



Political Institutions and Satisfaction with Democracy: A Cross-National Analysis of Consensus and Majoritarian Systems

Author(s): Christopher J. Anderson and Christine A. Guillory

Source: *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 91, No. 1, (Mar., 1997), pp. 66-81

Published by: American Political Science Association

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2952259>

Accessed: 22/05/2008 08:14

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=apsa>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

---

JSTOR is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1995 to build trusted digital archives for scholarship. We enable the scholarly community to preserve their work and the materials they rely upon, and to build a common research platform that promotes the discovery and use of these resources. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

# Political Institutions and Satisfaction with Democracy: A Cross-National Analysis of Consensus and Majoritarian Systems

CHRISTOPHER J. ANDERSON *Rice University and Northwestern University*

CHRISTINE A. GUILLORY *Rice University*

*Do political institutions affect citizen satisfaction with democracy? If so, how? Using cross-sectional survey data for eleven European democracies together with data on the type of democracy in which individuals live, we demonstrate that the nature of representative democratic institutions (measured by Arend Lijphart's consensus-majority index of democracies) mediates the relationship between a person's status as part of the political minority or majority and his or her satisfaction with the way the system works. Specifically, we find that (1) the losers of democratic competition show lower levels of satisfaction than do those in the majority and (2) losers in systems that are more consensual display higher levels of satisfaction with the way democracy works than do losers in systems with majoritarian characteristics. Conversely, winners tend to be more satisfied with democracy the more a country's political institutions approximate pure majoritarian government.*

Democracy is about winning and losing at election time. Yet, democratic governance is also about how the political system deals with the winners and losers of democratic contests after the election is over. Because some political systems compensate the minority while others allow the majority to implement policies unchallenged, the extent to which either group is satisfied with the workings of democratic governance varies systematically by type of democracy. Put differently, because winning and losing have different consequences as a result of differently structured democratic institutions, the way people feel about the way democracy works is affected by the kind of system in which they live.

In our view, there are two key elements to understanding attitudes toward the way democracy works. First, support for the system is influenced by whether people are part of the majority or minority, that is, whether they are among the winners or losers in electoral contests. Individuals who belong to the political majority are more likely to be satisfied with the way democracy works than are those in the minority. Second, and most important for our attempt to construct an explanation of attitudes toward democratic government that takes institutions into account, we posit that a country's political institutions and constitutional reality systematically mediate attitudes about the democratic process among winners and losers.

We contend that there are identifiable and relatively stable features of democratic life which serve to organize and constrain citizens' political experiences and which allow them to develop attitudes about the workings of the political system. People form attitudes about politics in systemic contexts whose institutional structures mediate preferences, define the choices available, and provide citizens with opportunities to be heard in the political process (Powell 1982, 1989). One feature of democratic life that is important for citizen attitudes toward the system is how democratic institutions treat those in the political majority and those in the minority.

Drawing on the insights generated by Arend Lijphart's work (1984, 1994) on the nature of democratic governance and representation, we examine how the nature of representative democracy influences the relationship between political minority and majority status, on the one hand, and satisfaction with democracy, on the other. On the basis of cross-national survey data and information about the nature of the democratic process in eleven European democracies, we argue and demonstrate empirically that consensual and majoritarian democratic institutions differentially and systematically affect citizen satisfaction with the way democracy works. We find that people on the losing side in an electoral competition show lower levels of satisfaction with the system than do those on the winning side. Moreover, there is an interaction between the institutional environment and a person's status as part of the political majority or minority. Losers in systems that are more consensual display higher levels of satisfaction with the way democracy works than do losers in systems with majoritarian characteristics. Conversely, winners tend to be more satisfied with democracy the more a country's political institutions approximate pure majoritarian government.

Our research links and extends two research traditions that seldom have been combined. First, we advance our understanding of the functioning of democratic institutions by showing how institutional differences intersect with electoral outcomes in conditioning citizen attitudes about the political system.

Christopher J. Anderson is Assistant Professor of Political Science, Rice University, Houston, TX 77005-1892, and Visiting Assistant Professor of Management, J. L. Kellogg Graduate School of Management, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL 60208-2001. Christine A. Guillory is a graduate student in Political Science, Rice University, Houston, TX 77005-1892.

We are grateful to James Alt, John Ambler, Raymond Duch, Mark Franklin, Carolyn Funk, and the anonymous reviewers for thoughtful comments on earlier ideas and drafts of this paper. Special thanks also go to Kathleen O'Connor and Carl Rhodes for their constructive criticisms and good advice. We are indebted to Arend Lijphart for supplying the institutional data and for providing valuable feedback. Finally, we thank Robert Adams and Patricia Garcia-Monet for their help with computing and data management. The Eurobarometer data are available through the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR).

