The Role of Congruence in Policy Priorities between Citizens and Elites in Citizens' Political Attitudes and Behaviour

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Contents

Abstract ii
Acknowledgements iii
List of Tables v
List of Figures vi
List of Appendices viii

CHAPTER 1 1
Introduction

CHAPTER 2 34
The Effect of Priority Congruence on Satisfaction with Democracy

CHAPTER 3 77
Political Sophistication and the Effects of Policy Congruence on Satisfaction with Democracy

CHAPTER 4 125
The Effect of Priority Congruence on Electoral Participation

CHAPTER 5 168
Explaining Cross-national Variation in the Relationship between Priority Congruence and Satisfaction with Democracy

CHAPTER 6 224
Conclusion

Abstract

This thesis shows that citizens whose policy concerns are higher on political elites' agendas are more likely to be satisfied with democracy and to vote in elections. It develops a theoretical framework to explain the influence of the previously neglected variable priority congruence on democratic satisfaction and turnout and provides empirical evidence for it. The thesis thereby makes significant contributions to our knowledge about the ingredients of democratic legitimacy.

Previous research shows that political representation, as measured by proximity between citizens' and elites' policy positions, is linked to democratic satisfaction. In this thesis, it is argued that congruence in priorities has a similar effect because citizens are likely to perceive elites who emphasise their concerns as responsive to societal needs and public opinion. The empirical analyses suggest that democratic satisfaction is indeed influenced by priority congruence, yet less so amongst more politically sophisticated individuals as well as in younger democracies and countries with lower levels of democracy and governance. These differences are probably due to variation in citizens' expectations towards elite behaviour and the democratic system.

Elite attention to citizens' concerns moreover influences their decision to turn out in elections. If voters' issue priorities are salient in the campaign, they are likely to perceive the election to be more important. Moreover, they will find it easier to evaluate parties and make their vote choice. These mechanisms are shown to be less relevant amongst partisans, since party attachment mobilises voters and facilitates their vote choice. Again, previous policy-based explanations of turnout focus on positions, largely ignoring priorities.

The hypotheses are tested through statistical analysis of data from voter and candidate surveys as well as media content analyses. The data come from all 27 European Union countries in 2009, whereby several hypotheses are only tested in Germany due to data availability.

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List of Tables

2.1 Effects of priority congruence on satisfaction with democracy …….55

2.2 Predicted probabilities of satisfaction with democracy and changes …….58
in probabilities with changes in priority congruence

2.3 Effects of priority congruence on satisfaction with democracy …….61

3.1 Issue categories and their salience among citizens, candidates, and …….92
the news media

3.2 Effects of policy congruence on satisfaction with democracy ……...98

3.3 Moderating effects on the influence of policy congruence on …….102
satisfaction with democracy

4.1 Direct effects of priority congruence and party identification on ……145
turnout

4.2 Interaction effects between priority congruence and party ……..146
identification on turnout

4.3 Effects of priority congruence on turnout among partisans and ……...147
non-partisans

4.4 Direct and moderating effects of economic issue salience on ……..151
turnout

5.1 Moderating effects of the quality and the age of democracy on the …….185
effect of priority congruence on satisfaction with democracy

List of Figures

2.1 Relative salience of issues among voters, candidates, and the media campaign coverage at the 2009 German federal election ……49

2.2 Mean levels of media, collective, and dyadic priority congruence among all citizens and only those who voted in the 2009 election (with 95% confidence intervals) ……50

2.3 Mean levels of collective and dyadic priority congruence across party voters (with 95% confidence intervals) ……..50

2.4 Relative salience of issues among candidates from the different parties at the 2009 German federal election ……...51

2.5 Predicted probabilities of satisfaction with democracy across media priority congruence ……...56

3.1 Predicted probabilities of satisfaction with democracy across left-right distance ……...99

3.2 Predicted probabilities of satisfaction with democracy across media priority congruence ……100

3.3 Differences in predicted probabilities of satisfaction with democracy at low and high media priority congruence (1 std. dev. below/above the mean), relative to probability at low congruence, at different education levels ……103

3.4 Differences in predicted probabilities of satisfaction with democracy at low and high media priority congruence (1 std. dev. below/above the mean), relative to probability at low congruence, at different political interest levels ……104

3.5 Differences in predicted probabilities of satisfaction with democracy at low and high media priority congruence (1 std. dev. below/above the mean), relative to probability at low congruence, at different political knowledge levels ……105

3.6 Differences in predicted probabilities of satisfaction with democracy at low and high candidate priority congruence (1 std. dev. below/above the mean), relative to probability at low congruence, at different political knowledge levels ……106

4.1 Salience of issue categories among voters, candidates, and the media ……137

4.2 Means of candidate and media priority congruence across levels of economic issue salience with 95% confidence intervals ……...140

4.3 The effect of candidate priority congruence on turnout among non- partisans and partisans ……...149

4.4 The effect of media priority congruence on turnout among non- partisans and partisans ……150

4.5 Predicted probabilities of turnout across media priority congruence levels by economic issue salience ……...152

5.1 Relationship between the quality and age of democracy and the effect of priority congruence on satisfaction with democracy …….184

5.2 Predicted probabilities of satisfaction with democracy across priority congruence and distribution of priority congruence ……....186

5.3 Variation in predicted differences in probabilities of democratic satisfaction between low and high priority congruence across the quality of democracy and governance ……188

5.4 Variation in predicted differences in probabilities of democratic satisfaction between low and high priority congruence across the age of democracy ……189

List of Appendices

2.A Distributions of the Congruence Measures ...……..74

2.B Variable Details ...…….....75

3 Variable Descriptives …….....123

4 Variable Details ……..….165

5.A Issue Salience and Priority Congruence ……...200

5.B Alternative Specifications of Priority Congruence ……...204

5.C Variable descriptions ……..….208

5.D The Relationship between Priority Congruence and Satisfaction with Democracy in each EU Country ……210

5.E Robustness Checks …….…...212

5.F A Tentative Test of the Mediating Role of Responsiveness Perceptions ……216

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The topic of this thesis is the influence of policy congruence between citizens and elites on citizens' political attitudes and behaviour. Specifically, I investigate whether citizens whose policy priorities are shared by political elites and reflected in the political debate are more likely to be satisfied with democracy and to participate in elections. The thesis consists of four empirical chapters as well as an introduction and a conclusion that provide the motivation, the context, and conclusions of this work. Three of the four empirical chapters focus on the relationship between priority congruence and democratic satisfaction, while the fourth analyses voter turnout as the dependent variable. The empirical chapters have the format of journal articles. As a result, while each of the chapters contains different research questions and makes unique contributions to the field, parts of the theoretical and data sections in the chapters on satisfaction with democracy overlap. The precise location of these sections will be indicated in each paper.

In this introduction, I explain my motivation for conducting this research project and locate the questions and hypotheses in the relevant literature. Since each empirical

chapter includes an overview of the theory and literature that is most important for its specific research question, this thesis does not include a separate comprehensive literature review.

Democratic Legitimacy, Satisfaction with Democracy and Electoral Participation

Legitimacy is widely considered crucial for the health and stability of democracy. If a large section of the citizenry in a democracy does not consider the processes and institutions that govern them as legitimate, meaning that they are willing to accept their decisions and outcomes, they may seek to make significant changes to these institutions up to the point of establishing a different political system (Almond and Verba 1963; Anderson et al. 2005; Bermeo 2003; Powell 1982). Because it is a key part of the very definition of democracy, a democratic system is dependent on the support of at least a majority of its citizens in order to be sustainable.

While the scenario of an overthrow of the democratic regime seems unrealistic in most established democracies today, there are nevertheless a number of potential consequences of a lack of legitimacy of democratic processes and institutions that may be disruptive to social peace and the effectiveness of the political system. Support for anti-system, extremist, and populist parties may rise as voters cast protest votes to express their dissatisfaction with the established system (Denemark and Bowler 2002; Oesch 2008). While such developments may have positive effects as they put pressure on established, democratically minded political actors and institutions to behave in a way that will restore citizens' trust, they can also have clear negative consequences, from inhibiting effective policy-making to making xenophobic views socially and politically acceptable.

Moreover, political trust and legitimacy are linked to law compliance (Easton 1965; Marien and Hooghe 2011; Norris 1999a: 264). If the democratic authorities lack legitimacy and trust, it may become difficult for them to effectively install rules which can be crucial, for instance, to protect the rights and freedoms of various societal groups or for the functioning of the redistributive system (cf. Keman 2014).

Another potential consequence of political disaffection and distrust is anti-system or anti-elite protests, which can turn violent. While violent conflict triggered by anti-regime sentiments is more common in non-democratic countries (recent examples include the Arab Spring and Euromaidan), it occasionally also occurs in established democracies. Although incidents of this kind seem to be concentrated amongst minority groups (Norris 1999a: 262), they can also occur on a larger level. The protests in Spain that started in 2011, which were linked to the economic crisis but also to people's distrust in the established political structures, can be considered one example.

Lastly, even if citizens who have withdrawn some of their support from the democratic system do not actively challenge the political order, they might not be willing to defend their democratic regime if it comes under attack by external forces (Norris 1999a: 268). For all these reason, it is crucial for democratic systems to maintain their legitimacy amongst their citizens.

Satisfaction with Democracy

Two important indicators as well as roots of the legitimacy of a democratic system are support of and participation in the system and its processes and institutions (Keman 2014). Let us first look at political support. It comprises several dimensions, which Easton (1965, 1975) and, in an extended form, Norris (Norris 1999b) have placed on a continuum from diffuse to specific. The most 'diffuse' category of support is support

for the political community. For a democratic system to be legitimate, it is absolutely essential that its citizens accept and support the community that comprises the system as they are otherwise unlikely to accept the decisions of the majority of this community, particularly if they are in the political minority. Similarly, it is crucial that citizens support the idea of democracy and its key principles, which are also on the 'diffuse' side. On the other end of the spectrum are the most specific objects of political orientations: political authorities. If citizens desire a democratically organised regime, they will not withdraw their support for their democratic system only because they distrust a specific set of leaders – as long as the possibility of exchanging them exists.

Yet, if citizens are dissatisfied not only with certain officials but with the institutions and processes that govern them, the legitimacy of the regime might be in danger. Support for the performance of the democratic regime and its institutions is located in the middle of the spectrum. It is more diffuse than support for specific authorities yet more specific than support for democratic principles. In theory, it is possible that institutions and processes that are no longer seen as legitimate, such as electoral rules, are changed or at least improved. As Easton (1975: 444-445) explains,

> Diffuse support […] tends to be more durable than specific support. This does not mean that such generalized attachment to political objects never changes or that it may not occasionally even fluctuate within short intervals. But […] this type of evaluation tends to be more difficult to strengthen once it is weak and to weaken once it is strong. Another and more precise way of stating the same thing is to say that the level of diffuse support will normally be independent of outputs and performance in the short run. Typically such support, representing as it does attachment to political objects for their own sake, will not be easily dislodged because of current dissatisfaction with what the government does. For example, members may rate the performance of Congress very low yet not call for any fundamental changes in it or in the Constitution.

However, diffuse support of a democratic regime is not completely immune to a lack of more specific support. Easton points out (1975: 445) that 'if discontent with perceived performance continues over a long enough time, it may gradually erode even

the strongest underlying bonds of attachment.' In the same vein, Almond and Verba (1963) argue that a democracy will be most stable if its political structures and its political culture are 'congruent', meaning that the system matches citizens' expectations. A certain level of satisfaction with the functioning of democracy is thus crucial for the stability and survival of the democratic system. For this reason, it is important to find out not only how satisfied citizens are with the functioning of their democracy but also what lies at the origins of their evaluations.

It should be pointed out here that creating satisfied citizens is certainly not the ultimate goal from a pro-democratic point of view. For the stability of democracy it is equally vital for citizens to be *critical* towards their political system, to use Pippa Norris' (Norris 1999b) term, as it is that citizens are satisfied (although Almond and Verba (1963) would argue that certain proportions of allegiant and even apathetic citizens are also important for a stable political system). If citizens' satisfaction is not caused by the good performance of their democratic system but, for instance, by financial 'gifts' from the government, it means that political elites may be able to overstep their powers without meeting public resistance. This can threaten the survival of democracy just as much as active demands for undemocratic alternatives. Bad performance of democratic institutions *should* thus lead to citizen dissatisfaction and – ideally – to calls for improvements. Ezrow and Xezonakis' (2014) finding that dissatisfaction with democracy increases turnout suggests that this is indeed what happens in many cases.

Thus, if a large proportion of citizens are critical *and* satisfied, a democracy is likely to be healthy and stable. The purpose of this thesis is thus not only to find out what makes citizens satisfied with democracy but also determine to what extent their satisfaction is based on the actual performance of democratic processes and institutions.

Electoral participation

What is the role of electoral participation in democratic legitimacy? Elections are one of the most important official means through which citizens' political preferences are transmitted to policy-makers in representative democracies. They channel political conflict 'into regular competition' (Powell 1982: 12), bringing about political stability and preventing violence. While casting a vote every few years is certainly not the only way through which citizens' political opinions can be heard and decision-makers held accountable, and other modes of participation, such as demonstrations and petitions, may allow citizens to voice their concerns much more actively (Dalton 2008; Inglehart 1997; Inglehart and Welzel 2005), elections tend to be characterised by much higher levels of political equality than 'elite-challenging' modes of participation (Dalton, Scarrow, and Cain 2003; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Since they are highly institutionalised and elite-directed, they require relatively low levels of effort and resources on the part of citizens and therefore represent an opportunity for the less politically involved and knowledgeable to participate as well. They are thus generally seen as a legitimate and useful means to bestow democratic legitimacy on political representatives.

In principle, this is also the case even if not everyone casts a vote, as long as those who abstained were not pressured or forced to do so and perceive the elected representatives as the legitimate holders of political authority. Yet, problems may arise if a considerably large proportion of eligible citizens do not turn out at elections. Not only those who abstained but also society at large might then not perceive the elected as the legitimate representatives of the entire citizenry. This is particularly problematic if entire social groups cease to participate, as their collective and shared preferences might then no longer be represented (Lijphart 1997). In fact, the electoral process as a whole

and hence the system and the idea of representative democracy may suffer losses in confidence if elections fail to produce legislatures and governments perceived as legitimate. Consequently, broad electoral participation is crucial for the enduring support and the stability of democratic system and it is important to find out what causes people to abstain from casting their vote.

One potential reason for abstention is, in fact, disillusionment with the democratic system. Low turnout can thus not only cause losses in democratic legitimacy but it can also be an indicator of it. If a citizen abstains from voting it need not necessarily mean that she distrusts the democratic system or that she will not consider the elected government as illegitimate, for there is a multitude of reasons for why people may not turn out (Smets and van Ham 2013), including satisfaction with the way things are going (Ezrow and Xezonakis 2014). However, a more permanent withdrawal from the democratic process is likely to be a sign of political apathy or even alienation (Almond and Verba 1963) from the electoral process as well as the democratic system as a whole (Groenlund and Setaelae 2007). In particular citizens who abstain may thus be less willing to accept the decisions of the elected government and to defend the principles of democracy when need be. Thus, in addition to studying what causes satisfaction and dissatisfaction with democracy, it is also extremely important to understand the dynamics and causes of electoral participation in order to comprehend why and when democratic systems are stable or unstable.

Satisfaction with Democracy, Electoral Participation, and Policy Congruence

Due to their key roles in the functioning and stability of democracy, a large amount of research has been conducted to investigate patterns and causes of both satisfaction with democracy and electoral participation. One factor that has been given much attention in

relation to both outcome variables is the proximity between citizens' and political elites' policy preferences. Although research on voting and on democratic attitudes is generally divided into two separate bodies of literature, the role of policy congruence is similar in both. Citizens whose policy preferences are shared by candidates, parties, or the government will feel that the representation process is functioning and, hence, be more satisfied with democracy. Likewise, broadly speaking, if a party or candidate shares voters' views on policy, they will be motivated to turn out and vote for this competitor.

Yet, existing research on these relationships predominantly focuses on citizen-elite congruence in terms of *positions* on policy dimensions. The extent to which their policy *priorities* correspond only plays a minor role. It is well-established knowledge that citizens will be more satisfied with democracy if political elites' ideological and issue positions are more proximate to their own (Aarts and Thomassen 2008; Anderson et al. 2005; Anderson and Guillory 1997; Borre 2000; Brandenburg and Johns 2013; Curini, Jou, and Memoli 2012; Dahlberg, Linde, and Holmberg 2013; Kim 2009; Rohrschneider 2005; Rosema, Denters, and Aarts 2011; Singh, Karakoc, and Blais 2012). At the same time, congruence between citizens' and elites' policy agendas, i.e., their priorities, is also recognised as an important indicator of policy representation, which the growing volume of studies on agenda or priority congruence shows (Bevan and Jennings 2014; Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008; Jennings and John 2009; Jones and Baumgartner 2004; Lindeboom 2012; Spoon and Klüver 2014). However, whether agreement on policy priorities also influences citizens' political attitudes has so far not been studied.

A situation is similar in the turnout literature. Spatial voting theorists expect voters to go for the candidate or party that is closest to her policy position or on the 'right' side of the spectrum (Davis, Enelow, and Hinich 1970; Downs 1957; Merrill and

Grofman 1999; Rabinowitz and Macdonald 1989). On this basis, a theory of turnout has been developed that also focuses on the proximity between voters' and parties' (or candidates') policy positions. In short, voters will abstain from *alienation* if no party's positions are close enough to theirs for them to feel that the party represents their views. Alternatively, they may abstain from *indifference* if more than one party are equally proximate to their positions and thus represent them equally well (e.g. Adams, Dow, and Merrill 2006; Adams and Merrill 2003; Adams, Merrill, and Grofman 2005; Downs 1957; Plane and Gershtenson 2004; Thurner and Eymann 2000). The salience of policy issues is only considered to play a role in these processes insofar as it determines the weight of different issue dimensions when calculating voters' and candidates' or parties' positions in a multidimensional space. Whether voters are more likely to be de-mobilised if parties talk past the issues they are concerned about has not yet been addressed.

I believe that this lack of attention to policy priorities is unjustified, as there are numerous strong reasons for why citizens whose policy concerns are shared by political elites should be more satisfied with democracy and more likely to turn out. I develop theoretical arguments explaining why these links should exist and how they might differ between individuals and contexts, which I briefly outline below and explain in more detail in the following chapters.

The Role of Priority Congruence in Satisfaction with Democracy

If political elites pay attention to the issues that an individual considers important for her country, she will have the perception that elites are doing their job by tackling

society's urgent problems.[1] One possibility is that citizens interpret the agreement on issue priorities as evidence of elite responsiveness to their concerns. Yet, the causal process that leads to congruence in policy priorities is certainly not unidirectional: citizens might get cues about which issues are most important from political elites and the media (Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996; Iyengar and Kinder 1987; Zaller 1992). If citizens realise that this is the case, they might nevertheless perceive priority congruence as a sign of a functioning democratic process, since it supports elites who are capable of recognising society's problems and of convincing citizens of their urgency. Thus, regardless of the process through which agreement on issue priorities comes about as well as citizens' perceptions of this process, it is likely that citizens will evaluate the functioning of the democratic process more favourably if political elites and representatives spend their time and energy tackling those problems that they consider most important.

How does the proposed effect of priority congruence on democratic satisfaction differ from that of other kinds of policy congruence? The fact that priorities and agendas have received so little attention in research on political attitudes might make us think that priorities either do not differ from policy positions or that they do not matter in this context. Both of these suggestions are incorrect, as I explain below.

[1] I focus on what elites say the most important issues are rather than the issues on which decisions are actually made. Several studies suggests that the relationship between parties' policy agendas and their subsequent budget priorities is in fact quite strong (Budge and Hofferbert 1990; Hofferbert and Budge 1992; Hofferbert and Klingemann 1990). While evidence based on data from the Comparative Policy Agendas project suggests that congruence between public priorities and elites' *agendas* is often higher than between public priorities and actual *law-making*, this is largely due to 'institutional friction' and other factors, such as coalitions, that can make it difficult for elites to include all of the issues on their agendas in the policy-making process (Bevan and Jennings 2014; Jones and Baumgartner 2004; Jones, Larsen-Price, and Wilkerson 2009; Naurin 2014; Schermann and Ennser-Jedenastik 2014; Thomson 2001). Since it should be even less likely for an issue that is not on elites' agenda to be addressed by policy than an issue that does make it on the agenda, congruence between what citizens want elites to do and what elites want to do is very relevant.

First, policy priorities are more *specific* than left-right positions in both conceptual and temporal terms. While the latter express deep-seated and usually fairly stable political values and societal ideals, the attention that is given to particular policy areas says something about the perceived urgency of specific policy issues or areas, such as health care or education, at particular points in time. Second, the issue agenda does not necessarily reveal much about the direction of policy preferences. In other words, priorities are more *neutral* than policy positions or ideological positions. In the case of spatial issues of the Downsian (1957) tradition, an issue can be emphasised by different actors who occupy completely different positions on the policy dimension. Likewise, two actors may prioritise different issues, for instance economic growth and abortion, without differing in their stances on both issues.

In the case of valence issues, i.e., issues on which general agreement exists about the policy aim, such as the environment or crime (Green 2007; Petrocik 1996; Stokes 1963), priorities are more indicative of policy preferences. Here, priority agreement thus likely indicates agreement on policy goals. At the same time, two actors can agree that environmental protection is more important than lower energy prices but nevertheless disagree on what the most important issue to be tackled is.

Since they are more neutral and more specific, priorities are also more *volatile*. They can fluctuate more because they do not equal deeply held values and because shifting emphasis does not necessarily mean shifting positions. Priorities indicate urgency and are often subject to quick change, for instance if a sudden event causes a societal problem that needs to be addressed (such as the break-out of war or natural disasters) or if a policy proposal has been passed and the debate moves on to the next agenda issue. In contrast, left-right ideology and specific issue positions tend to be more stable, as they should be, since values usually change slowly if they do at all. Hence,

sudden shifts in political views can cost political elites credibility and support (Budge 1994; Downs 1957; Mayer 2013; Tavits 2007).

Because it is more volatile than ideological and policy positions, policy attention should be the main means through which parties and governments are responsive to public preferences, particularly in the short term. Congruence in priorities may thus indicate elite responsiveness to citizens and, to the extent that citizens consider responsiveness an important process in representative democracy, influence their democratic satisfaction. But, as I indicated above, elites often do not actually follow public opinion but identify issues in need of legislation before the public does (Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996). At other times, both citizens and politicians react to events or to the media's focus on particular issues (Iyengar and Simon 1993; Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007). In these cases, congruence in priorities does not signal elite responsiveness, but it does indicate whether a person agrees with elites on what the urgent policy issues are. This should influence her perception of how well democracy is working, too, by showing her whether it puts elites into power who are willing and able to discern what matters to the country and to focus their attention on these issues.

Elite attention to citizens' concerns should thus influence their perceptions of representation independently of whether they share elites' opinions about what should be done about the issues in question. For '[h]ow representative is a legislative action that matches the policy preferences of the public on a low priority issue but ignores high priority issues?' (Jones and Baumgartner 2004: 2; see also Spoon and Klüver 2014). Agreement on policy positions is certainly also important, as previous research has shown, yet priority congruence should also influence citizens' perceptions of elites' and the system's performance as it indicates different aspects of the representation process.

In Chapters 2, 3, and 5, I analyse the relationship between priority congruence and satisfaction with democracy. The chapters' theoretical sections discuss the arguments for the association in more detail. In Chapters 3 and 5, respectively, I investigate whether the existence and strength of the congruence-satisfaction link varies with individual and contextual characteristics. An introduction into the sources of such variation in opinion-formation processes is given after the next section.

The Role of Priority Congruence in Turnout

The relationship between priority congruence and electoral participation in discussed and investigated in detail in Chapter 4. One reason for why agreement on issue importance should affect turnout is that the perception that the representation is functioning well should motivate voters to participate. The argument is thus related to the one outlined above, yet it includes a range of additional aspects. Voters are also likely to find the election campaign more interesting and to cognitively engage with it if it centres on the issues they find most important. Moreover, if this is the case, they should have stronger opinions about which candidate or party they would like to win the election and subsequently determine the policies on these issues (Visser, Krosnick, and Simmons 2003). These considerations fall under the 'motivation argument'.

In addition to being more motivated to turn out, voters whose policy concerns are more salient in the election campaign should face lower information costs when determining for which party or candidate to vote. Voters who would like to vote for the competitor who best represents their positions on the issues important to them (Adams, Merrill, and Grofman 2005; Downs 1957) or who is most competent in solving the most important societal problems (Belanger and Meguid 2008; Petrocik 1996; Walgrave and De Swert 2007) face the task of finding out what the candidates' and parties'

competences and positions are and comparing them to their own views. This task will be facilitated if candidates and parties talk about the issues in question and actively promote their views and abilities. As a result, the costs of gathering information and processing it will be much lower for voters whose policy concerns are salient in the campaign.

This 'cost argument' is supported by evidence of higher turnout rates amongst more politically knowledgeable voters (Larcinese 2007), which are presumably not only due to their higher interest in politics but also to their knowledge, which makes the vote choice easier for them. If a voter's policy concern is salient in a campaign, she can be considered an expert in this particular election. Accordingly, de Vries and Giger have shown in the context of performance voting that 'the sophistication gap in performance voting narrows when voters attach a higher degree of salience to a policy area' (2014: 345). Thus, in addition to being more motivated to vote, high-congruence voters will also find it easier to do so, making them altogether more likely to turn out.

The argument links together different strands within the literature on electoral behaviour and attitude formation. The idea that the costs that voters face and the potential benefits they will draw from voting (i.e., having the preferred candidate or party make decisions on the issues one considers important) influence their propensity to turn out comes from the rational voter framework (Riker and Ordeshook 1968). I also incorporate evidence from social psychology about the role of issue importance in attitude-formation and decision-making process in this discussion. At the same time, I acknowledge that sheer interest in the political debate can boost participation without instrumental considerations necessarily playing a role.

Sources of Heterogeneity in Opinion-Formation Processes

A major theme in this thesis concerns the patterns, causes, and consequences of heterogeneity in attitude-formation and decision-making processes. I discuss and analyse to what extent the effects of priority congruence as well as left-right congruence on democratic satisfaction and turnout differ and which individual and contextual characteristics cause this variation. The investigation of heterogeneity in these processes is based on two underlying mechanisms. The first involves the perceived importance of an attitude or a criterion in the evaluation process. The second concerns the complexity of an evaluation and the use of heuristics, which is closely tied to cognitive resources and abilities.

The Role of Attitude Importance

Attitudes are defined as associations between objects and their summary evaluations by Fazio and colleagues (Fazio 1986, 1989, 2007; Fazio et al. 1982; Fazio and Williams 1986). Such summary evaluations may be formed in different ways: They may be mostly based on emotional reactions but may also be 'the summary product of a more active process of propositional reasoning that involves careful scrutiny of the validity of information regarding the attitude object' (Fazio 2007: 609). Most summary evaluations include a mix of affective and deliberate evaluations. On important factor determining the composition of the summary evaluation should be the importance of different aspects. Satisfaction with democracy and party preferences should consist of evaluations of a range of aspects that individuals consider relevant for the respective object. While this expectation makes intuitive sense, it is also supported by psychological mechanisms. Aspects of an object that are considered important tend to be more accessible from memory, which means that they come to mind more easily

since they are generally frequently activated (Aldrich, Sullivan, and Borgida 1989; Fazio 1986; Goren 1997; Krosnick 1988, 1989).[2]

Thus, the more important an individual considers an aspect of democracy, the more strongly her evaluation of this aspect should influence overall satisfaction with democracy. If priority congruence (or left-right congruence, on which I also focus in this context) is not considered important for the democratic system, it should not influence its evaluation. Likewise, the more important it is to a voter that her policy concerns are salient in the election campaign, the stronger the effect of priority congruence should be on her propensity to turn out.

In this thesis, I discuss a range of factors that might influence how important priority and left-right congruence is considered for democracy and in elections. Specifically, in Chapter 3 I discuss why more politically sophisticated citizens may be less likely to expect that political elites share their priority concerns, drawing on previous evidence by Carman (2006, 2007) and Bengtsson and Wass (2011). In Chapter 4, I explain why citizens in less democratic countries and in newer democracies might place less emphasis on policy representation as compared to other aspects of democracy. Finally, in Chapter 5 I argue that those identifying with a party are less likely to evaluate the relevance of the election based on the emphasis on their concerns

[2] Evidence by Miller and Krosnick (2000) confirms that the perceived importance of an issue increases its effect on presidential evaluations. Yet, their findings also suggest that the mechanism does not involve the accessibility of attitudes. It is also important to note that the accessibility of information and attitudes is mainly relevant for evaluations that are made in a *memory-based* fashion. A competing framework understands attitude formation as an *on-line* process, according to which existing evaluations are updated as new relevant information is encountered (e.g. Bizer et al. 2006; Druckman and Lupia 2000; Lodge, McGraw, and Stroh 1989). Here, the accessibility of information from memory does not play a crucial role (Hastie and Park 1986). Yet, the perceived importance of information for an attitude should nevertheless influence to what extent it is incorporated.

in the campaign, for they consider supporting their party to be a more important reason for turning out.

The Role of Heuristics

The second potential cause for variation in the relationships between policy congruence and democratic satisfaction respectively turnout has to do with the difficulty of the evaluations. If evaluating an object, or an aspect deemed important to the object, demands a high level of cognitive effort, individuals may refrain from including them in their evaluation. They may instead make use of strategies to form an attitude through a simpler process. Such strategies involve the use of cognitive short-cuts, or heuristics, which are well-documented in psychological research on attitude formation and decision making (Tversky and Kahneman 1974) and have been shown to be relevant in political judgments (Goren 1997; Lau and Redlawsk 2001; Leiter 2012; Popkin 1991; Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock 1991).

For instance, if developing opinions on specific policies and judging parties' positions on them demands too much effort, voters may instead choose to support candidates with whom they share demographic characteristics, assuming that they will also share policy preferences. Relying on heuristics thus means relying on information that is easily accessible (Iyengar and Kinder 1987: 64). While important information is often accessible, as I explained above, this need not always be the case. One may find it very important to vote for the party with the best economic policy but might not feel capable of making this judgment. In this case, it may happen that an aspect does not enter an evaluation even though it is considered relevant.

Of course, the extent to which complex and demanding evaluations are replaced by cognitive short-cuts does not only depend on the difficulty of the evaluations but also

on the individual who is forming them. People's cognitive abilities and resources are decisive here, while their motivation to collect information and spend effort on the judgment is also vital (Kam 2005). In the political context, these abilities and motivations are usually assumed to be related to general cognitive mobilisation as indicated by the education level as well as political knowledge and interest. As mentioned above, political sophistication is also likely to be related to the importance placed on priority congruence as a factor in evaluating democracy. Hence, in Chapter 3 I discuss how and why priority congruence and left-right proximity might influence democratic satisfaction differently amongst more and less politically sophisticated citizens due to variation in preferences towards democracy and representation on the one hand and to variation in cognitive abilities and motivations on the other.

The use of heuristics in the attitude-formation process is also crucial in the context of turnout (Chapter 5). Since the 'ideal' party choice is one in which the voter supports the party that best represents her policy preferences, I assume that voters will perform policy-based party evaluations if possible. Yet, if parties do not stress the issues considered important by voters, and assuming that these are the issues on which voters aim to evaluate the parties, forming a policy-based vote choice will be difficult.[3] Voters may thus prefer to use heuristics to choose a party. Here, party identification comes in handy: if priority congruence is low, voters who are attached to a party can circumvent the effort of gathering information about policy issues by simply voting for the party they identify with. Non-partisans, on the other hand, might not have accessible and satisfactory heuristics readily available and hence choose to abstain.

[3] While this argument assumes that voters desire to evaluate parties based on their own issue priorities, the same holds true if voters want to evaluate parties based on the issues that parties emphasise (the two assumptions are discussed in more detail in Chapter 5). If voters do not consider these issues important, and hence have low levels of priority congruence, they are unlikely to have strong positions on them and hence face the burden of collecting information and forming an opinion.

Data and Method

Like most research on attitudes, the empirical part of this thesis relies on survey data, which I analyse using advanced regression analysis methods. Since I describe the data and method in detail in each of the empirical chapters, I restrict myself to a broad overview in this introduction.

Most major national and international social surveys collect data on the two dependent variables of interest, satisfaction with democracy and election turnout. They are usually measured by asking respondents 'How satisfied are you with the way democracy is working in your country?' and 'Did you vote in the last election?'. In contrast, measuring the main independent variable – priority congruence – is more challenging. In principle, we could measure individuals' perceptions of the salience of their policy priorities in the political debate by asking them directly about it. Alternatively, we could ask respondents about the salience of different issues amongst elites as well as about their own concerns and construct a congruence measure from them.

However, in addition to the fact that large-scale surveys usually do not include these questions, there are several disadvantages to relying on respondents' subjective perceptions of issue salience and congruence. First, when asking voters' about their perceptions of priority congruence with parties, we might encounter endogeneity problems. Voters who are more satisfied with democracy might indicate higher congruence levels because of their high satisfaction levels, while those who are dissatisfied might indicate low congruence levels to reiterate and reinforce their expression of dissatisfaction, even if it is not in fact rooted in a lack of elite attention to their concerns. Similarly, those who abstained from the election may say that parties did not address the issues they considered important in order to justify their failure to

adhere to the widely accepted norm of voting as a civic duty (Karp and Brockington 2005; Silver, Anderson, and Abramson 1986).

But even the potentially less error-prone method of asking respondents' separately about elites' priorities and about their own might be subject to biases. Researchers who analyse the distance between citizens' and parties' policy positions, for instance on the left-right dimension, are very familiar with the problem of 'projection bias'. Voters who support a certain party may place it closer to their own position and the parties they dislikes further away (Grand and Tiemann 2013; Heider 1946; Macdonald, Rabinowitz, and Listhaug 1997). One reason for this bias is voters' attempt to deal with cognitive dissonance. Furthermore, in particular with respect to rather complex attitudes, such as left-right positions, where respondents may be unsure about parties' positions, they may use their own position as a heuristic to determine parties' positions. As a result, they will probably judge parties they like to be more similar to them, which will inflate estimates of the strength of the relationship between policy proximity and party support.

Similar biases might occur with respect to priority congruence in the context of democratic satisfaction or turnout. If survey respondents are unsure about the salience of different issues amongst political elites, those who are satisfied with the functioning of democracy and those who participated in the election may project their own issue concerns on elites'. In turn, those who are dissatisfied or did not vote might infer that elites focused on issues they consider irrelevant. They might also choose to claim that their concerns were neglected in order to deal with their cognitive dissonance, justifying their dissatisfaction or failure to turn out.

I thus decided to use an objective measure of priority congruence (which also means that I was able to draw on existing survey data). I measure elites' policy issue

priorities directly by relying on candidate surveys as well as through the news media by using content data of news media coverage during the election campaign. Citizens' concerns as well as their democratic satisfaction and turnout are measured using voter surveys. I construct the priority congruence measures by integrating the indicators of the salience of citizens' issue concerns amongst candidates and in the media into the voter surveys, which also include the measures of democratic satisfaction and turnout.

Finding suitable data to construct these measures represents a challenge, since they require information on voters' policy priorities as well as on elites' priorities from the same time period. One problem is that, at a certain point in time, a small number of issues tend to be highly salient amongst both citizens and elites (Jennings and Wlezien 2011). In the US, for instance, foreign affairs generally dominated the public agenda until priorities shifted to economic issues since the 1970s (Smith 1980). Thus, surveys that only measure one issue priority do not provide a lot of variance amongst respondents, particularly in a cross-sectional framework.

Second, issues are usually already summarised into broader categories when survey data is released, especially if they are mentioned in response to open-ended questions such as the most important problem (MIP) question. This question is commonly used to tap respondents' policy priorities and I use it too: 'Which are, in your opinion, the most important problems facing your country today?' It is a great advantage to obtain data on citizens' and elites' issue concerns that use a common categorisation scheme.

I use data from two studies that fulfil both criteria as they record multiple issue concerns and use common coding schemes for citizen and elite concerns. These data are from the 2009 German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES) and the 2009 European Election Study (EES). The latter was conducted within the PIREDEU (Providing an

Infrastructure for Research on Electoral Democracy in the European Union) project.[4] Both studies include a voter survey (in the case of the GLES I use the post-election cross-section) as well as a candidate survey. It was conducted amongst the candidates of the five major parties after the 2009 German federal election and amongst the candidates of the parties competing in the 2009 European Parliament election, respectively. Moreover, the GLES includes a Campaign Media Content Analysis, which contains data on the print and TV news media coverage during the election campaign, including the salience of policy issues in the news reports.

As the theoretical discussion above should have made clear, I do not restrict the scope of applicability of my theoretical arguments to Germany or even to Europe. The use of these data is predominantly motivated by data availability. At the same time, Germany is not an atypical advanced industrialised democracy in terms of its history, economic system, social diversity, and political system. The EU, in turn, comprises countries with very diverse political trajectories and thus allows comparing countries with different levels of democratic experience.

Chapter overview

The thesis is structured as follows. As mentioned above, it consists of four papers in the style of journal articles. In the first paper (Chapter 2), I lay out the fundamental argument that congruence in policy priorities should influence satisfaction with democracy. I moreover discuss the distinction between *dyadic* and *collective* representation and analyse its role in the context of priority congruence. I furthermore elaborate on why it is appropriate to use the news media coverage of German politics to approximate the salience of policy issues among political elites. This paper has been

[4] Information about the 2009 GLES and the 2009 EES can be found on www.gles.eu and www.piredeu.eu, respectively.

accepted, conditional on minor revisions, by the *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*.

In the second paper (Chapter 3), I investigate whether the effects of priority and left-right congruence on democratic satisfaction vary across individuals. I identify two potential causes of variation: differences in representation preferences and differences in the cognitive resources and motivation necessary to evaluate complex attitude objects. I explain why both factors should be related to political sophistication and analyse whether education, political interest, and political knowledge moderate the impacts of priority and ideological congruence on satisfaction with democracy, using data from the 2009 GLES. I presented this paper at the 2013 Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA) Conference and at the Conference 'Advances in the study on democratic responsiveness' in Gothenburg on November 22-23, 2014.

In the last paper on satisfaction with democracy (Chapter 5), I explore the congruence-satisfaction link in a cross-national context. I discuss why the relationship might be weaker in countries with less democratic experience. I argue that, in less democratic countries, citizens might focus more strongly on whether the most fundamental aspects of democracy are met when evaluating democracy. Citizens in young democracies, in turn, have been shown to place less emphasis on processes and institutions when defining democracy. I test the hypotheses using data from the 2009 EES and employing multilevel regression analysis. This paper is published in the *European Journal of Political Research* (Reher 2015).

Chapter 4 focuses on voter turnout as the dependent variable. I discuss why citizens whose policy concerns are emphasised by political elites during the election campaign should be more likely to turn out than voters whose issue priorities are neglected. Priority congruence should influence the likelihood of turning out both by

increasing the perceived relevance of the election, and thus voters' motivation to vote, and by decreasing the costs of voting, by making the vote choice easier. However, these mechanisms should only apply to non-partisan voters since party identification can compensate for a low motivation and high costs due to a lack of priority congruence. I use data from the 2009 GLES to test the hypotheses. The paper is published in *Electoral Studies* (Reher 2014).

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CHAPTER 2

The Effects of Priority Congruence on Satisfaction with Democracy

Abstract

Previous research suggests that better policy representation increases citizens' satisfaction with democracy. Most existing studies measure representation in terms of spatial policy distance between citizens and elites. This paper proposes that citizens also take policy priorities into account when evaluating the quality of democracy. If elites pay attention to their concerns, it should indicate to citizens that they are dedicated to dealing with the important problems facing society and, potentially, that they are responsive to public opinion. To test the hypothesis, novel measures of priority congruence are developed that link voter survey data with candidate survey and media content data. The results show that citizens whose issue concerns are shared by candidates and salient in the media's campaign coverage are indeed more satisfied with democracy. Moreover, they suggest that not only congruence with one's supported party but with all parties matters.

Introduction

Maintaining a 'healthy' level of satisfaction with democracy among the public is considered vital for the stability of democratic systems and the containment of anti-democratic forces (Almond and Verba 1963; Dalton 2004; Norris 1999). Scholars have thus invested a considerable amount of effort into studying what predicts democratic (dis-)satisfaction. Since political representation is a key element of modern-day democratic systems, it is often argued that citizens will be more satisfied with and trusting towards their political system if they perceive the representation process to be well-functioning and their own preferences to be represented (Anderson et al. 2005; Miller 1974; Miller and Listhaug 1990; Muller 1970). A number of studies have shown that, indeed, citizens who are closer to elites in terms of ideology or policy positions tend to have higher satisfaction levels (e.g. Brandenburg and Johns 2013; Curini, Jou, and Memoli 2012; Dahlberg and Holmberg 2013; Ezrow and Xezonakis 2011; Kim 2009).

This study builds on this literature but goes beyond it by focusing on agreement between citizens and political elites on policy *priorities*, which have so far been largely ignored in the context of political system evaluations. I propose that citizens should be more satisfied with the functioning of democracy if their policy concerns are shared by political elites and addressed in the political debate. The main argument is that citizens whose issue priorities are salient amongst political elites should perceive them to be invested in solving society's most urgent problems. In this respect, priority congruence is distinct from proximity between citizens and elites on policy dimensions, which indicates agreement on *how*, yet not on *whether* an issue should be addressed by policy. Priority congruence is also different from left-right congruence, which indicates deep-seated and fairly stable values. A person might share a party's ideological position but

not at all agree with its policy agenda. Citizens might interpret elite attention to their concerns as a sign of responsiveness – more so than ideological congruence – although the potential causes for agreement on issue priorities are of course manifold.

In order to put the argument to an empirical test, I develop a novel measure of congruence in issue priorities between citizens and political elites that links data from a voter survey with a candidate study and TV and print media content analyses that are part of the 2009 German Longitudinal Election Study. I show that the probability of citizens to be satisfied with democracy increases if the policy issues they consider as currently most important for Germany are more salient in the media and amongst party candidates. The findings also suggest that voters evaluate the performance of the democratic system not only based on whether the party they supported in the election shares their concerns (*dyadic* congruence) but also based on the attention that political elites in general pay to them (*collective* congruence).

Priority Congruence and Satisfaction with Democracy

Satisfaction with democracy is widely considered an important indicator of evaluative political support (Easton 1965; Norris 1999) with potential implications for the legitimacy and stability of democratic systems (Almond and Verba 1963). If the political institutions and processes in a democracy do not meet citizens' expectations, they might seek out ways to improve them, but they might also support non-democratic alternatives. It is thus important to understand the patterns, sources, and consequences of satisfaction with democracy, which is usually measured by the survey question 'How satisfied are you with the functioning of democracy in [country]?'

This question has often been criticised, for instance on the ground of 'omit[ting] reference to any basis of comparison' (Canache, Mondak, and Seligson 2001: 511; cf.

also Linde and Ekman 2003; Norris 1999: 11). However, along with other scholars I argue that the survey question should be a valid measure of citizens' evaluations of their perceptions of the 'constitutional reality' in their country – i.e., the informal rules that have emerged within the formal political framework (Fuchs, Guidorossi, and Svensson 1995: 322) – in comparison to their expectations (Thomassen 1995).

Which institutions, processes, and outcomes play a role in this evaluation should depend on a person's understanding of the concept of democracy. The representation of public preferences through political elites is one of the most central elements of representative democracies (Pitkin 1967). It should influence most citizens' satisfaction with democracy (Miller 1974; Muller 1970; Rosema, Denters, and Aarts 2011) because, as Dennis and Owen (2011: 401) explain,

> [i]n a fully operative democracy, people are likely to have developed the firm expectation that they have the right to be heard, and that officials should be responsible to their needs and take action. If people have come to feel that their own needs, wants, interests, concerns, values, or demands are not being effectively represented in the policy process, […] popular resentment likely will result.

Aarts and Thomassen (2008) show that perceptions of the quality of democratic representation indeed influence satisfaction with democracy (McAllister 2005). In addition, a number of studies which operationalise the quality of representation in terms of citizen-elite agreement in terms of ideology or policy positions show that proximity or congruence is related to satisfaction (e.g. Brandenburg and Johns 2013; Curini, Jou, and Memoli 2012; Dahlberg and Holmberg 2013; Ezrow and Xezonakis 2011; Kim 2009). Indeed, measures of distance on the left-right or more specific policy dimensions have come to be regarded as standard indicators of substantive policy representation (e.g. Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996; Hurley and Hill 2003; McDonald and Budge 2005; Powell 2004; Rosema, Denters, and Aarts 2011).

Meanwhile, a related strand of research emerged in parallel, rather than in dialogue with, the spatial congruence literature. It focuses on agreement between citizens' and elites' policy agendas and, at times, the dynamics between them (Bevan and Jennings 2014; Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996; Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008; Jennings and John 2009; Jones and Baumgartner 2004; Lindeboom 2012; Spoon and Klüver 2014). This literature recognises that, in order to be representative of citizens' preferences, elites' agendas and policies should not only reflect the public's views on the issues in question but also focus on the issues that are considered important and in need of legislation by the represented. If, accordingly, citizens have the expectation that political elites not only share their policy positions but also emphasise their concerns, they should also evaluate the democratic system based whether elites pay attention to their issue priorities.

Since the appeal of this argument rests on the extent to which policy priorities are distinct from ideological and policy positions, it is appropriate to discuss the differences in their nature and purpose in the representation and policy-making processes in more detail. Left-right ideology, which is the most frequently used measure of preferences in studies of representation, is a political belief system that structures deep-seated and fairly stable views on political, social, and economic relations (Campbell et al. 1960: 192; Converse 1964). If parties change their ideological views they risk losses in credibility and supporters (Adams 2012; Budge 1994; Downs 1957; Mayer 2013; Tavits 2007).

Left-right can also be seen as a 'super issue' summarising people's more specific policy opinions (Gabel and Huber 2000; Inglehart 1984), although it is better understood as an underlying dimension that informs issue opinions. Specific issue

positions are thus usually quite closely tied to ideological positions and hence similarly, if not quite as tightly, constrained.

In contrast, policy priorities are more specific and volatile and not as strongly reflective of political ideology. Which policy issues citizens and representatives consider more important than others is certainly influenced by their fundamental political views – conservative voters are, for instance, unlikely to prioritise environmental protection over crime reduction. Thus, individuals' general political beliefs circumscribe a certain set of issues which they potentially prioritise. Within this set of issues, however, policy priories can change, sometimes rapidly, without entailing shifts in political ideology.

