

College of Social Sciences and International Studies,  
Department of Politics

# **The Conditions of Policy Representation in a Cross-National Perspective: Veto Players, Public Opinion and Government Responsiveness**

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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Politics.

December 2012

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## Abstract

This thesis explores “The Conditions of Effective Policy Representation in a Cross-National Perspective: Veto Players, Public Opinion and Government Responsiveness”. When one indicator of a democracy’s quality is whether and how well governments respond to citizens’ demands, continuing policy responsiveness is a key concern. Various models of responsiveness claim to explore the responsiveness of government towards citizens’ preferences but these come to inconsistent conclusions about how context affects the opinion-policy relationship.

My research contributes to the field (1) by systematically examining the commonly used models of the opinion-policy relationship (2) by providing a new theory of contextual effects based upon the veto player theory (Tsebelis, 2002) and clarity of responsibility argument (Hobolt et al., 2012, Whitten and Palmer, 1999, Powell and Whitten, 1993), (3) by cross-validating measures of issue preferences, and (4) by testing my theory using models of issue responsiveness and positional policy congruence.

After careful analysis of the many models and approaches to the opinion-policy linkage, I argue that political representation is best explored by applying a model of effective responsiveness, that is, governments responding to preferences by implementing policy that the public wants. Other models examine whether government agendas correspond with public agendas. This is achieved by using issue responsiveness techniques and also, to a limited extent, positional policy congruence.

Context is an important factor yet scholarship comes to inconsistent conclusions about how it affects political representation. I therefore develop a universally applicable theory of contextual effects, which borrows from the Tsebelis’ veto player theory (2002) and the clarity of responsibility hypothesis from economic voting literature (Hobolt et al., 2012, Whitten and Palmer, 1999, Powell and Whitten, 1993). Succinctly, the fewer veto players enter the decision-making process, the clearer it is who is responsible to act and the more likely it is that governments respond to public demands.

The first empirical chapter focuses on the validity of public opinion measures in issue responsiveness research and asks whether thinking something is an important problem is the same as wanting to increase public spending in the same domain. I find that both measures are related but that this relationship depends on the policy domain in question. The second and third empirical chapter test my theory of contextual effects, employing the salience model of responsiveness and the citizens’ perceptions model of positional policy congruence in a comparative framework. The results support my theory: In contexts where fewer veto players are created and the responsibilities are clearly allocated, political representation is increased.

This research finds its limitations in the quality and availability of the data, as well as in the non-dynamic nature of the model of ideological positions.

## Acknowledgements

Writing my thesis has been a long process and I want to use the opportunity to thank the many people who have supported me throughout this journey.

This dissertation would not have been possible without the funding and extraordinary opportunities provided by ELECDEM. The ELECDEM Training Network in Electoral Democracy is a Marie Curie Action (ITN), funded by the FP6-PEOPLE-ITN-2008 (EU reference: 238607). I owe sincere and earnest thanks to everyone who has been involved in the project.

I am indebted to the University of Exeter for hosting me in a dynamic research environment and providing me with the knowledge and support of my research team: Professor Susan A. Banducci, Professor Jack Vowles, Professor Jeffrey Karp and Doctor Dario Castiglione. I am truly thankful for your guidance and support with my research projects.

I gratefully acknowledge the encouragement, wisdom and support of Professor Mark Franklin and Doctor Jill Wittrock, who supervised me during my visits at the European University Institute and the Comparative Study of Electoral System based at the University of Michigan.

Special thanks to Christopher Wlezien for fruitful discussions about my topic and related work.

I am obliged to my fellow ELECDEMers who have inspired me throughout the fellowship, as well as to the many scholars, who I was able to meet through the network at conferences and workshops. Your advice and comments helped enormously in shaping this thesis.

Very special thanks to Fiona Raffael for her patience and support with the administrative work.

I would like to thank everyone at TNS BMRB who helped me collect original data for my dissertation and provided me with ideas about dynamic representation, measurement and survey research.

I owe so much to my friends, who have supported me over the past three years. Thanks for the intriguing discussions, the laughter and the putting up with my ups and downs.

Last, but not least. To my family, for loving, inspiring, and challenging me. I know you are always there for me and that I can always count on you.

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# I. Introduction

*“[A] key characteristic of a democracy is the continuing responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens, considered as political equals.”*

(Dahl, 1971: 1)

In representative democracies where one indicator of their quality is whether governments responds to citizens’ preferences (Powell, 2004: 91), continuous responsiveness and what shapes it are key concerns. The question of whether policy makers respond to public demands is a central one in the study of political representation. It links back to the core of what representation is all about, i.e. the delegation of powers to an overarching body that acts on behalf of the people. This implies that delegates represent public demands at the time of appointment, usually in election years, but it also indicates that there is a link of the two between elections. Representation that occurs at the same point in time can be understood as static. It indicates that public opinion and policy are congruent at a certain time. By contrast to static representation, dynamic government responsiveness towards citizens’ preferences is characterised by change, i.e. “policy makers act as a consequence of changes in public sentiment, which implies a sequence, inherently structured in time” (Stimson et al., 1995: 543). Responsiveness posits a two-way flow, where the public expresses preferences that are visible in the policy outputs produced by the incumbent government with a delay in time, and that these feed back to public opinion (Easton, 1965). It is *dynamic* representation that scholarship is increasingly interested in.

There are many ways in which policy representation occurs. One major distinction is agenda versus effective representation. In agenda representation,

governments respond to public concerns by setting a policy agenda that is in accordance with public opinion. Agendas articulate the policy intentions of the incumbent government, but they do not effectively translate preferences into policy outcomes. While agenda representation is an important step towards political representation, it is not enough to show that representation actually occurs. For effective political representation to happen, public preferences need to be visible in policy action. In other words, we the people want to see our preferences mirrored in public policy outcomes such as legislation, budgets and regulative acts. In essence, it is the *effective* representation of public preferences that matters most.

Finally, the degree of government success in translating public demands into policy outcomes is not stable. It varies across context as well as time. The question of why some governments frequently pay attention to and account for the wishes of the people while others do not is a major concern of the field. Although scholars study contextual effects on political representation, it is still largely unclear how context affects the link between public opinion and public policy. The focus of this dissertation is therefore especially on how political institutions shape representation.

To fulfil their representative function successfully it is important for policy makers to know what conditions promote political representation of public demands. If we do not understand how context affects representation, we will be unable to reform the political system in way that enhances the translation of citizens' preferences into policy. The consequences of this include protest movements and civil strikes, which can be dramatic for policy makers. In order to avoid these, understanding how policy representation can be increased is essential. If we know how to reform our institutions so that they lead to a clearer allocation of responsibilities and better representation of public demands, the danger of dissatisfied and revolting publics is mitigated.

Comparative research helps us to understand how context impacts policy representation. Only a comparison across countries allows the drawing of general conclusions about how context influences policymaking. If we study the effective and dynamic representation of public opinion in a *comparative* framework, this will enable us to give a recommendation about the conditions under which continuing responsiveness occurs. In my dissertation, I study the conditions of policy representation in a cross-national framework. Indeed, the study of policy representation as an indicator of the quality of a democracy is nothing new, nor is the question of what

moderates policy representation. However, previous work on policy representation comes to inconsistent conclusions about the impact of context with particular focus on electoral institutions. This may be due to the different models and measures employed, the absence of a universally applicable theory of context, or insufficient data. In addition, many studies focus entirely on the North American context. Admittedly this is where the field was developed and where data are available to measure different dimensions of representation. Although data are limited outside the American context, scholarship needs to move forward to explore the opinion-policy link elsewhere, with particular focus on how context shapes this relationship. Whether or not comparative work is done seems to depend on the approach chosen. While an extensive body of literature explores the ideological congruence, significantly less comparative work looks at the representation of issues. Further, little comparative work assesses context systematically. This is where my dissertation ties in. My study contributes to the field and to prior research in three important ways:

- It links the well-established veto player theory (Tsebelis, 1995, 2002) to the clarity of responsibilities argument (Hobolt et al., 2012, Whitten and Palmer, 1999, Powell and Whitten, 1993) and, thus, applies a combined theoretical framework of contextual effects to representation research.
- It contributes to the debate about the measurement validity of public opinion measures in responsiveness research by crossing different indicators of the public's issue preferences with one another and testing their content, discriminant and predictive validity.
- Finally, it provides empirical evidence for the impact of institutional context on the opinion-policy linkage that supports the idea of the veto player theory and clarity of responsibility argument. I test this in using the salience model of issue representation and the citizens' perception model of positional policy congruence.

Chapter 2 embeds my theory in the previous literature. I show why government responsiveness is important, how we can test it and what previous research suggests

with regard to context. In addition, Chapter 2 links the veto player theory to political representation and lays out the key argument as well as my hypotheses. I begin by discussing how the idea of democratic responsiveness ties in with the theory on democratic representation (Chapter 2.1) and I explain in more detail how government can fulfil its representative function (Chapter 2.2). Next, I turn to models and measures of responsiveness. I argue that inconsistent findings about the context effects on the opinion-policy relationship may be due to the different models and measures applied and point to the relevant studies. Chapter 2.3 discusses how public opinion and public policy are linked and how they are studied in previous research: in dyadic, collective and comparative studies. This sets out the basis for the review of the literature with a focus on contextual effects. Chapter 2.4 discusses what prior research suggests with regard to specific political institutions and points to the main gaps in the literature. In addition, it establishes a new theory of contextual effects (Chapter 2.4.1) that borrows from veto player theory (Tsebelis, 2002) and the clarity of responsibilities argument from the economic voting literature (Hobolt et al., 2012, Whitten and Palmer, 1999, Powell and Whitten, 1993). I distinguish between institutional and situational veto players. The former is defined as a country's fixed, time-invariant institutional framework, the latter describes time-varying political situations that are created by the political game or that are a short-term consequence of the electoral institutions. I present my conclusions about contextual effects in Chapter 2.4.2, where I also set out my hypotheses, which build upon my new, systematic theory of context. One essential part of Chapter 2 is a discussion and evaluation of the models commonly used to investigate policy representation (Chapter 2.5). In order to assess which approaches are most appropriate to explore the opinion-policy relationship, Chapter 2.5.1 develops evaluation criteria based on democratic theory. More specifically, it discusses why it is important to look at *dynamic* models that measure *effective* policy outputs in a *comparative* framework. Chapter 2.5.2 introduces the models and methods and at the same time assesses whether they fulfil the three criteria outlined in Chapter 2.5.1. In the closing section of Chapter 2 (Chapter 2.6), I summarise the rationale of my research, which links institutional and situational veto players, public opinion and government responsiveness.

In Chapter 3 I introduce my research design. In this, I discuss the nature of research in my field, which requires superior data and analyses techniques. Moreover,

Chapter 3 explores the data employed in the three empirical chapters (Chapters 4, 5 and 6) in more detail. I begin with an introduction about how the field has developed from its inception to the present day. Chapter 3.1 discusses the use of cross-sectional time-series methods and the multi-level structure of the survey data employed for the analyses. Next, I turn to the question of conceptualising public opinion and public policy responsiveness (Chapter 3.2). Here I point to the fact that, to this day, there is no universal definition of what public opinion means. Public opinion research relies heavily on an operationalist definition of public opinion, which in turn is led by the specific research interest of the scholar. Chapter 3.3 introduces my research design. It begins by looking at the data and modelling techniques to test the measurement validity of public opinion measures (Chapter 3.3.1). Chapter 3.3.2 introduces the measures and models to investigate the conditions of issue responsiveness and Chapter 3.3.3 the research design to explore the conditions of positional policy congruence. I specifically discuss the use of original, individual-level data and secondary, aggregate data sources. Chapter 3.4 introduces how I model the contextual effects on policy representation in the form of interactive terms.

My empirical analyses are conducted in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. Chapter 4 focuses on measurement. The review of the literature suggests that in issue responsiveness research different measures of public opinion are employed to model government responsiveness. However, the models come to different conclusions about the contextual effects modelled. Thus, Chapter 4 tests the measurement validity of public opinion measures in issue responsiveness research. I discuss how public opinion and public policy responsiveness are related in issue responsiveness research (Chapter 4.1). There is academic controversy surrounding two dynamic models of representation used in issue responsiveness research, namely the thermostatic and salience models of representation. While both models test the responsiveness of government to citizens' issue preferences, they rely on different indicators of public opinion. I discuss the advantages and limitations of each model. Chapter 4.2 theorises how the salience measure of public opinion (the Most Important Problem) may be linked to the indicator of public opinion in thermostatic representation, i.e. spending preferences. I come up with three possible scenarios of how spending preferences and policy concerns may be related. Further, I explain how validity can be assessed (Chapter 4.3). I set out my methodology on how I can empirically test the validity of opinion measurements in

Chapter 4.4. Here, I also talk about the data I use. I rely on original, individual-level data as well as secondary, aggregate data to test validity. Chapter 4.5 and Chapter 4.6 present the results of the empirical analyses. I begin exploring how spending preferences and important problems in Britain are related on the individual level (Chapter 4.5). The main question is whether thinking something is an important problem is the same as wanting to increase spending on the issue domain. If people want to increase spending on a specific issue and it corresponds with what they think is an important problem, the measure may be valid. After presenting some descriptive results, I test the construct and predictive validity, i.e. whether the measures correlate with each other and whether the same demographic characteristics predict the two measures of issue preferences in the same way. Chapter 4.5 tests the predictive validity on aggregate-level data. The main research interest here is to see whether, on the aggregate, both measures predict spending in the upcoming year in the same way. I draw my conclusions about the measurement validity of public opinion measures in issue responsiveness research in Chapter 4.7.

Chapters 5 and 6 explore the contextual effect on policy representation. While Chapter 5 looks at issue responsiveness and its moderators, Chapter 6 examines the conditions of positional policy congruence. Chapter 5 investigates the responsiveness of government to the public's issue preferences in a European context. I begin by introducing the models of issue responsiveness and justify why I use the salience model of responsiveness for my analysis (Chapter 5.1). Next, I discuss the contextual effects on issue responsiveness (Chapter 5.2). I point to the previous findings as well as to some inconsistent results about context effects. Next, I state my hypotheses based on the veto player theory of context effects and institutional and situational clarity. Chapter 5.3 presents the data and methodology in more detail and discusses the trade-offs between temporal and spatial analysis in the European context. I present descriptive statistics in Chapter 5.4 and inferential statistics in Chapter 5.5 – the latter test the institutional and situational clarity hypothesis according to the veto player theory. I summarise and draw conclusions in Chapter 5.6.

Chapter 6 explores the conditions of positional policy congruence. While at first sight it seems that I take a step backwards from dynamic representation to static representation, at the very beginning of Chapter 6 I discuss why it is important to look at the congruence of ideological positions in election years and what moderates it. I



critically comment on the lack of a dynamic model of positional responsiveness. Chapter 6.1 introduces the citizens' perception model of positional congruence and identifies it as the best model to explore positional correspondence. I also contrast the perception model with other models of ideological congruence. Next, I discuss the previous findings using positional policy congruence with particular focus on contextual effects and I set out my hypotheses (Chapter 6.2). Further, I introduce my methodology and data (Chapter 6.3). This includes a section where I discuss the trade-off between temporal and spatial research due to data availability. Chapter 6.4 and Chapter 6.5 present my empirical results. First, I display my descriptive results (Chapter 6.4), then I discuss the inferential statistics with regard to the contextual effects of institutional and situational veto players on positional congruence. In Chapter 6.6 I summarise my findings and present my conclusions.

I present my final thoughts in a concluding chapter (Chapter 7). The first part of Chapter 7 recaps the main achievements, summarises the key findings and points to the implications of this research for the field (Chapter 7.1). I talk about the limitations of my research and incentives for future research (Chapter 7.2).

## II. The Pathways of Democratic Responsiveness

Democratic responsiveness is a multi-dimensional phenomenon integrated in the broader study of political representation. It is often described as the key characteristic of a representative democracy (Dahl, 1971, Pitkin, 1967, Key, 1961) and is used as a tool to test its quality (Powell, 2004). This chapter introduces and evaluates the pathways of democratic responsiveness. I begin by explaining what I mean when I say that governments *respond* to citizens' preferences. One essential concept in research on political representation is the distinction between static and dynamic representation. In other words, representation at one fixed point in time as opposed to political representation that accounts for change in public sentiment (Stimson et al., 1995). Further, responsiveness describes a multi-stage process somewhat like a chain or cycle and at different stages there are various ways for a government to account for public opinion. I distinguish between the different ways in which government can respond to public opinion. This is followed by a discussion of how previous studies link citizens' preferences to political actors in terms of dyadic, collective and comparative research.

I then turn to discussing how context affects responsiveness. In order to understand in what ways context matters, I apply the basic argument of the veto player theory (Tsebelis, 2002). The veto players approach allows me thinking about context in a consistent and systematic way across countries. I link the veto player theory to the clarity of responsibility argument (Hobolt et al., 2012, Whitten and Palmer, 1999, Powell and Whitten, 1993) in order to theorise in detail how different political contexts impact the opinion-policy linkage. By looking at institutional and situational clarity in this way, I am able to identify the dimensions along which the opinion-policy relationship varies and what conditions enhance or constrain policy representation. Previously, studies on the context effects of political representation have come to inconsistent conclusions. One explanation for this is that the results are biased because

context has been explored in an unsystematic way. An alternative explanation for the inconsistent findings of prior studies is that the diverse approaches model different dimensions and kinds of responsiveness.

To understand the various models and ways to study political representation, I develop criteria to evaluate the existing approaches. This is followed by an introduction to and discussion of the commonly used methods and measures. At the same time I identify the best approach with which to model representation with regard to the specific needs of this thesis. In order to do this, I apply my three evaluation criteria (dynamics, effectiveness, and comparability) to test this. I close by pointing to the gap and inconsistencies in the literature and by emphasising the contribution of this thesis to field. I explicitly state the rationale of this research at the very end of Chapter 2.

## **2.1 Responsiveness – A Key Characteristic of Political Representation**

The concept of democratic responsiveness is embedded in the idea of representation in the agency theory. Agency theory interprets a representative democracy as the delegation of powers to an overarching body, where the people are the principals and the government acts as the agent. Kiewiet and McCubbins (1991) note that “the principals seek to structure the relationship with the agent so that outcomes produced through the agency’s effort are the best the principal’s can achieve, given the choice to delegate in first place.” (Kiewiet and McCubbins, 1991: 24). Hence, the core of this contract is that the government acts in the best interest of the people who have entrusted it with the power to govern, i.e. it responds to public wishes. There is natural conflict implied for the agent, the government, responding to citizens’ preferences, however. In essence, delegation theory assumes that the priorities of the people and the priorities of the agents are identical. After all, policy makers have been appointed to act on behalf of the citizens. People are heterogeneous, however, and not all people have the same preferences – they can even have opposing ideas of how a country should be run. In a practice, the people do not formulate one coherent preference for policies, but rather articulate dispersed preferences. It falls upon the agent, the respective government, to respond to an aggregate of those preferences. The above argument has

implications for political theory, but also for research methodology. If priorities differ amongst the individuals that we understand as “the public”, how can research account for these differences? This is one question that I discuss in further detail in the research design chapter (Chapter 3).

Another possibility is that governments have to make some decisions that do not correspond with public preferences. Is this against the social contract per se? It is not if the decision has been made in the best interest of the citizens and it may be based on hidden actions or hidden information of which the public is not aware (Kiewiet and McCubbins, 1991: 25). One related idea is the question of to whom government are accountable and to whom they are meant to respond in a representative democracy. Dahl (1971) suggests that representatives have to be completely or almost completely responsive to their citizens, who should be considered as political equals (Dahl, 1971: 2). This implies that there is equality in representation. However, a growing body of literature suggests that policymaking in modern democracies increases unequal representation (inter alia Bartels, 2009, Gilens, 2009). If preferences are dispersed and clustered around societal subgroups, it is harder for a government to respond to an aggregate of preferences as it is unable to recognise what this preference is. For instance, research on the US finds that well-educated citizens and people from high-income groups are more likely to participate in politics, to formulate preferences and to vote on Election Day (Gilens, 2009, Bartels, 2009, Bartels, 2008, Gilens, 2005).<sup>1</sup> Further, Lijphart (1999, 1994, 1984) argues that those to whom governments have to respond depends on how the political systems is designed. In particular, the electoral rules determine whose wishes governments should account for. As a rule of thumb, Lijphart (1984: 4) outlines that governments based on majoritarian rules are accountable to the majority of the people, or at least those who voted for the government in the election. The rules for governments based on proportional rules are less clear. These kinds of governments are accountable to as many people as possible.

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<sup>1</sup> The idea of inequality in representation is beyond the scope of this thesis but most certainly it defines where the field is going and it will be subject to future research by this dissertation’s author.

## 2.2 Studying Representation and Responsiveness

Political system theory has taught us that political representation is about *demands* and *supply* (Easton 1965). Those who hold the democratic power initially, the people, have demands, these are requests for or against a particular policy. Demands can occur in terms issue demands, public opinion towards regulating a cause within a particular issue domain, or ideological demands, preference for a broader set of issues or beliefs. The public frequently expresses their demands through election, but also between elections, for instance, through opinion polls, through political parties or other political organisations and political action. Policy makers and elected representatives are asked to supply solutions for public demands. They can do this by providing public policy that is in accordance with public opinion.

An extensive body of literature has discusses the mechanisms behind political representation and what happens between the expression of demands and the provision of supplies. Many view political representation as a chain of events (inter alia Powell 2004; Strom 2000; Lupia and McCubbins 2000), where voters delegate powers to elected representatives. Through the process of delegation representatives are expected to represent and respond to public demands. In turn, the reverse mechanism helps the public to hold representatives accountable by punishing or rewarding representatives retrospectively for their action. This usually happens through the next elections (Fearon 1999: 55). Thus, it is in the interest of the representatives to serve public opinion as they have to fear to be voted out of office otherwise.

**Figure 1: The Chain of Responsiveness (Powell, 2004)**

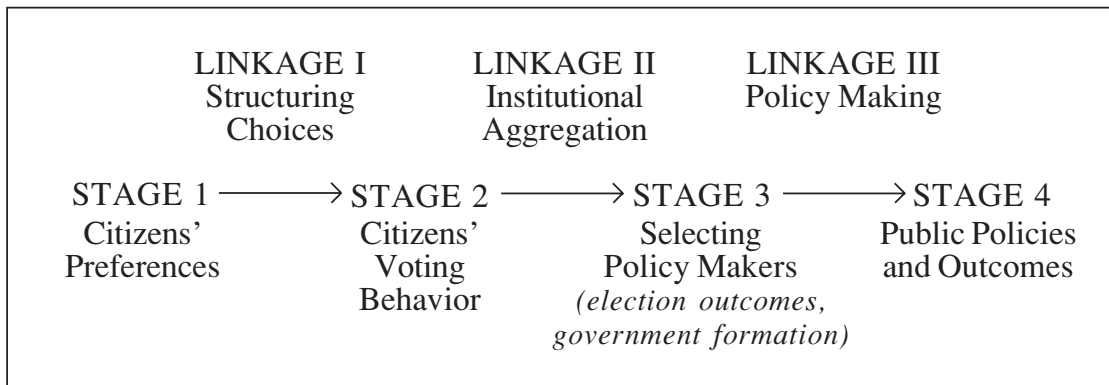


Figure 1 more precisely outlines delegation theory with particular focus on the responsiveness function of representatives according to Powell (2004). The chain begins with the formulation of public preferences (demands), which are expressed through the public's voting behaviour and vote choices. The first discrete step is the delegation of powers from voters towards elected representatives (Strøm 2000: 267). This may be particularly affected by citizens level of information. Lupia and McCubbins (2000: 294) note that the principals (the citizens) may be asymmetrically informed about what their agent (policy makers) have planned or are doing. While well-informed citizens are making the correct decision with regard to their level of information, it can be argued that less well informed citizens make less reasoned decisions. However, research on media effects shows, that even low-information voters are able to make reasonable choices by relying on short-cuts or heuristics (Lupia 1994).<sup>2</sup>

Secondly, the election outcomes are shaped by political institutions such as the electoral rules and the resulting party system (Mitchell 2000; Lupia and McCubbins 2000). This is crucial for our understanding of policy representation. If institutions moderate how well powers are delegated, they also affect how well policy makers respond to public opinion. This aspect is investigated in detail by this thesis (see Chapter 2.5 for a review of the literature and theory as well as Chapter 5 and 6 for the empirical analysis).

Thirdly, election outcomes determine how government is formed and who will be in charge. Hence, powers are delegated from the legislators towards the respective executive body (Strøm 2000: 267). This is not predominant concern in my thesis, but plays a role when I discuss the moderation of opinion through institutions.

Finally, in Powell's chain the last step is the process of policy making (supply); how well are policy preferences (demands) reflected in the policy outcomes (supply) of the incumbent government? This may be shaped by the short-term influences on policy making and depend upon how flexible or inflexible a government is to follow public opinion.

Pushing the argument further, policy making is also delegated down by the respective government to particular executive branches, the specialist ministries. And

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<sup>2</sup> While the question of media effects and unequal information is an important one, it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to clarify in how far the media and levels of information affect the choices citizens make with regard to delegating powers to representatives.

once a policy decision has been made powers are delegated to the bureaucracy and civil servants to implement the policy (Strøm 2000). This dissertation shall not focus on the last two steps of delegation theory, but end with Powell's final step in the equation the measurable supply or a policy outcome.

This dissertation focuses on the supply side of the equation and explores how well representatives respond to public demands. Thereby, I do not completely ignore the steps between stage 1 and stage 2, but I account for these steps by modelling the especially the institutional aggregation of preferences at and between election times. By taking into account how institutions shape preferences and consequently modelling whether governments respond to these preferences, this thesis accounts to some extent for stages 2 and 3.

In order to explore responsiveness, students do not necessarily have to focus on each single linkage, however. Some people are interested in how preferences lead to vote choice, others in how election outcomes lead to government formation, again another growing body of research looks at the relationship between initial preferences and policy outcomes. Whatever scholars study we need to keep in mind that every stage and linkage between those we study determines how we have to study responsiveness and that the principals are likely to suffer from agency losses along the way as the agents are to some extent self-interested (Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991: 24). Examining the overarching relationship between stage 1 and 4 always means accounting for how this linkage is moderated by context, for instance, and considering that voting behaviour and the selection of policy makers may have impact as well. But, the further powers are delegated up to experts and from there down to civil servants, the less clear it is for the public who made the final decision and thus to hold policy makers accountable for their action.

Powell's (2004) chain of responsiveness misses out on an essential linkage, however. Theoretically, his chain of responsiveness ends after a policy is supplied. Policy outcome (supply) feeds back to citizens' preferences (demands) though, and is reflected in reoccurring or new preferences. Easton's model of political representation (1965) has shown that any outcome of the political system will be picked up upon again by the people, who are either satisfied with the outcome and new preferences are expressed or they are dissatisfied and formulate the same (or very similar) preferences again. Further, the above argument suggests that there is one essential prerequisite for

the responsiveness of governments towards public opinion. Continuous responsiveness (Dahl 1971: 1) requires that there is also continuous expression of preferences on the part of the people. Without clearly expressed preferences, governments are unable to respond accordingly. Thus, the relationship between opinion and policy is a reciprocal one. It is characterised by government responding to citizens' preferences and citizens responding to government policies. While Powell (2004: 92) notes that government responsiveness is not entirely up to the good will of the policy makers, he does not acknowledge that policy responsiveness requires public responsiveness as well. Powell does not reflect on the reciprocal relationship and he does not incorporate the idea of public responsiveness or feedback in his visualisation of the responsiveness chain. Instead of thinking about representation and responsiveness as a chain of events, we can rather think of it as an ongoing cycle. Government responsiveness cannot apply if public responsiveness is absent (Thomas, 2010: 534). In this thesis I solely focus on the idea of government responsiveness towards public preferences, the supply side of the equation. But in order to get a full grasp of how policy representation works, I acknowledge that public responsiveness on the demand side is a crucial mechanism as well. To emphasise, the idea of public responsiveness is not tested in this dissertation.

A two-way flow of information suggests that there is a difference between a static and a dynamic dimension of representation. The former explores the correspondence of opinion and policy at the same point in time, the latter focuses on change, that is, "whether policy makers act as a consequence of changes in public sentiment, which implies a sequence, inherently structured in time" (Stimson et al., 1995: 543). This differentiation has consequences for how we understand '*responsiveness*', in particular. Strictly speaking, policy responsiveness is only studied by dynamic models that account for change in opinion, which leads to change in policy. By definition a responsive government is characterised by a lagged reaction to changes in opinion at a previous time. Nevertheless, the term '*responsiveness*' is also used, and often mistakenly used, by scholars to indicate a static relationship between public opinion and governments – see for example Powell (2000). Powell claims to explore the responsiveness of government towards the median citizen's ideological position on a left-right continuum by investigating whether ideologies correspond at election times. However, his model of ideological representation is static and reflects the congruence of



ideological positions, but not the responsiveness of government ideology towards the median citizen dynamically.

## 2.3 Kinds of Democratic Responsiveness

While it has been emphasised above that there is essential linkage between public preferences and governments, it is yet unclear what it means when I say that governments respond to public opinion and in what ways a government is able to account for public wishes. The term '*responsiveness*' implies that someone or something is reacting to someone or something else. To date scholars have failed to confidently define what responsiveness means (Kuklinski and Segura, 1995: 18). Political representation is an eminently complex, multi-dimensional phenomenon of which responsiveness is only one fragment. To some, responsiveness means that the representatives act in the interest of the represented (Pitkin, 1967: 209). Others add that it is the policy makers' duty to act according to the preferences of those who have chosen them, as this is the main reason why they have been elected and the precise purpose for which they have been selected (Birch, 1971: 125). Still others state that responsiveness aims for a relatively close policy correspondence with the wishes of relatively many citizens for a long period of time (Lijphart, 1984: 2). The above definitions are rather broad and they do not give any information on how a government practically responds to public opinion. Powell (2004) gives us a very clear and a narrower interpretation of the meaning of responsiveness: "Democratic responsiveness is what occurs when the democratic process induces the government to form and implement policies that the citizens want" (Powell, 2004: 91). In other words, responding to public opinion means that there is an effective policy outcome that reflects preferences, something that is measurable in implemented law. While the author agrees with this definition of effective democratic responsiveness, she acknowledges that there are other ways in which government responsiveness can occur.

Schumaker's (1975) work on protest group demands theorises that there are five kinds of responsiveness (or criteria as he calls it): access (1), agenda (2), policy (3), output (4), and impact responsiveness (5). Access responsiveness – the degree to which interest groups have access to policy makers – and impact responsiveness – the degree

to which protest action succeeds in satisfying demands of the groups – focus specifically on the demands of protest movements. The crucial contribution of Schumaker's work with respect to this thesis is how he theorises agenda, policy and output responsiveness. Agenda responsiveness is about whether policy makers' agendas respond to public agendas. Scholars test if policy makers pick up upon the most salient topics amongst the citizenry (inter alia Bonafont and Palau, 2011, Jennings et al., 2011b, Bevan and Jennings, 2010, Jones et al., 2009, Jennings and John, 2009, Jones and Baumgartner, 2004) or they analyse whether the median citizen is reflected in government speeches on the left-right scale (Warwick, 2012, Hakhverdian, 2010). While agendas give an indication of what the government plans, they describe policy promises only. An agenda can change, it can be adjusted or it can be given up on completely. Agenda responsiveness is not enough to make general statements about the effective responsiveness of government towards citizens' preferences. In order to ensure accountability and responsiveness, a more effective indicator is needed.

By contrast, policy and output representation go beyond the notion of using policy promises by indicating policy outputs effectively in terms of specific policy issues (inter alia Soroka and Wlezien, 2010, Wlezien, 1996, Wlezien, 1995) or on positional congruence (inter alia Budge and McDonald, 2007, McDonald et al., 2004, Powell, 2000). Policy responsiveness indicates the degree to which preferences in a country are adopted by or are congruent with legislation (Schumaker, 1975: 494). This corresponds with Powell's (2004: 91) definition of responsiveness. Output responsiveness goes even further. Here it is not the correspondence of outputs with public opinion that matters, but how well implemented laws are executed in daily political life, for example, within the administrative work of cities, councils, states or other administrative authorities. Testing the output responsiveness of governments is beyond the scope of this thesis, which focuses on the policy responsiveness and representation defined as the formulation, adoption and implementation of legislation that the people want.

If responsiveness is one essential mechanism to test the quality of political representation and democracy, it is important to look at effective responsiveness in terms of policy outputs. This does not mean that other forms of responsiveness are not important. They are rather complementary perspectives on how (well) representation works.

## 2.3 Perspectives on Democratic Responsiveness: Dyadic, Collective and Comparative Studies

Previous responsiveness studies cluster around three types of research: 1) dyadic, 2) collective and 3) comparative responsiveness research. Early studies focus on the dyadic opinion-policy relationship, i.e. the relation between a single legislator and her constituents. Pioneering research by Miller and Stokes (1963) suggests that the responsiveness of US congresswomen and -men is only imperfectly satisfied and that it depends on the issue domain whether responsiveness occurs. Using a similar approach, research by Achen (1978) suggests that that public opinion is well represented and responded to in all policy fields to a satisfactory degree. Individual legislators seem to listen to their constituents and reflect public opinion at least to some degree in their political decisions. While it is certainly important to explore the representation of constituents by individual legislators, research quickly shifted towards investigating responsiveness in collective terms, i.e. in the form of institutions collectively representing a people (Weissberg, 1978: 535). The idea of a representative body as a whole representing public demands became the focus of representation studies in the mid 1970s. Arguably, Weissberg's work (1979, 1978) suggests that the US congress as a whole responds a lot more to the preferences of the people than initially assumed by dyadic research. In addition, he presumes that institutional arrangements influence responsiveness. Other collective studies support these findings and show that public preferences and policy change in the US largely correspond (Monroe, 1979, Monroe, 1998, Dalton, 1985, Page and Shapiro, 1983). Notably, all studies mentioned so far look at political representation from a rather static perspective and track the correspondence of opinion and policy at the same point in time.

The transition to dynamic responsiveness research occurs in the 1990s. Stimson (1991) and Stimson et al. (1995) find that the relationship between public opinion and policy is a dynamic one. However, question remains open as to whether opinion prompts policy or vice versa. Follow up research suggests that there is a two-way flow between opinion and policy where policy makers follow public opinion and the outcome feeds back into public preferences (Wlezien, 1996, Wlezien, 1995, Canes-Wrone and Shotts, 2004). Until the late 1980s, collective representation was exclusively

studied in the US. Initial studies outside the US indicate that responsiveness also occurs in France (Brooks, 1987), Germany (Brooks, 1990), and Canada (Pétry and Mendelsohn, 2004, Pétry, 1999, Bélanger and Pétry, 2005).

While it is important to know whether representation occurs, the field opens up to comparative research around the same time. The observation that context has a bearing on representation, as well as the question of how well the people are represented across different countries, led to an increase in comparative studies. While Erikson et al. (1993) successfully demonstrate that the US states respond to public opinion, Klingeman et al. (1994) show that governments in 10 Western countries represent the policy priorities of the political parties as a proxy for public preferences. In a series of static, comparative studies, scholars show that representation of ideological beliefs is moderated by the electoral rules and party system (Budge and McDonald, 2007, McDonald and Budge, 2005, Powell, 2000, Powell and Vanberg, 2000, Huber and Powell, 1994), although it remains unclear whether these differences are significant (Powell, 2011, Golder and Stramski, 2010, Powell, 2009, Blais and Bodet, 2006). Dynamic responsiveness research focuses on the representation of opinion regarding specific issues and the impact of institutions (Soroka and Wlezien, forthcoming, Soroka and Wlezien, 2010, Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008, Brooks and Manza, 2006, Soroka and Wlezien, 2005, Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2005, Soroka and Wlezien, 2004).

## **2.4 Contextual Effects on the Opinion–Policy Linkage**

Institutions affect both sides of the opinion-policy equation. They can constrain or foster opinion expression as well as increase or decrease the number, quality and pace of policy outcomes. Prior research focuses on a variety of institutional contexts (legislative, executive and other political system characteristics) that affect the opinion-policy relationship.

One set of institutional contexts focuses on the electoral rules and the party system. Indeed, both institutional features are closely linked as the electoral rules determine which party system evolves (Powell, 2000, Katz, 1997, Downs, 1957, Duverger, 1954). Majoritarian electoral rules have long been believed to be superior for they create few parliamentary parties with distinct programmes that cluster around the

median voter and lead to decisive and stable single-party governments (Downs, 1957, Duverger, 1954). This assumption is first challenged Lijphart (1999, 1994, 1984) who finds that in fact consensus democracies are more successful in translating public wishes into policies as they represent all opinions and not just majority preferences. Indeed, further empirical research on the ideological correspondence of citizens and government supports Lijphart's findings (Budge and McDonald, 2007, McDonald and Budge, 2005, Powell, 2000, Powell and Vanberg, 2000, Huber and Powell, 1994). Powell (2000: 254) and Powell and Vanberg (Powell and Vanberg, 2000: 411) even conclude that proportional visions of democracy outperform their majoritarian counterparts. But more recent studies challenge these finding and suggest that neither majoritarian rules nor proportional ones increase the level of representation (Powell, 2011, Golder and Stramski, 2010, Powell, 2009, Blais and Bodet, 2006). These authors find that the differences in representation between electoral systems are marginal and not statistically significant, so the conclusion is that electoral rules perform equally well.

One explanation for these findings is that it is simply the timing of parties positioning themselves around the median that is different, and that the results are the same. While parties in majoritarian systems place themselves around the median voter before the election, parties in proportional systems are pulled back to the median voter during the coalition bargaining process (Golder and Stramski, 2010, Budge and McDonald, 2007, Blais and Bodet, 2006, McDonald and Budge, 2005). A similar picture is drawn in issue responsiveness research. While some scholars suggests that proportionality increases responsiveness (Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008), others show that the opposite is the case (Soroka and Wlezien, forthcoming). How the electoral rules affect the opinion-policy relationship is still unclear. The inconsistent results may be due to different approaches, data, time or measures; they at least suggest that further research is needed to disentangle this problem. Some of these issues are addressed later in this dissertation. For instance, evaluations of the different approaches are given in Chapter 2.5. Here I also focus on questions of measurement. A detailed empirical test of the measurement validity of public opinion in issue responsiveness research is provided in Chapter 4.

A very similar argument applies to the impact of the party system on political representation. The political parties are believed to be the essential link between public

opinion and outputs. Thus, party systems are crucial for the formation of majorities in parliaments and governments (Lijphart, 1999: 112). Few parties resulting from majoritarian rules usually lead to decisive single party governments, while multiple parties based on proportional rules normally bring out coalition governments (Downs, 1957: 144). However, instead of dividing between two and multiple party systems, scholarship suggests counting the effective number of parliamentary parties (Gallagher and Mitchell, 2008, Golder, 2005, Lijphart, 1999, Laakso and Taagepera, 1979, Sartori, 1976). According to the Downsian assumption, party systems that frequently bring out single party governments have been believed to be more likely to represent public preferences than their counterparts (Downs, 1957, Duverger, 1954). Research by Cox (1997) and Powell and Vanberg (2000) shows that in multipartyism the governing parties are pulled back to the median throughout the coalition bargaining process. This demonstrates that multipartyism is at least not inferior to two-party systems. Current studies even assume that governments in multiparty countries perform slightly better than those in two party systems, although the differences are not very large or statistically significant (Golder and Stramski, 2010, Powell, 2009, Blais and Bodet, 2006). Further research is needed to clarify how the party system affects political representation. In addition, it is also up to further research to unravel whether the electoral rules and party systems measure the same concept and for this reason have the same or at least very similar impact on the opinion-policy relationship.

In order to clarify the impact of these institutions on the opinion-policy linkage, I develop and employ a new comprehensive theoretical framework of contextual effects. It is founded in the veto players theory and allows me to systematically analyse context across countries. In addition, I evaluate and empirically review the popular approaches and measurements in order to rely on the best approaches and measures for my responsiveness analysis.

Another set of contextual effects explored previously are executive characteristics, in particular, the difference between presidential and parliamentary government. The distinction between them is that governments are either selected by the legislature and are dependent on its trust (parliamentary governments) or they are elected by popular vote or an electoral college that is independent from the legislature. A hybrid and less common type of government is the semi-presidential one, where an elected president and the head of government selected by the elected parliament share

responsibilities, e.g. France. Prior research finds that decision making in presidential systems is superior as the president is more decisive, because she is independent. A directly selected executive is more responsible and accountable than an executive that is only indirectly chosen by the people (Samuels, 2004, Powell and Whitten, 1993). In a case study on the United States, Canes-Wrone and Shotts (2004) find that presidents are highly responsive, especially when the next election is imminent. They also demonstrate that the popularity of the president is important. While moderate approval of the incumbent leads to increased responsiveness, high or low levels of popularity do not. Comparative research suggests that presidential systems are more likely to respond to the preferences of the people than parliamentary executives (Soroka and Wlezien, forthcoming, 2010, Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008). In addition, studies suggest that the political orientation of government determines how likely it is to respond (Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008).

There are other characteristics of a political system that moderate the opinion-policy relationship. Whether or not a country is organised centrally or federally seems to be one important factor. Federalism describes the delegation of powers to sub-national, self-governing bodies, where the division of powers has been codified in one way or another and is guaranteed for all levels by law (Wheare, 1963: 11). It is distinguished from other forms of decentralisation that are not explicitly guaranteed by law, e.g. the British devolved governments or the French administrative municipalities. The impact of federalism on political representation is assumed (Lijphart, 1999, 1994, 1984), but little empirical research demonstrates how it affects it. While Brooks (1985) finds no substantial variation in political representation in Germany due to different levels of (de-)centralisation (there is some variance, but it is statistically insignificant), Wood (1992) demonstrates that federalism dampens responsiveness in the US. Comparative research on the impact on federalism on the opinion-policy link suggests that it confuses public opinion expression (Soroka and Wlezien, forthcoming, Soroka and Wlezien, 2010). They argue that different levels of government make it hard to express specific preferences on the correct level – the level of government that is actually concerned with the policy problem. Further, political representation in government is decreased as preferences are not distinctly expressed. Although the results of the few studies modelling federalism point into the same direction (federalism decreases responsiveness), there is yet further research needed to get a more comprehensive

insight into its effect on the opinion-policy relationship. While studies specifically suggest that the public opinion side of the equation is affected by federal state-building, there are reasons to believe that the public policy side is also affected. Policy provision generally gets more complex the more actors are involved. In addition, a federal structure may have a serious impact on the lag structure of responsiveness, for example, a federal government may need more time to achieve consensus and respond to preferences than a central government. Further, the country samples in previous research are limited to a case study or less than a handful of countries, only one study looks at the effect cross-sectionally. Furthermore, although scholarship acknowledges that there are substantial differences between dual and cooperative federalism (Soroka and Wlezien, 2010), potential differences have not been tested.

There are many other characteristics that are likely to affect political representation, e.g. bicameralism (Lijphart, 1984, Sjölin, 1993, Druckman and Thies, 2002), political competition (Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008), timing in terms of at what time representation is looked at in the electoral cycle (Canes-Wrone and Shotts, 2004), the kind of government in terms of minimum-winning versus over- and undersized government (Tsebelis, 2002, Vowles, 2010), and so on.

Prior research explores the context effects on political representation but it appears that moderators have been chosen more or less at random rather than systematically, and especially not across approaches. For example, the positional policy congruence literature solely models the electoral and party system as contextual effects. While there has been no final answer as to whether those concepts tap into the same contextual effect – after all electoral and party systems are strongly linked – other factors important for policymaking have not been regarded at all. Issue responsiveness research has dealt with context similarly. There is little research that conducts confirmatory studies on the impact of institutions, but different covariates are modelled. Further, there are problems with the theory of contextual effects on the opinion-policy relationship. Previous studies embed contextual effects in very specific theoretical frameworks, but it seems that there is no general, systematic theory of exploring context. This is another explanation for inconsistent findings.

Thirdly, there are also differences across institutions: Are they fixed or do they vary over time? Are they codified by law or results of the political game? Are they measurable in a dichotomous way? The list of questions goes on. What is needed is a



systematic clustering of political system attributes that enables researchers to analyse complex institutions in a consequential and consistent way (Tsebelis, 2002: 2). That is, what consequences do political institutions for political representation have and can we apply the same argument to different countries and at different levels of analysis? By conducting cross-national research and by employing issue and ideology approaches, my thesis contributes a larger sample, which enables me to generalise as well as perform an comparison across approaches.

### **2.4.1 Explaining Contextual Effects on the Opinion–Policy Nexus Applying Veto Player Theory**

Why governments are expected to respond to citizens' preferences was outlined earlier in this thesis. Especially Chapter 2.1 and 2.2 have discussed in how far government responsiveness is a key characteristic of representation. In this section, I develop a more focused view on the role of institutions in the framework government responsiveness. Previous research has emphasised the effect of institutions for the demand side of the representation equation (inter alia Wlezien and Soroka 2011; John et al. 2011; Soroka and Wlezien 2010). According to this literature, particularly the institutional designs affect how well citizens can formulate and express their preferences. For instance, federal state-building has been identified as one institutional feature that “confuses” (Wlezien and Soroka 2011; Soroka and Wlezien 2010) citizens and prevents them from expressing clear preferences. In federal systems citizens may be unclear of how responsibilities are allocated and who is responsible to account for their demands, hence, citizens do not know who to address their demands to - the federal government or the sub-level government - and may not express preferences whatsoever. This mechanism is similar for other institutional features.

The mechanism of institutions and representation may affect the supply side at the same time, however. While citizens may be confused because the institutional framework is too complex and prevents them to express clear preferences at and between election times, institutions may at the same time affect how successful governments are in supplying policies. Let me go back to example of federalism. Federal state-building means that policy making is split horizontally across levels of

government. Depending on the kind of federal system established - dual or cooperative federalism - supplying public policies may involve more (or less) coordination with lower levels of government or even second chambers if the federal state building is tied to that. Coordinating policy and cooperating with other institutional actors means that a government is less flexible when it comes to policy making and providing policies in accordance with public opinion. It has to take into account other opinions before a final decision can be made. Further, this is a matter of time. Perhaps federal governments are as responsive as governments in unitary states, but it simply takes them more time to respond to citizens' preferences, because they have to account for the other actors' policy positions, negotiate aims and supply and, thus, respond with a longer delay in time. This should emphasise how institutions also effect the supply side and not only the demand side. This dissertation only focuses on the supply side of the equation. While the opinion policy nexus clearly has two side and both are important to study responsiveness, in this thesis I aim to disentangle how the supply side is affected by institutions.

#### **2.4.1.1 A Systematic Theory of Institutions**

In order to get a more structured insight into how the institutional context affects the opinion-policy linkage, a systematic theory institutions is required. For along time Lijphart's (1984; 1999) distinction into majoritarian and consensus democracies has served as a guideline to study the impact of institutions on political phenomena. However, more recent research suggests that Lijphart's rather static classifications are deficient frameworks (Kaiser 1997: 421) of studying institutional effects on dynamic political behaviour. Today many studies - and so is this one - are interested in the structuring effect as well as the consequences of institutions for political action. Since Lijphart a variety of ideas have been proposed by political scientist how to explain policy outcomes by studying institutions. For instance, Immergut's (1992) acknowledges:

“Constitutional rules, the organization of political parties, and patterns of electoral participation - the standard political variables - create decision-making structures, each of which has its own logic. These formal institutional features and the ways in which they are

combined with electoral results produce different kinds of political dynamics. (Immergut 1992: 5)

Immergut's idea of using veto points to structure the impact of institutions has been further developed by other scholars. Veto points are scores associated with institutions' ability to veto decisions. Huber et al. (1993) study institutional impact on welfare states in a similar way as Immergut suggests. In a comparative study on the institutional impact of policy-making, Cowhey and McCubbins (1995) develop, as Kaiser (1997) notes, "a whole range of different veto terms [...] to describe the motivational effect of institutions", where each term describes a different veto situation, e.g. veto point, veto player and veto office.

