

Ideological Congruence, Perceived Accountability, and Satisfaction with Democracy: Case Studies of Australia and New Zealand

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Abstract

A growing body of cross-national studies has examined the ideological congruence between citizens and political parties and found that those citizens whose ideology is close to the winning party tend to be satisfied with democracy in their country. We extend the causal story of ideological congruence and satisfaction with democracy to Australia and New Zealand. As we estimate the effects of various socio-psychological factors on citizen satisfaction, we highlight the effect of perceived accountability and ideological congruence. We find that both factors contribute to satisfaction with democracy in New Zealand and Australia. Our empirical evidence not only confirms the extant literature but also suggests that perceived accountability has a larger influence in both democracies that use different election systems. This result has to do with the possibility that majoritarianism and proportional representation may produce coalition governments that locate ideology at the median voter. Therefore, democratic satisfaction primarily depends on if the government be-

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ing controlled by its citizens.

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1. Introduction

Since the third wave of democratization in the 1990s, democracies across the world have been experiencing relatively tumultuous and volatile politics. In the aftermath of the Global Financial Crisis that began in September of 2008, many wealthy, industrialized democracies such as Greece, Spain, and Portugal were hit hard by the economic slowdown. Growing number of refugees, spiking national debt, and widening inequality between the rich and the poor have triggered the rise of populism. Anti-immigrant and far-right anti-system political parties ramped up and political polarization increased. As authoritarian China took the lead in recovering from the downturn, some leading emerging-market countries successfully responded to the crisis by adopting developmental semi-authoritarianism (Whitehead 2010). Assessing the “after-shock” of turmoil, Diamond (2011, 28) points out that, “At a minimum, illiberal populist and even extremist political parties could be expected to draw many more voters.”

Satisfaction with democracy has always been a fixation of political scientists since Lipset (1960) suggested the socio-economic requisites for democracy. Studies of democratic politics have long debated about the importance of citizen’s positive evaluation as crucial to political efficacy as well as the functioning of democracy (Anderson and Tverdova 2001; Mishler and Rose 2001). The main point from past studies is that low level of satisfaction is detrimental to the health of democracy as citizens’ attitudes is invariably linked to system maintenance. Conversely, high level of satisfaction builds social capital that can be useful for democratic governments when addressing future political, economic, and development challenges (Daskalopoulou 2018). Whether we are studying old or new democracies around the globe understanding the basis of popular support and citizen’s approval of democratic governance is of practical and theoretical importance to policymakers and scholars alike.

In the Asia-Pacific region, Australia and New Zealand are the leading democ-

racies as evidenced by various measures and indices of democracy. Comparing to other Anglo-Saxon democracies, these two countries stand out in many different measures including effective public health response to the global coronavirus pandemic, high quality of life, clean and corruption-free government, good and robust race relations, and low-voltage politics amongst many standout features. Why is there a high level of democratic satisfaction in Australia and in New Zealand? What are the factors that can help explain this?

In this study, we draw from the literature and argue that satisfaction with democracy is associated with ideological congruence between the citizens and the incumbent party in both New Zealand and Australia. We suggest that ideological congruence tend to play a bigger role in the consensus democracy characterized by proportional representation like New Zealand. Moreover, perception of accountability and winner/loser effect are prominent factors of democratic satisfaction in a majoritarian democracy like Australia.

In the next section, we review the literature on sources of democratic satisfaction and derive several testable hypotheses. We suggest that, *ceteris paribus*, ideological congruence between citizens and political parties contributes to a high level of democratic satisfaction because people that feel represented by the incumbent party tend to affirm the democracy in practice. Following this discussion, we provide a brief background of each of our cases--Australia and New Zealand--to the readers with some understanding of these two parliamentary democracies. We, then, proceed to discuss the use of survey data and the statistical method used for the analysis of the sources of democratic satisfaction in these two countries. And in the last section, we offer an analysis of our empirical test and provide a conclusion about what explains democratic satisfaction in these two leading Asia-Pacific democracies.

2. Perspectives of Democratic Satisfaction

According to Easton's (1965; 1975) groundbreaking theory, citizens express their support for the political community, regime principle, regime performance, specific institutions, and political actors. Using this framework, we may interpret regime performance as an evaluation of democratic performance rather than support for democratic values (Norris 1999; Klingemann 1999). The socio-psychology perspective helps ground this framework empirically, assuming that feelings or evaluations of political affairs drive expression of satisfaction with regime performance. Citizens would be satisfied with democracy in practice when they like how their democracy works. On the contrary, they may disapprove of the performance of their democracy if they perceive something is wrong or that their demand is not met.

2-1. Economic Evaluation, Civic Culture, and Winner/loser.

The extant literature has found three prominent factors of democratic satisfaction: government performance, civic participation, and winner's party. First of all, most citizens desire "good outcomes" as they assess democracy. Although the idea of democracy as a procedure based on rule of law, pluralist political participation, and contestation is embraced pervasively in the world, the objective of democracy is often understood as performance rather than procedure (Wu and Xiao 2021). Anderson (1995, 4) argues that "the performance of the economy influences what ordinary people think about politics." "If government cannot respond to people's expectation for performance, by contrast, political support would decline (Dalton 2004; Norris 2011)." Though Clarke, Dutt, and Kornberg's (1993) pooled time-series analysis shows that attitudes toward economy have real but limited effect on democratic satisfaction in Western democracies, others such as Magalhães (2013), Quaranta and Martini (2016)¹ and Christmann (2018) provide strong evidence for a

¹ Quaranta and Martini (2016) study uses Eurobarometer data from 572 national surveys in 28 European countries from 1973-2013. Using a Bayesian cross-classified mixed models they find that democratic satisfaction varies with macroeconomic and subjective economic indicators.

positive relationship between respondents' evaluation of the economy and satisfaction with democracy. Similarly, in studies of Asian countries Huang, Chang and Chu (2008) found that perceptions of government's ability to deliver public goods contribute to satisfaction with democracy.