Neither do changes in priorities necessarily reflect changes in positions on the issues in question (cf. Laver and Garry 2000: 620). To give an example, an individual might consider education policy to be most important but soon afterwards demand a stronger focus on gay rights instead. Such a shift in issue priorities does not imply a change in political views – neither in the case of voters nor in the case of political parties. Rather, it is likely to be caused by societal events and developments, by changes in someone's personal environment, or by the implementation of a policy and the conclusion of the debate (e.g. Bartle and Laycock 2012; McCombs 1999).

Because it is relatively neutral in terms of ideological views and policy positions and hence more volatile, policy attention should be the main means through which parties and governments are responsive to public preferences, particularly in the short term. Congruence in priorities may thus indicate elite responsiveness to citizens and thereby influence their democratic satisfaction, as responsiveness is seen as an important element of representative democracy by many. But often elites do not actually follow public opinion. In some cases – in fact, potentially most of the time – political

elites identify issues in need of policy or policy changes before the public does, or both citizens and politicians react to the media's focus on particular issues (Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996; Iyengar and Simon 1993; Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007).

In such cases, congruence in priorities may not signal elite responsiveness, but it nevertheless indicates whether a person agrees with elites on what the urgent policy issues are. This should influence her perception of how well democracy is working, too, by signalling to her whether the system promotes elites who are willing and able to discern what matters to the country and to devote attention and effort to it. The proposed relationship between priority congruence and satisfaction should thus not be contingent on how congruence comes about:

Hypothesis: *Higher levels of congruence in policy priorities are associated with higher levels of satisfaction with democracy.*

Dyadic vs Collective Priority Congruence

A crucial question when studying any aspect of political representation is: Who represents whom?, or, What is the *focus* (Eulau et al. 1959) or *locus* (Doherty 2012) of representation? In the context of substantive policy representation, the question becomes: With which section of the population should a representative have shared policy preferences? Or, in other words, which representative(s) should a citizen expect to share her preferences? This important normative question, which boils down to a clash between *dyadic* and *collective* views, is still disputed by political theorists and empiricists alike (Hurley 1982; Pitkin 1967; Weissberg 1978).

The *dyadic* view posits that representatives are delegates of their specific constituencies rather than the entire citizen body (Hurley 1982; Miller and Stokes 1963; Weissberg 1978). Dyadic congruence can be citizens' policy agreement with the party

or candidate they voted for or with the candidate that represents their local constituency. The latter is often in the focus in majoritarian systems (Miller and Stokes 1963), whereas the link between parties and their supporters is usually considered more important in proportional representation systems with list voting (Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996; Miller 1974; Powell 2004: 284).

Alternatively, representatives can be understood as a *collective* body representing society as a whole (Andeweg 2011; Hurley 1982; Pitkin 1967: 168-225; Weissberg 1978). Scholars following this approach usually compare the public's preferences with those of all parties or representatives (e.g. Erikson, Mackuen, and Stimson 2002; Ezrow and Xezonakis 2011; McDonald and Budge 2005; Powell 2000). A related approach is to look at congruence between citizens and the government as the actor that makes policies for the entire citizenry (e.g. Blais and Bodet 2006; Huber and Powell 1994).

The motivations for choosing either one of these approaches when empirically studying representation often remain unclear – even though it has both normative and empirical implications (cf. Ezrow et al. 2011; Golder and Stramski 2010: 90). In the context of citizens' perceptions of representation and its consequences for their attitudes and behaviour, it is important to measure representation *as citizens perceive and expect it*. If people expect their concerns to be addressed specifically by the party for which they voted, we should focus on dyadic priority congruence. If they desire political elites in general to focus on the issues they consider important, collective congruence is more likely to predict democratic satisfaction.

Since this study is the first investigation of the effects of priority congruence on citizens' political attitudes, we do not know whether the dyadic or the collective link will be more relevant. In general, evidence on citizens' preferences for dyadic and

collective representation is scarce. This means that developing and analysing both dyadic and collective indicators can be instructive, as it will provide an indication of what citizens' expectations may be and prevent that a relationship is overlooked because the wrong locus of congruence is used.

I will therefore investigate both dyadic and collective measures of priority congruence. In fact, I expect that both variables will influence satisfaction with democracy. On the one hand, citizens might expect in particular the party that they support to focus on the issues they consider most important for the country. Shared concerns can actually be a motivation to vote for a particular party, to the extent that a party's emphasis on an issue implies that it cares about it and/or is competent on it (Belanger and Meguid 2008; Budge and Farlie 1983; Green and Hobolt 2008; Petrocik 1996; Walgrave, Lefevere, and Tresch 2012). If this party does not live up to their expectations after the election, voters might be particularly disappointed (although it needs to be noted that I measure priority congruence right after the election, which means that it is likely to be similar or equal to priority congruence before the election).

On the other hand, citizens' policy priorities as understood in this study are not strictly their own concerns but the issues they consider most important for one's country, in this case Germany (Bartle and Laycock 2012; Bevan, Jennings, and Wlezien 2014; Johns 2010). If political elites – even those she did not vote for – neglect these issues, she might feel that the democratic system does not succeed in recruiting elites who dedicate their attention to the issues that really matter to society.

Data and Method

In order to empirically test the proposed arguments and hypotheses, I analyse voter and candidate survey data as well as quantitative media content data from the 2009 German

Longitudinal Election Study (GLES).[5] This data offers the opportunity of linking citizens' issue priorities with those of political elites, which is facilitated by the unified issue coding scheme used across the study's components. Germany was thus mainly chosen based on data availability, but it is also a suitable case beyond such practical considerations. Germany is representative of many established democracies in terms of its size, economic development, political culture, and political institutions. The results obtained in this study are thus likely to be indicative of patterns that also apply to other advanced industrialised democracies.

In the 2009 German federal election, the main competition took place between the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) and their Grand Coalition partner at the time, the Social Democrats (SPD). The fact that the two parties had governed together over the previous four years meant that they had difficulties blaming each other for the government's actions. For this and other reasons, the CDU/CSU's campaign strategy was to focus on the leadership qualities of Chancellor Merkel's, who enjoyed high popularity ratings, while downplaying substantive issues. Consequently, the election campaign lacked fierce issue competition and has been described as 'boring' (Krewel, Schmitt-Beck, and Wolsing 2011) and 'issue-less' (Schön 2011: 103). While this might mean that, in this particular election, it was quite difficult for citizens to evaluate how salient their issue concerns were compared to others, it also means that any results confirming the hypotheses in this context should be robust.

The CDU/CSU won the election with 33.8 per cent and was able to govern with her desired coalition partner, the FDP, who gained 14.6 per cent of the vote. The SPD was forced into the opposition after obtaining its lowest ever vote share, 23 per cent.

[5] All data used for the analyses in this paper can be obtained from GESIS (http://www.gesis.org/en/elections-home/gles/data-and-documents/).

The Left and the Greens gained 11.9 and 10.7 per cent, respectively. At 70.8 per cent, turnout was at its historical low.

I measure citizens' priorities on the basis of the post-election cross-sectional voter survey of the GLES (Rattinger et al. 2011). It was conducted within eight weeks after the 2009 federal election in which the members of *Bundestag* were elected. The salience of issues amongst political elites is measured via the candidate survey as well as based on the content of the print and TV news during the election campaign. The candidate survey (Rattinger, Roßteutscher, Schmitt-Beck, Weßels, et al. 2012) was conducted online and by mail among political candidates of the five major political parties – the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU), the Social Democrats (SPD), the Liberals (FDP), the Greens, and the Left – shortly after the election. The sample of 790 includes both constituency candidates, who stood for direct election by plurality vote in their constituencies, and list candidates, who could be elected based on proportional representation rules.

The campaign media data was collected over the ten weeks leading up to the election and comprises manually coded data on the content of TV news and newspapers. The TV news content analysis (Rattinger, Roßteutscher, Schmitt-Beck, and Weßels 2012) covers the evening newscasts of the main public and private German television broadcasters (*ARD/Das Erste*, *ZDF*, *RTL*, and *Sat.1*). The units of analysis are individual news reports in newscasts. The print media content analysis (Rattinger, Rossdeutscher, et al. 2012) covers the front pages of the six major nationwide daily newspapers (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *DIE WELT*, *BILD*, *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, and *die tageszeitung*). Here, the units of analysis are articles. From this comprehensive data, I extract the information about the major and minor policy issues with which the report or article dealt. In the following, I briefly discuss

why I consider using media data an appropriate method before explaining the variables in detail.

Measuring Representatives' Policy Priorities Using Media Content Data

Previous studies of policy congruence have predominantly relied on roll-call behaviour (Miller and Stokes 1963), party manifestos (e.g. Ezrow and Xezonakis 2011), expert surveys (e.g. Huber and Powell 1994), and candidate surveys (e.g. Andeweg 2011; Holmberg 2011) to measure representatives' preferences – only more recently, scholars have decided to analyse the media coverage of parties' election campaigns for this purpose (Kriesi 2007; Statham et al. 2010). Since the media do not merely mirror the debates among political elites but selectively emphasise certain aspects, it could be argued that they give a distorted image of the actual salience of issues among political elites (Kosicki 1993: 113; McCombs and Shaw 1972). However, the media are the main channel through which the public receives information about the political debate. Most voters do not pay much attention to party manifestos – and, in fact, even experts do not strongly rely on them (Adams, Ezrow, and Somer-Topcu 2014) – and few are in direct contact to party elites. Measuring the salience of issues in the news is thus a suitable approach to measure congruence between citizens' priorities and the issues emphasised by elites in the political debate as citizens perceive it.

Moreover, as Statham and colleagues note, media data gives a better indication of the 'intensity with which a party campaigns on an issue' (2010: 247) than manifestos and expert surveys, which is essentially equivalent to salience. Furthermore, the media better captures fluctuations in parties' preferences that result from their responses to events and political competitors' actions. As I explained above, such short-term changes

should be particularly prevalent in the context of priorities and agendas as compared to policy and ideological positions.

Measuring Congruence in Policy Priorities

The primary independent variables of interest in this study are a set of *priority congruence* variables which measure to what extent each survey respondents' issue concerns are prioritised by party candidates and mentioned in the news media. The variables were constructed by first determining the salience of each issue category among candidates and in the media and then calculating the average salience of each citizen's concerns. For this purpose, the policy issues included in the coding scheme of the GLES were summarised into broader issue categories. The salience of each of these categories in the media coverage of the campaign was defined by the average relative frequency with which it was mentioned in television news reports and newspaper articles concerned with German politics or politicians. The occurrence of an issue as the 'major' issue of a newspaper article (as determined by the GLES coders) is given twice as much weight as a mention as a 'minor' issue. I thereby obtain a media salience score for each issue.

The salience of each policy issue among party candidates was measured by the relative frequency with which the issue occurs in their replies to the question 'What are in your opinion the three most important problems with which Germany is confronted at the moment?' in the candidate survey. The data includes up to three issues mentioned in reply to the most, second most, and third most important problem questions, respectively. Each issue's occurrence was weighted according to its importance (most important issues count three times as heavily and second most important issues twice as

heavily as third most important issues).[6] In order construct the dyadic measures of priority congruence, issue salience scores were calculated for each party separately.

In the next step, each post-election survey respondent's priority congruence was calculated to reflect the salience of her issue priorities amongst elites. Similarly to the candidate survey, the voter survey asked respondents what they thought were the most, second most, and third most important problems facing Germany at the moment. From each of the three responses, up to five issue categories are listed in the data set in cases where a respondent included more than one issue in her response. Respondents' congruence scores were then calculated based on the salience of their concerns among candidates and the media, respectively.[7] The salience scores of multiple issues mentioned in one response were averaged. Each respondent's three resulting congruence scores, for the most, second most, and third most important problem, were then combined into a weighted average, where the score of the most important issue(s) counts three times as much as the one for the third most important issue(s) and that of the second most important issue(s) counts twice as much.

The resulting priority congruence scores can be interpreted as the percentage of the political elite's agenda for which an individual's issue concerns account. For instance, if a respondent mentions a labour market issue and an economy issue as most important, which account for 5.2 per cent and 25.4 per cent of the news coverage, respectively; immigration as second most important, which accounts for 0.6 per cent of

[6] The results of the analyses presented below are robust to different weighting formulae. When giving all three importance levels the same weight, neither the coefficients or standard errors of the salience congruence variables nor the model fit vary substantially. When assigning the second most important issues 40 per cent as much and the third most important issues 10 per cent as much weight as the most important issues, the coefficients are slightly smaller but statistically significant and the model fit is slightly worse.

[7] I constructed separate TV congruence and print media congruence variables, yet they were so highly correlated (Pearson's $r = .97$. $p<.0005$) that I decided to create one media priority congruence indicator that averages the two.

the coverage; and health care as the third most important problem, which accounts for 4.6 per cent of the coverage, the media congruence score will be [3*((5.2+25.4)/2)+(2*.06)+4.6]/6=8.4, meaning that 8.4 per cent of the policy issues addressed in the news media during the election campaign dealt with the individuals' issue concerns.

In addition to the *collective candidate priority congruence* variable, which indicates how salient citizens' concerns were amongst the candidates of all the five major parties on average, weighted by their seat shares in the election as a proxy for their visibility during the campaign, I construct a *dyadic candidate priority congruence* variable. It measures the level of priority congruence between a respondent and the candidates of the party for which he or she declared to have voted, if any. Since Germany has a mixed-member proportional election system and voters can make two crosses on the ballot paper – one for a constituency candidate and one for a party list – I take the average congruence with both parties when respondents split their ticket.[8] The distributions of all three congruence variables are displayed in Appendix 2.A.

Issue Priorities in the 2009 German Federal Election

Figure 2.1 illustrates that economic issues were the most salient among the media and party candidates, which is not surprising during times of financial and economic crisis. Among candidates, media, and citizens, economic issues accounted for about 25 per cent of the policy issues mentioned. Only citizens mentioned another category of issues even more frequently, namely the labour market, which includes unemployment.[9] In

[8] Since strategic voting occurs with respect to both votes and it is thus difficult to tell which party reflects a voter's 'real' preference, averaging the congruence scores with both parties for split-ticket voters seems an appropriate strategy (Gschwend 2007).

[9] Some of the issue categories may be related to each other in voters' eyes, in particular economic, financial, and labour market issues. It is thus possible that voters will

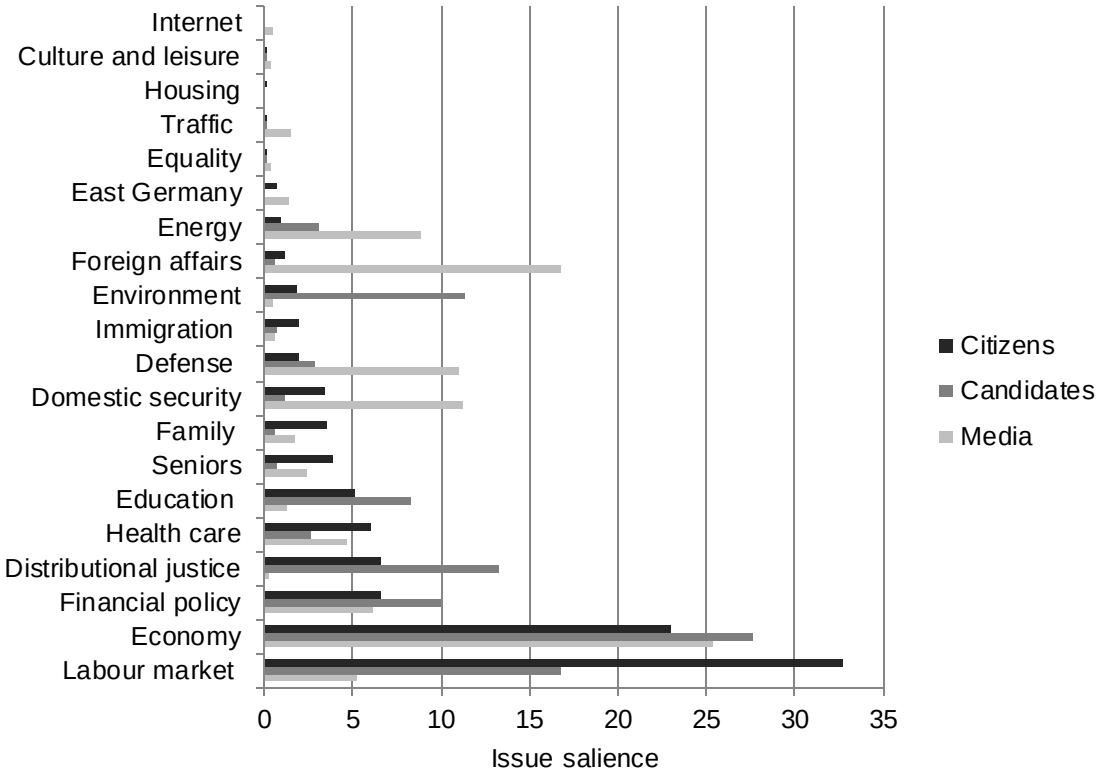


Figure 2.1. Relative salience of issues among voters, candidates, and the media campaign coverage at the 2009 German federal election

contrast, these issues were relatively low particularly on the media agenda, which, in turn, gave a lot of attention to foreign affairs, military and defence, and domestic security – issues which were fairly low on the citizen agenda.

From Figure 2.1 it appears that citizens' issue concerns were more closely reflected by candidates than by the media, which is confirmed by the mean priority congruence values shown in Figure 2.2. Here, we also see that voters' issue priorities are most similar to those of the candidates of the party for which they voted, meaning that dyadic congruence is on average higher than collective congruence, even if only slightly. This is also true when we compare the means only among those respondents

perceive high congruence levels if they prioritise unemployment while the media and elites focus on the economic crisis. To assess the robustness of the results presented below in this respect, I constructed alternative measures of priority congruence by collapsing these issue categories and re-estimated the models. The results presented below are robust to these changes.

who indicated their vote choice, whose statistics are shown in the dot pattern, as they are the only ones who have a dyadic congruence value.

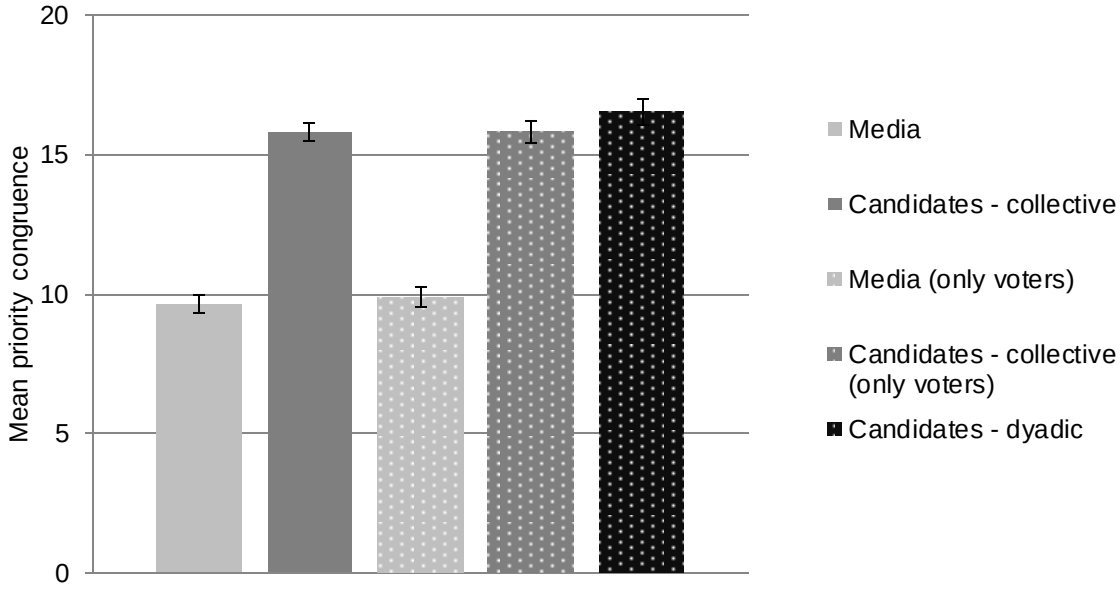


Figure 2.2. Mean levels of media, collective, and dyadic priority congruence among all citizens and only those who voted in the 2009 election (with 95% confidence intervals)

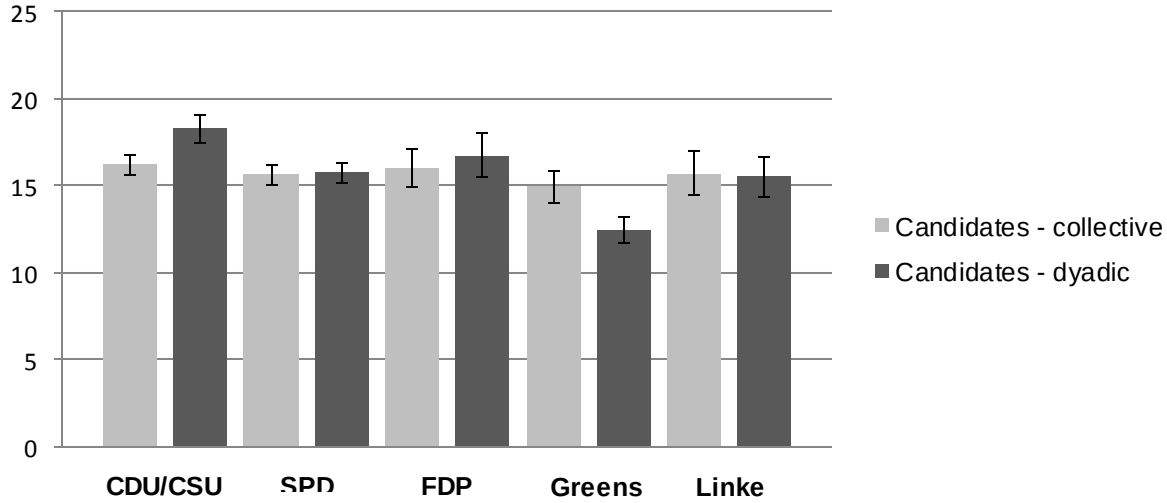


Figure 2.3. Mean levels of collective and dyadic priority congruence across party voters (with 95% confidence intervals)

However, if we look at the voters of different parties separately, we see that the congruence levels vary with the party a voter supported (Figure 2.3). Among CDU/CSU voters, the difference between dyadic and collective congruence is largest, with dyadic congruence being much higher, while the difference is smaller for voters of other parties. Green voters even have higher collective congruence than dyadic congruence levels. This is due to fact that environmental issues are highly salient amongst Green candidates, as we can see in Figure 2.4, which shows the salience of issues amongst the candidates of different parties. Green voters, on the other hand, also place high emphasis on other issues such as unemployment, which are stressed more by candidates of other parties.

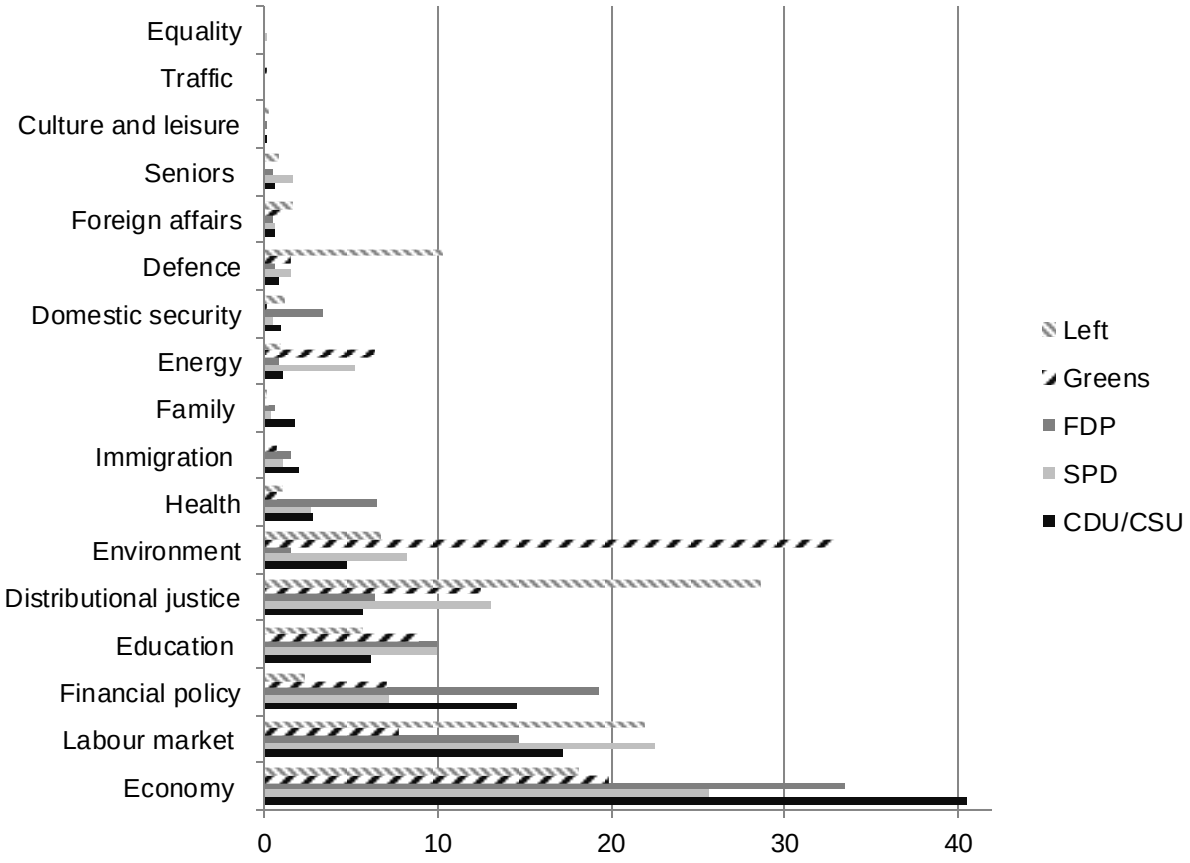


Figure 2.4. Relative salience of issues among candidates from the different parties at the 2009 German federal election

As we saw in Figure 2.1, the emphasis placed on different issues differs quite substantially between candidates and the media. Candidates' priorities are generally much more similar to citizens' than the media's, as Figure 2.2 showed. Nevertheless, the media and candidate congruence variables are strongly correlated (Pearson's r=.83, p<.0005, N=1639 for media and collective candidate congruence and Pearson's r=.75, p<0005, N=1107 for media and dyadic congruence). One of the reasons is that both the media and candidates place high emphasis on economic issues. That some issues, such as foreign affairs and defence, are much more salient in the media than among candidates does not significantly weaken the correlation between the congruence variables because so few citizens prioritise these issues and, as a result, have much higher media congruence than candidate congruence.

Collective and dyadic congruence are also strongly correlated (Pearson's r=.90, p<.0005, N=1107). This is partly true because, among voters, the dyadic congruence score is included in the collective congruence score. But it is also the case because candidates of different parties agree to quite a large extent on what the most important issues facing Germany are, as we see in Figure 2.4. The economy is the considered most important by candidates from the CDU/CSU, the SPD, and the FDP. While the Greens place most emphasis on the environment, the economy comes second. Amongst the Left, distributional justice and labour market issues are more salient, but the economy still accounts for 18 per cent of the issue mentions.

Figure 2.4 also suggests that issue emphasis is not necessarily indicative of political ideology and policy positions. Labour market issues, for instance, are quite salient amongst all parties and not systematically more or less so amongst the economically right CDU/CSU and FDP. The same is the case for education, health, immigration, and a number of other issues. Salience does appear to be correlated to

political views with regard to a few issues, for instance financial policy, distributional justice, and defence. Still, the patterns we observe here offer support for the argument that issue emphasis is not strongly dependent on fundamental political views, and certainly less so than issue positions.

Measuring Satisfaction with Democracy and the Control Variables

The dependent variable, *satisfaction with democracy*, is measured by the survey item 'On the whole, how satisfied or not are you with the way democracy works in Germany? Are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied?'[10] Assuming that this five-point scale taps a latent continuous dimension, the models are estimated using ordinal logit regression analysis. As socio-demographic controls, I include *age*, being *female*, *education* based on the highest school-leaving certificate obtained, as well as *subjective social class*. Income is excluded because of a high number of missing values. A dummy variable indicating whether a respondent lives in *East* or West Germany controls for differences in satisfaction with democracy based on divergent political and socio-economic experiences.

I furthermore control for a set of variables related to political representation. Since several studies have shown that '[p]eople who identify strongly with a party tend to be much more supportive of the idea that the political system functions properly' (Anderson et al. 2005: 76; Miller and Listhaug 1990), I control for the *strength of party identification* (*PID*). Furthermore, since the *winners* of an election tend to be more satisfied with democracy (Anderson et al. 2005), I include a dummy variable indicating

[10] Detailed information about all variables can be found in Appendix 5.D.

whether a respondent reported to have voted for the CDU/CSU or the FDP, who were seen as most likely to do so when the post-election survey was conducted.

I also include a measure of respondents' *subjective distance to the party mean* on the left-right dimension to control for the effect of ideological congruence on satisfaction (e.g. Kim 2009). While using an objective measure of the party mean might lower the risk of 'projection bias' (Kedar 2005: 191; Macdonald, Rabinowitz, and Listhaug 1997), I use a measure of voters' perceived distance to parties here (Blais et al. 2001). I tested whether the measures yield different results, and they did not.

The *evaluation of the current economic situation* has also been found to be a strong predictor of satisfaction with democracy in previous studies (Dalton 2004; Kim 2009). Moreover, I control for *political interest*, *newspaper use*, which measures the cumulative number of days per week on which a respondents reads a newspaper, and *TV news use*, which is the equivalent measure for TV news exposure. These variables account for potential spuriousness and endogeneity in the congruence-satisfaction link, since citizens who are more interested in politics and pay more attention to the news might have higher levels of both satisfaction with democracy and priority congruence (because they are better informed about representatives' and the media's agendas – although there is evidence that agenda-setting effects are actually weaker among more politically engaged individuals (Willnat 1997: 59)).

The Relationships between Priority Congruence and Satisfaction with Democracy

In order to test the hypothesis that citizens whose policy priorities are more salient amongst political elites tend to be more satisfied with the functioning of democracy, I regress satisfaction with democracy on the priority congruence variables and the set of control variables. Table 2.1 shows the estimates of the three models, one for each

Table 2.1. Effects of priority congruence on satisfaction with democracy

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	Log-odds	(std. error)	p	Log-odds	(std. error)	p	Log-odds	(std. error)	p
Age	.01	(.00)	.024	.01	(.00)	.011	.01	(.00)	.073
Female	-.03	(.11)	.776	-.04	(.11)	.738	-.07	(.13)	.575
Education	-.02	(.05)	.706	-.02	(.05)	.738	-.04	(.05)	.480
Social class	.20	(.07)	.005	.22	(.07)	.003	.23	(.08)	.004
East	-.50	(.13)	.000	-.50	(.13)	.000	-.44	(.14)	.002
PID strength	.24	(.05)	.000	.23	(.05)	.000	.30	(.05)	.000
Winner	.50	(.12)	.000	.51	(.12)	.000	.54	(.13)	.000
Left-right distance	-.35	(.05)	.000	-.35	(.05)	.000	-.34	(.06)	.000
Economic situation	.53	(.09)	.000	.54	(.09)	.000	.58	(.10)	.000
Political interest	.17	(.07)	.016	.18	(.07)	.010	.14	(.08)	.062
Newspaper use	.06	(.02)	.004	.05	(.02)	.004	.04	(.02)	.070
TV news use	-.02	(.01)	.077	-.02	(.01)	.079	-.02	(.01)	.170
Media congruence	.04	(.01)	.000						
Candidate congruence (collective)				.03	(.01)	.000			
Candidate congruence (dyadic)							.04	(.01)	.000
Wald chi-square	292.60		.000	289.71		.000	205.10		.000
Pseudo R-squared	.09			.09			.08		
LR test	16.36		.000	13.42		.000	23.05		.000
N	1272			1272			1013		

Notes: Standard errors are robust since weight is employed to correct for oversampling in East Germany. The likelihood-ratio (LR) test compares the fit of each model to a model excluding priority congruence (samples not weighted).

priority congruence variable (their high correlations do not allow us to include them in the same models). The coefficients of media congruence (Model 1), collective candidate congruence (Model 2), and dyadic candidate congruence (Model 3) are all positive and highly significant ($p<.0005$), thus confirming the hypothesis. The significant ($p<.0005$) results of likelihood ratio tests, which compare each model to a reduced model that includes only the control variables, indicate that adding any of the priority congruence variables significantly improves the model fit and therefore adds to our ability to explain variation in satisfaction with democracy.

The coefficients, standard errors, and p-values of the control variables are very similar across the models, particularly among Models 1 and 2, which are based on the

same sample of voters and non-voters. The variables that are significantly ($p<.05$) associated with satisfaction in Models 1 and 2 include age and subjective class, which have positive effects on satisfaction, and living in the former German Democratic Republic, which is associated with lower satisfaction levels. Moreover, the strength of party identification, having voted for the election winner, considering the economic situation as favourable, being political interested, and making more use of newspapers all increase satisfaction. Gender, education, and watching news on TV have no effects. Since Model 3 is only estimated amongst citizens who voted, some of the coefficients differ slightly from those in Models 1 and 2.

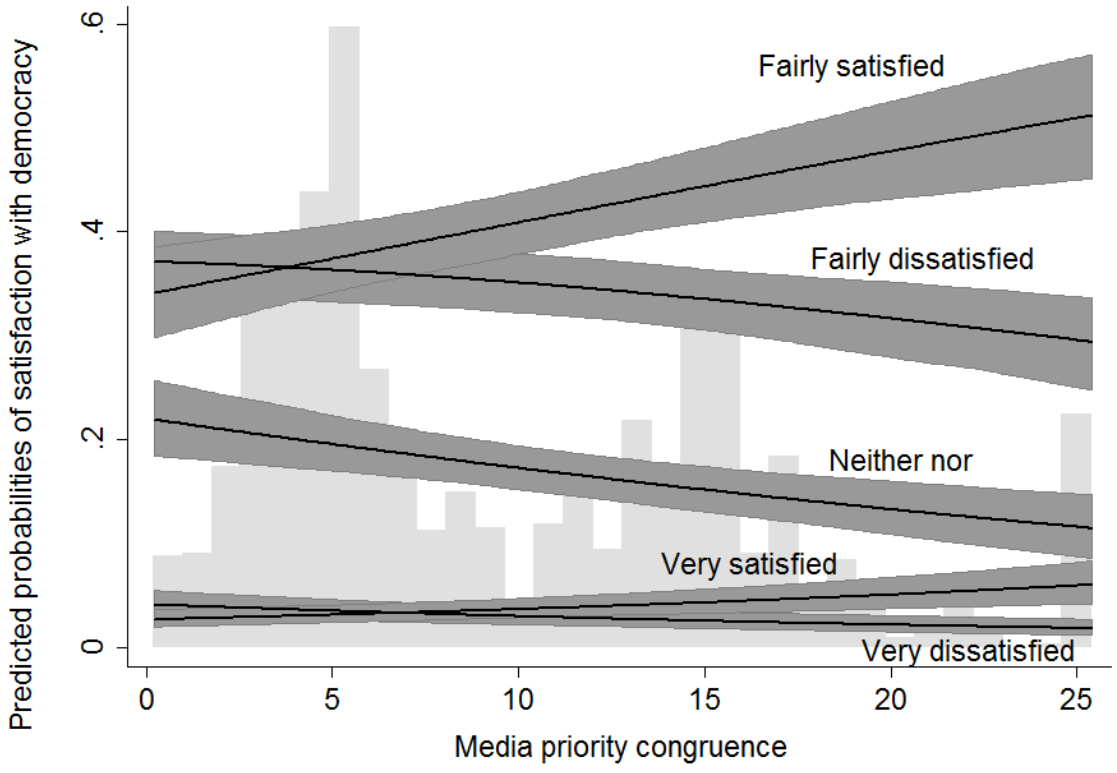


Figure 2.5. Predicted probabilities of satisfaction with democracy across media priority congruence

Notes: Probabilities are predicted from estimates of Model 1 (Table 2.1). 95% confidence intervals are shown in dark grey. Distribution of media priority congruence is shown in light grey. Covariates are held at their means.

Since the log-odds estimates in Table 2.1 do not tell us much about the nature and the relative strength of the effects of congruence on satisfaction, I present graphs of predicted probabilities. Figure 2.5 shows how the probabilities of being at the different satisfaction levels changes with increases in media priority congruence (the patterns look very similar for candidate congruence and are thus not plotted here). Generally, very few citizens are found at the extremes of the satisfaction scale – most are either fairly dissatisfied or fairly satisfied with democracy. Individuals whose policy priorities are not addressed at all in the news during the election are overall more likely to be dissatisfied than satisfied. This pattern changes with increasing congruence: the probabilities of dissatisfaction, as well as that of being neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, decline, while the probabilities of being fairly or very satisfied increase and eventually overtake those of dissatisfaction.

Comparing the Effects of the Priority Congruence Variables

Table 2.2 contains more detailed predicted probabilities that allow comparing the strength of the relationships of the different congruence variables with satisfaction. Since the distributions of media and candidate congruence differ quite a bit, I first calculate the predicted probabilities at one standard deviation below the mean of congruence. I also show the absolute and relative change in probabilities when moving up to a congruence level at one standard deviation above the mean (all control variables are held constant at their means) (cf. rows (1)-(5)). In addition, since the scales of collective and dyadic candidate congruence essentially have the same meaning (the percentage of one's issue priorities among candidates' issue mentions) but their distributions differ, I also show the predicted probabilities at one point on the 'raw' scales and the relative change when moving to another point (rows (6)-(8)).

Table 2.2. Predicted probabilities of satisfaction with democracy and changes in probabilities with changes in priority congruence

			Very dissatisfied	Fairly dissatisfied	Neither nor	Fairly satisfied	Very satisfied
(1)	Media priority congruence	1 std. dev. below mean	.037 (.005)	.203 (.015)	.370 (.015)	.360 (.018)	.029 (.004)
		First difference$_1$	-.013 (.004)	-.058 (.015)	-.037 (.010)	.093 (.023)	.016 (.004)
		% change	-35%	-29%	-10%	+26%	+55%
(2)	Collective candidate priority congruence	1 std. dev. below mean	.037 (.005)	.201 (.014)	.368 (.016)	.365 (.018)	.030 (.004)
		First difference$_1$	-.012 (.004)	-.053 (.014)	-.034 (.010)	.084 (.023)	.014 (.004)
		% change	-32%	-26%	-9%	+23%	+47%
(3)	Dyadic candidate priority congruence	1 std. dev. below mean	.037 (.006)	.195 (.017)	.358 (.017)	.376 (.020)	.035 (.005)
		First difference$_1$	-.016 (.004)	-.074 (.016)	-.060 (.013)	.123 (.025)	.027 (.006)
		% change	-43%	-38%	-17%	+33%	+77%
(4)	Media priority congruence (voters only)	1 std. dev. below mean	.035 (.006)	.189 (.016)	.354 (.018)	.386 (.020)	.037 (.006)
		First difference$_1$	-.014 (.004)	-.067 (.016)	-.056 (.013)	.112 (.025)	.025 (.006)
		% change	-40%	-35%	-16%	+29%	+68%
(5)	Collective candidate priority congruence (voters only)	1 std. dev. below mean	.034 (.006)	.186 (.015)	.353 (.018)	.390 (.021)	.038 (.005)
		First difference$_1$	-.013 (.004)	-.062 (.015)	-.052 (.013)	.104 (.024)	.024 (.006)
		% change	-38%	-33%	-15%	+27%	+63%
(6)	Collective candidate priority congruence	Congruence = 10	.036 (.005)	.200 (.014)	.364 (.015)	.371 (.017)	.031 (.004)
		First difference$_2$	-.012 (.004)	-.054 (.015)	-.037 (.011)	.087 (.025)	.016 (.005)
		% change	-33%	-27%	-10%	+23%	+52%
(7)	Dyadic candidate priority congruence	Congruence = 10	.035 (.006)	.187 (.015)	.354 (.017)	.388 (.019)	.037 (.006)
		First difference$_2$	-.015 (.004)	-.067 (.015)	-.060 (.013)	.114 (.025)	.027 (.006)
		% change	-43%	-36%	-17%	+29%	+73%
(8)	Collective candidate priority congruence (voters only)	Congruence = 10	.034 (.006)	.184 (.014)	.352 (.018)	.392 (.019)	.037 (.005)
		First difference$_2$	-.015 (.004)	-.068 (.016)	-.061 (.015)	.116 (.027)	.027 (.007)
		% change	-44%	-37%	-17%	+30%	+73%
(9)	Priority congruence with candidates from parties not voted for	Congruence = 10	.032 (.006)	.175 (.014)	.344 (.017)	.407 (.018)	.041 (.006)
		First difference$_2$	-.013 (.004)	-.063 (.016)	-.061 (.018)	.108 (.029)	.028 (.009)
		% change	-41%	-36%	-18%	+27%	+68%

$_1$ First differences are changes in predicted probabilities with a change from to 1 standard deviation below to 1 standard deviation above the mean of priority congruence.
$_2$ First differences are changes in predicted probabilities with a change from 10 to 25 on the priority congruence.
Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. All changes in predicted probabilities are significant at $p<.05$. Predicted probabilities are based on Models 1-3 with all control variables held constant at their means

In row (1), we see that a hypothetical individual with media congruence at one standard deviation below the mean has a probability of 4 per cent to be very dissatisfied with democracy and chance of 20 per cent to be fairly dissatisfied. Her probabilities of being neither satisfied nor dissatisfied or fairly satisfied are even higher, at 37 and 36 per cent, respectively. She is rather unlikely to be very satisfied, with a probability of 3 per cent. Looking at an individual with the same characteristics but a higher congruence level (1 std. dev. above mean), we see that the probabilities of being very or fairly dissatisfied decrease quite substantially, by 35 and 29 per cent, respectively, compared to the low congruence person. The chance of being neither satisfied nor dissatisfied declines by 10 per cent. The probabilities of being fairly or very satisfied, in turn, are 26 and 55 per cent higher at the higher congruence level, respectively. Similar patterns can be observed for collective (row (2)) and dyadic (row (3)) candidate congruence: The probabilities of being dissatisfied or neither satisfied nor dissatisfied decrease with increasing priority congruence, whereas the likelihood of being satisfied increases.

Comparing the probability changes in per cent when moving up two standard deviations on the three different congruence scales (rows (1) to (3)) suggests that media congruence has a slightly stronger effect on satisfaction than collective candidate congruence, whereas dyadic candidate congruence appears to have a much stronger effect than both media and collective candidate congruence. However, we need to keep in mind that only respondents who reported their vote choice in the federal elections have a dyadic congruence score, whereas the sample of the other two measures includes both voters and non-voters. It could thus simply be the case that congruence generally has a stronger effect among voters than among non-voters. And indeed, if we look at the effects of media and collective candidate congruence amongst voters only (rows (4) and (5)), we see that the percentage changes in predicted probabilities are larger than in the

sample that also includes non-voters. Still, even among voters dyadic candidate congruence appears to have a stronger effect on satisfaction with democracy than collective congruence.

However, we get a different picture if we compare the predicted probabilities at the same *absolute* levels of dyadic and collective congruence among voters (rows (7) and (8)). An increase in the salience of one's priorities among candidates from 10 to 25 per cent leads to the same changes in predicted probabilities of satisfaction, whether we look at the candidates of the supported party only or at the candidates of all parties. It thus seems that collective and dyadic priority congruence actually have similarly strong effects on democratic satisfaction.

The fact that dyadic and collective congruence are not only highly correlated but that their associations with satisfaction are also very similar raises the question whether the effect of collective congruence could be spurious, as the variable essentially includes dyadic congruence. Answering this question is difficult because we cannot include both variables in one model. Yet, we might be able to obtain a tentative answer by constructing a variable that measures how salient a respondent's issue priorities were amongst the candidates of the parties that she did *not* vote for.[11] When substituting this measure for the dyadic measure in Model 3 (Table 2.1), we find that the coefficient is positive and highly significant (see Table 2.3). In fact, as we see in row (9) in Table 2.2, the effect of this variable on satisfaction is almost equally strong as congruence with the supported parties, since the differences in predicted probabilities have similar magnitudes. This result provides additional support that it does matter for citizens'

[11] I say 'tentative' because this indicator is still highly correlated with dyadic congruence (Pearson's r=.77). We thus cannot include the variable in the same model as the dyadic congruence measure and, hence, not be absolutely certain that no spurious effect exists.

Table 2.3. Effects of priority congruence on satisfaction with democracy

	Log-odds (std. error)		p
Age	.01	(.00)	.053
Female	-.08	(.13)	.540
Education	-.03	(.05)	.526
Social class	.24	(.08)	.002
East	-.40	(.14)	.004
PID strength	.30	(.05)	.000
Winner	.66	(.12)	.000
Left-right distance	-.34	(.06)	.000
Economic situation	.47	(.10)	.000
Political interest	.14	(.08)	.059
Newspaper use	.04	(.02)	.050
TV news use	-.03	(.01)	.071
Congruence with parties not voted for	.04	(.01)	.000
Wald chi-square	235.63		.000
Pseudo R-squared	.09		
LR test	14.18		.000
N	1013		

Notes: Standard errors are robust since weight is employed to correct for oversampling in East Germany. The likelihood-ratio (LR) test compares the fit of each model to a model excluding priority congruence (samples not weighted).

satisfaction with democracy to what extent their policy priorities are addressed, not just by the party or parties that they voted for, but by political elites in general.

In addition, this finding offers further support for the argument that agreement on policy priorities matters, to some extent, independently from proximity on positions. For if the party for which one voted shares one's priorities, it is quite likely that it also shares one's positions on these issues. Dyadic priority congruence might thus in fact approximate agreement on both priorities *and* positions. This should be less the case with regard to parties for which one did not vote – for, as we saw in Figure 2.4, candidates' from very different parties often prioritise the same issues and they are unlikely to all take the same positions on them. Hence, it seems that political elites' emphasis on the issues that citizens consider important affects citizens' perception of

the way the democratic process is working above and beyond the degree to which their political views are represented.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to investigate whether citizens' satisfaction with democracy increases if political elites share and discuss their issue priorities. I found that, indeed, citizens appear to both notice and care about elites' policy agendas. They are more satisfied with democracy if party candidates share their issue priorities and if their concerns are salient in the news media during the election campaign. Since Germany, which was used as a case in the study, can be considered a typical Western democracy in terms of its citizens' political attitudes and their relationship with political elites, it is likely that the results can be extrapolated to other established democracies. Yet, further studies in other countries should nevertheless be conducted to confirm this suggestion.