Tsebelis (1995a, 1995b, 2002) develops veto player theory with regard to the stability of political systems. In a nutshell, Tsebelis (2002) argues that in order to change policies, a certain number of institutional actors, the veto players, have to agree on the proposed change. Further, any significant departures from the status quo are impossible if the winset is small, that is, if the number of veto players is high (Tsebelis, 2002: 2). For political stability, which is what Tsebelis studies, this means that stability is greater when the number of veto players is higher.

Further, Kaiser (1997) develops a veto player argument accounting for the consensual and conflictual competition between actors that may or may not be used by actors depending on their strategy. Veto points are thus classified according to their intended effects. Kaiser divides veto points across static and dynamic institutional designs, which he calls hard and soft veto points.

Birchfield and Crepaz (1998) push Kaiser's argument even further. They find that the ability to veto decisions is not equal across institutions, but divides alongside collective and competitive veto points. Competitive veto points occur when different political actors operate through separate institutions with mutual veto powers, such as federalism, strong bicameralism, and presidential government. Collective veto points, on the other hand, emerge from institutions where the different political actors operate in the same body and whose members interact with each other on a face to face basis. Typical examples of collective veto points are proportional electoral systems, multi-party legislatures, multi-party governments, and parliamentary regimes.

While the way of theorising the different veto dimensions differs across these studies, they have a common denominator. Kaiser (1997: 421) notes that political institutions are interpreted as structuring variables for political action, which is the viewpoint I also take in this dissertation. I build my institutional argument on Tsebelis's veto player theory. While on first sight may seem inferior to newer conceptualisation of institutions' abilities to veto decisions, it is the most straightforward way of systematically structuring institutions for the purpose of this research. While I pick up on Kaiser's idea of structuring players according to static and dynamic designs, which is important considering the time-series nature of this research, I do not follow the idea of competitiveness of veto actors. Kaiser's (1997) as well as Birchfield and Crepaz's (1998) argument are more sufficient when investigating how a combination of institutions affect representation altogether. This research, however, takes a step back and aims to identify institutional effects in a continuum of their own to provide an initial indication of how institutions affect representation. For this purpose, Tsebelis's (1995a, 1995b, 2002) classification is sufficient and offers a much clearer picture of institutions by simply counting the veto power. I lay out my veto player argument in more detail in the following section.

#### **2.4.1.2 Institutional and Situational Veto Players**

In order to study political stability in a systematic way, I employ Tsebelis's (1995a, 1995b, 2002) veto player argument to explain policy responsiveness in a comparative framework. Tsebelis's work focuses on political system stability. In a nutshell, he argues that in order to change policies, a certain number of institutional actors, the veto players, have to agree on the proposed change. Further, any significant departures from the status quo are impossible if the winset is small, that is, if the number of veto players is high (Tsebelis, 2002: 2). In other words, stability is greater when the number of veto players is higher as it is harder for players to move away from the status quo.

However, the direction of the institutional effects shifts when applying the veto player argument to the study of contextual effects in representation research. While Tsebelis's interest is in maintaining political system stability, representation research is interested in tracking the change from the status quo of policies. Following this notion,

representation should be greater when the number of veto players is lower. Tsebelis further distinguishes between two kinds of veto players: “If veto players are generated by the constitution, they are called *institutional* veto players. [...] If veto players are generated by the political game, they are called *partisan* veto players” (Tsebelis, 2002: 19). The distinction between different political actors according to their attributes is also found in the voting literature, especially in the clarity of responsibility hypothesis. Powell and Whitten (1993) first theorised the idea of the clarity of responsibility in the context of economic voting. Complex institutions, they argue, lead to blurred responsibilities and make it difficult for voters to judge governments on economic performances. They make a distinction between high and low clarity of institutional responsibility. Palmer and Whitten (1999) further developed this argument and distinguish further between institutions that lead to high, medium or low clarity of responsibility.<sup>3</sup>

Hobolt et al. (2012) suggest explicitly distinguishing between two dimensions of the political context, institutional clarity and the clarity of governance. Whereas the former focuses on the rather static institutional set-up of a country that does not vary over time, the latter looks at the time-variant cohesiveness of the government.<sup>4</sup> This enables scholars to test specifically what voters in this case are concerned with – the institutionally defined concentration of powers or an ad hoc cohesive actor in a particular situation.

Here, I link the idea of different kinds of veto players with the clarity of responsibility hypothesis. Indeed, there is a number of fixed institutions, i.e. actors that do not vary over time and are often specified by a constitution. For example, these include a country’s regime type, its electoral rules and party system, whether its legislative structure is bicameral or unicameral and whether government is organised centrally or federally. Following Tsebelis (2002), these established veto players that do

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<sup>3</sup> In order to test the clarity of responsibility hypothesis, Powell and Whitten (1993) construct an index consisting of five variables to indicate high and low clarity of responsibility (opposition control of committee chairs, weak party cohesion, bicameral opposition, minority government, and the number of parties in government). The index is refined by Palmer and Whitten (1999), in so far as it distinguishes in more detail between three levels of clarity – high, medium and low.

<sup>4</sup> Hobolt et al. (2012) also work with indexes to test their hypotheses. Instead of one index they create two for each hypothesis and differ between high and low clarity in accordance with the Powell and Whitten index (1993).

not vary over time, but are fixed in time (and often by a constitution as well), are called *institutional* veto players.

By contrast, there is also a number of veto players that are not fixed in any way, that vary with the political situation or the political game. For example, there are characteristics of governance (single party versus coalition governments, minimum-winning versus over-/undersized governments, the effective number of parties in government) as well as of the legislature (the effective number of parties in parliament). These time-variant veto players are called *situational* veto players.<sup>5</sup> Figure 2 exhibits how veto players are categorised.

These players semantically connects that they are plain institutional features and that they affect how government looks like as well as whether or not it is able to respond to preferences. The regime type is an overall important feature as it determines the relationship between the legislature and executive. How does a government come and stay in office? The electoral rules and party system are strongly linked as the party system is a result of the electoral rules, however, it is important to consider both.

Recent assumptions made about electoral rules and party systems are violated. For instance, single member districts do not necessarily lead to a two-party system any longer as we see in the case of the United Kingdom. Federal state building has previously been found to affect the demand side of responsiveness: public responsiveness. Federal state building affects public responsiveness by preventing citizens to formulate and express clear preferences as they are unsure who to address their policy demands to in a federal state, the federal or the sub-level government (Wlezien and Soroka, forthcoming). This research argues that federalism also impacts the supply side as it may require more effort form governments to make decisions in federal states and may thus decrease responsiveness. Further, federalism is likely to slow down decision making, so it may take governments longer to respond. Often a federal state building is tied to second chambers in legislature, for instance, in the USA or Germany, which the reason why I want to investigate bicameral assembly as well.

In term of the time-varying situational veto players the semantic connection is in how more (or less) veto players affect the decisiveness and flexibility of government's

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<sup>5</sup> I consciously abstain from calling these veto players *partisan* veto players as originated by Tsebelis, because the term is misleading in this context. The focus is on the situation created by the political game, which generates more or less veto players. Partisan veto players in the context of governance and legislation suggest an affiliation with a party, however.

decision making. The effective number of parliamentary parties links up with the electoral and party system, but it gives a more precise measure of how many veto players are created by the system. It may also change with elections, so ideally its impact can give a more precise answer to the veto player argument. There is a similar reasoning behind the idea of including the plain number of parties in the government. Two time-varying indicators that are strongly connected are the single party versus coalition governments and the maybe more precise measure of minimum winning versus over-/undersized governments. I use both characteristics to get a clearer image what government enhances responsiveness. It is important to test the simpler argument single party government versus coalitions. But more recent research shows that minimum winning coalitions are as successful in policy making as single-party governments Tsebelis, 2002, Vowles, 2010. By contrast minority and sur-plus governments face more veto players and hence are believed to be less successful.

Counting the institutional and situational veto players is consequently the simplest way of theorising veto players and it is sufficient for the design of this study as well. This study delivers an initial insight to the application of veto player theory to the study of policy representation by testing one institutional and situational feature at a time. Thus complex indices or ways of assigning veto points may not be necessary, because I am not interested in a combined effect. However, distinguishing between institutional and situational veto players still makes sense as it gives a more differentiated, yet simple insight to political institutions. Previous studies in the field do not provide a sufficient reasoning for picking institutions. Here I give a distinction between time variant and time-invariant institutions in a more systematic way, but also in a simplistic way.

Tsebelis strategy of counting the numbers of veto players is therefore sufficient to give a first insight to and test of veto player theory. Both, institutional and situational veto players, directly measure the institutional features. Certainly, veto player theory also touches the debate about how cohesive or distant the different players are in terms of their policy or ideological beliefs, this is something I do not consider in my dissertation. As outlined earlier in this chapter, I am interested in plain institutional features at this stage of my research and not the policy beliefs leading each actor to behave in a particular way. I acknowledge, however, that ideological and issue

convictions of each player are important when it comes to policy negotiations, competition and decision making.

**Figure 2: Characteristics of Institutional and Situational Veto Players**

<b>Institutional Veto Players (Time-invariant)</b>	<b>Situational Veto Players (Time-variant)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regime Type</li> <li>- Electoral Rules</li> <li>- Party System</li> <li>- Federalism</li> <li>- Bicameralism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Effective Number of Parties in the Legislature</li> <li>- Number of Parties in Government</li> <li>- Single Party versus Coalition Governments</li> <li>- Minimum-winning versus over-/undersized Governments</li> </ul>



An institutional design that enhances governments' *ability* to respond to preferences may be desirable. If the number of veto players that are involved in the policymaking process is high, the clarity of responsibilities is low and the ability of governments to respond to citizens' preferences is constrained. The resulting flexibility and ability to change policy directions is crucial. Governments that have this ability and flexibility to adjust policy easily, may be more likely to respond to public opinion in first place. It simply is easier for such governments to account for public demands. By contrast, governments who have to negotiate and unite the interest of many veto players to make decision and consequently are less flexible make those decision, are less likely to respond to public opinion as they are constrained in first place.

Now if few veto players lead to more flexible governments that have the ability to respond to public opinion, one may question that these governments will actually respond to public opinion. They might be rather self-interested if they are flexible and serve their own interests. The question occurs why would governments also have the *incentive* to respond to public opinion instead of doing what pleases them? The answer seems to be re-election. One major goals for all governments is to get re-elected (inter alia Tufte 1978). In order to increase their chances of getting re-elected, incumbent governments need to please their voters and the public. This can be done by taking into account or responding to the public's demands in order to increase the their chances of getting re-elected. It seems to be a logical consequence to assume that whenever the public is satisfied and pleased with government activity, they will vote for the same government or governmental parties in the next general elections (Miller and Stokes



1963; Eulau and Karps 1977). Spinning this argument further, governments who have to unite a larger number of veto players to take decisions, may have the same incentive, to get re-elected, but not the same ability to respond to public preferences as governments that face fewer veto players.

Clarity of responsibilities on the demand side of the equation may worsen this dilemma of governments with many veto players. In a constellation where the responsibilities of institutional actors are less clearly allocated and citizens are unsure who is taking the final decision, they may abstain from expressing clear preferences through election as well as between election (Soroka and Wlezien, 2009, Wlezien and Soroka, forthcoming). Where no clear preferences are expressed, governments may struggle to respond to demands. Hence, while governments facing more veto players in decision making may have the incentive to respond to the public, but they have the constrain of being less able to respond to opinion, because they are constrained by more veto players participating in the decision making, as well as picking up on clearly defined preferences, which may be due to the same muddy institutional framework that constrained government's ability to respond in first place.

The demand side of the opinion-policy equation is, however, no concern in this dissertation. It may be relevant to the study of government responsiveness, however. I argue that electoral incentives keep governments responsive, but that responsiveness under more complex institutional conditions might decrease governments ability and incentive to respond, because circumstances are less clear for governments' decision making as the responsibilities are less clear and more actors are involved in decision (lack of clarity). A similar lack of clarity caused by institutional and situational complexity may lead to voters being unclear about their preferences at the same time, which affects the public responsiveness side, which is not focus of this dissertation. The idea of public responsiveness and the impact of clarity of responsibilities has been studied previously (inter alia Soroka and Wlezien, 2009). Yet the consequence of the clarity of preference expression on policy responsiveness has not been studied explicitly. This may be relevant, but the idea is substance for further research. In this thesis I only investigate the supply side and institutions: the impact of institutional and situational veto players government responsiveness. For emphasis, I only test under what conditions governments have the ability and the incentive to respond to public demands. I take this as a measure of how well policy supply works.

There are also differences in the contextual effect of institutional and situational veto players on the opinion-policy linkage. The core characteristic of institutional veto players, I have argued, is that they do not vary over time, while situational veto players do. Now for short- and mid-term responses of governments towards public preferences, changing situations and fixed institutions matter, while long-established preferences, e.g. ideological positions, may be affected a lot more by the fixed institutional veto players, but not by situational ones. Ideology is less volatile and less subject to situational change. I elaborate on this argument in the hypothesis section.

Embedding the conditions of the opinion-policy relationship in the veto players theory with a focus on the clarity of responsibilities hypothesis is a new approach to theorising context in this field. Previous research has not distinguished between contexts this clearly. This way of theorising generally gives a clearer direction on how institutions may affect the opinion-policy relationship and it also helps to clarify how far institutional and situational context matter across approaches. This may have implications for prior research as well and may lead to a re-evaluation of the interpretation of contextual effects on policy responsiveness.<sup>6</sup>

## **2.4.2 The Clarity of Responsibility Hypotheses**

In the following I propose and justify the hypotheses that I test in this dissertation. The overall concept investigated is the clarity of responsibilities hypothesis. I argue that the clearer the responsibilities are allocated in a country, the more likely it is that a government responds to distinct preferences. This overarching hypothesis, however, divides into two subordinate hypotheses: the institutional and the situational clarity hypotheses. What I understand by those terms and what reasoning is behind each hypothesis is elaborated in more detail below. In order to examine the impact of institutional and situational clarity I make use of two sets of propositions based on different institutional and situational characteristics.

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<sup>6</sup> Most of the institutional and situational veto players are operationalised in a dichotomous way. Admittedly, the world is more complex than having only two options. Golder (2005) has noted dichotomising institutions does not give justice to the complexity of the institutions. However, for reason of practicability and simplification of the analysis dichotomous items are useful and frequently used by scholars. While I acknowledge that the world is more complex, I rely on dichotomous classifications. I discuss the operationalisation of the institutional variables in further detail in the methodology section (Chapter 3.4.1).

### 2.4.2.1 Institutional Clarity Hypothesis

Institutional clarity is “about the institutional concentration of power, which captures the formal division of powers both horizontally between the executive and the legislature, and vertically between different levels of government” (Hobolt et al., 2012: 10). It also incorporates other fixed attributes of the legislature. In this sense institutions are long-established and often fixed in a written form in the constitution. Hence, institutional clarity is concerned with the time invariant components of the political system.

Institutional Clarity Hypothesis:

*The fewer (time-invariant) institutional veto players are involved in policy making, the higher is the degree of government responsiveness.*

The clearer the institutional structure, the more likely it is that the people express distinct policy preferences at elections times as well as between elections. Consequently, if citizens have clearly defined demands, governments should be able to account for those. Further and maybe more importantly, the supply side is affected. Fewer institutional veto players means that responsibilities are clearly allocated and the decision-makers have to rely less on cooperation and coordination with other institutional actors. This enables decision makers to be more flexible in policy making and to implement policy that is in accordance with public opinion. In reverse, the more institutional veto players are involved in the decision-making process, the more complex is the network of actors who take part in making decisions. Complex networks affect the demand side - citizens may be less confident in who to address their demands to. But they also affect the supply side, more institutional veto players and a more complex system of institutions required cooperation and coordination between these actors to come to a final policy decision. Hence, policy makers may be less flexible and less able to implement policies in accordance with public opinion. Government responsiveness is decreased.

In order to empirically test the institutional clarity hypothesis I rely on a set of sub-propositions that focus more precisely on specific institutional veto players. I

consider the executive type , the electoral rules , the party system, federalism , and the establishment of a second legislative chamber. Thereby, I rely on dichotomisation. While the author acknowledges that some institutions are more complex and may require a distinction in more detail (Golder 2009), she also has keeps in mind her country samples for the empirical chapters. Especially, the second empirical chapter does not allow a more detailed differentiation for some of the explanatory variables as most European countries are fairly similar.

H1a: <i>Presidential governments are more likely to respond to public opinion.</i>
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One crucial criterion to distinguish between executive types is the relationship between the executive and the legislature. Parliamentary governments are elected by the legislative body and are subject to a legislature’s confidence to exist, whereas presidential governments are usually popularly elected and independent from the legislative assembly to exist (Carey, 2005: 91). The term “legislative confidence” refers to dependencies between the legislature and the government. Many parliamentary systems apply mechanisms that enable the parliament to withdraw its trust in the appointed government and select a new one or alternatively initiate early elections. In presidential governments such mechanism does not exist; the government is elected for a fixed term and cannot be removed from office between elections (Linz 1990). However, Cheibub and Limongi (2002: 176) argue that the “reality of of both parliamentary and presidential regimes is more complex than it would be if we derive these systems’ entire behavior from their first principles.” While the author acknowledges that deadlock, coalitions, and central decision making can happen in both systems, she also ascribes to the view that in “parliamentary systems the government controls the agenda and the legislature accepts or rejects proposals, while in presidential systems the legislature makes the proposals and the government signs or vetoes them“ (Tsebelis 1995: 325). However, spinning this argument further, it seems that presidential governments may yet be more flexible and successful in translating preferences into policies. As Mainwaring and Shugart (1997) note, presidents can do a lot more than sign or veto legislation, they often have the right to initiate legislation in some areas and have the power to act for a limited time period without the legislators

approval. Following this argument, it leads to the conclusions that parliamentary governments are less flexible to take policy decisions. While they usually have a more or less comfortable majority in the legislature that sustains the government, they have to please more veto-players at the same time, e.g. coalition partners in the government as well as coalescing parties or even opposing parties in the parliament. Admittedly, presidents also require legislators to sign off on policy decision, however, the president's veto as well as decree powers bring her in a more comfortable position when it comes to follow public opinion or not.

In the review of the literature on the context effects on policy representation, I have pointed to prior findings that suggest presidential governments are highly responsive to citizens preferences, particularly when the election date is close (Canes-Wrone and Shotts, 2004) and in comparison are more likely to respond than their parliamentary counterparts (Soroka and Wlezien, 2010, forthcoming). One argument is that a directly selected executive is more responsible and accountable, and thus also more responsive, than an executive that is indirectly chosen by the people (Hellwig and Samuels, 2007, Samuels, 2004, Powell and Whitten, 1993).

Thinking about veto player theory and its link with the clarity of responsibilities hypothesis, a parliamentary executive has more veto players to agree to proposed changes than a presidential government. The parliamentary executive is dependent on the trust of the parliament and has to negotiate and find a consensus on policies with the agreement of the respective parliamentary majority. Presidential governments are independent. They have been selected by popular vote and the legislature has no powers to withdraw the trust or mandate of the incumbent government. The presidential executive is free to decide on policy changes and more flexible when it comes to following public demands.

H2a: <i>Two-and-a-half party systems, are more likely to respond to public demands.</i>
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Political parties are understood as the primary vehicles that articulate citizens' policy beliefs and convert them into public policies (Adams, 2001: 3). They act as a mediator between the public and the government, and give content and structure to the processes of competition which are essential, by definition, to a representative

democracy (Klingemann, 1998: 185). Whether there are few or many parties competing for office is crucial for the formation of government (Lijphart, 1999: 112). In countries where there are fewer parties, the parties supposedly take more distinct positions on policies so that voters can clearly distinguish between them, e.g. in the US. Where many parties are represented the distinction between their policy priorities is blurry – parties may take very similar positions on policies that only differ in detail (inter alia Downs, 1957, Duverger, 1954).

Similarly to that on the effects of the electoral rules, scholarship on the impact of the party system is divided on how party systems affect representation. To some, the coalition bargaining process in multiparty governments is likely to have less definite, less coherent, and less integrated programmes than governments in a two party system (Downs, 1957: 144). To others, multipartyism pulls the coalescing parties back to the median voter during the bargaining process because parties will form a minimal winning coalition with like-minded parties (Van Eijk and Franklin, 2009, Powell and Vanberg, 2000, Cox, 1997, 1990). Once again, recent scholarship only finds marginal differences between the two party systems (Golder and Stramski, 2010, Powell, 2009, Blais and Bodet, 2006).

From a veto player perspective, the fewer institutional veto players are involved, the clearer the responsibilities are and the more likely it is that policy responds to public demands. Applied to the party system this means that having fewer parties in the legislature, each with clearly distinct propositions, usually leads to decisive, single-party governments that are likely to respond to public opinion. Multipartyism, by contrast, frequently leads to coalition governments, so the number of veto players is high, while the responsibilities are less clear, so coalitions are less likely to respond to preferences.

H3a: <i>Governments in unitary states are more likely to account for public opinion.</i>
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Government in many modern democracies is divided vertically in terms of a federal structure.<sup>7</sup> Federalism means the delegation of powers to sub-national, self-governing bodies, where the division of powers has been codified in one way or another and is guaranteed for all levels by law (Wheare, 1963: 11).<sup>8</sup> Around 30 countries around the globe are federally organised, amongst them are some long established modern democracies, e.g. the German Länder and US states<sup>9</sup>. While federalism is not studied much in relation to the opinion-policy connection, the few studies that there are suggest that federal state-building decreases responsiveness (Soroka and Wlezien, forthcoming, Soroka and Wlezien, 2010, Wood, 1992).

From a veto player perspective this is logical as federalism means multi-level governance and is associated with an increased number of veto players. Sub-level governments and other institutional actors take part in the decision-making process and it is largely unclear who acts and decides on which matters. If the number of veto players in federal countries is high and consequently the clarity of responsibility is low, the public is unable to express distinct preferences and government responsiveness is likely to be low too. In turn, unitary systems have fewer institutional veto players, so the allocation of powers and responsibilities is clearer, and people can form more distinct preferences that government are more likely to respond to.

H4a: <i>Governments in unicameral countries are more responsive to public preferences.</i>
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<sup>7</sup> Over 26 countries are federally organised, amongst them some long established modern democracies such as Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Comoros, Ethiopia, Germany, India, Malaysia, Mexico, Micronesia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia, Serbia & Montenegro, St. Kitts & Nevis, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, UAE, USA, Venezuela, Iraq, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Sudan, Sri Lanka ([http://www.forumfed.org/en/federalism\\_by\\_country\\_index.php](http://www.forumfed.org/en/federalism_by_country_index.php), accessed 12/07/2012).

<sup>8</sup> By contrast, the delegation of powers to sub-national entities that are *not* guaranteed under the constitution can be revoked by the federal government at any time (Bardhan 2002:185). The administrative municipalities in France and devolved Welsh and Scottish governments in great Britain indicate decentralisation, but are by no means characteristics of a constituted federalism.

<sup>9</sup> Federalism occurs as dual and cooperative federalism. The former refers to a de-central structure where the national and sub-national bodies are independent and their responsibilities are clearly dispersed between the different layers. In co-operative federalism, by contrast, the responsibilities are blurred in a hierarchical, interdependent system (Soroka and Wlezien 2010: 50; Wood 1992: 851) and the national and sub-national bodies compete over competencies in the shared issues. For practicability reasons scholars divide between unitary and federal political systems, however. Often, it is also unclear how to classify federal systems correctly as transitions are floating.

“Bicameralism is a constitutional arrangement, where the legislative function is distributed over multiple chambers” (Diermeier et al., 2004: 4). It is often linked to federal state-building, for example, the US or Germany, where the second chambers represent the federal government, but this is not a necessity, e.g. the House of Lords in the UK. While the importance of legislative bicameralism on coalition politics has been emphasised (Druckman and Thies, 2002, Lijphart, 1999, Sjölin, 1993, Lijphart, 1984), the impact of bicameralism on governance is yet to be studied in more detail. Some have argued that bicameralism is important when the multiple chambers share the right to appoint and remove members of the executive, however, there are only few (European) cases where this is relevant (Diermeier et al., 2004: 4). It is the impact of second chambers on government politics rather than whether they are involved in appointing/removing members of the government that is relevant here. Bicameralism as an institution means taking into account another veto player’s opinion when making a policy decision. While second chambers have to agree or can veto decisions made by the first chamber, governments in unicameral states do not have this additional veto player to win over in order to support their decisions.<sup>10</sup>

While no responsiveness research has looked at the bicameral structure, it is an institution that affects government and especially coalition government politics (Druckman and Thies, 2002). With a second chamber entering the political arena as an institutional veto player, decision-making processes are less clear. Citizens do not necessarily know whether the second chamber’s agreement is necessary to make a decision or how much influence they have. In addition, the second chamber’s attendance slows down the decision-making process until a consensus is reached as bicameralism adds to the number of interests that are represented in the policy process (Heller, 1997). Adding another institutional veto player in form of bicameralism means the responsibilities of both citizens and governments are less clear. Bicameralism leads to less pronounced policy preferences and a decrease in policy representation. In turn,

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<sup>10</sup> Pushing the argument further, another crucial aspect for governing is that a government needs majorities in both chambers to pass certain laws. Ideally, the governing party or coalition is dominant in both chambers, however in reality this is often not the case. In addition, rolling elections change majorities in the upper chamber frequently. This is the case in Germany, where the composition and partisan control of the Bundesrat changes with the parliamentary elections in the Länder. In this sense, bicameralism transforms from an institutional veto player to a situation veto player. The partisan control of government changes over time and thus is a time-variant characteristic of the political game. In this thesis I do not investigate this opportunity further, but I acknowledge that the partisan control of legislative chambers is a feature to explore in future research.



governments in unicameral states are more likely to respond, the responsibilities are clearly allocated, and public preferences are more pronounced.

H5a: <i>Governments brought about by majoritarian electoral rules are more likely to respond to citizens preferences.</i>
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Electoral systems are a set of essentially unchanged rules under which one or more successive elections are conducted in a particular democracy (Lijphart, 1994: 13). In other words, they are understood as methods of translating votes into seats. For representation research, the different rules or procedures are important to account for as they bring out legislative majorities, which influence the concentration of powers in government. Powell (2000: 21) notes that if the election rules encourage the equitable representation of multiple parties and the decision rules encourage dispersion of power among these parties in policymaking, then the constitution embodies the proportional vision. If it leads to a minimum representation two-and-a-half-parties and the power concentrates on only one of these parties it is a matter of a majoritarian vision. Previously, scholars have drawn inconsistent conclusions about the impact of the electoral rules on the opinion-policy nexus. To some, proportional visions outperform majoritarian ones (Powell, 2006, Powell, 2000, Powell and Vanberg, 2000, Lijphart, 1999), to others, there are only marginal differences between the dominant electoral formulas (Golder and Stramski, 2010, Powell, 2009, Blais and Bodet, 2006). There are many factors that influence the opinion-policy nexus, which may be one reason do inconsistent results. One explanation may be that ideological congruence is based on different measurements of public's ideological preferences (See Chapter 6.1). However, Blais and Bodet (2006) have demonstrated that all measures of citizens' preferences are highly comparable and valid. In a series of publications, Powell (Powell, 2006, Powell, 2000, Powell and Vanberg, 2000; Powell 2009) comes to different conclusions and speculates that the inconsistent results are due to time. Congruence and its moderators have changed across time. Golder and Stramski (2010) come up with a more comprehensive argument. They find that the electoral connection affects congruence. While we expect to congruence between citizens and the elected MPs to be high, the link between citizens and government may be weaker, but there should be increased congruence between the elected MPs and the government ideologies.

Theoretically, majoritarian electoral rules should lead to a more responsive government. They produce a manufactured majority, but frequently lead to decisive and stable single-party governments (Norris, 2004: 42). From a veto player perspective there is little competition in the legislature. Usually majoritarian rules lead to a party structure of two strong parties in the parliament and they frequently produce single-party executives. The responsibilities are clearly allocated and there is frequent contact between citizens and their representatives which fosters accountability and legitimacy (Curtice and Shively, 2009: 174).<sup>11</sup> Fewer institutional veto players lead to clear decision-making structures and, hypothetically, to increase responsiveness.

By contrast, proportional electoral rules produce a broad and fair representation of all opinions (Blais and Massicotte, 2006: 61) as the seats are allocated in proportion to the votes of each party. While proportionality emphasises the inclusion of all voices, it requires negotiation and compromise within the parliament as well as the government (Norris, 2004: 50). Proportional electoral rules frequently lead to coalition governments, so there are more veto players created in the legislature and the government that need to be included in the decision-making process. The responsibilities are blurred (Van Eijk and Franklin, 2009: 70) and policy responsiveness decreases.

#### **2.4.2.2 Situational Clarity Hypothesis**

By contrast, the situational clarity dimension is not directly concerned with formal institutional rules, but rather with situations resulting from the political game. Political situations can change more frequently, for example, with the beginning of a new legislative period. Here, I differentiate between situations regarding governance and changing situations in the legislature. The clearer the political situation is, the more likely it is that the people express distinct policy preferences and that governments respond to public opinion. Situational clarity occurs when only a few situational veto players are involved in the decision-making processes. In other words, the smaller the number of situational veto players is, the clearer the responsibilities in that situation are and the more likely it is that governments represent opinion. In reverse, the more situational veto players enter the political arena, the more confusion there is surrounding

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<sup>11</sup> There are certainly exceptions from this rule, for instance, the 2010 British General Elections have brought out a three party competition in the electorate and as a consequence a coalition government.

decision-making responsibilities, so it is less likely that the public expresses distinct opinions and governments are less likely to respond.

Situational Clarity Hypothesis:

*The fewer (time-variant) situational veto players are involved in policy making, the higher is the degree of government responsiveness.*

In order to empirically test the situational clarity hypothesis I rely on a set of sub-propositions that focus more precisely on specific situational veto players. I consider the effective number of parties in parliament, the number of parties in government, coalitions versus single party governments, and minimum-winning versus over-/undersized governments.

H1b: *The smaller the number of effective parliamentary parties, the more likely it is that governments respond to public opinion.*

One time-varying characteristic of the legislature is the effective number of parliamentary parties (ENPP). While the party system type (multiparty versus two party systems) is relatively stable, the ENPP is determined anew with each parliamentary election. Certainly both features are linked to some extent. For instance, party systems may change over time as well, but this change may come along a lot slower. The effective number of parties in the legislature can vary significantly with each election, party systems may vary in the long-run, when new parties slowly establish. In order to answer the question of whether a larger number of parties (Lijphart, 1984) or smaller number of parties in the legislature (Duverger, 1954) foster the responsiveness of governments, it is important to operationalise what the ENPP is (Laakso and Taagepera, 1979).

How many effective parties there are in the legislature is important for government formation as well. The higher the number of parliamentary parties, the more likely it is that the votes are distributed amongst them and that there is no clear mandate for one single party to form a government. While previous findings on the dichotomous party system have come to inconsistent conclusions, the time varying

ENPP measure may help to clarify how parties affect the opinion-policy relationship. From a veto player perspective the claim is clear. The more parties that participate in decision making, the less likely it is that responsiveness occurs. The fewer parties there are in the legislature, the clearer the structures are for government formation and decision making and thus it is more likely that responsiveness towards public priorities occurs.

H2b: *Government formed with a smaller number of parties are more likely to respond to public demands.*

The logic behind this is a similar one as that for the ENPP. In a nutshell, the more parties join the government, the less flexible that government is to follow public opinion. A larger number of government parties means that within the government every decision needs to be decided by consensus among the parties. A higher number of veto players means that more negotiation and bargaining over policies takes place and delays occur. By contrast, a low number of parties in government – ideally one – means that the government does not have to go through the process of bargaining and negotiation. Small governments are more flexible and solve issues in a shorter time than large governments. The smaller the number of parties in government, i.e. the smaller the number of situational veto players is, the more likely it is that the government represents public opinion.

H3b: *Single party governments are more likely to translate public opinion into public policies.*

One crucial characteristic of the executive is whether a single party or a coalition is in office. Single party governments are believed to be significantly more stable and more decisive than multiparty governments (Taylor and Herman, 1971, Downs, 1957, Curtice and Shively, 2009). Tsebelis (2002) argues that single-party governments have the power to change the status quo of policy, while multiparty ones only make incremental changes. If single-party governments are more decisive and able to achieve change in policy, one would assume that single-party government are also likely to respond to public priorities. Coalitions by contrast need more time and effort to reach a consensus on policies between the coalition partners and are, thus, less flexible and less

likely to respond to preferences. The claim from the veto players' perspective is logical one: The responsibilities in single party governments are clear; there is no other direct actor within the government that is able to veto decisions. Hence, those governments are likely to respond to preferences and achieve change in policy. By contrast, the responsibilities in coalition governments are less clear; there is at least one other actor, if not several coalition partners, directly involved in the decision-making process. Multiparty coalitions are less likely to translate public preferences into policies because they are less flexible to make decisions that follow public opinion. Instead they have to negotiate until they reach a consensus on the policy.

H4b: <i>Minimum-winning governments are more likely to respond to public opinion.</i>
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Policy representation is also believed to be affected by the executive-legislative relationship. This is characterised by the contrast between minimum-winning and over- or undersized government. Minimum-winning governments include only those parties that are needed to form a parliamentary majority. A minimum-winning government can be a single party government if one party has the support of a majority of parliament or a minimum-winning coalition, which includes only as many parties as needed to secure a parliamentary majority. By contrast, oversized governments include more parties than necessary to ensure a parliamentary majority and undersized governments include fewer parties in government than needed to form a majority. Undersized governments are also known as minority governments. With regard to the veto player argument, minimum-winning governments ensure that there are as few veto players to object to policymaking as possible. Over- and undersized governments always have an increased number of veto players participating in the decision-making process. In an oversized government, the additional situational veto players are the additional parties that are not necessary to form a majority. Minority governments deal with veto players within the parliament. In order to make a decision, a minority government needs to win votes from parliamentary parties that are not participating in the government. In both situations that potential to block policy is increased and the government is less flexible to regulate. The fewer veto players involved in the decision-making process, the clearer responsibilities are and the more likely it is that governments respond to public opinion. Therefore,

minimum-winning governments are more likely to respond to citizens' preferences, because they aim for the smallest number of situational veto players inside and outside the executive. Over- and undersized governments are less likely to respond to public demands because they have to agree with a larger number of situational veto players inside and outside the cabinet.

## **2.5 Approaching the Opinion–Policy Relationship**

In the previous sections I pointed out that democratic representation is approached in many different ways. One major distinction is between static and dynamic models and, strictly speaking, only dynamic models capture the *responsiveness* of governments towards citizens' preferences. The reason for this is simple: only dynamic representation accounts for a response inherently structured in time (Stimson et al., 1995: 543). We need to be wary about the use of the term *responsiveness* in particular when discussing the different models and methods of studying the opinion-policy connection. Keeping this in mind, I discuss and evaluate the different approaches in the following section. In Chapter 2.5.1 I define the criteria that a good model of policy representation should fulfil. Next, I present a typology of the commonly used approaches and apply my evaluation criteria to assess which approach best fits my research interest.

### **2.5.1 Developing Criteria to Find the Best Approach to Explore Responsiveness**

To be able to evaluate which approach best suits my research interest, I establish criteria to review the commonly used methods. In the following I focus on developing these criteria, while a more detailed discussion of each method and the assessment according to my criteria is presented in Chapter 2.5.2. A summary of the criteria and their assessment can be found in Table 1.

In this thesis I explore the conditions of policy responsiveness in a cross-national perspective. I have outlined in Chapter 2.1 that, strictly speaking, only dynamic models that explicitly model *responses* structured in time capture the responsiveness of governments towards public preferences. This means that static models capture at most

a momentary condition of representation, that is, the congruence of opinion and policy at a given point in time. This is reflected in my first criterion – the method of investigating policy responsiveness needs to capture *dynamics* in some way. In order to ensure that dynamics are accounted for by the methods, I ask: Does the approach allow for analysing responsiveness as a sequence inherently structured in time (lags or leads)? Stimson (1991) has noted that this is the characteristic for the transition from static analyses to dynamic models of political representation. The idea is that policy is looked at in time as a lead, that is, regarded in a future year, or opinion is looked at lagged in time, that is, measured in a previous year. The key concept captured by *dynamics* is whether there is a policy response as a reaction to opinion measured at a previous point in time.

**Table 1: Evaluation Criteria**

<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Assessment Factor</b>
<b>(1) Dynamics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the approach analyse responsiveness as a sequence inherently structured in time (lag or lead)?</li> </ul>
<b>(2) Comparability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the approach capture similarities and differences across countries (and time)?</li> <li>• Are data and measures comparable across countries (and over time)?</li> </ul>
<b>(3) Effectiveness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is policy measured effectively in terms of implemented legislation or spending outlays?</li> </ul>

Secondly, the method employed needs to enable me to compare across countries (and time). In order to make general statements about how context affects policy representation I need to rely on comparative methods that allow the drawing of probabilistic inferences between countries and across time and enable scholars to make generalisations about context (Lijphart, 1971). To capture *comparability* across countries, I ask: Does the approach allow for the testing of similarities and differences across countries (and time)? There is more to the criterion of *comparability*, however. The idea of comparison is strongly linked to the availability and quality of data and measures. *Comparability* is a particular challenge in public opinion research. To date, scholars have failed to confidently define what public opinion means (Kuklinski and Segura, 1995: 18). To some, is the general will of the people, which is the interest of the citizenry as a whole and it is the same for everyone whether it punishes or protects (Rousseau, 1762). To others, public opinion is what is formulated and expressed freely

in discussions and debates in a public sphere (Habermas, 1989). Still others think of public opinion as “a shared thing carried by individual people that varies with changes in the environment” (Stimson, 1991: 3). What exactly public opinion means or how it is defined is largely unclear and a detailed clarification cannot be achieved in this dissertation.

In my thesis, I follow a conceptionalist point of view about public opinion. From a conceptionalist perspective, public opinion consists of public opinion polls (Blumer, 1948: 542, see also Manza and Cook, 2002). While scholarship is unable to define clearly what public opinion is, it can rely on opinion polls to figure out how people think about political phenomena. Public opinion in this minimal sense is the collection of people who hold opinions on some issue (Weissberg, 1976a: 9) or on an ideology (Albig, 1956: 15). With regard to the *comparability* criterion, this means that the indicator of public opinion has to be comparable across countries and time. Consequently, survey respondents need to understand questions in the same way across countries.

In comparative surveys the question wording is usually coherent as questionnaires are professionally translated. Depending on the country sample, one problem could be how people understand political concepts. For instance, the positioning on the left-right continuum means something different in the Western countries than it does in many Asian countries, where another value dimension applies<sup>12</sup>. To capture the comparability of measurements, I ask: Are the data and the measures comparable and valid across countries (and over time)?

Finally, the criterion of *effectiveness* is inherent in the term ‘policy responsiveness’. Responding to public opinion means formulating and implementing policies that the public want (Powell, 2004: 91) and it is indicated by the degree to which preferences are adopted by legislation (Schumaker, 1975: 494). There is a difference between effective and rhetorical (Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008: 310) and policy and agenda responsiveness (Schumaker, 1975). The former employs effective policy outputs as an indicator for public policy. These can be implemented laws or budgets. The most common indicator of policy outputs is public expenditure or, more

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<sup>12</sup> This is made clear in the CSES surveys, where the left-right scale is replaced with an alternative scale for countries that rely on other values.. For example, the attitude towards religious values may be an area of difference.



precisely, spending outlays. Spending gives a clear statement of the government's goals and priorities (Heller, 1997: 486, see also Soroka et al., 2006, Wlezien and Soroka, 2003) and it is an available measure across time and space. For instance, the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) provides the national accounts of its member states. Admittedly, while expenditure is an important component of public policy, it is certainly not all there is to it (Klingemann et al., 1994: 41). However, spending is a reliable indication of effective policy outputs, which capture the political agenda only. While fiscal speeches and manifestos give an indication of what policy makers plan to achieve, these policy promises and rhetorical statements can change along the way. Agendas are not an indication of effective policy outputs. To capture *effectiveness*, I ask: Is policy measured effectively in terms implemented legislation or spending outlays?

In conclusion, I apply three key criteria to adjudicate which methods are most suitable for investigating how government responsiveness is shaped by institutional and situational context in a comparative framework, namely 1) *dynamics*, 2) *comparability* and 3) *effectiveness*. *Dynamics* are implied by the word “responsiveness”, *comparability* follows on from a “comparative framework” and *effectiveness* is a consequence of “policy responsiveness”. In the next Chapter, I apply these three evaluation criteria to the established approaches to investigate the opinion-policy linkage.

## 2.5.2 Approaching the Opinion–Policy Relationship

The opinion-policy linkage is studied in many different ways and the main distinctions are static versus dynamic dimension and an issue versus ideology dimension. Wlezien and Soroka (2007) have identified three ways to investigate the relationship between public opinion and public policy: (a) policy consistency, (b) policy co-variation, and (c) policy congruence. In a nutshell, consistency (a) approaches the opinion-policy relationship at one point in time and tests whether priorities and policy (coincidentally) correspond. Co-variation (b) expands this approach and maps preferences and policy before and after policy implementation. Co-variation studies either focus on time or space. Congruence (c) studies public opinion and policy outputs dynamically, that is, to what extent do preferences influence policy and policy preferences over time.

The use of terminology in Wlezien and Soroka's typology is unsatisfying and the typology appears incomplete, however.

Let me talk about the terminology first. Strictly speaking, consistency and congruence are very similar terms. Both describe the agreement or correspondence of opinion and policy at a time. The crucial difference between consistency and congruence methods is the idea of dynamic relationships. According to Wlezien and Soroka (2007), the latter is characterised by an over-time analysis that is also structured in time, whereas the former explores opinion and policy at the same time. I have argued earlier that in a case where the opinion-policy relationship is inherently structured in time and therefore represents a dynamic relationship, this is defined as responsiveness. What Wlezien and Soroka (2007) describe as congruence, I define as responsiveness. By contrast, the original typology speaks of consistency when a correspondence of opinion and policy at the same point in time is investigated. More precisely, when opinion and policy correspond at a given point in time, this is described as consistency.<sup>13</sup> Here, I refer to this relationship as policy congruence. Finally, I refer to co-variation when opinion and policy are measured at two different points in time and across time or across space, which is in accordance with Wlezien and Soroka's typology (2007). In comparison to responsiveness, the co-variation relationship regards a limited (shorter) time period, which makes it hard to ascertain whether opinion or policy came first (Wlezien and Soroka, 2007: 804). In comparison to congruence, it moves beyond looking at the same point in time and captures some dynamics by looking at policy or opinion again at a later point in time.

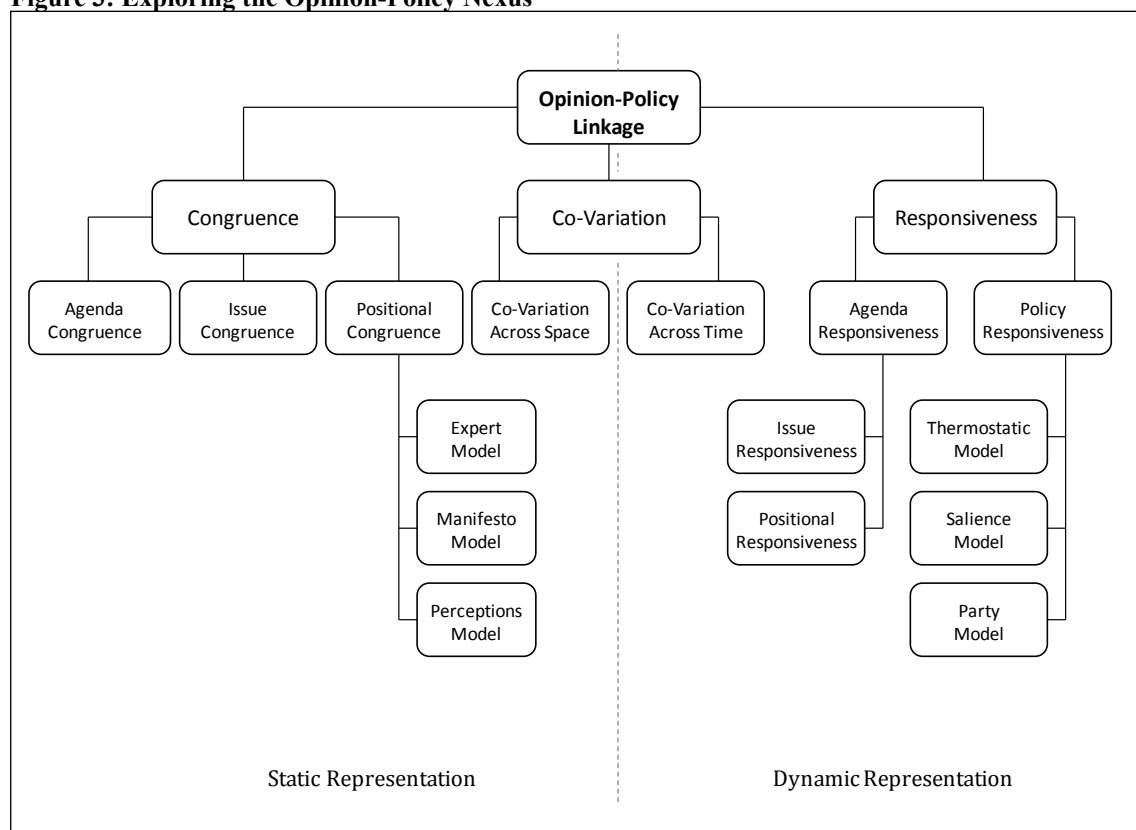
The typology is also incomplete. Most studies referred to by the authors focus entirely on whether public issues preferences correspond with public policy, but the idea of political ideology is neglected. An extensive body of literature explores positional policy congruence, that is, the positional correspondence of the median citizen and her government's ideology on a given continuum (inter alia Huber and Powell, 1994, Budge and McDonald, 2007, Blais and Bodet, 2006). Arguably, ideology may or may not be a good indicator for public policy. From a narrow perspective, government ideology is not policy in terms of what has actually been achieved or implemented. Ideology in this

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<sup>13</sup> Let me note that congruence can also be tracked over time. However, an over-time analysis of the congruence of public opinion and public policy, which are measured at the same point in time, does not make a dynamic approach. Dynamics are characterised by responses by the public or by the policy maker with a delay in time.

sense is at most an indicator of the general policy agenda as it accumulates the parties' stances on a collection of topics or an "ideological super-issue" (Pierce, 1999: 30). Following this definition, ideology captures nothing except the political agenda of a party or government and is no measure of actual policy outputs. By contrast, a broader view refers to ideology as the basic guideline for decisions and policy outcomes. Here, ideology is ascribed a central role in public policy, which goes beyond agenda setting. Ideological positions in this sense build a foundation for policy that gives governments a general notion of the direction of a policy, e.g. more or less welfare. Rightist governments usually want less welfare, while leftist governments prefer more welfare. Both governments could emphasise social problems as an issue in their manifestos, however. Following this argument, ideology is indeed an indicator for public policy. Political ideology is a more general measure of attitudes and it may be more likely to miss reactions to a particular issue (Zaller, 1992: 27). Nevertheless, it gives an indication of the policy direction. This is why I rely on the broader definition of ideology, which interprets it as a guideline for effective policy outputs, at least to a certain degree.