If democracy is defined as a political system wherein citizens can participate and engage in their own meaningful governance, then civic engagement can help nurture and maintain democracy. In their seminal work, *Civic Culture*, Almond and Verba (1963) suggest that democracy needs a majority participant culture, i.e., citizens that are aware of and engaged with the political system. Civic culture is a multi-dimensional concept, including political engagement and political attitudes, such as political trust, interest, and efficacy. They represent how people feel about politics and willingness to get involved. Voluminous studies in political behavior have long known that politically efficacious citizens will be more engaged and participate in politics and civic life. And according to Ginsberg and Weisberg (1978), active political participation and engagement help cultivate people's faith in the responsiveness of government and contributes to higher level of political trust as well as satisfaction with democracy (Anderson and Gillory 1997). Using 24 panel studies, Kostelka and Blais (2018) show that voting behavior affects perceptions of the functioning of democracy; participating in an election makes citizens more satisfied with the way democracy works. Furthermore, they suggest that voting boosts satisfaction with democracy especially in the majoritarian system.

Another factor that can affect approval of functioning of democracy is how those in the political majority and political minority view the functioning of democratic political institutions. Studies by Anderson and Tverdova (2001) and Linde and Ekman (2003) find that citizens who vote for the winner are more likely to be satisfied with democracy because their party wins. Conversely, election losers will be more dissatisfied with democracy (Huang, Chang, and Chu 2008). Anderson et al. (2005) found that ideology may enlarge the gap between winners and losers in terms of evaluation of the political system. The discrepancy between the winner and loser

in satisfaction with democracy is therefore critical for democratic legitimacy.

Context factor may mediate between democratic satisfaction and the socio-psychological factors. Anderson and Gillory (1997) find that losers in majoritarian systems are less satisfied with democracy than those in the consensual systems hinting that consensual systems tend to be more representative of citizen preferences vis-à-vis majoritarian ones as government and citizen issue preferences are more congruent. Curini, Jou, and Memoli (2012) argue that level of satisfaction is conditional on how closely the government's preferences align with the winners and losers, i.e., the greater the distance between voters and the government the worse the gap between the winner and loser in satisfaction with democracy. Kostelka and Blais' (2018) analysis confirms the view that election winners are happy with democracy under majoritarian rules as it is believed that election winners gain more under the winner-take-all rule. In other words, the context conditions the relationship between election winner and democratic satisfaction.

In sum, socio-psychological factors are critical to satisfaction with democracy. Yet, empirical reality is more complex and varied. Kostelka and Blais (2018, 374) point out that, "future research should explore in greater detail how contextual factors such as disproportionality or party system fragmentation condition the effect of elections on citizens' satisfaction."

2-2. Ideological Congruence and Perceived Accountability

Besides the individual political attitudes, the functioning of democracy inherent in different political systems may affect the factors of citizen satisfaction (Kornberg and Clarke 1994). According to Aarts and Thomassen's (2008) accountability-representation model, political systems--majoritarian or proportional--influences people's perceptions of the accountability and representativeness of the political system and argue that citizens in proportional representation systems are more satisfied with democracy in their countries. Perceived accountability is operationalized as this question, "Some people say that no matter who people vote for, it won't make a difference to what happens. Others say that who people vote for can make a difference

to what happens. Using the scale on this card, (where ONE means that voting won't make a difference to what happens and FIVE means that voting can make a difference) where would you place yourself (Aarts and Thomassen 2008, 9)?" People can perceive accountability only if voting can make a difference, i.e., voters can hold the government accountable by kicking out the rascals through the elections. They find that perceived accountability and representation are both predictors of satisfaction with democracy in established democracies and point out that systems where accountability is emphasized, such as in majoritarian system, higher level of democratic satisfaction is. Dahlberg and Holmberg (2014) find that citizens' satisfaction with the workings of democracy may be higher in proportional system that has better representation and ideological congruence. Sanders et al. (2014) also show that satisfaction with democracy is affected by clarity of responsibility and proportionality that are embedded in majoritarianism and consensualism respectively.

In addition to perceived accountability, earlier research argued that perceived congruence (or proximity) between citizens and government may capture the level of perceived representation, that is, ideological congruence can be operationalized as the distance between the incumbent party and people. Equal access to political representation is a yardstick of democratic government. If it is the idea subscribed by most people, it is essential for the mass public to feel included and represented. When citizens perceive to be represented by the governing party, they are likely to be satisfied with the way democracy works. Otherwise, citizens may feel that the incumbent party is distant from their own issue position and conclude that representative democracy does not pound in the stake. Using cross-national survey data, previous studies have shown solid evidences that satisfaction with democracy increases when the parties in a political system are closer to the mean voter position on the liberal-left ideology. For example, Kim (2009, 50) extended the rationale of winner/loser, arguing that "democracy and democratic performance involve not merely winning and losing elections but, more elaborately, how far policy positions are congruent with the public's needs." It is found that the linkage between satisfaction with

democracy and ideological congruence is more profound in the system that even the electoral losers are conveyed in policymaking. Ezrow and Xezonakis (2011) argued that citizen satisfaction increases when parties are perceived proximate to the mean voter position. The more parties converge toward the median position, the more support citizens will express to the system. Brandenburg and Johns (2014) found that distance to the nearest major party is negatively associated with democratic satisfaction. Stecker and Tausendpfund (2016) suggested that multidimensional congruence might be more important than abstract left-right ideology regarding the quality of democracies. When the government deviates from their policy views, people may drop in satisfaction for democracy. Mayne and Hakhverdian (2017) differentiated ecocentric and sociotropic congruence. By calculating the absolute distance between an individual citizen and the government or the legislature, they obtain a score ranges from 0 to 10. It is found that the distance to the nearest party is strongly related to satisfaction with functioning of democracy in Great Britain. Golder and Stramski (2010) constructed four types of congruence and compared the means across majoritarian and proportional systems in *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems*. Nevertheless, they did not find any evidence that congruence is significantly larger in the proportional electoral rule. In sum, the linkage between ideological congruence and democratic satisfaction is that perception of being represented by the party in power would strengthen the tie between citizens and the government in power, which may lead to satisfaction with functioning of democracy (Reher 2015). Mayne and Hakhverdian (2017, 825) nicely summarized the connection between democratic satisfaction and ideological congruence, pointing out that, “When ideological congruence is high, citizens might, therefore, be more inclined to look favorably upon their particular country’s democratic performance, . . ., because of a belief that elites who are ideologically proximate to citizens are more likely to produce policies that are responsive to popular preferences.”