This paper represents a first investigation of the link between priority congruence and satisfaction with democracy. It provides an extensive theoretical explanation for why agreement on priorities is different from agreement on policy and ideological positions and why it should play a distinct role in citizens' evaluations of democracy, supplementing the effect of policy and left-right proximity (Brandenburg and Johns 2013; Curini, Jou, and Memoli 2012; Ezrow and Xezonakis 2011; Kim 2009). It seems that citizens not only desire political elites to represent their views on particular issues but also to debate about and legislate on the issues that actually matter to the country at that point in time (Jones and Baumgartner 2004; Spoon and Klüver 2014). If politicians prioritise issues that citizens consider irrelevant, neglecting the important problems, citizens are likely to perceive the democratic process to be wanting.

That a lack of priority congruence decreases not only satisfaction with the specific elites who are currently running politics but also satisfaction with the functioning of democracy as a whole is important theoretically as well as substantively. It shows that specific political support is quite tightly linked to more diffuse support (Easton 1965, 1975; Norris 1999). Following this logic, dissatisfaction with the functioning of democracy– if not alleviated quickly – may lower more general support for the institutions and principles in place and thereby endanger the legitimacy and stability of democratic systems. In many advanced industrial democracies, political trust has already been declining for some time (Pharr and Putnam 2000; Pharr, Putnam, and Dalton 2000), and politicians and political scientists alike have been looking for solutions to this problem. As this study shows, elites making sure that their policy agenda reflects citizens' concerns can be a step towards sustaining a healthy level of democratic satisfaction and thus stability and effectiveness.

Whether this requires elites to be responsive to citizens' concerns was not a question this paper sought to answer. Previous research suggests that sometimes elites respond to citizens, sometimes citizens adopt elites' views, and sometimes citizens and elites react simultaneously to external events or actors (Behr and Iyengar 1985; Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996; Miller and Krosnick 2000). Priority congruence can thus have diverse origins. Whether they influence the relationship between congruence and satisfaction is an interesting question for future research.

What we can say at this point is that citizens whose concerns are addressed by elites tend to be more satisfied with their democratic system, and hence politicians and parties who seek to maintain or increase citizens' satisfaction should make sure that they are responsive to them. Alternatively, in cases where their agenda is not derived from public opinion or where placing citizens' concerns on the agenda is not feasible,

for instance because they fall outside of the competencies of the national government (Mair 2009; Pharr and Putnam 2000), they should invest effort into communicating the urgency of their issue priorities to those they (wish to) represent. For if they fail to do so, citizens may perceive political representatives as removed from the population, self-interested, and corrupt, and hence demand changes in the institutional set-up of their country.

The paper furthermore provides some insight into public preferences with regard to the 'locus' of priority congruence (Golder and Stramski 2010; Weissberg 1978). Apparently, Germans expect not only the parties they voted for in an election to share their policy concerns but also other parties and politicians. Interpreting this result as a sign that citizens hold preferences for both collective and dyadic congruence might be premature, however, since the high correlation between the collective and dyadic congruence measures prevented us from including them in the same model.

This high correlation is due to the fact that candidates from different parties agree to a substantial degree on what the most important issues are. This finding is at odds with 'selective emphasis' and issue ownership theories (Budge and Farlie 1983; Petrocik 1996; Petrocik, Benoit, and Hansen 2003/2004; Riker 1993), which predict that parties will focus on the issues on which they are rated as more competent than their competitors, resulting in 'each side steering its own course rather than engaging the other in discourse' (Sigelman and Buell 2004: 651). At the same time, a number of studies suggest that 'issue convergence' is in fact very common (Banda 2013; Damore 2005; Sigelman and Buell 2004). And it does makes sense that parties will not ignore problems that represents clear challenges to society, like the financial crisis in 2009, but rather 'ride the wave' (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1994) and try to win support by gaining ownership of these issues or by developing distinct positions on them.

Lastly, the paper provides support for using data from the media coverage of politics to measure the salience of issues in the political debate. For, even though the news media's emphasis on issues different quite a bit from candidates' agendas, citizens appear to evaluate the attention that their issue concerns receive in the debate by relying at least to some extent on the information they receive through the media. This result is extremely valuable because, in contrast to data on parties' and politicians' preferences, data on media coverage can be relatively easily accessed and collected on a daily basis, even retrospectively.

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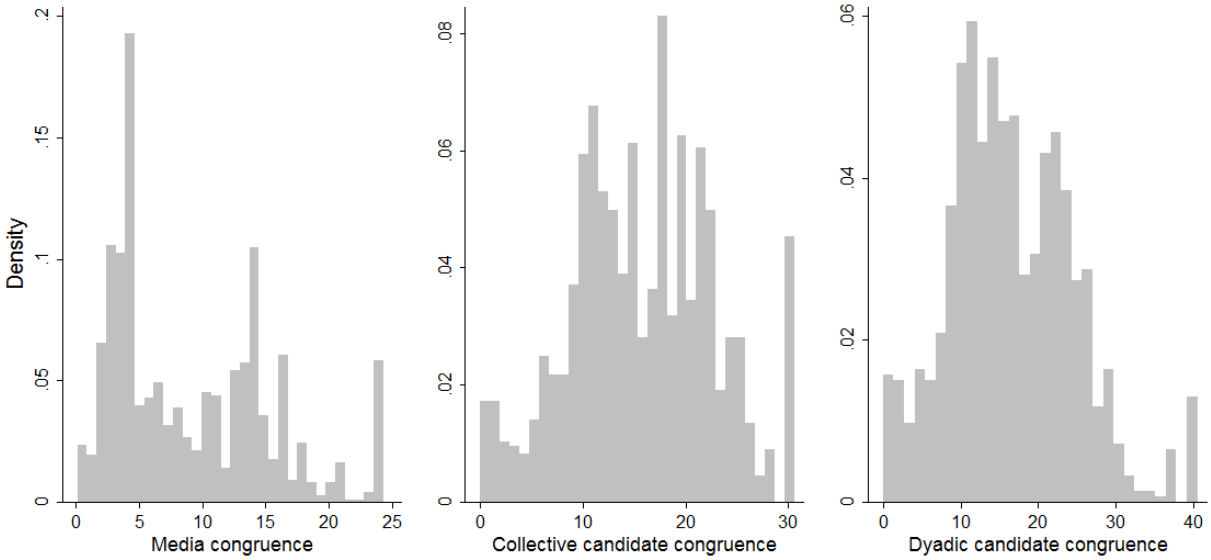
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APPENDIX 2.A. Distributions of the congruence measures



APPENDIX 2.B. Variable details

Label	Variable construction	Coding	Mean (std. dev.)
Satisfaction with democracy	On the whole, how satisfied or not are you with the way democracy works in Germany? Are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither/nor, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied?	1 = Very dissatisfied 2 = Quite dissatisfied 3 = Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied 4 = Quite satisfied 5 = Very satisfied	3.10 (1.03)
Age		Age in years (16-94)	50.17 (18.31)
Sex		0 = male, 1 = female	.53 (.50)
Education	"What general school leaving certificate do you have?"	1 = no degree 2 = secondary modern school 3 = intermediate school certificate 4 = National Vocational Qualification 5 = *Abitur* (highest secondary school degree) 6 = tertiary education	3.09 (1.36)
Subjective social class	"There is a lot of talk about social class these days. Which of these social classes do you consider you belong to?"	1 = underclass 2 = working class 3 = lower middle class 4 = middle class 5 = upper middle/upper class	2.99 (.99)
East	Place of residency	0 = West Germany 1 = East Germany, incl. Berlin	.35 (.48)
Strength of party identification	"Do you usually think of yourself as close to any particular party?"; if yes: "how strongly or weakly are you inclined to support this party […]?" (categories "very weak" and "quite weak" are combined)	1 = no ID 2 = very or quite weak 3 = moderate 4 = quite strong 5 = very strong	2.52 (1.41)
Winner	"Voted for winning party" if respondent reported to have voted for CDU/CSU or FDP with either first or second vote or reported that would have done so in the case of respondents not eligible to vote	0 = did not vote for winning party 1 = voted for winning party	.38 (.48)
Left-right distance	Distance between a respondent's own position on the left-right scale (1= left, 11 = right) and mean of the positions at which he or she places the five major parties.	0 = no distance … 10 = largest distance	1.71 (1.31)
Evaluation of the current economic situation	"Now we come to the economic situation in Germany. How in general terms would you rate the current economic situation in Germany?" (original five-point scale collapsed)	1 = bad 2 = neither good nor bad 3 = good	1.47 (.61)
Political interest	"How interested in politics are you?"	1 = not interested at all 2 = not very interested 3 = middling 4 = quite interested 5 = very interested	2.71 (1.03)
Newspaper use	Number of days per week on which a respondent reads a newspaper, additive	Number of days per week (range: 0-24)	4.55 (3.56)
TV news use	Number of days per week on which a respondent watches a TV news program, additive	Number of days per week (range: 0-28)	8.36 (4.84)

CHAPTER 3

Political Sophistication and the Effects of Policy Congruence on Satisfaction with Democracy[12]

Abstract

Previous research suggests that citizens' satisfaction with democracy depends on the representation of their policy preferences. This study proposes that the effects of different aspects of policy representation may vary with political sophistication. Since their expectations towards the representation process have been found to be different, more politically involved and cognitively mobilised individuals may find it less important that elites reflect their priorities. At the same time, evaluating congruence on the left-right dimension might be too demanding for the less politically sophisticated. The findings show that priority congruence indeed only influences satisfaction among the less politically sophisticated while ideological proximity has a universal effect, contradicting the notion that thinking in terms of left-right is highly complex.

[12] The following sections in this chapter partly repeat content included in previous parts of this thesis: 'Policy Representation and Satisfaction with Democracy' (pp80-81), 'How Ideological and Priority Congruence Differ' (pp 81-82), and 'Measuring Priority Congruence' (pp 92-94).

Introduction

Democratic legitimacy is considered crucial for the stability and sustenance of democracy (Almond and Verba 1963; Dalton 2004; Norris 1999). Scholars are thus interested in how satisfied citizens are with the functioning of democracy in their countries and what the sources of their satisfaction or dissatisfaction, which could threaten the system's legitimacy, are. Since political representation is one of the pillars of representative democratic systems, it is generally assumed that citizens are more satisfied with democracy if they feel that their policy preferences are adequately represented (Aarts and Thomassen 2008; Dennis and Owen 2011). Empirical evidence confirms that, indeed, citizens tend to be more satisfied with how democracy works when political actors' ideological positions are more proximate to their own (Brandenburg and Johns 2013; Curini, Jou, and Memoli 2012; Ezrow and Xezonakis 2011; Kim 2009).

Yet, citizens might expect more from the representation process than agreement with elites on fundamental political views. They probably also desire that political elites direct their attention to the issues they are concerned about, as it is unlikely that these issues will be addressed by policy if they are not on elites' agendas (Jones and Baumgartner 2004; Spoon and Klüver 2014). Agreement between citizens and elites on policy priorities should thus be an important indicator of the quality of policy representation, in addition to proximity on ideological and policy dimensions (Bevan and Jennings 2014; Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996; Hobolt and Klemmensen 2005, 2008; Jennings and John 2009; Jones and Baumgartner 2004; Laver and Garry 2000; Lindeboom 2012; Pennings 2005; Spoon and Klüver 2014). Accordingly, the extent to which elites share citizens' policy priorities may also influence citizens' satisfaction with the functioning of democracy. Testing the hypothesis that priority congruence and

left-right distance influence democratic satisfaction independently from each other is the first aim of this study.

The second goal is to examine whether the degree to which these two forms of citizen-elite agreement influence democratic satisfaction varies across citizens. Such variation might be linked to how demanding individuals are towards elites, to their normative views of the representation process, and to their motivation and ability to evaluate the quality of left-right agreement and priority congruence. Previous research on representation preferences and on attitude-formation processes suggests that all three sources of variation may be linked to political sophistication.

After discussing in detail whether and how political sophistication might moderate the effects of priority congruence and left-right distance on democratic satisfaction, I test the resulting hypotheses with voter and candidate survey as well as media content data from the 2009 German Longitudinal Election Study. The results confirm that less politically sophisticated citizens tend to be more satisfied with democracy when their issue priorities are emphasised in the political debate, while no such effect is found amongst the more educated and politically involved. Meanwhile, distance to political parties on the left-right dimension has equally strong effects on satisfaction with democracy among individuals at all political sophistication levels. The claim that evaluating parties' ideology demands extremely high levels of cognitive effort and resources (e.g. Campbell et al. 1960; Converse 1964; Goren 1997) is thus not corroborated in the context of democratic satisfaction.

This study thus expands the list of factors that are known to influence citizens' regime attitudes by showing that not only congruence in policy positions but also agreement on policy priorities matters for democratic satisfaction. It moreover contributes to our knowledge of heterogeneity in political attitude-formation and

decision-making processes. Only few studies have investigated how and why different individuals use different criteria to judge the functioning of democracy (Dahlberg, Linde, and Holmberg 2013; Hobolt 2012; Karp, Banducci, and Bowler 2003; Rohrschneider and Loveless 2010). This study corroborates their conclusion that such variation does exist, which means that the legitimacy of democratic systems depends on different factors amongst different sections of the citizenry.

The article proceeds as follows: I start by explaining how left-right and issue priority congruence relate to democracy and to one another. I then discuss why their effects on democratic satisfaction should vary with political sophistication. In the subsequent empirical part I explain how the measures are constructed before testing the hypotheses. The last section concludes and provides directions for further research.

Policy Representation and Satisfaction with Democracy

Satisfaction with democracy is an evaluative attitude towards democracy. Rather than support for the idea and the principles of democracy, it expresses individuals' evaluation of the functioning of democracy (Easton 1965, 1975; Linde and Ekman 2003; Norris 1999). Since defining what makes a political system democratic requires the inclusion of a number of criteria, it is reasonable to assume that individuals will take a number of aspects into account when judging the quality of their democratic system. Satisfaction with democracy can thus be understood as an aggregation of evaluations, each of which can be conceptualised as a comparison of the perceived state of an aspect with democracy with one's expectations towards it (Fuchs, Guidorossi, and Svensson 1995; Norris 2011: 77; Thomassen 1995).

One of the key elements of representative democracy is the representation of citizens' policy preferences by political elites (Pitkin 1967). The quality of

representation is thus generally assumed to be an important factor in citizens' evaluations of democracy (Aarts and Thomassen 2008; Dennis and Owen 2011; Miller 1974; Muller 1970). Indeed, a number of studies show that citizens' proximity to elites on the left-right dimension is associated with higher satisfaction levels (Brandenburg and Johns 2013; Curini, Jou, and Memoli 2012; Ezrow and Xezonakis 2011; Kim 2009). This study expands this literature in two ways. First, in addition to the most commonly used indicator of representation – left-right proximity (e.g. Golder and Stramski 2010; McDonald and Budge 2005; Powell 2004; Rosema, Denters, and Aarts 2011) – it looks at congruence between citizens' and elites' policy priorities. Second, it investigates variation across individuals in the influence of left-right and priority congruence on democratic satisfaction.

How Ideological and Priority Congruence Differ

In order for a comparison of left-right proximity and priority congruence to be justified, we need to establish that they tap distinct aspects of policy representation. Left-right positions express deep-seated and general societal and political values, which tend to be fairly stable. They traditionally characterise political parties and link them to their supporters. Consequently, ideological shifts can entail losses in credibility and supporters for parties. Since ideology strongly influences positions on more specific policy issues, these positions tend to be similarly constrained (Adams 2012; Budge 1994; Downs 1957; Mayer 2013; Tavits 2007).

Policy priorities and agendas have a different purpose and meaning. While they can be reflective of fundamental values, they also indicate which issues and problems parties and citizens consider most urgent at a certain point in time. They are thus much more volatile than policy positions. Parties could, for instance, shift their attention away

from nuclear energy to a debate about health care without shifting their beliefs regarding both issues. The exception is cases where different valence issues (i.e., issues where attention generally implies a particular policy aim) are incompatible and involve trade-offs, such as energy prices and pollution (Green 2007; Petrocik 1996; Stokes 1963). With respect to most other issues, however, elites and citizens can change their attention much more easily than their positions. And they should do so more frequently in order to respond to events, public opinion, and competitors' agendas.

If citizens share parties' policy priorities, it thus means that they agree on what the currently most important policy issues are. It does not necessarily mean that they agree on what should be done about these issues. Vice versa, holding the same views in terms of left-right or on specific policy positions does not imply agreement on which issues should dominate the political debate and the policy-making process. One type of agreement can occur independently from the other, and both should influence citizens' satisfaction with democracy. For if political elites share a person's fundamental political views or her specific issue opinions, she should feel that the democratic process works as it selects elites that represent her preferences. If elites emphasise her concerns, it signals to her that the democratic process incentivises elites to pay attention to the issues that are important to the public.

Differences in Expectations towards Political Representatives

While it is reasonable to assume that many citizens will desire elites who both agree with their political ideology and pay attention to the issues that they consider most important, the extent to which their evaluations of democracy are influenced by these factors may vary. The first potential causes for variation are differences in representation preferences. Substantive policy representation can be understood as the

reflection and promotion of citizens' policy preferences or interests by political elites' with the aim of implementing them into policy (Pitkin 1967; Soroka and Wlezien 2010). Yet, how closely and in what ways elites' preferences should resemble citizens' may be subject to disagreement. Different normative views as well as different understandings of how the political process works may entail different expectations.

As for left-right congruence, I hypothesise that all citizens expect from democracy that there are some political elites who are close to their own ideological position, since otherwise they have little opportunity to vote for representatives who share their political views. Meanwhile, the extent to which citizens expect from democracy that elites always prioritise the same issues that they do may differ between people, for reasons I explain below.

First, whether one expects close agreement between elites' and citizens' policy agendas should depend on one's preferred 'style' of representation (Doherty 2012). The main disagreement in this context is captured by the mandate-independence controversy.[13] On the one side is the 'delegate model', according to which it is representatives' task to carry out the mandate they are given when elected, meaning to implement their constituents' preferences (Pitkin 1967). This view can also entail that representatives should pay close attention to changes in public opinion while in office and swiftly respond to it by adapting their policy aims and agendas. Individuals who prefer representatives to be delegates are likely to expect that they prioritise the issues that citizens consider to be most important.

Although originally referring to individual representatives, the delegate model can easily be applied to parties when they are the main actors in the agenda- and policy-

[13] The mandate-independence controversy is both about the 'style' and the 'locus' of representation, i.e., whether representative act in the interest of those who elect them, for instance their local constituents or their parties' voters, as in the delegate model, or of the country at large (in the trustee model) (Pitkin 1967). However, the focus of this discussion is on the style rather than the locus.

making processes. In fact, the most influential model of representation in party democracies – the Responsible Party Model – is based on the mandate approach (Pierce 1999). The idea is that citizens elect parties based on their policy programmes, which they are expected to follow when in parliament and government, which they often do (Budge and Hofferbert 1990; Hofferbert and Budge 1992; Hofferbert and Klingemann 1990).

The Responsible Party Model's emphasis on parties' duty to stick to the agenda based on which they were elected means that agenda congruence is an indicator of functioning representation around election time. Thereafter, however, if citizens change their priorities, a lack of congruence does not necessarily mean that parties are not fulfilling their representational role, because they might be fulfilling their mandate. According to this view, priority congruence is thus not necessarily an indicator of a functioning representation process, at least between elections. Yet, since I will use data collected around election time, citizens who subscribe to the Responsible Party Model are likely to expect elites to share their policy priorities.

On the other side of representation controversy is the 'trustee model', which emphasises representatives' independence from public opinion. Amongst others, Burke (in the United Kingdom) and Madison (in the United States) advocated that elites should be elected based on constituents' trust in their intentions and their abilities to do what is best for society (Burke 1852; Eulau et al. 1959; Manin 1997; Pitkin 1967). The view assumes that political elites have a better understanding of the common good than ordinary citizens.

Citizens who subscribe to this view are likely to accept that elites follow their own judgment in determining the policy agenda. Consequently, the extent to which elites share their policy priorities should not greatly influence their perceptions of the

quality of representation and democracy. At the same time, they probably do expect that elites share their fundamental views about what constitutes a good society, and hence their left-right positions.

In contemporary democracies, where elites' and parties' policy programmes are at the centre of election campaigns and where citizens possess the means to get informed about policy issues, at least to a certain degree, the trustee model in the strict sense might seem outdated. However, much of what we observe in electoral politics today does in fact not diverge too far from it (Thomassen and van Ham 2014). Take Germany over the past years: Angela Merkel's success in 2009 and 2013 can to a considerable degree be attributed to voters' trust in her ability to lead and to make the right judgments, particularly in times of economic crisis (Schön 2011). The rationale for such behaviour on the side of voters may be that they themselves do not feel equipped or motivated to determine the optimal direction for policy.

A similar rationale may prompt voters to reward or punish representatives *ex post* through retrospective voting at the next election, based on their performance in parliament and government, rather than selecting representatives based on their prospective policy agendas (Andeweg and Thomassen 2005; Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996; Mansbridge 2003). These citizens might judge the quality of the representation process based on whether they feel that political elites improved the welfare of the country or by the extent to which the system allows voters to punish parties, for instance by ensuring clarity of responsibility (Aarts and Thomassen 2008; Powell and Whitten 1993). The degree to which elites share their perceptions of what the most important problems facing the country are may play a more minor role for them.

While not a great amount of evidence exists on what determines citizens' views on these different models of representation, recent research by Carman (2006, 2007) and

Bengtsson and Wass (2011) offers some valuable insights. Their findings suggests that more politically sophisticated and cognitively mobilised individuals in the UK, the US, and Finland are more likely than less knowledgeable and politically interested individuals to prefer representatives to do what they think is best as opposed to what voters want. These results can be interpreted as evidence that more politically sophisticated citizens tend to be proponents of the trustee model whereas less politically interested and knowledgeable individuals prefer representatives as delegates. But, as the authors of these studies acknowledge, there are other reasons besides differences in normative views on representation that might explain the results.

More educated citizens may have more trust in politicians and their good intentions, whereas the less politically knowledgeable may prefer to keep them on a tight leash. Furthermore, more politically involved individuals may be more aware of the complexities and constraints involved in the political decision-making process which often make it difficult for legislators to follow public opinion and focus on the issues that trouble citizens (Carman 2007: 7). These constraints include the need to compromise, particularly in multiparty systems with coalition governments, as well as the demand to act responsibly. Political responsibility encompasses consistency in the sense of honouring the promises made at election time (as prescribed by the Responsible Party Model), but also continuing previous governments' efforts as well as adhering to the guidelines and obligations set by external institutions and agencies, such as the European Union (Bardi, Bartolini, and Trechsel 2014; Laffan 2014; Mair 2009; Rose 2014). It may also refer to pursuing actions that are thought to be best for society despite public opposition (cf. Manin, Przeworski, and Stokes 1999).

When the aims of acting responsibly and of being responsive to citizens' demands prescribe different lines of actions, tensions are unavoidable and policy

congruence with citizens may need to be sacrificed (Bardi, Bartolini, and Trechsel 2014; Mair 2009). The more a person knows about these difficulties and appreciates the importance and necessity of responsible behaviour, the more likely she may be to lower her expectations with regard to citizen-elite agreement on policy priorities.

Anderson and Goodyear-Grant suggest another reason for why more politically knowledgeable citizens may prefer representatives-as-trustees: they 'may believe that a sizeable plurality of citizens are not informationally equipped to direct the behaviour of elected representatives' (2005: 1037). Contrary to their expectation, they find that that in Canada political knowledge actually increases support for the delegate model, yet this result might be due to their use of a problematic indicator.[14] Finally, it may be the case that more politically aware citizens differentiate more carefully between different objects of political support. They may thus be more hesitant to make the political system responsible for the failures of a particular set of political elites, particularly if they believe that these elites may be replaced by better ones. Incongruence in priorities might need to be sustained over a long period of time to affect their satisfaction with the democratic system.

In conclusion, whether due to their normative views on representation or to a greater understanding of the realities of the political process, we have reasons to expect that more politically sophisticated individuals may be less inclined to see a lack of elite attention to their priorities as a reason to be dissatisfied with democracy. Meanwhile, as I pointed out earlier, even those who are most aware of the difficulties and drawbacks in

[14] They interpret survey respondents' prioritising of representatives' 'looking after the interests of their riding' as support for the delegate model vs. the trustee model when ranking this item based on its importance relative to 'helping constituents deal with government red tape', 'taking an active role in shaping public policy', and 'informing their constituents about government policy'. This is problematic not only because the other items do not represent alternative models of representation but also because 'looking after the interests of their riding' could also be interpreted as the representative doing whatever he or she thinks is in the best interest of his or her constituents without consulting them, which would be more similar to the trustee model.

following public opinion should nevertheless desire elites to agree with their general political views as expressed in terms of left and right, as this means that the overall direction of policy-making will roughly be in line with their fundamental values.

The Cognitive Complexity of Evaluating Left-right and Priority Congruence

Different ideas about how the representation process ought to work are one potential cause for variation in the effects of left-right and priority congruence on satisfaction with democracy. Variation in the motivation and ability to perform complex cognitive processes is another potential factor, which is again related to political sophistication. Attitude Accessibility Theory suggests that, when forming opinions or evaluations, individuals rely on the attitudes that are most easily retrievable from memory (Fazio 1986, 1989; Fazio et al. 1982; Fazio and Williams 1986; Iyengar and Kinder 1987; Krosnick 1988, 1989). Accessibility increases if the attitude object is frequently thought about and discussed, which is often the case if it is important to the individual (Aldrich, Sullivan, and Borgida 1989; Fazio 1989; Fazio and Williams 1986; Goren 1997; Krosnick 1988, 1989).

The argument presented above, that differences in the perceived importance of priority congruence should influence the strength of its effect on satisfaction, is thus backed by psychological evidence. However, the accessibility of attitudes depends not only on their perceived relevance but also on the amount of knowledge and effort it takes to form them. If the effort is too high, individuals may take cognitive short-cuts by relying on criteria that may be considered less important but are easier to access and evaluate.

The use of cognitive short-cuts or heuristics has attracted much attention in the field of political behaviour (Campbell et al. 1960; Lau and Redlawsk 2001; Popkin

1991; Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock 1991). The relevance of knowledge of and interest in politics and of general cognitive skills in this context is evident: individuals who are able and motivated to process higher amounts of more complex information are less likely to resort to simple heuristics (Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock 1991). In the context of this study, this implies that more politically sophisticated individuals are more likely to take information-rich indicators into account when evaluating democracy. Less educated and politically engaged citizen, on the other hand, should base their judgment on cues that are easier to process, even if it means ignoring certain aspects they consider important for democracy. Hobolt's (2012) and Karp, Banducci and Bowler's (2003) findings that citizens who know less about the EU are more likely to judge its functioning based on more accessible evaluations of national politics illustrate the use of heuristics in a similar context.

What does this mean for the use of left-right proximity and priority congruence as bases for evaluating the quality of democracy? Evaluating how elites' ideological positions compare to one's own is generally assumed to be fairly complex. It involves determining one's own ideological position, estimating elites' positions, and relating them to each other (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996: 262). It necessitates pre-existing knowledge of what left and right mean, sufficient cognitive capacities to handle large amounts of information and integrate it, and a high level of motivation to invest the time and effort to retrieve and process this information (Campbell et al. 1960: 255).

Accordingly, studies show that ideological (left-right) voting is more prevalent among more educated (Pattie and Johnston 2001), more politically knowledgeable (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996: 254-258), and more politically sophisticated voters (Campbell et al. 1960; Knight 1985; Leiter 2012). Meanwhile, less politically sophisticated voters often use easier heuristics such as candidate's personal

characteristics, party identification, economic evaluations, and social group membership instead (Campbell et al. 1960; Knight 1985; Roy 2011).

Similarly, when judging the quality of representation, Muller (1970) contends, citizens with higher levels of political sophistication base their perception of the quality of representation on 'instrumental stimuli' which 'could be tested concretely against reality' (1970: 1154), such as the proximity between policy demands and outputs. Less politically knowledgeable and interested individuals rely on more subjective and general opinions about representatives ('expressive stimuli') or even 'extraneous stimuli', which are essentially unreflective evaluations void of any political content. Thus, even though less politically sophisticated citizens may consider political representation a key aspect of democracy, they may rely on simpler heuristic rather than evaluate left-right congruence (cf. Rohrschneider 2005). Combining this consideration with the expectation that politically more and less sophisticated individuals are equally likely to desire that political elites share their fundamental political views yields the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: *The relationship between left-right congruence and satisfaction with democracy will be weaker amongst less politically sophisticated citizens.*

What about evaluating congruence in issue priorities – is it similarly demanding in terms of cognitive effort and resources? Evidence shows that more educated (Macdonald, Rabinowitz, and Listhaug 1995; Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock 1991: 170-172), more politically interested (Macdonald, Rabinowitz, and Listhaug 1995), and more politically knowledgeable or sophisticated (Andersen, Heath, and Sinnott 2002; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Goren 1997; Nicholson, Pantoja, and Segura 2006)

voters are more strongly influenced in their vote choice by how well parties or candidates represent their views on specific policy issues.

However, these studies focus on issue positions, which should be much more difficult to evaluate than issue priorities (Aldrich and Alvarez 1994: 312), since the latter requires awareness of what parties and candidates talk about but not of what precisely they say about the issues. Less politically sophisticated citizens might thus in fact not be disadvantaged when it comes to evaluating priority congruence. In combination with the expectation that more politically involved individuals should place less weight on priority congruence, these considerations suggest the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: *The relationship between priority congruence and satisfaction with democracy will be weaker amongst more politically sophisticated citizens.*

Data and Method

I use data from the 2009 German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES) to test the hypotheses. The main reason for the case choice is the fact that the GLES includes data on a larger number of voters' and candidates' policy priorities than comparable surveys and provides data on the media coverage of issues during the election campaign. It thus allows constructing a relatively detailed and precise measure of priority congruence between voters and political elites. Moreover, Germany is an important European country that shares many political, social, and economic characteristics with other Western democracies. The results may thus be indicative for other European democracies as well.

Measuring Priority Congruence

Priority congruence essentially measures the salience of a respondent's policy concerns amongst candidates and the media. In a first step, the salience of each issue category is measured amongst candidates and the news media (cf. Table 3.1). In a second step, these salience scores are assigned to respondents to measure their priority congruence.

I use the candidate survey of the GLES to measure each issue category's salience among candidates (Rattinger, Roßteutscher, Schmitt-Beck, Weßels, et al. 2012). It was conducted after the election via online and postal questionnaires among candidates of the five major political parties, the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU), the Social Democrats (SPD), the Liberals (FDP), the Greens, and the Left. The sample of 790 candidates includes both direct and list candidates. Each candidate was asked 'What are in your opinion the three most important problems with which Germany is

Table 3.1. Issue categories and their salience among citizens, candidates, and the news media

	Citizens	Candidates	Newspapers	Television news
Labour market	32.78	16.74	6.12	4.26
Economy	23.02	27.64	26.49	24.31
Distributional justice	6.55	13.32	.31	.12
Financial policy	6.55	9.94	8.15	4.03
Health care	6.08	2.68	3.74	5.53
Education	5.18	8.33	1.56	1.04
Elderly care	3.87	.69	2.65	2.19
Family	3.50	.65	1.76	1.73
Domestic security	3.47	1.16	5.98	16.47
Military and defence	2.01	2.89	11.89	10.14
Immigration	1.96	.69	.66	.46
Environment	1.90	11.38	.66	.23
Foreign affairs	1.17	.60	17.23	16.24
Energy	.89	3.08	9.36	8.41
East Germany	.70	.00	.89	1.84
Equality	.15	.09	.74	.00
Traffic	.13	.02	.84	2.19
Housing	.06	.00	.00	.00
Culture and leisure	.03	.09	.40	.35
Internet	.00	.00	.58	.46

confronted at the moment?' and up to three issue categories referred to in each of the three replies are included in the data. The salience of each issue category is measured by the relative frequency with which it was mentioned, whereby I give most important problems three times as much and second-most important problems twice as much weight as third-most important problems. Respondents' congruence with the candidates of each party was measured separately and combined into a weighted average based on each party's vote share in the election.

Since the news media is one of the most important sources from which citizens obtain their information about the political debate (Kriesi 2007), I also include a measure of priority congruence with the news media. An issue's salience in the TV news is its relative frequency in news items in the context of German politics on one of the four major German TV channels (*ARD/Das Erste*, *ZDF*, *RTL*, and *Sat.1*) during the ten weeks leading up to the election, which is recorded in the GLES TV media content analysis (Rattinger, Roßteutscher, Schmitt-Beck, and Weßels 2012). Likewise, an issue's salience in the print news media is calculated based on the relative frequency with which it was addressed on the front pages of the six major nationwide daily newspapers (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *DIE WELT*, *BILD*, *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, and *die tageszeitung*) from June until September 2009, when the election took place, weighted by whether the issue was a major or minor issue in the article (the latter weighing half) (Rattinger, Rossdeutscher, et al. 2012).

The salience scores are then used to calculate each respondent's priority congruence. The GLES' post-election cross-section survey (Rattinger et al. 2011) asked what respondents thought were the most, second most, and third most important issues facing Germany at the moment. Within each reply up to five issue categories were identified, allowing for up to fifteen issues per respondent to be included in the data. I

determine how salient each respondent's priorities were among candidates and in the TV and print news, respectively. If a respondent mentioned multiple issues within one response, their salience scores were averaged. The three resulting salience scores for the most, second most and third most important issues were then combined into a weighted average for each respondent, where the most important problem counts three times and the second-most important problem twice as much as the third most important one. The two resulting media priority congruence variables – TV congruence and print media congruence – were summarized into one indicator by averaging respondents' values on them, since they are highly correlated (Pearson's r=.97, p<.0005) and their effects are very similar across the models tested in this study.

Table 3.1 lists the salience of each issue category amongst citizens, candidates, and the media. If, for instance, a respondent mentions unemployment – a labour market issue – as most important, environmental protection as second most important, and health care for the elderly as the third most important issue, her candidate congruence score will be ((3*16.74) + (2*11.38) + (1*(2.68 + .69)/2))/6 = 12.44, based on these issues' salience scores among candidates. This means that about 12 per cent of the candidate issue agenda addresses the respondent's concerns.

Measuring Ideological Distance

Amongst the range of studies that measure policy representation through a measure of congruence in policy positions between political elites and citizens, no agreement exists on how the indicator is most appropriately constructed. Many scholars measure the distance between a respondent's left-right position and the position at which he or she places the parties or candidates. Relying on respondents' perceived party positions has the advantage that is likely to be a valid measure of respondents' perceived distance to

parties, which is what should affect their attitudes and behaviour after all (Blais et al. 2001; Kedar 2005: 191).

However, this subjective measure bears the risk of a 'projection' or 'rationalization' bias: citizens may place parties closer to them if – for whichever reason – they are happy with them and further away if they dislike them (Grand and Tiemann 2013; Kedar 2005: 191; Leiter 2012; Macdonald, Rabinowitz, and Listhaug 1998: 672; Powell 2009). If a similar bias exists with respect to satisfaction with democracy, meaning that satisfied (dissatisfied) respondents place parties closer to (further away from) their own position in order to rationalise their satisfaction and decrease cognitive dissonance, we might overestimate the relationship between left-right congruence and democratic satisfaction.

While I decided to nevertheless use the distance between respondents' positions and the mean of the positions at which they place the five major parties, since evidence suggests that voters react to perceived changes in party positions but not actual left-right shifts (Adams, Ezrow, and Somer-Topcu 2011), I discuss alternative measures in the robustness checks section, just before the conclusion, and report how the choice of variable affects the results.

Measuring Political Sophistication

Political sophistication is a fairly complex concept that comprises factual knowledge about politics and the political process, an interest in political affairs and concepts, and the ability to understand, link, organise, and conceptualise pieces of political information. Most scholars measure it using one or a combination of indicators of political knowledge (Andersen, Heath, and Sinnott 2002; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996), political interest, and education (e.g. Pattie and Johnston 2001; Sniderman,

Brody, and Tetlock 1991). I include all three variables and, rather than creating a composite index, estimate their effects separately in order to avoid overlooking potential variations in their influences on the relationship with congruence and satisfaction.

Education, indicating a person's ability to absorb new information and link it to more abstract concepts, such as left-right political ideology (Hetherington 2001: 628), is measured as the highest qualification obtained. In the German education system, the qualification level is related to the type of secondary school and the length of education. The variable is an ordinal measure with four levels: (1) no qualification or *Hauptschule* (nine years, the least academic), (2) *Realschule/Mittlere Reife* (ten years), (3) *Fachhochschulreife* or *Abitur* (12 or 13 years, qualifying for tertiary education), and (4) university.

Political interest is measured on a five-point scale by the response to the question 'How interested in politics are you? Would you say you are very interested, quite interested, neither nor, not very interested or not interested at all?' Finally, *political knowledge* is measured by a four-point index indicating how many correct replies a respondent gave to three questions asking (1) at which elections EU citizens who are not German citizens can vote in Germany (correct answer: local elections), (2) what percentage of the national vote a political party must receive in order to be represented in the Bundestag (correct answer: 5 per cent), and (3) whether the first or the second vote in a federal election determines the number of seats a party wins in the Bundestag (correct answer: the second vote).[15]

[15] An alternative variable that has been used to measure political sophistication, indicating whether respondents correctly placed the CDU and the SPD relative to each other on several policy dimensions, was judged to be less valid as a measure of objective political knowledge based on how it correlates with other variables.

Measuring Satisfaction with Democracy and the Covariates

The dependent variable, *satisfaction with democracy*, is measured on a five-level scale based on the survey item 'On the whole, how satisfied or not are you with the way democracy works in Germany? Are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied?'

In addition to the main independent variables of interest, I include a number of control variables that may also affect satisfaction with democracy. The socio-demographic indicators include *age*, sex (*female*), a measure of *subjective social class*, and an indicator for living in *East* Germany, since divergent political trajectories and socio-economic experiences in the two parts of the country may cause differences in democratic satisfaction. I exclude income because of a high number of missing values.

I furthermore control for a set of variables related to political representation that have been shown to affect satisfaction with democracy. Since '[p]eople who identify strongly with a party tend to be much more supportive of the idea that the political system functions properly than people without strong party attachment' (Anderson et al. 2005: 76; Miller and Listhaug 1990), I control for whether a respondent identifies with a party (*PID dummy*). I also include a *winner* dummy indicating whether a respondent reported to have voted for the CDU/CSU or the FDP, which were expected to form the government coalition immediately after the election (Anderson et al. 2005).

The evaluation of the current *economic situation*, measured on a three-point scale from bad to good, has been found to be a particularly strong predictor of satisfaction with democracy in previous studies (Borre 2000; Dalton 2004). Since the performance of specific elites may influence perceptions of system performance, I also include a rating of the *performance of the government*. Finally, I control for *newspaper use*, measured in cumulative days per week on which a respondent reads one or more

newspapers, in order to avoid overestimating the effect of political interest, which may be correlated with it. Information on all variables' distributions can be found in Appendix 3.

Results

I first estimate the influence of left-right distance and priority congruence on satisfaction with democracy using ordinal logistic regression, not yet accounting for potential variation in the effects across respondents. The results in Table 3.2 suggest that, as expected, citizens whose policy priorities were shared by party candidates tend to be more satisfied with democracy (Model 1-1). The same is the case for citizens whose concerns were salient in the media during the election campaign (Model 1-2). In both models, proximity to the party mean on the left-right dimension significantly

Table 3.2. Effects of left-right distance and priority congruence on satisfaction with democracy

	Model 1-1: Candidates			Model 1-2: Media		
	Coeff.	SE	p	Coeff.	SE	p
Age	.01	(.00)	.026	.01	(.00)	.044
Sex (female)	-.04	(.12)	.754	-.04	(.12)	.760
Social class	.19	(.07)	.013	.17	(.07)	.019
East Germany	-.55	(.13)	.000	-.55	(.13)	.000
PID dummy	.50	(.14)	.000	.49	(.14)	.000
Winner	.34	(.13)	.008	.32	(.13)	.010
Economic situation	.36	(.10)	.000	.35	(.10)	.000
Government performance	.68	(.11)	.000	.69	(.11)	.000
Newspaper use	.06	(.02)	.002	.06	(.02)	.001
Education	-.03	(.07)	.657	-.03	(.07)	.637
Political interest	.25	(.07)	.000	.24	(.07)	.001
Political knowledge	-.03	(.06)	.664	-.03	(.06)	.681
Priority congruence	.03	(.01)	.001	.03	(.01)	.001
Left-right distance	-.29	(.05)	.000	-.29	(.05)	.000
Wald chi-squared	297.56		.000	297.54		.000
Pseudo R-squared	.10			.10		
N	1206			1206		

Notes: Ordinal logistic regressions estimated with Stata 13. Entries are log-odds estimates with robust standard errors (due to weighting of the data) in parentheses.

increases satisfaction. Satisfaction with democracy moreover increases with age, social class, living in West Germany, identifying with a political party, having supported one of the election winners, more positive economic perceptions and government performance ratings, newspaper use, and political interest.

Figures 3.1 and 3.2, respectively, illustrate how left-right distance and media priority congruence affect the probabilities of having different levels of satisfaction with democracy, with all covariates including political sophistication held at their means.

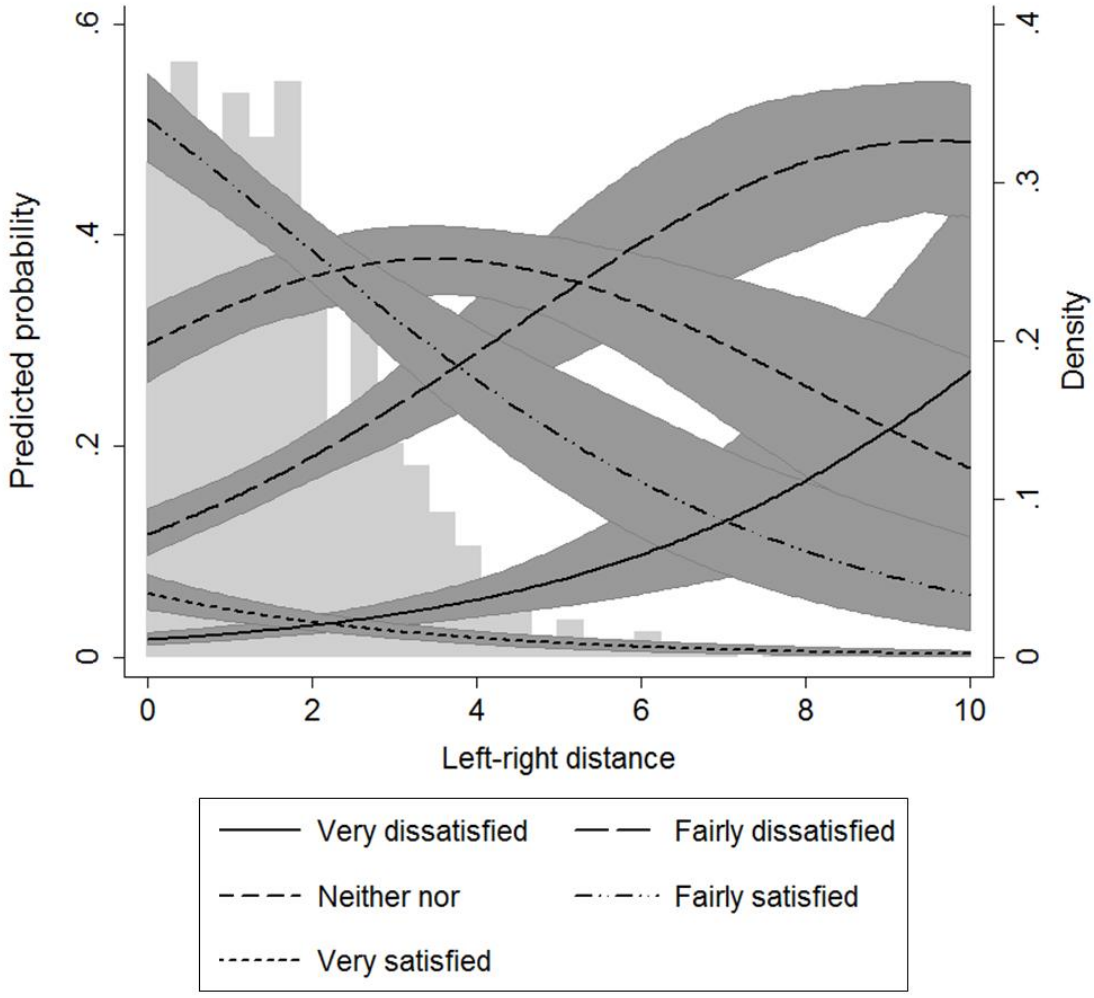


Figure 3.1. Predicted probabilities of satisfaction with democracy across left-right distance

Notes: 95% confidence intervals are shown in dark grey. The distribution of left-right congruence is shown in light grey. Based on Model 1-2 (Table 3.2). All covariates are held constant at their means.

The effect of candidate priority congruence is not shown here because it is very similar to that of media congruence.