Thus, we ask how institutions affect what people think about democracy. Second, we contribute to an understanding of the determinants of system support in democratic states by systematically combining a country's political institutions and individual-level independent variables across a number of democracies. We argue that we can better understand what and how citizens think about the way the system works if we combine information about individuals with information about the nature of representation in the system in which they live.

By combining the insights of different strands of research on system support, we follow M. Stephen Weatherford (1991, 252), who argues that "strengthening research on political legitimacy will depend on renewing efforts at middle-level theorizing, with the goal not of choosing between perspectives but of combining them more constructively." The combination of individual attitudes with systemic attributes advances our understanding of political support and the functioning of democratic systems because it allows for comparison across individuals, countries, and types of democracy.

The next section briefly reviews the role of attitudes toward democracy in research on the politics of Western democracies. Subsequently, we examine the role that political institutions play in such attitudes. We then develop a model of citizen satisfaction with democracy that includes political institutions and individual-level variables, such as economic performance evaluations and political interest. Using survey data from eleven European democracies, we test this model of citizen evaluations of the political system, and we assess the significance of our findings in light of theories of system support and satisfaction with democracy. We conclude by suggesting avenues for future research.

## SYSTEM SUPPORT IN WESTERN DEMOCRACIES

Survey research has documented high enthusiasm for democratic ideals and democratic government among citizens in the newly established democracies of Central and Eastern Europe (Mishler and Rose 1996). Yet, there has not been a similar resurgence of positive attitudes toward democracy in the West in the aftermath of the Cold War. In fact, after the much-heralded victory of liberal democracy around the globe in 1989–90, satisfaction with democracy and intermediary political institutions declined considerably in West European democracies (Kaase and Newton 1995). One explanation for this downward trend contends that the disappearance of communism as an alternative form of government no longer allows incumbents in the West to cover up some important weaknesses of democratic political institutions (Kaase 1995). Since the end of the Cold War, the "easy" comparison with communism has given way to comparisons among the group of pluralist democracies with regard to economic performance and optimal structures of democratic organization (see also Moe and Caldwell 1994). Furthermore, economic dif-

ficulties—most notably high unemployment rates—have magnified the loss of enthusiasm for democratic politics among people in Western Europe because the shortcomings of democratic governance have been put in sharper relief than previously.

Concern with the optimal functioning of democratic institutions and citizen attitudes about them is not new in research on the politics of advanced industrial societies. It has long been assumed that low levels of citizen support can pose serious problems for democratic systems because both their functioning and maintenance are intimately linked with what and how people think about democratic governance (Lipset 1959; Powell 1982, 1986). Moreover, earlier research repeatedly observed apparent institutional weaknesses as important influences on citizen satisfaction with democratic politics. During the 1970s, scholars concluded that democratic systems were suffering from overload because they appeared increasingly incapable of dealing with an expansion in citizens' demands (Brittan 1975, Huntington 1974). Similarly, in the late 1970s and 1980s, analysts found that representative democracy was not responsive enough to demands articulated by a citizenry with increased participatory inclinations (Abramson and Inglehart 1995, Barnes and Kaase 1979, Dalton 1996, Jennings and van Deth 1989).

Researchers and commentators frequently view the ensuing dissatisfaction with political institutions among Western mass publics as resulting from institutional inadequacies, which presumably limit democracy's capacity to cope with citizens' demands. To reduce such institutional deficits, scholars argue for an extension of more direct forms of popular participation in democratic decision making (Barber 1984, Held 1987). As a result, along with documenting a trend toward higher levels of political sophistication and a shift toward political values that emphasize involvement in the democratic process (Abramson and Inglehart 1995, Dalton 1996, Inglehart 1990), they have more closely investigated opportunities for people to have input into the political process.

The connection between political institutions and citizen attitudes toward democracy is a subject of particular relevance to contemporary debates about democratic performance because it involves the extent to which those attitudes and, by implication, the potential for protest or instability are mediated by a country's political institutions. Such questions are relevant to our understanding of both established and new democracies. With the end of the Cold War, older democracies have to cope with new realities, and new democracies are attempting to establish and stabilize various forms of democratic government. We argue, however, that the opportunity to participate in the democratic process or the quality of political outputs constitutes only part of the link between institutions and attitudes in contemporary democracies. It is not clear that more opportunities for input and access to the system will automatically lead to higher levels of satisfaction with democracy; nor is it self-evident that particular types of democratic institutions lead to superior outputs

(Crepaz 1996). Because the same set of democratic institutions can have different consequences for different groups among those governed by them, and in particular for those in the political minority and majority, we explore how long-standing and institutionally defined differences across and within political systems mediate citizen support for the system.