**Figure 3: Exploring the Opinion-Policy Nexus**



I have developed a revised typology of the methods to study the opinion-policy nexus that explicitly distinguishes between static and dynamic approaches and includes the idea of positional policy representation: 1) *Congruence*, the static study of opinion and policy at the same point in time, 2) *co-variation*, the study of opinion and policy measured at two different points in time and over time or across space and 3) *responsiveness*, the study of dynamic representation, where opinion and policy are structured in and studied over time. Figure 3 represents a schematic overview. I discuss the diagram in more detail in the following and begin by introducing static representation. Next, I discuss the transitioning from static to dynamic approaches (co-variation), and finally I present methods to explore dynamic representation.

### **2.5.2.1 Static Approaches to the Opinion–Policy Nexus**

The models of static representation are grouped under the term ‘*policy congruence*’. By definition, congruence tests whether opinion and policy correspond at the same point in time. Although some studies track congruence over time, this is no indicator for a full dynamic relationship. A dynamic model tracks whether changes in opinion affect policy at a later point in time or vice versa. None of the congruence methods meet the criterion of dynamics. Nevertheless, static representation is important. It gives an indication of whether opinion and policy match, usually at election times. While it does not allow one to draw conclusions about who is cueing whom, i.e. whether policy follows or leads opinion, we still know that at a certain point in time opinion and policy correspond. Broadly, congruence research clusters agenda and policy congruence, where the former looks at government agendas, e.g. speeches, and the latter at actual policy outcomes. Both strands of research have two dimensions, the degree of congruence between the public’s issues and policy makers’ *issues* and the degree of congruence between the public’s ideologies and policy makers’ *ideologies*.

#### *a) Agenda Congruence*

Agenda congruence is a complementary approach to policy congruence and provides a fuller picture of the representational process before implementation (Jones and Baumgartner, 2004: 2). Scholars examine whether the most salient issues amongst

the public match policy makers' agendas at a time. Public opinion is captured by a survey item known as the most important problem and matched with data collected from the content of debates, speeches or other political texts that set out the government's agenda. Jones and Baumgartner (2004) study the agenda congruence of Congress and the American public. They find that there is an impressive congruence between the priorities of the public and the priorities of Congress over time. While they observe the public focuses on a limited number of issues, Congress spreads out its issue priorities more and also handles multiple issues simultaneously. Jones et al. (2009) examine the agenda as well as policy congruence of policy makers' issue positions with public priorities. The authors observe a general correspondence of opinion with policy agendas that is stronger on salient issues. In addition, they find that the public's priorities tend to be less well represented where institutional friction is higher. They conclude that the higher the decision and transaction costs imposed by a policymaking channel, the lower the correspondence between the actions of policymakers and the priorities of the public (Jones et al., 2009: 286). In other words, priorities are likely to be represented in the agenda setting process but less likely to be represented in public policies.

Agenda congruence represents a static model of representation and does not capture any dynamics in the opinion-policy relationship. There are also doubts about the applicability of agenda congruence to comparative research. The most important issues that citizens in a country are concerned with dictate the policy agenda, but this agenda might be different across countries. When comparing the agenda congruence of the public's agenda and policy makers' agenda, this may result in comparing apples and oranges. For example, in the US, defence may be the most important concern, while in the UK it may be the health care system. This also ties in with the criterion of the effectiveness of output measures. Agenda congruence measures the emphasis given to topics in speeches or other political texts and does not give an effective measurement of outputs, but is an indicator of rhetorical representation.

In conclusion, agenda congruence is important if one studies the match-up of policy intentions but it is not an approach for capturing responsiveness. However, agenda congruence is by no means unimportant. After all, whether agendas correspond

gives us an indication of what to expect from effective representation. Agenda congruence can thus be seen as a pre-requisite of effective political representation.

### *b) Policy Congruence*

The focus of policy congruence studies is the match-up between public opinion and actual policy outputs. Hence, policy congruence moves beyond agenda representation by focusing on the decision itself. Policy congruence distinguishes between the issue congruence (aa) of opinion and policy and the congruence of ideological positions (bb).

### *aa) Issues Congruence*

Issue congruence studies identify whether citizens' preferences for change on policy issues are consistent with public policy at one single point in time. Although some studies also conduct over-time research, they are not interested in any dynamic interaction between opinion and policy. Preferences for change are measured in a non-directional directional way, that is, either respondents want to keep the status quo or they would prefer change per se without indicating the preferred level of change. Public policy is measured by coding official documents or news documentaries about policies in a similar manner. Either the documents indicate change or no change from the status quo. In a nutshell, the greater the correspondence between policy preferences and policy, the higher is the degree of congruence.

Pioneering congruence research focuses on the United States. Monroe (1979, 1998) observes congruence between public opinion and public policy in two-thirds of his cases. He also finds that the degree of congruence varies among areas of substantive policy. For instance, foreign policy decisions are more often consistent with public preference than domestic ones. Monroe also demonstrates that the degree of congruence in the US decreases over time. Brooks's (1985) work on the US confirms Monroe's early findings and suggests that consistency is also higher in election years. Similar studies investigate issue congruence in France (Brooks, 1987), Germany (Brooks, 1990, Brettschneider, 1996) and Canada (Pétry and Mendelsohn, 2004, Pétry, 1999, Bélanger and Pétry, 2005). French politics in the fourth and fifth republics were and are generally

characterised by incongruence between opinion and policy, there are some minor levels of correspondence, however. Congruence is higher on redistributive issues than on non-redistributive ones (Brooks, 1987). In the German case, the degree of opinion-policy congruence depends on the issue as well, but it is unclear how the issue type affects consistency. While Brooks demonstrates that the opinion-policy correspondence is lower on salient and redistributive issues (Brooks, 1990), Brettschneider observes increased congruence on salient issues (Brettschneider, 1996). These inconsistencies might be due to the time period regarded and data employed. For example, Brettschneider looks at the post-war period from 1945 to 1990, whereas Brooks regards a shorter time series in the 1980s. In addition, while the former study relies on one data source, the latter employs various different data sets. Work on the Canadian case suggests that there is an overall congruence between public opinion and policy, but it decreases from the 1970s to the 2000s (Pétry and Mendelsohn, 2004, Pétry, 1999). The studies also suggest that ideology and the degree of issue salience affect the level of congruence between opinion and policy. There seems to be higher correspondence when issues are salient and a conservative government is in office.

The congruence of policy preferences and effective policy outputs describes political representation in static terms. Thus, the criterion of dynamics is not met. In addition, there are concerns about the other criteria – the comparability across countries and the effectiveness of the output measure. In essence, the comparability of issue congruence studies depends on the measurements of opinion as well as policy and is strongly linked to the effectiveness criterion. By employing a simple coding of whether people want change in a policy area or not, it should be fairly simple to compare across countries, provided that the issue areas are the same. Coding survey responses this way is not very economical. It is cost, labour and time intensive, which is one big drawback of this approach. With regard to the effective measurement of policy outputs, issue congruence studies mostly meet the criterion. Issue congruence research looks at the content of enacted bills or at news documentaries about implemented laws, budgets etc. There are concerns about the comparability of the effective output measures, however. While comparable budgets are available, for example, provided by the OECD for its member states, it is unlikely that the content of bills or news documentaries about laws is coherently coded across countries. Once again this is not an economical way of

gathering data. It is a costly, time and labour-consuming undertaking to code these documentations by hand as well as electronically and come up with a coherent coding for a larger sample. The comparability criterion is not met.

#### *bb) Congruence of Ideological Positions*

Positional congruence studies explore whether the position of the median citizen on the left-right ideological continuum is congruent with her government at election times. Once again, while some research also tracks congruence over time, these studies do not examine a dynamic relationship, which additionally requires that opinion or policy is structured in time. While issue congruence specifically investigates the relationship between public and policy *issues*, ideological policy congruence focuses rather on an ideological super-issue (Pierce, 1999: 30), that is, the collection of a variety of issues in terms of ideology.

The median citizen's position on the left-right scale is indicated by asking survey respondents where they place themselves on a 10-point left-right scale, where 0 means the political left and 10 the political right. The average, mean or median citizen, is the measure of public opinion. The political parties are the essential linkage for capturing government positions on the same continuum. If a single-party government is in office, the party's placement on the left-right scale equals the government's ideological position. If a coalition government is elected, the weighted ideology of each party in the coalition gives the overall government's position on the left-right scale. Studies divide into three specific models of positional congruence. While the logic behind them is the same, it is the measurement of party and government ideology that differs. The models are: (1) the expert model, (2) the manifesto model and (3) the perceptions model of positional congruence.

##### *(1) The Expert Model of Positional Congruence*

The expert model of positional congruence employs expert surveys to define party positions on the left-right scale and to determine government ideology (Powell, 2006, Powell, 2000, Powell and Vanberg, 2000, Huber and Powell, 1994). Powell and his co-authors find a great deal of congruence between the median citizen and



government's ideological positions on a left-right scale conditioned by the electoral and party system. For example, Huber and Powell (1994) observe a closer match between ideologies in proportional systems than in majoritarian or mixed ones. Powell and Vanberg (2000) go even further and conclude that proportional systems outperform their majoritarian counterparts. They also demonstrate that the party system's degree of disproportionality affects responsiveness in a similar pattern, i.e. disproportionality decreases congruence. Powell's (2000) explanation for the enhanced performance of proportional systems is that the broader distribution of opinions in proportional systems leads to a closer match between citizen's and government's ideology. In further research, he steps back a little from the strong conclusion drawn in earlier research and admits that the proportional vision does not significantly enhance congruence, rather he concludes that pre-election coalitions shape and influence the degree of congruence positively (Powell, 2006). More recent research suggests that the difference between proportional and majoritarian systems is only marginal (Powell, 2011, Powell, 2009).

## *(2) The Manifesto Model of Positional Congruence*

The manifesto model employs data collected from party manifestos to indicate their position on the left-right continuum and government ideology. A content analysis of manifestos is conducted that assigns issues into leftist and rightist categories, from which an ideology score – the ratio of leftist to rightist statements – is determined (Kim and Fording, 2002, 2001, Kim and Fording, 1998). Studies using the manifesto model come to similar conclusion as those based on the expert model. While McDonald et al. (2004) show that ideology between voters and governments in proportional systems is generally more congruent, less biased and more reliably than in majoritarian systems, later research suggests that the impact of system differences on policy responsiveness are rather small and vanish in the long-term (Budge and McDonald, 2007, McDonald and Budge, 2005). With regard to party system effects, these authors conclude that they cancel each other out during the electoral process. Whereas parties in disproportional systems position themselves around the median voter before the election, parties in proportional systems are pulled back to the median voter during the coalition building process, so that as a result both party systems represent the median voter.

### *(3) The Perceptions Model of Positional Congruence*

A more recent model employed to test the degree of congruence is the citizens' perceptions model. This approach is entirely survey-based. While survey respondents are asked to place themselves on the left-right continuum, they are also asked to place the respective parties in parliament on the same ideological scale. The average perceived ideology score of the parties is then used to calculate the government's position on the left-right continuum. Where single party governments are concerned it is the average score a party was given. Where a coalition is concerned the weighted average scores of the coalescing parties indicates government ideology. The perceived positions of the political parties on the ideological scale are as accurate as the expert assessment and manifesto measure (Blais and Bodet, 2006). The results suggest a different story of congruence, however. While studies applying the perceptions model of congruence consistently find that there are indeed differences between majoritarian and proportional representation, the results also suggest that those differences are only marginal and statistically insignificant (Golder and Stramski, 2010, Powell, 2009, Blais and Bodet, 2006). The inconsistent findings of positional policy congruence research show that there is yet further research required in order to draw conclusions about the best model to apply. Powell assumes that the time frame causes inconsistent results and that there has simply been a shift in the quality of representation performance within the systems (Powell, 2009: 1492). The quality of data and the modelling technique may be other factors to re-consider for positional policy congruence.

Positional policy congruence is characterised by the static representation of the median citizen's ideological position at a given time. While research is also conducted over time – usually with larger gaps as left-right positions of the respective parties and government are recorded in election years only – the over-time analyses does not account for full dynamics. There are some minor concerns about the comparability of ideology scales. Countries outside the Western world rely on different value scales than the left-right continuum. This problem is solvable, however, by either sampling or employing alternative value scales for those states. Admittedly, this brings up other issues, e.g. the question of randomisation and the validity of such alternative value scales with the left-right dimension. Another concern is the effective measurement of

policy outputs. I have argued earlier that there are two opposing assumptions here. Ideological positions imply nothing but an expanded policy agenda. Or, in a broader sense, ideological positions also serve as the basis of policy content and direction. Following the broader definition, where ideology plays a central role in policymaking and builds the foundation of decision making, I conclude that the criterion of effectiveness is met.

### **2.5.2.2 Transitioning Approaches – Policy Covariation over Time and across Space**

So far I have discussed the static representation of public opinion in public policy. Before turning to the dynamic approaches it is important to look at the transition from static to dynamic representation – the co-variation methods. While co-variation does not fully capture the dynamic structure of the opinion-policy relationship, it does take into account at least some of these dynamics. Policy co-variation captures explicitly the change from one point in time to another, but most studies only employ very short time series and are unable to explore causality (Wlezien and Soroka, 2007: 803). Studies are either conducted across space (a) or across time (b). Both kinds of study assume a causal direction between opinion and policy, i.e. policy follows opinion. Whereas the former kind is interested in spatial similarities and differences, e.g. between countries or federal states, the latter tests this assumption over time.

#### *a) Co-variation across Space*

Co-variation across space explores whether opinion and policy covary across spatial area rather than over time. This allows comparison across contexts. Opinion is indicated by survey data on issues or ideology, whereas policy is measured accordingly as the content of implemented bills, news about enacted laws, spending or ideology. For example, Eriksen et al. (1993) have developed a liberalism index, which takes into account ideology as well as spending on policy issues. A study of party elites demonstrated that parties' ideologies covary with public ones in nine European countries (Dalton, 1985). In addition, it is shown that issue correspondence between public and policy issues depends on the issue type. For example, policy makers pick up

upon economic issues rather than on foreign policy issues. Stimson (1991) contributes a more dynamic method of looking at issue correspondence in the United States. He demonstrates that policy makers respond to a change in the public mood within approximately one year. A follow-up study by Erikson et al. (2002) supports Stimson's previous results. Employing a similar method, the scholars find that the US government responds to public preferences over time. In addition, they find that the elected bodies are more likely to respond than those institutions that are appointed. Eriksen et al. (1993) look at the US states as cross-sectional units and show that the states' governments respond frequently to public preferences on an ideological (liberal-conservative) level. While a liberal public gets liberal policies, conservative states serve conservative publics. On the EU level (EU parliamentary candidates and publics), Thomassen and Schmitt (1997) demonstrate that opinion and policy covary on ideological lines as well as on salient issues. Manza and Cook (2002) observe that opinion and policy covary on social issues and suggest that variation in policy responsiveness is due to different polities, issues and ideologies.

While the co-variation across space captures dynamic structures to some extent and models spatial similarities and differences, it lacks over-time tracking, which is not a severe violation of the dynamics criterion, however. The approach explicitly accounts for cross-sectional variation, for example, across the US states (Erikson et al., 1993). With regard to the principle of comparability there are some concerns. Admittedly, the approach relies on a complex measure to capture public opinion from a large battery of survey items. This is costly and incredibly time- and labour-intensive, particularly if one aims to replicate the mood measure for different countries. Some comparative studies with smaller samples demonstrate that it is possible to compare cross-sectionally using this approach, however. With regard to the effectiveness criterion, there are similar concerns. For instance, constructing a complex index of liberalism (Erikson et al., 1993) building on effective measures as well as rhetorical measures of policy outputs requires vast resources and there are doubts as to whether the compiled output variable would be comparable across countries. There are comparative data about the spending outlays available, but no comparative data based on enacted laws or news documentaries about implemented bills.

## b) Co-Variation across Time

In order to be able to test whether opinion and policy covary over time, survey data about citizens' issue preferences are employed, e.g. spending preferences. Whatever indicator one picks, it is crucial that the same question is asked in the same format at different time points and also over time. The output indicators are usually political content about implemented legislation or news documentation about it.

The findings of covariation studies across time are largely consistent. Burstein (1979) finds that opinion and policy on civil rights in the US covary over time. He shows that the Congress usually picks up on public preferences on social issues if at least half of the people support a policy proposal. In addition, he observes that civic engagement enhances public opinion expression and forces policy makers to introduce laws more quickly. Page and Shapiro (1983) study a variety of issues and demonstrate that policy follows opinion especially if the issues are salient amongst the public. They do observe differences in government responses, however. Wlezien and Goggin (1993) study the covariation of opinion and policy on abortion issues and show that the public reacts directly to the activities of the courts, becoming more supportive of current abortion policy. Although absolute preferences remained largely unchanged, they show that the public perceived an increasing threat to the status quo and became correspondingly less enamoured with further restrictions on the availability of abortion. While opinion stability is important for governments in order to respond (Bélanger and Pétry, 2005), comparative work on France, Germany and Italy demonstrates that public opinion is not as stable in those countries, but fluctuates depending on how policy on the issue changes (Isernia et al., 2002).

Testing whether opinion and policy covary over time implies that the models account for dynamics, but it does not allow generalisations about the causal relationship of opinion and policy. The focus on change in opinion and its influence on policy over time are evident in the idea of co-variation across time studies. The principle of dynamic representation is generally met. There are some minor concerns about the comparability and effectiveness of this type of co-variation study. The co-variation-over-time method focuses on tracking opinion change and policy over time. All studies that cluster under this approach focus entirely on an individual case study. Whether

comparative work can be done depends on the availability of comparative data. This links up to what I have discussed with issue congruence methods. It depends on whether the same questions are asked in a larger number of countries, either in a comparative survey or in individual surveys. I have similar concerns about the comparability and the effectiveness of the output measure. While co-variation studies employ effective measures of outputs, there are doubts whether these are comparable. There are comparative data available that capture spending outlays, but comparative data on enacted laws or news documentaries about implemented bills are rare.

### **2.5.2.3 Dynamic Approaches to the Opinion–Policy Nexus**

Dynamic representation focuses on change or more specifically whether policy makers act as a consequence of changes in public sentiment, which implies a sequence inherently structured in time (Stimson et al. 1995: 543). While static approaches explore opinion and policy at the same point in time (and perhaps across time), co-variation studies describe the transition to dynamic models, but do not allow for testing the causal relationship between opinion and policy. By definition, responsiveness research captures dynamic relationships. They do not only track the opinion-policy relationship over time, they also structure either opinion or policy in time looking at opinion lagging in time or policy leading in time. Responsiveness can tell us whether shifts in mass opinion occur prior to changes in government policy or not (Pétry and Mendelsohn, 2004: 510). Studies divide between two dimensions: agenda (a) and policy responsiveness (b).

#### **a) Agenda Responsiveness**

Agenda responsiveness examines how the public's agenda and policy makers' agenda are related. That is, do policy makers pick up upon issues that are salient amongst the public (aa) or do policy makers shift on the left-right scale in response to

changes in ideological preferences of the public (bb). Here, the left-right positions of the government are deduced from executive speeches.<sup>14</sup>

#### *aa) Issue Agenda Responsiveness*

An increasing body of literature explores the agenda responsiveness of governments towards citizens' issue preferences, i.e. whether government agendas respond to the most salient topics amongst the public in a dynamic way (inter alia Jennings and John, 2009, Bevan and Jennings, 2010, Bonafont and Palau, 2011, John et al., 2011). While opinion is indicated by an aggregate of the most important problems facing the country today, policy is captured by analysing the content of executive speeches and other written policy agendas. Jennings and John (2009) study the effect of public opinion on government attention in the United Kingdom and find that short-term responsiveness of government attention to public opinion occurs in a variety of policy areas. Their results suggest that there is coexistence of policy-opinion responsiveness. Further, punctuations in political attention can be explained by differences in theoretical conceptions of negative and positive feedback, as well as by the use of different methods. Bevan and Jennings (2010) replicate these findings for the UK and US. In addition, their results suggest that government agendas become less responsive to public opinion when agenda responsiveness (speeches) moves towards policy responsiveness and decision making (budgets). Public issue preferences, they demonstrate, also have a stronger effect in the long-run. John et al. (2011) explore the responsiveness of the UK and Scottish parliaments to public issue preference and the impact of institutions on the opinion-policy relationship. They observe that responsiveness of the British parliament has decreased with the devolution of the Scottish parliament. One explanation they give is that the clarity of responsibility in decision making is confused with the addition of another legislative level. The study shows that no responsiveness of the Scottish parliament towards public issue preferences occurs, however. A study on the agenda

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<sup>14</sup> Let me clarify and emphasise at this point that positional responsiveness can be studied and has been studied previously. However, the models of positional responsiveness we currently know are classified here as *positional agenda responsiveness*. They are not positional policy responsiveness models that test ideological responsiveness by looking at *effective* policy outputs. These models look at (fiscal) speeches, which, I argue, is an effective measure of policy outputs, but a rhetorical one. Actual policy may emerge differently from the policy making process than the original position stated in a speech or text that sets out the aims, goals and agenda of an actor.

responsiveness of the Spanish government towards public priorities demonstrates that policy makers follow public preferences for policies, but that the relationship varies across policy venues and issues (Bonafont and Palau, 2011). Bonafont and Palau show that the degree of responsiveness is related to elections, the type of government, issue jurisdiction and institutional friction. While overall responsiveness is observed, the results illustrate, for example, that Spanish policymakers are more responsive to public opinion on those issues without shared jurisdiction when the executive governs without a majority and immediately after elections.

#### *bb) Positional Agenda Responsiveness*

Hakverdhian (2010) has developed a dynamic approach in order to explore the responsiveness of governments to ideological positions. He extracts the left-right position of governments from executive speeches (agendas) and employs survey data to capture citizens' positions on the same continuum. UK government policy shifts on the left-right scale as public preferences change. While popular incumbents are less likely to adjust their policy position to the public, unpopular incumbents adjust frequently to changing public opinion. In addition, Hakverdhian shows that a public with right-wing preferences votes for the Conservatives, who then pursue right-wing policies in office. Warwick (2012) replicates Hakverdhian's design, but analyses budget speeches to capture government policy. He argues that budget speeches closely approximate actual government policy. However, they only indicate spending intentions and do not represent spending outlays. Warwick demonstrates that policy positions respond significantly to both changes in the governing party and changes in public opinion. He finds no evidence for ideological congruence, however.

Agenda responsiveness captures the dynamic structure of the opinion-policy relationship. There are concerns about the comparability and effectiveness criteria, however. While comparative data are collected and more and more countries are added (see for instance, the Comparative Agendas Project, which collects public opinion and rhetorical outputs), the comparability of positional agenda responsiveness is more difficult. Many large-scale surveys and individual-country surveys provide the annual left-right positions of citizens (for instance, see the Eurobarometer surveys). The output



side is more problematic. Although executive speeches or other documents are analysed cross-sectionally, they are not coded in order to deduce the left-right position in a continuous (annual) time series, which is needed to capture ongoing change. There are data available for election years (see for instance, the Comparative Manifesto Project) but the gaps between elections are too large to run a reliable positional agenda responsiveness model. There are also some concerns with regard to the criterion of effectiveness. By definition, these models are concerned with the political agenda, i.e. promises and policy intentions given in political speeches, manifestos or appropriations. These do not represent compulsory aims for the government, however. Promises and intention can change in the short and long term and do not have to result in effective policy outputs. Agenda responsiveness models are not a suitable model to apply in my dissertation as they score poorly on the effectiveness criterion, although they do capture dynamic relationships and there are possibilities to overcome the comparability issue.

## b) Policy Responsiveness

Policy responsiveness describes the degree to which governments implement policies that the public prefers. It goes beyond agenda setting and tracks whether actual policy outputs match public preferences in a previous year. Policy responsiveness research entirely focuses on issue responsiveness of governments to citizens' preferences. While there are several ways to capture public opinion, spending outlays are employed to capture public policy outputs. Policy responsiveness distinguishes three models: (aa) the thermostatic model, (bb) the salience model, and (cc) the party model of policy responsiveness.

### *aa) The Thermostatic Model of Representation*

The thermostatic model of representation model posits a reciprocal relationship between public preferences and policy. Government follows the public's relative preferences, that is, the difference between its ideal preferences and actual policy, while the public responds to change in policy (Soroka and Wlezien, 2010, Wlezien, 1996, Wlezien, 1995). Canes-Wrone and Shotts (2004) study presidential responsiveness towards the public's spending preferences and show that responsiveness is higher on

salient issues and when the next election is imminent. In addition, policy representation varies with the popularity of presidents. Further, an increase in popularity leads to a decrease in responsiveness, while low popularity forces presidents to increasingly respond to public preferences. Moreover, the relationship between the president's ideology and Congress's ideology matters. When Congress's ideology corresponds with the president's beliefs, responsiveness is generally higher. In series of comparative studies, Soroka and Wlezien (forthcoming, 2010, 2005, 2004) observe that thermostatic representation varies across countries. They explain the observed variation by different institutional contexts. For instance, responsiveness is higher in unitary, presidential and majoritarian systems than in their counterparts. Johnson et al. (2005) use preferential opinion data on attitudes towards the environment to replicate the thermostatic model on a more specific issue. Their findings suggest that public opinion responds to policy outputs on the improvement of the environment.

#### *bb) The Salience Model of Responsiveness*

The salience model of responsiveness follows the general notion of thermostatic representation, but it employs another indicator of public opinion. I call this model the salience model of responsiveness because it uses the most important problem question – a measure that captures the most salient issue the public is concerned with at a specific time – and tests whether these are reflected in spending outlays. If a policy area is considered a problem, this model assumes that government increases spending in the following fiscal year as a response to public opinion. Further, the proportion of people considering that the respective domain is a problem should then decrease in response to the change in policy. In two comparative studies, Hobolt and Klemmensen (2008, 2005) demonstrate that agenda and policy responsiveness occur in Denmark, the UK and the US, but that it varies across contexts. While rhetoric responsiveness is highest in the Danish and the US system and lowest in the UK, effective responsiveness is higher in the US than in Denmark and the UK. One explanation is that presidential executives are more responsive than parliamentary ones and majoritarian electoral rules lead to increased responsiveness. In addition, low popularity and high uncertainty about re-election increase the degree of responsiveness.

*cc) The Party Model of Responsiveness*

The party model of responsiveness focuses on the political parties as a medium for public preferences. The compiled issue priorities of all parliamentary parties indicated by the space parties dedicate to a particular issue serve as the public opinion measure. The underlying assumption is that party manifestos mirror public preferences almost perfectly. Government policy is indicated by public expenditure. Klingemann et al. (1994) demonstrate that government continuously responds to party priorities. They also test the relationship in left-right terms, but find that the opinion-policy connection is more pronounced on specific issues than on a general left-right ideological scale.

Issue responsiveness models capture the dynamic relationship between public opinion and public policy and the comparability criterion is less problematic with these kinds of models as well. The most important problem question is asked in many individual-country and cross-sectional surveys over time using the same question wording, meaning high comparability. In contrast, spending preferences are less available for a larger number of countries over a longer time period. Some individual country studies provide long time series of people's spending preferences, yet cross-sectional data are hardly available. There is a trade-off between time and space. Parties' issue priorities are deduced from manifestos. While there is serious doubt as to whether manifestos mirror public opinion perfectly as claimed by the model, party priorities are definitely only available in election years and lack a complete time series. Depending on the size of the country sample, at least the salience and thermostatic model meet the comparability criterion. With regard to the output effectiveness, issue responsiveness approaches rely on effective measures of policy outputs. All approaches use spending outlays to indicate government policy. Admittedly, spending is not all there is to policy, but it is a major factor in policymaking.

There are a variety of ways to study how opinion and policy are related. However, not all of these methods perform equally well with regard to the three evaluation criteria. To recap, the approach required to answer my research question has to allow conclusions about effective responsiveness across time and space. It needs to allow testing for a dynamic relationship between opinion and policy that employs a

measurement of effective policy outputs and enables me to compare across contexts. Table 2 provides a summary of the assessment using my evaluation criteria. The issue responsiveness models are the best way to explore responsiveness accounting for dynamics, effectiveness and comparability. The focus on issue or ideology seems to be of particular importance, however. This thesis is interested in whether positional and issue models are affected by the same contexts. I employ an issue responsiveness model to explore the conditions of the opinion-policy relationship on policy issues.

**Table 2: Evaluation of Policy Responsiveness Approaches**

Approach	Occurrence	Measures	Dynamics	Comparability	Effectiveness	
<b>Congruence</b>	Agenda Congruence		✘	▲	✓	STATIC REPRESENTATION
			✘	▲	✓	
	Positional Congruence	Expert Model	✘	✓	▲	
		Manifesto Model	✘	✓	▲	
		Perceptions Model	✘	✓	▲	
<b>Co-Variation</b>	Co-Variation across space		▲	▲	✓	
	Co-Variation across time		▲	▲	✓	
<b>Responsiveness</b>	Agenda Responsiveness	Issue Agenda Responsiveness	✓	✓	✘	DYNAMIC REPRESENTATION
		Positional Agenda Responsiveness	✓	✓	✘	
	Issue Responsiveness	Thermostatic Model	✓	✓	✓	
		Saliency Model	✓	✓	✓	
		Party Model	✓	✓	✓	

✓: Criterion fulfilled; ▲: Criterion partly fulfilled/debatable; ✘: Criterion not fulfilled

There are doubts about the measurement validity of the two main models (thermostatic and salience model). Is thinking a problem is important the same as wanting to increase spending on the issue domain? I dedicate the first empirical chapter (Chapter 4) to explore the validity of spending preferences and policy concerns. In Chapter 5 I then apply a salience model to investigate the contextual effects on the opinion-policy relationship. Unfortunately, there is no model of effective positional policy responsiveness, which is mainly due to the unavailability of data. This means I have to rely on a static congruence model to explore the conditions of positional representation (Chapter 6).

## 2.6 Rationale

The above review of the literature shows that it is important to examine the opinion-policy relationship. It builds on the core assumption of political representation, i.e. that the public delegates powers to a collective body that acts on its behalf. The linkage between public opinion and policy is a dynamic one. It is characterised by reciprocal behaviour between the public and policy makers that is structured in time. This is how I understand democratic responsiveness. However let me emphasise at this point that in my thesis I focus solely on the supply side of the equation. I am interested in the responsiveness of governments towards public opinion by looking at whether or not public opinion is reflected in policy outputs. I do not focus on how public opinion formation and expression may be constrained or enhanced. To some extent I account for the public responsiveness by looking at government responsiveness to *change* in public opinion in the relevant Chapter (See Discussion in Chapter 3.3.2 as well as Chapter 4, where I test this empirically). Responsiveness is also about the effectiveness of the response. While policy makers respond in terms of policy intentions and promises, which is agenda responsiveness, they can also represent citizens effectively by implementing legislation or increasing/decreasing public spending, which is effective government responsiveness.

I have concluded that effective policy responsiveness is what matters most, but this does not mean that other kinds of responsiveness are unimportant. They are complementary approaches that complete the picture of political representation. For effective political representation to occur, there must be agenda responsiveness of some

kind, for example, correspondence between the issue priorities of the public and the government (Jones and Baumgartner, 2004: 1). While the responsiveness link is long established (inter alia Dahl, 1971, Key, 1961, Birch, 1971), research also suggests that successful responsiveness is moderated by a country's institutional context (inter alia Lijphart, 1999, Powell, 2000, Soroka and Wlezien, forthcoming). Although previous studies give explanations about how institutions affect the opinion-policy link, the inconsistent findings suggest that further research is necessary to disentangle what effect context has on policy representation.

The review of the literature contains three gaps with regard to contextual effects: First of all, while we test the institutional impact on the opinion-policy relationship, the institutions chosen for analyses are often picked at random. There is a lack of a theory exploring more systematically how institutions affect responsiveness. Secondly, it is unclear why studies come to inconsistent conclusions. While some suggest that it is simply the different time periods regarded, others suspect it is the different data sources. Inconsistent conclusions could also be due to the different approaches chosen. Finally, in order to get a fuller picture of the impact of institutions on political representation, it is important to focus even more on the comparison. Comparative research enables us to model similarities and differences in institutional designs and draw general conclusions about their effect. While some comparative research on the opinion-policy link has already been conducted, it is crucial to extend this into a dynamic study of policy responsiveness.

My thesis contributes to all three aspects. I deliver a systematically structured theory of how context affects the relationship between opinion and policy. The foundation for this I find in the veto-player theory (Tsebelis, 2002) as well as the voting and performance literature (Hobolt et al., 2012, Whitten and Palmer, 1999, Powell and Whitten, 1993). In addition, the thesis compares whether institutions have the same impact on issue and positional representation. While both strands claim to study the same concept, there are presumably differences between short- and mid-term preferences on issues and the long-established priorities of ideological positions. I apply the same theoretical argument about the effect of institutions to an issue and a positional approach in order to explore whether or not institutions affect both in the same way. Finally, I employ a comparative research design in order to be able to test hypotheses about a larger number of institutional features and draw general conclusions about the

contextual effects. The evaluation of the approaches has determined the best methods to employ in order to study the opinion-policy relationship. While I use a dynamic issue responsiveness approach, I rely on a static positional congruence approach. The reasons for this are twofold. No approach has been developed to study positional responsiveness dynamically. The reason is simply that there are no continuous data available to indicate a government's policy positions on the left-right scale. To sum up, my thesis asks: What are the conditions of policy representation? Are they similar or different for issue and positional representation?

### III. Research Design

The study of responsiveness has been developed and established in the United States. It is therefore not surprising that the US is still the best explored country with regard to policy responsiveness. In fact, research started as a non-comparative field that focused on single country case studies at very few different points in time. For instance, scholars have only studied the correspondence of issue preferences and policy outcomes in the US (Weissberg, 1978, Monroe, 1979, Monroe, 1998, Page and Shapiro, 1983), France (Brooks, 1987), Germany (Brooks, 1990), and Canada (Pétry, 1999). Soon US studies moved on to accounting for variation across the US states and, thus, to cross-sectional, comparative research (Stimson, 1991, Erikson et al., 1993, Stimson et al., 1995) as well as to looking at responsiveness of the US government towards its citizens' preferences over time and to a limited extent also across space (Soroka and Wlezien, 2010, Soroka and Wlezien, 2004, Soroka and Wlezien, 2005, Wlezien, 1995, Wlezien, 1996). First attempts to study issue responsiveness in terms parties' priorities in a comparative way were made as well (Klingemann et al., 1994), yet have not been followed up upon. Around the same time the left-right ideological dimension was discovered as an indicator in representation research and with that the first significant comparative ideological congruence studies was conducted (Kim and Fording, 2002, Kim and Fording, 2001, Kim and Fording, 1998, Huber and Powell, 1994). Ideological congruence has developed very fast and is studied not only cross-sectionally, but also over time, with the drawback of larger gaps in the data (Powell, 2009, Budge and McDonald, 2007, Powell, 2006, Brooks and Manza, 2006, McDonald and Budge, 2005, McDonald et al., 2004, Powell, 2000, Powell and Vanberg, 2000). More recent research on policy representation in terms of ideology employs superior data, which, without complex re-scaling, allows ideological congruence to be examined cross-sectionally<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> One data project is the CSES who collects respondent's left-right self-placement and people's perceptions of where the political parties stand on the same scale.



These data are not time series though and are limited to a time period from the mid 1990s until 2011 (Golder and Stramski, 2010, Powell, 2009, Blais and Bodet, 2006).

There is a difference between issue responsiveness and the congruence of ideological positions. Issue positions are volatile and can be affected by short- and mid-term changes in the political environment. Positions on issues change quickly. By contrast, ideology is an underlying moral, something that has developed over a long time and is less volatile and less affected by short- or mid-term changes than issues. Both approaches are important. Issues give us an indication of how opinion and policy on specific topics, as well as on emerging issues, flows over time and behaves under changing political conditions. Ideological positions on the other hand allow one to capture the underlying morals and how established beliefs are reflected in policymaking. In the 2000s issue responsiveness research moved on to more time-series work as well as some comparative studies that focused on a handful countries (Soroka and Wlezien, 2010, Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008, Soroka and Wlezien, 2005, Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2005, Soroka and Wlezien, 2004). Issue responsiveness research has only recently attempted to explore the phenomenon across a larger number of countries, although this research is limited to very few time points (Soroka and Wlezien, forthcoming).

The main benefit of cross-sectional studies is that they allow one to examine the conditions under which responsiveness occurs (Soroka and Wlezien, forthcoming, Soroka and Wlezien, 2010, Golder and Stramski, 2010, Powell, 2009, Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008, Blais and Bodet, 2006, Powell, 2000, Powell and Vanberg, 2000, Huber and Powell, 1994). In particular, the electoral institutions were believed to cause variation in this respect. However, recent research also finds that time-varying political situations impact the degree to which governments respond (Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008, Canes-Wrone and Shotts, 2004). However it is largely unclear how institutions and situations influence the responsiveness of governments towards their citizens' preferences.

In summary, previous research on policy responsiveness is characterised by four properties with regard to their research design: 1) Research on issue representation is dominated by case studies that focus on the United States; 2) cross-national research is largely limited to ideological congruence approaches; 3) time-series analyses are mainly limited to individual case studies or comparative pieces comparing a very small number

of countries; and 4) there is a lack of knowledge about context effects on the opinion-policy linkage. Admittedly, there are always trade-offs between time and the cross-sectional components. Either responsiveness is looked at over time in a single case study or few countries or it is studied cross-sectionally, but not over time. In my dissertation I aim to combine the cross-sectional and time-series components. I explore the conditions of issue responsiveness cross-nationally and over time. In addition, I examine the conditions of ideological congruence across countries and, to an admittedly limited extent, across time. My research design allows me to compare the conditions of issue and ideological representation. Although the design is not entirely new, it relies on unique measures and models and clarifies issues concerning measurement, while contributing new insights into the context effects on issue and ideology representation. I rely on original individual-level and secondary data.

In this chapter I introduce the research design I employ in order to explore my overall research question: What are the conditions of government responsiveness to citizens' policy preferences? I begin by explaining the choices concerning cross-national and time-series research and argue why this is the best way to approach my research question. My research relies on survey data, which is why I also discuss the idea of multi-level data. I then explain the concepts of public opinion and policy responsiveness both theoretically and with regard to operationalisation. In this chapter I also discuss several approaches to public opinion responsiveness and policy responsiveness, as well as different ways to measure these. Some of these challenges are also the focus of the first empirical chapter (Chapter 4), where I specifically discuss and empirically analyse the measurement validity of public opinion measures. Thirdly, I talk about the different kinds of data sources and types I employ in the empirical chapters. I use original as well as secondary data and link analyses on the individual level with results on an aggregate data. For instance, Chapter 4 mainly focuses on original, individual-level data, but additionally validates the results employing aggregate data and comparison. Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 employ aggregate data in order to compare the main effects of context on responsiveness on the country level. Finally, I give an overview of the contextual effects I am interested in and how I can test these. In doing so I discuss what kinds of contexts I account for as well as how I test these with regard to my models. I distinguish between contexts that lead to more or less institutional and

situational clarity. I understand the first set of variables to be fixed, whereas the second set of factors varies over time.

### **3.1 Exploring Policy Representation as a Cross-Sectional Time-Series Phenomenon**

Policy responsiveness and its conditions are best studied employing a cross-national and over-time research design. There are numerous reasons why it is prudent to choose the comparative method and a time-series approach, which I discuss in the following. In addition, I look at the consequences of the nature and structure of the data that I employ and look at which data require specific modelling techniques.

#### **3.1.1 The Comparative Method as a Tool for Modelling Policy Representation**

The comparative method focuses on suggestive similarities and differentiates between cases and is a commonly-used tool for hypotheses testing as well as hypotheses and theory building (Collier, 1993: 105). It can be applied to large n samples and employs statistical modelling to analyse complex political phenomena. Robert W. Jackman (1985) considers comparative, cross-national research to be a very powerful tool particularly, in the study of political behaviour, which is where my research is located. Comparative research is important for the exploration of my key research questions. This study aims to identify under what institutional and situational conditions governments respond to public opinion. These institutional and situational characteristics of countries, the similarities as well as differences amongst states, need to be taken into account in order to draw conclusions about the general conditions of responsiveness. Studying one case only would give us information about the ability of governments to respond to preferences in that specific country, but it would not allow me to conclude what characteristics promote or constrain governments' performances in general. The author acknowledges that it is not less important to study a single case or fewer cases. However, in order to explore circumstances under which responsiveness is most successful or inefficient, comparison is required.

The comparative method has been criticised now and then. For instance, Macridis (1968), Satori (1970), and Ravenhill (1980) argue that cross-national research is rather superficial, and oversimplifies complex phenomena as it ignores detailed linkages or information about an individual case. Furthermore, they suggest that cross-sectional research excludes the interesting cases that do not fit the pattern. Admittedly, statistical outliers are excluded from further analysis, but good practice requires one to formulate an argument about why these countries do not fit the observed pattern. The criticism is harsh, saying that comparative research neither describes reality, nor allows generalisation or the drawing of causal inferences.

**Figure 4: Arguments in Favour of Cross-National Research**

- (1) It is easy to deal with and/or increase the number of small n samples.
- (2) It allows macro and micro hypotheses testing.
- (3) It permits controlling for a large number of explanatory factors.
- (4) The danger of oversimplification is as high as under any other method.
- (5) The exclusion of outlier cases has to be justified and therefore the interesting cases are not ignored.
- (6) The goal is to make probabilistic generalisation about a causal relationship between variables, not to make definite generalisations and causal inferences.

There are more convincing arguments in favour of comparative research, which reassure me that it is a powerful method for political, behavioural and related research after all. In fact these arguments outweigh all criticism against a cross-national design. Figure 4 summarises the advantages of cross-sectional research. First of all, Lijphart (1971: 685) teaches us that cross-national research designs apply specifically when the number of cases is restricted, e.g. we are dealing with a particular number of countries. This means whenever political systems are concerned it is necessary to use the comparative method, especially if the research interest is about comparison. It is even possible to apply comparative research with smaller n samples as it is fairly simple to increase the number of cases in order to enhance the explanatory power of the statistical analyses, for example by looking at a sample over time. My thesis studies countries and I am interested in the similarities and differences across them, which makes the use of the comparative method inevitable. Moreover, I look at responsiveness over time. I talk about the benefits of studying responsiveness over time and why it is necessary later in

this section. But let me point to the fact that in order to increase the explanatory power of the analyses conducted in this thesis, more than one election or survey is needed to verify patterns of responsiveness. A time-series analysis of many elections in the same countries increases the number of cases and the meaningfulness of the findings.

In addition, a cross-national research design aims to explore macro as well as micro hypotheses. Rokkan (1966) notes that the interrelation of structural elements in a political system can only be investigated applying a comparative method that allows for testing country-specific propositions at the same time in a different setting. This is an essential aspect with regard to testing the conditions of representation. Looking at institutional and situational clarity cross-sectionally allows me to look at similar and different structures in more than one setting and to draw general conclusions, as well as discuss the effects in a micro sphere, i.e. a particular country that may stand out. To model representation, I rely largely on multi-level data – individual-level responses that I aggregate up on the country level – which allows me to track micro and macro level behaviour. I am predominantly interested in the macro level factors that impact government responsiveness to aggregate citizens' preferences on the country level. Once again, I discuss the multi-level data structure later in this chapter.

Thirdly, a cross-national design permits to control for a large number of explanatory factors that may cause variation in the dependent variable. Usually, phenomena in the social sciences are rather complex and we need to control for more than one factor that might bias the response variable. Lijphart (1971) observes that by holding constant certain variables in a comparative design, the number of operative ones is reduced considerably, but the total number of variables inevitably stays the same. This, he argues, also helps when studying relationships under controlled conditions without the problem of running out of cases, which is exactly what my thesis aims to do. I am interested in explaining why some governments are more successful than others in translating public demands into policies. Not only do I aim to test similarities and differences, but also a large number of institutional and situational attributes that affect responsiveness, which again lead to the conclusion that the comparative method is the best way to examine the phenomenon.

Further, cross-national research requires a certain degree of simplification, but this is true for other methodologies as well. Oversimplification is a mischief that all methods, apart from experimental designs, have to deal with. Specifically, phenomena

in the social sciences are extraordinarily complex, because social scientists deal with people. A certain degree of simplification is necessary to make units comparable. However, the question is not whether or not we simplify what we study to its core attributes, but it is a question of the degree of simplification of reality (Blalock, 1964: 8). This is not solely a problem of comparative cross-national research. Contrary to the assumption that comparativists oversimplify in general, the argument is rather that the comparativist accounts for complexity while adding and removing explanatory factors to the models. The aim certainly is to find the balance of simplification and oversimplification, which is a problem other disciplines face in the same way. With regard to responsiveness research, this study simplifies in so far as it is concerned with the overarching link between public preferences and policy outputs (See for example, Figure 1, Chapter 2.1). There are certainly other linkages between the overarching relationship that influence how preferences are translated into policies, e.g. election outcomes, government formation etc. However, the choice of measures, classification and the decision on my explanatory variables and statistical methods largely account for some the complexity within the black box of representation. For instance, what measure of public opinion I use accounts for and also depends on what is going on between opinion formulation and policy outputs. The institutional and situational characteristics leading to more or less clarity partially account for events occurring after opinion expression and before policy implementation. For example, I predominantly use dummy variables to indicate opposing institutional and situational concepts. By using dummy variables to model the contextual effects I tie in with prior research that has looked at institutions in a similar way.

Outliers can be problematic in quantitative analyses as they may affect and distort findings drastically. This is especially crucial when the number of units is limited, e.g. when dealing with countries. If statistical outliers do affect the results, they need to be excluded from the analysis. In quantitative research and elsewhere, problematic cases are not simply excluded – the exclusion of cases needs to be justified and explained by the researcher. In fact the so-called *interesting cases* that do not fit the observed pattern are still looked at in some more detail and are usually carefully investigated. After all, quantitative research aims at keeping as many cases as possible in the statistical analysis to get meaningful and robust results. The removal of outlying cases from the analysis accounts for the robustness and the reliability of the findings. In

Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 I deal with samples that are limited to countries. I include as many states in my analyses as possible. However, there are some problems with new democracies and countries that employ different value schemes, so I have to drop those from the analyses. I discuss this in the respective chapters in more detail.

Finally, there is also a debate about the final goal(s) of cross-national research. As Lijphart (1971) and Jackman (1985) argue: The main goal is not to give a comprehensive image of reality, but to make probabilistic generalisation about a causal relationship or at least a relationship between two or more variables. Incidents in social and political science are more extensive than in other sciences, meaning that a researcher could never reach a perfect model that displays the reality or a perfect causation. However, quantitative research aims to explain general patterns, in this case across countries – a temporary truth that may be refuted when superior data are collected and new modelling techniques are developed.

### **3.1.2 Adding Time to Modelling Policy Representation in a Cross-National Perspective**

Certainly the comparative method is not flawless. But if the claims made and analyses conducted are transparent, carried out correctly and follow the scientific code, cross-national designs are a superior and useful tool for investigating complex social and political phenomena. In order to get a more comprehensive image of reality it is up to the researcher to back up their findings from a cross-sectional design with other methods. They can do this for instance by using a mixed methods approach or by adding individual country case studies (Lijphart, 1971: 690). Especially when dealing with countries, (comparative) case studies can help in gathering more information about a particular type of a political system and validating the findings from the cross-national statistical analysis. A mixed-methods design, however, is beyond the scope of this dissertation, which is why I solely rely on empirical, comparative research.