Citizens who are more ideological distant to parties have increased probabilities of being very or fairly dissatisfied and are less likely to be fairly or very satisfied with democracy than those close to parties. Generally, the probabilities of being very satisfied or dissatisfied are very low – few respondents place themselves at the extremes of the Likert scale. The probability of being neither dissatisfied nor satisfied first

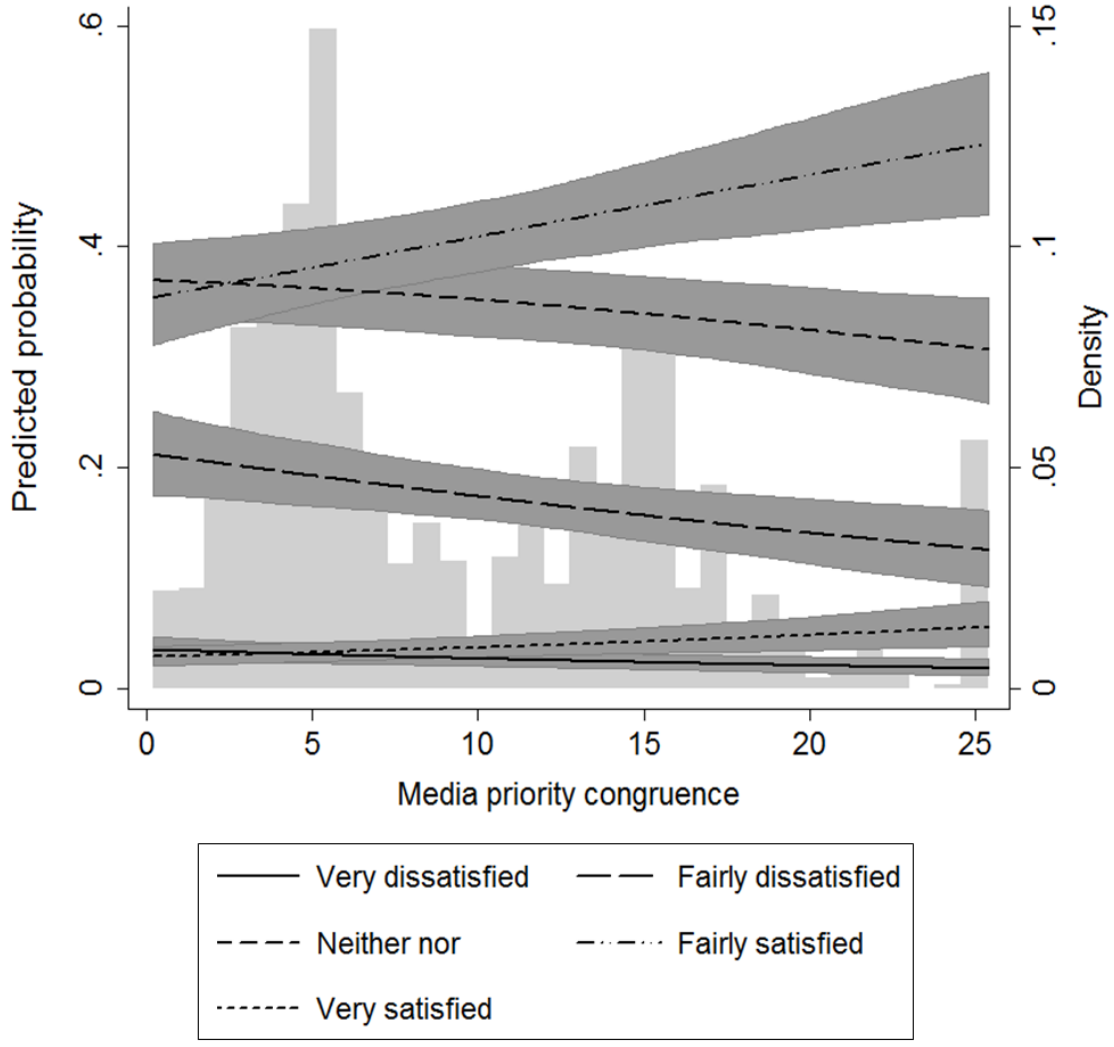


Figure 3.2. Predicted probabilities of satisfaction with democracy across media priority congruence

Notes: 95% confidence intervals are shown in dark grey. The distribution of media congruence is shown in light grey. Based on Model 1-2 (Table 3.2). All covariates are held constant at their means.

increases with larger distance and then decreases again at higher distances, where only very few citizens are located. The histogram in light grey shows that most people's left-right positions are fairly proximate to the mean of the positions at which they locate the parties.

The effect of priority congruence is similar, as Figure 3.2 shows. Citizens whose policy priorities are shared by elites, as conveyed by the media, are more likely to be satisfied and less likely to be dissatisfied than individuals with low congruence scores. The probability of being neither satisfied nor dissatisfied slightly decreases with increasing congruence.

But do left-right representation and priority congruence influence everyone's evaluation of democracy to the same extent? In order to test the hypotheses I interact candidate and media priority congruence as well as left-right distance with education, political interest, and political knowledge (Table 3.3). Based on Hypotheses 1 and 2, we would expect left-right congruence to affect satisfaction only – or more strongly – amongst more politically sophisticated citizens and priority congruence to have a stronger influence amongst the less educated, politically interested, and politically knowledgeable.

The most unambiguous result is that the relationship between left-right distance and satisfaction does not vary with education, political interest, and political knowledge. All three interaction coefficients are insignificant. This result contradicts Hypothesis 1 and suggests that evaluating how close parties are on average to one's own left-right positions is not too difficult or cumbersome for individuals who left school early and are not interested in and knowledgeable about politics.

In contrast, the effect of priority congruence on democratic satisfaction does vary with political sophistication. Education and political interest negatively interact

Table 3.3. Moderating effects on the influence of policy congruence on satisfaction with democracy

	Model 2-1: Candidates			Model 2-2: Media			Model 2-3: Candidates			Model 2-4: Media			Model 2-5: Candidates			Model 2-6: Media		
	Coeff.	SE	p	Coeff.	SE	p	Coeff.	SE	p	Coeff.	SE	p	Coeff.	SE	p	Coeff.	SE	p
Age	.01	(.00)	.021	.01	(.00)	.039	.01	(.00)	.018	.01	(.00)	.037	.01	(.00)	.022	.01	(.00)	.036
Sex (female)	-.02	(.12)	.834	-.02	(.12)	.866	-.03	(.12)	.796	-.04	(.12)	.756	-.03	(.12)	.785	-.03	(.12)	.798
Social class	.19	(.07)	.013	.17	(.07)	.020	.19	(.07)	.012	.17	(.07)	.021	.19	(.07)	.012	.17	(.07)	.025
East Germany	-.55	(.13)	.000	-.56	(.13)	.000	-.54	(.13)	.000	-.54	(.13)	.000	-.56	(.13)	.000	-.56	(.13)	.000
PID dummy	.50	(.14)	.000	.49	(.14)	.000	.52	(.14)	.000	.49	(.14)	.001	.50	(.14)	.000	.50	(.14)	.000
Winner	.36	(.13)	.005	.34	(.13)	.007	.35	(.13)	.006	.34	(.13)	.007	.34	(.13)	.008	.33	(.13)	.009
Economic situation	.35	(.10)	.000	.35	(.10)	.000	.36	(.10)	.000	.36	(.10)	.000	.36	(.10)	.000	.35	(.10)	.000
Government performance	.68	(.11)	.000	.69	(.11)	.000	.68	(.11)	.000	.68	(.11)	.000	.68	(.11)	.000	.68	(.11)	.000
Newspaper use	.06	(.02)	.001	.06	(.02)	.001	.06	(.02)	.001	.06	(.02)	.001	.06	(.02)	.002	.06	(.02)	.001
Education	.32	(.15)	.034	.26	(.13)	.054	-.03	(.07)	.655	-.03	(.07)	.636	-.03	(.07)	.668	-.03	(.07)	.717
Political interest	.24	(.07)	.000	.23	(.07)	.001	.68	(.16)	.000	.54	(.14)	.000	.25	(.07)	.000	.25	(.07)	.000
Political knowledge	-.03	(.06)	.677	-.02	(.06)	.730	-.01	(.06)	.257	-.01	(.06)	.835	.12	(.16)	.484	.23	(.14)	.094
Priority congruence (PC)	.06	(.02)	.000	.07	(.02)	.000	.10	(.03)	.000	.10	(.03)	.000	.04	(.02)	.017	.07	(.02)	.000
Left-right distance (LRD)	-.18	(.10)	.064	-.18	(.10)	.068	-.19	(.15)	.192	-.19	(.15)	.208	-.25	(.09)	.007	-.26	(.09)	.005
Interaction effects																		
PC * education	-.02	(.01)	.031	-.02	(.01)	.026												
LRD * education	-.06	(.04)	.174	-.06	(.04)	.168												
PC * interest							-.03	(.01)	.003	-.03	(.01)	.012						
LRD * interest							-.04	(.05)	.446	-.04	(.05)	.427						
PC * knowledge													-.01	(.01)	.447	-.02	(.01)	.015
LRD * knowledge													-.03	(.05)	.591	-.02	(.07)	.649
Wald chi-squared	305.02		.000	302.83		.000	317.21		.000	305.54		.000	301.38		.000	305.54		.000
Pseudo R-squared	.11			.11			.11			.11			.10			.11		
N	1206			1206			1206			1206			1206			1206		

Notes: Ordinal logistic regressions estimated with Stata 13. Entries are log-odds estimates with robust standard errors (due to weighting of the data) in parentheses.

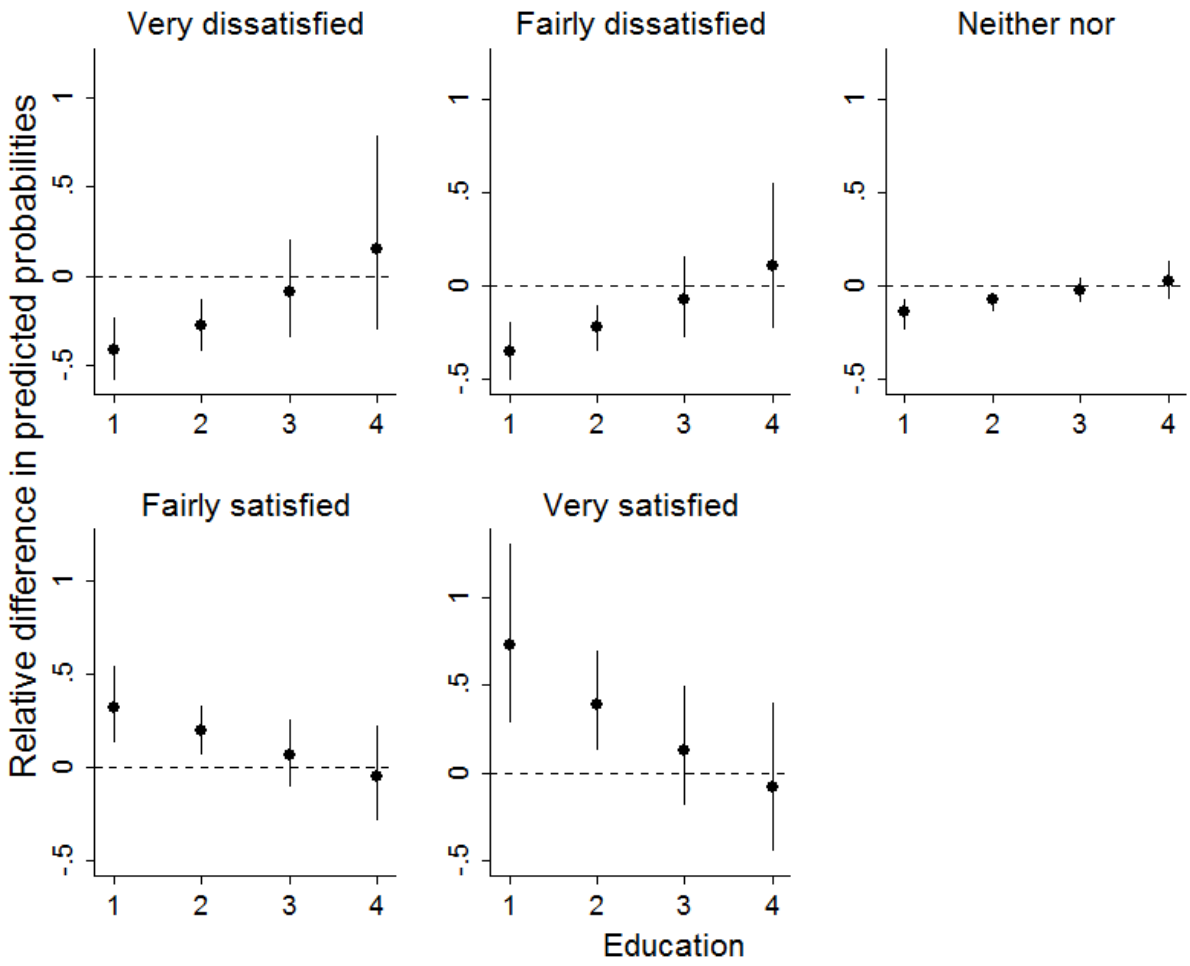


Figure 3.3. Differences in predicted probabilities of satisfaction with democracy at low and high media priority congruence (1 std. dev. below/above the mean), relative to probability at low congruence, at different education levels

Notes: Error spikes indicate 95% confidence interval. Reference line indicates no difference. Based on Model 2-2. All covariates are held constant at their means.

with both candidate and media priority congruence (Models 2-1 to 2-4). Political knowledge moderates the effect of media congruence on satisfaction (Model 2-6), while its interaction with candidate congruence is insignificant (Model 2-5). Figures 3.3 to 3.5 clarify how the effect of media congruence on satisfaction varies across the three indicators of political sophistication. The dots indicate the relative predicted difference in the probability of being very dissatisfied, fairly dissatisfied etc. between an individual with a media congruence value at one standard deviation above the sample mean and an

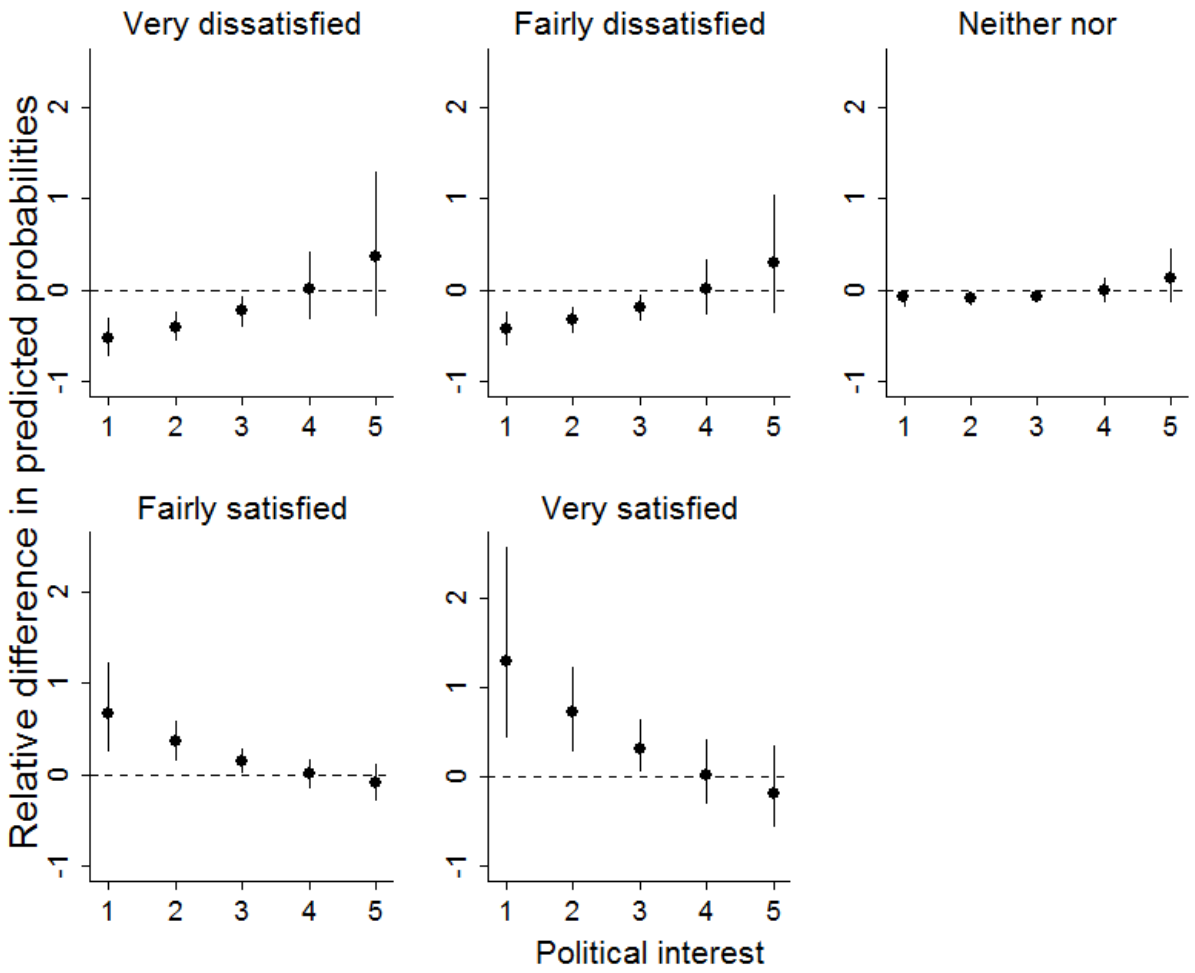


Figure 3.4. Differences in predicted probabilities of satisfaction with democracy at low and high media priority congruence (1 std. dev. below/above the mean), relative to probability at low congruence, at different political interest levels

Notes: Error spikes indicate 95% confidence interval. Reference line indicates no difference. Based on Model 2-4. All covariates are held constant at their means.

individual with a value at one standard deviation below the mean (the covariates are held at their means). I show the difference relative to the respective probability of the lower-congruence individual, since satisfaction is also influenced by political sophistication (at least by education, cf. Table 3.2) and, hence, the absolute differences in probabilities may increase with sophistication even though the relative differences remain stable.

Figure 3.3 shows that, at the two lower education levels, the differences in probabilities between the two individuals are significantly ($p<.05$) different from zero for each satisfaction level, since the error spikes do not overlap with the dashed reference line. Priority congruence thus influences satisfaction with democracy among those who finished school without obtaining a degree qualifying for university. Among individuals who have gone through tertiary education or are qualified to do so, on the other hand, differences in priority congruence do not result in differences in satisfaction with democracy.

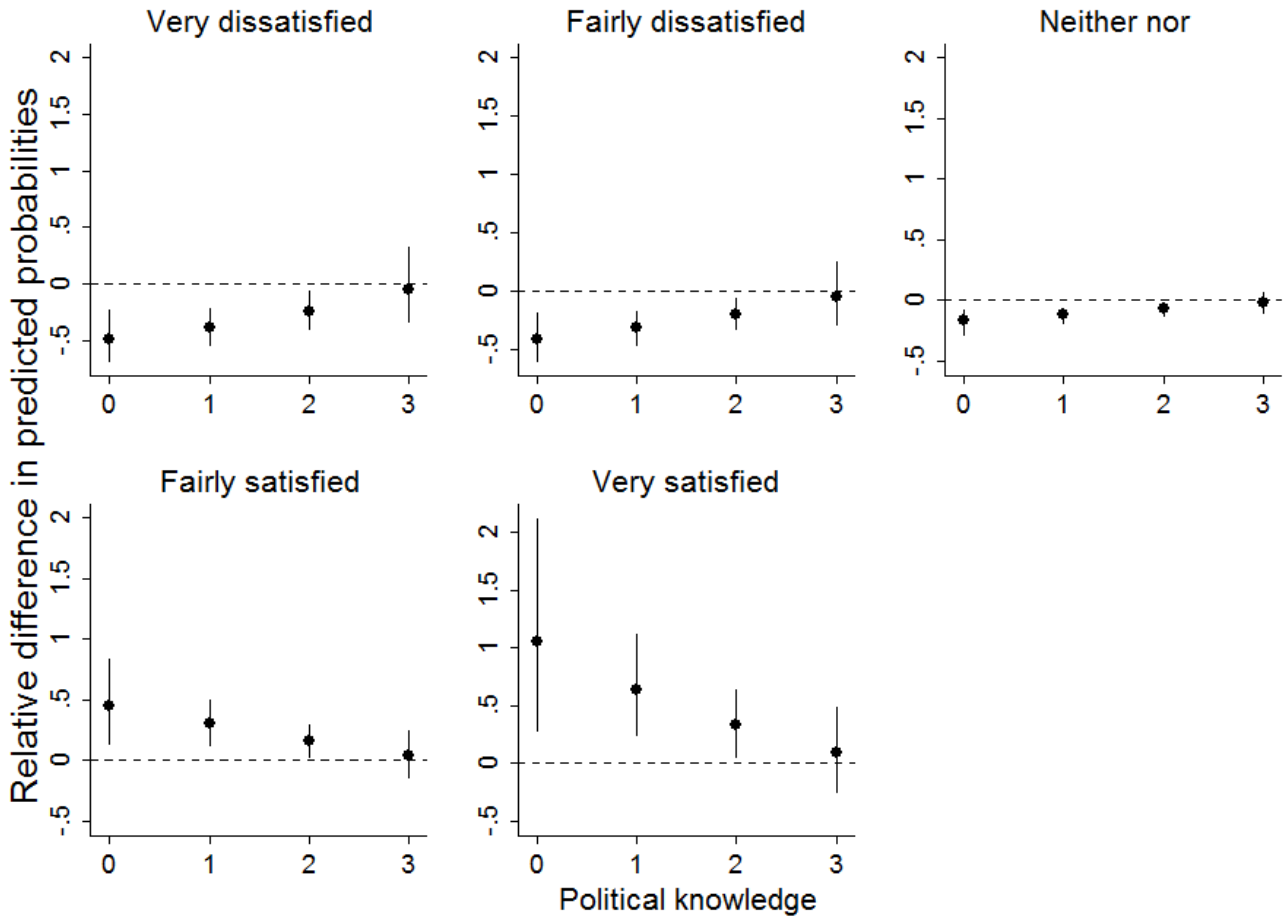


Figure 3.5. Differences in predicted probabilities of satisfaction with democracy at low and high media priority congruence (1 std. dev. below/above the mean), relative to probability at low congruence, at different political knowledge levels

Notes: Error spikes indicate 95% confidence interval. Reference line indicates no difference. Based on Model 2-6. All covariates are held constant at their means.

The picture is very similar for political interest (Figure 3.4): A difference of two standard deviations in media congruence implies significant differences in the satisfaction probabilities among those who are not at all or not very interested in politics or at a medium interest level. The politically interested, on the other hand, do not appear to base their satisfaction on the extent to which elites reflect their issue priorities. The same is the case for individuals with high levels of political knowledge, i.e., those who gave the correct answer to all three questions (Figure 3.5). In contrast, those who got fewer correct answers do let their priority congruence level influence their satisfaction with democracy.

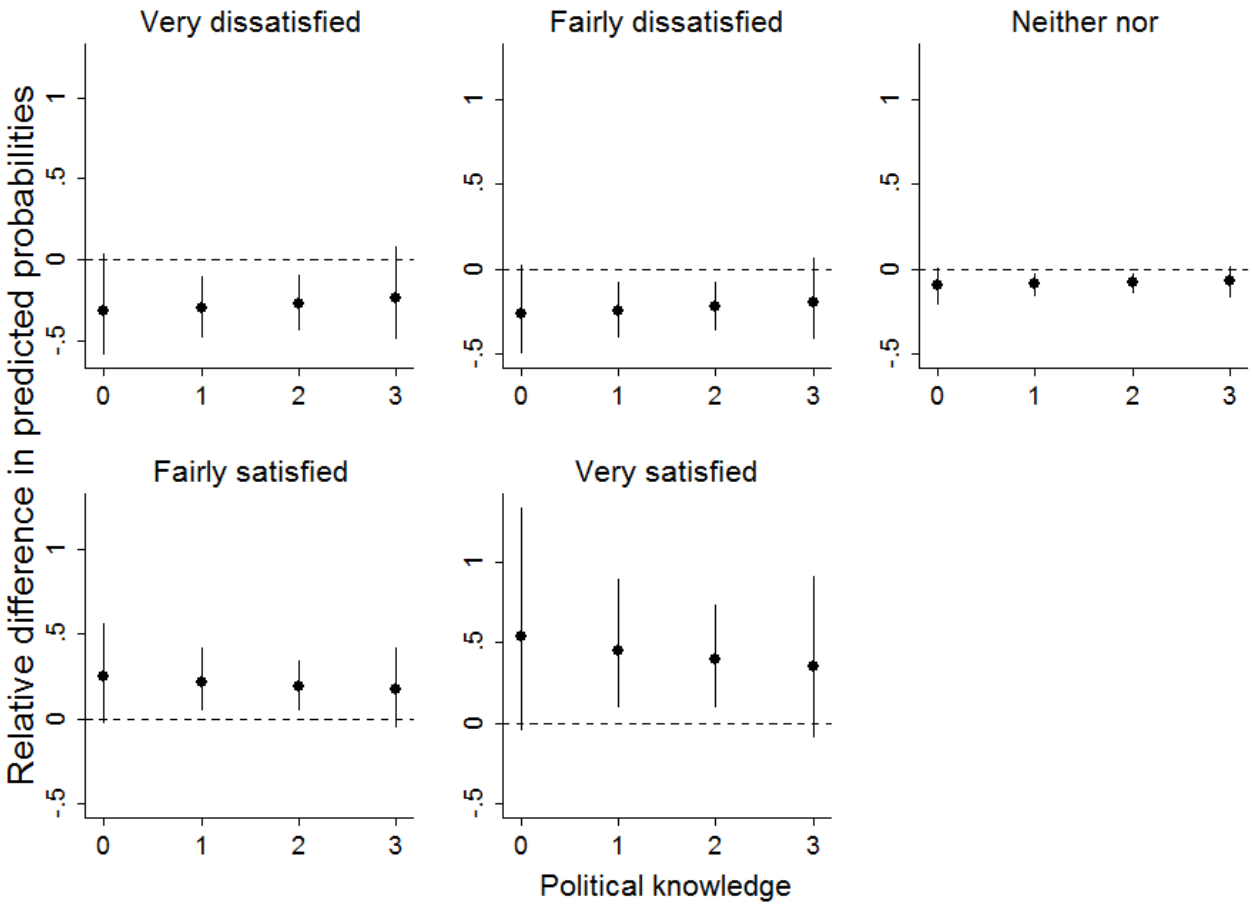


Figure 3.6. Differences in predicted probabilities of satisfaction with democracy at low and high candidate priority congruence (1 std. dev. below/above the mean), relative to probability at low congruence, at different political knowledge levels

Notes: Error spikes indicate 95% confidence interval. Reference line indicates no difference. Based on Model 2-5. All covariates are held constant at their means.

Table 3.3 showed that education and political interest moderate the effect of candidate congruence on satisfaction in a similar way to that of media congruence. Political knowledge, on the other hand, interacts with media congruence but not with candidate congruence. As a result, we see in Figure 3.6 that the relative differences in predicted probabilities are at similar magnitudes across all knowledge levels.

Robustness Checks

In order to test the robustness of the results to variations in the construction of the variables, I perform a few additional analyses. First, in order to ensure that the lack of variation in the effect of left-right congruence on satisfaction across individuals is not an artefact of the operationalisation, I investigate three types of alternative indicators. First, since I used a subjective measure of left-right distance, I repeat the analyses with two more objective indicators. The first measures the distance between a respondent and the mean of the left-right self-placement of the candidates who participated in the candidate survey, weighted by their party's seat share in the *Bundestag*. The other follows Golder and Stramski (2010) and measures how far a respondent's left-right position is from the mean party position based on the party placements of the most educated respondents in the sample (those holding a *Fachhochschule*, *Abitur*, or university degree).

I substitute both alternative measures for the subjective measure in the models in Tables 3.2 and 3.3. Surprisingly, I find that the distance to the party mean based on candidates' placements does not significantly influence satisfaction. Neither does it interact with any of the political sophistication indicators. In contrast, the variable based on the educated respondents' party placements influences satisfaction in the expected

direction ($p<.0005$). However, as in the original analysis, the effect does not vary with education, political interest, or political knowledge.

I furthermore test a quadratic loss function of left-right distance, which accounts for the possibility that larger distances weigh more heavily by squaring respondents' distances to the left-right mean (Adams 1999; Erikson and Romero 1990; Leiter 2012). This measure is significantly ($p<.0005$) associated with satisfaction. Interestingly, this relationship is negatively affected by education ($p<.05$), but does not interact with political interest and knowledge. Since this is the only instance in which the effect of a left-right distance measure on satisfaction varies with a measure of political sophistication, we should probably not attribute too much weight to it.

Lastly, it may be the case that citizens do not so much desire that the mean party position is close to their own as having (at least) one party that represents their views. I thus constructed a measure of the distance to the most ideologically proximate party. Citizens who are more ideologically proximate to some party are indeed significantly ($p<.0005$) more likely to be satisfied with democracy. Again, this effect does not vary with political sophistication. We can thus conclude that our results are robust to different specifications of the left-right congruence measure.

The specification of the priority congruence variables calls for two robustness checks. First, the assignment of weights to respondents' first, second, and third most important problems may not actually reflect the way in which individuals evaluate how salient their priorities are amongst elites. I therefore construct two sets of alternative candidate and media congruence variables. The first gives equal weights to the salience scores of the first, second, and third most important problems. The second only takes the most important problems into account, disregarding the second and third priorities. Both versions are highly correlated with the weighted candidate and media congruence

measures (Pearson's r between .81 and .96). Their effects on democratic satisfaction are also very similar in terms of direction and statistical significance. The only noteworthy difference is that the effects of the congruence measures based on only the most important problems are not significantly moderated by education.

The second potential concern is the strong influence of considering economic issues as most important on the priority congruence variables. Since economic issues were much more salient than other issues among candidates and the media (cf. Table 3.1), respondents can only achieve very high congruence values if they also mention economic issues. While there is no plausible reason why individuals with stronger economic worries should *per se* be more satisfied with democracy, I nevertheless investigate this issue. I re-estimate the models including a variable that is coded as 0 if a respondent did not mention an economic issue and as 1, 2, or 3 if economic issues were amongst the third, second, or first most important issues, respectively. The variable is correlated with candidate and media congruence at Pearson's r=.71 and .82, respectively.

When including the media salience variable in the models without interactions, the p-values of candidate and media congruence rise to about .07, which is likely due to multicollinearity. Yet, since the coefficient of economic issue salience is even further from being significant at $p<.05$, it appears that the effect of congruence on satisfaction is not in fact due to economic worries only. This conclusion is reinforced by the findings that the coefficients of the interactions of the priority congruence variables with education and political interest are not affected when including additional interactions of education and interest with economic salience. Only the interaction between knowledge and media congruence becomes insignificant, while economic issue salience is negatively moderated by political knowledge in this model.

All in all, the robustness checks lead us to conclude that the results of this study are insensitive to different specifications of the main independent variables of interest. Moreover, the alternative interpretation of the effect of priority congruence as evidence for a relationship between economic concerns and democratic satisfaction does not appear to be valid.

Conclusion

In the field of electoral behaviour, the notion that the choice calculus varies across voters enjoys widespread acceptance. Voters are assumed to give more weight to parties' views on issues they consider more important (Abramowitz 1995; Belanger and Meguid 2008; Krosnick 1988). And whether voters consider parties' issue preferences at all or rely on simpler heuristics such as group membership or candidate characteristics instead is thought to depend on the their political involvement and cognitive abilities (Campbell et al. 1960; Goren 1997; Knight 1985; Leiter 2012; Roy 2011). It is somewhat surprising, then, that differences between citizens in the way in which they evaluate the functioning of their democratic system have received little attention so far (but see Hobolt 2012; Karp, Banducci, and Bowler 2003; Rohrschneider and Loveless 2010). The aim of this paper was to shed further light on this puzzle.

The findings from analyses of German Election Study (GLES) data from 2009 show that different individuals are indeed satisfied or dissatisfied with democracy for different reasons. Citizens with lower levels of education, political interest, and political knowledge tend to be more satisfied with their democracy if political elites pay more attention to their issue concerns. It probably conveys to them that elites are responsive to public opinion, or – in cases where they set the agenda – devote time and resources to policy issues on whose importance citizens agree. Among more politically sophisticated

citizens, on the other hand, congruence in policy priorities does not affect democratic satisfaction. Meanwhile, proximity on the left-right dimension increases satisfaction among individuals across all levels of political engagement and education.

The likely source of the variation in the influence of priority congruence is a difference in expectations towards political elites and representatives. It appears as if more politically sophisticated individuals are more lenient towards them, since they are aware of the constraints that politicians and parties face in the policy-making process (Bengtsson and Wass 2011; Carman 2006, 2007). These constraints, which are often linked to the principle of 'responsibility' (Mair 2009), are fairly strong in the German system, since governments are usually formed of coalitions and because the EU (increasingly) limits the national government's room to manoeuvre in policy-making, which the Euro crisis further intensified (Bardi, Bartolini, and Trechsel 2014; Laffan 2014; Mair 2009; Rose 2014). Alternatively, or as an additional factor, it may be the case that politically sophisticated citizens tend to prefer representatives to follow their own judgment when determining what is best for society rather than public opinion, as prescribed by the trustee model of representation (Burke 1852; Eulau et al. 1959; Pitkin 1967).

In fact, a shift in preferences towards the trustee model might be a consequence of citizens' recognition of the difficulty to reconcile responsiveness with the growth in responsibilities and constraints (cf. Thomassen and van Ham 2014). Such a link would imply that a structural decline in priority congruence, which increasing international integration and interdependencies might cause, need not necessarily lead to growing citizen dissatisfaction. At the same time, the results suggest that the less politically sophisticated citizens still place strong emphasis on priority congruence, which means

that we might observe a widening gap in satisfaction between more and less politically involved citizens, which is reason for serious concern.

However, before we can confidently draw such conclusions, future research first needs to investigate to what extent the proposed reasons for the differences in the relationship between priority congruence and satisfaction between more and less politically sophisticated Germans are valid. There may be alternative or additional reasons, for instance a higher awareness among the politically involved that their own concerns may not necessarily be shared by the majority of citizens, which should be included in such an investigation.

Another conclusion that can be drawn from the results is that determining how salient one's issue concerns are amongst the political elite does not require extremely high levels of information and attentiveness to the political debate. At the same time, those with low political sophistication also appear to take their ideological proximity to elites into account when judging the quality of democracy. This finding contradicts Muller's (1970) predictions as well as studies from the vote choice literature, which conclude that ideological reasoning is too complex and hence a prerogative of the highly educated and politically knowledgeable (Goren 1997; Knight 1985; Leiter 2012; Muller 1970; Roy 2011). Instead, left-right might in fact serve as a rather simple way of making sense of politics, as it has become part of everyday language about politics (van der Eijk and Franklin 2009: 14) and – at least in Germany – the political dimension has been fairly stable over the past decades.

The findings encourage further studies of heterogeneity in the formation of democratic attitudes, adding to the small number of other studies that have tackled this issue so far (Dahlberg, Linde, and Holmberg 2013; Hobolt 2012; Karp, Banducci, and Bowler 2003; Rohrschneider and Loveless 2010). Do other factors that have been found

to affect democratic satisfaction, such as economic outputs or 'winning' the election, really matter to all citizens? Are there potentially important influences that have been overlooked because they only matter to a small proportion of the public? Moreover, future studies should explore whether the results travel to other contexts. The findings of this study should be generalizable to advanced industrialised democracies with proportional representation systems like Germany's, but may not apply to the same extent to countries with majoritarian electoral systems, which place more emphasis on accountability than on representation (Aarts and Thomassen 2008).

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APPENDIX 3. Variable descriptives

	Range	Mean	Standard deviation
Satisfaction with democracy	1 – 5	3.23	.99
Age	16 – 93	50.86	17.40
Sex (female)	0, 1	.53	.50
Social class	1 – 5	3.03	.99
East Germany	0, 1	.34	.47
PID dummy	0, 1	.71	.46
Winner	0, 1	.42	.49
Economic situation	1 – 3	1.51	.61
Government performance	1 – 4	2.41	.64
Newspaper use	0 – 24	5.04	3.50
Education	1 – 4	1.92	.99
Political interest	1 – 5	2.82	.98
Political knowledge	0 – 3	1.76	.90
Priority congruence (media)	.22 – 25.40	9.77	6.22
Priority congruence (candidates)	0 – 28.77	15.10	6.33
Left-right distance	0 – 8.83	1.65	1.20

CHAPTER 4

The Effect of Priority Congruence on Electoral Participation[16]

Abstract

This paper proposes that voters are more likely to turn out at elections if candidates and parties address their issue concerns in the election campaign. Voters with high levels of congruence in policy priorities should perceive the campaign as more interesting and the election as more relevant. In addition, the costs associated with the vote choice should be lower if voters' policy priorities are salient. The effect should be weakened by party identification, which acts both as a mobilising force and as a heuristic to the vote choice, making information costs less detrimental to turnout. The analysis, which links voter survey data with candidate survey and media content data from the 2009 German federal election, confirms the hypotheses.

[16] Some of the content of the section 'Data and Method' (pp 134-136) has been part of previous chapters.

Introduction

Electoral participation is considered vital for the functioning and the legitimacy of representative democratic systems. Hence, a tremendous amount of research has been dedicated to explaining individual and aggregate-level differences in turnout. We can distinguish between a number of individual-level approaches, including sociological, psychological, and rational choice frameworks (Smets and van Ham 2013). The latter perspective, building on the Downsian spatial model, models voters' probability of turning out by looking at voters' policy positions in relation to parties' or candidates'. If none of the competitors is close enough to represent a voter's preferences or if they are equally proximate, the voter is more likely to abstain (e.g. Adams, Dow, and Merrill 2006; Adams and Merrill 2003; Adams, Merrill, and Grofman 2005; Downs 1957; Plane and Gershtenson 2004; Thurner and Eymann 2000).

This paper takes a related but novel approach by focusing on an aspect of policy preferences that has so far been largely overlooked in turnout research, namely congruence between voters' and parties' policy priorities. Issue priorities are understood here as the policy issues that are considered as currently most in need of being addressed. Priorities are an important element of policy preferences that is distinct from policy positions, particularly in the case of spatial issues (Downs 1957). Accordingly, the mechanisms linking voter-elite congruence in priorities to turnout proposed here differ from those brought forth in the spatial voting literature.

I argue that voters whose issue concerns are reflected on elites' agendas in the election campaign are more likely to turn out at the ballot box than voters whose issue priorities are neglected by parties and in the media's campaign coverage. This is because, first, voters with high priority congruence levels should be more motivated to turn out. They should find the campaign more interesting, be more motivated to gather

information about it, and consider the election outcome as more important (Visser, Krosnick, and Simmons 2003). In addition, voters whose concerns are salient should have higher levels of confidence in the functioning of the democratic process.

Second, voters who care about the same issues as parties and candidates should find the vote choice easier. If voters evaluate parties based on their own issue priorities, which is suggested in much of the issue voting literature (e.g. Abramowitz 1995; Belanger and Meguid 2008; Fournier et al. 2003; Krosnick 1989), they will be provided with more information about parties' stances and competences on these issues if they are salient among parties. Similarly, if voters base their party choice on the issues emphasised by parties (de Vries 2009; Rabinowitz, Prothro, and Jacoby 1982), they will be better equipped to evaluate parties if they also care about these issues. Lower information costs due to priority congruence should, in turn, increase turnout.

We can thus identify two broad mechanisms that link priority congruence with turnout. However, they should be more – and potentially only – applicable to voters who do not identify with a political party. Since party identification is a very powerful mobilising factor and facilitates the vote choice by serving as a cognitive heuristic, it should be able to compensate for the demobilising effects of a lack of priority congruence.

After explaining the arguments in more detail below, I test the hypotheses using data from the 2009 German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES). Priority congruence is measured by a novel indicator that measures the salience of voters' issue priorities among election candidates as well as in the television and print news media covering the election campaign. The results confirm that the likelihood of participation increases among non-partisans if their policy priorities are salient in the media coverage of the election campaign, while party identifiers have high turnout rates regardless. This result

holds when controlling for voters' ideological distance to parties, suggesting that priority congruence influences turnout independently from proximity in policy positions.

The insights of this paper thus represent an important addition to our knowledge about why individual differences in electoral participation exist. They also warn us that particularly voters who tend to be less integrated into the political process anyway, namely non-partisans, are likely to become more politically alienated if their policy concerns are not given sufficient attention. This exacerbates their risk of withdrawal from political life. In this respect, the results of this paper underscore existing evidence that citizens whose policy preferences are not well represented tend to be less satisfied with the democratic process (Ezrow and Xezonakis 2011; Kim 2009; Muller 1970; Reher 2013).

Theory and Hypotheses

A major claim in the literature on spatial models of turnout is that a lack of representation of voters' issue preferences leads to alienation and, consequently, abstention (Adams, Dow, and Merrill 2006; Adams and Merrill 2003; Adams, Merrill, and Grofman 2005; Brody and Page 1973; Hinich and Ordeshook 1969; Kirchgaessner 2003; Plane and Gershtenson 2004; Thurner and Eymann 2000; Zipp 1985). Building on Downs' (1957) economic model of voting, this literature assumes that a voter is likely to abstain if all or several candidates or parties are equally close to the voter's position, making the voter *indifferent* towards the election outcome. Abstention also occurs if a voter's distance to the closest contestant exceeds a certain threshold, for in this case she will be *alienated* because no contender represents her policy preferences well enough to motivate her to bear the costs of voting.

In such spatial models of electoral behaviour, the focus lies on voters' and parties' positions on ideological and issue dimensions. The salience of issues is usually only considered relevant as a determinant of the relative importance of different policy dimensions (Abramowitz 1995; Giger 2011). In contrast, I argue that issue salience plays a much more central role: Agreement between voters and parties on the relative importance of issues should influence turnout in itself, independently from distance in issue positions. More specifically, it should influence voters' motivation to turn out and the costs associated with it.

The distinction between policy positions and policy priorities is thus crucial to my argument. In the case of spatial issues in the Downsian tradition, issue priorities are only very weakly related to issue positions, if at all. Different parties and voters may pay a lot of attention to the same issues, such as welfare spending, while pursuing radically different policy aims, i.e., increasing or decreasing spending. In turn, actors may be located at the same position on an issue dimension, for instance pro same-sex marriage, but assign very different levels of importance to this issue.[17] Here, priority congruence should affect turnout *in addition to* the alienation and indifference mechanisms in the positional framework. In the case of valence issues (Clarke et al. 2009; Green 2007; Stokes 1963), positions do not vary by definition, and hence the spatial mechanisms of indifference and alienation do not apply. Congruence in priorities on these issues, on the other hand, should influence turnout, as I explain below.

[17] The Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) (Volkens et al. 2013) considers issue positions and salience to be more closely related as it measures parties' positions on spatial issues based on their salience. However, the CMP's issue categories are already more indicative of positions and ideology than the categories used in this paper. Compare, for instance, the CMP's categories 'military: positive' and 'military: negative to the category 'defence' used in this study (cf. Figure 4.1).

Priority Congruence and the Motivation to Turn Out

If political parties and candidates do not devote much attention in their campaigns to the issues that are most important to a voter, she is likely to find the campaign and the election to be irrelevant and may be less motivated to turn out. The election outcome will also appear less relevant because her concerns seem unlikely to be on the government's agenda after the election. Whether one party represents her positions better than another only really becomes relevant if she cares about the issues that will be part of the policy debate (Jones and Baumgartner 2004; Spoon and Klüver 2014).

In contrast, a voter who considers the issues that are salient in the campaign as important should perceive the campaign and the election as stimulating and important (Campbell 1960). She should feel that it will make a difference which parties will be represented in parliament and government after the election, since the policies proposed by parties concern issues that are important to her. Even if she realises that none of the competitors' aims on the issues closely match her own, the mobilisation effect should not be diminished altogether. She might, for instance, cast a vote in order to prevent the party that is furthest from their views from winning. Moreover, having paid a lot of attention to the campaign, she is likely to have been exposed to a diverse range of information about parties' stances beyond those on her issue concerns, which may prompt her to support one of them anyway.

The idea that citizens will be mobilised if their concerns are at stake is certainly not a new one: Converse voiced it in the 1960s in reference to 'issue publics'. However, the studies testing his argument did not actually measure individuals' issue concerns but derived them from their group membership (Hutchings 2001; Sides and Karch 2008).

An additional potential mobilising factor related to priority congruence is voters' more general attitude towards the democratic process. Evidence suggests that citizens

whose policy priorities are neglected (Reher 2013) and whose positions on policy and ideological dimensions are not shared by political elites (Ezrow and Xezonakis 2011; Kim 2009) tend to have lower levels of satisfaction with democracy. Such distrust in the functioning of the democratic process may further alienate voters from participating in elections (although evidence on the relationship between political trust and turnout is mixed (cf. Birch 2010; Citrin 1974; Ezrow and Xezonakis 2014; Groenlund and Setaelae 2007; Hooghe and Marien 2013; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993)).

So far, I have framed the mobilisation argument primarily in terms of issue priorities and positions, which are conceptually distinct in the proximity model (Downs 1957; Enelow and Hinich 1984) and the directional model of issue voting (Rabinowitz and Macdonald 1989). But the mechanism also applies to valence issues, where general agreement exists on the optimal situation (e.g. low unemployment, crime or pollution) (Stokes 1963). Here, differences in positions on policy dimensions essentially do not exist. Instead, variation in policy preferences is manifest through different priorities (e.g. Budge and Farlie 1983; Clarke et al. 2009; Green 2007; Petrocik 1996). High priority congruence on valence issues should thus have a particularly strong influence on voters' motivation to turn out, since it means not only that elites share voters' issue concerns but also that they pursue the same policy aims. The first hypothesis to be tested is thus:

Hypothesis 1: *Higher levels of priority congruence are associated with a higher probability of turning out*.

Priority Congruence and the Costs of Voting

Rational choice (Aldrich 1993; Downs 1957; Riker and Ordeshook 1968) and resource models of turnout (e.g. Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995) recognise that decision-

making costs are a crucial factor that depresses the likelihood of participation. I argue that priority congruence decreases the difficulty of evaluating parties' substantive policies and, as a result, the costs of the vote choice, which is the second mechanism through which priority congruence should promote turnout.

Krosnick (1989, 1990) found that voters tend to evaluate political candidates based on the issues they consider most important and most frequently think about (see also Abramowitz 1995; Fournier et al. 2003; Herstein 1981; Lavine et al. 1996; RePass 1971). Doing so is less cognitively demanding because voters can more easily access their attitudes towards these issues from their memory (cf. Fazio 1986). Moreover, voters are likely to know quite a bit about the issues important to them and tend to have stronger and more certain positions on them (Visser, Krosnick, and Simmons 2003). Hence, it is also easier for them to evaluate parties' and candidates' positions on these issues (Weaver 1991). But the cognitive effort that these evaluations require is also contingent on whether and how much elites stress these issues in their campaigns. Parties' positions on issues that are high on their agenda are likely to be clearer and more discernible to voters. Thus, the costs of comparing parties' positions to one's own with respect to one's issue concerns will be lower the more attention parties pay to these issues.[18]

Again, this argument applies not only to spatial issue voting. Studies on performance voting (de Vries and Giger 2014; Fournier et al. 2003) and issue ownership voting (e.g. Belanger and Meguid 2005, 2008; Green and Hobolt 2008; Petrocik 1996;

[18] It may also be the case that voters base their party evaluations on the issues stressed in parties' campaigns rather than their own priorities in situations where they diverge. Some studies argue that this might be the case , although Miller and Krosnick (2000) show that media attention to issues only increases their impact on President approval through increasing their perceived importance (cf. also Lavine et al 1996). In any case, priority congruence should have the same cost-reducing effect in this scenario, for evaluating competitors based on the issues on which they compete should be facilitated by the availability of knowledge and attitudes on the issues.