### WINNERS AND LOSERS IN CONSENSUAL AND MAJORITARIAN DEMOCRACY

In the absence of knowledge about the specific nature of the representative process in a democracy, we need to make a crucial distinction between different categories of citizens when it comes to attitudes toward the system: "Since the struggle for political office is bound to create winners and losers, this necessarily generates ambivalent attitudes towards authorities on the part of the losers" (Kaase and Newton 1995, 60; Nadeau and Blais 1993). Democracy is about winning and losing within the context of set rules to which those participating in political contests adhere. Thus, people who voted for a governing party—either *the* governing party or one among several in a governing coalition—are almost by definition more likely to believe that the government is interested in and responsive to their needs. They are inclined to be satisfied with the government's performance (Lambert et al. 1986) and with the way the system works (Citrin and Green 1986, Gabriel 1989, Kornberg and Clarke 1994, Kuechler 1986, Nadeau and Blais 1993). Put differently, because the political system is a friendlier place for people who identify with the governing party, we hypothesize that losers are less satisfied with the way democracy works than are winners.

Winning and losing mean different things in different political systems, however. In fact, some systems are designed to protect democratic minorities from unrestrained rule by the majority. Arend Lijphart's work (1984, 1994) on the nature of democratic systems serves as the basis for our theory of how political institutions affect satisfaction with the way democracy works. Lijphart analyzes constitutional reality across a number of Western democracies as well as the underlying factors that drive the operation of democracy in particular countries. On the basis of five factors—minimal winning cabinets, executive dominance, effective number of parties, number of issue dimensions, and electoral disproportionality—he develops a typology of democratic systems that places countries on a continuum from most consensual to most majoritarian in nature (Lijphart 1984; Lijphart et al. 1988).

The overarching principle that distinguishes majoritarian and consensual forms of democracy is the answer to the question: "Who rules?" The answer given by majoritarian systems is "the majority of the people," whereas in consensual systems it is "as many people as possible" (Lijphart 1984, 4). At the extremes, majoritarian government is about unfettered rule by the majority on the basis of an unwritten constitution without provisions for minority veto, whereas a pure form of consensus democracy is organized on the basis

of a rigid, written constitution with formal veto powers for minorities.<sup>1</sup>

The classic example for the majoritarian model of democracy is the British Westminster model, whereas the Netherlands and Belgium typically are mentioned as prototypes of the consensual model. Under the British system, the winners of elections are in a strong position to implement their preferred policies largely unchallenged. Under one-party government and cabinet decision making in an environment of an unwritten constitution, asymmetric bicameralism (strong House of Commons, weak House of Lords), unitary and centralized government, plurality electoral rules, and no room for elements of direct democracy, the majority rules, and the minority opposes. In contrast, political systems like those found in the Netherlands and Belgium provide electoral losers with significant rights to participate in governmental decision making. These institutional designs involve executive power sharing (multiparty coalition government is the norm), balanced bicameralism, federalism and decentralization, electoral rules based on proportional representation, and written constitutions that include minority veto power and opportunities for referendums (Lijphart 1984).

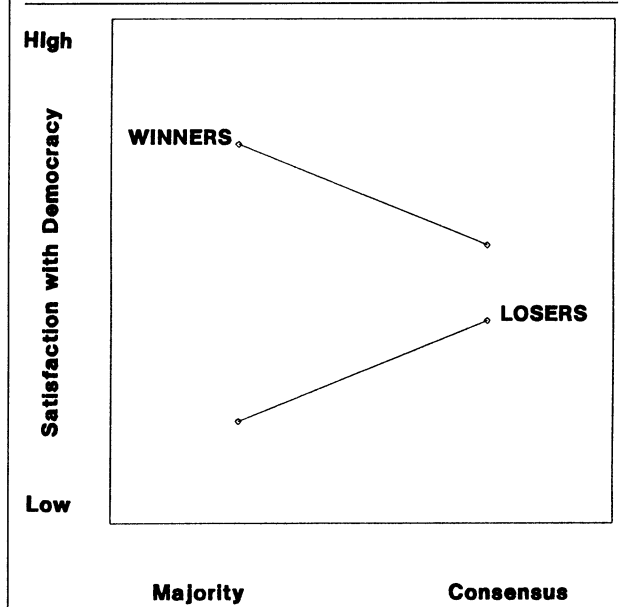
Thus, when it comes to citizen access to and participation in the political process, it is important to note that some countries' institutions are designed to afford greater opportunities for both winners and losers of democratic competition to be represented in the political arena and to implement their preferred policies. Given that consensual systems provide the political minority with a voice in the decision-making process, we expect that the more consensual the set of political institutions in a country, the greater is the extent to which negative consequences of losing elections are muted. Conversely, the more majoritarian the country's institutions, the more winners get to have a say and impose their will on the minority.<sup>2</sup>

Note, however, that this argument does not imply that citizens in one type of system are, on average, more likely to be satisfied with the system than are people in another, regardless of their status as part of the political majority or minority. Instead, we argue that the nature of a country's institutions and status as part of the political majority or minority interact in their effect on satisfaction with democracy. Figure 1 plots this hypothesized interactive effect.