In the social sciences, cross-sectional observations are the form of data most commonly used for assessing the determinants of political behaviour. Cross-national surveys are often conducted at one point in time and are not suited to the study of social change (Coleman, 1981, Ruspini, 2003, Ruspini, 2002). In order to capture change, it is

common to record cross-sectional data at several points in time. Ideally the data are collected from the same people over time in the form of a panel study, which allows the tracking of individuals' behaviour, as well as countries' behaviour. However, this is cost-heavy and time consuming in a single country, let alone in a cross-national survey, which is why there is only little panel data available over time and across countries. Another way to increase the time component is to conduct the same survey, but ask a different representative sample over time. This is a common procedure that requires high levels of consistency in the wording of the questions so that it is possible to incorporate a time trend into the analysis (Ruspini, 2002). In addition, a precise translation of the surveys across countries is required in order to achieve consistent and comparable data across time and space. One example of cross-sectional time-series data are the Eurobarometer surveys, which I employ in Chapter 5.

**Figure 5: Arguments in Favour of Cross-Section Time-Series Research**

- (1) Social phenomena ideally need observation over time (and across countries)
- (2) Permits diachronic analysis of the incidence of conditions and events (across countries)
- (3) Allows analysing the duration of the phenomenon (across countries)
- (4) Permits tracking differences and changes from time to time/over time (as well as across countries)
- (5) Allows testing for time-variant and time-invariant explanatory factors (across countries)
- (6) Includes techniques to correct for issues related to time e.g. autoregression, moving average, integration and space e.g. spacial correlation

I cannot solely rely on a cross-sectional dimension, especially when studying the conditions of policy responsiveness, but it is also crucial to explore responsiveness over time. Dahl (1971) states that one key characteristic of a representative democracy is the *continuous* policy responsiveness of governments to their citizens' preferences, which implies the necessity to conduct over-time analysis. Only if governments follow public opinion continuously over time can we conclude that the quality of representation is high. A time-series cross-sectional design accounts for issues concerning time and space such as auto-correlation, integration and moving average, as well as intercorrelations across countries.

Over-time data also allow analysis of the duration of social phenomena, they permit measurement of differences or changes from one point in time to another, and



help explain changes by looking at time-variant as well as invariant independent variables (Van der Kamp and Bijefeld, 1998: 3). The three key characteristics of time-series research discussed above apply to the research design that I suggest for my dissertation.

Representation changes across space, but also across time. To account for dynamics it is essential to have measures across time, which is one reason why a time-series component is important for the analyses. In addition, with the question about the conditions of responsiveness, I aim to track time-varying as well as time-invariant factors at the same time, which means not only does representation change over time, but also the conditions that I explore. I elaborate on the contextual effects later in this chapter, but I would like to point out here that it is important to look at time-varying explanations for different degrees in responsiveness across sections and time. It is not only fixed institutions and rules that cause variation in responsiveness but also attributes of the specific situation created by political institutions or the political game. For instance, it matters across time and space how many veto players are involved within as well as outside the core executive.

### **3.1.3 Modelling Policy Responsiveness using Multi-Level Survey Data**

Finally, the nature and the structure of the data I employ cause additional challenges for modelling policy representation. Comparative survey data are characterised by their multi-level structure and nature. “Multilevel data are structures that consist of multiple units of analysis, one nested within the other” (Steenbergen and Jones, 2002). For instance, individual survey respondents are clustered within countries. In my dissertation, I deal with a two-level data structure and by adding a time component to my study I also add third dimension to my data. The survey data I employ in the empirical chapters are not panel data, but repeated cross-sectional data, which means different people are asked the same questions in the same countries at several points in time. If I were dealing with cross-sectional panel data collected over time, I would deal with a three-level data structure, where time would be nested in individuals and individuals would be nested within countries. This is not the case. The repeated

cross-sectional data force me to decide which component I am more interested in, the micro-level (individual-level) behaviour in the cross-sectional units or the behaviour of the aggregate (the macro-level or country-level) across time. In answer to my research question about the conditions of policy responsiveness to citizens' preferences, I argued, that a cross-sectional time-series design is the way forward. Intrinsically, the research question requires one to look at the macro-level over time. I am not interested in how governments respond to individual preferences. The specific nature of the data leads to the question of whether a multi-level data structure also requires multi-level modelling techniques or if it is acceptable to rely on one-step estimation methods. I discuss the (dis-)advantages of multi-level and regression approaches in the following with regard to policy representation.

The main goal of multi-level modelling approaches is to better account for the variance in the dependent variable, which is measured at the lowest level (Steenbergen and Jones, 2002: 219). In essence, multi-level modelling means nothing but splitting the variance into level-1 and level-2 (level-3 etc.) variance in order to be able to account for any variation more precisely on each level of analysis, instead of minimising one compound error term. However, whether or not it makes sense to apply a multi-level approach depends on the data dimension and properties as well as the substantive research interests and goals of the analyst (Franzese, 2005: 431). From a technical point of view, multi-level models are superior because they model the variance of each data level, which allows for the estimation of correct standard errors and reduces the likelihood of a Type I error pitfall (Steenbergen and Jones, 2002: 218). However, as Franzese notes, "what one can do in separate subsamples in two steps (multi-level approach) one can also do in one step with interactions (etc.), and vice versa, but some things are easier one way or the other" (Franzese, 2005: 443). Researchers should not blindly use multi-level models simply because they deal with a multi-level data structure and the method is currently quite fashionable. After all, the aim of an empirical researcher is to keep the methods simple, transparent, powerful and accurate. By examining the conditions of policy representation I test the impact of country-level characteristics on the opinion-policy linkage. This means I am explicitly interested in the effects and conditions of macro-level factors, but not so much in any individual level variation. The data I rely on are structured in a multi-level fashion, but modelling the phenomenon is possible using a simple regression, as well as using multi-level

techniques. Being predominantly interested in the higher level, the country level, a one step model seems like a rational choice.

Although the total variance and the estimates of a two-level model or a 1-step model are identical and either model handles context specific regressors equally easily (Franzese, 2005: 443), ignoring the multi-level structure of the data can lead to incorrect standard errors (Steenbergen and Jones, 2002: 219). However, this does not necessary turn out to be a problem if the sample is large enough, especially in the macro-unit dimension (Franzese, 2005: 444). Multi-level techniques also require a sufficient number of higher level units. In addition, they require specifically valid and reliable measures to satisfy a larger number of statistical assumptions and deliver reliable results (Steenbergen and Jones, 2002: 234). In addition, multi-level approaches yield “coefficient estimates for micro-level variables that are more robust to misspecification of macro-level effects than one-step linear-interaction models” (Franzese, 2005: 443). While there are a lot of benefits of multi-level analysis, the important characteristic is my research interest. Here, I deal with over 20 countries looked at over time (Chapter 5) or at least at several points in time (Chapter 6), so I have a large enough sample to rely on simple modelling techniques without affecting the results of the analysis. In addition, my research interest is the country-level, so I do not want to model any individual-level variation or characteristics. For these reasons I stay away from multi-level modelling strategies. After all, in a situation where the macro-level effects and their conditioning are at least as central as micro-level effects, one-step estimation strategies seem the better option (Franzese, 2005: 445). In my dissertation the macro-level effects and their conditioning are the key interest, which is why I abstain from using multi-level modelling and rely on time-series cross-section analyses (Chapter 5) as well as Ordinary Least Square regressions with interactive terms (Chapter 6).

The use of a cross-sectional time-series design can ensure a more complete approach to empirical research and especially to studying policy responsiveness. This type of data clarifies the direction and the magnitude of change among the dependent and independent variables, it allows comparison across units and classification of similarities and differences between countries, and permits exploring changes within countries and across countries over time. This research combines cross-sectional and time-series analyses to explore policy representation and its conditions in a comparative fashion. The emphasis is on the cross-sectional comparison. I am predominantly

interested in the conditions that lead to more or less policy representation and less interested in whether representation occurs across time. There is a trade-off between time and space and I have decided to focus on space rather than time.

## **3.2 Conceptualising Public Opinion and Public Policy Measures**

Political representation in modern democracies is characterised by a linkage between the public and policy outputs. We have learned from political theory that the policy cycle requires a reciprocal and interactive relationship between citizens' demands and policy makers' supplies (Easton, 1965, Powell, 2004, Deutsch, 1963). Thus the concept of policy representation means that policy makers supply public policies that are in accordance with public wishes. While the idea of responsiveness is easy to grasp, it is a lot more difficult to conceptualise its components: a) public opinion and b) public policy responsiveness.

### **3.2.1 Measuring Public Opinion in Policy Responsiveness Research**

One crucial aspect for policy makers focussing on representation is to know what people think. In order to implement new or amend existing policies in correspondence with public demands, governments essentially need to know what these demands are. To date scholars of public opinion have failed to universally define what public opinion means. The term public opinion has been

loosely used, sometimes in reference to widespread beliefs, climate of opinion, consensus, the mores and the more settled convictions of a group; at times to the process of developing opinions, as distinguished from the product; elsewhere, to statements which are the result of a reasoned, logical process as contrasted with those which have been arrived at by illogical means; and the like (Albig, 1956: 3).

At a very least, the concept 'public opinion' suggests "a collection of people who hold opinions on some issue" (Weissberg, 1976b: 9) or on a collection of issues, i.e. an ideology. Ideology is also a valuable conceptual tool (Albig, 1956: 15). Opinions towards an issue or ideology may vary over time with the changing scope of

governmental action or across societies and in the intensity with which they are held (Key, 1961: 9).

As there seems to be no solution to the problem of the theoretical conceptualisation of public opinion, scholars look at opinion from an operationalist point of view. The notion is that public opinion is indicated by public opinion polls (Blumer, 1948) and is measured by aggregating the responses of individuals reflected in surveys, elections or referenda (Brooks and Manza, 2006: 631). Following this notion it is crucial to debate how citizens' preferences are contemplated in the study of comparative policy representation. At this juncture I would like to note that this notion differs from the public opinion measure in single case studies or related subjects. Comparative representation research is limited in its tools to measure opinion, whereas in single-country studies many measurements of public opinion exist and can be employed. In the comparative study of policy responsiveness, public preferences are captured by measuring 1) citizens' ideology and 2) citizens' attitudes towards specific policy issues.

The most common single dimension in modernized democracies is almost certainly the left-right ideological continuum. The language of "left" and "right" creates a unidimensional discourse that can assimilate the various issues and alternatives that continuously appear before the electorate (Huber and Powell, 1994: 294).

There are no competing concepts for measuring public opinion on ideology. The survey item commonly employed in ideological or *positional* representation research (Jones and Baumgartner, 2004: 2) is the median citizen. That is the average (median) of all respondents who have placed themselves on a 10-point left-right scale in a survey. Survey respondents are asked to place themselves on the left-right continuum, where 0 indicates the left and 10 the right. For example the CSES surveys, which I rely on in Chapter 6, ask: "*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?*" When aggregating up respondents' answers, they are averaged by country and year. Usually scholars employ the median: "if the median and the mean do not coincide, a majority will always prefer the median to mean [...] since the mean minimizes the sum of the squared distances, it gives greater weight to cases more distant to the center" (Huber and Powell, 1994: 296). The mean should work equally well, however.

Conceptualising citizens' attitudes towards specific issues with regard to public opinion responsiveness is somewhat more problematic as there are competing notions of how to measure issue preferences best. This is particularly a question of the survey item chosen. While spending preferences are a commonly used technique to indicate issue preferences (Soroka and Wlezien, 2010, Soroka and Wlezien, 2005, Soroka and Wlezien, 2004, Wlezien, 1995, Wlezien, 1996), an alternative measure, the most important problem, has recently been used to measure the issue demands of the public (Pickup and Hobolt, 2011, Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008, Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2005). According to Downs, the underlying assumption for using spending preferences is that the public can be conceived of as a collection of individuals distributed along a dimension of preferences for spending (Downs, 1957). Spending preferences are viewed as the most direct and directional measure of citizens' issue opinions as they ask respondents to indicate a direction of change, more or less. For example, the role of government surveys by the ISSP ask: *"Listed below are various areas of government spending. Please show whether you would like to see more or less government spending in each area. Remember that if you say "much more", it might require a tax increase to pay for it."* The ordinal answer categories range from 1 *"Spend much more"* to 5 *"Spend much less"*. Although it gives an indication of whether people want an increase or decrease in expenditure in an issue area, it is yet not a perfect measure of issue preferences because it does not give us the quantity by which people want to increase/decrease the budgets. Down's assumption implies that individuals do not have specific preferred levels of spending in mind, but it reflects the idea that some individuals want more or less spending than others (Wlezien, 1996: 84). In public responsiveness research it is not the raw spending preferences that are used, but a measure of net support for spending in the respective field is deduced from them, which is the difference between the percentage of people who say *"spend more"* and *"spend less"* (Wlezien, 1995: 985). While there is no indicator of the quantity of the increase/decrease of the budget, at least net support implies citizens' preferred degree of spending (even over time). One major drawback of this measure is that data are not available for a comparative sample over time. For instance, the ISSP collected data in more than 35 countries, however it does not collect these data continuously but only in 4 waves (1985, 1990, 1996 and 2006). In addition, many individual country case studies do not ask about people's spending preferences, which makes it hard to apply this model

to comparative time-series research. Despite the criticism, spending preferences seem to be a straightforward indicator of what issues the public prefers.

Another measure indicative of public opinion is the most important problem or most important issue question.<sup>16</sup> Using most important problems as an indicator for citizens' issue preferences is a rather new concept. First and foremost, most important problems are used as a measure of issue salience. Large scale surveys provide cross-sectional data over time. For instance, the Eurobarometer polls have asked the most important issue question in same format since 2002: "*What do you think are the two most important issues facing [OUR COUNTRY] at the moment?*" The most important problem/issue measures the relative importance of issues to citizens (Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2005, Burden and Sanberg, 2003, Bara, 2001, Mackuen and Coombs, 1981, McCombs and Shaw, 1972) and is considered as an appropriate measure of public opinion towards issues. However, this instrument of issue preferences has been criticised recently. Experimental research on the most important problem has come to the conclusion that the answers to the MIP question are enormously sensitive to question wording. For instance, it matters what time frame is given in the question – 'today' or 'within the last few years' or 'in the future' – as well as how personalised the question is asked – 'to you personally' or 'for your country' or 'for society' or 'for the world' (Yeager et al., 2011). In a recent paper, Jennings and Wlezien (2012) argue that spending preferences and policy concerns correlate weakly with each other and conclude that the most important problem cannot serve as an alternative measure to spending preferences in issue responsiveness research.

While on first sight policy concerns seem to be the inferior measurement compared with the directional spending measure, I discuss and empirically test the relationship between spending preferences and policy concerns in my first empirical chapter (Chapter 4) on individual-level and aggregate-level data. My conclusions are more positive and in favour of the policy concerns measure. Despite all criticism, one major benefit of the most important problems/issues question is that the data are publicly available over time and for large country sample. Looking at public opinion

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<sup>16</sup> Wlezien has criticised that the importance of issues and the degree to which issues are a problem point in a similar, yet slightly different direction (Wlezien 2005). However recent research by Jennings and Wlezien (2011) comes to the conclusion that they effectively measure the same concept. Survey respondents do not differ between issues and problems. The terms and measures are thus used interchangeably in the following.

from an operationalist point of view is not quite satisfying after all as public opinion has many facets and dimensions. Public opinion ranges from ideology to specific attitudes on issues and to date scholars have not precisely explained the analogies and divergences of public preference measurements. In Chapter 4 I contribute at least to the debate around issue preferences measures.

### **3.2.2. Measuring Public Policy Outputs in Policy Representation Research**

The second crucial concept underlying representation research is measures of public policy outputs. Schumaker (1975) identifies five criteria of policy makers' responsiveness to citizens' preferences that point to a different measure of policy outputs: 1) access responsiveness, 2) agenda responsiveness, 3) policy responsiveness, 4) output responsiveness, and 5) impact responsiveness. Indeed, his study focuses on responsiveness to protest group demands, yet many of his theoretical ideas also apply to responsiveness towards the citizenry.

While access responsiveness – the degree to which interest or protest groups have access to policy makers – and impact responsiveness – the degree to which protest action succeeds in alleviating the grievances of the groups – apply more specifically to activist groups, the other three dimensions outlined in Schumaker's paper also apply to the broader study of responsiveness and representation.

Agenda responsiveness – whether policy makers' agendas respond to public ones – is also a key concern of responsiveness research as looked at in this thesis. There is an increasing body of literature that is concerned with agenda setting and the scholars of the Comparative Agendas Project are conducting lead research here (Jennings et al., 2011a, Jennings et al., 2011b, John et al., 2011, Bevan and Jennings, 2010, Jones and Baumgartner, 2004). An extensive body of literature is concerned with issue agenda responsiveness. First and foremost, the work of the Comparative Agendas Project (CAP) needs to be mentioned here. The CAP codes speeches by political leaders such as prime ministers, queens, kings and presidents. The main interest lies in the emphasis that is given to specific policy issues. The issue priorities of a party leader, head of government or state can then be modelled in terms of policy responsiveness to



publics' issue priorities (Jennings et al., 2011a, Jennings et al., 2011b, Bonafont and Palau, 2011, John et al., 2011, Bevan and Jennings, 2010, Jennings and John, 2009, Jones and Baumgartner, 2004). This kind of responsiveness has also been described as rhetorical responsiveness (Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008) because it is entirely based on agenda setting from rhetoric. For instance, issues outlined in speeches by political leaders such as the head of government are measures, which by quantitative content analysis, indicate issue agenda setting. Another way of capturing agendas is by looking at spending appropriations (Soroka et al., 2006, Wlezien and Soroka, 2003). In addition, there is also some positional agenda responsiveness research. For example, scholars study whether governments respond on a left-right continuum by analysing (fiscal) speeches (Warwick, 2012, Hakhverdian, 2010) in left-right terms. Agendas do not give us information about the actual relationship between public preferences and public policy. The political agenda sets out policy intentions and promises that policy makers may not necessarily meet when enacting bills.

The goal of this thesis is to explore policy representation. According to Schumaker (1975: 494) policy responsiveness indicates the degree to which preferences in a country are adopted by or are congruent with legislation, which is exactly what all models revised in the review of the literature aim to achieve. What is needed here is a measure of effective policy outputs. Something goes beyond the agenda-setting process. The only way to measure such policy outputs is by looking at regulative laws, implemented bills or budgets.

Output responsiveness (Schumaker, 1975: 494) goes further because it is not only interested in whether policy makers respond by introducing bills, but also in the degree to which decisions are actually implemented and executed in daily political life. In order to measure this, a record would be needed that again looks at a particular issue and how it is handled after the implementation of a bill, for instance how it is dealt with in the administrative work of councils or other authorities. Questions of output responsiveness need to be addressed at a lower level, for instance by local authorities, where it is possible to see how an issue is dealt with in daily political life. However, this is less of an issue with regard to government responsiveness as governments are not the institutions that execute the laws they implement. This dissertation focuses on agenda and policy responsiveness only, as these are the two main concepts that are important and trackable on the macro (governmental) level.

When discussing the concept of public policy representation, the questions of operationalisation and measurement are integral. However, how policy outputs are operationalised largely depends on the underlying concept dimension regarded. Following the argument above, this dissertation deals with policy responsiveness exclusively. The measurement of public policy outputs is to a certain extent determined by the measure of public opinion. While public opinion on ideological beliefs requires a response in terms of ideology, issue preferences ask for a more precise response by governments to a particular issue. I have argued previously that I consider the left-right continuum to be an underlying dimension of effective policy outputs. Public policy outputs in terms of policy responsiveness can be tested by looking at ideology as well as policy issues.

The ideology strand of policy representation has developed three models of policy congruence and thus of public policy outputs: 1) the expert model, 2) the manifesto model, and the 3) perception model of ideological congruence. The expert model of ideological congruence employs expert surveys about the stance of the political parties on a left-right continuum to indicate policy outputs (Powell, 2006, Powell, 2000, Huber and Powell, 1994). From the position of the parties on the left-right scale, this model deduces the government's left-right position by averaging the stance of all government parties. If a single party-government is in office, this is simply the left-right position of the one governing party. If a multi-party government is in office, the average left-right score of all parties in the coalition indicates the coalition's stance on the continuum.<sup>17</sup> Expert surveys are a popular instrument for estimating parties' position on political topics as well as on the left-right continuum in general. Several different expert surveys have been conducted in the past (Benoit and Laver, 2006, Laver and Shepsle, 1996, Hunt and Laver, 1992, Castles and Mair, 1984). The drawback of these surveys is that they only provide us with an estimate of the parties' positions at the point in time when the survey was conducted. Expert surveys can also be criticised as subjective or even elitist points of view. The expert is usually a scholar

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<sup>17</sup> This is based on the underlying assumption is that all coalescing parties share powers equally, which in reality is not case. In reality, a larger mass party often enters a coalition with one or more smaller, junior partner(s). Yet it is common practice in ideological responsiveness research and across positional congruence models to assume that coalition partners share powers equally. Certainly, this is a matter of simplification and practicability. This is why I also follow this assumption in the dissertation.

of political parties in the respective country who gives her subjective evaluation of that party, which is rarely cross-validated or cross-checked.

The Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) has coded parties' manifestos since 1948 and serves as the basis for the manifesto model of ideological congruence. Trained coders conduct a content analysis of party manifestos, where they code quasi-sentences into 56 policy categories and 7 policy domains (Klingemann et al., 2006, Budge et al., 2001). The left-right-dimension can then be deduced from the party scores in each dimension. Similar to the expert model, the government's stance on the left-right scale is either the single party's left-right position on the scale or the average left-right score of the coalescing parties (Golder and Stramski, 2010, Powell, 2009, McDonald et al., 2004). However, there are some concerns about the CMP data with regard to their validity and reliability. Each manifesto is coded once and only once by a single coder. Thus there are doubts about the stochastic nature of the test, the unreliability of the human unitisation and human coding as well as scaling (Mikhaylov et al., 2008). However, the CMP data largely correlate with the experts' estimates of parties' left-right positions as Benoit and Laver demonstrate in a comparative paper (Benoit and Laver, 2007). It is still a commonly used method to indicate policy outputs in ideological congruence research.

A new model of positional congruence is the perception model of representation. The perception model is linked to the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) data project. Amongst other things, the CSES collects the survey respondents' left-right position on the ideological continuum as well as where respondents evaluate the respective parties on the same 10-point left-right scale. The benefit from this is that no re-scaling is necessary to compare citizens' and parties' (or governments') ideology. The drawback however is that perceptions' are very subjective and may not necessarily reflect the parties' (governments') actual left-right convictions. Blais and Bodet (2006) have shown however that the respondents' perceptions of the positioning of the parties is coherent with the experts' assessment as well as the CMP codings, which makes the CSES's method and also the perceptions model a superior approach. Recent representation studies rely on this technique of measuring public policy outputs (Golder and Stramski, 2010, Powell, 2009, Blais and Bodet, 2006). It is a fairly new project that is connected to the general election studies of the participating countries, which means that there is no neat time series of data available yet.

There are two models of effective issue responsiveness that employ the same measure of public policy responsiveness, but a different indicator of public responsiveness, as discussed earlier in this chapter: 1) the thermostatic model of representation (Wlezien, 1996, 1995) and 2) the salience model of responsiveness (Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008). Here, effective public policy outputs are measured by looking at change in public expenditure or more precisely change in spending outlays by function. The data can be gathered from individual countries or governments, but comparative data has been collected by the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) for its member states. While spending is not all there is to policies (Klingemann et al., 1994: 34), it is still one essential form of policymaking. Superior data on the content of passed bills and regulative laws have been collected for individual units (Franklin and Wlezien, 1997), however there is no larger comparative database available for analysis.

It appears that conceptualising public policy outputs is not very straightforward. While the theoretically public policy outputs can be defined clearly, the measurements are sketchy and vague. In fact, current research still lacks a comparative measure of effective policy outputs that also takes into account regulative acts. Here, I rely on measures of public expenditure, which are available for a cross-country sample.

### **3.3 Data**

In order to explore the measurement validity of issue preferences as well as the conditions of policy representation of the public's issue and ideological preferences superior data are required. For the empirical analyses I rely on several data sources: 1) individual-level survey data, 2) aggregate-level survey data and 3) country-level data on public expenditure and institutions. Survey data are characterised by their multi-level structure and nature. They are "lower, micro-level data nested within higher, macro-level units" (Franzese, 2005: 430). In other words, individual survey respondents are nested or clustered within countries. This specific nature of the data leads to the question of whether a multi-level data structure also requires multi-level modelling techniques or whether it is acceptable to rely on simple regression techniques. After all, I want to keep my methods simple, powerful and accurate. The modelling strategy of multi-level data depends on the data dimension and properties as well as the substantive

research interests and goals of the researcher (Franzese, 2005: 431). In my first empirical chapter I am interested in the individual level properties; I explore whether wanting to increase spending in a policy domain means the same to respondents as considering an issue an important problem. The focus shifts in the other two empirical chapters from the individual to the aggregate level. Modelling the conditions of government responsiveness is about how the macro-level (country-level) characteristics affect the translation of public preferences into public policy. This relation is affected by context and it is not about how each individual's preferences are turned in policy. Hence, the analyses deal in different ways with the multi-level data structure. While the measurement chapter is about the individual level and is based largely on the British case, so no higher level needs to be taken into account, the other two chapters focus on the macro-level. By aggregating up individuals to country level, the data are reduced to a single-level data structure. I will now introduce the data for each chapter in more detail.

### **3.3.1 Measurement Validity of Opinion Measures**

The first empirical chapter tests the measurement validity of issue preferences. To recap, I am interested in conducting dynamic, cross-sectional analyses of government responsiveness. This means that ideally I would want to explore the validity of my opinion measurements on a cross-national sample and over time. Spending preferences and issue salience measures of public opinion are not available cross-sectionally, which is why I have to rely on an individual case study for this chapter, and also on an aggregate, comparative sample that is weak on the time-series component.

To examine how spending preferences and measures of issue salience are related I collected original, individual data in Britain in March 2012. The survey was run on a monthly online public opinion tracker by TNS BMRB, who are an independent research agency. I was able to place an open-ended most important problem question as well as a question about people's spending preferences on four policy domains on the same survey. This enabled me to cross the two measures and empirically test how they are related.

Further, I am able to construct an aggregate data set from different sources that allows me to explore how spending preferences and most important problems are related in a cross-sectional sample. Four modules of the Role of Government survey conducted by the International Social Survey Program (ISSP) have asked about respondents' spending preferences. The survey includes most European countries and a larger number of countries outside the European Union. In addition, I can extract the most important issues from the Eurobarometer surveys. Both surveys were carried out in the year 2006, which is the only matching year with the ISSP data. By aggregating up the data, I am able to construct a new dataset, which incorporates both spending preferences and most important issues. Hence, I rely on aggregate data for fourteen European countries in the year 2006. Moreover, I can access data on actual spending for these countries through the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which allows me to run some bivariate tests on the predictive power of both kinds of opinion measures. In addition, to my individual level case study of British respondents, I can also look at the measurement validity cross-sectionally.

### **3.3.2 Issue Responsiveness of Governments to Public Preferences**

The second empirical chapter examines the conditions of government responsiveness to citizens' issue preferences across countries and over time. The survey data are individual-level, repeated, cross-sectional data regarded over a time period of eight years. The research question is entirely about the macro-level. By aggregating up the individual responses to the country level, I lose information about the individuals. However I am not interested in micro properties, so this does not cause any problems. The survey data employed are collected by the Eurobarometer project, which asks about citizens' opinions on up-to-date political topics. Amongst other variables, it regularly asks respondents about the most important issues facing their country at that moment. The question has been asked in the same format since 2002. I look at the time period between 2002 and 2010. To the aggregate opinion data I add information on annual public expenditure by function provided by the OECD for the same countries and years. The cross-sectional sample allows me to test different institutional and situational

conditions in the European context. Moreover, it also enables me to explore responsiveness over time in an (admittedly) short time series of eight years.

### **3.3.3 Positional Responsiveness of Governments to Public Ideological Preferences**

In the third empirical chapter the focus shifts to the conditions of positional policy congruence of governments and the mean citizen. The analysis is based on the perception model of ideological congruence and employs data collected by the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES). The CSES conducts post-election surveys consisting of a set of regularly-asked questions, as well as a module on a topic of academic interest that varies from module to module. By nature the data are multi-level data, however, again I am solely interested in macro-level effects of political institutions on the opinion-policy linkage. This means by aggregating up to the country level by election, I eliminate the individual-level information. Three waves of the CSES are available that incorporate at least one election survey and at most four election surveys per country. Consequently, I have several data points for a larger number of countries. The CSES does not provide time-series data, however. The surveys are linked to presidential and parliamentary elections in a country, thus there are larger gaps between surveys. I rely on the data collected after parliamentary elections only. While I end up with a decent cross-sectional sample, the data do not allow a proper time-series analysis. As the aim of this thesis is to examine the conditions under which opinion representation occurs, it is more important to compare across units than over time.

## **3.4 Conceptualising Contextual Effects on Policy Responsiveness**

I test the conditions of policy responsiveness by looking at contextual effects of time-invariant (institutional) and time-variant (situational) veto players. For theoretical as well as structural reasons I distinguish between contextual the effects of alongside institutional and situational clarity. The former focuses on the static institutional set-up of a country, which does not vary over time, the latter looks at time-variant components

such as cohesiveness of the government as well as time variant characteristics of the legislature, e.g. the effective number of parties in parliament and government. I have discussed the theoretical distinction between institutional and situational clarity in more detail in the review of the literature (Chapter 2). Here, I describe how I empirically test the impact of institutional and situational clarity on policy responsiveness.

### **3.4.1 Operationalisation of Institutional and Situational Clarity**

Most comparative studies are led by the notion that context affects the degree to which governments respond to or represent the preferences of the people. There are many ways in which scholars see that context can influence the responsiveness of governments to public preferences. While we get different answers how institutions affect the opinion policy nexus, we know that political institutions shape and moderate the opinion-policy linkage in some way. In this section, I review the literature with special regard to contextual effects. There are some inconsistent findings about how institutions affect the translation of preferences into policies that may be due to the lack of a systematic theory of institutions, as well as to the different methods applied.

The idea that institutions affect political representation has been long established (Lijphart, 1999, 1994, 1984, Downs, 1957, Duverger, 1954). There are different ways of operationalising institutions. Often scholars rely on a dichotomisation of institutions, where the institutional features only take two categories: majoritarian versus proportional electoral rules, two- versus multiple-party systems, (semi-)presidential versus parliamentary government, unitary versus federal states and so on. Others, use continuous measurements to measure institutions. For instance, Sartori (1976) develops a continuous measure of party fractionalisation and polarisation or Rodden (2002; 2004) suggest to capture levels of devolution and federalism in a continuous indexes. The problem with indexes is that many different components are captured and often the creation of the measurement gets quite complex. Often scholars still fall back on one very specific component of a phenomenon. For example, Wlezien and Soroka (2012: 1416) rely on Rodden's continuous index of fiscal federalism, which, on the one hand give a more differentiated picture, but after all only captures the financial component of federalism.



Continuous measures certainly allow a larger differentiation of institutions, while dichotomous measures are criticised for not doing justice to the complexity of institutions (Golder 2005). For instance, an increasing number of countries uses mixed electoral rules, which scholars are unable to account for by creating dummy variables. However, one benefit of dichotomisation is that it allows two groups of countries. The measure is simple and easy to interpret, especially in interactive terms. As this is initial research, I justify my decision to use dichotomous items by its practicability and simplicity. The research interest here is to give a very first insight to how institutions affect policy representation. Many scholars in the field have conceded to this notion previously (see for instance, Powell 2000). Although I acknowledge that a more differentiated picture may be more desirable, for this initial research a dichotomisation of institutions some institutions is sufficient.

Some previous studies have developed indexes to model the impact of institutional and situational characteristics with regard to the clarity of policymaking (Hobolt et al., 2012, Whitten and Palmer, 1999, Powell and Whitten, 1993). I abstain from using an index to model the institutional and situational impact on the opinion-policy relationship. I am interested in disentangling the effect of each individual, fixed institutional and time-varying situation. I can achieve this by interacting the different attributes with my measure of public opinion.

### **3.4.2. Modelling Institutional and Situational Clarity**

Interactive terms are increasingly common in political science, in particularly when exploring the importance of context or context conditionality (Franzese, 2003). By interacting public opinion with the contextual variable of interest, I assume a particular condition under which opinion is influencing policy. In more technical terms, an increase in X is associated with an increase in Y when the condition Z is met, but not when the condition is absent (Brambor et al., 2006: 2). Most of the contextual factors are dummy variables, which assume an opposing context. For instance, the regime type is coded 0 if it is a presidential system and 1 if it is a parliamentary one. In the analysis, the interaction coefficient gives me the condition of public opinion in parliamentary systems, whereas the coefficient for public opinion represents the counterfactual, the effect of opinion in presidential countries. To avoid some common pitfalls when using

interaction terms, it is important to include all constitutive terms the interactive terms consist of as well as check the marginal effects of the conditional impact using plots, for example (Brambor et al., 2006). While the coefficient may indicate a significant impact of  $X$  under the condition  $Z$  on  $Y$ , the marginal effect does not necessarily need to be significant. A condition  $Z$  has a statistically significant effect whenever the upper and lower bounds of the confidence intervals are either above or below 0 (Brambor et al., 2006: 14). In order to come up with a classification by country, I rely on secondary data collected by the Database of Political Institutions (DPI) (Beck et al., 2001), the ParlGov (Döring and Manow, 2011) and Parline data sets (IPU, 1996-2012), as well as the Gallagher index (Gallagher and Mitchell, 2008). According to the argument set out in Chapter 2, I distinguish between fixed institutions and time-varying situations created by the political game (see Figure 2, page 40).

### **3.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have set out my research design. I have discussed and justified why I have chosen the comparative method and why I look at policy representation across an extensive country sample and across time. In addition, I have introduced the concepts and measures of public opinion and public policy responsiveness. While the concept of public opinion is also the subject matter of the first empirical chapter, the choices regarding public policy responsiveness have been extensively discussed here. In order to get a more comprehensive view of policy representation and the related measurement issues, I have argued that I need to rely on original as well as secondary data and have to conduct analyses on both the individual level as well as on the aggregate. The combination of superior data that I have introduced here allows me to overcome some challenges with regard to data availability. Last but not least, I have established a classification of characteristics that influence whether governments perform better or worse with regard to their representation function. I have argued that these characteristics divide fixed institutional attributes and time-varying political situations create by the political game. The clearer policymaking structures are, the higher the likelihood is that governments are able to respond to citizens' demands.

In the following three empirical chapters I test whether there is measurement equivalence across public opinion measures (Chapter 4), which is essential for the second empirical chapter on issue responsiveness (Chapter 5). The third empirical chapter tests whether the conditions of issue responsiveness and ideological congruence are the same or different (Chapter 6). I summarise my findings and discuss incentives for future research in the concluding chapter (Chapter 7).

## Appendix A

**Table A1: Codes for Independent Variables - Institutional Clarity**

<b>Data Source</b>	<b>Variable</b>	<b>Code</b>
Database of Political Institutions (Beck, Clarke, Groff, Keefer, Walsh 2012)	Regime Type	(semi-)presidentialism = 0; parliamentarianism = 1
IPU Parline Database (IPU 2012)	Electoral Rules	Single Member District = 0; Proportional Rules = 1
IPU Parline Database (IPU 2012)	Party System	Two-and-a-half-parties = 0; Multipartyism = 1
Database of Political Institutions (Beck, Clarke, Groff, Keefer, Walsh 2012)	Federalism	Unitary state = 0; federal state = 1
Database of Political Institutions (Beck, Clarke, Groff, Keefer, Walsh 2012)	Bicameralism	Unicameral = 0; bicameral = 1

**Table A2: Codes for Independent Variables - Situational Clarity**

<b>Data Source</b>	<b>Variable</b>	<b>Code</b>
Election Indices Dataset (Gallagher 2013)	Effective Number of Parliamentary Parties	Ranges from 1.94 to 9.05 parliamentary parties
ParlGov database (Döring and Manow 2012)	Number of Parties in Government	Ranges from 1 to 7 parties in the government
ParlGov database (Döring and Manow 2012)	Government Type I	Single Party Government = 0; Coalition Government = 1
ParlGov database (Döring and Manow 2012)	Government Type II	Minimum-winning Government = 0; Over-/undersized Government = 1

## **IV. Measurement Validity of Public Opinion Measures**

In the previous chapters I have discussed the different approaches to examining policy representation and introduced my research design. One conclusion of the review of the literature is that issue responsiveness approaches, the thermostatic and salience model of representation, are the ways forward to test effective responsiveness to public preferences. Both models examine the same concept, namely the responsiveness of government towards citizens' issue preferences. While they employ the same effective indicator of public policy, i.e. public expenditure, the models rely on different measures of public opinion.

The thermostatic model of representation (Soroka and Wlezien, forthcoming, Soroka and Wlezien, 2010, Soroka and Wlezien, 2005, Soroka and Wlezien, 2004, Wlezien, 1996, Wlezien, 1995) specifically asks respondents about their spending preferences – whether they want more, less or about the same amount of spending on a specific policy area. The aggregated net preferences (the difference between those who prefer more spending and those who want less spending) indicate what people want.

The salience model of representation (Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008) employs the so-called most important problem (MIP) question as its measure of public opinion. The MIP asks survey respondents to name the most important problems facing their country at any given time. The model employs the aggregate of answers, which gives the most salient problem amongst the public. The MIP is a measure of the relative salience of an issue, which is why I call the model the salience model of representation.

Both models investigate responsiveness in a dynamic way and to find the same causal relationship, i.e. that policy follows opinion. They come to inconsistent conclusions with regard to context effects on the opinion-policy linkage, however. For instance, while thermostatic representation shows increased responsiveness in

majoritarian systems (Soroka and Wlezien, forthcoming), the salience model finds enhanced responsiveness under proportional rules (Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008). One explanation for the inconsistent results is that the measurements of public opinion used in the extant literature do not reflect the same underlying concept of public preferences. While no one explicitly claims that the public opinion measurement employed captures the same idea of public opinion, I argue that it is important to investigate whether there is a common denominator, some similarity or commonality across these indicators. First of all it is a valid question to ask why we rely on different measures of public preferences?

One answer to this question is data availability. The thermostatic model has been developed in a strong survey environment. Questions about people's spending preferences have been asked consistently since the early twentieth century in the United States, Canada and a few other countries. Hence, long time series on public preferences are available to track thermostatic representation over time. In other contexts, for instance in Europe, there is not such a vast survey research environment and data on public opinion are significantly thinner. Many surveys have not asked the same question about people's spending preferences over time, let alone cross-sectionally, which may be the reason why researchers fall back on alternative measures such as the MIP.

Another answer is that the research interest in issue responsiveness studies is shifting more and more towards exploring under what conditions government responsiveness occurs. Investigations into the conditions of political representation focus in particular on institutional conditions, which are best examined in a cross-sectional research design. While time wins in the trade-off between time and space when it comes to thermostatic representation – there are long time series on the public's spending preferences for a few countries – it is space that triumphs the trade-off for the salience model – cross-sectional data are available, but for shorter time series.

In a recent paper, Jennings and Wlezien (2012) raise the problem of measurement validity. They point out that spending preferences and the MIP tap very different things and that they are only modestly related over time. Further, they conclude that the MIP misrepresents the relationship between opinion and policy. However, they still find moderate correlations, which in particular in the social sciences indicate that the measures are related in some way. In this chapter I also address the measurement validity issue, but I start from a different angle. I am interested in whether

on the individual level thinking something is an important problem also means that people want to increase spending on that issue. In addition, I test how important problems and spending preferences are related on the aggregate level using comparative data. The results suggest different conclusions from those Jennings and Wlezien draw.

My first empirical chapter looks at the measurement validity of public opinion measurements, i.e. “whether or not, under different conditions of observing and studying [the same] phenomena, measurement operations yield measures of the same attribute” (Horn and McArdle, 1992: 117). In order to examine the measurement validity or measurement equivalence of public opinion measurements in issue responsiveness research, I conduct a three step analysis: I explore the 1) content, 2) discriminant, and 3) predictive validity of spending preferences and the MIP. In investigating the content validity I am limited to a discussion about the concepts of public opinion and how the previous literature treats and discusses the use of spending preferences and the MIP. In discriminant and predictive validity I am able to empirically test whether measurements are valid. Discriminant validity asks whether public opinion measures correlate with each other. Predictive validity is tested in a two ways. Firstly, it examines whether the same demographics predict preferences in the same way. Secondly, it looks at whether both measures of preferences predict government spending in the same way. The chapter is structured as follows: I start by discussing the linkages between public opinion responsiveness and effective policy responsiveness. Next, I set out the possible scenarios of how spending preferences and the MIP may be related. I then introduce the ideas of content, construct and predictive validity in more detail. Subsequently, the methodology and data are presented. Next, I conduct the empirical analyses and I close with some concluding remarks and implications for future research.

## **4.1 Public Opinion and Effective Policy Outcome Responsiveness**

Political representation in modern democracies is characterised by a linkage between public opinion and policy outputs. David Easton (1965) has taught us that the relationship between citizens’ demands and policy makers’ supplies in the policy cycle

is a reciprocal and interactive one. What scholars commonly describe as *'policy responsiveness'* means that policy makers supply public policies that are in accordance with public wishes. Democratic responsiveness is what occurs “when the democratic process induces the government to form and implement policies that the citizens want.” (Powell 2004: 91). Powell views responsiveness as a chain of events, which are moderated by structuring conditions. However, Powell’s ‘Chain of Responsiveness’ does not consider that policy outcomes feed back into what people want from governments, as Easton has established in his theory of political system (Easton, 1965). If people are satisfied with the policy outcomes, they may express new preferences for policies and start the policy cycle anew. If they are dissatisfied, the same preferences go back into the system. Democratic responsiveness is ongoing and dynamic. Although Powell admits that the responsiveness of governments to preferences is not entirely up to the good will of the policy makers (Powell, 2004: 92), he does not take into account public opinion responsiveness (see, Figure 1 in Chapter 2). If no public preferences are expressed, government cannot respond to anything. Consequently, the two crucial prerequisites for successful government responsiveness are public opinion and policy outcome responsiveness, which I discuss in more detail in the following.

### **4.1.1 Public Opinion Responsiveness**

In order to account for public preferences, it is important for policy makers to know what it is people think. To date, scholars of public opinion have failed to fully define what public opinion means. The term public opinion has been

loosely used, sometimes in reference to widespread beliefs, climate of opinion, consensus, the mores and the more settled convictions of a group; at times to the process of developing opinions, as distinguished from the product; elsewhere, to statements which are the result of a reasoned, logical process as contrasted with those which have been arrived at by ideological means; and the like (Albig, 1956: 3).

A minimum definition is that public opinion stands for “a collection of people who hold opinions on some issue” (Weissberg, 1976b: 9) or a collection of opinions on several issues, i.e. ideology (Albig, 1956: 15). While some opinions can be fixed, for example, underlying morals in the form of ideology, others vary over time with the changing scope of governmental action, or across societies and in the intensity with which they are held (Key, 1961: 9).



As there is no universal definition of what exactly public opinion stands for, empirical research relies on an operationalist definition, where public opinion is indicated by public opinion polls (Blumer, 1948). More precisely, opinion is viewed as the aggregated responses of individuals reflected in surveys (Brooks and Manza, 2006: 631) and expressed in elections or referenda. Following this notion it is important to assess how citizens' preferences are measured. Here, I discuss the measurements of public opinion in the context of comparative issue responsiveness research, which requires a certain degree of comparability across countries. That is, it must be ensured that the same concept is measured across countries.<sup>18</sup> Further, comparative issue responsiveness research looks at the correspondence of the public's issue preferences and public policies dynamically, implying a sequence inherently structured in time (Stimson et al., 1995: 543). This means that public responsiveness to policy outcomes occurs immediately and can be captured at any time through opinion polls, while policy responsiveness happens with a delay in time.

#### **4.1.2 Effective Policy Outcome Responsiveness**

Exploring the effective responsiveness of government towards public preferences is an ambitious task. Measuring public policy outcomes effectively means capturing the content of implemented legislation. In an ideal world, effective outcomes include regulative policies as well as spending. Yet data on regulative legislation are sparse, which is why scholars employ spending outlays to indicate public policy outcomes. The two widely used models of public policy responsiveness are the thermostatic model (Soroka and Wlezien, forthcoming, Soroka and Wlezien, 2010, Soroka and Wlezien, 2005, Soroka and Wlezien, 2004, Wlezien, 1996, Wlezien, 1995) and the salience model of responsiveness (Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008). Both

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<sup>18</sup> Indeed, there are many ways to measure what the public thinks. One could study specific attitudes towards moral (Wlezien and Goggin 1993) or environmental issues (Johnson et al. 2005) in individual cases. For example, Wlezien and Goggin use a statement question about abortion to indicate public opinion: "Please tell me whether you think it should be possible for a pregnant woman to obtain a legal abortion: (1) If the woman's health is seriously endangered by the pregnancy. (2) If she became pregnant as a result of rape. (3) If there is a strong chance of a serious defect in the baby. (4) If she has a very low income and cannot afford any more children. (5) If she is not married and does not want to marry the man. (6) If she is married and does not want any more children. (7) For any reason." Johnson, Brace and Arceneaux also employ a statement question in a different format that measures environmental attitudes: "I support pollution standards even if it means shutting down some factories. – Definitely agree, generally agree, moderately agree, moderately disagree, generally disagree, definitely disagree."

models employ spending outlays as the outcome indicator, but rely on different public opinion measures. While none of these authors claims that they test the same aspect of public opinion, it may yet be important to test whether spending preferences and salient issues have a common denominator. If this is the case, it may enable scholars to study the conditions of institutions on effective representation in broader country samples. Even if there is a much thinner survey environment scholarship may be able to rely on salient opinion, which is captured by surveys more frequently than spending preferences.

The thermostatic model of representation suggests a reciprocal relationship between public preferences for spending and public expenditure. Public opinion is operationalised as citizens' preferences for spending in a policy area X. Downs (1957) assumes that the public can be conceived of as a collection of individuals distributed along a dimension of preference for spending. While this does imply that individuals have specific preferred levels of spending in mind, the measure intends to reflect the fact that some individuals want more or less spending than others (Wlezien, 1996: 84). The survey item issued to capture the spending preferences of the people is: 'Are we spending too much, too little, or about the right amount on policy area X? Remember if you say "more" it could require a tax increase, and if you say "less" it could require a reduction in those services.' The difference between preferences for less spending and support for more spending, i.e. the net support for spending, indicates the relative preferences of the public. Policy makers follow the public's relative preferences by increasing/decreasing expenditure and the induced spending change feeds back into public preferences (inter alia Wlezien, 2004, Wlezien, 1995, Wlezien, 1996). Thermostatic representation does not work equally well across countries and issue areas, however, but is moderated by a country's political institutions. Federalism, for instance, constrains the responsiveness of the public to policy change, while presidentialism and majoritarianism increase political representation (Soroka and Wlezien, forthcoming, Soroka and Wlezien, 2010, Soroka and Wlezien, 2005, Soroka and Wlezien, 2004).