Walgrave, Lefevere, and Tresch 2012) have also found that voters evaluate parties with respect to their own issue priorities. Here, the evaluations should be similarly facilitated if parties address the issues in question.

Party Identification, Priority Congruence and Electoral Participation

So far I have argued that voters whose policy priorities are emphasised in the political debate and the election campaign should both be more motivated to participate in the election and face lower information costs and cognitive effort when doing so. Turnout should therefore be higher amongst voters with higher levels of priority congruence. However, there may be factors that mitigate this effect. Specifically, party attachment should be able to compensate for both the alienation and the costs effect by serving as a strong mobilising force as well as a heuristic for the vote choice.

Party identifiers generally turn out at elections at higher rates than non-identifiers because they have an emotional attachment to their party and hence feel the desire and the obligation to support it (Campbell et al. 1960; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). Since party identification can be understood as a social group identity (Greene 1999), partisans include their party in their self-conception (Tajfel 1974) and thus derive satisfaction and even self-esteem from its electoral success. But even in the absence of a party's prospect of winning the election, identifiers experience 'satisfaction from affirming a partisan preference' (Riker and Ordeshook 1968: 28). In addition, partisanship decreases the cost of voting, for identifiers can assume that their party generally represents their preferences and therefore use their affiliation as an information short-cut to the vote choice (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Downs 1957; Popkin 1991; Rahn 1993; Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock 1991).

Party identification thus has a strong direct positive effect on turnout. In addition – and most importantly for this paper – it should moderate the negative effects of other factors on turnout, such as a lack of priority congruence. At least in the short run, partisans should feel represented by their party regardless of how well it matches their policy preferences (Green and Palmquist 1990).[19] Therefore, they should perceive the election to be relevant and be motivated to turn out and support their party even if their issue priorities are not addressed. While long-term incongruence with one's party may eventually lead to alienation, it should then also erode party attachment.

Furthermore, the argument that the election outcome will appear less relevant to voters whose policy concerns are not addressed in the political debate should also be less valid for party identifiers. Partisans should have a considerable amount of trust that their party will act in their best interest after the election even if it does not address their priorities in the campaign. If this trust had been eroded, for instance by serious policy disagreement, voters should also be less likely to indicate a party identity in the survey. In addition, partisans should feel more efficacious with respect to their party and believing that they can influence the political agenda after the election through the organisational channels linking them to their party's leaders (Carman 2006: 108). This implies that partisans should also be more likely to trust the representational system even if parties do not stress their concerns, making them less likely to abstain because they are alienated by the political process.

In addition to preventing alienation, party identification should also mitigate the effect of priority disagreement on the cost of voting. In situations in which it is difficult for a voter to choose between parties because their issue agendas do not reflect to her

[19] There is only weak evidence that disagreement with one's own party on issue positions leads to abstention (Narud and Valen 1996). This effect should be even weaker with respect to incongruence in priorities since it does not usually constitute a conflict between diametrically opposed preferences.

priorities, a partisan voter can fall back on her party attachment as a guide to the vote choice, trusting that her party represents her preferences adequately enough (Popkin 1991; Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock 1991). Similarly, if a party identifier wants to vote for the party that best represents her views on the issues that are salient in the political debate, but she does not have readily accessible attitudes on these issues because they are not salient to her, she can take cues from her party about what her position should be, given that she generally agrees with her party's views (Jacoby 1988). In support of this argument, Jackson (1975) found that partisans are more likely to base their vote choice on their partisan identity when policy voting is more costly due to equidistance on policy dimensions. In short, party identifiers should be less likely to be alienated and de-mobilised by low congruence in issue priorities while being better equipped to avoid the higher costs of the vote choice induced by a lack of agreement on policy concerns. The second hypothesis thus reads:

Hypothesis 2: *The effect of priority congruence on turnout is stronger among non-partisan voters.*

Data and Method

I use the case of Germany at the 2009 federal election to test the hypotheses. The main rationale for the case choice is the suitability of the data: the 2009 German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES) measures a larger number of voters' and candidates' policy priorities than comparable surveys and provides data on the media coverage of issues during the election campaign. It thus allows constructing a relatively detailed and precise measure of priority congruence between voters and political elites, making it very suitable for a first study of the effects of priority congruence on turnout. Since Germany is an important European country that shares many political, social, and

economic characteristics with other Western democracies, the result may be indicative for other European democracies as well. Future studies in other countries shall reveal how generalizable the findings are.

I use the GLES' post-election cross-sectional voter survey to measure voters' priorities and satisfaction with democracy. To measure elites' policy priorities and the salience of issues in the political debate during the campaign, I use the candidate study, which was conducted after the election among candidates of the five parties represented in the *Bundestag* (CDU/CSU, SPD, FDP, the Greens, and the Left). I construct a second priority congruence measure by deriving the salience of issues from the news media coverage during the election campaign, which is documented by the GLES' TV and print media content analyses.[20]

Before explaining the measurement of congruence in issue priorities in detail, I will give a brief overview of the 2009 German federal election and the issues that were emphasised by voters and representatives. The main competitors were the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) and the Social Democrats (SPD), who had been governing together in a Grand Coalition over the previous four years. Consequently, it was difficult for the parties to blame each other for policies for which they were jointly responsible. The CDU/CSU therefore sought to win the election based on its chancellor candidate Angela Merkel's popularity and voters' trust in her ability to handle the financial crisis. They succeeded, winning 33.8 per cent of the vote, while the SPD only obtained 23 per cent, enabling Merkel to form a coalition government with the smaller Liberal Democratic Party. At 70.8 per cent, turnout at the election was at a historic low. While I do not analyse the effect of priority congruence on turnout on the aggregate level, the low turnout level in this 'boring' (Krewel, Schmitt-Beck, and Wolsing 2011)

[20] For more information about the GLES 2009 and data access, see www.gesis.org/en/elections-home/gles/.

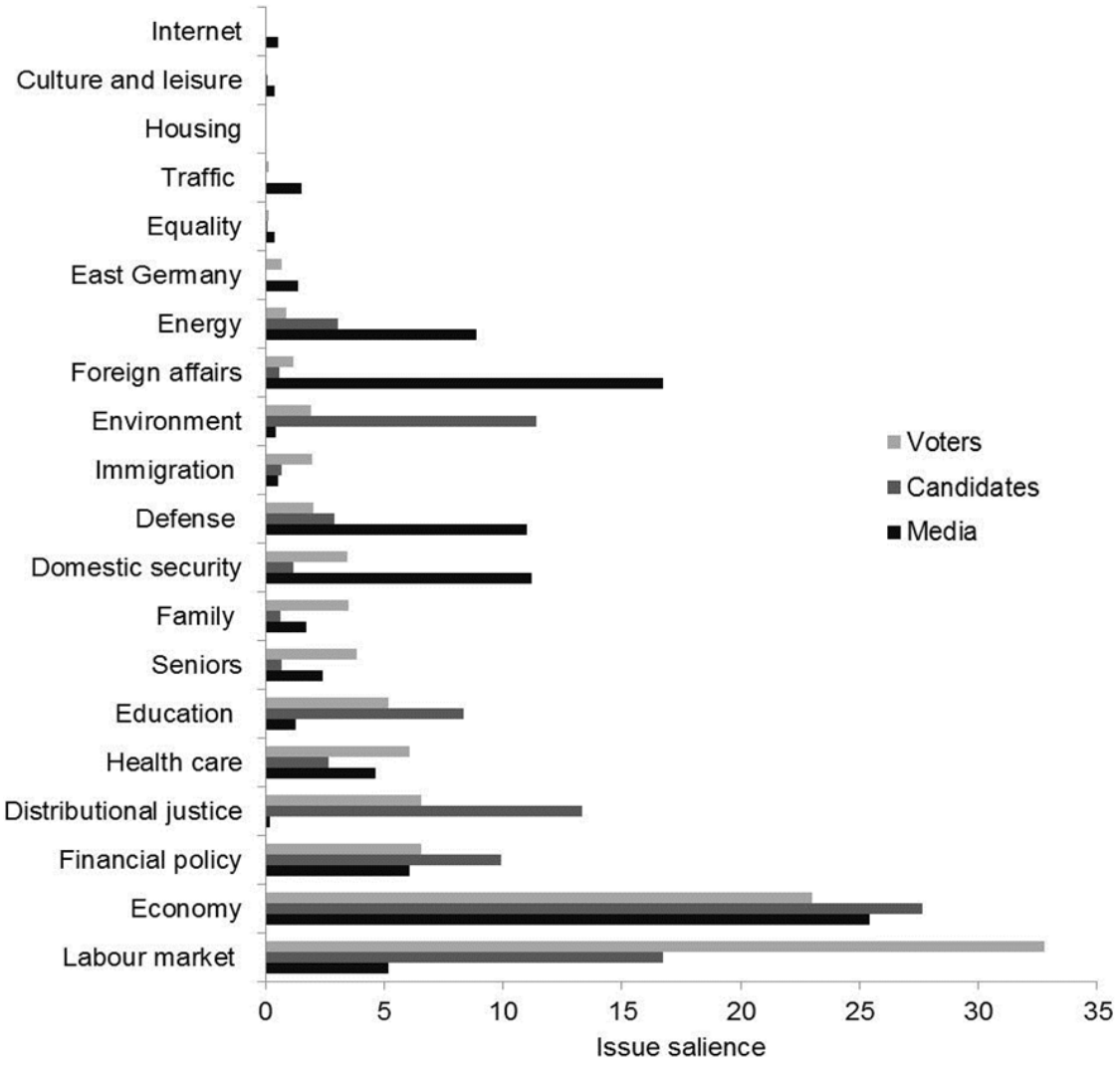


Figure 4.1. Salience of issue categories among voters, candidates, and the media

and 'issue-less' (Schön 2011: 103) election is in line with my argument that voters will abstain at higher numbers if their issue concerns are not salient.

How salient each of the twenty issue categories used in the analysis was amongst voters, candidates, and the media during the campaign is shown in Figure 4.1. While labour market issues, including unemployment, were most salient among voters, candidates and the media gave most attention to economic issues, including the economic crisis. Candidates' concerns seem more similar to voters' than the media's agenda, which included issues such as foreign affairs, domestic security, and defense, which were not considered important by voters.

Measuring Priority Congruence

Priority congruence measures the salience of each voter's issue priorities among candidates and in the media covering the election campaign. It is constructed by assigning to each respondent in the voter survey a score that indicates the proportion with which the policy issues that he or she considers most important are mentioned as most important by candidates and addressed in the TV and print news covering German politics prior to the election, respectively. The voter survey asked respondents in an open-ended question what they think are the most, second most, and third most important issues Germany is facing at the moment. Up to five issue categories mentioned by respondents in each of the three replies answer were recorded, meaning that up to fifteen issue categories per respondents are included in the data. We thus obtain a uniquely large amount of information about voters' issue concerns.

The candidate study asked candidates the same question, registering up to three issue categories for each of the three replies. The relative salience of each issue category among candidates is its percentage of all issue mentions by the candidates from the five major parties who participated in the survey, weighted by the issue's importance (most important issues count three times as much and second most important issues twice as much as third most important issues) and by the candidates' parties' seat share in the parliament after the election. These salience scores were then used to calculate the average salience of each voter's set of issue priorities among candidates, which I call *candidate priority congruence*. When averaging the candidate salience scores of multiple issues mentioned by a respondent, they were also weighted according to whether the issue was mentioned as most important (counting three times as much as third most important issues), second most important (counting twice as much as third most important issues) or third most important.

The second priority congruence variable measures the salience of voters' issue priorities in the news media during the election campaign. Whereas using media data to measure representatives' agendas is still unusual in the voting literature, it is becoming more common (Kriesi 2007; Statham et al. 2010). As one of voters' main sources of information about politics – for most voters never actually speak to political candidates or representatives or read a party manifesto – media salience can be considered an adequate measure of voters' perceptions of political elites' agendas. The media content analyses of the GLES cover news items in the major news shows on the four major TV channels (*ARD*, *ZDF*, *RTL*, and *Sat.1*) and in the six major national newspapers (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *DIE WELT*, *BILD*, *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, and *die tageszeitung*). They only include news items related to German politics and political actors, which are likely to be linked to parties' election campaigns.

The salience of each issue category is the frequency with which it is mentioned relative to the other issue categories. If an issue was the main aspect of a news report, it was given twice as much weight as a minor aspect. To measure print news media and TV news media priority congruence, respectively, voters were assigned the average media salience scores of the issues they mentioned as most important, again weighted by the level of importance. Since the two resulting priority congruence variables are strongly correlated (Pearson's r larger than .9), I created one *media priority congruence* variable by averaging respondents' scores on the TV and newspaper-based measures.

The two resulting variables, *candidate priority congruence* and *media priority congruence*, range from a minimum of 0 and .2, respectively, to a maximum of 25.4 and 28.8, respectively. The values correspond to the average (weighted) percentages of respondents' issue priorities on candidates' and the media's issue agendas. Thus, a congruence value of zero indicates that a respondent's issue concerns are not on

candidates'/the media's agenda. A value of 25 indicates that a quarter of candidates'/the media's issue attention is dedicated to a respondents' priorities.[21]

This particular way of measuring congruence in issue priorities has advantages over, for instance, measures that compare a voter's rank order of issues to those of candidates and the media (Lindeboom 2012). Most importantly, it indicates what proportion of political elites' issue attention is directed at a respondent's concerns. As Figure 4.1 shows, their attention is not linearly distributed across issues. For instance, defense and domestic security are almost equally salient in the media, whereas the issue above these two in the rank-order of media salience – foreign affairs – is disproportionately more salient.

One potential concern with the congruence measures needs to be addressed at this point since it could potentially affect the validity of the results. As we saw in Figure

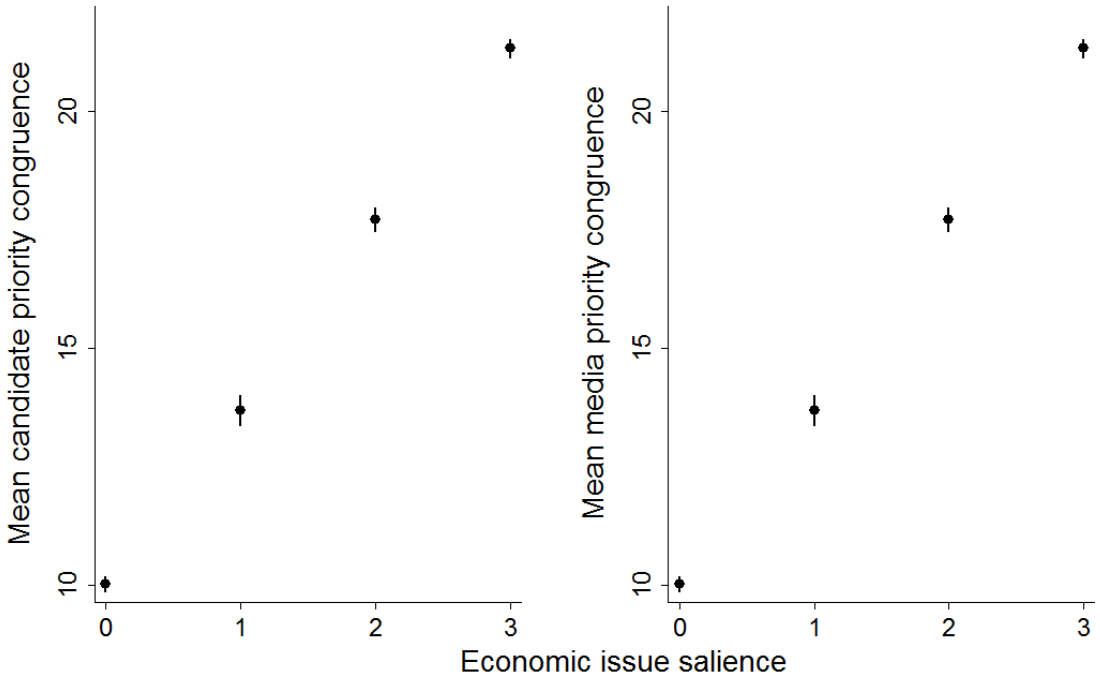


Figure 4.2. Means of candidate and media priority congruence across levels of economic issue salience with 95% confidence intervals

[21] Cf. Appendix 4 for details on the variables used in this study.

4.1, economic issues were by far the most salient amongst candidates and in the media. As a result, voters who mentioned economic issues as most important tend to have high congruence scores. Figure 4.2 shows that priority congruence with candidates and the media is indeed higher among voters to whom economic issues are salient.[22] This means that priority congruence and economic concerns are highly correlated. Hence, if we find a relationship between congruence and turnout, it is conceivable that it actually masks a relationship between economic issue salience and turnout. While this relationship is theoretically implausible – why should voters who find economic problems most pressing *per se* be more likely to turn out? – I will perform a robustness test after the presentation of the main results in order to exclude this possibility.

Indicators of Turnout, Party Identification, and Control Variables

The dependent variable *turnout* is a dummy indicating whether a respondent stated to have cast a vote in the 2009 federal election. Here, a potential source of bias needs to be addressed, namely overreporting, which is a common problem associated with survey-based measures of turnout. The reported turnout rate in the GLES post-election survey was 79.4 per cent, whereas actual turnout in the 2009 election was at 70.9 per cent. This suggests that some respondents might have indicated that they voted even though they did not, although part of this deviation might also be due to response bias. This discrepancy between actual and reported turnout levels is actually fairly small in comparison to elections in other contexts (cf. Bernstein, Chadha, and Montjoy 2001; Karp and Brockington 2005). While it should thus not be a major issue in this study, we nevertheless need to be aware of the potential biases it might entail.

[22] The variable *economic issue salience* takes the value 0 when no economic issue was mentioned as a most important problem, 1 when economic issues were mentioned as third most important, and 2 or 3 when they were mentioned as second or first most important, respectively.

The following scenarios could lead us to find empirical support for the hypotheses even if there was none. First, if non-partisans with higher congruence levels were no more likely to vote than non-partisans with lower congruence levels but more likely to overreport, we would find a false positive correlation between congruence and turnout. Second, among partisans we would find no effect of congruence although there is one if those with lower congruence levels were less likely to turn out but more likely to overreport than partisans with high congruence levels. Yet, it is theoretically implausible that priority congruence should be linked to overreporting. Third, if it was the case that partisans always reported that they voted (previous research shows that party identifiers are more prone to overreporting (Bernstein, Chadha, and Montjoy 2001; Brenner 2012; Karp and Brockington 2005)), even those who abstained due to low priority congruence, we might also falsely conclude that incongruence in priorities does not reduce turnout among partisans. Yet, 8 per cent of partisans reported to have abstained, indicating that partisans did not *per se* state that they turned out. Overreporting should thus not present a threat to the validity of the results.

Party identification (*PID*) is the third main variable of interest. It is also measured as a binary variable, indicating whether a respondent is inclined to support a particular party. In addition, I include a range of control variables that have been found to affect turnout in the past. Several socio-demographic predictors of turnout are included: *age*, *sex*, a dummy indicating whether a respondent lives in *East* Germany, four *education* dummies indicating the highest qualification earned, and subjective *social class*. The latter two indicate individuals resources which facilitate voting by decreasing the costs of time and information acquisition (Brady, Verba, and Schlozman

1995; Milbrath and Goel 1977).[23] Income should have a similar effect but is excluded due to its high number of missing values. Respondents' degree of *newspaper use*, measured as the cumulative number of days per week on which a particular newspaper is read, also taps the facilitative dimension. So does *political knowledge*, which indicates how many correct answers a respondent gave to three factual questions about the German political system.

Political interest is a motivational as well as a facilitating driver of turnout (Milbrath and Goel 1977). Controlling for it means reducing the risk of spuriousness, for voters who are more interested in the political debate may adapt their priorities more to parties' concerns and, consequently, have higher levels of priority congruence (although there is evidence that agenda-setting effects are actually weaker among more politically engaged individuals (Willnat 1997: 59)). Including political interest thus controls for the possibility that priority congruence and turnout are only correlated because they are both driven by political interest. For the same reason, I also control for voters' *attention to the election campaign*.

A measure of perceptions of the *economic situation* is included in order to control for economic worries which may be picked up by the priority congruence variable due to its high correlation with economic issue salience. Moreover, perceptions of the *performance of the previous government* are controlled for because negative perceptions might alienate voters or motivate them to turn out to vote for the opposition.

I also include two measures of agreement with parties on policy positions. As a predictor of 'abstention from alienation' I include the *left-right distance to the most proximate party* measuring the distance between a respondent's position on the left-

[23] An objective measure of class based on Erikson and Goldthorpe's (1992) class scheme has also been tested but yielded no different results. Since it has a high number of missing values, the subjective class measure is used instead.

right dimension and the position of the most proximate party, measured by the mean of the positions assigned to it by the parties' own candidates.[24] 'Abstention from indifference' should be predicted by a lack of difference between respondents' distances to different parties (e.g. Adams, Dow, and Merrill 2006). The *left-right distance differential* is the difference in a respondent's left-right distance to the two most proximate parties.[25] I moreover include a variable measuring respondents' political *efficacy*, indicating to what extent respondents feel that turning out may have a political impact, and an indicator of their *duty to vote*. Lastly, respondents' reported turnout at the previous federal election in 2005 is included, for voters who regularly vote may pay more attention to the political debate and therefore have higher levels of preference agreement with elites.

Results

Since the dependent variable is categorical, I conduct logistic regression analyses. First, I estimate the effects of the different measures of priority congruence on turnout across all voters without differentiating between partisans and non-partisans. Models 1-1 and 1-2 (Table 4.1) show that neither candidate nor media priority congruence significantly affect turnout. Among the control variables, political interest, perceptions of the economic situation, efficacy, the duty to vote, turnout in 2005, and party identification have significant effects in the expected directions. Age, sex, living in East Germany,

Table 4.1. Direct effects of priority congruence and party identification on turnout

	Model 1-1:	**Model 1-2:**

[24] The distance to the most proximate party is not correlated with candidate congruence (Pearson's r=-.04, p=.112) or media congruence (r=-.02, p=.567), underscoring the argument that priority congruence is distinct from position congruence. The same is the case for the average left-right distance to all parties (weighted by parties' vote shares).

[25] The distance measures could also be constructed so as to take account of party size. Yet, robustness checks with variables that weight the distance scores by parties' shares of the second vote in the 2009 election suggest that doing so does not alter the results.

	Candidate priority congruence			**Media priority congruence**		
	Coef.	(SE)	p-value	Coef.	(SE)	p-value
Age	-.01	(.01)	.617	-.01	(.01)	.598
Female	.39	(.29)	.181	.42	(.29)	.141
East	.19	(.29)	.511	.21	(.29)	.473
Education: *Realschule*	.27	(.33)	.421	.23	(.33)	.498
Education: *Abitur*	.62	(.59)	.297	.58	(.59)	.322
Education: university	.21	(.62)	.737	.18	(.62)	.777
Social class	-.10	(.17)	.577	-.10	(.17)	.562
Newspaper use	.08	(.05)	.105	.08	(.05)	.103
Political knowledge	.11	(.15)	.474	.13	(.15)	.383
Political interest	**.69**	**(.20)**	**.001**	**.67**	**(.20)**	**.001**
Campaign attention	.25	(.24)	.309	.26	(.24)	.295
Economic situation	**.52**	**(.26)**	**.042**	**.52**	**(.26)**	**.043**
Government performance	.14	(.22)	.545	.15	(.22)	.501
Left-right distance	-.18	(.31)	.553	-.15	(.31)	.638
Left-right distance differential	-.04	(.25)	.877	-.04	(.26)	.869
Efficacy	**.47**	**(.11)**	**.000**	**.47**	**(.11)**	**.000**
Duty to vote	**.79**	**(.09)**	**.000**	**.79**	**(.09)**	**.000**
Turnout 2005	**.65**	**(.30)**	**.033**	**.64**	**(.31)**	**.037**
PID	**.62**	**(.28)**	**.028**	**.67**	**(.28)**	**.018**
Priority congruence	.00	(.02)	.843	.02	(.02)	.328
Constant	**-6.56**	**(.87)**	**.000**	**-6.90**	**(.85)**	**.000**
Wald chi-squared	269.71		.000	270.88		.000
Pseudo R-squared	.44			.44		
N	1155			1155		

Notes: Logistic regression results. Standard errors are robust because data is weighted for proportionality of the numbers of respondents from West and East Germany. Coefficients that are significant at p<.05 are displayed in bold.

education, social class, newspaper use, political knowledge, previous government performance, and the left-right distance variables have no significant effects.

The Moderating Effects of Party Identification

I now include interaction terms between priority congruence and party identification in order to test whether the reason why we previously found no significant coefficients for priority congruence is that the effects only exist among non-partisan voters, as suggested by Hypothesis 2. The results in Table 4.2 suggest that this is indeed the case. The effects of both candidate priority congruence (Model 2-1) and media priority

congruence (Model 2-2) are significantly (p<.05) moderated by partisanship. The coefficients of priority congruence in these models indicate the effect among non-partisans. They show that media congruence has a significant positive effect on turnout

Table 4.2. Interaction effects between priority congruence and party identification on turnout

	Model 2-1: Candidate priority congruence			**Model 2-2: Media priority congruence**		
	Coef.	(SE)	p-value	Coef.	SE	p-value
Age	.00	(.01)	.760	.00	(.01)	.747
Female	.42	(.29)	.148	.46	(.29)	.117
East	.20	(.28)	.473	.22	(.29)	.436
Education: *Realschule*	.33	(.33)	.317	.29	(.33)	.374
Education: *Abitur*	.61	(.57)	.282	.59	(.57)	.303
Education: university	.28	(.63)	.656	.26	(.64)	.689
Social class	-.07	(.17)	.666	-.09	(.17)	.603
Newspaper use	.07	(.05)	.144	.07	(.05)	.146
Political knowledge	.14	(.15)	.346	.17	(.15)	.269
Political interest	**.69**	**(.20)**	**.001**	**.67**	**(.21)**	**.001**
Campaign attention	.29	(.25)	.246	.29	(.25)	.244
Economic situation	**.53**	**(.25)**	**.039**	**.53**	**(.25)**	**.036**
Government performance	.14	(.22)	.521	.15	(.22)	.507
Left-right distance	-.16	(.32)	.614	-.14	(.32)	.659
Left-right distance differential	-.06	(.26)	.807	-.05	(.26)	.849
Efficacy	**.48**	**(.11)**	**.000**	**.48**	**(.11)**	**.000**
Duty to vote	**.78**	**(.09)**	**.000**	**.78**	**(.09)**	**.000**
Turnout 2005	**.64**	**(.30)**	**.035**	.60	(.31)	.051
PID	**2.04**	**(.68)**	**.003**	**1.61**	**(.47)**	**.001**
Priority congruence	.04	(.03)	.118	**.07**	**(.03)**	**.023**
PID * priority congruence	**-.09**	**(.04)**	**.024**	**-.10**	**(.04)**	**.015**
Constant	**-7.62**	**(1.03)**	**.000**	**-7.64**	**(.92)**	**.000**
Wald chi-squared	260.58		.000	267.80		.000
Pseudo R-squared	.45			.45		
N	1155			1155		

Notes: Logistic regression results. Standard errors are robust because data is weighted for proportionality of the numbers of respondents from West and East Germany. Coefficients that are significant at p<.05 are displayed in bold.

Table 4.3. Effects of priority congruence on turnout among partisans and non-partisans

	Model 3-1: Candidate priority congruence – partisans			**Model 3-2: Candidate priority congruence – non-partisans**			**Model 3-3: Media priority congruence - partisans**			**Model 3-4: Media priority congruence – non-partisans**		
	Coef.	(SE)	p-value	Coef.	SE	p-value	Coef.	(SE)	p-value	Coef.	(SE)	p-value
Age	.01	(.02)	.557	-.02	(.01)	.256	.01	(.02)	.516	-.02	(.01)	.262
Female	.73	(.54)	.174	.07	(.38)	.863	.77	(.53)	.150	.11	(.38)	.767
East	-.01	(.39)	.979	.43	(.42)	.302	.02	(.39)	.960	.42	(.42)	.316
Education: *Realschule*	1.00	(.48)	.036	-.29	(.49)	.547	.92	(.47)	.051	-.31	(.49)	.532
Education: *Abitur*	1.96	(1.30)	.132	-.46	(.69)	.506	1.90	(1.28)	.137	-.49	(.69)	.477
Education: university	2.05	(1.47)	.164	-.96	(.88)	.275	2.00	(1.48)	.176	-1.02	(.89)	.251
Social class	-.24	(.26)	.361	.06	(.25)	.807	-.21	(.26)	.432	.02	(.25)	.940
Newspaper use	.08	(.08)	.276	.09	(.07)	.205	.08	(.08)	.301	.09	(.07)	.181
Political knowledge	.18	(.24)	.452	.09	(.20)	.644	.19	(.24)	.440	.14	(.20)	.483
Political interest	.65	(.37)	.084	**.54**	**(.25)**	**.029**	.64	(.37)	.085	**.51**	**(.25)**	**.045**
Campaign attention	.63	(.40)	.117	.28	(.33)	.404	.59	(.39)	.135	.30	(.33)	.362
Economic situation	.58	(.37)	.114	.54	(.36)	.132	.60	(.37)	.103	.57	(.36)	.110
Government performance	-.49	(.40)	.222	.41	(.34)	.223	-.50	(.39)	.199	.51	(.36)	.161
Left-right distance	-.26	(.39)	.506	.04	(.34)	.909	-.24	(.39)	.545	.06	(.35)	.853
Left-right distance differential	.03	(.33)	.925	.42	(.32)	.187	-.01	(.33)	.977	.46	(.31)	.141
Efficacy	**.52**	**(.19)**	**.006**	**.46**	**(.14)**	**.001**	**.53**	**(.18)**	**.004**	**.46**	**(.14)**	**.001**
Duty to vote	**.78**	**(.14)**	**.000**	**.81**	**(.15)**	**.000**	**.77**	**(.14)**	**.000**	**.82**	**(.15)**	**.000**
Turnout 2005	.35	(.64)	.588	**.96**	**(.38)**	**.011**	.38	(.64)	.555	**.91**	**(.37)**	**.016**
Priority congruence	**-.07**	**(.04)**	**.047**	.04	(.03)	.161	-.05	(.03)	.102	**.07**	**(.03)**	**.022**
Constant	**-6.14**	**(1.21)**	**.000**	**-7.53**	**(1.47)**	**.000**	**-6.67**	**(1.24)**	**.000**	**-7.83**	**(1.37)**	**.000**
Wald chi-squared	129.26		.000	105.04		.000	131.38		.000	102.26		.000
Pseudo R-squared	.37			.41			.37			.42		
N	815			340			815			340		

Notes: Logistic regression results. Standard errors are robust because data is weighted for proportionality of the numbers of respondents from West and East Germany. Coefficients that are significant at $p<.05$ are displayed in bold.

among non-partisans, while the effect of candidate priority congruence is positive but not significantly different from zero.[26]

Table 4.3 presents the results of separate estimations of the models among partisans and non-partisans. The estimates confirm that candidate priority congruence is positively but not statistically significantly related to turnout among non-partisans (Model 3-2). We unexpectedly find a negative significant ($p<.05$) relationship between candidate congruence and turnout among partisans, whose origins are unclear and will not be further explored at this point. In contrast, non-partisans are significantly ($p<.05$) more likely to turn out if their concerns are salient in the media (Model 3-4), whereas no relationship between media congruence and turnout exists among partisans (Model 3-3).

Figures 4.3 and 4.4 illustrate the results. They show average predicted probabilities of turning out for non-partisans and partisans across the observed levels of candidate and media priority congruence, respectively. We observe similar patterns for both congruence variables: Among partisans, the probability of turning out increases at higher congruence levels. Yet – as the results in Table 4.3 suggested – the effect is only significant for media congruence (Figure 4.4). Turnout among non-partisans is generally lower than among partisans – even at very high levels of congruence, where it reaches 80 per cent. Non-partisans whose concerns are neglected by the media only have a probability of turning out of around 65 per cent. Partisans' reported turnout levels are above 90 per cent regardless of congruence.

[26] The interaction effects as well as the direct effects of priority congruence are stronger and significant at a stricter level when the duty to vote is excluded from the models. The effect of candidate priority congruence among non-partisans then becomes significant at the .05-level. Excluding the duty to vote can be argued to be appropriate since its extremely strong effect is probably partly due to endogeneity: Respondents who reported not to have voted should be less likely to agree that they have a duty to vote in order to avoid cognitive dissonance. However, I rely on the more conservative model controlling for the duty to vote here.

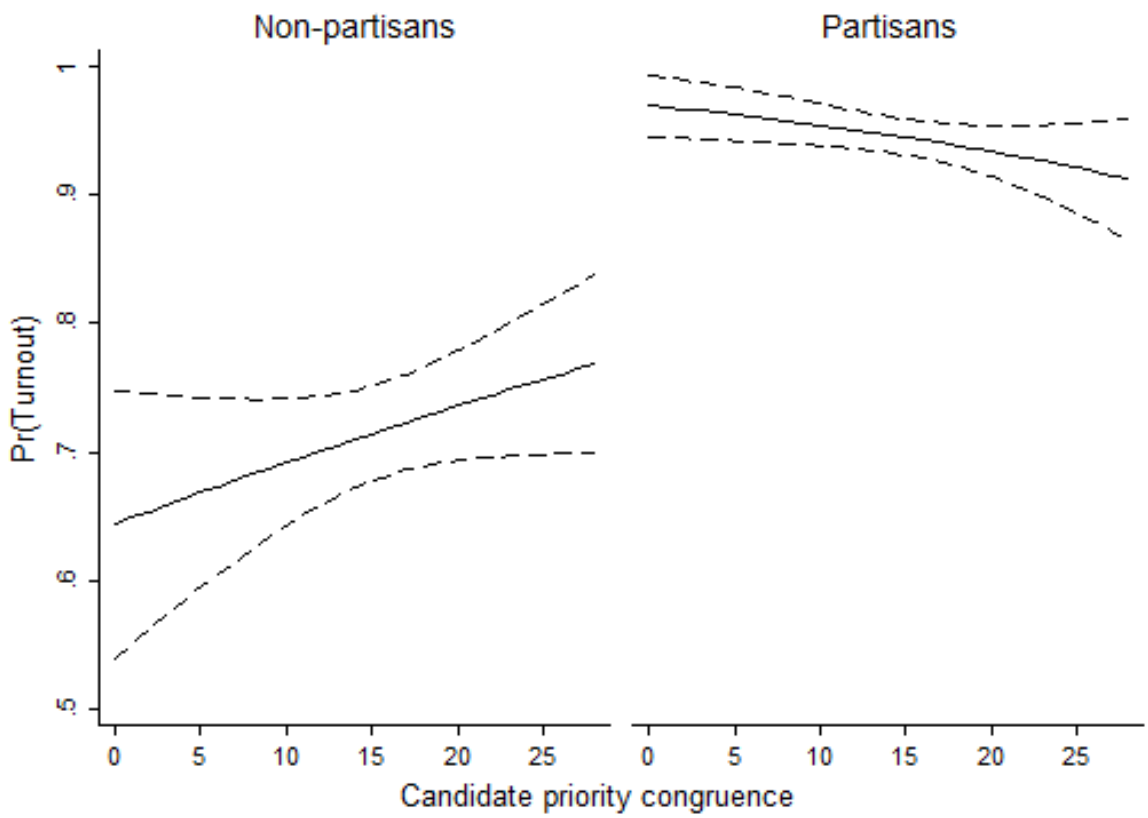


Figure 4.3. The effect of candidate priority congruence on turnout among non-partisans and partisans

Notes: based on Model 2-1; average predicted probabilities at each congruence level with control variables at observed values.

With regard to media priority congruence, the results thus confirm the hypotheses: non-partisan voters are more likely to cast a vote if their issue priorities are more strongly emphasised by the media reporting on the political debate during the election campaign, while partisan voters' turnout rates are unaffected. The findings also suggest that voters' impression of parties' agendas is indeed strongly shaped by what the media choose to cover, underlining their role in politics and parties' need to make them an essential part of their campaign strategy.

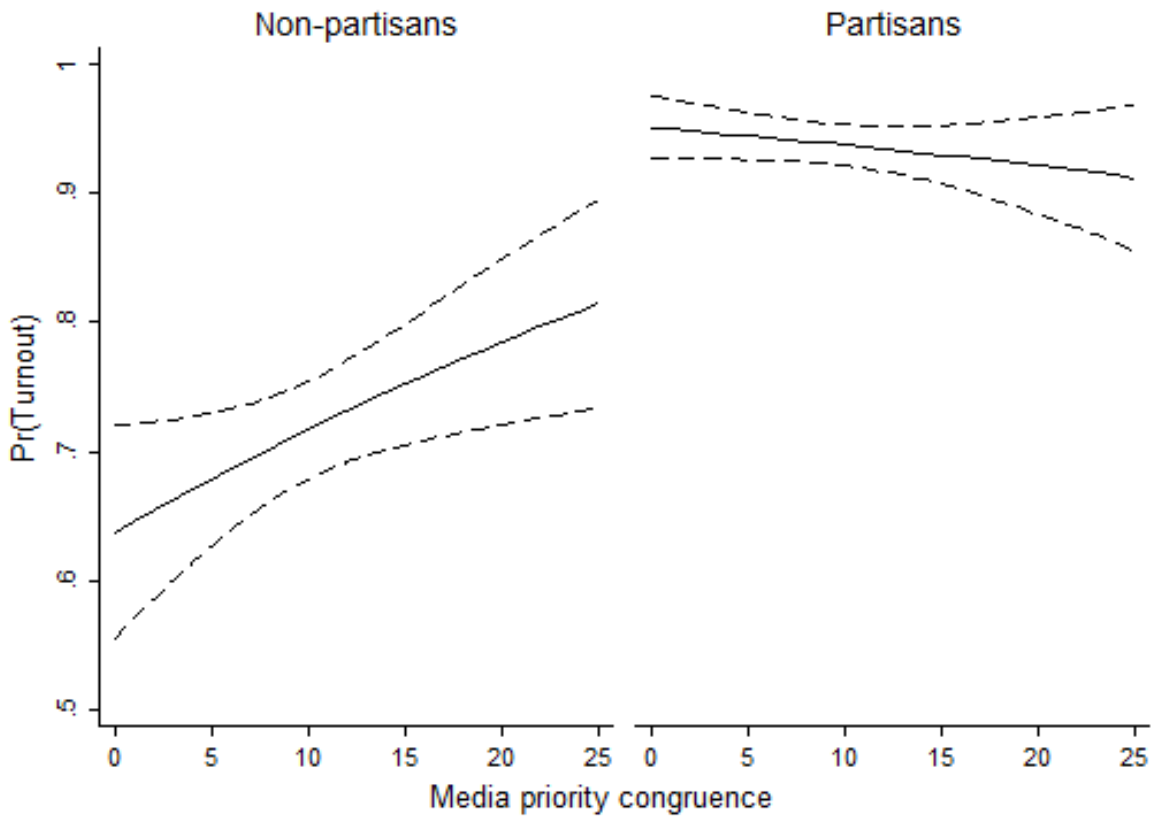


Figure 4.4. The effect of media priority congruence on turnout among non-partisans and partisans

Notes: based on Model 2-2; average predicted probabilities at each congruence level with control variables at observed values.

The Role of Economic Issue Salience

As mentioned above, one potential validity issue with the measurement of priority congruence remains to be addressed. The nature of the variable entails that, particularly in the context of the 2009 German election, mentioning economic issues as most important is strongly correlated with high priority congruence values. Further analyses are thus needed to exclude the possibility that it is in fact economic concern that increases turnout amongst non-partisans rather than priority congruence. Model 4-1 in Table 4.4 regresses turnout on the covariates from the previous models but includes the economic issue salience measure (cf. footnote 22) instead of the priority congruence variable. The results show that, indeed, economic issue salience significantly interacts

with party identification in a similar way as media priority congruence: non-partisan voters who assigned greater importance to economic issues in the 2009 election were more likely to turn out, while no such effect existed amongst non-partisans.

In order to find out whether it really is priority congruence rather than economic issue salience that affects turnout among non-partisans, I test whether media priority congruence interacts with economic issue salience when influencing turnout. Doing so

Table 4.4. Direct and moderating effects of economic issue salience on turnout

	Model 4-1			**Model 4-2 (non-partisans only)**		
	Coef.	(SE)	p-value	Coef.	(SE)	p-value
Age	.00	(.01)	.721	-.02	(.02	.192
Female	.48	(.29)	.101	.18	(.38	.634
East	.19	(.28)	.495	.38	(.41	.348
Education: *Realschule*	.31	(.33)	.352	-.43	(.52	.405
Education: *Abitur*	.65	(.57)	.261	-.57	(.74	.443
Education: university	.23	(.65)	.721	-1.34	(.98	.174
Social class	-.09	(.17)	.613	.07	(.26	.788
Newspaper use	.07	(.05)	.136	.09	(.07	.194
Political knowledge	.15	(.15)	.302	.14	(.20	.487
Political interest	**.69**	**(.21)**	**.001**	**.52**	**(.26**	**.047**
Campaign attention	.25	(.25)	.320	.18	(.32	.565
Economic situation	**.53**	**(.25)**	**.038**	.59	(.37	.109
Government performance	.15	(.22)	.512	.48	(.31	.119
Left-right distance	-.14	(.32)	.658	.48	(.37	.189
Left-right distance differential	-.06	(.26)	.821	.04	(.35	.904
Efficacy	**.49**	**(.11)**	**.000**	**.52**	**.14**	**.000**
Duty to vote	**.77**	**(.09)**	**.000**	**.81**	**.15**	**.000**
Turnout 2005	**.61**	**(.31)**	**.049**	**.86**	**.39**	**.028**
Economic issue salience	**.34**	**(.14)**	**.017**	**.96**	**.35**	**.006**
PID	**1.27**	**(.36)**	**.000**			
Economic issue salience * PID	**-.53**	**(.20)**	**.007**			
Media priority congruence				**.30**	**.12**	**.014**
Economic issue salience * media priority congruence				**-.11**	**.04**	**.007**
Constant	**-7.34**	**(.89)**	**.000**	**-8.93**	**1.54**	**.000**
Wald chi-squared	268.40		.000	114.07		.000
Pseudo R-squared	.45			.44		
N	1155			340		

Notes: Logistic regression results. Standard errors are robust because data is weighted for proportionality of the numbers of respondents from West and East Germany. Coefficients that are significant at p<.05 are displayed in bold.

is equivalent to testing whether the residual congruence in priorities, net of congruence in economic concerns, still affects turnout. We would expect to find a significant effect for those who do not consider economic issues as most important, for their motivation and costs of voting should be influenced by the extent to which their issue concerns are debated. Amongst voters who do consider economic issues as important, we should see weaker effects of the 'residual congruence', since the overwhelming salience of one of their concerns should have already mobilised them and helped them make the vote choice.

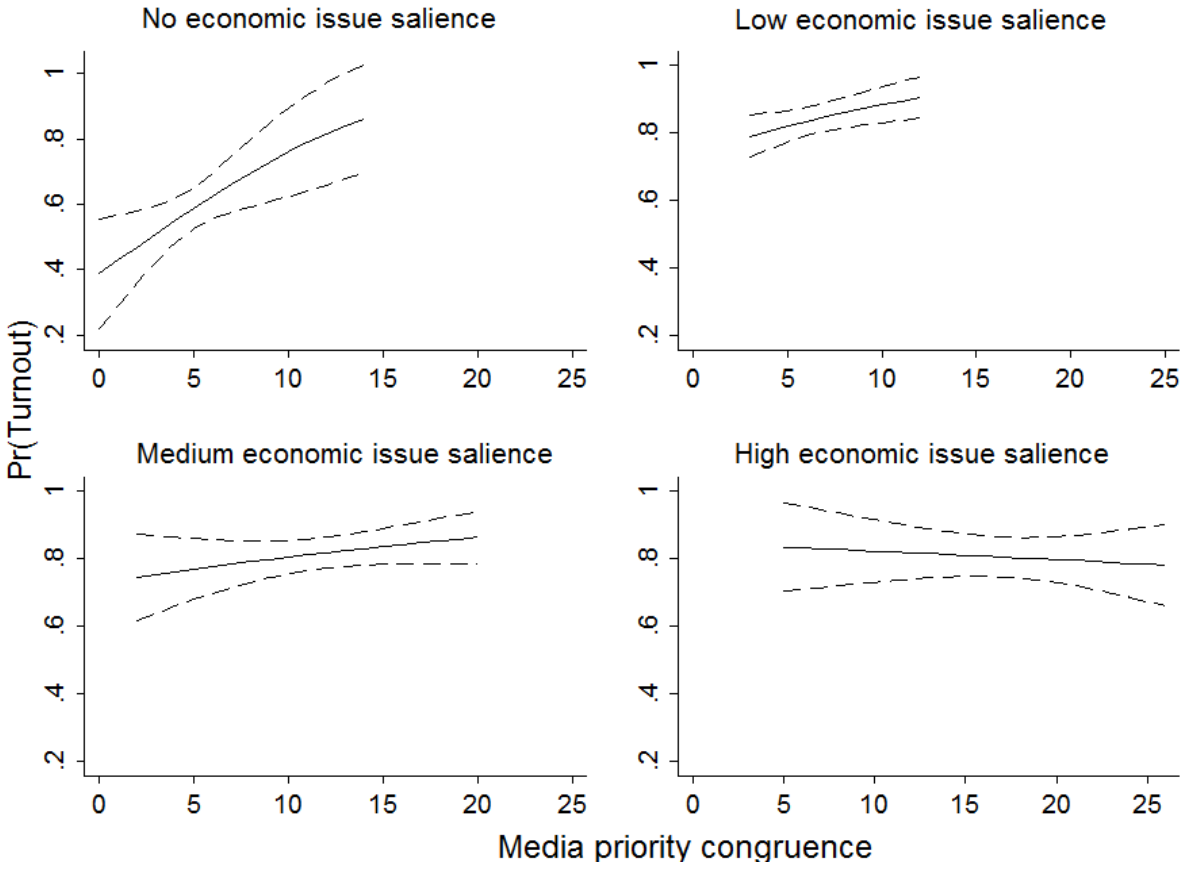


Figure 4.5. Predicted probabilities of turnout across media priority congruence levels by economic issue salience

Notes: based on Model 4-2; average predicted probabilities at observed congruence levels with control variables at observed values.