While there is abundant literature on the relationship between representation and democratic satisfaction, there are different measurement of ideology congru-

ence. For example, Kim (2009) measured “incongruence” by computing the absolute difference between respondent’s self-placement and median party location. Ezrow and Xezonakis (2011) tapped ideological congruence with the average party extremism. Stecker and Tausendpfund (2016) measured left-right and policy congruence. As in Kim (2009), our research operationalizes ideology congruence as the absolute difference between respondent’s self-placement and the position of the winning party or coalition. In doing so, we are able to assess each respondent’s perceived distance between the democratic government and themselves. Our proposition is that the larger the distance, the less representation that the government achieves, which leads to less democratic satisfaction. Since both ideological congruence and perceived accountability are inspired by cross-national analysis, it is appropriate to compare their association with democratic satisfaction in two similar countries. Fortunately, we have access to survey data from Australia and New Zealand.

3. Democracy in Australia and New Zealand

Both Australia and New Zealand are leading democracies in the Asia-Pacific region. As Westminster-style democracies, parliament is supreme and executive powers rest in the Prime Minister and cabinet. Beyond this there are clear differences in the institutional design of these two neighboring Commonwealth countries. With its large geographic size, Australia is a federal parliamentary constitutional monarchy comprising of six states and ten territories. It has a bicameral legislature where the upper house is elected using a single-transferable vote proportional representation system and the lower house is preferential voting in single-member seats. Like Australia, New Zealand is a parliamentary constitutional monarchy with the Queen as its head of state. Unlike Australia, New Zealand is a unitary state with a unicameral legislature elected with a mixed-member proportional representation system. As a consequence of the difference in the electoral system, Australia is closer to a two-party system dominated by the Liberal-National coalition and the Australian Labor Party. For New Zealand, on the other hand, since 1996 multi-party system is clearly a product of proportional representation system where coalition governments have

become the norm.²

Electoral politics in both countries are governed by regular general elections of three-year intervals, although parliament can be dissolved and general elections called any time within the three-year period. When compared to other parliamentary democracies, Australian and New Zealand election cycles are relatively short with the United Kingdom for example having a five-year interval as a case in point. In some ways, the short electoral cycle makes cabinet government more sensitive to public opinion and electioneering that lead to policies that have immediate and short-term impact to the detriment of policies with medium-term to long-term effect.

Both Australia and New Zealand have enjoyed stable democratic politics as evidenced by the high rankings of both countries in democratic satisfaction and quality of democracy index. Yet, in the last decade or so, compared to the low-voltage electoral politics of New Zealand, Australia has had a more contentious electoral politics that witnessed the rise of anti-immigrant One Nation Party as well as internecine intra-party squabbles within the governing party that led to Prime Minister's having short tenure. From 2007-2020, Australia had six changes in prime ministers--three times each under the Labor and Liberal coalition governments. By comparison, New Zealand had four prime ministers from 1999 to 2020.

While Australia has more short-term prime ministers, the parties that controls cabinet are more stable due to the effect of a majoritarian electoral system.³ In the case of New Zealand, party representation in the legislature while more predictable for the two large parties--National and Labour--is less so for the smaller parties

² Prior to 1996, New Zealand parliament is elected on single member districts using the first-past-the-post electoral system.

³ Alternative Vote (AV) was introduced to Australia in 1918 to replace the existing first-past-the-post rule. Lijphart (1999) called Australia as "modifying majoritarianism" because it has bicameral legislature and uses the majoritarian alternative-vote system for the House of Representatives and PR for the Senate. However, most literature categorizes Australia as majoritarianism because the winning candidate needs a plurality of votes (ex. Golder 2005, 104; Aarts and Thomassen 2008, 11).

with the exception of the New Zealand Greens and to some extent New Zealand First parties. New Zealand had a proliferation of micro-parties adding complexity to formation of coalition governments (Shugart and Tan 2016). Furthermore, the prevalence of smaller parties has created the impression amongst voters that smaller coalition partners have disproportionate influence in cabinet government due to their blackmail potential leading to frustration with the MMP electoral system.⁴

However, these outstanding issues notwithstanding, Australia and New Zealand enjoys high levels of democratic satisfaction with majority of their citizens expressing satisfaction. We choose Australia and New Zealand because they share the same political culture and representative democracy. Both countries have low level of party polarization as well. The comparison of these two democracies gives prominence to proportional vs. majoritarian system. Although Aarts and Thomassen (2008) argued that representativeness is central to the distinction between these two systems, our *a priori* knowledge indicates that representation can be found in both systems. Proportional representation systems are characterized by multiple parties, each of them is expected to represent certain voters. When there is no dominant party, multiple parties may form a coalition government that should be located close to the median voter (Golder and Stramski 2010). However, it is found that accountability is valued more than representation by citizens of proportional-type political systems (Aarts and Thomassen 2008, 17). The majoritarian system, on the other hand, may produce a few centrist parties (Downs 1957). Political parties are likely to converge on the median voter to approach the most voters. In Australia, for example, the Liberal/National coalition that represents center-right ideology has been in power five times since 1990.⁵ The prime minister and deputy prime minister are different party members. Therefore, the difference in representation between majoritarian electoral

⁴ New Zealand had a referendum on the electoral system that proposed the replacement of the mixed-member proportional system (MMP) with a mixed-member majoritarian (MMM) system in 2011. The referendum showed strong support for MMP and rejected MMM.

⁵ The Liberal-National coalition were in power in 1996, 1998, 2001, 2004, and 2013.

rules and proportional electoral rules is not clear-cut.

In the next section, we will propose five hypotheses based on our literature review. With national survey data, we will investigate the factors of democratic satisfaction in these two countries.