The salience model of responsiveness employs the open-ended MIP question to measure public opinion: "What is the most important problem facing [YOUR] country today?" The MIP is a measure of issue salience and measures the relative importance of issues to citizens (Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2005, Burden and Sanberg, 2003, Bara,

2001, Mackuen and Coombs, 1981, McCombs and Shaw, 1972). This is why I call the model employing this measure the salience model of representation. Responsiveness to salient issues posits that policy makers follow what people think is the most important problem by increasing budgets in the respective issue area and this change feeds back into public preferences (Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008). Just like thermostatic representation, the responsiveness to salient issues varies across countries and issue domains. Political institutions seem to be the main driver of those differences. However, in contrast to the thermostat, some of the results point in a different direction. While both models find consistent results with regard to the regime type – presidential governments are more responsive than parliamentary ones – the salience model suggests that representation is more pronounced in proportional systems than majoritarian systems (Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2005, Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008, Pickup and Hobolt, 2011). In addition, it proposes that representation is affected by the political game, for example, minority and unpopular governments represent public preferences more successfully than their counterparts (Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008, Pickup and Hobolt, 2011). Now, these scholars do not claim to capture exactly the same aspect or dimension of public opinion. However, it would be valuable to know whether both measures are related and thus something else explains different results of contextual effects or whether the measures are not related. In the latter case, the different results may not be so surprising, but it may be worth to disentangle further what dimension of public preferences salient opinion and spending preferences are capturing.

While it is largely accepted that spending preferences are a good indicator of what people want (Soroka and Wlezien, 2010, Canes-Wrone and Shotts, 2004, Wlezien, 1996, Wlezien, 1995, Page and Shapiro, 1983, Downs, 1957), issue salience is for being a non-directional measure of public *priorities* (Jennings and Wlezien 2012) and may not be the best indicator for public opinion when matching opinion with spending outlays<sup>19</sup>. Further, experimental research suggests that responses to the MIP question are extremely volatile and susceptible to change depending on question wording. For instance, the indicated time period and (de-)personalisation matter to the answers given

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<sup>19</sup> In contrast to public preferences, public priorities only indicate what issues are important in comparison to other ones, but they do not induce a preferred direction, e.g. for more or less policy in an area. Thus, priorities only tell us about how much emphasis someone is giving to a topic or an issue.

by survey respondents (Yeager et al., 2011).<sup>20</sup> A recent paper by Jennings and Wlezien (2012) criticises that the MIP captures something completely different from spending preferences. By crossing the two measures over time for the US and the UK, they conclude that they are, if at all, only moderately correlated and that indicating opinion using the MIP misrepresents the relationship between public opinion and public policy. Moderate correlations in the social sciences do suggest however that there is at least something going on between the MIP and spending preferences. It is important to investigate the moderate relationship in more detail. The MIP is an important indicator that is comparable across countries, while spending preferences are only collected in a handful of countries. Let me emphasise again, that by no means I claim that any of these scholars mentioned above suggests that the measures capture exactly the same dimension or aspect of public opinion. Until recently, there has not even been a discussion about the validity of spending preferences and the MIP (see Jennings and Wlezien 2012). However, it also has not been emphasised that the models of government responsiveness and especially the measures of public opinion do not capture the same dimension or the same aspect of public preferences. For the above reasons it is important, however, to investigate in how far these public opinion measures - spending preferences and the MIP - are related (or not).

## **4.2 Possible Linkages between Spending Preferences and the Most Important Problems**

Whether or not there is a relationship could be incredibly important for comparative research. Spending preferences have previously been used in single-country case studies or comparative case studies, e.g. of the US, the UK and Canada. While there has been no concern about the general comparability of this measure, there is a trade-off between the quality of the measure and its cross-sectional availability. Most individual country studies and cross-sectional surveys do not ask respondents about their spending preferences on specific policy issues. By contrast, the MIP is

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<sup>20</sup> Related research on the equivalence of most important issues and problems indicates that there is a difference between the importance of an issue and the degree to which an issue is a problem (Wlezien 2005). To survey respondents, salient issues and problems are similar enough to use them interchangeably (Jennings and Wlezien 2011). Here I only focus on the most important problem as a measurement in comparative responsiveness research.

commonly asked in individual-country surveys as well as in large scale cross-national surveys. It is easily translated and a valuable, comparable and available measure. While only one study explores whether both measure are related (Jennings and Wlezien, 2012), the MIP is accused of being a weak measure of public opinion and at best captures people's issues priorities (Jennings and Wlezien, 2012, Jennings and Wlezien, 2011, Yeager et al., 2011, Wlezien, 2005). The trade-off between the ability to conduct cross-sectional research and the quality (perhaps non-directionality) of the public opinion measurement leads this research. Although recent research indicates that the two measures tap into completely different aspects of public opinion (Jennings and Wlezien, 2012), the same results lend some confidence that there is at least some relationship between spending preferences and the MIP. This is suggested by the moderate correlations Jennings and Wleizen report. I see three conceivable scenarios of how spending preference and the MIP may be related:

- 1) Measurements' equivalence
- 2) Measurements related depending on the policy area
- 3) Measurements' dissimilarity

Spending preferences and the MIP might be equivalent (1). That means, under different conditions of observing and studying the same phenomena, measurement operations yield measures of the same attribute (Horn and McArdle, 1992: 117). In other words, spending preferences and the MIP capture the same concept of public opinion and can be used interchangeably. This would mean that although the MIP does not give a direction of preferred change, respondents want to increase spending if they think something is a problem. This is unlikely as previous empirical research already suggests they are not exactly the same and after all the survey questions ask for different things: Spending preferences and issues or problem that are considered important.

Spending preferences and the MIP might be related, but the relationship only in some policy domains, not in others (2). It might be that, particularly in the social domains, thinking something is an important problem is related to wanting more spending on the social issues. Why the social issues? Social domains are redistributive. If governments spend money, the expenses will eventually be redistributed, so that the people benefit from it. For instance, healthcare or welfare. It is likely that, in thinking

of an redistributive area as a problem, people believe that less is spent on the issue by the incumbent government. Spending on non-redistributive issues such as defence and law and order do not affect people directly, so it is likely that thinking of such areas as a problem is less or not at all related to wanting more spending on the issue. Should this be the case, we know that can use the MIP as an indicator to test government responsiveness on social issues, but not on other issues. This would allow comparative research using the MIP to study social policy responsiveness, which would still be a great implication of this research.

Finally, spending preferences and the MIP could be completely unrelated and dissimilar (3). Both measures would be asymmetric in this scenario. This would imply that indeed the conclusions we can draw from the MIP, which as a measure may be so valuable for comparativists, are limited. As a consequence, the assumptions that the salience model is build upon, may have to be reconsidered. Perhaps all salient opinion can tell us to in terms of policy responsiveness research is whenever a problem is important, there will be change in spending. This would be a simpler, non-directional test of responsiveness. Responsiveness occurs when there is change in spending in the policy domain regarded, but it would unable to explain why there has been more (or less) spending relying on salient opinion. Further research would be required to disentangle this.

I expect to find evidence for the second scenario. Empirical evidence on the US and the UK shows that the measurements are not equivalent (Jennings and Wlezien, 2012), which is something we may expect. Why would questions on spending means exactly the same to people than questions on important problems? However, the empirics of the same paper also indicate that both measure are not completely unrelated. Perhaps if an issue is salient people are inclined to want more/or less spending depending on the issue domain. Whatever the outcome of the following individual-level investigation is, previous research shows that there is also a relationship between the MIP and spending (Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008).

Spending preferences and salient opinion are likely to differ by policy domain, however. People feel strongly about some areas that directly affect them such as redistributive issues like health care, education, and welfare. Issues concerned with higher policy, such as defence or foreign policy, which do not affect citizens directly, may have less of an impact on their preferences for spending in these domains.

### **4.3 Assessing the Content, Discriminant and Predictive Validity of Public Opinion Measures**

To test the measurement validity of public issue demands I explore the content, discriminant and predictive validity of spending preferences and the MIP. Content validity describes an imprecise assessment of validity. “Fundamentally, content validity depends on the extent to which an empirical measurement reflects a specific domain of content” (Camines and Zeller, 1979: 21). In order to examine whether the issue preferences achieve content validity, I have to rely on a discussion about these measurements in the respective literature. There is no other “agreed upon criterion for determining the extent to which a measure has attained content validity” (Camines and Zeller, 1979: 23) than the discussion in the research literature. In the absence of well-defined, objective criteria “inevitably content validity rests mainly on appeals to reason regarding the adequacy with which important content has been sampled and on the adequacy with which the content has been cast in the form of test items” (Nunnally, 1978: 93). The review of the relevant literature in the previous sections (Chapter 4.1 and Chapter 4.2) shows that there is only little debate about the measurement validity of spending preferences and the MIP.

Discriminant “validity must be investigated whenever no criterion or universe of content is accepted as entirely adequate to define the quality to be measured” (Cronbach and Meehl, 1955: 282). In order to test the discriminant validity, measures can be crossed to test whether they correlate with each other. While weak correlations between the MIP and spending preferences are found over time in the UK and US (Jennings and Wlezien, 2012), it is important to further explore whether the measures correlate with each other on the individual level as well as across countries.

Moreover, it is also helpful to examine the predictive validity of the MIP and spending preferences. While correlations already give an indication “that our measures can correctly predict something that we theoretically think it should be able to predict” (Trochim, 2006), further tests are needed to see whether they predict the same outcome of a dependent variable. I examine the predictive validity of public opinion measures in two steps. Firstly, I am interested in whether or not the two measures are predicted in the same way by the demographic characteristics of survey respondents, in

other words, whether the same attributes predict the public's issue preferences in the same way. Secondly, I test whether both measures predict spending in the bivariate relationship in the same way. To adjudicate whether spending preferences and MIP are related, I ask four questions:

**Figure 6: Adjudicating the Relationship between Spending Preferences and MIP**

- (1) Is there a relationship between the measures?
- (2) Is the relationship strong enough to suggest that they are the same?
- (3) Are both measures predicted in the same way by a set of demographic attributes?
- (4) Are the findings comparable across policy areas?

Moderate or strong, positive (and ideally statistically significant) correlations and bivariate relationships suggest that discriminant validity is achieved. In terms of predictive validity, I hope to find that coefficients for the demographic characteristics point at least in the same direction, and at best that they also display significant results. In the aggregate data, I hope to find positive relationships between the MIP and spending outlays in the following year as well as a positive relationship between spending preferences and spending outlays in the following year. If the strengths and direction of the coefficients are the same or similar, I conclude that predictive validity is achieved.

## 4.4 Data and Methodology

In order to empirically test the validity of public opinion measures in issue responsiveness research, superior data are required that incorporate the different measures, preferably for a large number of countries and over time. Such a data set does not exist, however. Most of the available data sources include either spending preferences or the MIP. These are usually individual case studies and not surveys that collect cross-sectional time-series data. I rely on original, individual-level data as well as secondary, aggregate-level data. I discuss my data and methodology in the following.



#### 4.4.1 Individual-Level Data

The individual-level survey data on people's spending preferences and MIPs are provided by TNS BMRB. TNS BMRB is an independent research agency that conducts a monthly web-based public opinion monitor on politically relevant topics in Britain. I was able to place some questions on the public's issue preferences on the March 2012 monitor: (1) a verbatim coded MIP question and (2) four questions about people's spending preferences on health care, education, the environment and national security/defence. The MIP is asked as an open-ended question: *"What do you think is the most important problem facing Britain today?"* In order to ensure that respondents answer this question without bias produced by other questions asked in the survey, the MIP question is placed at the very beginning of the online questionnaire. The verbatim answers were hand-coded into eight issue areas (inflation/rising prices, unemployment, the National Health Service, education, national security/defence, level of taxation, crime/law & order, and the environment). If respondents typed in more than one problem the first mentioned topic was coded. Problems that did not match any category were dropped as missing values.

Due to the limited space on the questionnaire I had to choose four policy domains of interest to ask about in regard to respondents' spending preferences. The selection of the four policy areas is not random. "National security/ defence", "the National Health Service", "education", and "the environment" were relevant topics in Britain at the time and have been studied previously in responsiveness research. TNS BRMB asked:

*For the next questions, please say whether there should be more or less public spending in each of the following areas. Remember if you say 'more' it could require a tax increase, and if you say 'less' it could require a reduction in those services. Thinking about public spending on [National Security/Defence/ The National Health Service/ Education/ the Environment], should there be much more than now, somewhat more than now, the same as now, somewhat less than now, or much less than now?*

In order to ensure that respondents would not say "much more spending" per se for every question, the reminder *"Remember if you say 'more' it could require a tax increase, and if you say 'less' it could require a reduction in those services"* has been added. The issue areas were randomised on the online questionnaire to avoid bias and fatigue. TNS BRMB placed the spending preferences question at the very end of the

survey to ensure that respondents do not make any connection between the MIP and the spending preferences asked.

From prior research on issue responsiveness we have learned that the net support for spending is one straightforward way to measure the public's issue preferences. For instance, Downs (1957) notes that the public can be conceived of as a collection of individuals distributed along a dimension of preference for spending. Spending preferences "serve to indicate the degree to which the public want more (less) spending" (Wlezien, 1995: 985) and can be measured over time. The measure has been frequently used in previous responsiveness research as a placeholder for public opinion (Soroka and Wlezien, 2010, Soroka and Wlezien, 2005, Soroka and Wlezien, 2004, Canes-Wrone and Shotts, 2004, Wlezien, 1996, Wlezien, 1995, Page and Shapiro, 1983) and is well explored in terms of what predicts spending preferences (Welch, 1985, Ferris, 1983, Eismeier, 1982).

For the above reasons I treat spending preferences as the dependent variable in the analyses. Citizens' preferences for spending were measured on an ordinal scale ranging originally from 1 to 5, where 5 means people want a lot less spending on an area and 1 indicates they want a lot more spending on an area. For the purpose of the analyses I have reversed the coding, so that higher numbers indicate preferences for more spending and low numbers preferences for less spending. The MIP serves as the independent variable. I coded the MIP into dummy variables for health care, education, defence and the environment, where 1 indicates the topic was mentioned and 0 if it was not mentioned. I begin my analysis by examining the simple correlations and bivariate ordered logistic relationships between spending preferences and the MIP:

$$\text{ologit SPENDPREF} = \alpha + \beta * \text{MIP} + \varepsilon, \quad (1)$$

where SPENDPREF are the spending preferences by policy area and serve as a dependent variable and the MIP as the explanatory variable.  $\alpha$  gives the coefficient for the constant and  $\beta$  gives the relationship coefficient for the MIP. The error term is indicated by  $\varepsilon$ .

To examine the predictive validity of spending preferences and the MIP, here whether or not the same demographics predict spending preferences and the MIP similarly, I run similar models. I rely on an ordered logistic regression to explore what

predicts spending preference. Instead of using the MIP as a predictor I use the MIP and spending preferences as dependent variables and include age, gender, education and vote choice as predictors:

$$\text{ologit}_{\text{SPENDPREF}} = \alpha + \beta * [\text{AGE/GENDER/EDU/VOTE}] + \varepsilon, \quad (2)$$

$\alpha$  gives the coefficient for the constant and  $\beta$  gives the relationship coefficient for the predictors. The error term is indicated by  $\varepsilon$ . To explore whether the same predictors have the same or at least a similar effect on the MIP, I rely on a simple logistic regression for dependent dummy variables:

$$\text{logit}_{\text{MIP}} = \alpha + \beta * [\text{AGE/GENDER/EDU/VOTE}] + \varepsilon, \quad (3)$$

$\alpha$  gives the coefficient for the constant and  $\beta$  gives the relationship coefficient for the predictors. The error term is indicated by  $\varepsilon$ .

## 4.4.2 Comparative, Aggregate Data

In order to examine whether or not spending preferences and the Most Important Issue (MII) predict spending outlays in the same way, I have generated a comparative, aggregate data set from three different data sources. I aggregated up and pooled data on the public's spending preferences collected by the International Social Survey Program (ISSP) as well as data on public's policy concerns collected by Eurobarometer and added country-level data on government spending, GDP and inflation rates provided by the OECD.

The ISSP asked respondents about their spending preferences on eight policy domains, but I only look at the same four policy domains that I have analysed in Chapter 4.4.1: health care, education, the environment and defence. The question wording deviates slightly from the questions I ran on TNS BMRB's online survey:

*Listed below are various areas of government spending. Please show whether you would like to see more or less government spending in each area. Remember that if you say 'much more', it might require a tax increase to pay for it. Government should spend [SPEND MUCH MORE/ SPEND MORE/ SPEND THE SAME AS NOW/ SPEND LESS/ SPEND MUCH LESS] money on [HEALTH/ EDUCATION/ THE ENVIRONMENT/ DEFENCE].*

The code is ordinal and ranges from 1 to 5, where 5 indicates much less spending and 1 much more spending. When aggregating up the data and for ease of the analysis, I collapse the categories “spend much more” and “spend more” as well as “spend much less” and “spend less”. I also drop the middle category – those people who want spending to stay the same. Further, I generate a measure of net spending, which is the proportion of people who prefer more spending minus the proportion of people who want less spending.

Salient opinion is collected by the Eurobarometer surveys. Instead of asking what respondents think is an important problem, they ask about the most important issue (MII). While there are theoretical differences between issues and to what extent an issue is a problem (Wlezien, 2005), crossing the MIP and MII measure has shown that people think of both measures as the same thing (Jennings and Wlezien, 2011). Eurobarometer asks: “*What do you think are the two most important issues facing [OUR COUNTRY] today?*” Note that the survey does not differentiate between first and second mentioned issues, so in the aggregate the proportion of people who named an issue either as the most or second most important problem is captured.

Finally, my combined data incorporates information about spending outlays by function provided by the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Amongst other country information the OECD collects data on how much the respective government has spent in the last fiscal year (spending outlays). In addition, spending outlays are broken down by their function into ten spending categories. These also cover my four policy domains: health, education, the environment and defence. The outcome variable is spending in a policy domain measured as the proportion of the overall expenditure.

While the ISSP and Eurobarometer surveys only overlap in 2006, I am able to add spending data for 2006 and 2007 in order to test whether there is overall congruence between measures of opinion and spending in 2006 and whether spending in 2007 is predicted by public opinion captured in 2006.<sup>21</sup> After matching the data sources by

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<sup>21</sup> Please note that I work with levels of opinion here. The ISSP did not run these questions in 2005, so I am unable to calculate change in opinion from the previous year.

country and year, I end up with a comparative country sample for 14 European countries<sup>22</sup>.

To get an initial indication of whether or not spending preferences and the MII are related on the aggregate, I begin by crossing the measures with actual spending in the area. I then assess the predictive validity. Here, this means whether spending preferences and the MII predict spending in the same way. I capture the responsiveness of government spending in year  $t+1$  towards public opinion in year  $t$ . In order to investigate responsiveness, I run simple Ordinary Least Square regressions with panel-corrected standard errors that correct for clustering by country<sup>23</sup>.

$$[EXP_{t+1}] = \alpha + \beta * [MII_t / MSPEND_t / MSPEND_t] + \varepsilon, \quad (4)$$

where  $EXP_{t+1}$  is the proportion of the overall expenditure in year 2007 in the four issue domains.  $\alpha$  is the constant, and  $\beta$  indicates the relationship coefficient for the  $MII_t$  (the proportion of people who thought the issue was important in 2006),  $MSPEND_t$  (preferences for more spending in the domain) and  $LSPEND_t$  (preferences for less spending in 2006). If the MII and MSPEND measures predict positive coefficients and the LSPEND produces negative results, preferably at the standard significance level, I can accept predictive validity.

## 4.5 Spending Preferences and MIPs in Britain

In this section I rely on the individual-level data collected in Britain and explore the validity of spending preferences and the MIP. The models and underlying assumptions have been discussed in the methodology section. I begin by presenting some descriptive results indicating that there is some relationship between the measurements. I then investigate the construct validity of spending preferences and

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<sup>22</sup> Eurobarometer only includes countries within the European Union and served as the basis for adding other information. The ISSP provides data for over 30 countries, but only 14 of them are European. Spending outlay data is available for all 14 EU members sampled in the ISSP and Eurobarometer. The countries I look at are the Czech Republic, Denmark, Spain, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

<sup>23</sup> I also run analyses on the stacked data set. I reshape the data from wide to long format in order to increase the number of observation for analysis. While I lose information on the specific policy domain, this allows me to increase the reliability of my results. I correct standard errors for the analyses on the stacked data for clustering by policy field.

important problems. The results suggest that there is a somewhat weak relationship between the measurements. Finally, I examine how well demographic characteristics predict spending preferences and the MIP. Indeed, the analyses show that most coefficients consistently point in the same direction, but that there is some variation across policy domains.

#### **4.5.1 The Relationship between MIP & Spending**

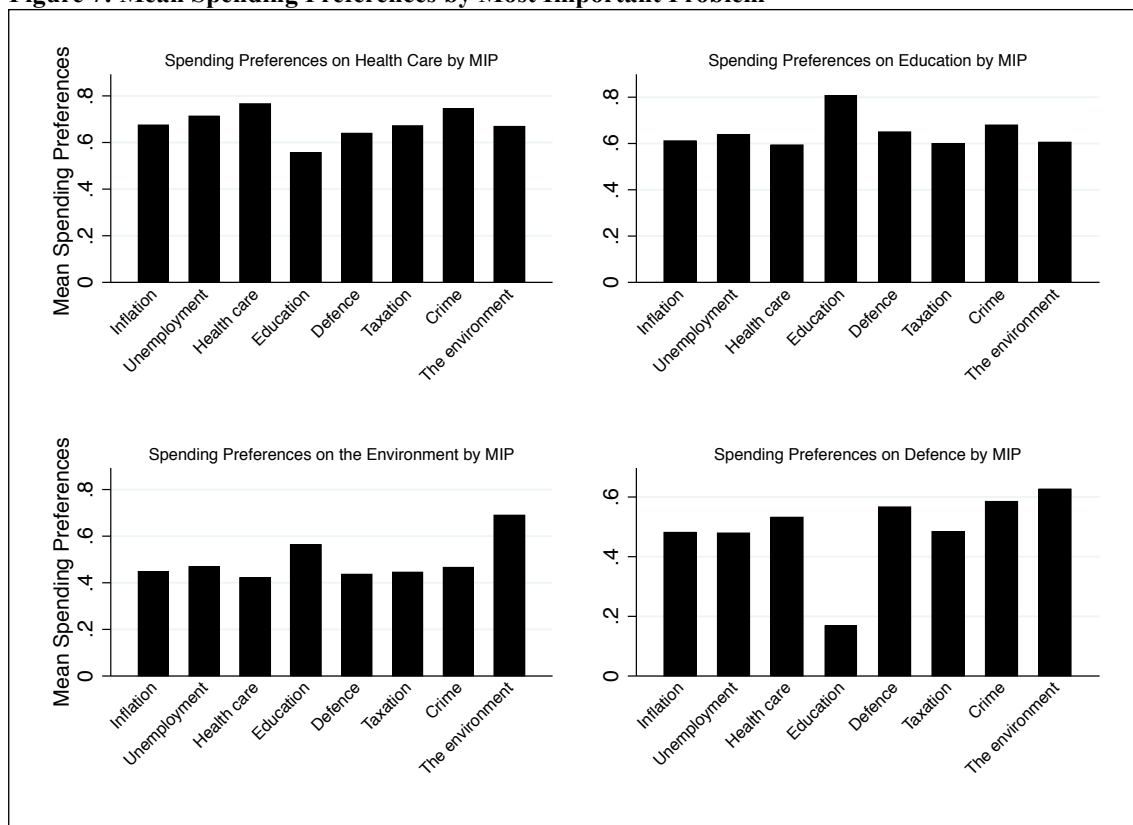
##### **Preferences: Descriptive Results**

I begin by presenting some descriptive statistics. Figure 7 exhibits the relationship between mean spending preferences on the four policy areas and the MIP. The sample has been divided by responses to the MIP question. In order to evaluate how spending preferences vary across the four policy areas by the MIP, I give the mean value on spending preferences for each policy area. If the MIP is tapping into spending preferences, I would expect that preferences for spending in a given policy area are highest for those who identified that policy area as the most important problem. Furthermore, I am also able to explore how spending preferences on my four policy areas are related to any other issue outside the four areas. I may expect that if a respondent identifies a social issue such as education as the MIP, preferences for spending on other social issues such as health care might also be high.

The graph below (Figure 7) suggests that there is a relationship between the MIP and preferences for more spending on the same issues. I observe similar patterns for the social domains, health care and education as well as for the environment, where the highest column (preferences for more spending) coincides with the largest share considering the issue an important problem. For instance, the graph on health care indicates that people who think health care is an important problem also prefer more spending on health in comparison to those who have identified another MIP. The bar for health care stands out as the highest peak, which means that on average people want a lot more spending in this area. Furthermore, for those who have identified health as the MIP, preferences for more spending are highest on health care when compared to the other four policy areas. Overall, taking all MIPs and comparing across policy areas, the figure also suggests that respondents generally prefer more spending on health care.

This is the general pattern for the other policy areas. For example, those who identified the environment as the MIP also have highest average preference for more spending. Notably, people who stated that education is most important want a lot more spending on the education. The graph also displays that people want more spending on education in general; all MIP categories are beyond the middle category on the y axis, which indicates support for more spending. There is less variation across problems in comparison to health care. Preferences on environmental issues are similarly related. Those who believe the environment is the most important problem prefer more spending on environmental issues. Here, education stands out as being the second highest peak, which means, that respondents who think education is the MIP also want more spending on the environmental issues. There is little variation across the other problems. They range around the middle category for spending preferences, indicating that respondents prefer spending to stay about the same.

**Figure 7: Mean Spending Preferences by Most Important Problem**



Data source: Monthly Public Opinion Monitor, March 2012, TNS BMRB

The one exception from the general pattern is defence as those who identify this as the MIP have, on average, a lower preference for increased spending than for any of

the other MIPs. While people who think national security/ defence is the MIP also want more spending on the issue, there are two other problems that are more salient and seem to be better related to preferences for more defence spending: the environment and crime. Those respondents who believe that the environment and crime are the MIP prefer more defence spending than those who explicitly named defence as the MIP. There seems to be a lot more variation between preferences on defence spending and the MIP in comparison to the other three policy areas suggesting that defence is somewhat special. For example, those who recall education as an important problem support less spending on defence, while people who name another problem as the most important one want defence spending to stay about the same. Given that defence is not a social policy like the other policy spending areas, I suspect this may be driving the different result. The type of the issue seems to matter.

#### **4.5.2 Issue Importance and Spending Preferences in Britain: Discriminant Validity**

The discriminant measurement validity of important problems and spending preferences is explored in two steps. I begin by correlating both measures with each other in the four issue areas: health care, education, the environment and national security/defence. Next, I explore whether spending preferences are predicted by the MIP in ordered logistic regressions.

Table 3 presents the correlation matrix for all policy areas. The top of the table presents the correlation between all spending preference questions and the bottom of the table presents the correlations between MIP and spending preferences. Given the nature of the variables, I present Spearman Rank Order correlations. I find the strongest correlations between education and health care spending preferences and a strong correlation also between education and the environment. Defence spending preferences stand out as lacking any relationship to the other issues in terms of spending preferences. Consistent with Figure 7, there seems to be some similarity between the social issues in terms of how they behave alongside the other issues, with defence standing on its own. When examining the correlations between spending preferences and the MIP, the results suggest weak, positive, but statistically significant relationships



across the social policy areas. Defence as an important problem and spending preferences also display a weak, positive, but insignificant correlation. Again, this is consistent with the earlier findings that distinguish defence as a special policy area. It is difficult to draw any firm conclusions from the bivariate correlations as the results are not consistent.

**Table 3: Correlation Matrix of Spending Preferences and MIP**

		Spending Preferences				Most Important Problem			
		Health Care	Education	Environment	Defence	Health Care	Education	Environment	Defence
Spending Preferences	Health Care	1.00							
	Education	0.44***	1.00						
	Environment	0.19***	0.27***	1.00					
	Defence	0.15***	0.09***	0.01	1.00				
Most Important Problem	Health Care	0.05*	-0.02	-0.02	0.01	1.00			
	Education	-0.05*	0.08***	0.03	-0.09***	-0.01	1.00		
	Environment	-0.01	-0.01	0.09***	0.05*	-0.01	-0.01	1.00	
	Defence	-0.03	0.02	-0.02	0.04	-0.02	-0.01	0.02	1.00

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

As a next step in my analysis, I employ the MIP to predict spending preferences. While I expect to find similar results, this step allows a more appropriate test given the ordinal nature of the dependent variable. Table 4 displays the results of these ordered logits. The overall picture is that whenever people consider something an important problem, they also prefer more spending on the issue. The coefficients are positive throughout, but not all of them are statistically significant. For instance, the strongest relationships are between spending preferences and the MIP on education (+1.76, Pearson's  $p < 0.01$ ) and the environment (+1.6, Pearson's  $p < 0.01$ ). I also observe a considerably strong correspondence between measures on health care issues (+0.96). This latter coefficient does not reach the traditional 0.05 level of statistical significance but nevertheless indicates a strong relationship. With a Pearson's  $p$  of 0.056 it is more than close to being significant at 95% confidence level. The weakest linkage is between measures on defence (+0.46). It is positive, but is not statistically significant. This is not surprising as I expected priorities on this issue to be non-linear and different from the social issues.

Although measures only weakly correlate with each other, there is a linkage between spending preferences and the MIP. Salient problems seem to predict spending

preferences to some extent. There are differences across domains, however. While health care, education and the environment reach the traditional levels of statistical significance, defence seems to be different from these social domains. With regard to the discriminant validity, the small correlation indicates that they are not equivalent measures, but that they are related in some way depending on the policy area. Whenever a social problem is important, people do prefer more spending on the domain.

**Table 4: Relationship between Spending Preferences Most Important Problems**

	Spending Preferences on			
	Health	Education	Environment	Defence
<b>MIP: Health</b>	0.96* (-0.5)			
<b>MIP: Education</b>		1.76*** (-0.65)		
<b>MIP: Environment</b>			1.6*** (-0.56)	
<b>MIP: Defence</b>				0.46 (-0.34)
<b>Cut 1</b>	-4.08*** (-0.23)	-3.88*** (-0.21)	-1.96*** (-0.09)	-2.05*** (-0.1)
<b>Cut 2</b>	-2.5*** (-0.11)	-2.5*** (-0.11)	-0.76*** (-0.06)	-0.91*** (-0.07)
<b>Cut 3</b>	-0.49*** (-0.06)	0.13** (-0.06)	1.16*** (-0.07)	0.8*** (-0.07)
<b>Cut 4</b>	1.48*** (-0.08)	2.13*** (-0.1)	2.63*** (-0.12)	2.4*** (-0.11)
<b>Observations</b>	1,153	1,146	1,131	1,117

Standard error in parentheses

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

### 4.5.3 Spending Preferences and MIP in Britain: Predictive Validity

In predictive validity with regard to the individual-level character of the data used here, I examine whether the likelihood of identifying an important problem and spending preferences on that issue is predicted by the same demographic attributes. The data allow me to investigate the impact of a respondent's age, gender, education and vote choice. If the MIP and spending preferences are similar indicators of policy preferences, I expect the demographic coefficients to point in the same direction. Instead of reporting the results in a table, I indicate the size of the coefficients and their

statistical significance in the text. The reported coefficients are based on the bivariate relationships.

Age generally appears to be good predictor for problem importance and spending. In all four policy domains, it works in the expected direction. For instance, the older people are, the more likely they are to prefer more spending on health care (+0.003) and to name health care as the MIP (+0.02).<sup>24</sup> This is also true for issue preferences on defence. Older respondents prefer more defence spending (+0.01\*\*\*); the issue is also more salient to them (+0.02). Age has a consistent, negative impact on preferences on education and environmental issues. The older people are, the less likely they are to prefer a spending increase on education (-0.01\*\*\*) and to name education as an important problem (-0.03\*). In addition, older respondents are the less likely to prefer more spending on the environment (-0.01\*\*\*) and to name it as the MIP (-0.05\*\*).

The results are not as clear on how gender predicts the MIP and spending preferences. I observe a consistent pattern for preferences on health care and the environment. In comparison to women, men are less likely to support more spending on health care issues (-0.6\*\*\*) or to name health care as the MIP (-1.08\*). Men are also less likely to prefer spending on the environment (-0.12) or to consider the environment an important problem (-0.31). On educational and defence issues the results are inconsistent. While men prefer less spending on education when compared to women (-0.47\*\*\*), they are more likely to name educational issues as a most important problem (+0.26). The same pattern shows for preferences on defence. Men are less likely to prefer an increase in defence spending than women (-0.17), but they are more likely to think of defence as an important problem (+0.58).

I observe consistent patterns in the respondents' education on issues concerned with health care, education and defence. Well-educated respondents are more likely to prefer spending on education (+0.07) and to name education as the most important problem (+2.16\*\*) when compared with less well-educated respondents. Similarly, they are less likely to prefer a spending increase on health care (-0.29\*\*\*) or defence (-0.79\*\*\*), or to name health (-0.39) or defence (-0.28) as important problems. It is ambiguous how education predicts preferences on the environment, however. While

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<sup>24</sup> Asterisks indicated with the coefficients stand for significance levels: \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

well-educated people prefer more spending on the environment (+0.38\*\*\*), they are less likely to think of the environment as an important problem (-1.08) compared to less well-educated respondents.

Lastly, I explore vote choice as a predictor for issue preferences. For practical reasons, I only consider the catch-all parties, i.e. Labour and the Conservatives<sup>25</sup>. Vote choice seems to be a good predictor for issue priorities. It shows consistent patterns across all issue domains. As expected, Conservative voters, in comparison to Labour affiliates, are less likely to prefer an increase in spending on health care (-0.59\*\*\*), education (-0.7\*\*\*) and the environment (-0.8\*\*\*); consistently they are also less likely to think of these areas as important problems (health care: -0.69; education: -1.1; the environment: -1.79\*). On defence the coefficients for Conservative supporters are throughout positive, which is not surprising. Conservative partisans are more likely to prefer an increase in defence spending (+0.53\*\*\*) and at the same time they are more likely to name defence as an important problem (+0.42) when compared to Labour voters. This is in accordance with the expectation for those on the left and those on the right. Labour partisans are expected to want an increase spending on social issues, whereas Conservative voters are believed to prefer a spending increase on issues concerned with law and order and defence.

In conclusion, the empirical tests for discriminant and predictive validity suggest support for the second scenario. Few inconsistencies can be explained by the issue domain looked at. I find consistent results throughout for health care and education with regard to discriminant validity and predictive validity. The only exceptions are defence and environmental preferences predicted by gender, as well as environmental preferences predicted by education. The relation between spending preferences and the MIP seems to depend on the issue domain regarded. In the following, I explore another dimension of predictive measurement validity and test whether spending preferences and salient issues also predict public expenditure similarly. To do this, I rely on a different data set that I have constructed from different data sources. I look at aggregate data in a comparative setting. In addition, I also discuss the implications of these

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<sup>25</sup> Most people report to have voted for one of the mass parties, while there are few respondents in our sample who state they have voted for a niche party or not voted at all. It made sense to dummy the vote choice variable into Labour and Conservatives.

findings for policy responsiveness research and how future analyses might incorporate those results in a concluding section.

## **4.6 Spending Preferences, Salient Opinion & Public Expenditure across Space: Predictive Validity**

In predictive validity I do not only test whether the same demographics predict spending preferences and the MIP in the same way, I also examine whether spending preferences and most important issues (MII) predict actual spending similarly on an aggregate using cross-sectional data. I begin by investigating the correlations between public expenditure in year  $t+1$  and spending preferences for more spending, less spending, and net spending preferences<sup>26</sup>, as well as the MII measured in year  $t$ . This way I test responsiveness of budgets to measures of issue preferences assuming that responsiveness occurs with a delay of one year (Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008, Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2005, Soroka and Wlezien, 2005, Brooks, 1990, Page and Shapiro, 1983). In order to increase the explanatory power, I have reshaped the data from wide to long format by policy field, which increases the number of observations to 56 (14 countries times 4 policy domains). While I lose the information about the policy field, I do get an indication of how opinion and policy are related when all domains are taken together. Table 5 displays the correlation matrix for public expenditure and the three measures of public preferences taken all issue domains together. I present Spearman Rank Order correlations. All three measures of preferences are strongly correlated with public expenditure and are also highly statistically significant with a Pearson's  $p < 0.01$ . The strongest correlations are between public expenditure and preferences for more spending (+0.68), as well as for public expenditure and net preferences for spending (+0.63). Spending outlays and the MII also show a fair level of correspondence that is a little weaker (+0.54). Not surprisingly, expenditure and preferences for less spending are negatively correlated (-0.52).

In addition to this, the matrix also displays correlations between the MII and preferences for more spending – with a correlation coefficient of +0.34 (Pearson's  $p < 0.01$ ) – as well as with net spending preferences (+0.29, Pearson's  $p < 0.05$ ). This

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<sup>26</sup> To recap, this is the difference between those who said they prefer more spending on an issue and those who stated that they prefer less spending on the same issue.

supports the findings from the individual-level data and indicates that people who prefer more spending also think the issue is important. It also shows that the net spending measure used in the thermostatic model correlates to some extent with the MII.

**Table 5: Correlations between Public Spending and Public Preferences**

	<b>Public Expenditure</b>	<b>Preferences for More Spending</b>	<b>Preferences for Less Spending</b>	<b>Net Spending Preferences</b>	<b>MII</b>
<b>Public Expenditure (OECD)</b>	1.00				
<b>Preferences for more spending (ISSP)</b>	0.68***	1.00			
<b>Preferences for less spending (ISSP)</b>	-0.52***	-0.9***	1.00		
<b>Net Spending Preferences (ISSP)</b>	0.63***	0.98***	-0.96***	1.00	
<b>MII (Eurobarometer)</b>	0.54***	0.34***	-0.18	0.29**	1.00
<b>Observations</b>	56	56	56	56	56

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

When examining the correlation by policy domain these patterns do not hold, nor do the findings show statistically significant results. I present the correlation matrices for the four policy domains in Tables A1–A4 in Appendix A. In accordance with the overall pattern, preferences for education and defence work in the expected direction. That is, support for more spending (education: 0.09; defence 0.11), net spending (education: 0.14; defence: 0.08) and the MII (education: 0.02; defence: 0.5) are positively correlated, while support for less spending is negatively correlated with actual spending in these domains (education: -0.42; defence : -0.06). The picture for health care and the environment is less clear, however. While expenditure on environmental issues is positively correlated with both support for more environmental spending (0.06) as well as the MII (0.1), it is also positively correlated with support for less spending (0.3), but negatively correlated with the measure of net preferences for environmental spending (-0.01). Even less clear is the relationship between health spending and public opinion measures. While the coefficient points in the expected direction for the MII – health spending is positively correlated (0.25) with the proportion of people who think health care is an important issue – the correlation

displays negative coefficients for support for more health spending (-0.26) and net preferences for spending (-0.25), but indicates positive correlations for support for less spending on health care (0.17).

Once again these results suggest that the policy domain plays an important role in public opinion measures in responsiveness research. Contrary to the individual level results, the policy domains ‘health care’ and ‘the environment’ seem to be different. I do not find evidence for thermostatic representation. The relationship between preferences for more spending on health care, the net measurement and spending outlays are negative, while preferences for less spending results in more spending on health care issues. On environmental issues, support for more/less spending is mirrored in more/less expenditure on environmental issues in the next year; the net preferences measure displays a negative relationship, however. The results for the MII are consistent and promising with regard to its performance as a predictor for an increase in government spending in the following year. In all issue areas, the MII is positively related to public spending: When people think an issue is important, spending in the next year increases, which is what the salience model posits.

**Table 6: Responsiveness of Public Expenditure towards Public Opinion**

	Responsiveness			
	Proportion of Overall Spending (year t+1)			
<b>Preferences for More Spending</b>	0.15** (-0.03)			
<b>Preferences for Less Spending</b>		-0.17* (-0.08)		
<b>Net Spending Preferences</b>			0.08** -0.03	
<b>MII</b>				0.2** (-0.05)
<b>Constant</b>	-0.45 (-2.00)	10.03* (-3.55)	4.16* -1.82	3.533 (-3.22)
<b>Observations</b>	56	56	56	56
<b>R-squared</b>	0.46	0.27	0.4	0.3

Standard error in parentheses  
 \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

So far I have only explored whether public spending is related to the measures of public opinion. Next, I explore whether the opinion measures predict public expenditure in the

same way. Therefore, I run simple bivariate OLS regressions with public expenditure (year  $t+1$ ) as the dependent variable and measures of opinion (year  $t$ ) as the independent variables. I begin by examining the responsiveness of policy to the different opinion measures, taking all issues together. By stacking the data by the policy domains, I increase the number of observations but lose the specific domain information (an analysis by policy domain is presented later in this chapter, however).

The results suggest that spending preferences and the MII predict levels of public spending in the expected directions, taking all issues together.<sup>27</sup> Table 6 presents the results. The level of support for more spending in year  $t$  leads to a +0.15 unit increase in spending in the next year. The effect of net spending preferences in year  $t$  has less of an impact on spending in the upcoming year. The coefficient is about half the size of the one indicating support for more spending with a value of 0.08. The relationship between public opinion and spending in the next year is a little stronger for the MII (+0.2) and negative for support for less spending (-0.17). While the results for the relationship between expenditure and support for more spending, net spending preferences and the MII are statistically significant on the 0.05 level, the coefficient for support for less spending is only approaching significance with a  $p$  of 0.11.<sup>28</sup> The findings indicate predictive validity of preferences for more spending, net preferences and the MII. These measures predict public expenditure in the same direction, taking all issues together. Support for more spending, net spending preferences and the MII in 2006 predicts an increase in spending in 2007. Support for less spending predicts a decrease in spending in the upcoming year.

In the following, I investigate whether these relationships hold when I look more specifically at the individual policy domains with errors corrected for clustering by country.<sup>29</sup> The results give an inconsistent picture. In accordance with the correlations presented earlier in this chapter, the direction of coefficients works in the expected

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<sup>27</sup> The thermostat and salience models suggest that change in spending follows change in public opinion in the previous year. The data do not allow for calculating change in opinion, however they do allow me to explore whether change in public policy follows the levels of public opinion in the previous year, which is one step in the direction of dynamic models. While the coefficients for all measures of levels in preferences still point in the expected direction, the explanatory power and statistical significance of the coefficients drop largely.

<sup>28</sup> I also ran the same relationship controlling for GDP and the inflation rate and the results and statistical significance of the coefficients did not change. Controlling for a lagged dependent variable affects the statistical significance. It also diminishes the effect of the public opinion measures on expenditure.

<sup>29</sup> Results by issue domains are reported in the Appendix B in Tables B5-B8.



direction for education and defence. The coefficients deviate from the expected direction for health care and environmental issues. The results do not display traditional levels of statistical significance. Support for more spending (0.01), net preferences (0.01) and the MII (0.004) on education predict more spending on the issue, while support for less spending decreases spending by -0.32 units. The effect size is admittedly small. A similar pattern applies to defence. Support for more defence spending (0.01), net preferences (0.003) and the MII (0.03) on education predict more spending on the issue, while support for less spending decreases actual spending by -0.004 units.

The conclusions from the above analysis are limited. While the results indicate that spending preferences and the MII predict spending in the expected direction, taking all issues together, these patterns do not hold for the specific issue areas. Education and defence stand out as domains where my expectations hold. Surprisingly, health care, which has shown to be fairly robust in the individual level analyses, and the environment seem to be problematic issue areas. The expectations do not hold for these domains and coefficients point in different directions. However, with regard to the MII measure and the idea of the salience model of responsiveness, the findings are consistent and promising. Taking all issues together, the MII displays a moderate correlation with spending outlays, which is only insignificantly weaker than the correlation with the measure for support for more spending. In addition, the coefficient from the bivariate relationship between the MII and spending is strongest in comparison to spending preferences. Once again, it is important to emphasise that in the bivariate regressions by policy domain the expectations for the MII hold throughout. People who think health care, education, the environment and defence are important problems get more spending on the issue domain.

## **4.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter I explored whether or not the commonly used measures of the public's issue preferences in comparative responsiveness research capture the same dimension of public opinion and can be used interchangeably. While research has tested the responsiveness of government towards its citizens' preferences, no one has explicitly validated whether it is responsiveness to the same kind of preferences. While

the two commonly used models – the thermostatic representation and the representation of salient issues – find responsiveness takes place, there come to different conclusions about the conditioning effect of institutions. One reason for this might be responsiveness to a different dimension has been tested and that consequently institutions shape these aspects of opinion in a different way. . Hence, it is important to know how spending preferences and the MIP are related. While some over-time research has suggested that there is no relationship between important problems and spending preferences (Jennings and Wlezien, 2012), this analysis suggests otherwise.

I outlined three scenarios of the relationship between the opinion measures. Spending preferences and the MIP might be exactly the same (1), they might be related depending on the policy domain regarded (2), or completely unrelated (3). My results point in the direction that the two indicators are related to each other and this relationship depends on the policy domain. While across social issues the indicators are linked, in other areas such as defence we need to be more cautious in using the indicators interchangeably. This is what I take from the individual level analysis conducted in this chapter.

Analysis on aggregate data looking at 14 European countries indicates that there is also a global relationship between measures in predicting spending in the next year. Support for more spending and important problems successfully predicted spending. However, these relationships did not show constantly on the issue domains. However, important issues seemed to perform relatively well also looking at specific issues. They consistently predicted spending, i.e. whenever people think something is an important issue, they actually get more spending on the issue.

The analyses conducted here are limited and contradict pioneering research conducted on time-series data in the US and UK (Jennings and Wlezien, 2012). We need to account for cross-sectional differences. Perhaps measures are related in one country but not in another. In this connection I would like to note that it is important to know what people are thinking. We need to be aware that correct measurements are employed to indicate public opinion on issues, not only for responsiveness research, but also for related areas – including in practice. This early research gives an indication that preferences for increases in spending do reflect the importance of the issue to an individual, yet preferences on spending are related to importance specifically in the domain of social issues. My results provide evidence for those who employ these

measures. It is often the case that those wishing to analyse responsiveness over time, often going back 20 or more years, or wishing to compare across a large number of countries, must rely on existing data. The existing data on public preferences gathered through mass surveys most consistently asks about issue importance and it is therefore a useful measure for responsiveness researchers. Conceptually, one may question whether issue importance is equal to a desire for increased spending on that issue and my results for issues outside the social domain suggest that this concern may be warranted. However, the findings lend some confidence to the use of the MIP/MII, at least for social issues.

I acknowledge that my results also suggest that a link between the two concepts depends on sub-group membership and self-interested motives, which has been demonstrated in the individual level analysis of predictive validity. Because the indicators I evaluate in the analysis tend to be aggregated to form an expression of public preferences, perhaps these subgroup differences do not present such a concern to researchers. However, it does point to the need to pay attention to sub-group differences in responsiveness research.