Model 4-2 in Table 4.4 and Figure 4.5 show that the findings reflect precisely these expectations. Figure 4.5 illustrates non-partisan's average predicted probabilities of turning out across media priority congruence at different levels of economic concern. Among the voters who did not mention economic issues as one of the three most important issues (these voters make up about half of the sample), those whose issue priorities were more frequently addressed in the news media were more likely to turn out than those voters whose concerns were neglected. This relationship is weaker and insignificant among voters who do prioritise economic issues: they are mobilised by the salience of economic issues regardless of whether their other concerns are addressed. We can therefore conclude with some confidence that it is indeed the reflection of voters' issue concerns on the political agenda that motivates them to turn out.

Conclusion

As we know from a range of studies within the spatial voting framework, voters' decision of whether or not to go to the ballot box depends to some extent on parties' policy offerings. If parties' policy positions are either too far away from a voter's or equally close, her propensity to abstain increases (e.g. Adams, Dow, and Merrill 2006; Adams and Merrill 2003; Adams, Merrill, and Grofman 2005; Downs 1957; Plane and Gershtenson 2004; Thurner and Eymann 2000). What has received little attention in this context is the role of issue priorities. Are voters more likely to participate in an election if it is about the issues that matter to them? A few studies have asked this question, yet in their analysis they either did not actually measure the importance of particular issues to voters (Hutchings 2001; Sides and Karch 2008) or disregarded the salience of these issues in the campaign (Visser, Krosnick, and Simmons 2003).

This study is the first to measure individual voters' issue concerns, link them with parties' agendas, and investigate the consequences of priority agreement on turnout. It develops a novel argument that is twofold. First, voters will be more motivated to become involved in the election, they will consider the election outcome as important, and they will trust the democratic process if they feel that the issues addressed in the election campaign are important. Second, determining which party best represents voters' preferences on the important issues will be much easier if voters and parties focus on the same issues. Hence, we would expect voters to be more likely to turn out if their issue concerns are salient in the political debate before an election. The analyses show that precisely this was the case in the 2009 German federal election, adding a new perspective to the policy-centred literature on turnout

In addition, I show that the effect of shared priorities only applies to non-partisan voters. Party identifiers turn out at high rates regardless of how much their priorities are emphasised in the campaign – presumably because their party attachment is a strong mobiliser and a heuristic to the vote choice. We can thus conceive of party identification as a stabilising force that mitigates the risk of political disengagement and alienation due to discrepancies between voters' and elites' (short-term) policy agendas. Similar conclusions have been drawn by Ezrow, Tavits and Homola (2014), who show that voter polarisation is less likely to lead to extreme party support where identification with mainstream parties is high.

The reduced amount of pressure on elites to be responsive to citizens' demands in high-partisanship contexts is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it might diminish the quality of political representation and hinder the translation of public preferences into policy. On the other hand, it makes it easier for elites to pursue unpopular but necessary reforms, to finish ongoing policy efforts, and to comply to the

guidelines and constraints set by external institutions such as the EU – in other words, to be responsible (Mair 2009).

According to Mair (2009), maintaining the balance between representation and responsibility has been becoming more and more difficult to maintain as international integration puts increasing constraints on domestic policy-makers. The declines in responsiveness that will potentially result might not immediately affect the electoral behaviour of party supporters, as the results of this study indicate. Yet, most advanced democracies have witnessed a steady decline in party identification over the last decades (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000). Thus, rising incongruence between voters' and elites' agendas would potentially not only lead to a growing participation gap between partisans and non-partisans but also to further reductions in absolute turnout.

Parties may thus be well-advised to pay attention not only to their supporters' concerns but also to those of non-attached voters as much as they can. While potentially benefitting the health and legitimacy of the democratic system overall, parties may even be able to win the support of independent voters this way, as evidence by Neundorf and Adams (2014) suggests – and they might want to do so before extremist or populist parties do.

The findings of this study suggest several avenues for future research. First, it is worth investigating whether other policy (and non-policy) factors that have been shown to affect turnout are also less relevant among partisans, for instance the alienation and indifference effects in the spatial framework (e.g. Adams, Dow, and Merrill 2006; Brody and Page 1973; Plane and Gershtenson 2004; Thurner and Eymann 2000). In addition, other voter characteristics besides partisanship may also influence the importance of different turnout drivers. For instance, we know that politically sophisticated voters apply more cognitively demanding voting calculi (e.g. Delli Carpini

and Keeter 1996; Goren 1997). They might, for instance, be less likely to be demobilised when the vote choice is difficult.

An issue that was addressed in the theoretical part of this paper but could not be thoroughly analysed due to a lack of available data is the relationship between congruence in issue positions and in issue priorities. By controlling for ideological congruence, I showed that priority congruence has an independent influence on turnout and can compensate for a lack in position congruence. But priority congruence and position congruence may also interact. For instance, what happens if a voter's most important concern is heatedly debated amongst parties, yet none of their stances on this policy is sufficiently close to the voter's position? Similarly, it may be the case that voters are less likely to even consider how well parties represent their positions if they do not perceive the issues that are debated as relevant.

While such questions should be investigated in the spatial framework (Downs 1957), they are essentially superfluous in the case of valence issues (Clarke et al. 2009; Green 2007; Stokes 1963), where differences in positions generally do not exist. This means that the priority-based model I presented in this paper is particularly important in the context of valence issues, to which previous theories of alienation and indifference that are based on positional dimensions (e.g. Adams, Dow, and Merrill 2006; Plane and Gershtenson 2004) are not directly applicable. It would be interesting to investigate whether abstention from indifference also exists in the valence framework in the form of shared issue ownership and equal competence ratings.

Lastly, the question of whether the findings from Germany can be generalized across countries and time remains to be answered. Since Germany does not particularly stand out within (Western) Europe in terms of its political institutions and culture, we might observe similar relationships between priority congruence and turnout in other

European countries. However, different patterns may emerge in non-Western countries and particularly in new democracies where party identification is weaker (cf. Ezrow, Tavits, and Homola 2014). Future research should seek to obtain suitable data in order to test the hypotheses in other contexts.

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APPENDIX 4. Variable details

Label	Variable construction / survey item	Coding	Mean (std. dev.)
Turnout	"Many voters didn't get around to voting or did not participate in the federal election on 27 September for other reasons. What about you? Did you vote or not?"	0 = did not vote 1 = voted	.79 (.40)
Candidate priority congruence	*Cf. in-text explanation*	*Cf. in-text explanation*	14.84 (6.57)
Media priority congruence	*Cf. in-text explanation*	*Cf. in-text explanation*	9.65 (6.33)
PID (party identification)	"Many people in Germany are inclined to support a particular political party for a longer period of time even if they occasionally vote for another party. What about you? In general terms, are you inclined to support a particular political party? And if so, which one?"	0 = no party identification 1 = party identification	.64 (.48)
Age		Age in years (16-94)	50.17 (18.31)
Female	Sex	0 = male, 1 = female	.53 (.50)
East	Place of residency	0 = West Germany 1 = East Germany, incl. Berlin	.35 (.48)
Education (4 dummies)	"What general school leaving certificate do you have?" (cf. in-text explanation of school forms)	1) No qualification or *Hauptschule* (9 years of schooling, non-academic focus) (reference category) 2) *Realschule/Mittlere Reife* (10 years of schooling) 3) *Fachhochschulreife* or *Abitur* (12-13 years of scooling, highest secondary school degree, academic focus, qualifying university) 4) University degree	.42 (.49) .36 (.48) .10 (.30) .12 (.32)
Subjective social class	"There is a lot of talk about social class these days. Which of these social classes do you consider you belong to?"	1 = underclass 2 = working class 3 = lower middle class 4 = middle class 5 = upper middle/upper class	2.99 (.99)
Newspaper use	Number of days per week on which a respondent reads a newspaper, additive	Number of days per week (range: 0-24)	4.55 (3.56)
Political knowledge	Additive scale of number of correct answers to the questions: (1) At which elections can EU citizens who are not German citizens vote in Germany? (local elections); (2) What percentage of the national vote must a political party receive in order to be represented in the Bundestag? (5 per cent); (3) Does the first or the second vote in a federal election determine the number of seats a party wins in the Bundestag? (second vote)	0 = no correct answer … 3 = three correct answers	1.57 (.91)

(APPENDIX 4 continued)

Label	Variable construction / survey item	Coding	Mean (std. dev.)
Political interest	"How interested in politics are you?"	1 = not interested at all 2 = not very interested 3 = middling 4 = quite interested 5 = very interested	2.71 (1.03)
Attention to the election campaign	"How closely did you follow the election campaign?"	1 = not closely at all 2 = not very closely 3 = fairly closely 4 = very closely	2.39 (.79)
Evaluation of the current economic situation	"Now we come to the economic situation in Germany. How in general terms would you rate the current economic situation in Germany?" (original five-point scale collapsed)	1 = bad 2 = neither good nor bad 3 = good	1.47 (.61)
Government performance	"Now thinking about the performance of the government in general, how good or bad a job do you think the government has done over the past four years?"	1 = very bad job 2 = bad job 3 = good job 4 = very good job	2.33 (.67)
Left-right distance to the most proximate party	Distance between a respondent's own position on the left-right scale (1= left, 11 = right) and the closest party's based on his/her placement of the five major parties	0 = no distance … 10 = largest distance (at opposite ends of spectrum)	.59 (.85)
Left-right differential	Distance between the party placed closest to respondent's position and the party placed second-closest on the left-right scale	0 = no distance … 10 = largest distance (at opposite ends of spectrum)	.76 (.83)
Efficacy	"Some people say that no matter who people vote for, it won't make any difference to what happens. Others say that who people vote for can make a big difference to what happens. […W]here would you place yourself?"	1 = who people vote for won't make any difference … 5 = who people vote for can make a big difference	3.56 (1.34)
Duty to vote	"I would now like to ask what you think about some general statements on politics. Please tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements. […] "In a democracy it is the duty of all citizens to vote regularly in elections."	1 = strongly disagree 2 = tend to disagree 3 = neither agree nor disagree 4 = tend to agree 5 = strongly agree	3.67 (1.32)
Turnout 2005	"If you think back to the federal election four years ago on 18 September 2005, were you eligible to vote?" → "And did you vote?"	0 = did not vote 1 = voted	.81 (.39)
Economic issue salience	Indicates whether economic issues were mentioned in reply to "What do you think is the [second / third] most important political problem facing Germany today?"	0 = no economic issue mentioned 1 = economic issue third most important 2 = economic issue second most important 3 = economic issue most important	1.26 (1.34)

CHAPTER 5

Explaining Cross-national Variation in the Link between Priority Congruence and Satisfaction with Democracy[27]

Abstract

Previous research has shown that citizens tend to be more satisfied with the functioning of democracy when their ideological positions are more proximate to representatives'. This paper argues that congruence in policy priorities between citizens and political elites should have a similar effect: citizens whose concerns are shared by elites should perceive them to be more responsive to public concerns and societal challenges. Due to varying expectations towards democracy and representation, the association between priority congruence and satisfaction should be stronger in more democratic countries and older democracies. The hypotheses are empirically tested in a multilevel regression framework, where voter survey data from the 2009 European Election Study is linked to candidate survey data. The results indicate that citizens are indeed more satisfied with democracies if elites share their concerns, and this relationship is stronger in more advanced and experienced democracies.

[27] The section 'Priority Congruence and Satisfaction with Democracy' (pp 170-173) mostly repeats content that has already been discussed in previous chapters.

Introduction

A certain level of satisfaction with the functioning of democracy among citizens is considered vital for the stability of democratic systems (Dalton 2004; Norris 1999). Scholars have therefore looked at a variety of factors that influence how satisfied citizens are with their democracy, including inputs and outputs of the political system as well as individual-level characteristics and political predispositions (e.g. Aarts and Thomassen 2008; Anderson 1998; Bernauer and Vatter 2012; Blais and Gelineau 2007; Listhaug, Aardal, and Ellis 2009; Norris 2011). Since political representation is a central element of the democratic process, various aspects and measures of it appear to be important factors in political trust and satisfaction (Miller 1974; Miller and Listhaug 1990; Muller 1970; Weil 1989), including being on the winning side in an election (Anderson et al. 2005; Anderson and Guillory 1997; Blais and Gelineau 2007; Singh 2014). At the core of this literature are a number of studies showing that citizens who are more proximate to representatives in terms of ideological or issue positions tend to have higher levels of democratic satisfaction (e.g. Brandenburg and Johns 2013; Curini, Jou, and Memoli 2012; Dahlberg and Holmberg 2013; Ezrow and Xezonakis 2011; Kim 2009).

In addition to positions on various issue dimensions, the relative importance or urgency that citizens and political elites assign to policy issues is an important component of their preferences. If citizen' and elites' policy priorities overlap, it means that they agree on the issues that are most in need of deliberation and legislation. If no such agreement exists, the policy-making process will not adequately reflect citizens' concerns. For it is not only important that policies are reflective of citizens' opinions on the respective issues, but also that they aim at solving those problems which citizens consider as most urgent (Jones and Baumgartner 2004; Spoon and Klüver 2014).

Policy priorities are moreover different from policy and ideological positions because they tend to be more volatile. Shifts in priorities do not necessarily entail changes in policy stances, and hence it is a key means of political elites to react to changes in public opinion and to societal developments and events in the short term. Accordingly, the extent to which elites share their policy priorities should be an important basis for citizens to judge elites' responsiveness to their concerns and their ability and willingness to tackle society's most pressing problems. Consequently, priority congruence should be an important indicator of policy representation and responsiveness, in addition to proximity on ideological and policy dimensions, and hence influence satisfaction with democracy. This paper tests whether this relationship, which has so far been ignored in the literature on democratic satisfaction and political support, does indeed exist.

The strength of the association between priority congruence and democratic satisfaction may, however, not be equal across contexts. More specifically, it should vary with the quality of democracy and governance as well as with the age of democracy. Citizens in less democratic countries should attach lower importance to priority congruence, since in contexts where democratic institutions are deficient and political elites do not adhere to the rules, citizens are likely to prioritise the improvement of basic aspects of democracy. Moreover, if political elites and officeholders are corrupt and institutions ineffective, congruence in policy priorities may not be seen as a meaningful indicator of policy responsiveness. Meanwhile, citizens in younger democracies have been shown to understand democracy in more instrumental and less process-focused ways (Dalton, Shin, and Jou 2007; Norris 2011). Hence, priority congruence might not influence democratic satisfaction to the same extent in less experienced democracies.

I investigate the hypotheses with data from the 2009 European Election Study (EES). I construct a measure of congruence in policy priorities that links national representatives' priorities measured on the basis of the EES' candidate survey with individual citizens' concerns as expressed in the voter survey. The results of multilevel regressions analyses indicate that, indeed, individuals whose policy priorities are shared by political elites in their countries tend to be more satisfied with democracy. As hypothesised, this association is weaker to non-existent in countries with lower levels of democracy and good governance and in younger democracies. In the next section, I explain in more detail why priority congruence should influence satisfaction with democracy and why this effect should be stronger in more democratic countries and in older democracies. I then discuss the data and methods, present the empirical results, and conclude with suggestions for further research.

Theory and Hypotheses

Priority Congruence and Satisfaction with Democracy

Satisfaction with democracy can be understood as the result of individuals' evaluation of various criteria considered relevant for democracy on the basis of their expectations (Fuchs, Guidorossi, and Svensson 1995; Norris 2011: 77; Thomassen 1995). Since the reflection, promotion, and implementation of citizens' policy preferences by political elites are major elements of representative democratic systems (Pitkin 1967), policy representation should be considered as an important criterion that individuals take into consideration in their evaluation (Aarts and Thomassen 2008; Dennis and Owen 2011: 401; Miller 1974; Muller 1970).

A range of studies suggest that this indeed the case: citizens whose policy preferences are shared by representatives tend to be more satisfied with democracy.

Similarly to other work on policy representation (e.g. Erikson, Mackuen, and Stimson 2002; Ezrow and Xezonakis 2011; McDonald and Budge 2005; Powell 2004; Stimson, Mackuen, and Erikson 1995), these studies usually measure representation as the proximity of citizens' to party candidates', parliament's or government's ideological or policy positions (Brandenburg and Johns 2013; Curini, Jou, and Memoli 2012; Dahlberg and Holmberg 2013; Ezrow and Xezonakis 2011; Kim 2009).

Whether the same holds for agreement on policy priorities between citizens and elites has not yet been addressed, even though a growing body of research focusing on (static) agenda congruence and (dynamic) responsiveness recognises the importance of this particular link between citizens and elites (Bevan and Jennings 2014; Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008; Jennings and John 2009; Jones and Baumgartner 2004; Lindeboom 2012; Spoon and Klüver 2014).[28] What is more, the literature on valence (e.g. Clarke et al. 2009; Stokes 1963) and issue ownership voting (e.g. Budge and Farlie 1983; Green and Hobolt 2008; Petrocik 1996) shows that the extent to which elites pay attention to their concerns clearly influences citizens' political attitudes and choices, as they not only care what is done about various issues but also which issues are addressed in the political debate. For in order for citizens' preferences to become reflected in policy, the issues they are concerned about first need to be on the political agenda (Jones and Baumgartner 2004; Spoon and Klüver 2014).[29]

[28] Note that policy priorities are understood here in terms of 'the public's [and elites'] relative prioritization of the focus of government attention and activities on particular topics' (Jennings and John 2009: 844). They refer to policy priorities at the particular point in time rather than more general values. This understanding of priorities is reflected in the survey question about the most important problems currently facing the country, which is used as the measure of policy priorities (see e.g. Bartle and Laycock 2012; Jennings and Wlezien 2011; Wlezien 2005 on a heated debate about this survey item).

[29] Priority congruence may of course be the result of other mechanisms than elites' responsiveness to citizens, in particular priming and agenda-setting by elites and the media (e.g. Iyengar and Simon 1993; Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007). However, many

Policy priorities thus have very different meanings and functions than policy and ideological positions. They indicate perceived urgency and attention and are much more volatile and neutral. Left-right ideology structures deep-seated and fairly stable views on political, social, and economic relations (Campbell et al. 1960: 192; Converse 1964). Stances on specific policies may be less stable, and party positions shift in reaction to voters, competitors, and events (Adams 2012). Nevertheless, they are constrained by ideology, prior positions, and internal processes (Budge 1994; Downs 1957; Mayer 2013; Tavits 2007). Shifts in issue positions, and even more so in ideology, may entail losses of credibility and party supporters (cf. Downs 1957; Tavits 2007).

In comparison, policy priorities are less dependent on and indicative of fundamental values. In the case of spatial issues (Downs 1957), such as taxation or same-sex marriage, elites might pay attention to citizens' issue concerns while pursuing radically different aims.[30] At the same time, citizens and elites may agree on positions on a range of issues but they may disagree on the urgency of different problems. And issue attention can shift quickly without entailing a shift in issue positions.

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citizens should generally be unaware of these processes and interpret priority congruence as a result of elites' responsiveness to public opinion or, more generally, to societal needs.

[30] Priorities and positions are less distinct in the case of valence issues (e.g. Green 2007), such as unemployment or environmental protection, where there is general agreement on the desired direction of policy and preferences vary based on different priorities. In this case, priority congruence thus indicates agreement on issue importance *and* policy aim, thereby not only complementing but in fact replacing position congruence as an indicator of policy agreement. The Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) (Volkens et al. 2013) measures parties' positions based on issue salience also in the case of spatial issues. However, their issue categories are already more indicative of positions and ideology than the categories used in this paper. For instance, the CMP divides the category 'social justice and welfare' used in this paper (cf. Appendix 5.A) into 'welfare state expansion' and 'welfare state limitation'. Agreement on the importance of either of these CMP categories is much more similar to position congruence on welfare state issues than agreement on the importance of questions of social justice and welfare more generally. The same applies to the other issue categories used in this paper and by the CMP.

Changes in citizens' priorities may be caused by changes in socio-economic conditions (Behr and Iyengar 1985), events (Birkland 2006; Kingdon 1995), personal circumstances and interests (McCombs 1999), and the media's and political elites' agendas (e.g. McCombs and Shaw 1972). Elites, in turn, alter their issue emphasis in reaction to events, voters' priorities, and competitors' agendas (Banda 2013; Budge and Farlie 1983; Mayer and Wagner 2014; Sides 2006; Sigelman and Buell 2004). These dynamics can sometimes trigger rapid shifts in issue salience without necessarily entailing changes in ideological and policy opinions. Congruence in policy priorities can thus serve as a yardstick for citizens to judge elites' willingness and ability to (quickly) react to changes in their concerns and to societal circumstances in a way in which congruence in policy positions and ideology does not.

Thus, even though policy representation is certainly at its best if priorities *and* positions coincide, the perception that elites pay attention to the important issues should have some influence on democratic satisfaction in and by itself. It indicates that at least one important element of the representation process is functioning well, namely putting the right issues on the agenda. Moreover, once they are on the agenda, policies are discussed and negotiated among actors who usually represent a range of positions, and the resulting policy may be the result of a compromise that is closer to one's preference than parties' initial positions. Therefore:

Hypothesis 1: *Higher levels of priority congruence are associated with higher levels of satisfaction with democracy.*

Country-level Influences on the Strength of the Congruence-Satisfaction Link

The above argument assumes, first, that citizens value policy responsiveness (understood as responsiveness to public opinion as well as to societal problems and

needs, for sometimes citizens follow elites' agendas rather than vice versa (Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996)) as a key element of democracy and, second, that they interpret elite attention to their concerns as an indicator of responsiveness. While these may be reasonable assumptions in the context of established democracies, I explain below why they might be less applicable in newer democracies and in countries with a lower quality of democracy and governance. In these countries, the effect of priority congruence on democratic satisfaction might be weaker or non-existent.

The Moderating Role of the Quality of Democracy and Governance

Different democratic rights, institutions, and processes can be conceived of as being hierarchically ordered in terms of their importance for the functioning of democratic systems. Fundamental elements of democracy include, for instance, free and fair elections with inclusive suffrage and freedom of expression and association. In places where these rights and institutions are not taken for granted, they should be most salient in citizens' evaluation of the functioning of their democratic system.[31] The extent to which elites share their policy concerns may thus have a relatively weaker influence on their attitudes. In contrast, if the fundamental elements of democracy are in place, citizens are likely to focus on processes which still vary in their quality, such as elite's representation of and responsiveness to citizens' concerns (cf. Brandenburg and Johns 2013).

In addition to placing less emphasis on the quality of policy representation, citizens in countries where political elites are considered corrupt and not accountable

[31] Citrin, Levy and Wright's (2014) finding that immigration attitudes influence political support more strongly if the makeup of the political community is contested through multicultural policies supports the argument that citizens tend to evaluate the political system based on its most salient aspects. The argument also has similarities to Maslow's (1954) 'hierarchy of needs' model.

should be less likely to interpret congruence in preferences as an indicator of responsiveness. If elites' agendas do reflect their priorities, citizens might consider it as chance or strategy rather than as a sign of elites' commitment to the societal good. Moreover, if the link between elites' promises and actual policy is weak due to low accountability, weak legislatures, and ineffective governments and administrations, citizens are unlikely to trust that the policies promoted by elites might actually be turned into effective policy (cf. Dahlberg, Linde, and Holmberg 2013).

Lastly, the communication process between citizens and elites may not function very well in countries with democratic deficits. Thus, even if citizens were to take priority congruence into account in their evaluation of the democratic-ness of the political process, they may be less likely to be aware of elites' agendas, and particularly the opposition's. Consequently, whether political elites share citizens' priorities might not enter their satisfaction calculus. Thus:

Hypothesis 2: *The association between priority congruence and satisfaction with democracy is stronger in countries with higher levels of democracy and good governance.*

The Moderating Role of Democratic Experience

In line with recent findings by Dahlberg, Linde and Holmberg (2013), I moreover argue that the effect of perceptions of representation and responsiveness on satisfaction with democracy should be stronger in older democracies than in newer ones due to differences in conceptions of democratic rule. The way in which people understand democracy has been shown to vary with individual characteristics such as gender, education, and religiosity, but also with the political and social context (Bratton and Mattes 2001; Miller, Hesli, and Reisinger 1997). Dalton, Shin and Jou (2007) show that

citizens outside of Western democracies are more likely to define democracy in terms of social and economic benefits, rights and freedoms, and democratic institutions, while assigning less importance to processes. Analysing time-series trends, the authors find that societies' experience with democracy appears to be responsible for this pattern. The longer a country has been democratic, the more its citizens have learnt about the meaning of democracy and the more they define it in terms of institutions and procedures rather than socio-economic welfare. These results are echoed by Norris' (2011: 159) finding that 'instrumental' and 'authoritarian' notions of democracy are more prevalent in societies with less historical experience of democracy.

Even though the empirical analysis of this paper is based on EU countries, experience with democratic rule varies quite substantially within this sample. Spain, Portugal, and Greece, for instance, made the transition only in the 1970s, when the United Kingdom had already been ruled democratically for more than a century. The most important gap, however, exists between Western Europe and the post-Communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe, which have only been democratic since the 1990s.

Dalton, Shin and Jou (2007) show that citizens in formerly Communist countries are less likely to link democracy with institutions and processes while giving more weight to social and economic benefits than Western Europeans. Since 'democracy and the market have been packaged together as an ideology of opposition to communism' (Evans and Whitefield 1995: 507), citizens' ideas about the new political regime were strongly interconnected with economic expectations at the time of transition (Przeworski 1991; Rose, Mishler, and Haerpfer 1998; Toka 1995). Consequently, I expect that:

Hypothesis 3: *The association between priority congruence and satisfaction with democracy is stronger in countries that have been democratic for longer.*

Data and Method

Analysing priority congruence requires information about citizens' and elites' issue priorities during the same time period. The 2009 European Election Study (EES) includes such data in its voter survey with around one thousand respondents in each country and its survey among candidates running for European Parliament (EP) from each of the 27 EU member states (EES 2009a, 2009b). I use only the 2009 wave because previous waves either did not include an elite study or did not measure voters' and candidates' issue priorities in a comparable way.

Despite the EES' focus on the EU, all items I employ refer to the national context. Most importantly, EP candidates as well as voters are asked about the most important issues facing *their country* rather than the EU. I assume that the candidates' issue concerns are sufficiently similar to those of national political elites to serve as a valid proxy for them. In order to further improve the fit between the EP candidates' and national elites' priorities, each surveyed candidate's priorities are weighted according to his or her party's strength at the national level.

Measuring Priority Congruence

The priority congruence variable indicates to what extent a voter survey respondent's issue concerns are shared by her country's EP candidates. Both voters and candidates were asked in an open-ended question what they thought were the most, second most, and third most important problems (MIP) their country was currently facing. The issues

concerned with policy were summarised into 24 categories.[32] Each issue category's salience among a country's candidates is calculated as the relative frequency with which it was mentioned. The number of mentions are weighted based on (i) a candidates' party's vote share at the most recent national parliamentary election and (ii) the issue's importance, where most important issues count three times and second most important issues twice as much as third most important issues. This weighting takes into account that candidates' ordering of issues in accordance to their importance in the survey probably corresponds to actual differences in salience.

In most countries, issues related to the economic and financial situation were most salient among candidates. Czech and Maltese candidates considered civil rights and liberties and multiculturalism and immigration most important, respectively (cf. Appendix 5.A). Interestingly, the EU did not emerge as a particularly salient issue except in Cyprus and, to a weaker extent, in Poland. This suggests that the fact that salience is measured among EP candidates rather than politicians standing in national elections does not strongly skew the results. This is further supported by the observation that the usual 'bread and butter issues' are most salient despite the prominence of niche interests in EP and other second-order elections (e.g. Reif and Schmitt 1980). The weighting of the data ensures that the priorities of candidates of EU-specific parties (anti or pro) and other niche parties that play a small role in national politics do not disproportionally influence the salience measures.

In the second step of constructing the congruence variable, each respondent in the voter survey is assigned the salience scores of the issues he or she mentioned as the most, second most, and third most important problems. The scores for all mentioned issues are averaged, giving more weight to more important issues based on the same 3-

[32] The issue categories and their relative salience among candidates in each country are listed in Appendix 5.A (Table 5.A.1).

2-1 weighting scheme as the one used for candidates. Again, the reason is that citizen' replies to the rank-ordered survey items are likely to reflect an actual rank order in their concerns.[33] We thus obtain one priority congruence score for each respondent, which reflects the proportion of the candidate agenda occupied by a respondent's priorities. As an illustration of the substantive meaning of the variable, consider a hypothetical citizen from Poland who considers the economic situation as the most important problem, health care as second most important, and immigration as third most important. Polish EP candidates also give the highest importance to the economy: it accounts for 38 per cent of their issue mentions. Meanwhile, health care and immigration only account for 5 and 4 per cent, respectively (cf. Table 5.A.1 in Appendix 5.A). The citizen's priority congruence score will be (.38*3+.05*2+.04*1)/6=.213, meaning that about 21 per cent of elites' policy attention is dedicated to her issue concerns.

Theoretically, the congruence variable ranges from zero, if a respondent's issue priority is not mentioned by candidates at all, to one (or one hundred per cent), if a respondent has one issue priority and it is the only issue mentioned by all candidates. This is of course unrealistic. The observed congruence values are thus much lower, with a mean across the EU of .28. The lowest maximum congruence level can be found in Latvia with .25 and the highest, at .76, in Ireland, where at the same time the largest differences in priority congruence among citizens exist (cf. Table 5.A.2 in Appendix 5.A). A high maximum value suggests that many candidates consider the same issue as most important, making their agenda more concentrated. A lower maximum indicates that candidates' attention is more equally spread across issues. In many countries, the

[33] In Appendix 5.B, I further discuss the rationale behind the weighting scheme. I also show the results of analyses with alternative congruence variables that use only the first priority respectively equal weights for all three issues. The coefficients and their statistical significance do not vary substantially between the different operationalisations of congruence. Yet, the weighted variable used in the main analysis fits the data slightly better.

distribution of congruence among citizens has a spike at the empirical maximum, indicating that a large proportion of respondents agree with candidates on the most important issues (cf. Figure 5.A.1 in Appendix 5.A).

Measuring Satisfaction with Democracy and the Control Variables

Satisfaction with democracy is measured by a four-level variable based on the item 'On the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [country]? Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied, or not at all satisfied?' I include a range of control variables to increase confidence that the estimated relationship between priority congruence and democratic satisfaction is not spurious (cf. Appendix 5.C, Table 5.C.1 for details on variable construction). *Age* in years, a *female* dummy, *education*, and *social class* are included as socio-demographic controls. Moreover, I include the strength of *party identification*, since '[p]eople who identify strongly with a party tend to be much more supportive of the idea that the political system functions properly than people without strong party attachment' (Anderson et al. 2005: 76; Miller and Listhaug 1990).

Two variables account for the well-known influence of economic conditions on democratic satisfaction (Borre 2000; Dalton 2004; Kim 2009), namely the development of the *economic situation* over the previous twelve months and *economic expectations* with regard to the next twelve months. Furthermore, since election *winners* tend to be more satisfied (e.g. Anderson et al. 2005; Anderson and Guillory 1997; Blais and Gelineau 2007; Singh 2014), I include a measure of whether a respondent's vote in the most recent parliamentary election went to a party that was part of the government when the survey was conducted. I also include respondents' *left-right position*, since left-leaning citizens tend to be less satisfied with democracy (Anderson and Singer 2008). In

order to control for ideological congruence (Curini, Jou, and Memoli 2012; Kim 2009), I include a measure of the distance between a respondent's self-placement on the left-right dimension and the mean position of all parties calculated by averaging all respondents' party placements in a country.[34]

Since I conduct multilevel regression analysis on pooled data from all 27 EU countries, I also include several control variables on the country-level that have been found to cause differences in satisfaction with democracy (cf. Appendix 5.C, Table 5.C.2 for descriptive statistics of these variables). *GDP per capita* in 2009 measures a country's economic development (e.g. Bernauer and Vatter 2012).[35] Since election outcomes are more representative in countries with proportional election systems, citizens might be more satisfied here (Aarts and Thomassen 2008; Bernauer and Vatter 2012; Lijphart 1999). Despite mixed evidence on this effect (e.g. Aarts and Thomassen 2008; Anderson and Guillory 1997; McAllister 2005), I thus control for the discrepancy between parties' vote shares and seat shares with the *Gallagher Index* (Gallagher and Mitchell 2008).[36]

I furthermore include a measure of the *quality of democracy and governance* since we can expect citizens in more democratic countries to be more satisfied with the functioning of democracy (e.g. Wagner, Schneider, and Halla 2009). The variable will also be used to measure whether the quality of democracy moderates the relationship between priority congruence and satisfaction. It is a combination of several indices of the World Bank's 2009 *Worldwide Governance Indicators*, namely the *Voice and*

[34] Similarly to Golder and Stramski's (2010) measure, which relies on the most educated respondents' perceptions of parties' positions, this more objective measure of party positions reduces the risk of a 'projection bias' (Kedar 2005: 191; Grand and Tiemann 2013), since respondents who are more satisfied with democracy may place parties closer to their own positions.
[35] Data were obtained from the World Bank (http://data.worldbank.org/).
[36] Data were obtained from the Quality of Government Institute (www.qog.pol.gu.se/data).

Accountability index, the *Control of Corruption* index, the *Government Effectiveness* index, and the *Rule of Law* index.[37] I collapsed these strongly correlated items (the average inter-item correlation between the standardised variables is .94 with Cronbach's α=.98) into an additive index. The resulting indicator shows substantial variation among the European countries (cf. Appendix 5.C) and is therefore more suitable for this study than other measures of democratic quality such as Freedom House's *Freedom of the World Index* or Polity IV, which hardly vary within Europe.

Lastly, I measure the other potential moderating variable, *age of democracy*, based on Polity IV's measure of regime durability, which indicates the number of years since the most recent regime change took place in a country, measured by a change in Polity IV's democracy score of at least three points over a period of three years or less.[38] Since it is strongly correlated with the quality of democracy (Pearson's r=.73, p<.0005, N=27), I only include it when analysing whether it moderates the congruence-satisfaction association.

Results

Exploring Cross-national Variation in the Congruence-Satisfaction Link

For a first exploration of whether priority congruence is related to satisfaction with democracy and how the association varies across countries, I estimate the relationship within each country using ordered logistic regression and controlling for the individual-level covariates (cf. Appendix 5.D). In Figure 5.1, I plot the two democracy indicators against the log-odds coefficients from all 27 countries. Although we cannot strictly

[37] Data were obtained from the World Bank (info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.asp). The website contains detailed information about each index.
[38] Data were obtained from the Quality of Government Institute (www.qog.pol.gu.se/data).

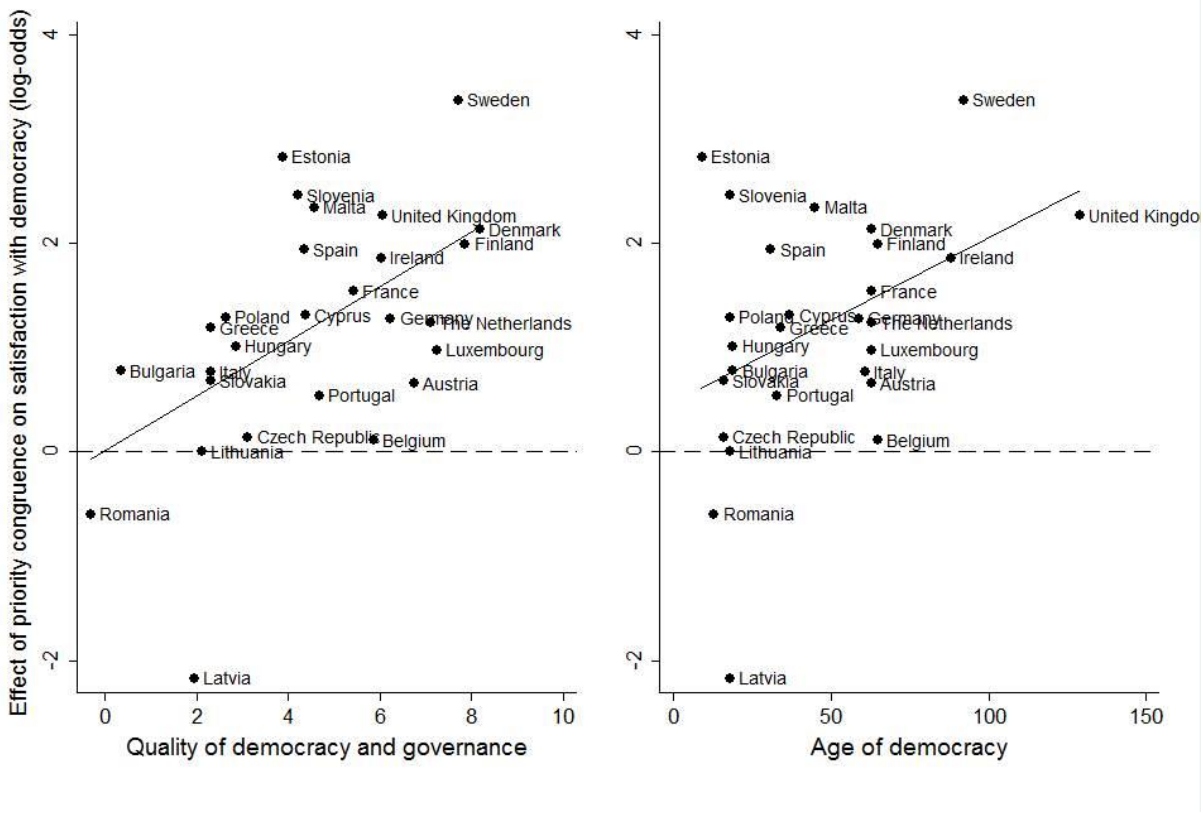


Figure 5.1. Relationship between the quality and age of democracy and the effect of priority congruence on satisfaction with democracy

Notes: The effects of priority congruence are log-odds coefficients from within-country ordered logistic regressions (cf. Appendix 5.D).

compare the coefficients and their standard errors across countries, this figure provides a first indication of how the strength of the congruence-satisfaction link varies and whether this is related to the quality and age of democracy. We see that priority congruence and satisfaction are positively associated in most countries; the negative coefficients in Romania and Latvia are insignificant (cf. Appendix 5.D). The fitted lines suggest that the relationship is stronger at higher levels of democracy and governance and increasing length of democratic rule, providing tentative support for the hypotheses.

Explaining Cross-national Variation with Multilevel Regression Analysis

For a more rigorous test of the relationships indicated in Figure 5.1, I estimate random-slope multilevel ordered logistic regression models (Table 5.1), which estimate the

Table 5.1. Moderating effects of the quality and the age of democracy on the effect of priority congruence on satisfaction with democracy

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	Coeff.	(SE)	p	Coeff.	SE	p	Coeff.	SE	p
Fixed effects									
Individual level									
Age	.00	.00	.880	.00	.00	.914	.00	.00	.619
Female	-.08	.03	.008	-.08	.03	.006	-.07	.03	.015
Education	.05	.01	.000	.05	.01	.000	.06	.01	.000
Class	.17	.02	.000	.16	.02	.000	.16	.02	.000
PID strength	.15	.02	.000	.15	.02	.000	.13	.02	.000
Economic situation	.23	.02	.000	.23	.02	.000	.21	.02	.000
Economic expectations	.33	.01	.000	.32	.01	.000	.33	.01	.000
Winner	.41	.03	.000	.42	.03	.000	.43	.03	.000
Left-right position	.03	.01	.000	.03	.01	.000	.03	.01	.000
Left-right distance	-.04	.01	.000	-.04	.01	.000	-.05	.01	.000
Priority congruence	1.28	.14	.000	1.20	.15	.000	1.21	.15	.000
Country level									
Quality of democracy	.13	.01	.000	.32	.01	.000			
Age of democracy							.00	.00	.058
GDP/capita	.01	.00	.000	.00	.00	.002	.03	.00	.000
Gallagher Index	-.03	.00	.000	-.02	.00	.000	-.04	.01	.000
Cross-level interactions									
Priority congruence * quality of democracy				.19	.07	.004			
Priority congruence * age of democracy							.01	.00	.002
Random variance									
Priority congruence	.536	(.380)		.269	(.170)		.447	(.213)	
Intercept	.225	(.017)		.264	(.018)		.335	(.019)	
Intercept-slope covariance	.105	(.083)		.094	(.073)		.215	(.085)	
Deviance	36998			36996			37020		

Notes: Coefficients are log-odds from multilevel ordered logistic regression, estimated in Stata 13. Level-1 N (individuals) = 17395; level-2 N (countries) = 27.

cross-national variance of the intercept as well as of the coefficient of priority congruence across countries. Since the effect of priority congruence on satisfaction might vary with the average satisfaction level, I also estimate the covariance of the two random components.

First, I estimate the relationship between priority congruence and democratic satisfaction across the EU countries without including any interaction terms. The results in Table 5.1 indicate that, across the EU, priority congruence has a positive and

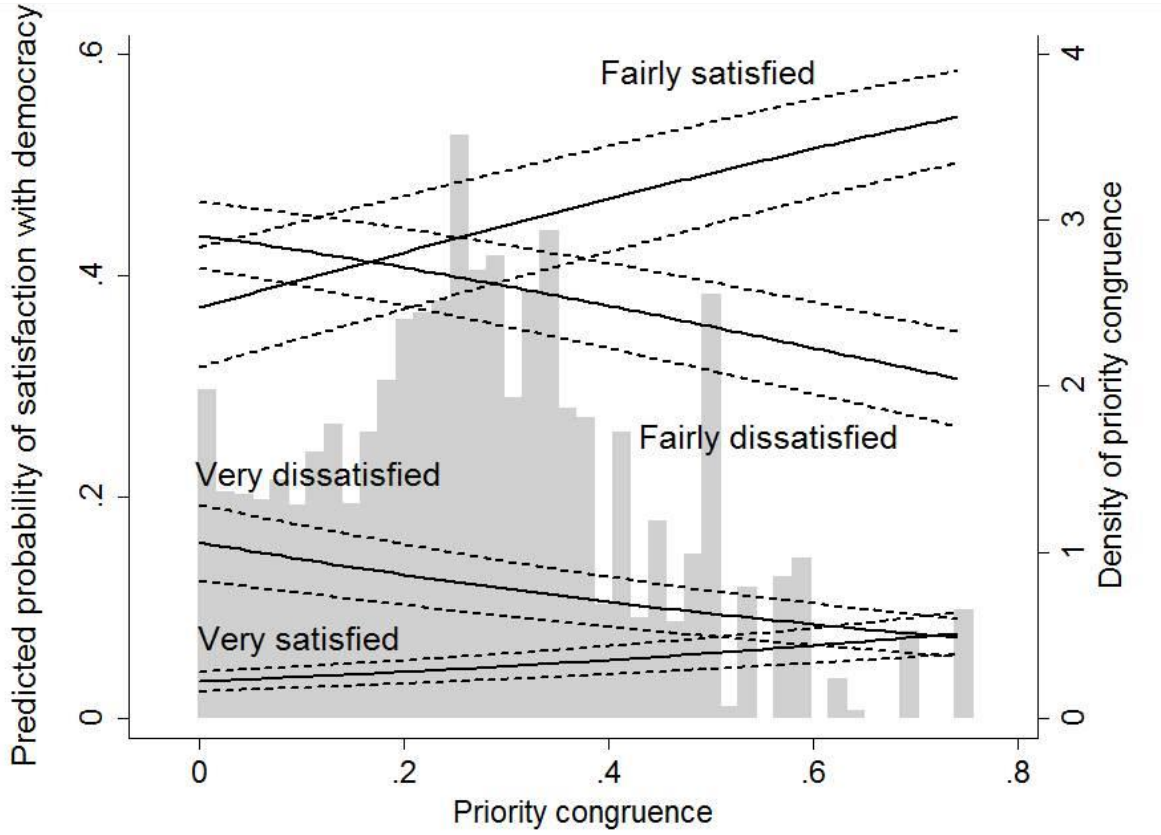


Figure 5.2. Predicted probabilities of satisfaction with democracy across priority congruence and distribution of priority congruence

Notes: Figure based on Model 1 in Table 5.1. Short-dashed lines indicate 95% confidence intervals. Covariates are held constant at their means.

significant ($p<.0005$) effect on satisfaction with democracy (Model 1). All control variables except age also have significant coefficients. Figure 5.2 illustrates that the predicted probabilities of being very or fairly satisfied increase with higher congruence, whereas the probabilities of being fairly or dissatisfied decrease. The underlying histogram indicates the distribution of priority congruence.

The variance estimate of the slope of priority congruence in Model 1 suggests that the effect of congruence on satisfaction varies quite substantially across countries. The average log-odds coefficient of priority congruence is 1.28 and its standard deviation is .73 (the square root of the slope variance estimate). The predicted log-odds coefficients thus range from -.15 to 2.71 (1.28±1.96*.73) in 95 per cent of countries. I

therefore move on to testing whether differences in the quality and age of democracy can help explain the cross-national variation in this relationship. I do so by including cross-level interaction terms between priority congruence and the quality of democracy (Model 2) and between priority congruence and the age of democracy (Model 3).

Both interaction terms are positive and significant ($p<.01$), suggesting that the relationship between congruence and satisfaction is stronger in countries with higher levels and a longer history of democracy. Hypotheses 2 and 3 are thus confirmed.[39] Figures 5.3 and 5.4 illustrate these relationships. Specifically, they show the difference between the probabilities of individuals with higher and lower levels of priority congruence (i.e., at one standard deviation above and below the mean) of being at each level of satisfaction, relative to the probability of the individual with lower congruence. The relative differences takes account of the fact that the overall probabilities of the different levels of democratic satisfaction change with democratic age and quality, which means that absolute differences in probabilities may express different relative differences at different points of the x-axis.