4. Hypotheses

We attempt to weigh in on the literature that analyzed democratic satisfaction from several perspectives. Ideological congruence between respondent and the ruling party is our primary predictor of democratic satisfaction. Therefore, our first hypothesis is as follows.

H1 (Ideological congruence): Higher levels of ideological congruence are associated with higher levels of satisfaction with democracy.

Following Aarts and Thomassen's (2008) theory, we measure perceived accountability by asking respondents if voting makes any difference. Our second hypothesis is as follows.

H2 (Perceived accountability): The more people perceive voting can make difference the more they are likely to have democratic satisfaction.

Previous researches suggest that election winner/loser represents perception of accountability. According to Anderson and Gillory (1997) and Kostelka and Blais' (2018) analysis, election winners are satisfied with democracy under a majoritarian system. Their analysis implies that since the winning party takes over government, voters of the winning party may either feel they are represented by the winner or they have punished the loser. Therefore, election winners tend to be more satisfied with the way democracy works than losers. It follows then,

H3 (Election winner): People who vote for the winning party or coalition are likely to have higher levels of democratic content than other citizens.

According to the literature, democratic satisfaction is higher in consensus democracy (Klingemann 1999). Perceived representativeness is more important than perception of accountability (Aarts and Thomassen 2008, 14). We therefore hypothesize:

H4a (Ideological congruence and other variables): Ideological congruence is less important than election winner and perceived accountability.

Guided by previous analyses, we expect that the importance of ideological congruence varied with majoritarianism and proportional representation. However, alliances of more than two parties have been common in both Austria and New Zealand. Political parties converge on the median voter and the gap between the government and most citizens is narrow. In other words, representation may be not as important as accountability concerning the functioning of democracy. Because coalition government seems to be a norm in New Zealand, we still assume that ideological congruence may be more important in New Zealand.

H4b (Ideological congruence in different countries): Ideological congruence is more important than election winner and perceived accountability in New Zealand than in Australia.

To make sure that the relationships between ideological congruence, election winner, voting difference, and democratic satisfaction are not spurious, our model includes government performance, political interest, political efficacy, and demographic background as control variables. We will give more details in the next sec-

tion.

5. Data and Operationalization

To study the impact of ideological congruence on satisfaction with democracy in Australia, we use the post-election survey data from the Australian Election Study (AES). It is collected after the 2013 general election. The number of valid responses is 3,955. It is weighted to reflect the characteristics of population. Regarding public opinions in New Zealand, we used the 2014 New Zealand Election Survey (NZES) conducted by Victoria University of Wellington and the University of Auckland. The NZES survey is a post-election mail survey. After excluding missing data, there are still 2,194 cases in our analysis. It is also weighted by gender, age, and education to be representative of the national population.

5-1. Dependent variable

Regarding the New Zealand's case, respondents are asked how satisfied with democracy works in New Zealand. It is a four-point ordinal scale to measure people's satisfaction with democracy. The four categories are "Not at all satisfied", "not very satisfied", "satisfied", and "very satisfied". AES also gauges the extent to which the mass public is satisfied with democracy and measure it as four levels: "Not at all satisfied", "not very satisfied", "satisfied", and "very satisfied". More details about the wording can be found in the Appendix.

5-2. Explanatory variables

We measure ideological ties between citizens and parties in power by taking the absolute value of the difference between the voter location and governing party location on the left-right ideology. In both dataset, respondents are asked their positions on a 0-10 left-right continuum and their perception about each party's position. Like previous cross-national studies such as Kim (2009), our model considers ideological proximity between the winning party and the respondent--termed egocentric congruence by Mayne and Hakhverdian (2017). In Australia, the winning party is

the Liberal-National alliance. In New Zealand, the National Party formed a coalition with Maori Party, United Future, and ACT New Zealand. These measures have a theoretical range of 0 (where the winning party and the individual citizen occupy the exact same location on the left-right spectrum) to 10 (where the winning party and citizen occupy opposing ends of the left-right spectrum). We assume the smaller distance in ideology between the voter and either coalition may increase satisfaction with democracy.

Regarding the election winner variable, we code respondents' answers to the question of their vote choices in the 2013 (Australia) and 2014 (New Zealand) election. In Australia, the center-right Liberal/National Coalition opposition led by Tony Abbott of the Liberal Party and Warren Truss from the National Party defeated the incumbent Labor Party on 7 September 2013. As for New Zealand, there were eight parties competing for the seats on September 20, 2014. The center-right National Party, led by incumbent Prime Minister John Key, gained a plurality with 47.0% of the party vote and 60 of the 121 seats. The First Party and Act New Zealand also gained four and one more seats than the last election respectively. If Australian respondents chose the Liberal Party or National Party, they are coded as "election winner." Those New Zealand respondents who voted for the National Party, First Party, and Act New Zealand are also coded as "election winner."

Following Aarts and Thomassen's (2008) reasoning, accountability requires clarity of responsibility. If whoever wins the election does not matter with citizens, we may infer that citizens do not expect they can control the winning party. Therefore, we measure perceived accountability by using whether voters think it makes a difference who they vote for.

To measure government performance, we use respondent's evaluation of the national economy. In both Australia and New Zealand's surveys, respondents are asked to evaluate the state of national economy with a five-point yardstick: "a lot worse", "a little worse", "about the same", "a little better", and "a lot better". We expect to find a positive coefficient with this variable.

Civic culture is another source of democratic satisfaction. It includes political engagement and political attitudes, such as participation, political trust, interest, and efficacy. AES measures individuals' political interest and political trust, and NZES weighs respondents' feeling about their influence in politics and their interest in politics. We assume that people are likely to be satisfied with democracy if they show interest in politics.

5-3. Control variables

To make sure the relationships between economic conditions, civic culture, winner/loser status, ideological congruence, perceived accountability, and democracy satisfaction hold up, we control for the gender, education, age, income, and partisanship. In the AES data set, gender is categorized as male or otherwise. Age is recoded as 18-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, and 70 and above. As for education, we classify it as 4 groups: primary, high school, before college, and college. Income is measured by household income that ranges from 1 to 22. The lowest group earns on average less than \$10,000 per year, and the highest group earns more than \$10,000 per year. To isolate the effect of partisanship on satisfaction with democracy, we control for partisanship.