## Appendix B

**Table B1: Correlation Matrix Expenditure on Health – Public Opinion on Health Care**

	<b>Expenditure on Health Care (year t+1)</b>	<b>Preferences for More Spending on Health (year t)</b>	<b>Preferences for less Spending on Health (year t)</b>	<b>Net Spending Preferences on health (year t)</b>	<b>MII: Health (year t)</b>
<b>Expenditure on Health Care (year t+1)</b>	1.0000				
<b>Preferences for More Spending on Health (year t)</b>	-0.2563	1.0000			
<b>Preferences for less Spending on Health (year t)</b>	0.1710	-0.8901***	1.0000		
<b>Net Spending Preferences on health (year t)</b>	-0.2459	0.997***	-0.9226***	1.0000	
<b>MII: Health (year t)</b>	0.2508	0.2126	-0.1181	0.1999	1.0000
<b>Observations</b>	14	14	14	14	14

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**Table B2: Correlation Matrix Expenditure on Health – Public Opinion on Education**

	<b>Expenditure on Education (year t+1)</b>	<b>Preferences for More Spending on Education (year t)</b>	<b>Preferences for Less Spending on Education (year t)</b>	<b>Net Spending Preferences on Education (year t)</b>	<b>MII: Education (year t)</b>
<b>Expenditure on Education (year t+1)</b>	1.0000				
<b>Preferences for More Spending on Education (year t)</b>	0.0853	1.0000			
<b>Preferences for Less Spending on Education (year t)</b>	-0.4223	-0.6804***	1.0000		
<b>Net Spending Preferences on Education (year t)</b>	0.1357	0.9947***	-0.7518***	1.0000	
<b>MII: Education (year t)</b>	0.0225	-0.0459	0.0953	-0.0546	1.0000
<b>Observations</b>	14	14	14	14	14

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**Table B3: Correlation Matrix Expenditure on Health – Public Opinion on the Environment**

	<b>Expenditure on the Environment (year t+1)</b>	<b>Preferences for More Spending on the Environment (year t)</b>	<b>Preferences for Less Spending on the Environment (year t)</b>	<b>Net Spending Preferences on the Environment (year t)</b>	<b>MII: The Environment (year t)</b>
<b>Expenditure on the Environment (year t+1)</b>	1.0000				
<b>Preferences for More Spending on the Environment (year t)</b>	0.0670	1.0000			
<b>Preferences for Less Spending on the Environment (year t)</b>	0.2992	-0.8224***	1.0000		
<b>Net Spending Preferences on the Environment (year t)</b>	-0.0122	0.992***	-0.8877***	1.0000	
<b>MII: The Environment (year t)</b>	0.1037	-0.2392	0.0838	-0.2122	1.0000
<b>Observations</b>	14	14	14	14	14

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**Table B4: Correlation Matrix Expenditure on Health – Public Opinion on Defence**

	<b>Expenditure on Defence (year t+1)</b>	<b>Preferences for More Spending on Defence (year t)</b>	<b>Preferences for Less Spending on Defence (year t)</b>	<b>Preferences for Less Spending on Defence (year t)</b>	<b>MII: Defence (year t)</b>
<b>Expenditure on Defence (year t+1)</b>	1.0000				
<b>Preferences for More Spending on Defence (year t)</b>	0.1078	1.0000			
<b>Preferences for Less Spending on Defence (year t)</b>	-0.0622	-0.9146***	1.0000		
<b>Preferences for Less Spending on Defence (year t)</b>	0.0845	0.9738***	-0.9826***	1.0000	
<b>MII: Defence (year t)</b>	0.4975	-0.1102	0.2171	-0.1727	1.0000
<b>Observations</b>	14	14	14	14	14

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**Table B5: Responsiveness towards the Public's Issue Preference on Health Care**

	<b>Health Spending (year t+1)</b>			
<b>Preferences for More Health Spending</b>	-0.06 (-0.07)			
<b>Preferences for Less Health Spending</b>		0.19 (-0.23)		
<b>Net Health Spending Preferences</b>			-0.05 (-0.06)	
<b>MII: Health</b>				0.04 (-0.04)
<b>Constant</b>	18.97*** (-5.02)	14.09*** (-1.06)	18.03*** (-3.91)	13.15*** (-1.08)
<b>Observations</b>	14	14	14	14
<b>R-squared</b>	0.07	0.03	0.06	0.06

Standard error in parentheses

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1



**Table B6: Responsiveness towards the Public's Issue Preference on Education**

	<b>Education Spending (year t+1)</b>			
<b>Preferences for More Education Spending</b>	0.01 (-0.03)			
<b>Preferences for Less Education Spending</b>		-0.32*** (-0.1)		
<b>Net Education Spending Preferences</b>			0.01 (-0.03)	
<b>MII: Education</b>				0.004 (-0.04)
<b>Constant</b>	11.51*** (-1.81)	12.99*** (-0.56)	11.23*** (-1.58)	12.15*** (-0.73)
<b>Observations</b>	14	14	14	14
<b>R-squared</b>	0.007	0.18	0.018	0.001

Standard error in parentheses

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**Table B7: Responsiveness towards the Public's Issue Preference on the Environment**

	<b>Environmental Spending (year t+1)</b>			
<b>Preferences for More Environmental Spending</b>	0.01 (-0.03)			
<b>Preferences for Less Environmental Spending</b>		0.08 (-0.09)		
<b>Net Environmental Preferences</b>			-0.001 (-0.02)	
<b>MII: Environment</b>				0.01 (-0.03)
<b>Constant</b>	1.51 (-1.60)	1.31** (-0.49)	1.81 (-1.24)	1.62*** (-0.43)
<b>Observations</b>	14	14	14	14
<b>R-squared</b>	0.004	0.090	0.000	0.011

Standard error in parentheses

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**Table B8: Responsiveness towards the Public's Issue Preference for Health Care**

	<b>Defence Spending (year t+1)</b>			
<b>Preferences for More Defence Spending</b>	0.008 (-0.02)			
<b>Preferences for Less Defence Spending</b>		-0.004 (-0.02)		
<b>Net Preferences for Defence Spending</b>			0.003 (-0.01)	
<b>MII: Defence</b>				0.03 (-0.02)
<b>Constant</b>	2.84*** (-0.22)	3.14*** (-0.9)	3.05*** (-0.43)	2.45*** (-0.35)
<b>Observations</b>	14	14	14	14
<b>R-squared</b>	0.012	0.004	0.007	0.248

Standard error in parentheses

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

## V. The Conditions of Issue Responsiveness

The previous chapters have established a new theory of contextual effects on the opinion-policy relationship. Therefore I have borrowed the main argument of the veto player theory and linked it to the clarity of responsibility hypothesis from the economic voting literature. In a nutshell, I argue that the more veto players are involved in the decision-making process of government, the less clearly responsibilities are allocated, which decreases government ability to respond to the preferences of its citizens. I have also introduced and discussed the empirical models of policy representation. From the review of literature I conclude that issue responsiveness and positional congruence are the models that best test how public opinion and effective policy outputs are linked. Although the latter is no dynamic model of political representation, it is the only model that tests the ideological correspondence between government and the public. Issue responsiveness relies on two models to test how policy responds to issue preferences in a dynamic fashion. While the thermostatic model tests the responsiveness of budgets to spending preferences in directional way, the salience model assumes a relationship between salient issues and budget increase. Studies come to inconsistent conclusion about how context affects the opinion-policy relationship. As both models employ spending as the outcome variable, one explanation for the inconsistent findings is that the measurement of public opinion does not capture the same concept.

The research design of my empirical chapters is laid out in Chapter 3. I rely on cross-sectional analysis as this the best way to explore context effects. In addition, I introduce a time-series element as political representation is something that needs to be look at continuously over time.

In the first empirical chapter (Chapter 4) I have picked up on this possibility and tested empirically how spending preferences and salient opinion indicated by the MIP are related. I have conducted a two-step analysis. First, in original, individual level data collected in Britain in March 2012, I explored whether people who think a problem is

important also want to increase spending in this issue domain. Indeed, the results indicate that this is the case at least for the social issues regarded (health care, education and the environment), while defence seems to be different. Further, I examined whether both measures of preferences are predicted by the same demographic characteristics. While age and vote choice seem to be good predictors of both kinds of preferences, gender and education give an inconsistent picture, which once again indicates that the issue domain matters. Secondly, I have built a comparative, aggregate data set from different data sources in order to test whether spending preferences and important issues predict spending in the same way in a bivariate setup. There is no comparative data set that incorporates both measures of preferences, which is why I had to build a new data base from different resources. The analysis shows that, taking all domains together, preferences for more spending as well as net spending and the MII performed fairly well in predicting spending in the following year. In fact, the relationship was strongest for the MII. When looking at the specific issue domains, this pattern did not show consistently and did not reach the conventional levels of statistical significance. Once again, the MII measure seemed to perform quite well in the specific issue areas. It consistently predicted an increase in spending. Whenever people think an issue is important, they actually get more spending on the issue domain in the following year. Although spending preferences are a more direct measure of the public's issue preferences, one major drawback is that these are only measured in a handful of countries with a thick survey environment. The MIP/MII measure is available cross-sectionally and over time even in a much thinner survey environment. While until recently (Jennings and Wlezien 2012) it has been unclear if measures tap into the concept of public opinion, my analyses in the first empirical chapter lend some confidence in the use of MIP/MII as a measurement of the public's issue preferences. While researchers need to be wary about the issue domain regarded, the MIP/MII performs well enough to be a fall-back measure of opinion in a thin survey environment and for cross-national research.

In this chapter, I move on to testing the conditions of issue responsiveness, employing the salience model of policy representation. I am interested in how institutions affect the opinion-policy linkage. In order to be able to generalise I need to conduct a comparative study. My results from the previous chapter indicate that the MIP/MII performs well enough to be used in comparative responsiveness research.

There are no data that allow for conducting comparative research relying on the thermostatic model using spending preferences. This chapter is structured as follows: I firstly discuss the benefits and drawbacks of the salience model of issue responsiveness (Section 5.1). I then set out my hypothesis about the impact of institutions on issue responsiveness (Chapter 5.2). This includes a recap of the veto player theory and clarity of responsibility hypothesis, as well as the distinction between time-invariant institutions and time-variant political situations created by the political game. Thirdly, I discuss my data and methodology in more detail (Chapter 5.3). The descriptive results are presented in sections 5.4, followed by the discussion of the analytical results in section 5.5. Chapter 5.5 looks at situations and institutions separately. I conclude and discuss my findings in section 5.6.

## **5.1 The Issue Responsiveness Model**

A growing body of literature explores the effective responsiveness of governments towards citizens issue preferences (Soroka and Wlezien, 2010, Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008, Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2005, Soroka and Wlezien, 2004, Wlezien, 1996, Wlezien, 1995, Klingemann et al., 1994). The issue responsiveness model is based on the assumption that political representation is a dynamic phenomenon. Government and citizens react towards each other's behaviour; while government follows citizens' issue preferences, the induced change in policy leads to a change in preferences, and so on.

The literature distinguishes between three models of issue responsiveness: 1) The thermostatic model (Soroka and Wlezien, 2010, Wlezien, 1995), 2) the salience model (Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2005, Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008, Pickup and Hobolt, 2011) and 3) the party model of responsiveness (Klingemann et al., 1994). All models employ the same measure of policy outputs, i.e. public expenditure, but different indications of public opinion. The thermostatic model uses public net spending preferences for a policy area, the salience model applies the aggregate of what people think is the most important problem facing their country today, and the party model deduces the public's issue preferences from party manifestos as the proportion of the most mentioned issues.

The main criticism of the party model of responsiveness is that parties' most salient issues are no valid indicator of public preferences. After all, parties serve their partisans and not necessarily the citizenry as a whole. While parties transport public opinion and act as a mediator, the most salient issues in party manifestos are no direct measure of public opinion.

The thermostatic model is the most prominent model of political representation. It matches lagged net spending preferences – i.e. the difference between those who prefer more spending and those who want less spending on an issue area X in year t-1 – with change in expenditure in the same area in year t. A series of studies demonstrates that thermostatic representation works in the US, Canada and Britain (Soroka and Wlezien, 2010, Soroka and Wlezien, 2005, Soroka and Wlezien, 2004), and provides some support for the idea that the model also works in different contexts (Soroka and Wlezien, forthcoming). One drawback of thermostatic representation is that the model is enormously data-intensive. In order to track political representation, a long time series of public opinion and output data is required. In addition, to enable researchers to conduct comparative research and draw general conclusions about contextual effects, the data need to be available for a large country sample. While spending outlays can be accessed through various international organisations (e.g. the OECD or World Bank), this is not the case for the public opinion side. The only cross-sectional study providing public opinion data on public spending preferences is the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), but it only incorporates the question in four separate modules with large gaps in between and delivers no time series of data, which is needed to model thermostatic representation properly.

The salience model of responsiveness employs the proportion of people who think a problem is important as the public opinion indicator. It argues that government represents salient opinion by increasing spending in the respective policy domain; in turn, the proportion of people considering that area a problem decreases (Pickup and Hobolt, 2011, Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008). Critics argue that the salience model is inferior to the thermostatic approach because thinking something is a problem does not indicate the preferred direction of change. For instance, to some people the environment is a problem because environmental protection keeps them from fox hunting. To others, the environment is a problem, because they care about the environment and environmental protection. The most we learn from the salience model, critics argue, is

whenever people think something is a problem, there may be change in spending, but it is not necessarily an increase in budgets.

In some policy domains, the assumed relationship between issue salience and spending preferences, and thus between issue salience and actual spending, works. In Chapter 4, I have demonstrated that, in the social domains, wanting more spending is highly correlated with thinking the domain is a problem, e.g. in health care and education. For domains such as defence, the assumed relationship was not necessarily expected to hold. Indeed, the analysis has not shown any statistically significant correlations between defence spending preferences and people thinking defence is a problem. However, the coefficients point into a similar direction suggesting that there is a positive relation between both measures.

One main advantage of the salience model of responsiveness is that the MIP question is asked in a similar format in individual case studies and in cross-sectional surveys over time. This is important for comparativists who are interested in capturing the similarities and differences of political institutions, situations and other contexts. Further, the thermostat and the salience model of responsiveness come to different conclusions about the impact of institutions on political representation. For instance, while thermostat representation shows increased responsiveness in majoritarian systems (Soroka and Wlezien, forthcoming), the salience model finds enhanced responsiveness under proportional rules (Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008). One explanation for the inconsistent findings is that the different measurements affect the results of the analysis. I have showed previously that the measures are related, so it is unlikely that it is the measurement of public opinion leads to differing results. Another explanation is found in an underdeveloped theory of contextual effects in responsiveness research. While thermostat representation assumes that clear institutional rules enhance opinion formation, increase input and policy responsiveness, rules that lead to a more diverse representation in salience models enhance responsiveness as everyone gets bits of what they want.



## 5.2 Veto Players and the Clarity of Responsibilities

### Hypotheses

What is needed is a theory of institutional context that is consistent across countries. The foundation for such a conceptual framework is found in the veto player theory and ties in with the clarity of responsibilities hypothesis (Hobolt et al., 2012, Whitten and Palmer, 1999, Powell and Whitten, 1993). While fewer veto players are believed to enhance representation, the mechanism by which this is achieved with regard to responsiveness is clarity of responsibility. In a nutshell, the fewer veto players are involved in the policy process, the clearer responsibilities are allocated, and the more likely it is that government responds to public preferences. Therefore, clarity depends on two features: fixed institutions and time varying situations created by the political game. While those veto players created by time invariant institutions always take part in the decision-making process and constantly influence responsiveness, veto players produced by the political game change and may enter or leave the political arena frequently. The latter affects policymaking and representation in the short term, while the former affects long-term responsiveness.

This chapter asks under what conditions issue responsiveness occurs. I have set out a novel theory about the contextual impact of institutions and situations on policy responsiveness. Issue responsiveness is about people's positions on political issues. Issue positions<sup>30</sup> are volatile and can change as a result of both short- or mid-term events, as well as long-established morals or ideology. Zaller (1992) presumes that opinion formation on political issues and change in issue positions is largely due to a person's lifetime experience, but also depends on the social, economic and political environment. Issue preferences can be affected by time-varying situational characteristics created by the political game. They are can also be affected by political elites and institutions that never or rarely change. By contrast, long-standing political predispositions, such as ideological beliefs, are not influenced by elites and their institutions in the short term, but it is more likely that they are affected in the long run (Zaller, 1992: 23) and by institutions that rarely change and are well-established. Most

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<sup>30</sup> One special kind of extremely volatile issue is valence issues. These are issues which carry emotion and image, but less policy content, e.g. the economy, participation in an interstate war (Stimson 1991, Stokes 1963).

notably, issue positions change when an unforeseeable event takes place, such as the participation in a war or an economic crisis. Thus, whether or not responsiveness of government towards public issue preferences occurs is believed to be affected by both short-term changes and long-standing time-invariant institutions. With regard to the clarity of responsibility idea, I hypothesise:

### **Issue Responsiveness Hypothesis**

*Issue responsiveness is increased when institutional and situational clarity is high, i.e. the number of institutional and situational veto players is low.*

This is because issue positions are volatile and can change as a result of short-term events, as well as long-standing institutional continuity. I explore the institutional and situational clarity hypotheses separately on a set of sub-hypothesis discussed in the following.

## **5.2.1 The Institutional Clarity Hypothesis**

The institutional clarity hypothesis assumes that the more veto players are created by time-invariant or rarely changing institutions, the less clearly responsibilities are allocated and government responsiveness is decreased. I test institutional clarity in a subset of five hypotheses, which examine the impact of five fixed institutional features: the regime type, the party system, bicameralism, federalism, and the electoral system. See hypotheses H1a to H5a in Chapter 2.4.2.1. Those institutions that foster the creation of more veto players (bicameral and federal structures, parliamentarianism, proportionality and multipartyism) are expected to lead to less clarity of responsibility and, hence, decreased responsiveness of governments. The impact of time-invariant factors is less important for issue responsiveness, however. Issue responsiveness is more subject to change as a result of time-varying situations than long-established political institutions. While I expect to find the coefficients for these institutions to point in the expected direction (be negative), I expect to find marginal and insignificant effects. I do not set out individual sub-hypothesis as I expect to find no significant effects for any

institutional factor on issue responsiveness. The hypothesised effect is summarised in the rows 6–10 of Table 7. I accept the Institutional Clarity Hypothesis if I find results for all sub-hypothesis pointing in the expected directions.

## 5.2.2 The Situational Clarity Hypothesis

Issue positions, I have argued, are more volatile and more subject to change as a result of short- and mid-term events than as a result of long-standing institutional characteristics. People's position on an issue also changes more easily than moral or ideological stances. General policy issues are certainly driven by an underlying ideology, yet these ideologies are not deeply anchored in people's issue positions as much. Admittedly, they are not entirely free of ideological predispositions, but still detached enough to be affected only a little by ideological convictions. After all, the issue domains regarded in this thesis do not strongly divide according to moral beliefs. When the political game leads to changing situations, the new situation may have more of an impact on issue responsiveness than the fixed institutional framework. Firstly I expect time-varying situations to affect the number of veto players involved in decisions in the short term and, secondly, I expect this short-term clarity or complexity to affect the issue responsiveness of governments. The more clarity political situations create, i.e. the fewer veto players enter the policymaking arena, the more likely it is that governments respond to public issue preferences.

I test the situational clarity hypothesis as a set of four sub-hypotheses regarding one legislative situation – effective number of parties in the legislature – and three executive conditions – single-party versus coalition governments, the effective number of parties in government and minimum-winning versus over-/undersized governments.

<p>H1b: <i>The larger the number of effective parliamentary parties is, the less likely government is to respond to public opinion.</i></p>
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How many parties are represented in the legislature changes frequently with parliamentary elections. The ENPP affects the coalition formation process as well as citizens' perceptions of the clarity of responsibility. Having a large number of parties in parliamentary democracies usually leads to the formation of coalition government

(Downs, 1957: 144), which is believed to be less flexible when it comes to taking policy decisions. In addition, the existence of multiple parties in the legislature and in the executive may confuse citizens. They are less clear about the differences between parties and who to hold accountable for policy decision. A larger number of veto players in the form of a high number of political parties in the legislature affects issue responsiveness from two sides. It confuses preference expression and constrains policymaking.

H2b: *The larger the number of parties in government, the less likely it is that government responsiveness to citizens' preferences occurs.*

The rationale behind this hypothesis is obvious. The more parties that share responsibilities within the government, the larger the potential for intra-party conflict is. Who has the final say in the decision-making process is unclear. If a single party is in charge, the responsibilities are clearly allocated; the single party is accountable for policy outcome. In addition to this is it more flexible to act according to public demands. Fewer parties reach compromises on policies or policy directions more easily than many parties.

H3b: *Coalition governments are less likely to respond to the public's issue demands than a single-party governments.*

Coalition government means that two or more parties are directly involved in the decision-making process. The number of veto players is increased in comparison to single-party governments with no internal competitors. The coalescing parties negotiate policy content, while single-party governments can implement without bargaining over policies. The clarity of responsibilities in coalition governments is decreased, with an increased number of veto players. Further, whether a coalition or a single-party government is in charge can change regularly, at least with each election.

H4b: *Minimum-winning governments are more likely to respond to public opinion.*

One can even push the previous argument further and be more precise about the effect of government characteristics on issue responsiveness. Separate from the idea of whether a government consists of one or more parties, it may matter more on what basis the government is founded. Minimum-winning governments that include only as many parties in the government needed to achieve a majority may be more successful in responding to preferences, independent of being a coalition or single party executive. Oversized governments, whose cabinets include more parties than necessary to maintain a parliamentary majority, or undersized governments, whose cabinets rule on the basis of minority rules, are less successful in responding to public opinion. Both kinds have to deal with an increased number of veto players, internally or externally, that constrain policymaking and decrease the clarity of responsibility.

**Table 7: Hypothesised Effect of Situational and Institutional Clarity on Issue Responsiveness**

	<b>Number of Veto Players</b>	<b>Clarity of Responsibility</b>	<b>Effect on Issue Responsiveness</b>
<b>Situational</b>			Overall Negative Effect
High number Parliamentary Parties	High	Low	-
High number Government Parties	High	Low	-
Coalition Government	High	Low	-
Over-/Undersized Government	High	Low	-
<b>Institutional</b>			Overall Negative Effect
Bicameralism	High	Low	-
Federalism	High	Low	-
Parliamentarianism	High	Low	-
Multipartyism	High	Low	-

Note: The negative sign indicates a constraining impact of situations and institutions on responsiveness

Whenever more veto players are involved, i.e. when situations are less clear, I expect issue responsiveness to be decreased. In reverse, if fewer veto players are created by the political game, i.e. responsibilities are clearly allocated, I expect issue responsiveness to be enhanced. I assume the Situational Clarity Hypothesis to be confirmed if I find coefficients for the indicators of situational clarity pointing in the expected direction. Rows 2-4 of Table 7 summarise the hypothesised effects of situations created by the political game on issue responsiveness. The coding of the explanatory variables is reflected in Table 7. The situational as well as institutional design that creates more veto players are coded as 1, whereas low veto players are coded as 0. If the variable is continuous, e.g. ENPP, higher values indicate a larger number of veto players.

## 5.3 Data and Methodology

Superior data and a straightforward methodology are required to model the issue responsiveness of a government towards its citizens' preferences employing the salience model of representation cross-sectionally. This chapter disentangles the contextual effects of political situations and institutions on how well a government reflects the public's policy concerns in spending. Effective government responsiveness is examined as a dynamic phenomenon in a comparative framework across 21 countries employing the salience model of political representation.

### 5.3.1 Measuring Public Opinion and Policy Outputs

In order to explore the institutional and situational conditions of issue responsiveness employing the salience model of representation, superior data are required that allow cross-sectional comparison and account for dynamics. I rely on opinion data collected by the Eurobarometer (EB) project as well as spending outlays provided by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

The EB is a continuous survey project that asks European citizens about their opinions and attitudes towards Europe as well as national political and societal issues. The standard EB survey is carried out (at least) twice a year in a spring and an autumn wave. Since 2002 the surveys regularly include a question about the most salient issues facing a country: "What do you think are the two most important issues facing [OUR COUNTRY] at the moment?" The question wording deviates slightly from the one used in the original salience model, which employs the single most important *problem* facing the country today.

The criticism that salient opinion captures a different concept than spending preferences (Jennings and Wlezien, 2012) has been challenged by my analysis in Chapter 4. I demonstrate that spending preferences and salient opinion are related in some way. In fact, the MIP has shown to be fairly consistent throughout and to predict actual spending reliably and even better than spending preferences itself. Whether what people think is the most important *issue* or the most important *problem* facing their country today may also matter. Wlezien (2005) argues that while the MIP tells us the prominence of a particular topic, we do not know the extent to which that topic is also a

problem. While there are conceptual doubts about the equivalence of issues and problems, in survey practice both questions capture the same thing. Most important issue responses are strikingly similar to responses given to the most important problem question (Jennings and Wlezien, 2011). Hence, using most important issues instead of most important problems does not significantly change the measurement or model.

There is also some more general criticism about the validity of the most important problem question, which applies equally well to the most important issues. Larson, Yeager et al. (2011) have shown that the most important problem question is very sensitive to question wording. In an experimental setup they find that answers vary across two dimensions: association of time and personalisation. Whether the question includes a specification of time “today”, “within the next few years” or “in the future” affects how people answer. For example, in the long run respondents think more about environmental issues, while the economy worries them most in the short term. Secondly, the (de-)personalisation of the question (‘personally’, ‘the country’, ‘the society’ or ‘the world’) matters to respondents’ answers. For instance, “What is the most important problem facing the world today?” makes respondents think about war and environmental issues rather than personal economic situations.

After all, the most important problem question “provides an adequate estimate of the public’s relative concerns with different policy areas and it allows us to measure variations in publicly perceived issue salience between countries and over time” (Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008: 386). It is a good and valid measure of public issue preferences and in the redistributive domains is also correlated with another direction measure, i.e. peoples’ spending preferences. If a redistributive issue is believed to be an important problem, respondents want more spending on the issue.

Further, the format of the EB most important issue might cause some problems. The original model employs an aggregate of an open ended answer catalogue. The most important issues asked in the EB surveys are captured as a battery of fourteen issue areas in the form of dummy variables, where 1 means the issue is important and 0 indicates that the respondent has not mentioned the issue. The first two mentioned important issues are coded in the EB data matrix. There is no indicator which answer was given first and which was given second. Although the original model employs an open ended list and the EB survey employs a closed list, this does not seem to be much

of a problem. The EB surveys account for spontaneously given answers that can be coded back into the original issue domains.

**Table 8: Country Matches and Availability of EB and OECD Data**

	<b>EB<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>OECD<sup>b</sup></b>
<b>Austria</b>	2002–2010	1995–2009
<b>Belgium</b>	2002–2010	1990–2008
<b>Bulgaria</b>	MIP not available	not available
<b>Cyprus</b>	2004–2010	not available
<b>Czech Republic</b>	2004–2010	1995–2008
<b>Denmark</b>	2002–2010	1990–2009
<b>Estonia</b>	2004–2010	1995–2008
<b>Finland</b>	2002–2010	1990–2008
<b>France</b>	2002–2010	1995–2009
<b>Germany<sup>c</sup></b>	2002–2010	1991–2009
<b>Greece</b>	2002–2010	2000–2008
<b>Hungary</b>	2004–2010	1995–2008
<b>Ireland</b>	2002–2010	1990–2008
<b>Italy</b>	2002–2010	1990–2008
<b>Latvia</b>	MIP not available	not available
<b>Lithuania</b>	MIP not available	not available
<b>Luxembourg</b>	2002–2010	1990–2009
<b>Malta</b>	MIP not available	not available
<b>Netherlands</b>	2002–2010	1995–2009
<b>Poland</b>	2004–2010	2002–2008
<b>Portugal</b>	2002–2010	1995–2009
<b>Romania</b>	MIP not available	not available
<b>Slovakia</b>	2004–2010	1995–2008
<b>Slovenia</b>	2004–2010	1999–2009
<b>Spain</b>	2002–2010	1995–2008
<b>Sweden</b>	2002–2010	1995–2008
<b>United Kingdom</b>	2002–2010	1990–2008

a. Question asked in EU countries is: “What do you think are the two most important issues facing [OUR COUNTRY] at the moment?”

b. OECD national accounts Government Expenditure by function and year

c. Data for East and West Germany

Before aggregating up the proportion of people who stated that issue X is an important issue, I recode all issue categories into ten issue domains, which correspond to OECD spending by function data (more on this momentarily). I also generate a change variable that captures how opinion – the proportion of people who think something is an issue – changes from year t-1 to year t. I employ the spring wave of the EB surveys only, which enables me to add two additional time points to the series.<sup>31</sup> My

<sup>31</sup> I have to employ an annual measure of opinion because spending outlays are available annually. As the most important issue question is asked in the 2002 spring wave only, I chose to employ only data from the spring wave. By the time the analysis was conducted, data for 2010 was only available for spring as well, when this thesis was written and submitted. By choosing the EB spring wave, I am able to add two years to the analysis. In addition, I avoid dealing with averaging problems or weights. I do not expect the analysis to be affected by my choice.



policy output measure is spending outlays<sup>32</sup> by function provided by the OECD. The OECD collects continuous data on the economic development of its member states. While I would ideally like to employ data that captures regulative policies, which are not available, I can rely on consistent, comparative information about budgets broken down into ten policy functions (General public service, defense and foreign policy, public order and safety, economic affairs, environmental issues, housing and community amenities, health care, culture, religion and recreation, education and social problems). back to 1989. Data are reported in the national currency. This is challenge for comparison. There are two strategies to deal with this. Firstly, the OECD provides purchasing power parity (PPP) tables for all years. The PPP is nothing but a multiplier that allows national currencies to be converted into a comparable unit, namely the US Dollar. Secondly, the original salience model captures outputs as the percentage of the overall expenditure in each policy domain regarded. No conversion into a coherent unit is required to capture the proportion of spending per domain as a function of the overall spending. I follow the latter strategy and employ spending per domain as the percentage of the overall budget. Although spending data is available back to 1989, the time series employed in the analysis is shorter. Matching the accessible years of the EB surveys with OECD spending outlays provides a much shorter time series of only eight years between 2002 and 2010. Table 8 exhibits the countries and years attainable. I end up with a sample of 21 European countries over a time period of six to nine years. Opinion data for some of the newer European democracies is only provided from 2004 onwards.

### 5.3.2 Data structure

I have constructed a data set that incorporate the data from the resources mentioned in Chapter 5.3.1, the Eurobarometer, the OECD as well as several institutional data sets (see Appendix A, Chapter 3 for information on the institutional resources). The individual-level survey data collected by Eurobarometer have been aggregated up by country and year. Each case represents the country, a year and a policy domain. I have linked public spending for each country, year and domain collected by

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<sup>32</sup> There is a crucial difference between spending appropriations and spending outlays. Whereas spending appropriations describe what governments would like to spend and thus can only be interpreted as a rhetorical measure of policy outputs, spending outlays are what governments have actually spent in a fiscal year and indicate an effective measure of policy outputs (Wlezien and Soroka 2003). This is not a problem here as the OECD reports spending outlays by function.

the OECD as well as the institutional variables. While the fixed institutions do not change for each country and year, the situational characteristics vary. The institutional and situational characteristics are the same for each policy domain and spending entry.

As I am dealing with a limited number of countries (21) as well as very short time-series (6-9 years), data analysis with so few cases may be problematic and give biased and unreliable results. The data are stacked by policy area such that each you have country panel data within each policy domain. I have used Stata's reshape command to change the data format from wide to long. After restructuring the data, it is still sorted by country and year, however another component is added. A new variable 'policy field' is created that ranges from 1 to 10, where each number corresponds with a particular policy domain.<sup>33</sup> In accordance with this new variable, two other variables are created 'policy' and 'opinion'. While the policy variable captures change in public spending, the opinion variable captures information on change in public opinion. The information of these two variables correspond with the policy field factor by country and year. The stacked data allow me to investigate policy effects in a single model and one of its benefits is that I deal with a larger sample size from initially 210 observations to over 1400 observations clustered in 10 policy fields and 21 countries. The trade-off is that I lose the more specific information about the policy domains. I argue in Chapter 3.1.3 that I do not rely on a classical multi-level data structure when dealing with cross-sectional surveys, that is, individuals are nested in countries and/or years. However, by stacking the data I technically create a multi-level data structure: country and year are nested within policy areas.

### **5.3.3 Modelling Issue Responsiveness**

To investigate government responsiveness I employ the salience model of representation, which combines cross-sectional, time-series measures of issue salience and public expenditure to model dynamic representation. However, the availability of data affects how efficiently I am able to model issue responsiveness across space and time. I deal with a larger N than T sample (21 countries over six to eight years). This

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<sup>33</sup> General public service (1), defense and foreign policy (2), public order and safety (3), economic affairs (4), environmental issues (5), housing and community amenities (6), health care (7), culture, religion and recreation (8), education (9) and social problems (10).

means the focus lies on the cross-sectional units and not on dynamics. From a more theoretical perspective this can be a problem as responsiveness is best explored in a dynamic fashion over a longer time period, as I argued earlier. The emphasis of this thesis is the cross-sectional comparison, however. Only comparative research allows generalisations about the effect of political institutions and situations on the opinion-policy relationship. This does not mean I ignore dynamics completely.

While the original model examines each country in the sample individually, I rely on a pooled model as I deal with a significantly larger number of countries and I am interested in the similarities and differences of the moderators. I conduct two kinds of analyses. Firstly, I am interested in the overall responsiveness taking all issues together. In order to do this I work on a reshaped data set in long format (see Chapter 5.3.2 for a discussion about the data structure and reshaping). Secondly, I go back to initial data set in wide format and look at the conditions of government responsiveness in particular issue domains. I expect change in salient opinion in the year  $t$  ( $\Delta S_t$ ) to predict change in public spending in the year  $t+1$  ( $\Delta P_{t+1}$ ), when an individual institutional condition  $Z_k$  applies. I run a random effects model using Stata's `xtreg` command with the `re` option, where the random effects are specified as my countries. The expectations can be summarised as follows:

$$\Delta P_{jt+1} = \alpha_j + \beta_1 \Delta S_{jt} + \beta_2 Z_k + \beta_3 \Delta S_{jt} Z_k + \epsilon_j, \quad (1)$$

where  $\alpha_j$  and  $\epsilon_j$  represent the intercept and the error term and  $Z_k$  represents a distinct institutional feature that is either coded 1 or 0. I include an interaction between  $Z_k$  and  $S_t$  as well as both constitutive terms. If policy responsiveness occurs under both distinct institutional features,  $\beta_1$  and  $\beta_3$  are positive and suggest that an increase in spending from year  $t$  to  $t+1$  is predicted by an increase in opinion saliency in the year  $t$  given the institutional condition  $Z_k$ . Many studies have explored the lag structure of government responsiveness and find that a lag of one year fits best (Soroka and Wlezien, 2010, Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008, Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2005, Wlezien, 1995, Page and Shapiro, 1983). This is also in accordance with the theoretical assumptions about the relationship between public opinion and policy laid out in the same literature.

## 5.4 Policy Concerns and Public Expenditure

Before modelling the situational and institutional conditions of issue responsiveness, I present some descriptive statistics. Table 9 exhibits public concerns and public expenditure pooled across all countries and years.<sup>34</sup> The economy (51%) stands out as the most important policy concern, followed by social services issues (46.8%) and law and order (25.3%). The domains with the highest percentage of spending are social services (37.5%), health care (14.5%) and education (12.3%). The three least mentioned policy issues are the environment (6.3%), housing (7.1%) and education (9.1%). This partially coincides with public spending. Governments on average spend least on environmental issues (1.8%), housing (1.9%) and defence (3.1%).

**Table 9: Policy Concerns and Public Expenditure in Percentages**

	<b>Policy Concerns</b>	<b>Public Expenditure</b>
<b>Defence</b>	9.7	3.1
<b>Law &amp; Order</b>	25.3	4.0
<b>Economy</b>	51.0	10.6
<b>The Environment</b>	6.3	1.8
<b>Housing</b>	7.1	1.9
<b>Health Care</b>	23.2	14.5
<b>Education</b>	9.1	12.3
<b>Social Services</b>	46.8	37.5
<b>n (NxT)</b>	170	170

Note: Policy concerns are the proportion of people stating that a policy issue is a most or second most important. Public expenditure is the percentage of the overall spending.

There is some cross-country variation, however. On average, the publics in 9 out of 21 countries (Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Poland and Sweden) are more concerned with social problems than the economy. The Spanish are most concerned with defence, while the British think law and order is the most important issue. In 7 out of 21 countries, housing (Austria, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Sweden) or the environment (France, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Britain) are the least important issues. Five publics

<sup>34</sup> Note that I have averaged across country and year if data has been complete for both the MII and spending. There is complete data for 15 countries over 9 years. Six new democracies had some missing data for the 3 years before they entered the European Union. One country misses spending data for 2010. Thus I end up with an n of 170 (15\*9+6\*6-1).

are least concerned with defence (Czech Republic, Hungary, Ireland, Luxembourg, Slovakia) and two with education (Belgium and Italy). Consistently across countries the largest spending domain is social problems, followed by health care and education. In a handful of countries the third highest amount of spending is invested on economic issues (Czech Republic, Ireland, Greece, Spain and Poland). On average, the least is spent on housing and the environment, with the exception of Ireland and Luxembourg, where defence spending stands out as the smallest spending category. More detailed information on policy concerns and public expenditure by country and function can be found in Tables B1 to B21 in Appendix B.

Although some of the policy concerns coincide with the proportion of spending, the tables presented above do not imply that there is a relationship between the MII and public spending per se. It is important to look at whether the MII and public spending are related and if thinking something is an issue predicts spending in a bivariate setup. In order to get an indication of the overall relationship, I begin by working on a reshaped data matrix in long format and explore the link between policy concerns and spending, taking all issues together. Reshaping the data from wide to long format increases the number of cases by the eight policy domains with the trade-off of losing the specific issue domain information. I generally deal with a relatively small  $n$  (21 countries over six to nine years). Stacking the data increases the explanatory power of my analysis and increases the number of observations for each country and year by the eight policy domains (21 countries times six to nine years times eight policy domains).

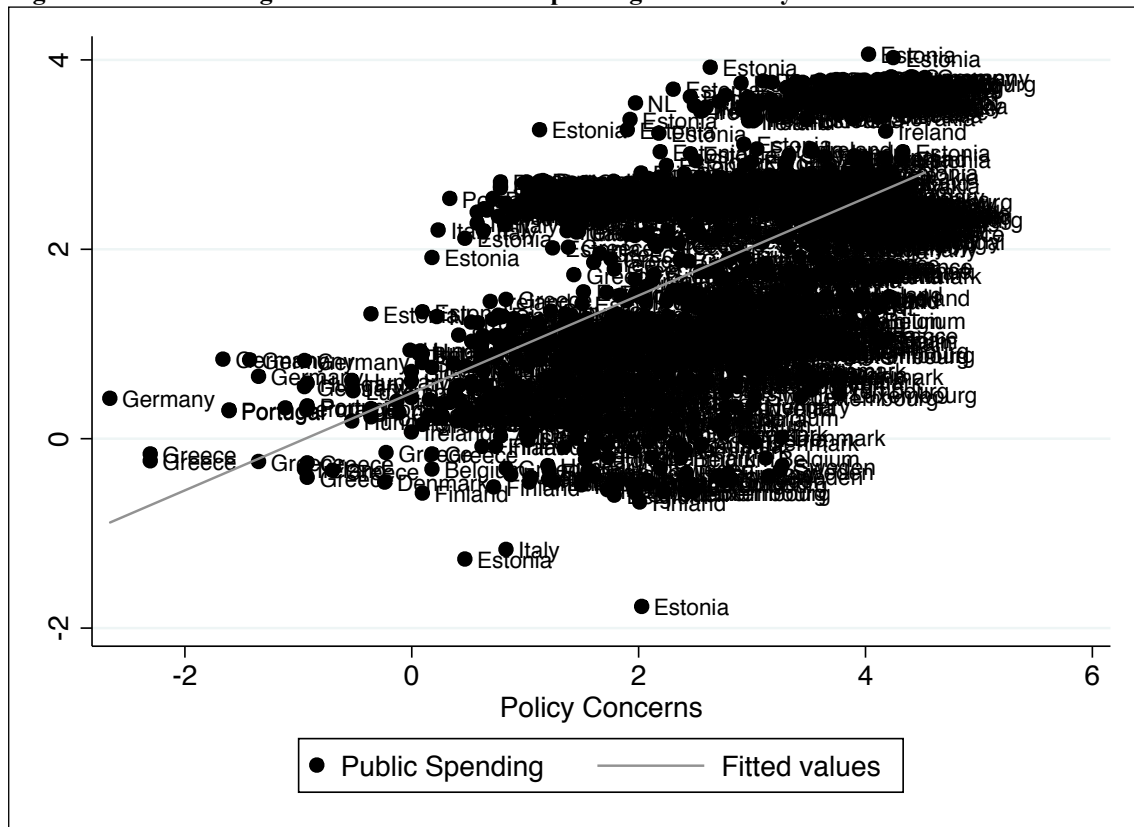
As an initial test I check whether public expenditure and policy concerns correlate with each other. I report the Spearman Rank Order correlation. It suggests a moderate level of correspondence between spending and the MII (0.52), which is statistically significant at the 0.01 level. Next, I am interested in whether the MII predicts spending in the same year. Figure 8 presents the relationship graphically.<sup>35</sup> The plot indicates a positive relationship between expenditure and policy concerns. For one

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<sup>35</sup> Note, in order to ensure that my data are normally distributed, I took the log of my public opinion and spending data. Thus, the scale is expanded to negative and positive values. The clustering is due to the nature of the spending data. The largest percentages are by far expenditure on social issues and the economy, which is reflected in the two clusters at the top of the graph. The clustering only marginally affects the relationship. If I take out these domains, assuming that there is a not a lot of flexibility in spending in these areas, the relationship between spending and the MII is a little bit smaller at 0.42, but stays significant at the 0.01 level.

unit change in the level of policy concerns, public expenditure increases by 0.52 units. The relationship is statistically significant (Pearson's  $p < 0.01$ ).

**Figure 8: Overall Congruence between Public Spending and MII in year t**



This pattern is reflected, but less pronounced, looking at the specific issue domains. The strongest correlation is between spending and policy concerns on economic issues (0.32), housing (0.29) and social problems (0.24), which are statistically significant with a Pearson's  $p < 0.01$ . The weakest correspondence is on health care (0.05) and educational issues (0.02). This is also mirrored in the bivariate predictions. Concerns about the economy (0.23), housing (0.14) and social problems (0.07) predict spending in these areas significantly. There seems to be only a very small relationship between spending and policy concerns on health care, education and environmental issues as the effect sizes of the coefficients are close to 0.

To recap, the above tests indicate the congruence of the expenditure and important issues, taking all domains together. I look at both spending and important issues at the same point in time. Dynamic representation focuses on change, however, or more specifically whether policy makers act as a consequence of changes in public

sentiment, which implies a sequence inherently structured in time (Stimson et al. 1995: 543). As levels of preferences and spending correspond in the year  $t$ , I expect to find a relationship between them in a dynamic setup as well. To examine the dynamic relationship I repeat my test using change in MII in year  $t$  and change in spending in the upcoming year  $t+1$ . Although it is statistically significant at the 0.01 level, the Spearman Rank Order correlation suggests a much weaker correspondence between opinion change measured in year  $t$  and expenditure change measured in year  $t+1$  (0.08). This is deflating, because it indicates that there is no relationship between the change measures.

A better way to explore this would be to predict change in spending in year  $t+1$  using change in policy concerns in a bivariate regression model. Indeed, the bivariate relationship suggests that change in opinion predicts spending, even though the effect size is fairly small. One unit change in opinion in year  $t$  leads to a 0.14 increase in spending in the next year. The results are statistically significant on the 0.01 level. These patterns do not hold when looking at the specific policy domains. While coefficients indicate responsiveness on issues concerned with law and order, the environment, housing and education, they are negative on defence, the economy, health care and social problems. None of the results by policy domain is statistically significant.

## **5.5 Analysing the Conditions of Government Issue Responsiveness**

Next, I investigate the conditions of responsive government to the public's issue preferences. The results are presented in two steps. I begin exploring the impact of time invariant political institutions on the opinion-policy relationship, testing the institutional clarity hypothesis. Secondly, I examine what impact the time varying situations have on the issue responsiveness of government towards citizens' policy concerns, testing the situational clarity hypothesis. I follow the same procedure as for the bivariate results. First, I look at all issues taken together on a reshape data matrix in long format, then I examine how the relationship behaves in the specific issue domains.

## 5.5.1 The Impact of Institutional Clarity on Issue Responsiveness

To recap, the institutional clarity hypothesis with regard to the issue responsiveness of government to public demands assumes that the more veto players are created by fixed political institutions, the less clearly responsibilities are allocated and the less successful government is in responding to issue preferences. In order to test this I rely on a set of sub-hypothesis, which I test using cross-sectional time-series methods with random effects. The institutional hypotheses are tested in interaction terms.<sup>36</sup> The data are reshaped in order to increase the number of cases and the explanatory power of the analysis. The impact of bicameralism, federalism, regime type and party system are reported in Table 12. The baseline models, which are reported in the first row of the table labelled “Change in Opinion”, indicate the relationship between change in public opinion (year t) and public expenditure (year t+1) in unicameral, centralist, presidential and three-party systems. I deal with a very short time series of 6 to 9 data points, thus autocorrelation may be of no great concern (Birchfield and Crepez 1998: 188; Stimson 1985).<sup>37</sup>

Hypothesis 1 states that a bicameral state-structure increases the number of veto players involved in decision making, leads to less clear allocation of responsibilities and depresses government responsiveness. Indeed this is what the results display. While responsiveness occurs under the condition of a unicameral state – spending increases by 0.23 units following opinion in the previous year – bicameralism decreases responsiveness by -0.2 units. The effect of opinion on spending is significantly lower and falls towards no responsiveness (+0.03). Results are statistically significant on the 0.5 level. The results for federalism give a similar picture, however the effect size is a lot smaller. Federal countries have an increased number of veto players taking part in

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<sup>36</sup> I have to rely on a random effects model because fixed effects would drop at least the fixed institutional constitutive term as it cannot deal with time-invariant variables. The interactive term itself would still be included and it is interacted with the time-varying indicator of public opinion, the MII. The random effects are the countries.

<sup>37</sup> However, especially spending data is prone to be autocorrelated. When calculating first order autocorrelations of my dependent variable there seems to be some autocorrelation, however. By using change in spending and change in public opinion the data already correct for some of this. In addition, I run two variants of my models. Firstly, I introduce some more economic variables such as GDP and the inflation rate to correct for factual economic inconsistencies. Finally, I run an error correction model (ECM) where I introduce the lagged dependent variable to correct for autoregression. The results of the ECM are reported in footnotes in the respective section.



decision making, hence responsibilities are less clearly allocated and responsiveness is dampened. The results indicate that this is the case. The base model suggests that government in a unitary state responds to the MII with an increase in spending (0.12) in the next year. The coefficient is significant with a Pearson's  $p < 0.05$ . Under federal conditions, responsiveness decreases. The effect (-0.001) is marginal, however, and not statistically significant.