We see that, at very low levels of democratic quality, the probabilities of being dissatisfied or satisfied do not significantly differ between individuals with higher and

[39] As robustness checks, I re-estimated Models 2 and 3 while excluding the countries that are clear outliers either in terms of their relationship between congruence and satisfaction or in terms of democratic quality and age (cf. Figure 5.1). The interaction effects remain significant at $p<.05$ when excluding Latvia and Romania (either individually or at the same time) and when excluding Sweden. When excluding the UK from Model 3 because of its exceptionally early democratic transition, the congruence-satisfaction relationship still significantly ($p<.01$) varies with democratic age. Moreover, since many of the younger democracies used to be Communist, it is possible that the observed effect of democratic age is actually caused by a divide between the post-Communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe (Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania, and Bulgaria) and the other EU members. However, I find no significant variation in the congruence-satisfaction link between the post-Communist and the other European countries. A range of further robustness checks, taking into account the differential response rates in the candidate surveys and the role of the economy, are discussed and performed in Appendix 5.E.

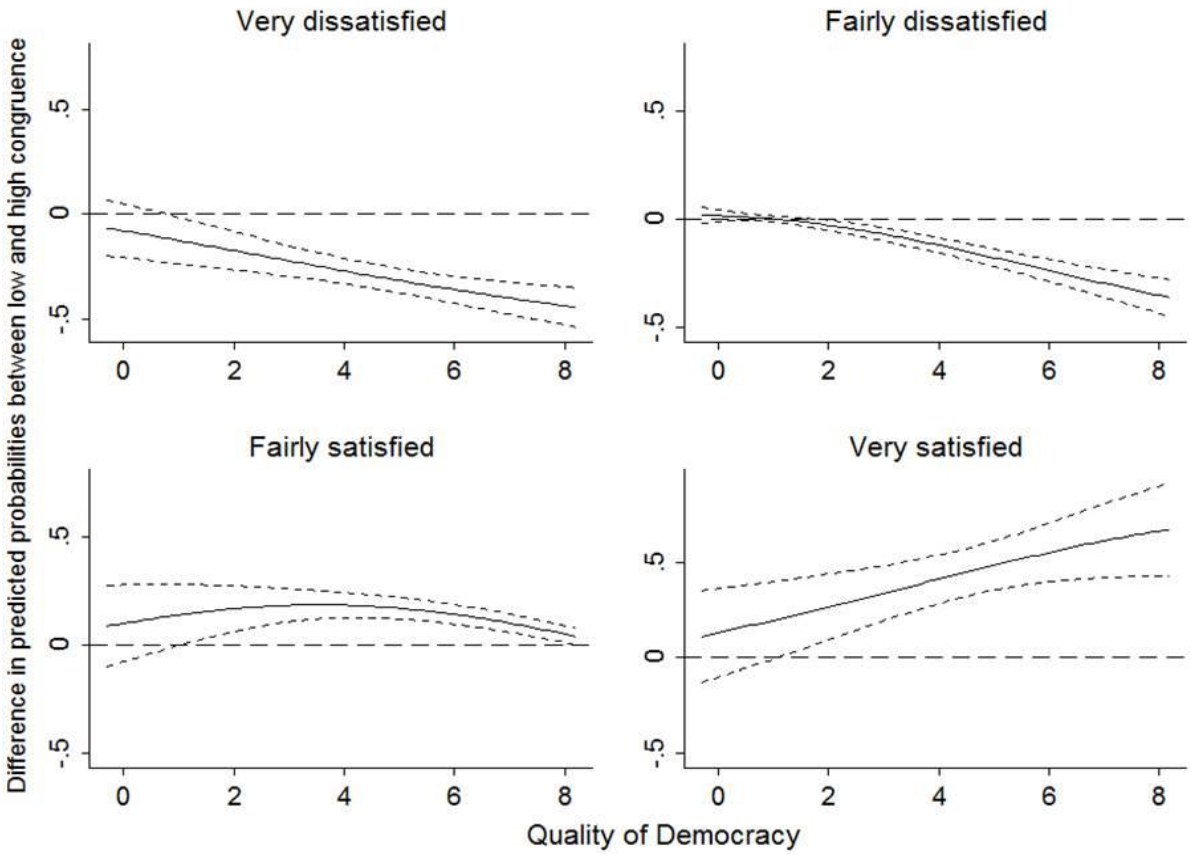


Figure 5.3. Variation in predicted differences in probabilities of democratic satisfaction between low and high priority congruence across the quality of democracy and governance

Notes: Figure based on Model 2 in Table 5.1. Low (high) priority congruence = 1 standard deviation below (above) the mean. Short-dashed lines indicate 95% confidence intervals. Covariates are held constant at their means.

lower levels of priority congruence, since the confidence interval includes zero (Figure 5.3). With increasing democratic quality, the effect of priority congruence on satisfaction becomes stronger. The exception is the effect of priority congruence on being 'fairly satisfied': while initially increasing with democratic quality, the relationship becomes weaker again at high levels democratic quality.

The age of democracy has a similar effect on the congruence-satisfaction link, as Figure 5.4 shows. The relative difference in predicted probabilities between a low and a high-priority individual is close to zero in societies with very recent democratic

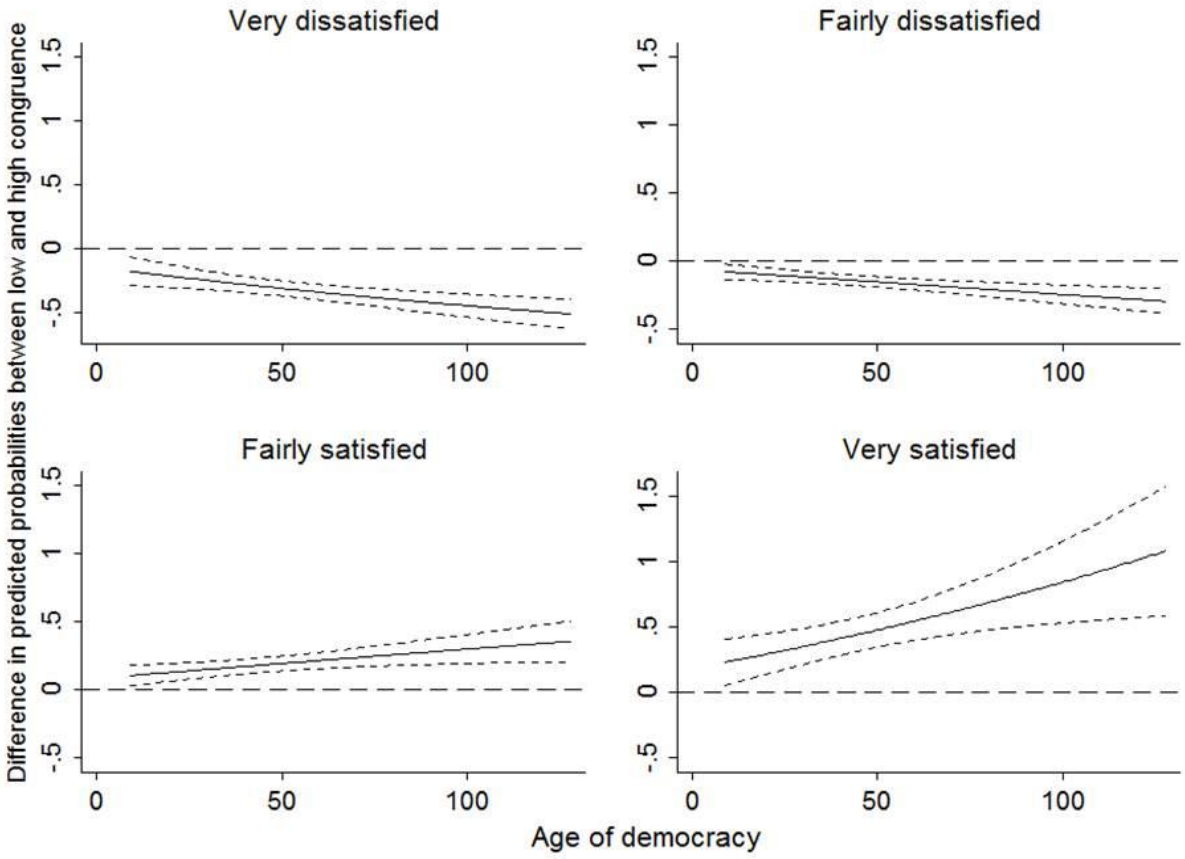


Figure 5.4. Variation in predicted differences in probabilities of democratic satisfaction between low and high priority congruence across the age of democracy

Notes: Figure based on Model 3 in Table 5.1. Low (high) priority congruence = 1 standard deviation below (above) the mean. Short-dashed lines indicate 95% confidence intervals. Covariates are held constant at their means.

transitions. It increases with increasing age of democracy, since it moves away from the dashed line indicating no difference in either direction. Here, the pattern is also observed for the category of 'fairly satisfied'.

Conclusion

Debating and implementing citizens' policy preferences are among the main tasks of political representatives in democratic systems. Citizens' evaluations of the democratic process are thus commonly expected to reflect the extent to which political elites reflect their preferences (Aarts and Thomassen 2008; McAllister 2005; Muller 1970). Previous

research has confirmed this expectation, showing that proximity to elites on ideological and policy positions increases citizens' satisfaction with democracy (e.g. Brandenburg and Johns 2013; Ezrow and Xezonakis 2011; Kim 2009).

This paper provides new evidence on the citizen-elite policy link and democratic satisfaction. It shows that citizens not only expect the democratic process to promote congruence between their own and elites' policy positions but also to ensure that elites pay attention to the issues they consider important. This is not too surprising, considering that a problem is unlikely to be addressed by policy if it is not on elites' agendas, regardless of elites' positions on the issue (Jones and Baumgartner 2004; Spoon and Klüver 2014).

Priority congruence might moreover matter to citizens above and beyond congruence in ideological and policy positions because it can serve as an indicator of elites' short-term policy responsiveness to events, societal developments, and changes in public opinion. Since issue attention can shift without entailing changes in fundamental political beliefs or even positions on specific issues, it is more volatile, which can be exploited by elites to show citizens that they are fully dedicated to improving society's welfare and their voters' situation.

Future research should investigate whether the effects of congruence in terms of priorities and in terms of (ideological) positions are strictly additive, as the results of this study suggest, or whether they also interact. For elite attention to citizens' concerns may have an even stronger effect if their policy aims regarding this issue also correspond. Vice versa, citizens might consider it even more important that parties' policy positions reflect their own if they care about the issues that are on the policy agenda. Answering these questions requires collecting data on citizens' and elites' priorities and positions on a comprehensive set of issues, which does not currently exist.

The second main insight provided by this paper is that the association between priority congruence and satisfaction is limited to countries with higher levels of democracy and governance and to older democracies. No relationship between congruence and satisfaction was observed in countries like Romania, Lithuania, and Portugal, where society has not yet had as much time as in many other EU countries to experience democracy and where some fundamental aspects of democratic systems are deficient. The analyses presented in Appendix 5.F suggest that both the link between objective priority congruence and perceived elite responsiveness and that between perceived responsiveness and democratic satisfaction are moderated by the quality and the age of democracy.

This suggests that, on the one hand, citizens' trust in elites to base their policy agendas on society's needs and citizens' preferences might generally be low in less established democracies. Hence, priority congruence might be seen as coincidental. Alternatively, citizens might not even be aware of candidates' priorities due to a lack of effective communication between politicians and the public in these countries. In particular, opposition parties might find it difficult to make their policy programmes known to citizens if the government controls large sections of the mass media.

On the other hand, citizens in less established democracies do not seem to assign much importance to elite attention to their concerns when judging the quality of democracy, echoing Dahlberg, Linde and Holmberg's (2013) finding that the perceived quality of representation affects democratic satisfaction only in older democracies. This may be because fundamental democratic rights and freedoms are more salient to them or because their understanding of what defines a democracy is based on outputs and institutions more than processes, particularly in post-Communist societies (Dalton, Shin, and Jou 2007; Evans and Whitefield 1995; Norris 2011). This variety of different

potential explanations for heterogeneity in democracy evaluation calculi calls for further research.

In addition, future studies should seek to disentangle the highly correlated variables of democratic age and quality in order to confirm that both influence the congruence-satisfaction link. This may be feasible with a sample that goes beyond the EU, where quality and age of democracy may be less strongly correlated. Extending the analysis to other world regions would moreover show whether the results are generalizable to all democracies, since the theoretical argument itself is not restricted to the European context.

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APPENDIX 5.A: Issue Salience and Priority Congruence

Table 5.A.1. Weighted salience of issue categories among each EU country's EP candidates

	Belgium	Czech Rep.	Denmark	Germany	Estonia	Greece	Spain	France	Ireland	Italy	Cyprus	Latvia	Lithuania	Luxem-bourg
Civil rights & liberties	.06	.33	.06	.02	.03	.09	.01	.04	.00	.03	.09	.16	.18	.05
Health	.01	.00	.00	.01	.05	.02	.00	.01	.00	.01	.12	.02	.02	.00
Agriculture	.00	.00	.03	.00	.00	.00	.01	.01	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Education	.01	.02	.00	.05	.00	.04	.26	.03	.00	.05	.07	.02	.03	.06
Environment	.07	.09	.14	.05	.01	.00	.00	.07	.05	.02	.04	.00	.00	.02
Energy	.00	.03	.00	.02	.03	.00	.00	.01	.03	.00	.00	.00	.15	.01
Law, crime, and domestic security	.00	.01	.08	.00	.00	.16	.14	.00	.00	.06	.00	.00	.01	.00
Social justice & welfare	.02	.01	.07	.12	.10	.05	.00	.11	.00	.06	.00	.10	.05	.27
Military and defence	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Science, Technology & Communications	.00	.01	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.03	.00	.07	.00	.00	.00	.00
Foreign affairs & EU	.01	.00	.05	.01	.00	.00	.00	.02	.04	.01	.41	.01	.01	.00
Elderly	.03	.04	.00	.01	.11	.00	.00	.02	.00	.02	.00	.03	.00	.00
Family	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.01	.03	.00	.00	.01	.00	.00
Regional and local administration	.13	.07	.03	.05	.04	.07	.05	.02	.00	.06	.02	.08	.04	.00
Culture	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.03	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.02
Church and Religion	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Multiculturalism and immigration	.13	.02	.10	.02	.06	.06	.01	.07	.00	.09	.02	.10	.07	.00
Economic system	.04	.08	.11	.11	.12	.03	.02	.05	.10	.13	.00	.21	.04	.00
Economic and financial situation	.48	.25	.31	.51	.42	.46	.50	.50	.76	.38	.24	.25	.41	.57
Transport	.01	.00	.01	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Human interest	.00	.03	.00	.00	.01	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Response rate in %	43.6	20.9	30.4	33.5	32.4	21.4	19.1	16.6	17.8	13.6	26.7	47.0	25.5	41.7

[*Table 5.A.1 continued*]

	Hungary	Malta	Netherlands	Austria	Poland	Portugal	Slovenia	Slovakia	Finland	Sweden	UK	Bulgaria	Romania
Civil rights & liberties	.18	.05	.05	.01	.03	.09	.02	.11	.10	.06	.07	.07	.35
Health	.00	.01	.00	.00	.05	.00	.00	.02	.02	.02	.01	.00	.02
Agriculture	.00	.00	.00	.00	.02	.00	.00	.02	.01	.00	.00	.00	.00
Education	.00	.00	.01	.02	.00	.12	.00	.00	.00	.01	.03	.00	.02
Environment	.00	.03	.16	.05	.02	.00	.20	.04	.16	.21	.16	.00	.00
Energy	.00	.04	.04	.00	.10	.03	.00	.02	.00	.00	.02	.00	.03
Law, crime, and domestic security	.00	.00	.02	.05	.01	.08	.02	.00	.00	.02	.05	.09	.00
Social justice & welfare	.12	.01	.01	.07	.00	.02	.06	.01	.11	.11	.05	.12	.01
Military and defence	.00	.00	.00	.04	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.01	.00	.00
Science, Technology & Communications	.00	.00	.00	.00	.18	.00	.00	.00	.00	.01	.01	.00	.06
Foreign affairs & EU	.01	.00	.00	.00	.13	.02	.12	.07	.01	.02	.04	.00	.03
Elderly	.00	.00	.00	.01	.00	.00	.00	.04	.09	.00	.03	.00	.01
Family	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.03	.00	.01	.00	.00	.00	.00
Regional and local administration	.08	.00	.00	.01	.01	.00	.01	.00	.02	.01	.00	.03	.09
Culture	.00	.00	.09	.00	.01	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.01	.00	.00
Church and Religion	.00	.00	.02	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Multiculturalism and immigration	.12	.38	.15	.18	.04	.00	.01	.11	.04	.05	.02	.00	.02
Economic system	.01	.12	.01	.22	.01	.03	.26	.02	.12	.12	.02	.00	.02
Economic and financial situation	.48	.34	.44	.35	.38	.59	.25	.53	.32	.34	.49	.69	.34
Transportation	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.04	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Human interest	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Response rate in %	22.8	43.8	26.5	33.3	6.2	14.2	28.4	27.3	39.3	47.9	29.3	5.1	11.3

Table 5.A.2. Descriptives of priority congruence by country

	Mean	Std. dev.	Minimum	Maximum	N
Belgium	.30	.15	.00	.48	690
Czech Republic	.20	.09	.00	.33	907
Denmark	.17	.09	.00	.31	873
Germany	.38	.14	.00	.51	861
Estonia	.28	.12	.00	.42	930
Greece	.28	.12	.00	.46	937
Spain	.37	.12	.00	.50	982
France	.29	.15	.00	.50	967
Ireland	.48	.24	.00	.76	947
Italy	.20	.11	.00	.38	867
Cyprus	.29	.09	.00	.41	883
Latvia	.17	.06	.00	.25	908
Lithuania	.25	.09	.00	.35	926
Luxembourg	.40	.17	.00	.57	905
Hungary	.30	.13	.00	.48	778
Malta	.23	.11	.00	.38	904
Netherlands	.27	.14	.00	.44	792
Austria	.23	.10	.00	.35	829
Poland	.23	.12	.00	.38	845
Portugal	.38	.21	.00	.59	948
Slovenia	.17	.07	.00	.26	910
Slovakia	.37	.16	.00	.53	927
Finland	.21	.10	.00	.32	852
Sweden	.18	.09	.00	.34	916
UK	.25	.16	.00	.49	866
Bulgaria	.37	.25	.00	.69	831
Romania	.24	.10	.00	.35	923
Total	.28	.16	.00	.76	23904

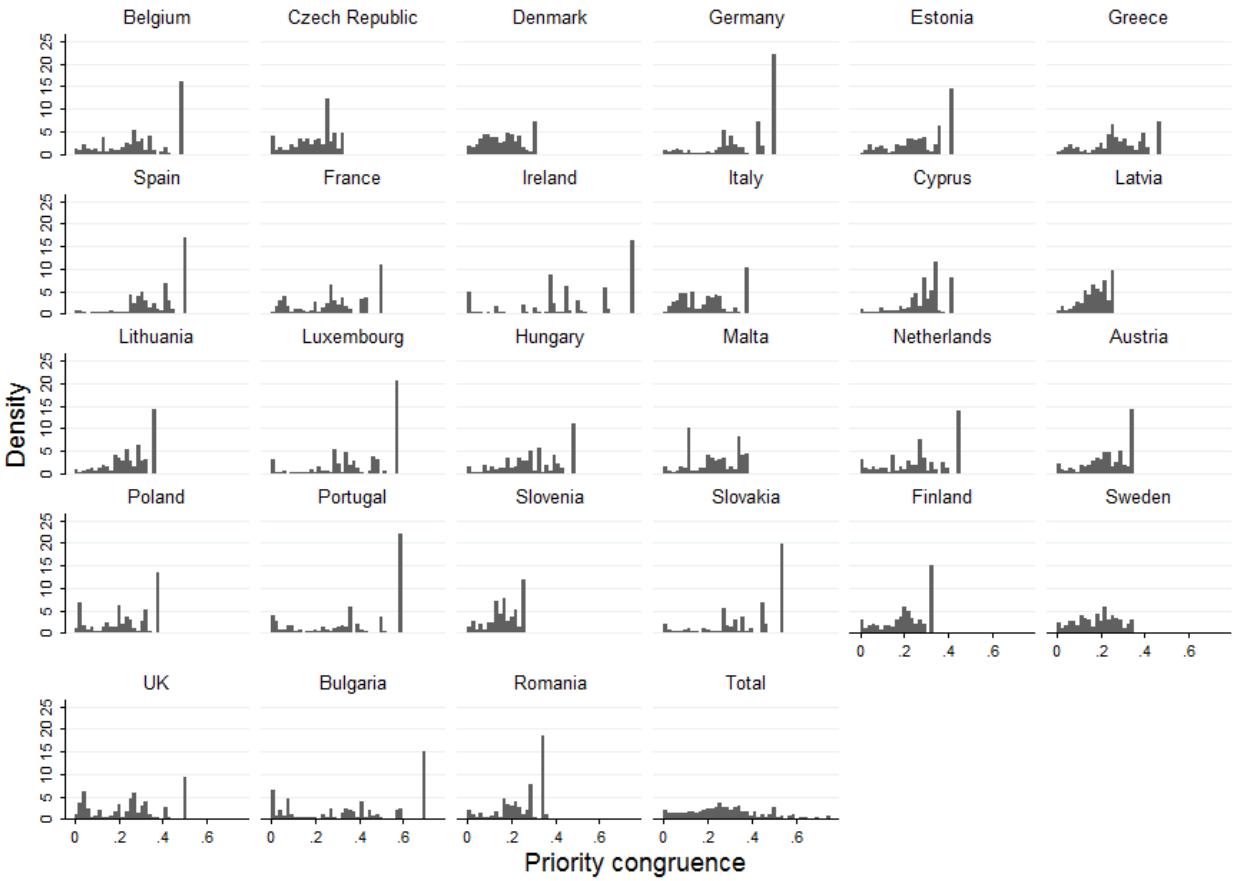


Figure 5.A.1. Distribution of priority congruence by country and in pooled EU sample

APPENDIX 5.B.: Alternative Specifications of Priority Congruence

In the main analysis, I weight candidates' issue priorities and those of respondents in the voter survey according to the indicated importance of the issues. In both the voter and the candidate surveys, respondents are first asked what they consider to be the most important problem their country is currently facing. After they reply to this question, they are asked about the second and subsequently about the third most important problem. If individuals assign different levels of importance to issues they consider to be problematic for their country, asking for one issue after the other should result in replies that reflect the issues' actual rank-order of importance.

Thus, by giving less weight to candidates' second most important issues than to their most important issues, and even less to their third important issues, I take into account that this rank-order probably reflects the issues' relative position on their policy agendas. It is thus likely that citizens will also perceive candidates' most important issues as more salient than their second and third most important issues.

In turn, citizens should find it more important that elites pay attention to the more urgent problems. Hence, their overall impression of priority congruence should be most strongly based on elites' attention to the issue they consider most important. Yet, they should also take into account how much attention elites give to the issues that are slightly less important but nevertheless more urgent than most other issues. Lavine, Sullivan, Borgida and Thomsen's (1996) findings support this argument: the more important respondents consider an issue, the more accessible their attitudes towards it, suggesting that issues influence political attitude-formation and choice process in proportion to their salience.

The 3-2-1 weighting scheme I apply in the article to both candidates' and citizens' priorities is one possible way to empirically account for these differences in

salience and importance. In order to empirically test the validity of this particular weighting scheme, I replicate Model 1 from Table 5.1, which estimates the effect of priority congruence on satisfaction without taking differences in democratic age and quality into account. In these replications, I use two alternative measures of congruence.

The first variable measures the salience of respondents' priorities without weighting them (issue salience among candidates is still calculated according to the original weighting scheme). It assumes that respondents either have no clear rank-order among their most important issue concerns or that the survey items included in the EES do not capture it.

The second specification only takes respondents' most important problem into account, ignoring the second and third most important issues. This specification reflects the view that citizens' capacity and willingness to spend cognitive effort on political matters is limited and that they use heuristics to form opinions and make choices (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Lau and Redlawsk 2001; Popkin 1991). Citizens' may use evaluations of elites' attention to their single most important concern as a heuristic to judging elite responsiveness more generally.

All three variants of the congruence variable are highly correlated with each other (cf. Table 5.B.1). This is partly due to the fact that some respondents indicate only one issue priority (19 per cent) while others' concerns fall into the same issue category (12 per cent). Accordingly, it is not surprising that the multilevel ordered logit regression results in Table 5.B.2 show that the two alternative specifications of the congruence have similarly positive and significant ($p<.0005$) effects on satisfaction as the weighted variable. The results reported in the paper are thus robust to different specifications of the explanatory variable.

However, both Models 1 and 2 in Table 5.B.2 have higher deviance values than Model 1 in Table 5.1, suggesting that the weighted congruence variable indeed fits the data better than the two alternative specifications. The assumption that respondents' indicated first, second, and third most important issues reflect actual differences in importance thus appear justified.

Table 5.B.1. Correlations between different measures of priority congruence

	Same weights (1-1-1)	Only most important problem
Different weights (3-2-1)	.97	.86
Same weights (1-1-1)		.73

Notes: Coefficients are Pearson's r. All coefficients are statistically significant at p<.0005. N=23904.

Table 5.B.2. Testing the relationship between satisfaction with democracy and alternative priority congruence variables (re-estimations of Model 1, Table 5.1)

	Model 1			Model 2		
	Coeff.	(SE)	p	Coeff.	SE	p
Fixed effects						
Individual level						
Age	.00	(.00)	.735	.00	(.00)	.865
Female	-.08	(.03)	.007	-.08	(.03)	.007
Education	.05	(.01)	.000	.04	(.01)	.000
Class	.15	(.02)	.000	.16	(.02)	.000
PID strength	.14	(.02)	.000	.14	(.02)	.000
Economic situation	.23	(.02)	.000	.23	(.02)	.000
Economic expectations	.32	(.01)	.000	.33	(.01)	.000
Winner	.42	(.03)	.000	.41	(.03)	.000
Left-right position	.03	(.01)	.000	.03	(.01)	.000
Left-right distance	-.04	(.01)	.000	-.04	(.01)	.000
Priority congruence: not weighted	1.24	(.11)	.000			
Priority congruence: only first priority				.99	(.13)	.000
Country level						
Quality of democracy	.25	(.01)	.000	.23	(.01)	.000
GDP/capita	.00	(.00)	.001	.00	(.00)	.003
Gallagher Index	-.02	(.00)	.000	-.04	(.00)	.000
Random variance						
Priority congruence	.108	(.118)		.251	(.093)	
Constant	.236	(.017)		.132	(.009)	
Constant-slope covariance	.122	(.052)		.034	(.032)	
Deviance	37053			37016		

Notes: Coefficients are log-odds from multilevel ordered logistic regression, estimated in Stata 13. Level-1 N (individuals) = 17395; level-2 N (countries) = 27.

References (Appendix 5.B)

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APPENDIX 5.C. Variable Descriptions

Table 5.C.1. Description of individual-level variables

Label	Survey item / construction	Coding	Mean (std. dev.) (pooled sample)
Satisfaction with democracy	"On the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [country]? Are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied?"	0 = Very dissatisfied 1 = Fairly dissatisfied 2 = Fairly satisfied 3 = Very satisfied	2.48 (.86)
Age		Years (18-99)	50.29 (16.91)
Female		0 = male, 1 = female	.56 (.50)
Education	Highest qualification obtained based on ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education) (http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/international-standard-classification-of-education.aspx)	0 = Pre-primary education … 6 = Tertiary education (second stage) (leading to PhD or doctorate)	3.46 (1.38)
Subjective social class	"If you were asked to choose one of these five names for your social class, which would you say you belong to – […]?"	1 = Working class 2 = Lower middle class 3 = Middle class 4 = Upper middle class 5 = Upper class	2.99 (.99)
Strength of party identification	"Do you consider yourself to be close to any particular party? If so, which party do you feel close to?"; if "yes", "Do you feel yourself to be very close to this party, fairly close, or merely a sympathiser?"	0 = No ID 1 = Merely a sympathiser 2 = Fairly close 3 = Very close	.99 (1.00)
Evaluation of the current economic situation	"What do you think about the economy? Compared to 12 months ago, do you think that the general economic situation in [country] is […]?"	1 = A lot worse 2 = A little worse 3 = Same 4 = A little better 5 = A lot better	1.85 (.95)
Economic expectations	"And over the next 12 months, how do you think the general economic situation in this country will be? Will it […]?	1 = Get a lot worse 2 = Get a little worse 3 = Stay the same 4 = Get a little better 5 = Get a lot better	2.77 (1.13)
Winner	Dummy indicating whether the party for which a respondent indicated to have voted in the last national parliamentary election was part of the national government at the time of the survey.	1 = Winner 0 = Loser/abstained/not eligible to vote	.38 (.48)
Left-right position	"In political matters people talk of 'the left' and 'the right'. What is your position? Please indicate your views using any number on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means 'left' and 10 means 'right'."	Range: 0-10	5.33 (2.72)
Left-right distance	Distance between own position ("In political matters people talk of 'the left' and 'the right'. What is your position? Please indicate your views using any number on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means 'left' and 10 means 'right'.") and mean of major parties' positions measured by mean of respondents' party placements ("And about where would you place the following parties on this scale? …")	Range: 0-10	2.46 (1.93)

Table 5.C.2. Values of country-level variables

	Quality of democracy and governance	Age of democracy	GDP per capita, 2009 (in $1000 ppp)	Gallagher Index
Mean (std. dev.)	4.453 (2.326)	45.064 (29.047)	31424.69 (19860.25)	4.91 (3.55)
Range	-0.317 – 8.190	9 – 129	6403 – 100541	.72 – 16.73
Belgium	5.873	65	43848	3.37
Czech Republic	3.123	16	18806	5.72
Denmark	8.190	63	56227	0.72
Germany	6.237	59	40275	2.16
Estonia	3.882	9	14264	3.43
Greece	2.301	34	28452	6.99
Spain	4.352	31	31714	4.49
France	5.418	63	40477	13.58
Ireland	6.028	88	50034	5.85
Italy	2.311	61	35073	3.61
Cyprus	4.386	37	29428	2.42
Lithuania	1.956	18	11034	11.14
Latvia	2.108	18	11476	4.77
Luxembourg	7.240	63	100541	3.36
Hungary	2.868	19	12635	5.13
Malta	4.562	45	19564	1.44
Netherlands	7.118	63	48174	1.03
Austria	6.755	63	45859	2.92
Poland	2.642	18	11294	4.67
Portugal	4.678	33	22016	5.75
Slovenia	4.208	18	24051	3.89
Slovakia	2.315	16	16100	5.53
Finland	7.865	65	44838	3.20
Sweden	7.713	92	43640	3.02
UK	6.057	129	35331	16.73
Bulgaria	0.350	19	6403	3.97
Romania	-0.317	13	7500	3.74

APPENDIX 5.D. The Relationship between Priority Congruence and Satisfaction with Democracy in each EU Country

	Coefficient	(SE)	p-value	Pseudo R^2	LR chi^2	N
Belgium	.11	(.64)	.861	.05	48.15***	460
Czech Republic	.14	(.79)	.857	.06	95.97***	710
Denmark	**2.13**	**(.82)**	**.009**	**.04**	**61.22*** **	**789**
Germany	**1.28**	**(.57)**	**.024**	**.06**	**90.99*** **	**672**
Estonia	**2.86**	**(.70)**	**.000**	**.09**	**133.21*** **	**610**
Greece	**1.19**	**(.58)**	**.040**	**.06**	**103.30*** **	**785**
Spain	**1.94**	**(.59)**	**.001**	**.06**	**115.70*** **	**760**
France	**1.54**	**(.50)**	**.002**	**.09**	**138.83*** **	**680**
Ireland	**1.86**	**(.29)**	**.000**	**.05**	**101.58*** **	**764**
Italy	.77	(.77)	.320	.10	128.88***	549
Cyprus	1.31	(.91)	.149	.10	154.75***	672
Latvia	-2.17	(1.34)	.106	.06	78.65***	636
Lithuania	.00	(.91)	.997	.06	73.93***	548
Luxembourg	**.98**	**(.50)**	**.049**	**.07**	**91.06*** **	**676**
Hungary	1.01	(.61)	.099	.05	63.00***	602
Malta	**2.34**	**(.89)**	**.009**	**.10**	**98.31*** **	**395**
Netherlands	**1.23**	**(.59)**	**.035**	**.03**	**34.81*** **	**683**
Austria	.66	(.81)	.419	.04	62.85***	665
Poland	1.29	(.75)	.087	.06	60.18***	504
Portugal	.54	(.36)	.127	.08	110.38***	664
Slovenia	**2.46**	**(1.07)**	**.021**	**.04**	**69.33*** **	**721**
Slovakia	.68	(.52)	.189	.05	71.09***	646
Finland	**1.99**	**(.88)**	**.024**	**.08**	**100.73*** **	**702**
Sweden	**3.37**	**(.80)**	**.000**	**.07**	**111.71*** **	**786**
UK	**2.26**	**(.48)**	**.000**	**.05**	**90.95*** **	**711**
Bulgaria	**.77**	**(.36)**	**.033**	**.06**	**59.00*** **	**478**
Romania	-.59	(.86)	.491	.04	57.09***	527

Notes: Coefficients are log-odds estimates of ordered logistic regression analysis within each country. Control variables included: age, female, education, social class, economic situation, party identification, prospective economic situation, winner, left-right position, and left-right distance. Models with significant ($p<.05$) coefficients of priority congruence are marked in bold.

APPENDIX 5.E: Robustness Checks

The Role of Economic Issue Salience in Priority Congruence

In most of the 27 EU countries, economic issues were the most salient issues among EP candidates in 2009. In these countries, citizens' priority congruence thus strongly depends on whether they considered economic issues as most important. As Figure 5.E.1 shows, priority congruence increases with economic issue salience in nearly all countries. In order to ensure that the estimated effect of priority congruence is not in fact due to an effect of economic issue salience, I re-estimate the relationship between priority congruence and satisfaction while controlling for a measure of economic issue salience (where 0=respondent did not mention an economic issue, 1=third most

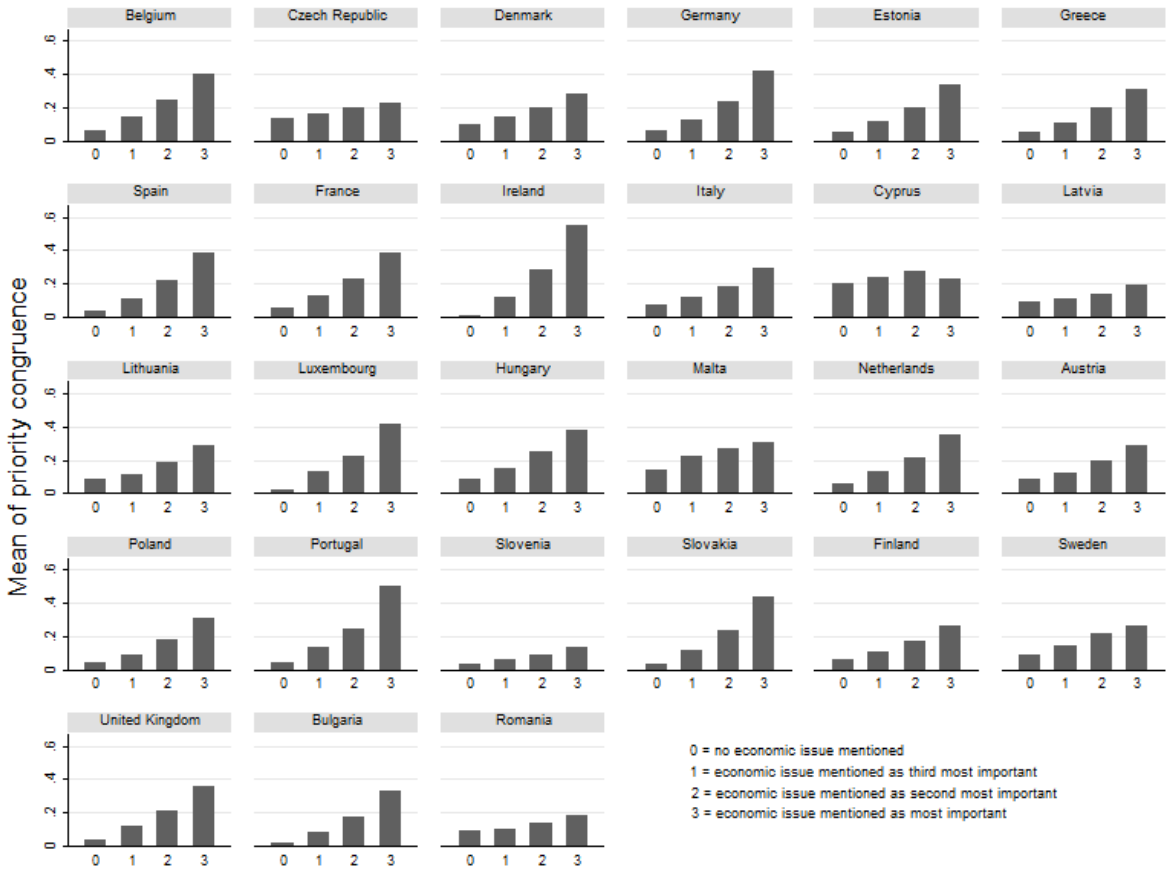


Figure 5.E.1. Mean levels of priority congruence at different levels of the salience of economic issues in EU countries

Table 5.E.1. Effects of priority congruence on satisfaction with democracy, controlling for the salience of economic issues

	Coeff.	SE	p-value
Fixed effects			
Individual level			
Age	.00	(.00)	.841
Female	-.10	(.03)	.002
Education	.06	(.01)	.000
Class	.16	(.02)	.000
PID strength	.13	(.02)	.000
Economic situation	.23	(.02)	.000
Economic expectations	.31	(.02)	.000
Winner	.41	(.03)	.000
Left-right position	.04	(.01)	.000
Left-right distance	-.04	(.01)	.000
Priority congruence	1.26	(.15)	.000
Economic issue salience	.02	(.03)	.525
Country level			
Quality of democracy	.27	(.02)	.000
GDP/capita	.00	(.00)	.035
Gallagher Index	-.01	(.00)	.003
Random variance			
Priority congruence	.117	(.214)	
Intercept	.252	(.019)	
Intercept-slope covariance	.102	(.072)	
Deviance	29542		

Notes: Coefficients are log-odds from multilevel ordered logistic regression, estimated in Stata 13. Level-1 N (individuals) = 13955; level-2 N (countries) = 27.

important, 2=second most important, and 3=most important). As we see in Table 5.E.1, the coefficient of priority congruence remains highly significant ($p<.0005$), while the salience of economic issues is not significantly associated with satisfaction. We can thus be confident that the relationship between priority congruence and satisfaction with democracy is not merely an artefact of a correlation between economic issue salience and satisfaction.

The Potential Moderating Effect of Economic Development

It is conceivable that the effect of priority congruence on democratic satisfaction is moderated by economic development, in addition to or rather than democratic quality

and age, since the public might value (economic) policy outputs over responsiveness in economically less developed societies. Since GDP per capita is strongly correlated with democratic quality (Pearson's r=.79, p<.0005) and age of democracy (Pearson's r=.65, p<.0005), we should therefore make sure that the moderation effects of the latter variables do not actually reflect a moderation effect of economic development. I therefore re-estimate the interaction models from Table 1 while controlling for the interaction between GDP per capita and congruence (Table 5.E.2).

Table 5.E.2. Moderating effects of quality and age of democracy on the relationship between of priority congruence and satisfaction with democracy, controlling for the moderating effect of GDP/capita

	Model 1			Model 2		
	Coeff.	SE	p-value	Coeff.	SE	p-value
Fixed effects						
Individual level						
Age	.00	(.00)	.657	.00	(.00)	.819
Female	-.08	(.03)	.006	-.07	(.03)	.011
Education	.05	(.01)	.000	.05	(.01)	.000
Class	.16	(.02)	.000	.16	(.02)	.000
PID strength	.14	(.02)	.000	.14	(.02)	.000
Economic situation	.22	(.02)	.000	.22	(.02)	.000
Economic expectations	.33	(.01)	.000	.32	(.02)	.000
Winner	.42	(.03)	.000	.42	(.03)	.000
Left-right position	.03	(.01)	.000	.03	(.01)	.000
Left-right distance	-.04	(.01)	.000	-.04	(.01)	.000
Priority congruence	1.33	(.14)	.000	1.26	(.19)	.000
Country level						
Quality of democracy	.35	(.01)	.000			
Age of democracy				.01	(.00)	.000
GDP/capita	.03	(.00)	.000	.04	(.00)	.000
Gallagher Index	-.01	(.00)	.163	-.06	(.01)	.000
Cross-level interactions						
Priority congruence * quality of democracy	.38	(.11)	.000			
Priority congruence * age of democracy				.02	(.01)	.014
Priority congruence * GDP/capita	-.02	(.01)	.187	.01	(.01)	.551
Random variance						
Priority congruence	.280	(.132)		.707	(.639)	
Intercept	.220	(.015)		.188	(.012)	
Intercept-slope covariance	.066	(.064)		.128	(.050)	
Deviance	37019			37030		

Notes: Coefficients are log-odds from ordered multilevel logistic regression, estimated in Stata 13. Level-1 N (individuals) = 17395; level-2 N (countries) = 27.

The coefficients of the interactions between congruence and both the quality (Model 1) and the age of democracy (Model 2) remain positive and significant ($p<.0005$ and $p<.05$, respectively), while the interaction between congruence and GDP per capita is not significant (Model 1). These results provide confidence that it is indeed the quality and age of democracy which influence whether priority congruence is associated with democratic satisfaction.

Table 5.E.3. Moderating effects of quality and age of democracy on the relationship between of priority congruence and satisfaction with democracy, controlling for the moderating effect of the candidate survey response rate

	Model 1			Model 2		
	Coeff.	SE	p-value	Coeff.	SE	p-value
Fixed effects						
Individual level						
Age	.00	(.00)	.768	.00	(.00)	.518
Female	-.08	(.03)	.008	-.08	(.03)	.007
Education	.06	(.01)	.000	.06	(.01)	.000
Class	.16	(.02)	.000	.16	(.02)	.000
PID strength	.14	(.02)	.000	.15	(.02)	.000
Economic situation	.22	(.02)	.000	.22	(.02)	.000
Economic expectations	.32	(.01)	.000	.33	(.01)	.000
Winner	.42	(.03)	.000	.41	(.03)	.000
Left-right position	.03	(.01)	.000	.03	(.01)	.000
Left-right distance	-.04	(.01)	.000	-.04	(.01)	.000
Priority congruence	1.62	(.41)	.013	.85	(.36)	.019
Country level						
Quality of democracy	.19	(.02)	.000			
Age of democracy				.00	(.00)	.000
GDP/capita	.02	(.00)	.000	.02	(.00)	.000
Gallagher Index	-.08	(.00)	.000	-.01	(.01)	.037
Response rate	.00	(.00)	.030	.02	(.00)	.000
Cross-level interactions						
Priority congruence * quality of democracy	.27	(.07)	.000			
Priority congruence * age of democracy				.01	(.00)	.253
Priority congruence * response rate	-.01	(.02)	.460	.02	(.01)	.156
Random variance						
Priority congruence	.545	(.299)		.548	(.323)	
Intercept	.124	(.010)		.327	(.019)	
Intercept-slope covariance	.057	(.049)		.179	(.091)	
Deviance	37016			37023		

Notes: Coefficients are log-odds from ordered multilevel logistic regression, estimated in Stata 13. Level-1 N (individuals) = 17395; level-2 N (countries) = 27.

Low Response Rates in Candidate Survey

While the mean response rate in the candidate survey across the EU is at 26.9 per cent, it is extremely low in some countries (5 and 6 per cent in Bulgaria and Poland, respectively (Appendix 5.A, Table 5.A.1)). If, as a consequence, the measure of issue salience amongst candidates is of a low quality in these countries, we might not find an association between priority congruence and democratic satisfaction for this reason. In turn, if the response rate is related to the quality and age of democracy, their moderation effects could be spurious. I thus re-estimate Models 2 and 3 from Table 5.1 while including an interaction term between priority congruence and the response rate (Table 5.E.3).

The moderating effect of democratic quality on the congruence-satisfaction link remains positive and significant ($p<.0005$) (Model 1). The coefficient of the interaction between congruence and age of democracy becomes insignificant, however (Model 2), suggesting that this finding may not be as robust as the interaction with the quality of democracy and governance. The candidate survey response rate in a country does not significantly influence the relationship between congruence and satisfaction.

APPENDIX 5.F: A Tentative Test of the Mediating Role of Responsiveness Perceptions

The central argument of the article is that priority congruence affects satisfaction with democracy and that this association is stronger in more democratic countries and in older democracies. Citizens whose policy priorities are emphasised by political elites should perceive them as more responsive to their concerns and to societal needs and, as a result, the democratic system as better functioning. Both the link between congruence and responsiveness perceptions and the link between responsiveness perceptions and democratic satisfaction should be stronger in established democracies. Figure 5.F.1 illustrates this proposed causal mechanism.