As for NZES, gender is presented as a three-category choice 1 for male, 2 for female, and 3 for transgender. We recode it as a dummy variable; male or otherwise. Age is categorized as 18-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, and 70 and above. We classify education as 5 groups: no qualification, level 1-3, level 4-6, undergraduate, and graduate. Income is measured by household income in eight ordinal brackets coded as 0 for no income to 8 for the highest income group. Last, we control for partisanship; party identifiers may have higher level of democracy satisfaction than independents.

5-4. Descriptive statistics

Our preliminary inspection of politics of Australia and New Zealand indicates that citizens in both countries support the existing political system. Figure 1 shows the distribution of satisfaction with democracy in Australia and New Zealand. More

than half of respondents in both countries are satisfied with democracy. Australian voters seem to be more satisfied with democracy than New Zealanders; the proportion of Australian respondents who answer “satisfied” or “very satisfied” is greater than that of New Zealand interviewees.

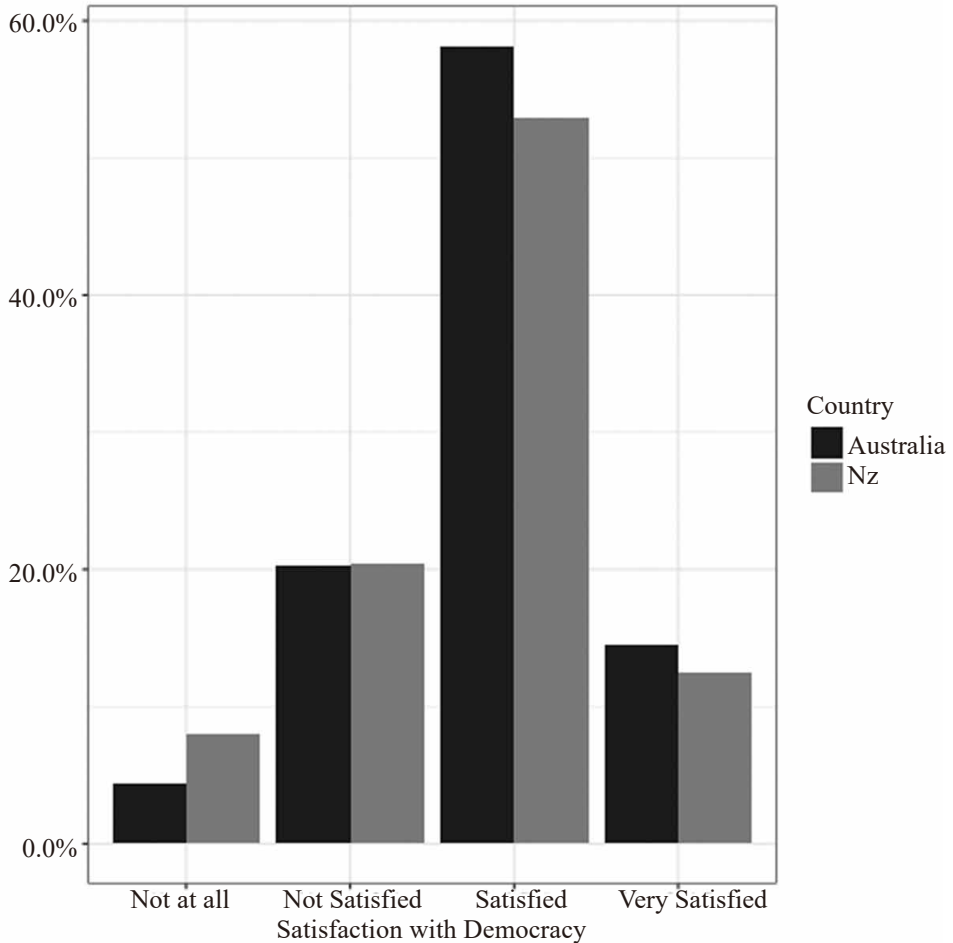


Figure 1. Satisfaction with Democracy in Australia and New Zealand

Data: McAllister et al. (2014); Vowles et al. (2014).

Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of absolute distance in ideology between the respondents and winning parties in Australia and New Zealand. The average distance between respondents and the winning coalition--Liberal Party and National Party--is 2.473 (SD=2.462). As for New Zealand, the average ideological distance between respondents and the mean position of four parties is 2.610 (SD=2.157). It seems that the winning party of Australia gravitates toward the median voter but citizens feel somewhat distant from their winning parties. In the case of New Zealand, then, the wider range of parties and the distribution of voters from left to right, work together to contribute to a larger ideological distance between voters and parties vis-à-vis the largely two-party majoritarian system of Australia.

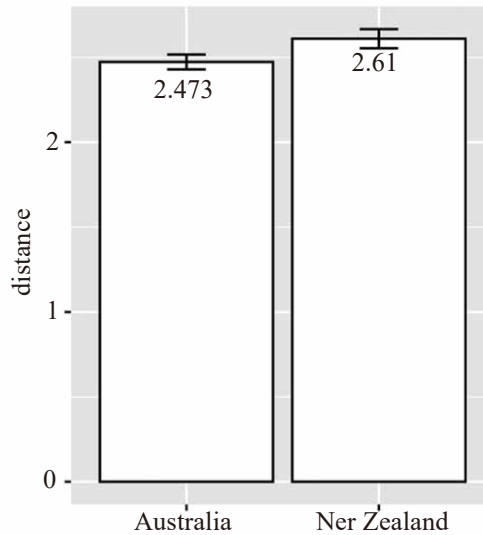


Figure 2. Ideological Congruence in Australia and New Zealand

Data: McAllister et al. (2014); Vowles et al. (2014).

These two figures demonstrate that Australian citizens' satisfaction with democracy is as high as that of New Zealand citizens'. The ideological distance between each voter and party is somewhat different. This can be explained by the

difference in the party systems of the two countries. In proportional representation system, as in New Zealand, the range of party positions arrayed in a left-right continuum tends to be wider than in a two-party system. Furthermore, voters also tend to be more distributed along the ideological continuum than in a two-party system. The more pressing question is the effect of ideological congruence, which is presented in next section.