**Table 10: The Impact of Institutional Clarity on Issue Responsiveness**

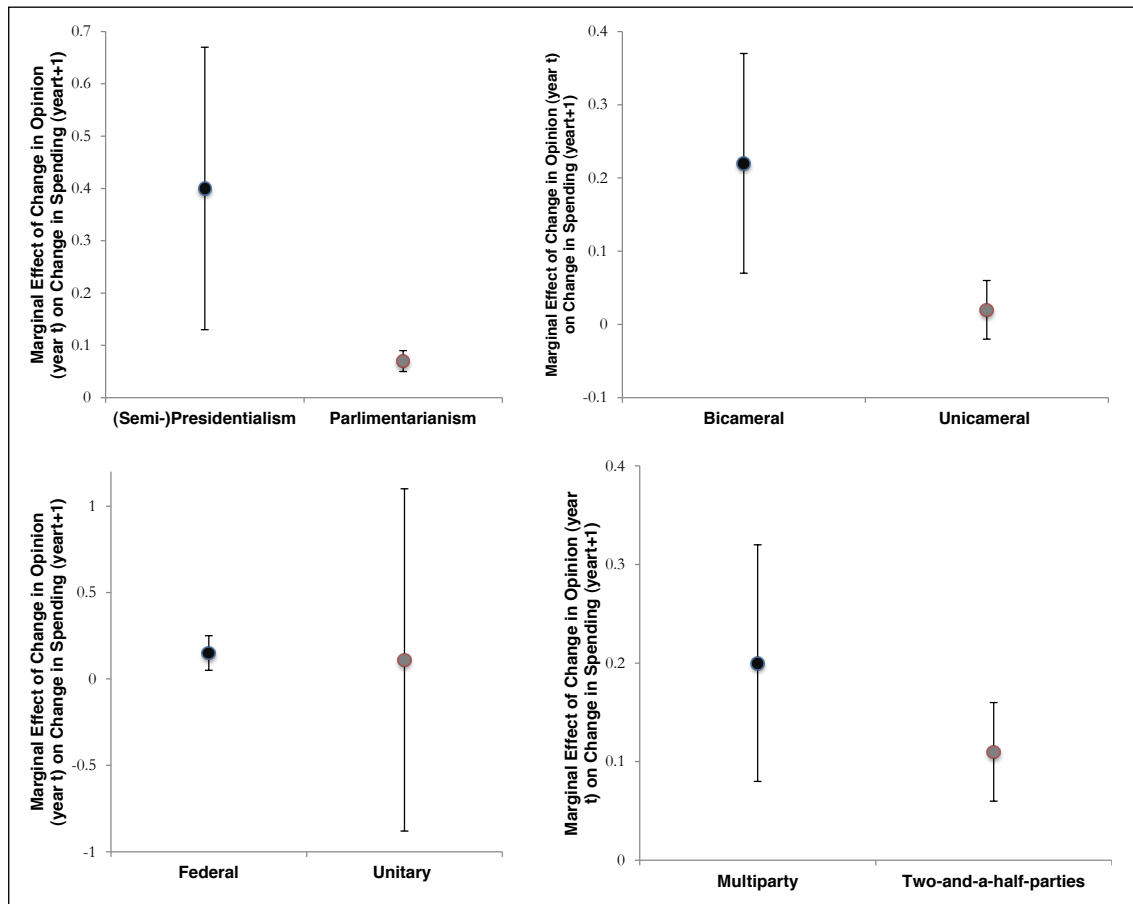
	<b>Public Expenditure (year t+1)</b>			
<b>Change in Opinion</b>	0.23*** (-0.07)	0.12** (-0.05)	0.2** (-0.08)	0.40*** (-0.13)
<b>Change in Opinion*Bicameralism</b>	-0.20** (-0.09)			
<b>Bicameralism</b>	-0.13 (-0.14)			
<b>Change in Opinion*Federalism</b>		-0.001 (-0.12)		
<b>Federalism</b>		-0.19 (-0.17)		
<b>Change in Opinion*Multipartyism</b>			-0.09 (-0.1)	
<b>Multipartyism</b>			-0.03 (-0.11)	
<b>Change in Opinion*Parliamentarianism</b>				-0.33** (-0.14)
<b>Parliamentarianism</b>				0.07 (-0.2)
<b>Constant</b>	-0.53*** (-0.11)	-0.57*** (-0.08)	-0.6*** (-0.09)	-0.67*** (-0.18)
<b>Observations</b>	1,320	1,320	1,320	1,320
<b>Number of Countries</b>	21	21	21	21
<b>Rho</b>	0.05	0.05	0.03	0.05

Standard error in parentheses  
 \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

This picture is similar for the impact of two-party versus multi-party systems. While government in three-party-systems is responsive to the public's issue demands and it increases spending by 0.20 (Pearson's  $p < 0.05$ ) units following salient opinion in the previous year, multi-partyism decreases responsiveness by -0.09 units. The interaction coefficient does not reach statistical significance. The results support previous research on the effect of the party system, however, which suggests that here

are only marginal differences between few-party and multi-party systems. The results for the effect of the regime type are also consistent with earlier findings. Presidential governments respond to citizens' preferences in the upcoming fiscal year with a spending increase of 0.4 units (Pearson's  $p < 0.01$ ). Parliamentary executives seem to be less responsive. Government responsiveness decreases by -0.33 units (Pearson's  $p < 0.05$ ) if a parliamentary system is concerned.<sup>38</sup>

**Figure 9: Marginal Effects of Change in Salient Opinion (year t) on Change in Spending (year t+1) under Institutional Conditions**



<sup>38</sup> The controls included in the analysis, namely GDP per capita and inflation rate, did not alter the main results of the model. When I run an error correction model (ECM) including a lagged dependent variable to control for autoregression across time, the results do not hold. I get different results for the same indicators across the different specifications. While some results lose significance, but the directions of the effect stays the same, other coefficients also change direction. The direction of the effect of opinion as well as the interaction term stays the same for the regime type and structure of the legislature into uni-versus bicameral assemblies. Yet, the statistical significance vanished for the regime type. These results seem to be largely robust in a sense that the direction of the effect does not change. The significance does, however, which may be due to the limited number of cases in the analysis. For the conditional impact of federalism and the party system, the results also change direction. In unitary states governments respond to public opinion in the previous year, but the effect is insignificant. The sign of the interaction term reverses and suggests that federalism enhances government responsiveness, however. The statistical significance vanishes. Few-party systems show to have an insignificant negative effect on spending in the next year, while multipartyism has positive, yet insignificant, effect on government responsiveness. I conclude that the initial results reported are not robust.

As an additional check for the significance of the interaction terms, I have plotted the marginal effects of change in salient opinion (year t) on public expenditure (year t+1) under my institutional conditions as Brambor et al. suggest (2006). However, I cannot rely on Stata's `ginter` function here. `Ginter` is suitable to plot the marginal effects for interaction with continuous variables, my interactions are between an institutional dummy variable and opinion change. Thus, I cannot calculate any meaningful averages that allow me to plot lines. Instead I create marginal effects using whisker's plots presented in Figure 9. All graphs suggest that where there is extreme institutional clarity, i.e. the number of institutional veto players is low, salient opinion has a significant impact on public spending in the upcoming year. This is shown by the left hand side of the graphs, the dot is higher on y-axis, which suggests that the effect is stronger. Where there is less institutional clarity and the number of veto players is higher, the effect is lower. This is displayed by the situation on the right hand side of each graph. The conditional impact of federalism versus unitary states seems to be special. The effect seems to be very similar, however, the variation and error for unitary states is much larger than for federal states, which might be related to a limited variation in the sample.

**Table 11: Issue Responsiveness under the Conditions of Time-Invariant Institutions**

	Time-Invariant Institutions			
	Bicameralism	Federalism	3+ Party System	Parliamentarianism
<b>Defence</b>	o	o	-	-
<b>Law &amp; Order</b>	-	-	-	-
<b>Economy</b>	o	o	o	o
<b>Environment</b>	-	+	-	-
<b>Housing</b>	-	+	+	-
<b>Heath Care</b>	-	-	+	-
<b>Education</b>	-	-	-	-
<b>Social Problems</b>	o	o	+	o

Note, A negative sign means responsiveness is decreased, a positive sign indicates responsiveness is enhanced, o means that institutions have no conditioning effect on responsiveness in the baseline model or the interaction term

When I look at the specific issue domains the results are not consistent across policy domains. I present an overview in Table 11. It displays the effect of time-invariant institutions that lead to an increased number of veto players. Once again, two

issue domains display consistent results that point in the hypothesised direction. Government responsiveness to preferences on education and law and order is decreased by bicameralism, federalism, multiparty systems and parliamentarianism. The veto player theory also seems to apply fairly well to the domains of health care and environment. While bicameral and federal structures, as well as parliamentarianism, seem to decrease responsiveness towards health care preferences, multipartyism seems to enhance responsiveness in this issue domain. A similar pattern is displayed looking at environmental issues. The results indicate that bicameralism, multipartyism and parliamentarianism decrease responsiveness towards environmental preferences, while federalism appears to enhance the responsiveness of government towards environmental preferences. With regard to defence issues, multiparty systems and parliamentarianism seem to decrease responsiveness, which is coherent with the expectations. Government does not respond to defence preferences in bicameral or federal states. The results indicate that no responsiveness towards preferences on social problems occurs under bicameral, federal and parliamentary conditions, whereas government responsiveness seems to be enhanced under multiparty conditions. Economic issues seem to be special. Government does not seem to respond to these issues at all, whatever institutional design applies. When correcting for autoregression the results do not hold.

## **5.5.2 The Impact of Situational Clarity on Issue Responsiveness**

I start exploring the situational clarity hypotheses, testing four time-varying situations (effective numbers of parliamentary parties and government parties, coalition versus single party government, as well as minimum-winning versus over-/undersized governments) and their impact on the opinion-policy relationship. To recap, the situational clarity hypothesis assumes that the more veto players are created by time varying political situations, the less clearly responsibilities are allocated and the less successful government is in responding to issue preferences. I test the impact of situations on responsiveness using cross-sectional time-series methods with random effects. The situational hypotheses are tested in interaction terms. Data are reshaped in order to increase the number of cases and the explanatory power of the analysis.

The indicators for the effective number of parliamentary and governmental parties are continuous variables. Thus, the interaction coefficient is the important one to look at. It indicates the impact of public opinion under the condition of a large number of parties in the legislature or executive. Whether government is a coalition or single party government, as well as whether it is minimum-winning or over-/undersized one, is captured by dummy variables. The baseline model labelled “change in opinion” assumes the political situations of single party and minimum-winning governments, the interactive terms describe a situation of coalition and over-/undersized governments.

**Table 12: The Impact of Situational Clarity on Issue Responsiveness**

	<b>Public Expenditure (year t+1)</b>			
<b>Change in Opinion</b>	0.35**	0.25**	0.26**	0.18***
	(-0.14)	(-0.1)	(-0.11)	(-0.06)
<b>Change in Opinion*ENPP</b>	-0.06*			
	(-0.04)			
<b>ENPP</b>	-0.01			
	(-0.04)			
<b>Change in Opinion*ENPG</b>		-0.06		
		(-0.04)		
<b>ENPG</b>		-0.04		
		(-0.04)		
<b>Change in Opinion*Coalition</b>			-0.17	
			(-0.12)	
<b>Coalition</b>			0.21	
			(-0.14)	
<b>Change in Opinion*Over-/Undersized Government</b>				-0.19**
				(-0.1)
<b>Over-/Undersized Government</b>				-0.17**
				(-0.08)
<b>Constant</b>	-0.58***	-0.51***	-0.79***	-0.53***
	(-0.17)	(-0.12)	(-0.13)	(-0.07)
<b>Observations</b>	1,320	1,320	1,320	1,320
<b>Number of Countries</b>	21	21	21	21
<b>Rho</b>	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.04

Standard error in parentheses

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

The results indicate that the higher the effective number of parliamentary parties is, the less responsive government is to salient opinion in the previous year. A higher number of effective parliamentary parties decreases responsiveness by -0.06 units. The coefficient is approaching statistical significance. A similar image is drawn for the

number of government parties. The higher the number of government parties is, the less responsive government is towards salient opinion. A higher number of government parties decreases responsiveness by -0.06 units. Looking at the time varying dummy variables, a clearer pattern is shown for whether a government is a coalition or single-party government and a minimum-winning coalition or over-/undersized government. Single-party governments seem to respond to salient opinion. Government spending increases by 0.26 units in response to salient opinion in the previous year. The relationship is significant at the 0.05 level. Coalition government is less responsive to salient opinion (0.09). The coefficient is not quite significant, however. With regard to minimum-winning government versus over-/undersized executives, I find a similar pattern. Minimum-winning government responds to salient opinion with an increase in spending in the following year by 0.18 units (Pearson's  $p < 0.01$ ). Over- and undersized governments do not respond to salient public opinion. The baseline coefficient decreases by -0.19 units under the condition of an over- or undersized government. Hence, the relationship reverses and turns weakly negative (-0.01; Pearson's  $p < 0.05$ ).<sup>39</sup>

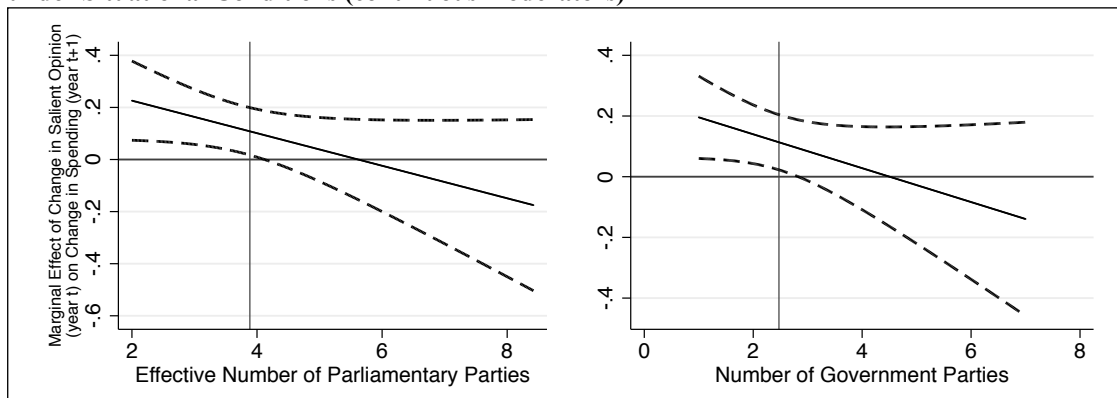
When I plot the marginal effects of change in salient opinion on spending in the following year under the conditions of political situations as Brambor et al. (2006) suggest, I find support at least for one part of the veto player theory. Figure 10 displays the graphs created with Stata's `griinter` function for the continuous moderators. For emphasis, the graphs indicate the conditional impact of policy concerns on spending given a certain number of situational veto players. It indicates where the significant effect of the interaction terms comes from. `Griinter` suggests that whenever there is extreme situational clarity, the impact of policy concerns on public spending matters most. This is true for low numbers of effective parliamentary parties as well as for low

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<sup>39</sup> The controls included in the analysis, namely GDP per capita and inflation rate, did not alter the main results of the model. When I run an error correction model (ECM) including a lagged dependent variable to control for autoregression across time, the results do not hold. I get different results for the same situational indicators across the specifications. The results I get are even less consistent than for institutional clarity. Only for minimum-winning governments the direction of the effects stays the same, but the results lose significance. The ECM model does not change the direction of the effect in the baseline coefficient or the interaction effect. For the effective number of parties in the legislature and government the interaction effect changes the sign. This suggests that more veto players lead to increased responsiveness, and the significance of the effects vanishes completely. For the dichotomous moderator single party versus coalition governments, the ECM model shows the opposite effect of the baseline and interaction. Change in opinion has no influence on spending in the next year under single party governments - this is suggested by the negative baseline coefficient. The interaction term is positive and suggests that in coalition ruled countries, salient opinion indeed has an impact on spending in the upcoming year. However, none of these effects reaches the conventional level of statistical significance. The results are not robust when correcting for autocorrelation in the dependent variable.

numbers of governmental parties. Both dashed lines are above zero where few veto players are involved in decision making and situational clarity is increased. The image is less clear for an increased number of veto players and decreased situational clarity, however. The interactive terms are not significant for the cases where a higher number of situational veto players is involved in the decision-making process. As rule of thumb the graphs show that the conditional impact of small numbers of situational veto players, those below the mean, drives significance.

**Figure 10: Marginal Effects of Change in Salient Opinion (year t) on Change in Spending (year t+1) under Situational Conditions (continuous moderators)**



Note: The graphs are created with Stata's grrint function.

In order to plot the marginal effects of change in salient opinion (year t) on change in spending (year t+1) for my dichotomous moderators, I have to rely on a different type of visualisation. I have created whisker's charts that show the marginal effects when the treatment is present - the dummy variable equals 1 - as well as when the treatment is not present - the dummy variable equals 0.

**Figure 11: Marginal Effects of Change in Salient Opinion (year t) on Change in Spending (year t+1) under Situational Conditions (dichotomous moderators)**

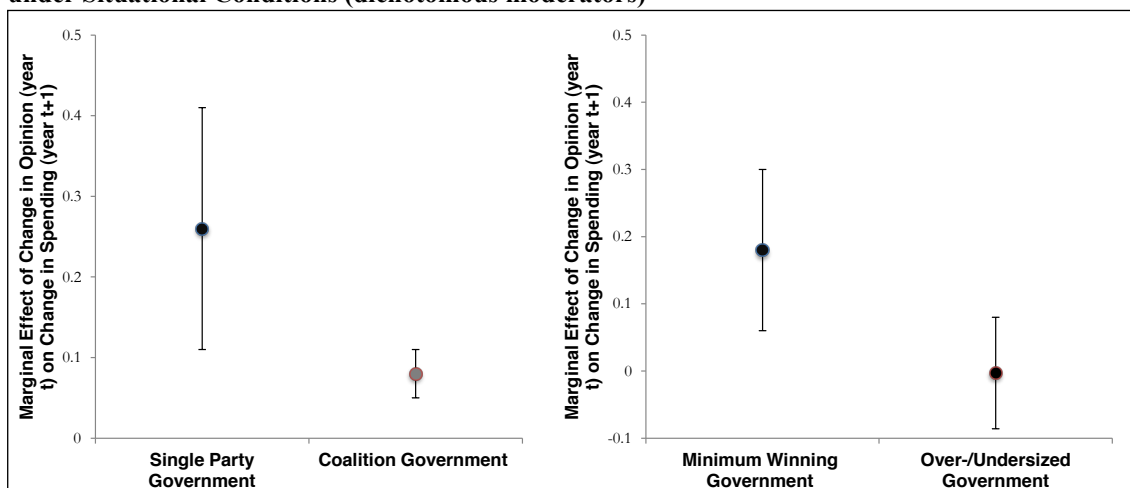


Figure 11 displays the effects for my two government characteristics: coalition versus single party governments as well as minimum winning versus over-/undersized governments. The graphs show a similar image. The effect of salient opinion on change in government spending is higher when there is more situational clarity (single party government as well as minimum winning government). The effect is smaller for an increased number of veto players and less situational clarity (coalition government as well as over-/undersized government).

The picture is largely not consistent looking at the conditions of responsiveness by issue domain. Responsiveness, I have argued and shown, depends on the issue domain regarded. Indeed, this is mirrored in the analysis of the conditions of responsiveness as well. Here I investigate the time-variant political situations and how they affect the representation of salient opinion. The n for the individual issue domains is admittedly small (21\*6 (9)). The coefficients do not reach statistical significance, yet indicate whether or responsiveness in terms of budget increase in the issue domain occurs.

**Table 13: Issue Responsiveness under the Conditions of Time-Variant Situations**

	<b>Time-Variant Situations</b>			
	<b>High ENPP</b>	<b>High ENPG</b>	<b>Coalition</b>	<b>Over-/Undersized Government</b>
<b>Defence</b>	-	0	-	0
<b>Law &amp; Order</b>	-	+	-	-
<b>Economy</b>	-	0	-	0
<b>Environment</b>	-	-	-	-
<b>Housing</b>	0	-	-	-
<b>Health Care</b>	-	0	+	-
<b>Education</b>	-	-	-	-
<b>Social Problems</b>	0	0	0	+

Note: A negative sign means responsiveness is decreased, a positive sign indicates responsiveness is enhanced, 0 means that institutions have no conditioning effect on responsiveness in the baseline model or the interaction term

Table 13 summarises the results of the statistical analysis. It displays the affect of a high number of parliamentary parties and government parties, coalitions and over-/undersized governments on responsiveness by policy domain. When the table indicates no responsiveness, the baseline model suggests that no responsiveness occurs, nor does responsiveness occur when the treatment is given (interaction). Decreased responsiveness means that responsiveness occurs in the baseline model, but introducing



the context effect captured by the interaction decreases responsiveness. Enhanced responsiveness means that either the baseline model suggests that budget responsiveness and the introduced treatment in the interaction had a positive effect on this, or that the baseline model suggested no responsiveness, but that the interaction term reversed the sign in front of the coefficient, so that responsiveness occurs. The results are inconsistent. In two issue domains, the effect of time-variant situations works consistently in the expected direction. Responsiveness to environmental issue preferences and salient opinion on education decreases the more veto players enter the political decision-making arena. That is the case in countries with a high number of parliamentary and government parties, coalitions and over- and undersized governments. This coincides with the findings in the first empirical chapter. Education and environmental issue have been shown to be domains where spending preferences and salient opinion are related. Veto player theory only gives clear results for some institutions looking at issue preferences on law and order and housing. While government responsiveness towards issues of public law and order is decreased by a higher number of parliamentary parties, coalition government and surplus coalitions or minority government, the results indicate that a higher number of government parties enhances responsiveness to these issues. Government responsiveness to salient opinion on housing is decreased when there are a larger number of parties in government, a coalition is formed or an over-/undersized government is in power. There appears to be no responsiveness towards these issue preferences in countries with a large number of parliamentary parties. Defence and the economy show similar but even less clear patterns. The results indicate that a high number of parliamentary parties and coalition governments decrease responsiveness in these areas. Governments in countries with a larger number of parties in government and over- or undersized governments show no responsiveness to citizens' defence and economic preferences, however. Health care gives an unclear picture. A higher number of parliamentary parties and over-/undersized governments lead to decreased responsiveness, as expected. Higher numbers of government parties indicate that no government responsiveness occurs. Coalition government enhances the responsiveness towards health care preferences. The least promising results are displayed for social problems. While the results indicate that no responsiveness occurs in situations where the number of veto players is high, surplus coalitions and minority governments seem to enhance the responsiveness of government

towards preferences on social issues. When correcting for autoregression in the ECM model specifications, the results do not hold.

## 5.6 Conclusion

This chapter examines the conditions of issue responsiveness employing a salience model of political representation. I have demonstrated in Chapter 4 that salient opinion can serve as an indicator for public preferences, but that we need to be wary about the issue domain regarded. Chapter 4 shows that the MIP performs well, taking all issues together, and it seems to be a good indicator for spending, looking at specific issues. The survey environment on spending preferences is very thin in the European context and so I need to rely on salient opinion as an alternative measure of public policy preferences. I focus on the comparison to study context, but not so much on the time-series component in Chapter 5. Only through a comparison across countries am I able to draw more general conclusions about how context affects the opinion-policy relationship. I rely on the veto player theory linked with the clarity of responsibility argument.

My findings can be summarised as follows: Taking all issue domains together, I find that budgets respond to what people think is an important issue concerning their country today. This relationship is equally moderated by situational and institutional veto players in the expected direction, i.e. the more veto players are involved, the less clearly the responsibilities are allocated and the less successful government is in responding to people's issue demands. Both fixed and time-varying veto players affect short-term policy responsiveness. An increased number of situational veto players (number of parties in parliament and government, coalition and over- as well as undersized government) seem to decrease government's ability to respond to salient opinion. This is also indicated in the results for institutional veto players, where extreme clarity – a low number of institutional veto players– leads to increased responsiveness. Unfortunately, the results do not consistently hold, when I run an ECM model with a lagged dependent variable to correct for autoregression.

Looking at the specific policy domains, I observe variation and do not find a clear picture of how situational and institutional veto players affect the responsiveness

of governments. While education and law and order stand out as those domains where I find some support for the veto player theory – the coefficients point in the expected direction, but are not statistically significant – the other areas give an inconsistent picture of how context affects the opinion-policy relationship in these domains. Some areas display at least some consistent results, while in other domains no responsiveness at all is observed. These are the broader categories, the economy and social problems, which may incorporate many answers that could not be included in a more specific code. The data do not allow this to be tracked, however. Once again the results suggest that issue domains matter for the opinion-policy relationship. The inconsistent results may be due to the data employed. Although my data are strong on the cross-sectional side, the time-series component is limited to a few years. There is more leeway to test this new theory of institutions with regard to political representation on superior data.

While issue salience seemed to perform well in the measurement cross-validation (Chapter 4), it may not be the best way to test the responsiveness of government to issue preferences after all. However, it is important to investigate alternative models of responsiveness. The thermostatic model relies heavily on a thick data environment, which in most countries does not exist. Outside the US, Canadian and British context, we do not have such data and we need to develop alternative measures and models to test how public opinion and public policy are related.

## Appendix C

**Table C1: Policy Concerns and Spending in Austria**

	<b>Policy Concerns</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>
<b>Defence</b>	8.7	1.7
<b>Law &amp; Order</b>	21.8	2.9
<b>Economy</b>	55.6	10.8
<b>Environment</b>	7.8	1.0
<b>Housing</b>	4.6	1.3
<b>Health Care</b>	15.0	15.1
<b>Education</b>	10.0	10.7
<b>Social Problems</b>	49.0	40.9

Note: Policy concerns are the proportion of people stating that a policy issue is the most or the second-most important. Public expenditure is the percentage of overall spending.

**Table C2: Policy Concerns and Spending in Belgium**

	<b>Policy Concerns</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>
<b>Defence</b>	7.8	2.1
<b>Law &amp; Order</b>	30.0	3.4
<b>Economy</b>	55.0	10.4
<b>Environment</b>	7.7	1.3
<b>Housing</b>	7.8	0.7
<b>Health Care</b>	5.8	14.2
<b>Education</b>	4.9	11.8
<b>Social Problems</b>	48.9	35.7

Note: Policy concerns are the proportion of people stating that a policy issue is the most or the second-most important. Public expenditure is the percentage of overall spending.

**Table C3: Policy Concerns and Spending in Czech Republic**

	<b>Policy Concerns</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>
<b>Defence</b>	4.1	2.6
<b>Law &amp; Order</b>	29.3	4.8
<b>Economy</b>	54.5	16.0
<b>Environment</b>	6.2	2.2
<b>Housing</b>	9.7	2.6
<b>Health Care</b>	39.0	17.0
<b>Education</b>	5.5	11.0
<b>Social Problems</b>	41.2	30.4

Note: Policy concerns are the proportion of people stating that a policy issue is the most or the second-most important. Public expenditure is the percentage of overall spending.

**Table C4: Policy Concerns and Spending in Denmark**

	<b>Policy Concerns</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>
<b>Defence</b>	18.1	2.9
<b>Law &amp; Order</b>	27.5	1.9
<b>Economy</b>	28.9	5.7
<b>Environment</b>	13.8	1.0
<b>Housing</b>	4.8	1.0
<b>Health Care</b>	27.5	14.0
<b>Education</b>	12.7	13.8
<b>Social Problems</b>	36.7	43.5

Note: Policy concerns are the proportion of people stating that a policy issue is the most or the second-most important. Public expenditure is the percentage of overall spending.

**Table C5: Policy Concerns and Spending in Estonia**

	<b>Policy Concerns</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>
<b>Defence</b>	5.4	6.1
<b>Law &amp; Order</b>	31.6	8.7
<b>Economy</b>	61.7	17.3
<b>Environment</b>	4.8	3.6
<b>Housing</b>	3.1	1.4
<b>Health Care</b>	22.0	18.1
<b>Education</b>	9.3	24.2
<b>Social Problems</b>	37.6	44.4

Note: Policy concerns are the proportion of people stating that a policy issue is the most or the second-most important. Public expenditure is the percentage of overall spending.

**Table C6: Policy Concerns and Spending in Finland**

	<b>Policy Concerns</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>
<b>Defence</b>	3.9	2.9
<b>Law &amp; Order</b>	17.6	2.7
<b>Economy</b>	37.4	9.3
<b>Environment</b>	8.2	0.6
<b>Housing</b>	3.2	0.7
<b>Health Care</b>	36.8	13.6
<b>Education</b>	3.6	12.2
<b>Social Problems</b>	55.6	42.4

Note: Policy concerns are the proportion of people stating that a policy issue is the most or the second-most important. Public expenditure is the percentage of overall spending.

**Table C7: Policy Concerns and Spending in France**

	<b>Policy Concerns</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>
<b>Defence</b>	8.5	3.5
<b>Law &amp; Order</b>	27.9	3.0
<b>Economy</b>	48.3	6.3
<b>Environment</b>	8.3	1.8
<b>Housing</b>	9.5	3.5
<b>Health Care</b>	10.6	14.3
<b>Education</b>	9.3	10.8
<b>Social Problems</b>	58.5	41.1

Note: Policy concerns are the proportion of people stating that a policy issue is the most or the second-most important. Public expenditure is the percentage of overall spending.

**Table C8: Policy Concerns and Spending in Germany**

	<b>Policy Concerns</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>
<b>Defence</b>	7.1	2.2
<b>Law &amp; Order</b>	17.4	3.4
<b>Economy</b>	56.6	8.2
<b>Environment</b>	3.7	1.3
<b>Housing</b>	1.1	2.0
<b>Health Care</b>	18.9	14.7
<b>Education</b>	13.7	8.9
<b>Social Problems</b>	63.0	44.5

Note: Policy concerns are the proportion of people stating that a policy issue is the most or the second-most important. Public expenditure is the percentage of overall spending.

**Table C9: Policy Concerns and Spending in Greece**

	<b>Policy Concerns</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>
<b>Defence</b>	6.2	6.4
<b>Law &amp; Order</b>	22.8	3.3
<b>Economy</b>	63.6	10.9
<b>Environment</b>	3.2	1.2
<b>Housing</b>	0.7	0.8
<b>Health Care</b>	15.8	13.4
<b>Education</b>	10.4	8.1
<b>Social Problems</b>	58.7	34.0

Note: Policy concerns are the proportion of people stating that a policy issue is the most or the second-most important. Public expenditure is the percentage of overall spending.

**Table C10: Policy Concerns and Spending in Hungary**

	<b>Policy Concerns</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>
<b>Defence</b>	2.1	2.3
<b>Law &amp; Order</b>	19.1	4.0
<b>Economy</b>	68.3	11.8
<b>Environment</b>	4.8	1.4
<b>Housing</b>	5.1	1.8
<b>Health Care</b>	27.8	10.3
<b>Education</b>	5.5	11.0
<b>Social Problems</b>	53.4	35.2

Note: Policy concerns are the proportion of people stating that a policy issue is the most or the second-most important. Public expenditure is the percentage of overall spending.

**Table C11: Policy Concerns and Spending in Ireland**

	<b>Policy Concerns</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>
<b>Defence</b>	4.6	1.3
<b>Law &amp; Order</b>	44.6	4.2
<b>Economy</b>	47.2	15.3
<b>Environment</b>	4.8	2.6
<b>Housing</b>	12.5	4.6
<b>Health Care</b>	42.2	18.7
<b>Education</b>	5.8	12.9
<b>Social Problems</b>	28.2	30.3

Note: Policy concerns are the proportion of people stating that a policy issue is the most or the second-most important. Public expenditure is the percentage of overall spending.

**Table C12: Policy Concerns and Spending in Italy**

	<b>Policy Concerns</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>
<b>Defence</b>	12.4	2.7
<b>Law &amp; Order</b>	27.0	4.0
<b>Economy</b>	64.4	8.4
<b>Environment</b>	4.3	1.8
<b>Housing</b>	3.4	1.4
<b>Health Care</b>	9.1	14.3
<b>Education</b>	4.1	9.4
<b>Social Problems</b>	40.9	38.2

Note: Policy concerns are the proportion of people stating that a policy issue is the most or the second-most important. Public expenditure is the percentage of overall spending.

**Table C13: Policy Concerns and Spending in Luxembourg**

	<b>Policy Concerns</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>
<b>Defence</b>	7.0	0.7
<b>Law &amp; Order</b>	21.2	2.4
<b>Economy</b>	44.1	11.0
<b>Environment</b>	7.8	2.7
<b>Housing</b>	21.3	1.8
<b>Health Care</b>	8.9	11.9
<b>Education</b>	21.3	11.6
<b>Social Problems</b>	48.5	42.4

Note: Policy concerns are the proportion of people stating that a policy issue is the most or the second-most important. Public expenditure is the percentage of overall spending.

**Table C14: Policy Concerns and Spending in Netherlands**

	<b>Policy Concerns</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>
<b>Defence</b>	16.4	3.1
<b>Law &amp; Order</b>	40.2	4.2
<b>Economy</b>	45.0	11.3
<b>Environment</b>	7.2	3.6
<b>Housing</b>	5.2	1.3
<b>Health Care</b>	34.1	14.3
<b>Education</b>	14.7	11.8
<b>Social Problems</b>	24.8	33.9

Note: Policy concerns are the proportion of people stating that a policy issue is the most or the second-most important. Public expenditure is the percentage of overall spending.



**Table C15: Policy Concerns and Spending in Poland**

	<b>Policy Concerns</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>
<b>Defence</b>	3.9	2.8
<b>Law &amp; Order</b>	17.6	4.3
<b>Economy</b>	46.6	11.0
<b>Environment</b>	2.3	1.5
<b>Housing</b>	5.5	2.8
<b>Health Care</b>	38.6	11.0
<b>Education</b>	3.4	13.2
<b>Social Problems</b>	55.7	37.5

Note: Policy concerns are the proportion of people stating that a policy issue is the most or the second-most important. Public expenditure is the percentage of overall spending.

**Table C16: Policy Concerns and Spending in Portugal**

	<b>Policy Concerns</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>
<b>Defence</b>	4.0	3.0
<b>Law &amp; Order</b>	19.5	4.4
<b>Economy</b>	65.0	9.4
<b>Environment</b>	1.3	1.4
<b>Housing</b>	2.9	1.5
<b>Health Care</b>	21.1	15.0
<b>Education</b>	6.2	14.2
<b>Social Problems</b>	57.8	34.2

Note: Policy concerns are the proportion of people stating that a policy issue is the most or the second-most important. Public expenditure is the percentage of overall spending.

**Table C17: Policy Concerns and Spending in Slovakia**

	<b>Policy Concerns</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>
<b>Defence</b>	5.6	4.0
<b>Law &amp; Order</b>	25.8	5.8
<b>Economy</b>	61.9	11.4
<b>Environment</b>	5.7	1.9
<b>Housing</b>	10.2	2.1
<b>Health Care</b>	27.9	17.0
<b>Education</b>	8.1	10.6
<b>Social Problems</b>	57.3	31.5

Note: Policy concerns are the proportion of people stating that a policy issue is the most or the second-most important. Public expenditure is the percentage of overall spending.

**Table C18: Policy Concerns and Spending in Slovenia**

	<b>Policy Concerns</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>
<b>Defence</b>	6.2	3.2
<b>Law &amp; Order</b>	12.8	3.6
<b>Economy</b>	66.7	9.9
<b>Environment</b>	5.2	1.8
<b>Housing</b>	9.0	1.5
<b>Health Care</b>	16.6	14.0
<b>Education</b>	7.2	13.9
<b>Social Problems</b>	47.9	36.7

Note: Policy concerns are the proportion of people stating that a policy issue is the most or the second-most important. Public expenditure is the percentage of the overall spending.

**Table C19: Policy Concerns and Spending in Spain**

	<b>Policy Concerns</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>
<b>Defence</b>	42.0	2.6
<b>Law &amp; Order</b>	14.6	4.8
<b>Economy</b>	37.6	12.3
<b>Environment</b>	2.1	2.3
<b>Housing</b>	14.8	2.5
<b>Health Care</b>	3.9	14.3
<b>Education</b>	3.4	11.1
<b>Social Problems</b>	41.5	34.1

Note: Policy concerns are the proportion of people stating that a policy issue is the most or the second-most important. Public expenditure is the percentage of overall spending.

**Table C20: Policy Concerns and Spending in Sweden**

	<b>Policy Concerns</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>
<b>Defence</b>	6.3	3.2
<b>Law &amp; Order</b>	23.0	2.6
<b>Economy</b>	33.8	8.0
<b>Environment</b>	15.6	0.7
<b>Housing</b>	5.8	1.5
<b>Health Care</b>	39.9	12.8
<b>Education</b>	20.2	13.1
<b>Social Problems</b>	53.4	42.0

Note: Policy concerns are the proportion of people stating that a policy issue is the most or the second-most important. Public expenditure is the percentage of overall spending.

**Table C21: Policy Concerns and Spending in Britain**

	<b>Policy Concerns</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>
<b>Defence</b>	23.5	5.6
<b>Law &amp; Order</b>	40.8	5.7
<b>Economy</b>	29.6	7.2
<b>Environment</b>	7.0	1.9
<b>Housing</b>	9.0	2.4
<b>Health Care</b>	24.7	15.8
<b>Education</b>	11.0	13.8
<b>Social Problems</b>	24.0	35.6

Note: Policy concerns are the proportion of people stating that a policy issue is the most or the second-most important. Public expenditure is the percentage of overall spending.

## VI. The Conditions of Ideological Congruence

Previous chapters have focused on the issue responsiveness of government towards citizens' preferences. In the review of the literature I argue that issue responsiveness is the best approach to test the quality of effective political representation and its contextual effects. Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 focus on investigating the conditions of issue responsiveness on the basis of veto player theory linked to the clarity of responsibility arguments. The analyses suggest that although using salient opinion appears to be a relatively good alternative to using spending preferences (Chapter 4), modelling issue responsiveness and its conditions is more complex. The results from Chapter 5 lend some confidence to one end of the veto player theory, in that the fewer institutional and situational veto players are created, the more responsive government is towards the public's policy concerns. The impact of many situational and institutional veto players is less clear, because the results do not lend much confidence in terms of statistical significance. They do indicate, however, that the veto player theory largely applies. Whether opinion representation in terms of a budget increase occurs seems to depend heavily on the issue domain regarded. This coincides with the findings from the first empirical chapter, where redistributive issues seemed to perform well in comparison to other issues such as defence. This is what the individual level analysis in Chapter 4 suggests. The aggregate analysis indicates that salient opinion also performs quite well in predicting actual spending in a bivariate setup, but once again it also depends on the issue domain regarded. Whenever people think an issue is important, they actually get more spending on the issue domain in the following year.

In this chapter I move on to investigating the positional policy congruence of the public's ideological beliefs with government's stance on the left-right continuum. *Positional policy congruence* (Jones and Baumgartner, 2004: 2) appears to be the dominant approach for examining the congruence of citizens and governments. Let me point to two important facts here. Firstly, I understand ideology approaches as a way of

testing effective policy representation as pointed out in the review of literature. and not just as agendas setting. Secondly, 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 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). Although we have got over-time measures of public opinion on ideology over time, we lack continuous (annual) measures of parties and government's stance on the ideological continuum. Such data are to date not available. I will get back to this thought in more detail later in this chapter, when I elaborate on the models and measures of ideological congruence.

Here, I am interested in the circumstances under which congruence between the mean citizen's position and governments' position on the left-right continuum occurs. In addition, I ask whether the same institutions and situations have an impact on the opinion-policy relationship as for effective issue correspondence. After all, both kinds of political representation look at the relationship between public opinion and government outputs, yet rely on different measures and concepts of preferences and outputs.

I expect to find different circumstances to condition ideological representation and issue responsiveness. Issue priorities are "at heart, a forecast, and it seems reasonable to expect that these forecasts are established on a retrospective basis" (Enelow and 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 making up an ideological "super-issue" (Pierce, 1999: 34). Ideology is something that is established and long-standing. "[I]deology, as the more general measure of people's left-right tendencies, is more likely to miss reactions to a particular issue [...] one can, if necessary, use general or omnibus ideology measures to capture left-right tendencies" (Zaller, 1992: 27). It is also expected to be less affected by short- and mid-term events, but rather affected by long-established 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.

Indeed, it seems this is a step backwards from dynamic to static representation. There is no model that tracks the representation of ideology in government in a dynamic way – based on whether change in ideological preferences is mirrored in change in government ideology in the following year. This is due to a lack of data for the ideological positioning of government. While there are various ways to indicate government ideology, the available data usually capture party/government ideology as a snapshot in time through expert judgements or collect it from manifesto data or election surveys. This means there are large gaps between data points, which makes it hard to model representation dynamically. On the other hand looking at positional policy congruence and how it is affected by context enables me to compare the conditions of political representation of issues and ideology. While issue representation is volatile and subject to change as a result of short- and long-term events, I argue that the ideological representation of the mean citizen is only affected by time-invariant institutions. I test this hypothesis here. This chapter is structured as follows.

I discuss the notion of positional policy congruence first (Chapter 6.1). I then present the citizens' perceptions model of positional policy congruence, also discussing alternative models of ideological representation (Chapter 6.2). My hypotheses are introduced in Chapter 6.3, where, similar to Chapter 5, I distinguish between the impact of institutional and situational clarity on ideological congruence of government and the mean citizen. This includes a recap of the veto player theory and clarity of responsibility hypothesis. Next, I discuss my data and methodology in more detail (Chapter 6.4). I present some descriptive results of the mean citizens' position, government ideology and the absolute distances between them in Chapter 6.5. This is followed by an analysis of the conditions of positional policy congruence in Chapter 6.6, which looks at institutions (6.6.1) and situations (6.6.2) separately. I conclude and discuss my findings in section 6.7.

## 6.1 The Citizens' Perceptions Model of 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 (Powell, 2011, Golder and Stramski, 2010, Blais and Bodet, 2006, Powell, 2009, Powell, 2000, Huber and Powell, 1994). 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, there is a different indicator of government ideology. 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 et al., 2007: 6).

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 it to be inaccurate as the data contain measurement errors and lack cross-coder validation (Benoit et al., 2009). There are doubts that the CMP serves reliable data on party positions. In addition, it does not carry out continuous measurement.

Another way to capture parties' ideologies is through expert surveys (Benoit and Laver, 2003-2004, Huber and Inglehart, 1995, Castles and Mair, 1984), 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 was conducted. In addition, there are some doubts about the validity and reliability of the measures (Whitefield et al., 2007, Budge, 2001). 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 and Laver, 2007: 103)

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' views on the position of parties on the ideological scale are fairly accurate and correlate with expert views and manifesto measures (Golder and Stramski, 2010, Powell, 2009, Blais and Bodet, 2006). However, the perception measure is a very new instrument employed in survey research, which means that data are limited to a few time points. In addition, the perception question is only employed in election surveys, which additionally limits the data availability to election years. A perfectly accurate, continuous and over-time measure of parties' ideologies is to date not available.

Positional policy congruence engages in disentangling the effect of context on the opinion-policy linkage. Political institutions have been the focus of studies, in



particular, legislative characteristics such as the electoral and party system (Powell, 2011, Golder and Stramski, 2010, Kang and Powell, 2010, Powell, 2009, Blais and Bodet, 2006, Powell, 2006, Powell, 2000, Powell and Vanberg, 2000, Huber and Powell, 1994). The conclusions drawn about the impact of the electoral and party system are inconsistent, however. Whereas earlier research asserts that proportional and multiparty systems outperform their counterparts (Powell, 2006, Powell and Vanberg, 2000, Powell, 2000, Huber and Powell, 1994), more recent research finds only marginal differences across those institutional features (Powell, 2011, Golder and Stramski, 2010, Powell, 2009, Blais and Bodet, 2006). Yet, there is only little discussion about why findings on the contextual effects of institutions are inconsistent.<sup>40</sup> 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 (Whitten and Palmer, 1999, Powell and Whitten, 1993). This has been further developed in a study on performance voting that distinguished between fixed institutional and time-varying government clarity (Hobolt et al., 2012). I follow this notion here. In accordance with Hobolt et al. (2012), I consider two sets of contextual effects that split between fixed institutions such as the electoral and party system, level of federalism, bicameralism and regime type. I also do this for time-varying factors in terms of situational clarity such as single party versus coalition governments, the effective numbers of parties in the legislature and executive, minimum-winning versus over- and undersized governments. Such a classification of contextual factors allows me to clarify what impacts the relationship between public opinion and government ideology.

## **6.2 The Clarity of Responsibilities Hypothesis**

In this chapter 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

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<sup>40</sup> In the meantime scholarship moves on to exploring other contextual effect such as globalisation. Ezrow and Hellwig (2012) and Ezrow et al. (2011) find that economic globalisation has a significant impact on ideological representation of citizens by political parties, where in highly globalised countries congruence decreases. 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.

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.

### **Positional Congruence Hypothesis**

*Positional congruence is higher when there is increased institutional clarity, but it is not affected by situational clarity.*

## **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 stances on issues may change over time depending on the political climate and developments, it is more difficult to change and affect a person's general ideology (Zaller, 1992: 23 ff.). 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: *Presidential governments are more congruent with the mean citizen than parliamentary ones.*

The regime type has been looked at with regard to the issue responsiveness of governments to public preferences before. 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 in shifting 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.

H2a: *Governments in two-and-a-half-party systems are more congruent with the mean citizen than those in multiparty systems.*

A similar argument applies to few parties versus multipartyism. The type of the party system is a direct consequence of the electoral rules. In short the same mechanisms for policymaking apply. In systems with fewer parties, they are able 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 pull 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 I expect government in systems with a limited number of parties to be more congruent with the mean citizen.

H3a: *Governments federal states are less congruent with the mean citizen than their unitary counterparts.*

Federalism has previously been found to have a negative impact on public responsiveness to government action because the public is not clear about who to address their preferences to (Soroka and Wlezien, 2010, Downs, 1999). Citizens 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 policymaking. 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 effects specific policies and also ideological beliefs. Unitary states do not have another level of governance and have fewer 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 policymaking occurs.

H4a: <i>Governments with unicameral legislatures are more congruent with the mean citizens than their bicameral counterparts.</i>
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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, as does the Bundesrat in Germany with interests of the German Länder, the House of Lords in the Britain on the other hand brings in expert 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 policymaking, whereas unicameral states do not have to negotiate with another body of legislation. More veto players, I have argued earlier, always mean more compromise on issues and, thus, on ideology. Agreement is achieved by moving ideological beliefs towards a compromise. A bicameral structure also makes it 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 governments in unicameral systems to be more congruent with the mean citizens' beliefs.

H5a: *Majoritarian electoral rules increase positional congruence between the mean citizen and her government.*

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 that proportional electoral systems outperform majoritarian ones with regard to the ideological congruence of governments and citizens (Powell, 2000, Powell and Vanberg, 2000, Huber and Powell, 1994). However, current research suggests that there are only marginal differences across electoral systems (Powell, 2011, Golder and Stramski, 2010, Powell, 2009, Blais and Bodet, 2006). 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 tend to position themselves around the mean citizen 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 pulled 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.

**Table 14: Hypothesised Effect of Institutions and Situations on Positional Policy Congruence**

	<b>Number of Veto Players</b>	<b>Clarity of Responsibility</b>	<b>Effect on Positional Policy Congruence</b>
<b>Situations</b>			Minor effect
High number of ENPP	High	Low	-
High number of ENPG	High	Low	-
Coalition Government	High	Low	-
Over-/Undersized Government	High	Low	-
<b>Institutions</b>			Major effect
Bicameralism	High	Low	-
Federalism	High	Low	-
Parliamentarianism	High	Low	-
Proportional Electoral Rules	High	Low	-
Multipartyism	High	Low	-

Note: The negative sign indicates a constraining impact of situations and institutions on responsiveness

Overall, I assume the Institutional Clarity Hypothesis to be confirmed if I find support for all sub-hypothesis on institutional clarity. Table 14 summarises my expectations.