In the article, I do not analyse the role of the mediating variable responsiveness perceptions because the voter survey of the 2009 European Election Study does not include any items that measure precisely this concept. However, it does include a question that is close enough to serve as a proxy and can be used for a robustness check in which I test the validity of the proposed causal mechanism. The item measures agreement with the statement 'The [country's] Parliament takes into consideration the

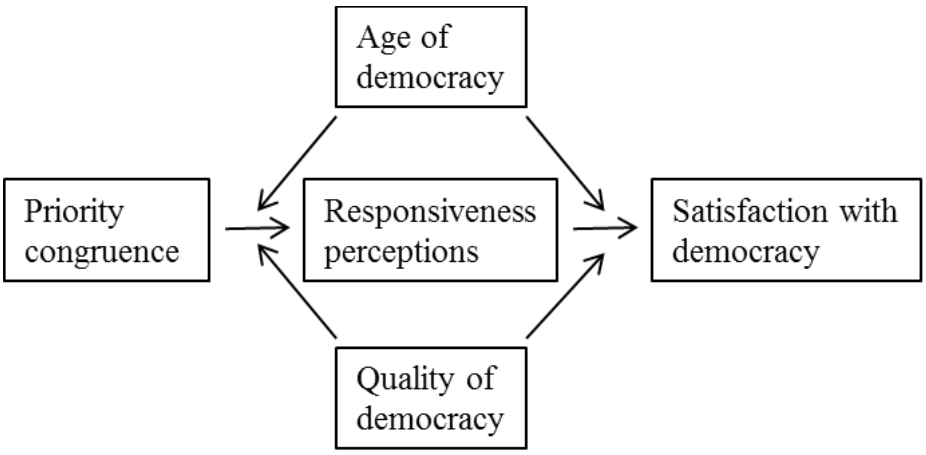


Figure 5.F.1. The proposed causal mechanism with responsiveness perceptions as a mediating variable

Table 5.F.1. Effects of priority congruence on responsiveness perceptions

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	Coeff.	(SE)	p	Coeff.	(SE)	p	Coeff.	(SE)	p
Fixed effects									
Individual level									
Age	.00	(.00)	.028	.00	(.00)	.044	.00	(.00)	.063
Female	-.12	(.03)	.000	-.11	(.03)	.000	-.11	(.03)	.000
Education	.03	(.01)	.006	.03	(.01)	.026	.03	(.01)	.015
Class	.08	(.02)	.000	.08	(.02)	.000	.08	(.02)	.000
PID strength	.12	(.02)	.000	.12	(.02)	.000	.12	(.02)	.000
Economic situation	.23	(.01)	.000	.23	(.01)	.000	.23	(.01)	.000
Economic expectations	.19	(.02)	.000	.19	(.02)	.000	.19	(.02)	.000
Winner	.35	(.03)	.000	.34	(.03)	.000	.34	(.03)	.000
Left-right position	.02	(.01)	.000	.02	(.01)	.000	.02	(.01)	.000
Left-right distance	.01	(.01)	.422	.01	(.01)	.225	.01	(.01)	.368
Priority congruence	1.02	(.14)	.000	.92	(.16)	.000	.98	(.10)	.000
Country level									
Quality of democracy	.04	(.02)	.000	.16	(.01)	.000			
Age of democracy							.01	(.00)	.000
GDP/capita	.02	(.00)	.000	.02	(.00)	.000	.02	(.00)	.000
Gallagher Index	-.02	(.00)	.040	-.04	(.00)	.000	-.03	(.01)	.000
Cross-level interactions									
Priority congruence * quality of democracy				.17	(.06)	.008			
Priority congruence * age of democracy							.01	(.00)	.000
Random variance									
Priority congruence	.172	(.139)		.200	(.103)		.000	(.001)	
Intercept	.082	(.010)		.130	(.013)		.057	(.007)	
Intercept-slope covariance	.052	(.027)		.076	(.049)		.001	(.018)	
Deviance	47669			47682			47661		

Notes: Coefficients are log-odds from multilevel ordered logistic regression, estimated in Stata 13. Level-1 N (individuals) = 17245; level-2 N (countries) = 27.

concerns of [country] citizens', with five response categories from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Since it refers to the responsiveness of parliament in particular, it is not a perfect measure of the perceived responsiveness of political elites more generally, on which the article focuses. Nevertheless, since members of parliament are an important subset of the national political elite, we may derive tentative conclusions from the item's links to priority congruence and satisfaction with democracy.

I estimate two sets of multilevel ordered logistic regressions in order to analyse whether priority congruence influences responsiveness perceptions, measured by the

abovementioned five-level variable, and whether responsiveness perceptions in turn affect satisfaction with democracy. I also analyse whether these relationships are moderated by the quality and the age of democracy. The models include the same control variables as Models 1 to 3 in Table 5.1. Table 5.F.1 shows the results of regressing responsiveness perceptions on priority congruence and the other covariates. Priority congruence indeed significantly ($p<.0005$) increases the likelihood that citizens perceive parliament as responsive (Model 1). Moreover, this relationship is significantly stronger in more democratic countries ($p<.01$; Model 2) and older democracies ($p<.0005$; Model 3).

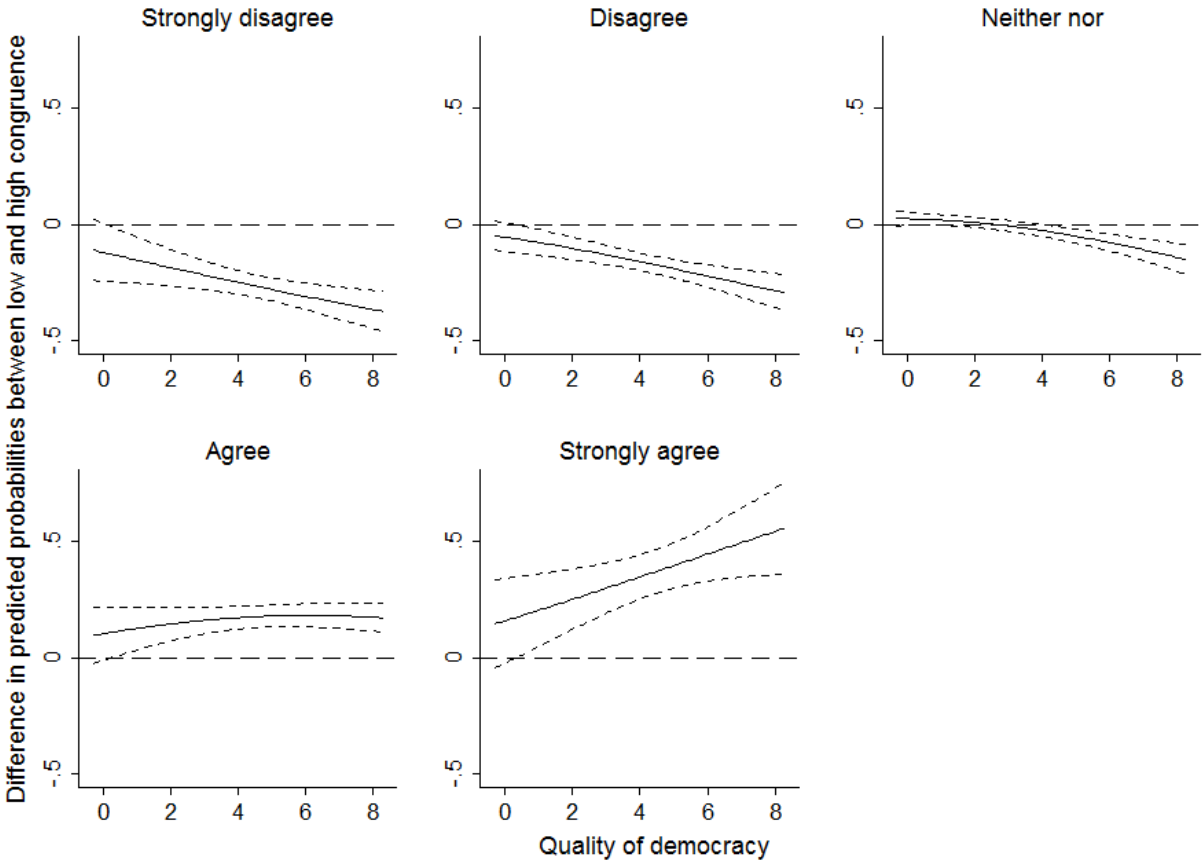


Figure 5.F.2. Variation in predicted differences in probabilities of considering parliament as representative between low and high priority congruence across the quality of democracy and governance

Notes: Figure based on Model 2 in Table 5.F.1. Low (high) priority congruence = 1 standard deviation below (above) the mean. Short-dashed lines indicate 95% confidence intervals. Covariates are held constant at their means.

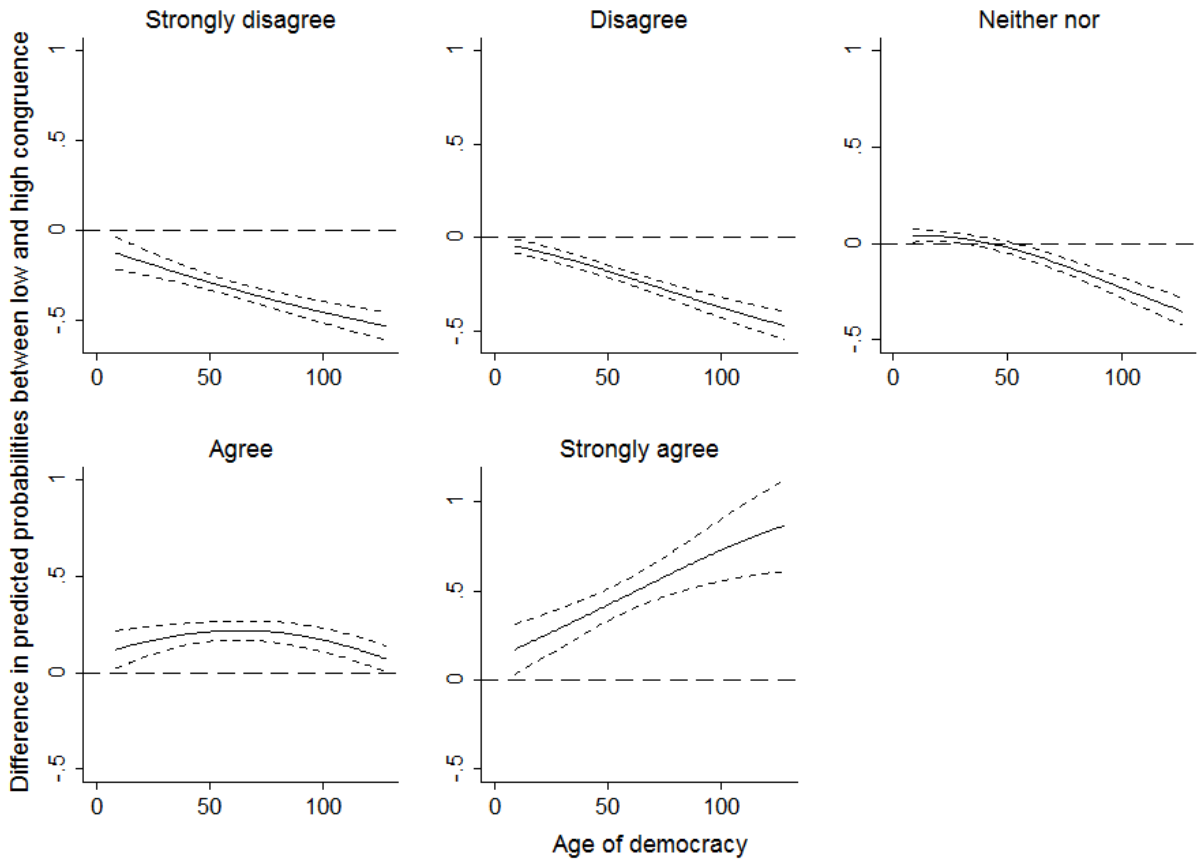


Figure 5.F.3. Variation in predicted differences in probabilities of considering parliament as representative between low and high priority congruence across the age of democracy

Notes: Figure based on Model 3 in Table 5.F.1. Low (high) priority congruence = 1 standard deviation below (above) the mean. Short-dashed lines indicate 95% confidence intervals. Covariates are held constant at their means.

Figures 5.F.2 and 5.F.3 illustrate these interaction effects. They show the change in the probabilities of being at each level of agreement with the statement that parliament takes citizens' concerns into consideration when moving from one standard deviation below the mean to one standard deviation above the mean of priority congruence. These differences are proportional to the probability at the lower level of congruence in order to account for the different mean responsiveness perceptions in countries with more and less democratic experience. We see that at low levels of democratic quality and age, a difference of two standard deviations in congruence is not associated with a difference in responsiveness perceptions. With increasing quality and

duration of democracy, citizens whose concerns are more salient among elites become more likely to find parliament very responsive and less likely to not find it responsive.

These findings can be considered as providing tentative support for the argument that citizens in less democratic countries are more suspicious of political elites. Even if elites talk about the issues citizens consider important, it might not be perceived as a sign of responsive behaviour but rather as chance or strategy. Moreover, to citizens in

Table 5.F.2. Effects of responsiveness perceptions on satisfaction with democracy

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	Coeff.	SE	p	Coeff.	SE	p	Coeff.	SE	p
Fixed effects									
Individual level									
Age	.00	(.00)	.202	.00	(.00)	.133	.00	(.00)	.161
Female	-.06	(.03)	.043	-.06	(.03)	.045	-.06	(.03)	.041
Education	.04	(.01)	.002	.04	(.01)	.002	.03	(.01)	.007
Class	.14	(.02)	.000	.14	(.02)	.000	.14	(.02)	.000
PID strength	.11	(.02)	.000	.11	(.02)	.000	.12	(.02)	.000
Economic situation	.18	(.02)	.000	.19	(.02)	.000	.19	(.02)	.000
Economic expectations	.28	(.01)	.000	.28	(.01)	.000	.28	(.01)	.000
Winner	.34	(.03)	.000	.34	(.03)	.000	.34	(.03)	.000
Left-right position	.03	(.01)	.000	.03	(.01)	.000	.03	(.01)	.000
Left-right distance	-.04	(.01)	.000	-.04	(.01)	.000	-.04	(.01)	.000
Responsiveness perceptions	.49	(.02)	.000	.44	(.02)	.000	.43	(.02)	.000
Country level									
Quality of democracy	.19	(.01)	.000	.19	(.03)	.397			
Age of democracy							.00	(.00)	.011
GDP/capita	.01	(.00)	.000	.00	(.00)	.900	.01	(.00)	.000
Gallagher Index	-.01	(.00)	.220	-.04	(.01)	.000	.00	(.01)	.426
Cross-level interactions									
Responsiveness perceptions * quality of democracy				.02	(.01)	.003			
Responsiveness perceptions * age of democracy							.00	(.00)	.000
Random variance									
Responsiveness perceptions	.025	(.003)		.025	(.003)		.013	(.002)	
Intercept	.304	(.055)		.304	(.055)		.279	(.042)	
Intercept-slope covariance	-.036	(.011)		-.036	(.011)		-.037	(.009)	
Deviance	39672			39649			39676		

Notes: Coefficients are log-odds from multilevel ordered logistic regression, estimated in Stata 13. Level-1 N (individuals) = 19127; level-2 N (countries) = 27.

countries with less accountable and more corrupt elites, it might not appear as likely that the issues on the agenda will actually be addressed by policy. A similar explanation may apply for the age of democracy. The first part of the causal mechanism proposed in the paper thus receives tentative support.

Table 5.F.2 displays the estimates of the second part of the proposed causal mechanism: the association between responsiveness perceptions and satisfaction with democracy. We find that, on average, Europeans who perceive their parliament to be more responsive to their preferences tend to be more satisfied with democracy ($p<.0005$; Model 1). Again, the association between responsiveness perceptions and

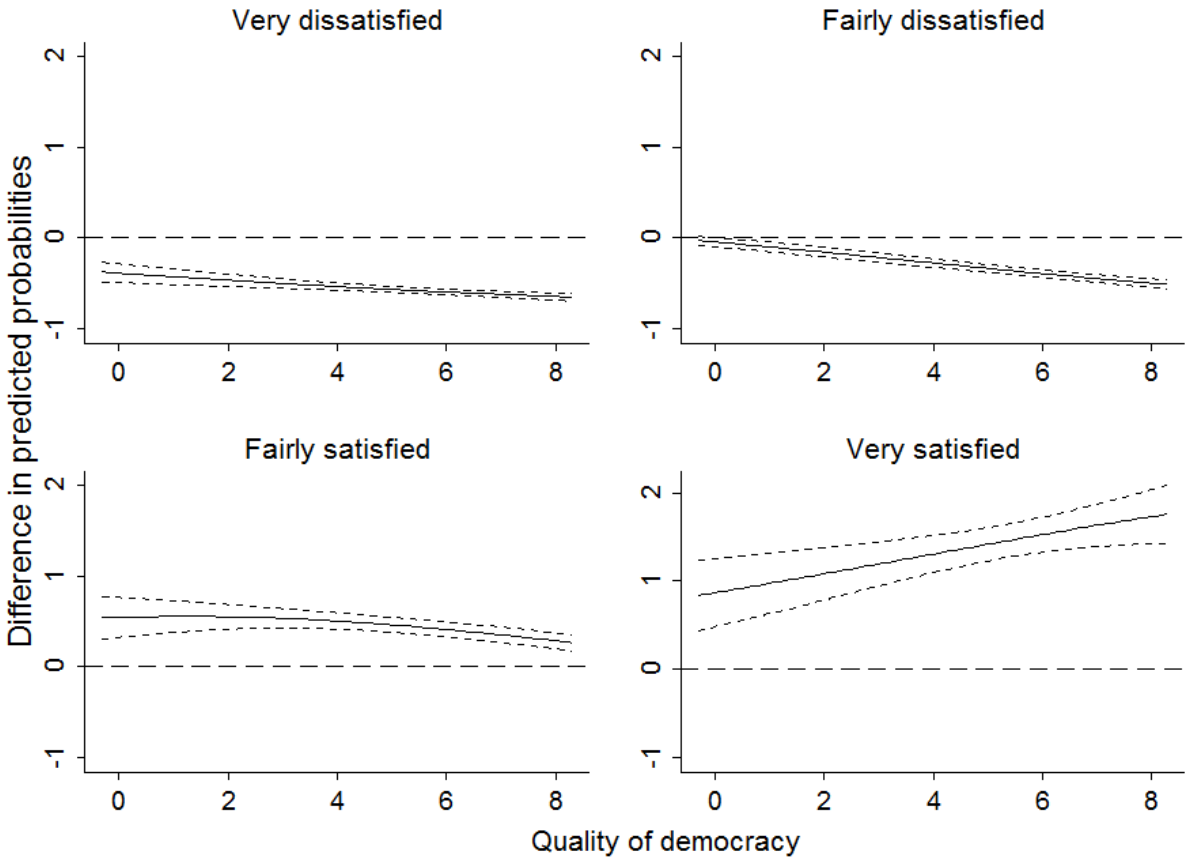


Figure 5.F.4. Variation in predicted differences in probabilities of satisfaction with democracy between low and high perceived responsiveness across the quality of democracy and governance

Notes: Figure based on Model 2 in Table 5.F.2. Low (high) responsiveness perceptions = 2 (4) (close to 1 standard deviation below (above) the mean). Covariates are held constant at their means.

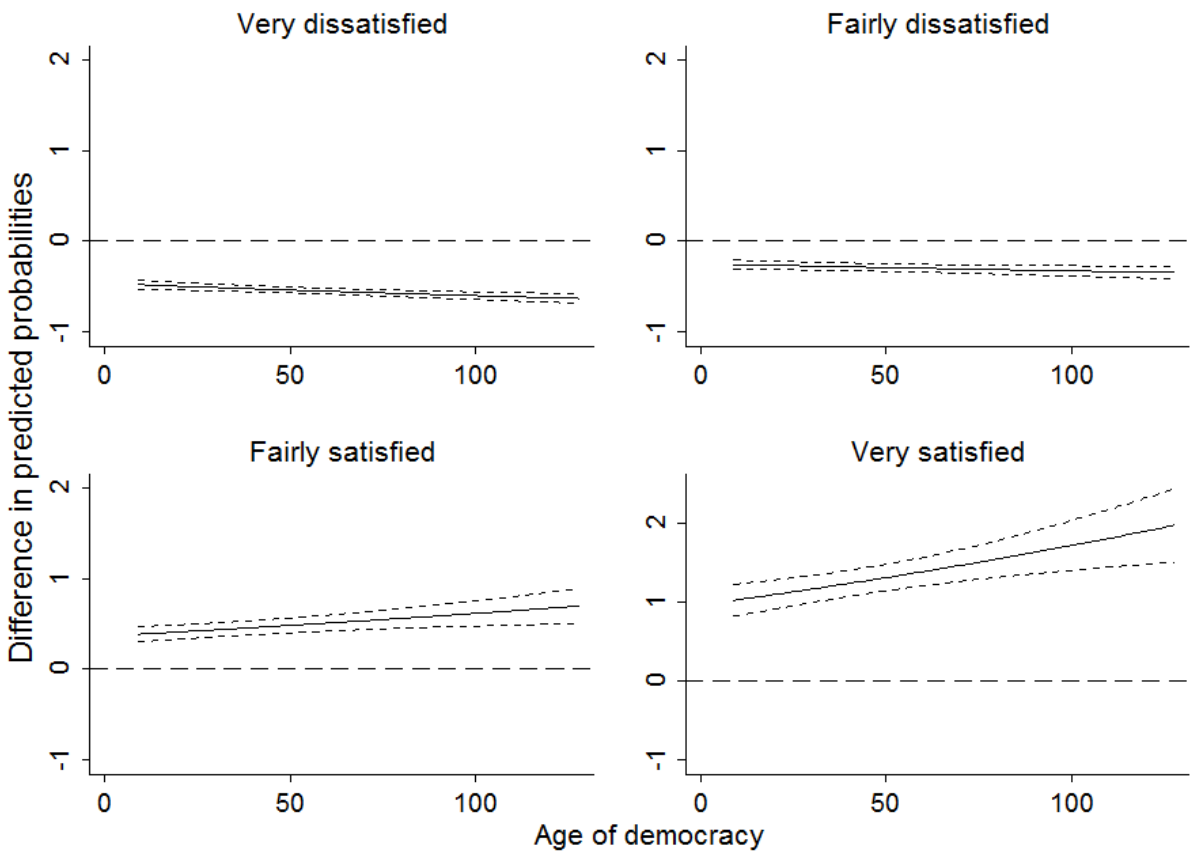


Figure 5.F.5. Variation in predicted differences in probabilities of satisfaction with democracy between low and high perceived responsiveness across the age of democracy

Notes: Figure based on Model 3 in Table 5.F.2. Low (high) responsiveness perceptions = 2 (4) (close to 1 standard deviation below (above) the mean). Covariates are held constant at their means.

democratic satisfaction is significantly ($p<.001$) stronger in countries with higher levels of democracy and in older democracies (Models 2 and 3).

Accordingly, Figures 5.F.4 and 5.F.5 show that the relative difference in the predicted probability of being very satisfied with democracy between those with high and those with low responsiveness perceptions becomes larger with increasing quality and age of democracy. These results support the argument that citizens in more democratic countries and in older democracies consider policy responsiveness as a more important criterion of democracy than citizens in new and deficient democracies do.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to investigate whether, and how, it matters for citizens' attitudes towards the political system and their political behaviour whether the political elites who (seek to) share their policy concerns. The general conclusions that emerge from the empirical analysis are that citizens are more likely to be satisfied with the functioning of democracy (Chapters 2, 3, and 5) and more likely to participate in elections (Chapter 4) if the issues they consider currently most important for their country receive more attention from political elites and in the news media coverage of domestic politics and politicians. However, the existence and strength of these relationships vary with individual and contextual characteristics. Since each of the empirical chapters finishes with a fairly detailed discussion of what the results mean and which further research they suggest, I will only briefly summarise the main findings and draw some overall conclusions here.

The empirical results suggest that the salience of citizens' policy priorities, measured *objectively* rather than based on survey respondents' perceptions, influences their attitudes and behaviour. We can therefore conclude that citizens have a certain

level of awareness of the political debate. This is by no means a foregone conclusion considering that the common presumption used to be that citizens are fairly ignorant towards politics, although this view has to some extent been altered more recently (Converse 1964; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock 1991). The findings in this thesis suggests that citizens both recognise whether political elites emphasise the issues they consider important and use this knowledge to evaluate the performance of the democratic institutions and processes in their country. If their concerns are ignored, they withdraw their attitudinal and behavioural support in the form of satisfaction with democracy and electoral participation.

The results thus imply that citizens in many countries – the exceptions will be addressed below – (implicitly) expect from the democratic system that it provides conditions that allow and incentivise political elites to focus on the most important problems facing society, or at least on those issues seen as such by the public. For if citizens were to attribute any failures of elites to represent their preferences solely to the specific elites themselves and not to the political system, they would be unlikely to become less satisfied with the functioning of democracy as a result (Easton 1965, 1975; Norris 1999). It also means that citizens are (again, with potential exceptions) critical observers of democratic processes and the political actors who perform and manage them.

A notable observation is that citizens' perceptions of priority congruence are influenced by all parties' issues agendas and not only by the agendas of the parties that they support, as the *dyadic* model of representation would lead us to expect. This result can be interpreted as showing that citizens tend to desire a *collective* model of representation in which representatives serve the public as a whole rather than solely

their own constituents, as citizens would otherwise only expect the party they support to focus on their issue concerns (Hurley 1982; Weissberg 1978).

The finding that priority congruence influences satisfaction with democracy presents an important contribution to the literatures on policy representation and on satisfaction with democracy. While a range of studies have investigated static and dynamic congruence on policy priorities between citizens and elites as an indicator of the quality of representation and responsiveness (Bevan and Jennings 2014; Hobolt and Klemmensen 2005, 2008; Jennings and John 2009; Jones and Baumgartner 2004; Lindeboom 2012; Pennings 2005; Spoon and Klüver 2014), research on the attitudinal consequences of representation in terms of democratic satisfaction has almost exclusively focused on agreement on policy and ideological positions as well as on directly measured perceptions of representation (Brandenburg and Johns 2013; Curini, Jou, and Memoli 2012; Dahlberg, Linde, and Holmberg 2013; Ezrow and Xezonakis 2011; Kim 2009). This study thus provides, on the one hand, an extension of existing research on the congruence-satisfaction link and, on the other, a further rationale for studying the dynamics between and the causes of correspondence between public and elite agendas.

Likewise, the effects of citizen-elite policy proximity on election turnout have received ample attention in the spatial voting framework, while the importance of priority congruence has not been similarly acknowledged (Adams, Dow, and Merrill 2006; Hinich and Ordeshook 1969; Kirchgaessner 2003; Plane and Gershtenson 2004; Thurner and Eymann 2000). As I showed in Chapter 5, this lack of attention is undeserved, as (non-partisan) voters whose policy concerns are neglected are more likely to abstain than those voters about whose priorities parties and candidates care, as suggested by the media coverage during the campaign. The findings of this chapter

make a valuable contribution to the literature on policy-based determinants of turnout and highlight the importance of issue salience in addition to issue positions in this context. The main conclusion here is that issue attention and priorities matter, and they do so beyond determining on which issues spatial considerations and estimations should focus, which has been seen as the main function of issue salience in the turnout and satisfaction literatures so far.

Evidence for Variation in the Influence of Priority Congruence on Satisfaction with Democracy and Turnout

As straightforward as the main findings about the relationships between congruence in policy priorities and democratic satisfaction and turnout, respectively, are, their validity is not universal. In Chapters 3, 4, and 5, I show how the relationships vary with both individual-level and contextual characteristics. The thesis offers some important insights into heterogeneous attitude-formation and decision-making processes.

The findings in Chapter 3 suggest that the effect of priority congruence on satisfaction only exists among citizens with lower levels of education, political interest, and political knowledge – at least in the German case. This means that more politically sophisticated citizens probably do not consider it as an indicator of a functioning democratic system, which can have several reasons. The most likely one is that they are more aware of the constraints facing representatives, including the need to behave responsibly (Mair 2009), that may at times prevent them from representing public opinion and placing issues that might seem urgent on the agenda.

Alternatively (or additionally), it may be the case that the more politically sophisticated tend to endorse a model of the political representative who follows his own judgment rather than his constituents' demands, i.e., a 'trustee' (Bengtsson and Wass 2011; Carman 2006, 2007; Eulau et al. 1959; Pitkin 1967). This may be grounded

in normative views about the representation process or in the belief that political elites are able to make better judgments than the general population (Anderson and Goodyear-Grant 2005). By including measures of such attitudes in surveys that also measure policy priorities and democratic satisfaction, we may be able to determine which of the proposed mechanisms explains the interaction between priority congruence and political sophistication on satisfaction.

Ideological congruence, on the other hand, should influence perceptions of the quality of representation even amongst more politically sophisticated individuals, which is what I found to be the case in Chapter 3. For differences on left-right positions indicate differences in fundamental political views, whereas discrepancies in policy priorities only indicate disagreement on which issues are most urgent. It does not mean that no agreement exists on the aims of policies.

These results offer important insights into how different individuals use different calculi when evaluating political objects – in this case the democratic system. Most previous research on this topic focuses on evaluations of political candidates and parties (e.g. Andersen, Heath, and Sinnott 2002; Goren 1997; Knight 1985; Leiter 2012; Macdonald, Rabinowitz, and Listhaug 1995; Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock 1991), although some studies have also shown variation in the factors that determine people's satisfaction with democracy (Hobolt 2012; Karp, Banducci, and Bowler 2003). However, the causes of this variation that are analysed in these studies often have to do with knowledge and resources more than with preferences and normative views regarding the political object in question. They usually find that individuals at lower levels of education and political knowledge tend to base their political judgments on information and attitudes that are easier to access and evaluate.

I also discussed the difficulty of evaluating left-right congruence and priority congruence in Chapter 3 and hypothesised that priority congruence should be more accessible than left-right congruence, as it only involves determining what is important and whether political elites talk about it and not what elites say about an issue and how it compares to one's own opinions. While the results confirmed that citizens with low education, political interest, and political knowledge levels rely on priority congruence to evaluate democracy, they also seem to take left-right congruence into account. In light of previous research which found that ideological reasoning is mostly used by the more politically involved (Campbell et al. 1960; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Knight 1985; Leiter 2012; Muller 1970; Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock 1991), this finding is rather surprising and casts doubt on the widely accepted notion of the complexity of ideological reasoning.

The extent to which priority congruence influences democratic satisfaction furthermore varies across countries, as the results of cross-national analyses within the EU in Chapter 5 show. More specifically, it appears that only in more advanced democracies and in countries with a longer history of democracy do citizens take the place of their own issue concerns on elites' agendas into account when judging the quality of democracy.

The finding confirms evidence by Dahlberg, Linde and Holmberg (2013), that subjective perceptions of the quality of representation have a weaker relationship with democratic satisfaction in newer democracies. It is in line with what we know about differences in understandings of democracy across countries: in newer democracies, citizens tend to focus on liberties and freedoms as well as social benefits much more than in established democracies. According to results by Dalton, Shin, and Jou (2007; see also Norris 2011), the role of institutions and processes is seen as minor in particular

in the post-Communist societies in Central and Eastern Europe, which comprise most of the younger democracies in the EU.

In countries with democratic deficiencies, which are often but not always younger democracies, it may moreover be the case that more fundamental aspects of democracy, such as basic rights and freedoms, are more salient in citizens' judgments. We could think of it as a 'hierarchy of democratic needs' similar to Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of human needs, where the more basic needs need to be fulfilled before people direct their attention and aspirations towards higher-level needs. Another factor might be general trust in politicians: where it is low or absent, for instance due to corruption and nepotism, citizens may not actually interpret priority congruence with elites as a sign for their intention to address and solve citizens' concerns.

It thus seems that different conceptions of, and preferences towards, representative democracy are again amongst the important factors responsible for the variation in the association between priority congruence and democratic satisfaction. This time, the differences are not based on individuals' characteristics but originate in the political context. Future research should put the proposed causal mechanisms to rigorous tests in order to establish their validity and their relative importance.

The theme of heterogeneous attitude-formation and decision-making calculi was also a major focus of Chapter 4, which analysed the relationship between priority congruence and turnout. Here, the variable that determined whether electoral participation is boosted by elite attention to one's policy concerns was party identification. The mechanism through which I expect it to affect the relationship is twofold. Partisanship compensates both for the lower motivation to vote and for the higher costs of the vote choice that low priority congruence entails. Put differently, it moderates two relationships: first, that between priority congruence and the decision to

turn out and, second, that between priority congruence and the difficulty of deciding for whom to vote.

In the former relationship, partisanship acts as a mobilising force: voters feel emotionally attached to a party are likely to support it even if they do not feel that their concerns receive enough attention during the campaign. In the latter, it acts as a facilitative force. Again, the idea that individuals use their cognitive resources and efforts economically is crucial. If the vote choice becomes very difficult because parties and candidates do not reveal their preferences and competences regarding the issues that voters find important – if they have any at all –, voters may decide to abstain or use a simpler heuristic to make their choice instead (Lau and Redlawsk 2001; Popkin 1991; Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock 1991). However, simple heuristics that are considered satisfactory bases of the vote choice may not always be available.

Here, partisans have the advantage of their attachment to a particular party with which they tend to agree in terms of policy goals or, at least, general political values. Hence, if they do not already use this attachment as a guide to the vote choice, they might do so when determining which party is best in dealing with one's main concerns or shares one's views on the most important policy issues (which need not necessarily be the party with which one generally identifies). The study thus draws a connection between the literature on variation in the voting calculus and research on turnout. By explaining how partisanship should influence the use of heuristics, it highlights the importance of another factor besides political sophistication, which is usually at the centre of studies of heterogeneous vote choices.

Implications of the Findings

The theoretical discussions and empirical evidence of the links between priority congruence and democratic satisfaction and turnout as well as variation in them provide significant contributions to the literatures in the respective fields. But they also have important substantive implications.

The Prospects of Sustained Elite Attention to Citizen Concerns

It appears that citizens may become disaffected and disengaged democrats if elites do not fulfil their representational roles. If elites' neglect of citizens' concerns persists over a long period of time, it might threaten the legitimacy and hence the effectiveness and stability of the democratic system (Almond and Verba 1963; Dalton 2004; Norris 1999). This risk seems to apply particularly to individuals who are already less integrated in the political process because they are less interested in politics, know less about it, and/or do not identify with a political party. They are most likely to be alienated by a lack of attention to their policy concerns in the political debate.

It thus seems important that elites do not neglect citizens' concerns, and particularly those of less politically involved individuals and non-partisans, in order to prevent them from becoming disillusioned with democracy and withdrawing from the democratic process. This is particularly crucial because party identification has been on the decline over the past decades (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000), which means that turnout rates may become more volatile and more dependent on parties' policy offerings (cf. Ezrow, Tavits, and Homola 2014).

There are two reasons why this might be problematic. First, political elites might not be easily convinced to take actions that might benefit the political system and society as a whole if they do not also secure them political support, or at least do not

threaten their power. Whether parties can gain votes by addressing the issues that citizens consider important appears to depend on their association with the particular issue. The issue ownership literature suggests that voters will vote for the party that 'owns' the most salient issue (Belanger and Meguid 2008). Thus, parties will benefit from emphasising the issues they 'own' while losing out from stressing issues on which their competitors are considered more competent (Carsey 2000; Petrocik 1996; Riker 1993). Recent evidence by Pardos-Prado, Lancee and Sagarzazu (forthcoming) confirms that, in the case of Germany, only the centre-right CDU/CSU gains support from voters concerned about immigration when the issue is salient. It thus seems that it is often rational for parties to not stress certain policy issues, even if voters consider them important.

On the other hand, evidence by Walgrave, Lefevere and Tresch (2012) suggests that parties can become the owners of issues by paying attention to them. They can establish 'associative ownership', which is distinct from 'competence' ownership, and will gain them support from voters who consider the issue important. Moreover, Neundorf and Adams (2014) find that parties can gain support amongst unaffiliated voters by addressing their concerns.

This finding is crucial, because parties might be particularly hesitant to address the issues that are important to unattached and disengaged voters out of fear of losing some of their core supporters. This, in turn, would mean that those citizens most at risk of disengagement through low priority congruence are at a high risk of low congruence. Neundorf and Adams' result is very encouraging in this sense. Pardos-Prado, Lancee and Sagarzazu (forthcoming) contribute to it somewhat by showing that parties may win over previously unattached voters by stressing their concerns. Yet, it appears to be necessary that the party is considered competent on the issues.

There is thus evidence that, at least in some situations, parties can profit from addressing voters' concerns. At the same time, the common assumption, which seems to hold true in many cases, is that parties can lose a lot from focusing on the wrong issues. Hence, the prospects of increasing citizens' satisfaction with democracy and their participation rates alone are unlikely to motivate parties to be more responsive to citizens' concerns and focus on the issues they consider most important.

The second concern has less to do with elites' willingness to put citizens' issue priorities on their agendas and more with factors that make it difficult for them to do so, which may become even more restrictive in the future. Political representatives often face demands that exert pressures into opposite directions. While, on the one hand, they would like to be responsive to citizens' demands and concerns, they are often limited in their ability to do so by other responsibilities and constraints. These include the expectation for continuity in parties' and governments' agendas, the need to compromise both within and between parties – particularly in multiparty systems with coalition governments – in order to avoid gridlock, and constraints placed on national policy-makers by supra- and international regimes, such as the European Union or bilateral and multilateral trade agreements (Bardi, Bartolini, and Trechsel 2014; Laffan 2014; Mair 2009; Pharr and Putnam 2000; Rose 2014).

These constraints are further intensifying, particularly through an increasing shift of policy-making powers to supranational institutions like the EU and to new and extended bilateral or multilateral agreements such as the currently heatedly debated Transantlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). As Laffan (2014) points out, the EU's dealing with the Euro crisis has led to further constraints on national governments' ability to determine the direction of their country's economic and financial policies.

This means that political elites may find it ever more difficult to achieve priority congruence with citizens by being responsive to their concerns. In the long run, this might turn into a problem for the stability of democratic systems (Keman 2014). In fact, the declines in turnout and political trust that have already occurred over the past half century (Blais, Gidengil, and Nevitte 2004; Gray and Caul 2000; Miller 1992; Norris 1999; Pharr and Putnam 2000; Wattenberg 2002) may in part be due to an increasing gap between citizens' and elites' policy agendas – a possibility that should be investigated in future research.

Future research should thus explore to what extent citizens are aware of the value of and the necessity for responsible behaviour and whether it also influences their evaluations of the democratic system. The finding of Chapter 3, that more politically sophisticated citizens' democratic evaluations are not influenced by priority congruence, may be due to their heightened awareness of these constraints. If this interpretation is correct, which needs to be further investigated, then increasing the public's awareness of the constraints and conflicting demands facing political elites may prevent a drastic decline in democratic satisfaction. As Laffan (2014) argues in the context of governments' declining abilities to address economic concerns, parties may be able to contribute to citizens' learning about these constraints and, hence, to a lowering of their expectations. Yet, a loosening of the link between priority congruence and satisfaction would also mean that the public's checks on elite behaviour are declining. This needs to be weighed against potential benefits of such a development.

Another potential concern in the context of elites' decreasing room to manoeuvre in terms of their issue agendas is the risk of populism. Some political actors might see a chance to win votes by promising to solve voters' problems when their competitors do not put these issues on the agenda because they would not be able to

keep their promises (Kriesi 2014; Rose 2014: 264). As a result, populist parties and actors might gain political power, which could decrease the effectiveness of governance. As a result, some mainstream parties might give in to the pressure to put citizens' concerns on the agenda and thereby potentially neglect their responsibilities.

To what extent this danger is real depends partly on whether citizens punish elites and the system for not living up to their promises and for neglecting their responsibilities. If it is the case that some of the democratic satisfaction that responsiveness to citizens' concerns brings about diminishes if elites do not live up to their commitments, populist and irresponsible behaviour might have less appeal to elites and thus not pose a danger.

Unfortunately, investigating this question went beyond what was feasible in this thesis. And while there is quite some research on pledge fulfilment and the relationship between party manifestos and policies (Budge and Hofferbert 1990; Hofferbert and Budge 1992; Hofferbert and Klingemann 1990; Naurin 2014; Schermann and Ennser-Jedenastik 2014), its consequences for citizen satisfaction with the democratic system are yet to be analysed. The urgency of this issue will hopefully motivate future inquiries into these issues.

An Alternative Strategy for Elites to Maintain Democratic Satisfaction and Participation

The above discussion about how elites can be incentivised to be responsive and how citizens can be informed about the constraints emanating from the need for responsible elite behaviour was based on the assumption that priority congruence is the result of elites responding to citizen concerns. Yet, there are additional possibilities through which congruence can be achieved. Often, citizens will adopt elites' priorities, or both

citizens and politicians will react to external events or media attention to certain issues (Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996). If congruence is the result of processes other than bottom-up agenda setting, citizens may nevertheless perceive it as a sign of a functioning representation process.

They may in fact not be aware that congruence is the result of top-down processes and hence interpret it as an indication of elite responsiveness to their concerns. Yet, they may also be aware of how citizens and elites interact and perceive top-down opinion-formation as a legitimate means of achieving policy agreement and representation. For, as Esaiasson and Holmberg (1996) point out, citizens may find it difficult and burdensome to actively find out which societal problems are most in need of being addressed. They may prefer elites to take on this task and subsequently decide whether to adopt these issues as their priorities.

According to this logic, elites should be able to boost participation and democratic satisfaction by putting effort into convincing citizens of their policy agenda and thereby achieving congruence. While one may criticise this as elites 'manipulating' citizens, we should not forget that citizens may in fact expect elites to take a leading role in the agenda-setting process and that they will critically reflect upon elites' agendas and, if necessary, voice their disagreement. In this scenario, parties' aim of office-seeking does not interfere with the aim of establishing priority congruence, since convincing voters that the issues the party owns and hence emphasises are most important is an important part of the electoral strategy anyway (Petrocik 1996). Doing better at communicating their agendas to citizens can thus benefit individual parties as well as the health of the democratic system and thus represents a viable recommendation to be drawn from the findings of this thesis.

The Role of Priority Congruence in Less Established Democracies

What remains to be addressed are the implications of the finding that citizens in less democratic countries and in newer democracies do not seem to take elite attention to their issue concerns into account when judging the quality of democracy. As I explained above, this may be because more basic elements of democracy are more salient to them or because representation processes do not play a prominent role in their understandings of democracy. If these explanations are valid, they can be seen as suggesting that citizens in these countries are not critical enough towards their political elites and let them get away with neglecting their concerns.

On the other hand, it may also be that citizens in less democratic countries are too critical of their system and elites and do not even become more satisfied when the representation process does work. If either of these suggestions is correct, it might represent a hindrance to democratic deepening and consolidation. For if political leaders are not incentivised to ensure that the public agrees with their policy agendas, corruption and nepotism might continue to be prevalent in some of these countries.

It greatly matters in this context whether the lack of influence of priority congruence on satisfaction can be generalised to other aspects of elite behaviour. If citizens are more critical with regard to them, this potential problem might not be as serious. Further research should thus aim at further exploring these issues.

Recommendations for Further Research

In the preceding discussion, I already pointed out several questions that arise from the findings of this thesis and that should be further investigated. In addition, two major recommendations for further research concern the generalizability of the results and the causal mechanisms behind them. First, the applicability of findings that are solely based

on analyses of data from Germany in 2009 should be tested in other contexts. While Germany can be considered a fairly 'typical' advanced democracy in light of its economic development, political system, and cultural diversity, it would nevertheless be very valuable to test the hypotheses in other countries, particularly the moderation effect of political sophistication and the influence on priority congruence on turnout.

Moreover, further research should investigate to what extent priority congruence influences satisfaction in countries outside of Europe and whether the moderating effects of democratic age and quality hold. In fact, with a higher number of and more diverse country cases it might be possible to include measures of both democratic quality and democratic age in the same model without facing the same multicollinearity concerns that I face in Chapter 5. It might then be possible to find out whether both moderate the influence of congruence or whether the effect of one of them is in fact spurious.

In addition to expanding the geographical scope, analysing the relationships at different times during the election cycle may be informative. At the time when the European Election Study was conducted, some countries were holding national elections while others did not. Previous research suggests that policy-based considerations matter more around election time since citizens pay more attention to parties' preferences (cf. Abney et al. 2011; Andersen, Tilley, and Heath 2005; Gelman and King 1993). Yet, I found that this did not seem to matter for the existence of a relationship between priority congruence and democratic satisfaction (these results are not shown).

It could be the case that, even though citizens pay more attention to parties' policy proposals around this time, a range of other factors that influence democratic satisfaction are also more salient and overshadow the increased attention to policy

priorities, for instance whether one's preferred party wins (Anderson et al. 2005) and whether economic conditions will become better or worse under the future government. Further research into these questions is certainly worthwhile, as it would add to existing knowledge about how the basis of political attitudes varies throughout the electoral cycle.

Secondly, the proposed causal mechanisms should be further scrutinised. In Chapter 5 (Appendix 5.F), I show that the relationship between priority congruence and democratic satisfaction is mediated by perceptions of the responsiveness of Parliament. However, some of the causal mechanisms I propose could not be tested with the available data. Why does priority congruence not influence satisfaction amongst the politically sophisticated (Chapter 3)? Is it because they understand the constraints that elites are facing in the agenda-setting and policy-making processes, or because they would rather have leaders who trust their own judgment rather than follow public opinion? Answering these questions requires collecting survey data that includes suitable measures of these attitudes.

Doing so would be valuable not only to find out what underlies the relationship I uncovered but also to expand our knowledge about citizens' perceptions of and preferences toward the political process. For if political knowledge increases citizens' awareness of the limitations elites face in the agenda-setting process, the dangers of political disaffection and populism discussed above may be challenged by increasing citizens' knowledge about these constraints.

Knowing about citizens' preferences towards the behaviour of representatives is valuable because the normative debate about how political representatives should behave has not been settled (Hurley 1982; Pitkin 1967; Powell 2004; Weissberg 1978). Citizens' preferences might be considered as offering useful guidance for the debate and

for political elites themselves. At the same time, knowledge about differences in preferences between different groups of citizens can help avoid following the opinion of the majority while neglecting the views of minorities.

Similarly, further research is necessary in order to disentangle the mechanisms that link priority congruence and turnout (Chapter 4). I offer two broad explanations, namely that voters will find the election interesting and relevant if their concerns are salient at that their vote choice will be facilitated. Are both mechanisms at work, and to what extent? Adding suitable items to questionnaires to measure perceptions of the relevance of elections as well as developing indictors of the difficulty of the vote choice, for instance incorporating measures of when voters decide for a party and how certain they are about their choice, represent appropriate steps forward. Moreover, (survey) experiments in which the salience of issues is manipulated may be a useful tool to increase the internal validity of the findings, as they would allow excluding that (non-partisan) voters tend to stress the same issues as parties *because* they are more likely to vote.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis makes a novel and compelling argument that congruence between citizens' and political elites' policy priorities is an important factor in citizens' political attitudes and behaviour. Although the data used to empirically test the argument are limited in their temporal and regional scope, the analysis provides persuasive evidence that priority congruence is indeed linked to satisfaction with democracy and to voter turnout. It shows that policy priorities and issue attention matter for political attitudes and behaviour in more powerful ways than previously known and thus deserve a more prominent role in political science research.

At the same time, the thesis exposes the boundaries of the role of priority congruence. Its influence on democratic satisfaction is weaker amongst more politically sophisticated individuals and in countries with less democratic experience. Meanwhile, its effect on turnout only exists amongst non-partisan voters. These findings highlight the importance of taking into account that individuals think in different ways and that they are subject to powerful influences of their environment.

The theoretical discussion draws on theory and evidence from the literatures on political trust, policy representation and responsiveness, democratic perceptions, and attitude formation, and establishes hitherto non-existent links between them. The thesis makes important theoretical and methodological contributions to each of these fields and generates a range of questions and ideas that merit further research.

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