5-5. Ordered Probit Estimates

Satisfaction with democracy is measured by a four-level variable ‘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?’ Given that the level of measurement is ordinal, we use the ordered probit model to estimate the effects of independent variables. The equation, after controlling for demographic characteristics, summarizes the relationships among the variables: gender (male), education, age, income, Australia or New Zealand ethnicity, economic evaluation, partisanship, perceived accountability, election winner, ideological congruence, political trust/efficacy, and political interest. The ordinal probit regression model can be specified as follows.

$$\begin{aligned}\Pr[y_i=m] &= \Pr[\mu_{m-1} < X_j \beta + e_i \leq \mu_m] \\ &= \Phi(\mu_m - X_j \beta) - \Phi(\mu_{m-1} - X_j \beta) \\ &= 1 - \Phi(\mu_m - 1 - X_j \beta)\end{aligned}$$

Where X means the vector of independent variables that we discuss in previous section, β the coefficients, and e the disturbance term that has a standard Normal distribution. We use maximum likelihood estimation to estimate this model for relevant data from Australia and New Zealand respectively.

First of all, Table 1 shows the ordered probit estimates in the 2013 Australian election. In terms of socio-psychological factors, economic performance and political trust is positively associated with satisfaction with democracy. As for institution

perspective, people who voted for the Liberal-National alliance and tend to be satisfied with democracy. Likewise, the perception of the difference that voting make increase satisfaction with democracy. More importantly, ideological proximity between the voter and the Liberal-National alliance has positive impact on satisfaction with democracy.

Table 1. Determinants of Satisfaction with Democracy in 2013 Australian Election

	Coef.	S.E.	z-value
Ideological congruence	0.041**	0.014	2.87
Election winner	0.318**	0.076	4.17
Perceived accountability	0.257**	0.026	10.45
Economic evaluation	0.148**	0.027	5.51
Political interest	0.102*	0.040	2.57
Male	0.034	0.049	0.70
Education			
High school	0.133	0.107	1.24
Some College	0.067	0.092	0.72
College & above	0.194	0.098	1.98
Age			
30-39 years old	-0.04	0.097	-0.41
40-49 years old	0.01	0.093	0.10
50-59 years old	0.15	0.091	1.64
60-69 years old	0.186	0.095	1.96
70 years old and above	0.282	0.108	2.61
Income	0.009	0.005	1.83
Partisanship			
Liberal Party	0.212	0.081	2.61
Labor Party	0.303	0.081	3.76

	Coef.	S.E.	z-value
National Party	0.241	0.182	1.32
Green Party	0.012	0.116	0.11
Cut point 1	-1.149	0.214	
Cut point 2	-0.012	0.210	
Cut point 3	1.835	0.212	
N	2,839		
Pseudo r-squared	0.082		
Chi-square	274.910***		
Akaike crit. (AIC)	5829.749		

Data: McAllister et al. (2014).

Note: *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$. We recode ideological congruence so the largest value represents the smaller distance between respondent's self-placement and the position of the ruling party/coalition.

Table 2 presents the ordered probit estimates in New Zealand's 2014 election. The result is very similar with the case of Australian election. Positive evaluation of economy may increase satisfaction with democracy. National Party identifiers and people that voted for National Party, United Future, Maori Party, or Act New Zealand tend to have higher level of democracy satisfaction, which confirms winner/loser theory. Much as economy, election winner, and perceived accountability affect democratic satisfaction, the distance between respondents and average position of the four parties decreases it. The higher the congruence, the higher satisfaction level is.

Table 2. Determinants of Satisfaction with Democracy in 2014 New Zealand Election

	Coef.	S.E.	z-value
Ideological congruence	0.074***	0.022	3.40
Election winner	0.268***	0.101	2.66
Perceived accountability	0.274***	0.051	5.39
Economic evaluation	0.251***	0.054	4.69
Political interest	0.088	0.061	1.43
Male	-0.106	0.08	-1.33
Education			
High school	-0.042	0.124	-0.34
Some College	0.005	0.125	0.04
College & above	0.098	0.133	0.74
Age			
30-39 years old	-0.137*	0.192	-0.71
40-49 years old	-0.294	0.174	-1.69
50-59 years old	-0.183	0.161	-1.14
60-69 years old	-0.168	0.161	-1.04
70 years old and above	-0.094	0.169	-0.55
Income	0.035*	0.021	1.68
Partisanship			
Labour Party	-0.130	0.135	-0.97
National Party	-0.029	0.094	-0.30
Green Party	-0.155	0.160	-0.97
NZ First	-0.189	0.231	-0.82
Act New Zealand	0.932	0.610	1.53
United Future	6.830***	1.112	6.14
Maori	-0.17	0.183	-0.93

	Coef.	S.E.	z-value
Cut point 1	0.409	0.336	
Cut point 2	1.553	0.329	
Cut point 3	3.521	0.338	
N	1,213		
Pseudo r-squared	0.105		
Chi-square	785.178***		
Akaike crit. (AIC)	2205.745		

Data: Vowles et al. (2014).

Note: *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$. We recode ideological congruence so the largest value represents the smaller distance between respondent's self-placement and the position of the ruling party/coalition.

Table 1 and 2 show the evidence that ideological closeness contributes to satisfaction with democracy, controlling for some other important variables. That confirms hypothesis H1. Both perceived accountability and perceived accountability have significant and positive impact on democratic satisfaction, which means both hypotheses H2 and H3 hold up. These findings imply that both representation and accountability are valued in both proportional and majoritarian systems. Context is not as relevant to the factors of democratic satisfaction as earlier studies indicated.