## 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 well established, ideological beliefs are rooted within individuals. 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 clarity. In fact, I suspect situations to have no significant effect on congruence at all. In order to explore this I rely on four sub-hypotheses, using which I expect find an indication of directions, if only marginal and insignificant ones. The time-varying factors I regard here are the effective number of parties in the legislature (ENPP), the number of parties in the government, single party versus coalition governments as well as minimum-winning versus over-/undersized governments corresponding with H1b to H4b (See Chapter 2.4.1.2). I do not set out individual sub-hypothesis as I do not expect to find any significant effects from 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 over other models of ideological congruence, e.g. it uses the same scale for citizens' self-placement and party placements. However, 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, but the CSES are no time-series data. The CSES combines measures in one single survey, so that no data merging of different sources and qualities is 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 and others on a 1 to 10 continuum (Blais and Bodet, 2006: 1248). With the CSES I overcome this issue. The perception model employs data from the same source where respondents were asked to place themselves and 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 delivers a decent amount of data on parties' position on the left-right continuum across time, but with larger gaps as data are only collected in election years.. However, the discussion about the reliability of the data and particularly the inter- and intra-coder validity (Benoit et al., 2009, Mikhaylov et al., 2008, Benoit et al., 2007, Benoit and Laver, 2007, Laver et al., 2003) 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 and robust 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 until today. The latest module has only recently been released for research. CSES has collected three modules of data (Module 1:1996–2001, Module 2: 2002–2006, Module 3: 2007–2011) that combine micro and macro-level data. The main advantage for researchers is that the

data allow cross-national studies to be conducted and contextual factors to be incorporated into their models such as institutional attributes. The project offers consistent data for election years from 1996 onwards. Still, 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 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. Table 15 presents the country sample and election years chosen for analysis. 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 15: CSES Country Sample and Election Years**

<b>CSES Country</b>	<b>Years</b>
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]?"*<sup>41</sup> 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 (2011, 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. Why the mean citizen?

[T]he 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 and Powell 1994:296). Theoretically, it may matter after all to account for minority opinion. Especially in consensus democracies, which are not build on the notion of majority rule, minority opinion is important and one should allow for it to influence the average ideology score of citizens. While I acknowledge that very strong outliers may pull the average towards the left or the right and that one has diagnose and/

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<sup>41</sup> 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?"*

or correct for that, I also believe that it is important to account for the full range of ideological preferences. This is not an issue in my data, however. The mean and median scores are very similar.<sup>42</sup> Further, checking the distribution of the left-right scores by country has shown that there are not extreme outliers that may pull the mean to either direction. In addition, it appears that using 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 and Hellwig, 2012) 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. Accordingly, I set up mean perceived party scores in order to place the governments' positions on the left-right continuum. If a single-party government is 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 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 for 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 (three-party versus multiparty systems). The group of factors that vary over time are summarised under situational clarity and include two continuous variables (effective number of parties in parliament, number of parties in government) 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 (Döring and Manow, 2011), the Parline (IPU,

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<sup>42</sup> I report the descriptive statistics including both, the mean and the median citizens' scores in Appendix D.

1996–2012) data base and the Database of Political Institutions (Beck, Clarke, Groff, Keefer, Walsh 2012) as well as Gallagher’s effective number of political parties in the legislature (Gallagher, 2012).

The modelling strategy applied is transparent, efficient, yet simple. I rely on clustered Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regression analyses with interactive terms. I correct for country clustering by estimating the panel-corrected standardised errors. 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 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 (Brambor et al., 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.  $\alpha$  is the intercept,  $\beta_1$  the estimate for the slope of citizens’ mean ideology,  $\beta_2$  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  $\beta_3$  accompanies the interaction term,  $\epsilon$  is the unobserved error. The important estimates for me are the coefficients for the baseline model  $\beta_1$  and the interaction term  $\beta_3$ . 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 gives us 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  $\beta_1$  indicates the impact of publics’ mean ideological preferences on government ideology in presidential systems and  $\beta_3$  the impact of mean citizens’ preferences in parliamentary ones.

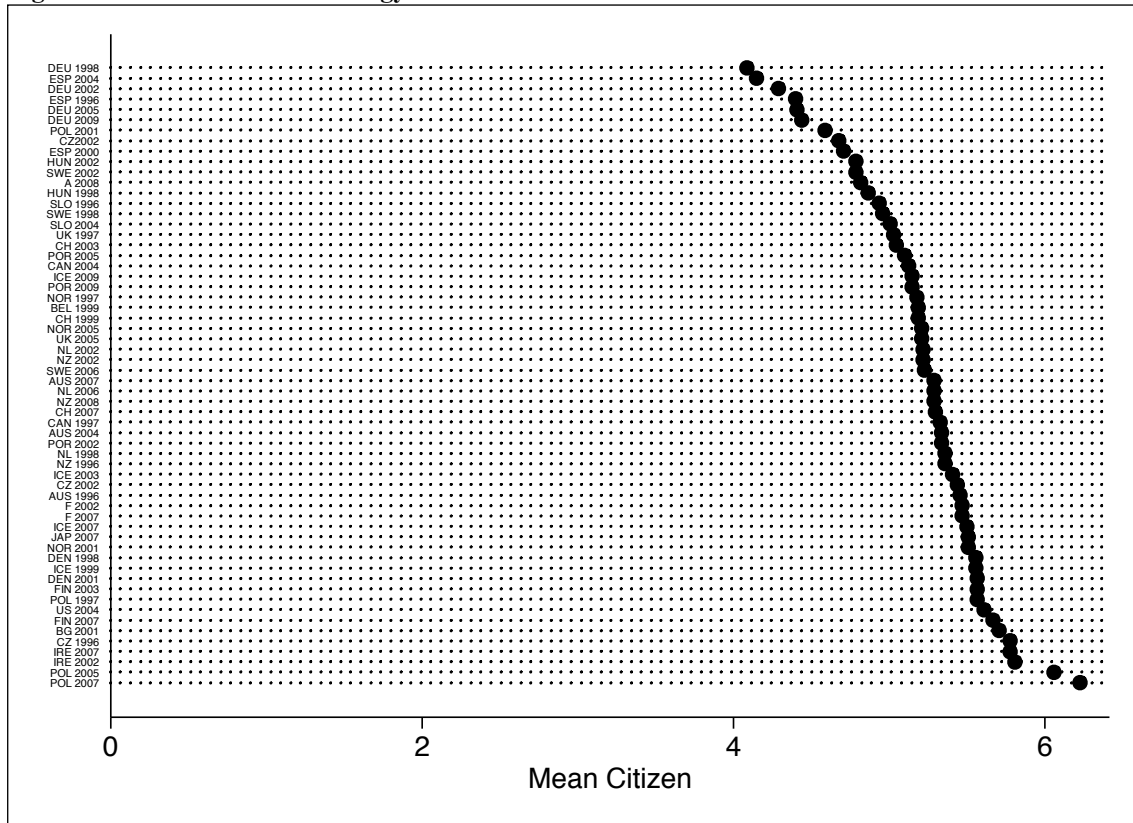
## 6.4 The Mean Citizen, Government and Absolute Ideological Distances

I begin my analysis by presenting some descriptive results. Figure 11 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 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 is 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. When calculating the mean 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, there 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 taken with a pinch of salt.<sup>43</sup> 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 ideology score of 5.21.

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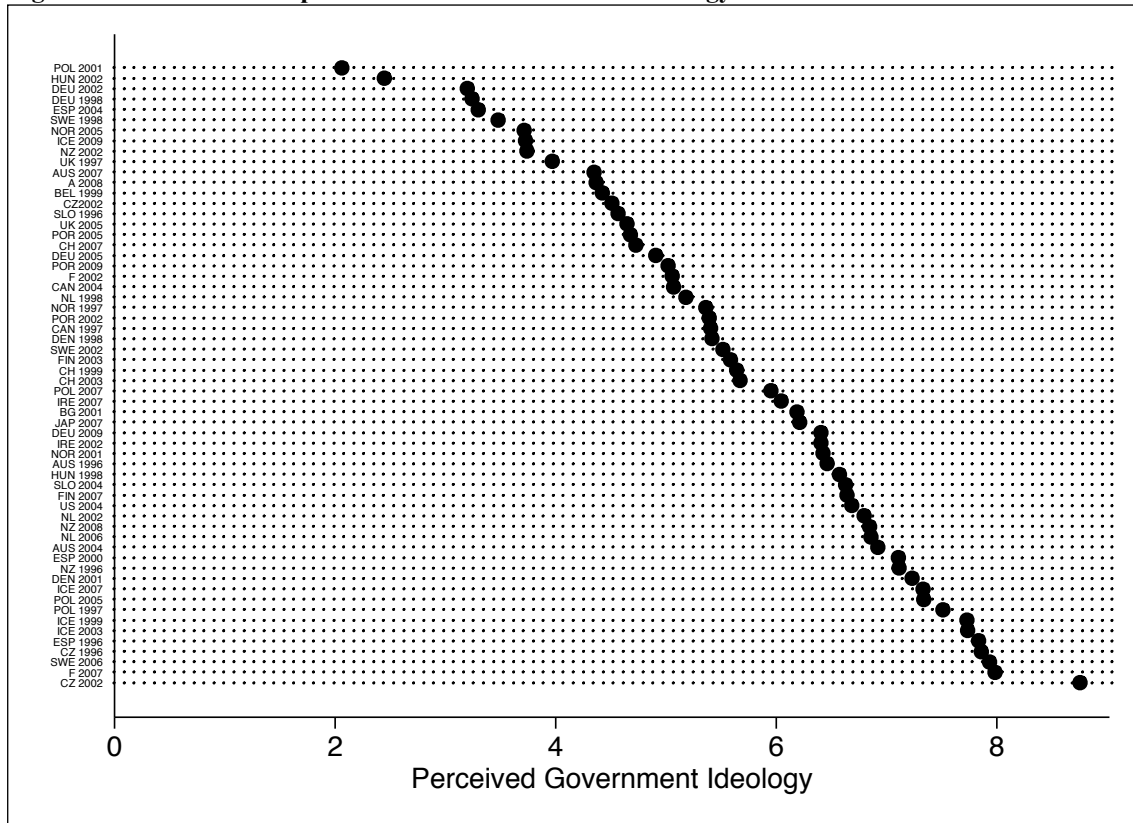
<sup>43</sup> The impact of social desirability bias on analyses of social and political science phenomena has been discussed elsewhere. However, a more detailed discussion with regard to measuring ideological preferences would contribute to the study of positional policy congruence. However, this cannot be achieved by this thesis and will be subject of future research.

Figure 12: Mean Citizens' 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 generally at the centre-right. The average ideology score can be found in Sweden in the year 2003.

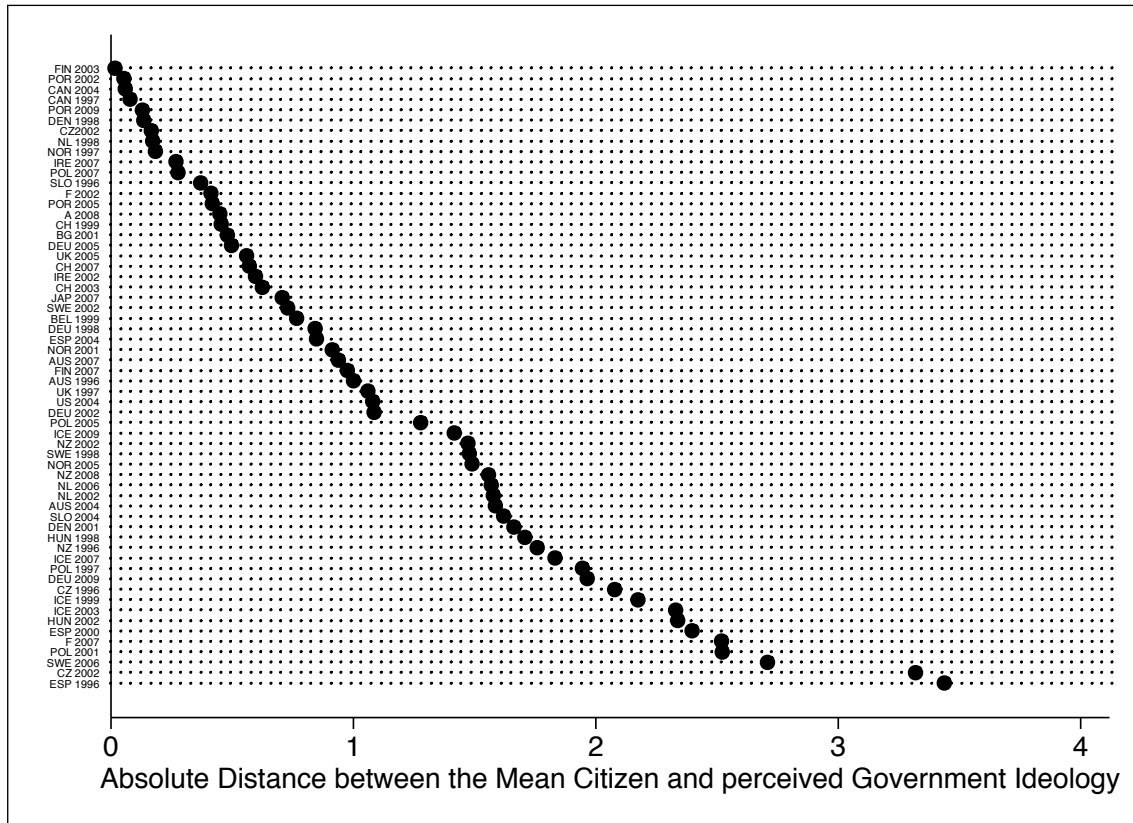
**Figure 13: Citizens' Perception of Governments' Mean Ideology**



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 into 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 substantial 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 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.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Please note that the ideology scores for the mean citizen and governments as well as the absolute distance between them broken down by country and election can be found in Table C1 in Appendix C.

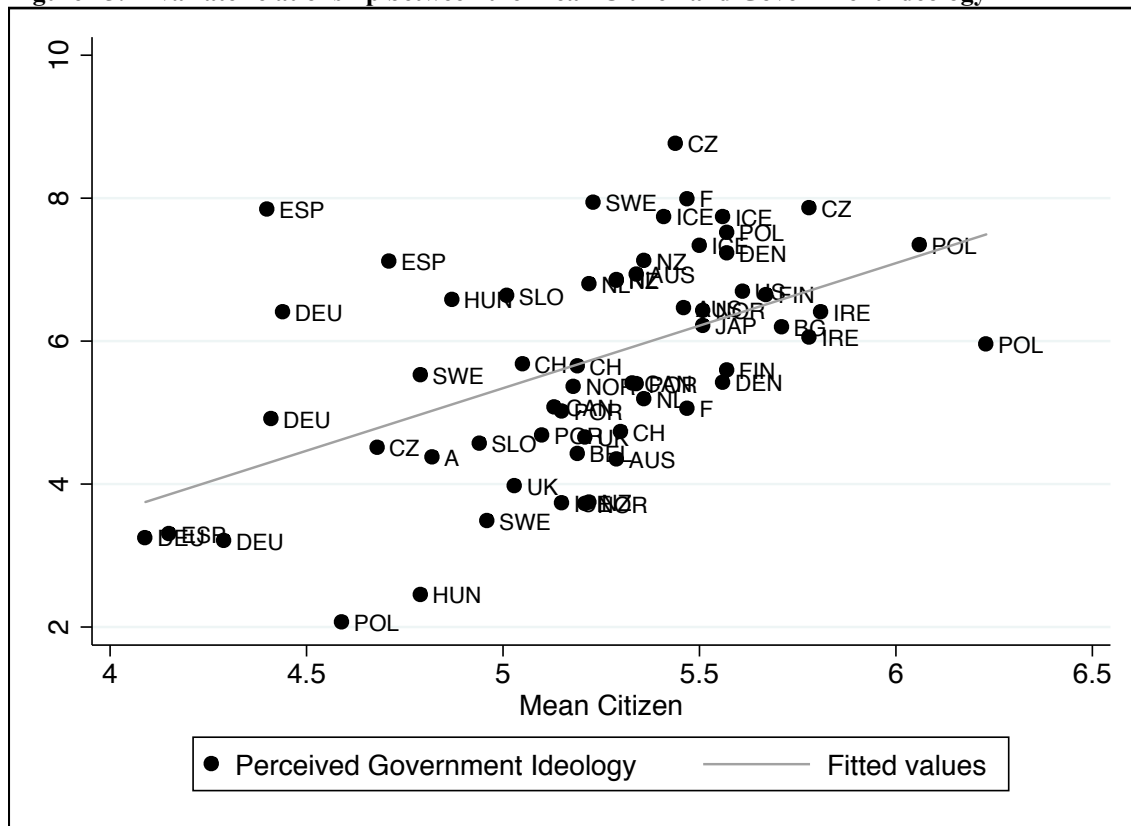
**Figure 14: Absolute Ideological Distance between the Mean Citizen and Perceived Governments' Positions**



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 in Figure 14.

The bivariate 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.

Figure 15: Bivariate relationship between the Mean Citizen and Government Ideology



## 6.5 Analysing the Conditions of Positional Policy Congruence

In order to examine the conditions of positional policy congruence, I present the results in two steps. I begin looking at the time-invariant institutional conditions that I have clustered according to their impact on the clarity of policymaking and opinion expression. Secondly, I examine the time-varying situational circumstances that vary over time. According to my hypotheses I expect to find that institutions have a significant impact on ideological congruence, but that situations have no significant impact on the opinion-policy relationship. I have argued that ideology is rather static and thus potentially more affected by long-standing and invariant factors than by varying ones. I come back to the comparison by the end of this section.



## 6.5.1 The Impact of Institutional Clarity on Positional Policy Congruence

I have run OLS regressions with interactive terms and produced clustered standardised errors to examine the moderating impact of the time-invariant institutions on the opinion-policy relationship. I discuss my findings for each institution in the following order: the impact of bicameralism, federalism, the regime type, the electoral, then the party system. The regression results are presented in Table 17.

I have argued that a bicameral nation state structure leads to a less clear 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 the 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 structured 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 decreases 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 issues, which also affects 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.

**Table 16: The Impact of Institutional Clarity on Ideological Congruence**

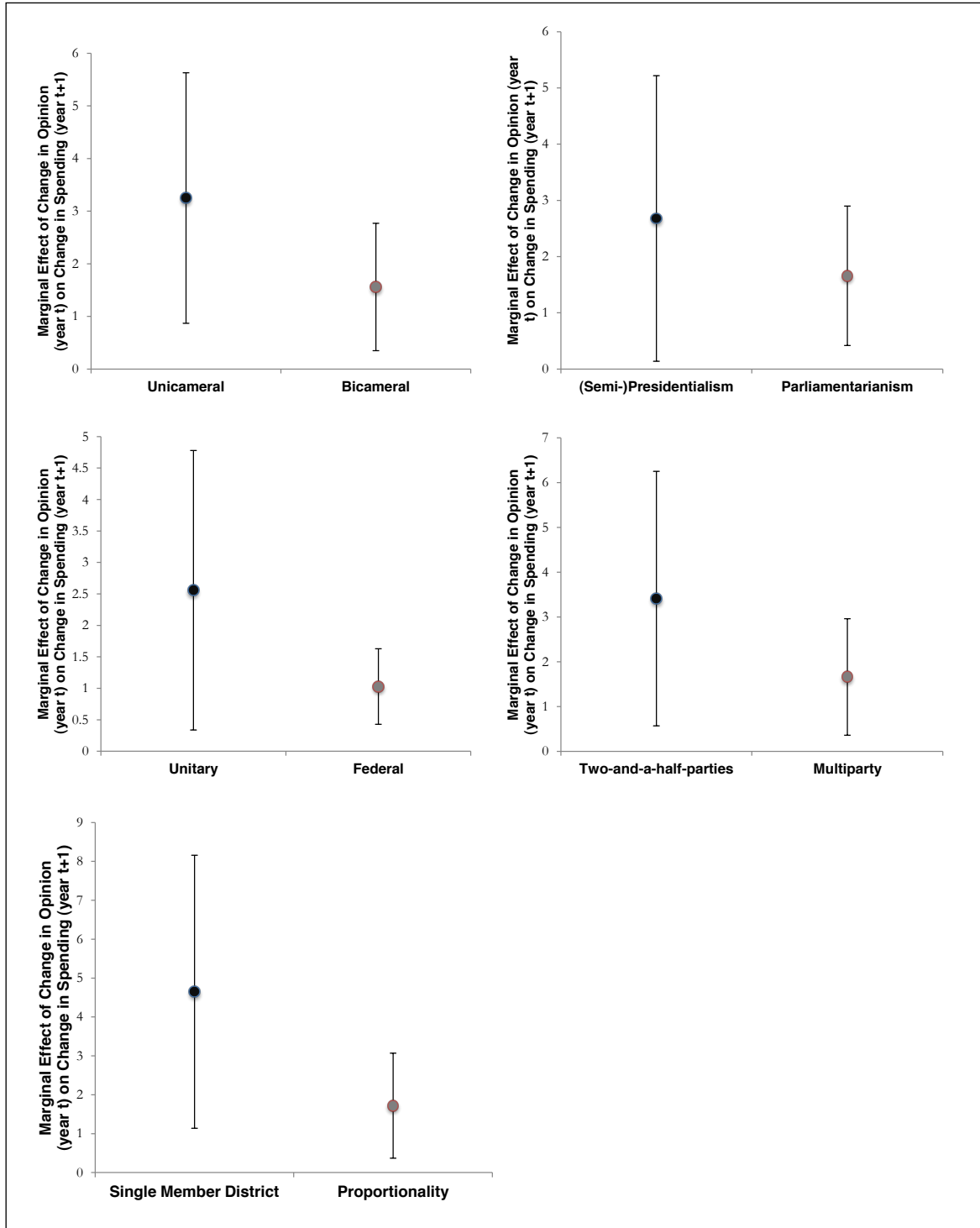
	<b>Perceived Government Ideology</b>				
<b>Mean Citizen</b>	3.25*** (-0.87)	2.56*** (-0.34)	2.69*** (-0.14)	4.65*** (-1.14)	3.41*** (-0.57)
<b>Bicameralism</b>	9.09* (-4.91)				
<b>Mean Citizen*Bicameralism</b>	-1.69* (-0.94)				
<b>Federalism</b>		8.02*** (-2.84)			
<b>Mean Citizen*Federalism</b>		-1.52** (-0.55)			
<b>Parliamentary System</b>			5.92** (-2.38)		
<b>Mean Citizen*Parliamentary System</b>			-1.02** (-0.46)		
<b>Proportionality</b>				15.81** (-6.3)	
<b>Mean Citizen*Proportionality</b>				-2.94** (-1.19)	
<b>Multipartyism</b>					9.64** (-3.61)
<b>Mean Citizen*Multipartyism</b>					-1.75** (-0.67)
<b>Constant</b>	-11.42** (-4.53)	-7.78*** (-1.73)	-8.81*** (-0.60)	-19.02*** (-5.98)	-12.49*** (-3.07)
<b>Observations</b>	60	60	60	60	60
<b>R-squared</b>	0.29	0.3	0.28	0.27	0.29

Standard error in parentheses  
 \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

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 that proportional and multiparty systems perform better than their counterparts. However, a handful of current studies suggest that differences in the type of the electoral and party system are marginal and conclude that systems perform equally well. My regression results 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.

**Figure 16: Marginal Effects of Mean Citizen on Perceived Government Ideology under Institutional Conditions**



The most important coefficients in the regression table are the baseline model as well as the interactive terms. For all institutional features  $\beta_1$ , the coefficient for the baseline model is significant within the 99% confidence interval. The coefficient for the

interactive terms,  $\beta_2$ , also achieves significance within the 90% and 95% confidence intervals. Brambor et al. (2006: 76) suggest plotting the marginal effects of the main explanatory variable on the dependent under the moderating condition. The recommendation is to use Stata's `grinter` function, however, this is only appropriate for interactions with continuous variables. As I am dealing with interactions between a continuous and a group (dummy) variable I present the marginal effect in whisker's plots with confidence intervals. Figure 15 displays the conditional impact of the mean citizen on perceived government ideology given certain numbers of institutional veto players. All graphs suggest that the mean citizen has a significant impact on perceived government ideology under condition of institutional veto players. They further indicate that fewer veto players lead to increased congruence. The whisker's plot on the left hand side describes institutional constellations with fewer veto players, where as the chart on the right describes an institutional constellation with an increased number of veto players. It appears that the marginal effect of institutions is stronger when fewer veto players are involved in the decision making process (whisker's charts to the left), but lower when more veto players are involved (whisker's chart to the right). Admittedly, the variance around the institutional design that leads to fewer veto players is larger than for the one that creates more veto players. Yet, the general pattern suggests where there is extreme clarity of institutions, there is also highest congruence of the mean citizen and perceived government ideology. In turn, less institutional clarity leads to a decrease in congruence, however, there is still significant impact under a higher number of institutional veto players. These results correspond with the regression output presented in Table 16.

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 are longstanding and established preferences on a collection of issues grouped into 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, regime type, electoral and party system. These institutions are

fixed and normally written in form of a constitution. All five institutions showed a moderating effect on the opinion-policy relationship. It seems the more veto players these institutions allow, the less congruent a government is with the ideological preferences of the mean citizen, based on these characteristics. A bicameral structure, a federal organisation, parliamentary executives, proportional electoral rules and multipartyism appear to lead to significantly 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 policymaking, I do not find that any situation has a significant impact. The situations looked at here vary over time usually with the beginning of a new legislative period. They should have short-term effects on preference expression and policymaking. However, as ideology is long established, I did not expect short- and mid-term effects on congruence. The results generally support this. All of the characteristics looked at under situational clarity suggested that congruence occurred, but also that the results were not conclusive as statistical significance has not been achieved. Further, the findings suggest that veto player theory does not apply here.

### **6.5.2 The Impact of Situational Clarity on Positional Policy Congruence**

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 four moderators: the effective number of parliamentary parties (ENPP), 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.

**Table 17: The Impact of Situational Clarity on Ideological Congruence**

	<b>Mean Government Ideology</b>			
<b>Mean Citizen</b>	1.69	1.58**	1.42	0.86
	(-2.17)	(-0.60)	(-1.51)	(-0.87)
<b>ENPP</b>	-0.12			
	(-3.14)			
<b>Mean Citizen*ENPP</b>	0.02			
	(-0.59)			
<b>Minimum-Winning Government</b>		-1.48		
		(-3.76)		
<b>Mean Citizen*Minimum-Winning Government</b>		0.29		
		(-0.70)		
<b>ENPG</b>			-0.82	
			(-3.26)	
<b>Mean Citizen*ENPG</b>			0.15	
			(-0.62)	
<b>Coalition</b>				-5.96
				(-4.42)
<b>Mean Citizen*Coalition</b>				1.14
				(-0.87)
<b>Constant</b>	-3.00	-2.53	-1.67	1.2
	(-11.71)	(-3.24)	(-8.00)	(-4.37)
<b>Observations</b>	60	60	60	60
<b>R-squared</b>	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.27

Standard error in parentheses

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

I expect to find that situations have no significant impact on ideological congruence. Yet I expect to see an indication that the larger the number of parties in the parliament or in government is, the less congruence occurs. In addition, I would expect 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 appear to have no significant impact on the positional congruence between the mean citizen and her government. 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, minimum-winning versus over-/undersized governments, the ENPG, then coalition versus single party governments. The regression results are presented in Table 17.

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 the 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 time-varying government characteristics I have argued 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 coefficient for the baseline model,  $\beta_1$ , 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. 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 conclusive.

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 reaches statistical significance. This is also why I abstain from presenting the conditional impact of the mean citizen on perceived government ideology given a certain number of situational veto players. There is no significant impact, which indicates that I cannot confirm the veto player theory.

## 6.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I explore the conditions of positional policy congruence. Although it seems as a step backwards from dynamic to static representation, it is important to investigate what makes government more or less successful in translating ideological demands into policymaking at election times. If there is no congruence between what people want and what governments provide at election times when opinion and policy should correspond extremely, there are sincere doubts about political representation in and between election years.

Ideology describes a more general preference than attitudes towards specific issues. Ideological positions are something that gives a broad direction of where people stand on a collection of issues. It is usually long-established and it is harder to change or affect people's ideological positions. Representing ideological positions in policies is difficult; there is no such thing as an effective ideological policy outcome. Ideology does affect the general line of policymaking, however. Previous studies suggest that context affects the congruence of ideological positions of the public and policy makers, but it is still unclear how it affects it.

Here I argued that long-standing and fixed institutions may have more of an impact on positional representation than short-term events or changes such as changing situations. While both institutions and situations that lead to a larger number of veto players in the decision-making process decrease congruence, only the results for institutional clarity come up statistically significant. The analysis suggests that specifically federalism, bicameralism and parliamentarianism negatively affect the congruence of the public and government's ideological conviction. With regard to situational clarity, veto player theory does not apply. The coefficients point in the opposite direction suggesting that more veto players lead to increased representation.

Admittedly, the congruence of ideologies is not a dynamic way of modelling political representation, but it is not less important. If we know that government and the mean citizen correspond in election years, this is at least an indicator that elections are performing well in terms of representing opinion. A more dynamic and between-election approach would be desirable, however. Pioneering research on dynamic models of positional representation shows that positional responsiveness takes place in Britain



(Warwick, 2012, Hakhverdian, 2010). The procedures for data collection, in particular to indicate government policy, are very time consuming and costly, which is why scholarship is only slowly moving forward.

It is important to continue work on positional representation. After all, ideological beliefs and convictions are an underlying dimension of policymaking. Conservative governments rarely implement liberal policies or vice versa. It is important to bring forward the field and test the ideological responsiveness of government to the mean citizen, preferably using indicators of effective policy outputs. There are new techniques, e.g. content analysis, that capture left-right positions from texts that are not manifestos. Further, there is also a lot of leeway for future research with regard to the impact of context on positional representation. There are more institutional attributes that affect how successful government is in representing citizens' general positions. Some indications are presented here. The large issue responsiveness literature also delivers evidence that other institutions than the electoral and the party system affect representation, which may also be true for ideological positions. In addition, we would want to know how institutions affect representation in interplay with each other.

## Appendix D

**Table D1: Government Ideology, Mean Citizen and Absolute Distances by Country and Election Year**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Government Ideology</b>	<b>Mean Citizen</b>	<b>Absolute Distance</b>
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

<b>Country</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Government Ideology</b>	<b>Mean Citizen</b>	<b>Absolute Distance</b>
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
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

## **VII. Conclusion: Veto Players, Public Opinion and Government Responsiveness**

This thesis explores the role context plays in connecting public preferences and public policy outcomes with each other. The analysis is based upon previous normative and empirical results, which indicate that there is a relationship between public opinion and policy and suggest that this relationship is moderated by political institutions. How institutions affect the quality of opinion representation is still largely unclear, however. Inconsistent findings based on different models, measures and approaches give an inconsistent picture of the direction of the effect of different institutional concepts.

In borrowing the key idea of veto player theory and linking it to the clarity of responsibility argument, this study examines the contextual effects on policy representation more systematically. Here I distinguish between institutional veto players, which are understood as the fixed, time-invariant institutions, and situational veto players, which are defined as time-varying characteristics created by the political game. In a nutshell, veto player theory paired with the clarity of responsibilities hypothesis states: The more institutional and situational veto players enter the political decision-making arena, the less clear the allocation of responsibilities is and the less likely is it that governments translate public opinion into public policy outcomes.

In order to test my theory empirically, I assess the various models, measures and approaches according to whether they account for dynamics, effectiveness and comparability. The policy representation of public opinion through government policy is an ongoing process that is characterised by a dynamic relationship between opinion and policy. Policy representation of public preferences occurs with a delay in time and feed back into opinion expression. To test whether or not opinion is represented is also a matter of effective measurements of public policy outcomes. While policy intentions, expressed for example in party manifestos or speeches, can change after a government

is elected, effective outcomes in terms of spending outlays and implemented legislation are a better indicator of the quality of representation. Finally, in order to generalise the effect of context on the opinion-policy relationship, a comparative design is required. The empirical analyses in the preceding chapters disentangle the measurement validity of issue preferences in responsiveness research and trace under what conditions issue and positional representation occur. I cross the commonly used measures of the public's issue preferences to validate the use of important problems as an indicator of public opinion. Issue salience serves an alternative measure to spending preferences in a significantly thinner survey environment where more direct measurements are not available. This applies to most environments outside the North American context, which gives particular importance to the measurement of salient opinion. Further, I test veto player theory linked to the clarity of responsibilities hypothesis empirically looking at two dimensions of political representation, namely issue responsiveness and ideological congruence. Indeed, I find some empirical evidence that supports my theory in both frameworks. In this concluding chapter I recapitulate my findings, discuss their implications as well as limitations and address some remaining issues and look at leeway for future research.

## **7.1 Measures, Models and Conditions of Effective Policy Representation**

Chapter 4 discusses the measurement validity of public opinion measures in issue responsiveness research. There are two ways of measuring the public's issue demands: 1) by looking at people's spending preferences in an issue domain and 2) by taking the proportion of people who think some issue is important. Scholarship has expressed concerns about whether both measurements capture the same concept, but has not delivered enough empirical evidence yet. Further, there are good reasons why salient opinion is employed to indicate the public's issue demands in issue responsiveness research. Spending preferences are a direct and directional measure of public opinion on issues. They have been collected in a strong survey environment back to the early twentieth century in individual case studies for a handful of countries following the North American tradition. Salient opinion is also collected in a much

thinner survey environment outside the North American context in individual case studies and comparative surveys. Testing the quality of representation using dynamic responsiveness models is data intensive, and even more so when the aim is comparison. Salient opinion, if valid, can serve as an alternative measure that enables scholars to test hypotheses in the context of comparing institutions. It is therefore important to know whether spending preferences and salient opinion are related.

The empirical analysis lends some confidence that this case. Although the results do not fully uncover *how* spending preferences and important issues are related, the results suggest that they *are* related. The individual level analysis points in the direction that, while across social issues the indicators are linked, we need to be more cautious in using the indicators interchangeably in other areas such as defence. Spending preferences and important problems correlate with each other at least to some extent and they have also been shown to have similar predictive power. For instance, age and vote choice predict preferences in the same way. Moreover, the results from the aggregate analysis indicate that spending preferences and important issue also predict spending in the same direction. Both support for more spending and important problems lead to an increase in public expenditure in the following year. These patterns do not show up consistently across all issue domains, however. Surprisingly, it is salient opinion that seems to perform well when predicting spending on the specific issue domains. Whenever people think something is an important issue, they actually get more spending on the issue.

With these results in mind, Chapter 5 explores the conditions of issue responsiveness of government to public opinion, employing the salience model of responsiveness. How institutions affect the success of government's ability to respond is best investigated in a comparative study. While the thermostatic model may be the superior model, it performs weakly when it comes to comparison. Data on spending preferences are not available in cross-sectional sample or for a larger number of case studies. Salient opinion is available in individual case studies as well as in cross-sectional surveys and opens up the opportunity for a large n sample to test the conditions of responsiveness. With some confidence that spending preferences and salient issues capture a similar concept, I rely on the salience model of representation to test the institutional and situational clarity hypotheses of context. Both situations and institutions are expected to influence short-term issue representation in a similar way.

More veto players mean less clarity, which results in decreased government responsiveness, where responsiveness is measured as an increase in budgets as a reaction to salient opinion on an issue. Yet, there were some issues with autoregression. When I corrected for autoregression in the dependent variable the empirical data display inconsistent results. Further investigation is required.

The empirical results for all issues taken together indicate that institutions and situations have an impact on the opinion-policy relationship. The directions of these effects support the clarity of responsibility hypothesis and veto player theory. The more institutional veto players share decision-making responsibilities, the less clearly these are allocated and the less responsive governments are towards public preferences. The pattern is similar for situational veto players. The more veto players created by the political game enter the decision-making arena, the less clearly responsibilities are allocated and the less likely it is that government responsiveness occurs. Admittedly, the explanatory power of the analysis is limited as many coefficients do not achieve standard levels of statistical significance.

These patterns do not consistently hold when looking at the individual policy domains, however. Coefficients do not reach conventional levels of statistical significance. Education and public law and order stand out as the domains where the veto player theory is supported. Most other domains display an inconsistent picture of how context affects the linkage between public opinion and public policy. Some of the social domains at least in parts support the veto player argument, while especially the broader categories such as the economy and social problems show no pattern at all. This may be due to the imperfect data, e.g. a short time-series. The results do suggest that the issue domains regarded matter to whether or not responsiveness occurs, as measured by the salience model. While the results applying the salience model of responsiveness indicate support for the veto player theory, they find their limitations in the explanatory power of the analysis. One explanation for this is that salient opinion is not such a great measurement of public opinion after all and that scholarship needs to look into other alternatives to capture what people think. To date it is at least the best fall-back option in terms of public opinion measures that scholars have to test the issue responsiveness of governments to public preferences in countries outside the North American context.

Chapter 6 treats institutional and situational clarity in a slightly different way. Ideology as a broader measure of public opinion characterised by a collection of

attitudes towards a larger number of issues, I argue, is less volatile and less susceptible to short-term changes in terms of situational clarity than it is towards institutional clarity, which is by definition based on continuity. In addition, Chapter 6 steps back from dynamic representation to a rather static form of opinion representation. It traces the congruence of ideologies in election years. Ideological congruence is an important dimension to policymaking as party ideologies drive the general direction of public policy. The positional policy congruence of the mean citizen and government is an important basis for political representation.

The empirical results suggest support for veto player theory with regard to the ideological congruence of governments and citizens, but only with regard to the institutional clarity hypothesis. The coefficients for the interactive terms for the fixed institutions point in the expected direction - more veto players lead decrease ideological correspondence between citizens and governments. I do not find a significant effect for situational clarity and thus no support for the situational clarity hypothesis.

This chapter expands on previous research on the institutional impact on positional policy congruence by accounting for a larger number of institutional characteristics in a systematic way. Previous work has only taken a country's electoral rules and party system into account, but neglected other characteristics of the fixed institutional framework, as well as other time varying indicators of situational clarity. This research shows that there are more institutions that affect the correspondence of governments' ideology and the mean citizen. For instance, it suggests that the regime type, federalism and bicameralism also affect how congruent the mean citizen is with government ideology. Further, it also indicates that time-varying indicators affect the correspondence of the ideological positions of the public and policy makers, however the impact is statistically insignificant. Overall, I find empirical support for the veto player theory in Chapter 6.

The contribution of this research is threefold. Firstly, it contributes a systematic theory of context effects on the opinion-policy relationship and political representation in general. Secondly, it contributes to the debate on the measurement validity of the public's issue preferences and lends some confidence to the use of salient opinion as an indicator of public preferences in responsiveness research. Finally, it provides empirical evidence for the veto player theory of context effects.



This has theoretical implications for previous and future research. The veto player theory of political context is a more systematic way to test the effect of institutions on political representation. It has previously proven useful for capturing political institutions with regard to the political stability of a country. Linked with the clarity of responsibility argument it seems to work well with regard to the institutional impact on the opinion-policy relationship. While previous research has come to inconsistent conclusions, for example about how the electoral and party system affect policy representation, the empirical results based on the veto player theory come to clear statements about their impact. For instance, those electoral rules that produce more veto players, e.g. majoritarian electoral formulas, lead to a less clear distribution of responsibilities and a decrease in government's ability to respond to public preferences. Applying this systematic theory of context to previous models in future research may give a clearer view on how context affects representation. Prior studies may want rethink their findings as well.

With regard to the measurement issues I explored in this thesis, the theoretical implication is a little less clear. While thinking an issue is important is related to wanting to increase spending and both measures seem to reliably predict expenditure, it is still unclear how exactly both measures are related. The results from the analysis in Chapter 5 are rather deflating, which does not necessarily have to do with the measurement of public opinion, but may also be due to the data quality or indicators of policy outputs. It is important to know what people think and how this is mirrored in public policy outcomes. Yet, the data environment is not equally well developed across the globe, which means that scholars need alternative models and measures to test the same or at least similar concepts. My findings lend some confidence in the use of salient opinion and it is up to future research to verify or falsify the correspondence of the measures or develop a new measure to capture the public's issue preferences. The recommendations from this study are to rely on the better data and model whenever possible, but at the same time not to hesitate to fall back on alternative measures if the research question requires this. With particular regard to issue responsiveness research, the salience model should theoretically work well, however the analysis here does not have the explanatory power to fully conclude that it also works in praxis.

## 7.2 Limitations of this Research & Future Projects

While this dissertation contributes a new theory of context, a cross-validation of measurement and provides some empirical evidence for the more systematic way of thinking about institutions, it finds its limitations as well. These issues mainly cluster around questions of data availability and quality and, thus, the explanatory power of the analyses. One key aspect that came up throughout this thesis is the question of data availability. Public opinion research heavily relies on data that tell us what people are thinking. In particular, dynamic political representation is a data-intensive field. Adding context to this and widening analyses into cross-sectional comparisons increases the data volume on top of this.

The limitations of my measurement chapter tie in with this. The individual-level analysis based on original data looks at only one country, Britain, and a single point in time. Obviously, I am unable to make a statement about how spending preferences and important problems correspond over time, let alone across countries and over time. It is an important achievement to know how these measures are related at least in one country and point in time, tracking them over time and across countries would increase the explanatory power and confidence in the measures enormously. At the same time if we had measures across countries and time, there would be no need to discuss validity of both measures as one could use spending preferences for analysis from the outset. The results from the aggregate data have limited explanatory power as well, as they are based on a constructed data set from three secondary data sources. The ISSP and Eurobarometer are large n survey studies with different quality standards and samples. While many issues are cancelled out by aggregating up the data, others are not. After all, it is a constructed data source. In order to look at the predictive validity in a cross-sectional way, it would be better to have all questions in the same survey to ensure the reliability of the data. If we had such data, which incorporated both measures cross-sectionally (and over time) the validity question would not necessarily have to be asked. Scholars could rely on the direct measurement of issue preferences we find in the spending preferences.

With regard to Chapter 5 and the question of models of issue responsiveness, I find some limitation in my research as well. Research on thermostatic representation

tells us that the model works and that public opinion is reflected in the policy outcomes. While the model has developed in a strong survey environment and allows opinion to be tracked back over long time period, at the same time it is limited to a sample of countries that have a similar survey tradition. The trade off is between time and space. European research looks for alternative models and measures to investigate the responsiveness of governments to citizens' issue preferences. It finds it in the salience model of representation. Yet again the availability of data limits the scope of the analysis. Europe has a much shorter survey tradition. Although salient opinion is frequently asked in surveys conducted as individual case studies, as well as in cross-sectional surveys, the time period is limited to a significantly shorter number of years. There is a trade-off between space and time. My analysis here serves a larger country sample of 21 countries, but over a very limited and short time series of six to nine years. During the data cleaning and modelling process, as well as when taking into account special requirements of the data, the time component is even more limited. For instance, cross-sectional time-series methods rely on a complete data matrix and observations with missing values are not included in the analysis. Further, accounting for the change structured in time, additional cases at the beginning or end of the time series get lost.

Another limitation in this dissertation is the data quality of issue preferences. The analysis relies on Eurobarometer data, which are generally high quality data. The specific question on salience, which captures the important issues facing a country at the time, inseparably collects the first two mentioned issues. It would be more valuable to be able to distinguish between first- and second-mentioned answers. In addition, the format of the question is not ideal as it covers a closed list of topics. For the analysis this means that proportions exceed a hundred percent and may bias the overall analysis of responsiveness. This shows in the low explanatory power and the low level of confidence that I can have in the results of the analysis. Although my results indicate a relationship and even indicate that the theory works in the expected direction, most of the results are not statistically significant.

Chapter 6, which explores the congruence of the ideological positions of the mean citizen and her government, steps back from analysing a dynamic model of representation to a rather static model. In this my research finds its limitation. I argue that political representation is a dynamic phenomenon and needs to be studied employing dynamic modelling techniques. Once again the availability of the data limits

the analysis to static representation in election years. While many surveys, individual case studies and cross-sectional studies ask about people's self-placement on the left-right continuum, research lacks continuous measures of government ideology on the same scale. Whatever indicator scholars use to capture parties' and therefore governments' ideologies, they are always limited to a specific year, usually the election year. This is true for manifesto data and election surveys, but not necessarily for expert surveys. However, even expert surveys are conducted at interesting times, many in election years. Most recent research uncovers government positions in terms of left and right between elections by coding fiscal speeches by the head of the executive in left-right terms. While I acknowledge that this is an enormous step forward for the field of ideological representation, at the same time it is not enough. Capturing left-right positions from speeches is labour- and time-intensive, not to mention costly. So far research is limited to Britain. From the perspective of a comparativist this is not satisfactory with regard to the idea of comparing context. It is surely only a matter of time until comparative data are available. Another drawback is that fiscal speeches do not capture what governments effectively implement, rather they indicate what they intend to do and links in with the representation of public opinion in the agenda setting strand of research. With regard to the results from the analysis in Chapter 6, the findings suggest that veto players stop things from happening. An increased number of, in particular, institutional veto players means they can stop things that mean voters might want. In reverse, this also means that veto players can also stop things that mean voters don't want, retaining congruence. The country cases I look at in my analysis and the time period I look at may bias the results as they may lend themselves to one set of conclusions – conclusions that may not necessarily apply to a wider country sample.

My thesis focuses on context effects, especially the impact of institutions and situations on political representation. I examine the effect of institutions and situations by looking at them individually. In the real world, institutions and situations do not stand alone. An interplay of various institutional features and a number of different political situations characterises modern state-building. While the individual effects suggest how one or the other impacts policy representation, it is perhaps even more important for political scientists to uncover how an interplay of institutions and situations affects representation. It is up to future research to overcome some of these limitations and fill the gaps in the literature. It is important to study how public opinion

and public policy are linked. Whether or not government acts on behalf of the public is a core principle of representation and allows us to judge the quality of a democracy.

While the analysis in Chapter 4 suggests a relationship between spending preferences and important issue, it does not fully uncover whether this holds across time and counties. It is also a matter for future research to look out for a better alternative measure to capture public opinion towards issues consistently across context, regardless of the survey tradition a country has. This applies to measures of public policy outputs as well. After all, spending outlays are not all there is to policy. In order to capture the level of representativeness of a government we also need to take into account regulative acts. For instance, instead of coding the content of agenda-setting speeches, one may rather wish to code the most important topics covered in regulative acts or count the number or lengths of implemented bills in a policy domain. Some projects and studies already move in this direction. With regard to modelling the opinion-policy relationship, dynamic representation is what scholarship aims to elaborate on and perhaps find new and alternative models to the commonly used ones. However, researchers should acknowledge the fact that there are discrepancies between research traditions. The field has developed and is developing rapidly in the North American context because resources are available. The thick survey environment allows researchers develop new measures and models. This is not the case outside this North American context, which is a fact that scholarship seems to forget. Scholarship may be too ambitious applying sophisticated models of political representation to contexts that cannot pick and choose from secondary sources as easily. Perhaps we need to step back from the more complex models and develop techniques to investigate the relationship between public opinion and public policy using simpler and less sophisticated models – models that better match our data. This gives us more time to collect the data we need to conduct more complex analyses. For instance, the representation of ideological positions is about to develop from static to dynamic models of representation. If we have the methods to analyse speeches, we may as well use these skills to analyse implemented legislation to better capture policy outcomes. There is also the opportunity of linking the idea of spending to the representation of ideologies. If there is a relationship between left-wingers and right-wingers' spending preferences and a pattern between government ideology and spending, there may well be a relationship between being a left-/right-winger's views on increasing or decreasing budgets.

As a matter of fact, the field of political representation is wide open for future research. This thesis sheds some light on the question of public opinion measurement. There is some confidence that issue preference, spending preferences and salient opinion are related to each other. It also contributes to the previous comparative literature by developing and testing a universally applicable theory of contextual effects. The results suggest the theory works with regard to the linkage between public opinion and public policy. Governments appear to respond to preferences when the number of veto players is low. However, the limitations of research and previous work also indicate that there is a lot of leeway for future research, namely with regard to theory, data collection, data analysis and context.

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