To compare the effects of major independent variables, we calculate the cumulative estimated probability of being in each of four categories of the dependent variable conditional on ideological congruence, election winner, and perceived accountability according to Table 1 and 2. Marginal effects are the change in probability when the independent variable increases by one unit, whether it is continuous or binary (Mallick 2009). As differences in probabilities, it is more informative than odds ratios and relative risks. Figure 3 shows the average marginal effects of three variables in Australia. The average marginal effect of satisfaction with democracy

remains almost the same. It is around 0. However, ‘election winner’ and ‘perceived accountability’ have a larger marginal effect. The marginal effects range from -0.029 to 0.067 and -0.025 to 0.053 respectively (see Appendix 2).

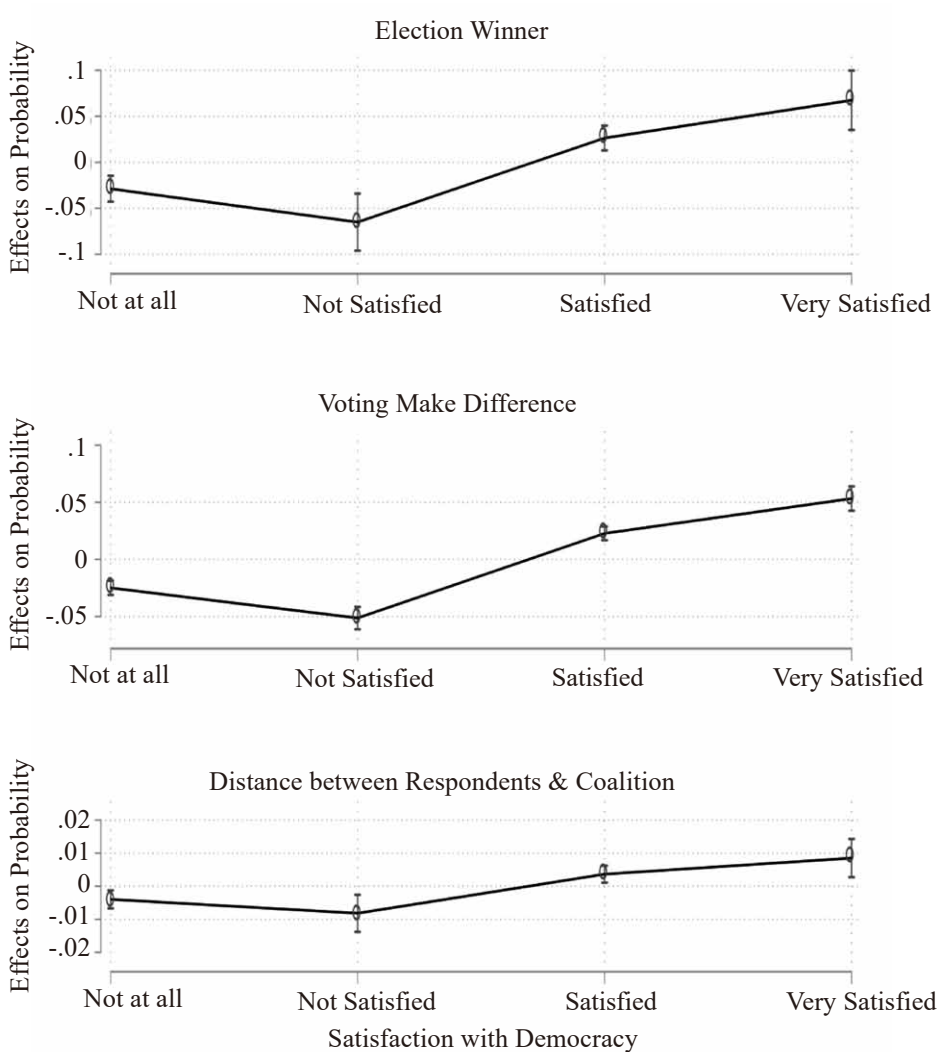


Figure 3. Average Marginal Effects of Ideological Congruence, Perceived Accountability, and Election Winner on Satisfaction with Democracy in Australia

Data: McAllister et al. (2014).

Figure 4 also displays larger average marginal effects of election winner and perceived accountability compared to ideological congruence in New Zealand. It is apparent that ideological congruence has relatively smaller average marginal effect. Therefore, we find that H4a is not supported.

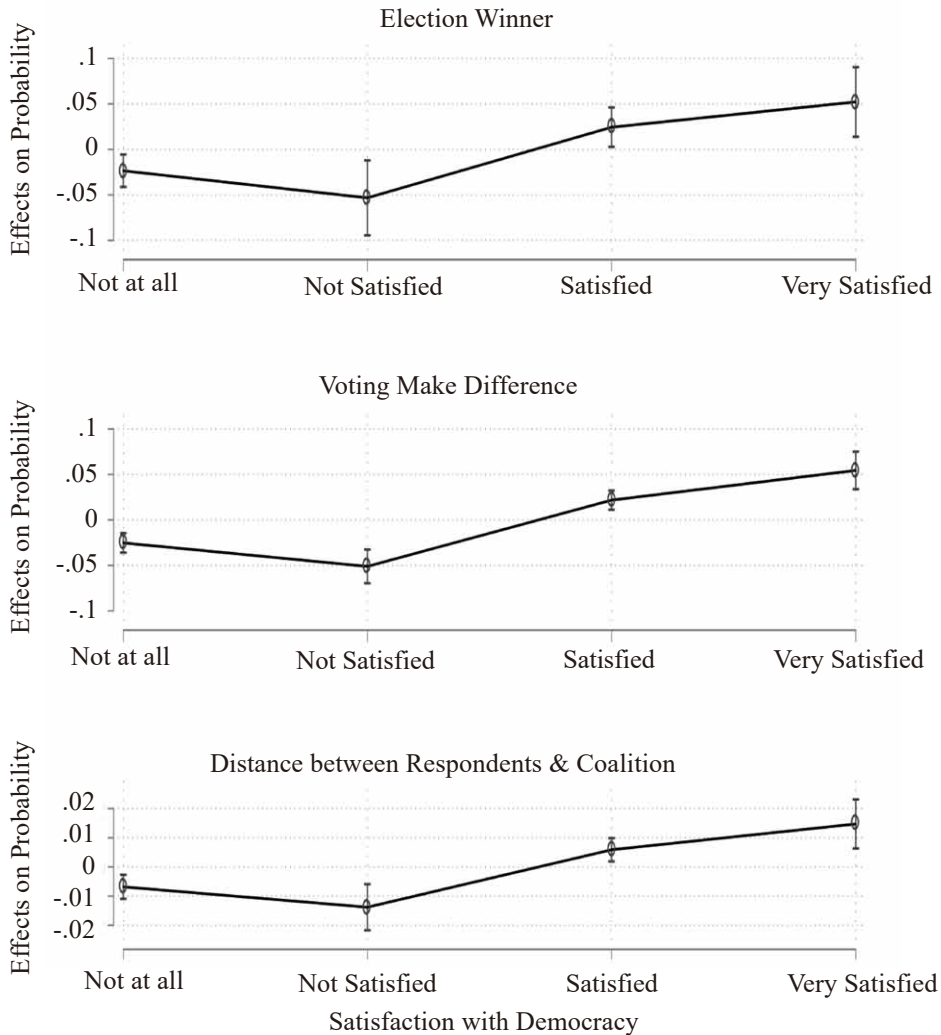


Figure 4. Average Marginal Effects of Ideological Congruence, Perceived Accountability, and Election Winner on Satisfaction with Democracy in New Zealand

Data: Vowles et al. (2014).

Figure 3 and 4 display very similar patterns across the three variables. Ideological congruence has small average marginal effect on democratic satisfaction in both countries. Therefore, H4b is rejected, either.

In sum, our data analysis confirms all four hypotheses: economic evaluation, civic culture, winner/loser, and ideological closeness. Our empirical findings suggest that ideological closeness matters most with the political system that prioritizes representation. The contextual effect of majoritarian and proportional system is manifested in this study. As Anderson and Gillory (1997, 78) conclude that, “we can better understand differences across individuals and countries regarding satisfaction with democracy if we can identify not only who citizens are and what they think but also the kind of democracy in which they live.”

6. Conclusion

The recent discontent and rising dissatisfaction with democracy globally hides the reality that in many democracies, citizens continue to support democracy and are satisfied with democracy. In a 2020 report by the Cambridge University’s Centre for the Future of Democracy noted that while democratic dissatisfaction levels are on the rise, citizens continue to strongly support their democracies. In this study, we follow on and ask why is there variation in the level of democratic satisfaction in democracies? In particular we are interested in understanding why two of Asia-Pacific’s leading democracies--Australia and New Zealand--have such a high level of democratic satisfaction amongst its citizens. Extant studies suggest several factors that form the basis of democratic satisfaction such as positive economic evaluation, political trust and efficacy, as well supporting the winning or losing party. In light of previous literature, we posit that ideological congruence between voters and parties matter as well. Using Australia and New Zealand as two case studies, our research corroborates the findings of earlier works and also confirms a strong relationship between ideological congruence and the citizens’ satisfaction with democracy. Although Australia has a majoritarian system, the level of representation in light of

ideological distance is as high as in New Zealand. Respondents who feel close to the Liberal-National Party in Australia and the coalition led by National Party in New Zealand seem to be assured that their views are well represented in elections and, therefore, satisfied with democracy.

In this study, we have not directly investigated or tested the mediated and interactive effects of the electoral system and other institutional designs on the factors we have enumerated here, especially ideological congruence. For example, Wang (2021) finds that satisfaction with democracy increases when election losers are able to oversee the winners in the presidential democracies. Holmberg (2014) found that the extent to which people perceived to be represented by politicians does not vary with the consensus and majoritarian rule. Going forward, future studies may want to examine the path analytic casual relations between institutional designs, accountability and representation, ideological congruence, and voter's satisfaction with democracy.

There could be more variants of ideological proximity. For example, some people may feel distant from major parties but close to one of political leaders. After the political leader dominates a party for certain period of time, the party may become increasingly like the political leader. That is probably what happened in Trump administration (Espinoza 2021). Therefore, it is necessary to measure ideological congruence in difference ways (Mayne and Hakhverdian 2017).

In recent years, polarization drew attention from political scientists (Banda and Cluverius 2018; Hetherington 2001; Mason 2015). As elites try to mobilize their supporters, partisans may respond to increasing levels of elite polarization. As the tension and divergence between different party supporters increases, norms of democracy--tolerance, trust, and efficacy--are shattered. Polarization may appear in both proportional and majoritarian systems, and its level may decrease ideological proximity from median voter legislature (Powell 2010). A proportional system may encourage extreme parties and fragmentation, and a majoritarian system tends to add fuel to disparity that already exists. We should consider the causal relationship between party polarization level and representation/accountability while we explain the variation in citizen satisfaction with democracy.

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Appendix

To view this paper's appendix, please visit *Journal of Electoral Studies* official website.⁶

Appendix 1: Question Wordings and Descriptive Statistics.

Appendix 2: Average Marginal Effects of Major Variables.

⁶ *Journal of Electoral Studies* official website: <http://www.jestw.com/tc/index.php>.

意識形態一致程度、課責感與民主滿意度： 以澳洲與紐西蘭為例

蔡佳泓*、陳永福**

摘要

近年來出現相當多的跨國研究探討民眾與政黨的意識形態一致性，並且指出民眾的意識形態如果接近執政黨，他們對民主的滿意程度比較高。本研究延伸這些理論到澳洲以及紐西蘭的民主。在估計包含意識形態一致程度、課責感等各種社會心理因素對於民主滿意度的作用時，我們特別凸顯意識形態一致程度的重要性，同時發現課責比意識形態一致性的作用更大，而且課責感在澳洲以及紐西蘭的影響都比意識形態一致程度來得大。我們的實證證據確認了有關意識形態一致程度的作用，但是並沒有找到意識形態一致程度在強調代表的政治體系特別有影響。這個發現說明雖然澳洲與紐西蘭分別採用多數決與比例代表制，但是有可能產生意識形態靠向中間位置的政府，使得多數民眾都感受到政府可以代表其價值，而是以人民是否可以控制政府來決定是否滿意現在的民主。

關鍵詞：意識形態一致程度、課責感、民主滿意度、多數決、比例代表制

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