The more consensual the system, the higher should be the level of support for the system among losers and

<sup>1</sup> The (reversed) consensus/majority index used in this study is based on Lijphart's (1984) typology and scores countries from most majoritarian to most consensual. Higher values denote that a country is more consensual. The data for the individual countries were updated through 1990 (also see Appendix B for descriptive statistics). The scores for the countries are as follows: Belgium 0.80, Denmark 0.71, France -0.24, Greece -0.70, Ireland -0.62, Italy 1.03, Netherlands 1.08, Portugal 0.22, Spain -0.58, United Kingdom -1.56, and West Germany 0.28.

<sup>2</sup> Note that no predictions are made regarding the quality of the decisions made or of the eventual policy outcomes obtained. For the effects of consensus versus majority democracy on policy outcomes, see Crepaz (1996).

**FIGURE 1. Hypothesized Satisfaction with Democracy in Different Systems**

the lower it should be among winners. Conversely, as we move toward a more majoritarian system, winners should display higher levels of satisfaction with the system, whereas losers should be much less satisfied with the way the system works.<sup>3</sup> In the aggregate, this should translate into a narrower gap in satisfaction with the system between winners and losers as we move toward a more consensual system. This proposition states that the nature of representation in a country, as conceptualized by Lijphart, systematically mediates the relationship between political majority/minority status and attitudes toward the way democracy works (see Kaase 1995).

Related evidence suggests that consensus versus majority democracy is a useful tool for understanding the congruence of citizen and policymaker interests. Huber and Powell (1994) have shown, for example, that citizen and party preferences are more likely to be congruent in multiparty systems based on proportional representation than in (approximate) two-party systems based on majority electoral laws. As the distinction drawn by Huber and Powell essentially maps onto Lijphart's majoritarian-consensual typology, we expect satisfaction with the system to be greater when there is a greater likelihood of congruence of party and citizen preference. Moreover, there is evidence that two-party (majoritarian) systems, which typically are built on electoral laws that discourage the emergence of additional parties, may alienate voters whose policy positions are not represented in one of the two parties (Miller and Listhaug 1990; see also Weil 1989).

<sup>3</sup> The effects of political institutions on satisfaction with democracy for the country as a whole, however, that is, among both winners and losers combined, is determined by how many more winners there are than losers in any particular country.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

To date, a country's political context rarely has been incorporated explicitly into explanations of system support or satisfaction with democracy and political institutions. In fact, much of the research on the determinants of system support in Western democracies is notably institution-free because it has focused on the study of attitudes using variables measured exclusively at the level of individuals. Such analyses suggest that citizens are supportive of political institutions because of who they are and what they think about different aspects of the political universe. The few exceptions include a small number of studies suggesting that explanations of system support need to take the nature of the political system into account. Miller and Listhaug (1990) find, for example, that people in systems with new parties and opportunities to express discontent with the existing political arrangements are more likely to have confidence in the system. Schmitt (1983), in a study of ten European countries, and Harmel and Robertson (1986), in their nine-nation study, find that people in systems with more durable governments are more supportive of the existing political arrangements.

The focus on individual attributes is largely a consequence of the single-country design employed by these studies. Given that political contexts vary widely among countries, any truly comparative investigation into citizen attitudes toward democracy that seeks to replace country names with variable names requires that variation in institutional structures be taken into account (Przeworski and Teune 1970). While we do not wish to claim that individual characteristics play a secondary role in explanations of support for democratic institutions, we do wish to point out that single-country studies do not easily allow for the construction of theories seeking to explain variations in citizen attitudes using factors measured at the level of the political system.

Because the goal of this study is to explain citizen satisfaction with democracy across a number of democracies, we need surveys that specify such individual-level variables as vote in the last election, demographic information, citizen perceptions of economic conditions, and attitudes toward the political system. Moreover, we require information about countries' political structures since institutional arrangements are not variable in single-country studies, except in cases of significant institutional change over time. For the survey data we use Eurobarometer surveys conducted in the member states of the European Union in 1990 (Reif and Melich 1993).<sup>4</sup> In order to examine the

<sup>4</sup> The particular set of surveys used is the Eurobarometer 34.0, which was conducted in October/November 1990. It was based on random national samples of about 1,000 respondents each, totaling 10,670 persons aged 15 years and older in the (then) 12 member states of the European Community: Belgium, Denmark, France, Great Britain, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and West Germany. The inclusion here of West Germany in fall 1990—the period of unification—is not particularly problematic, as West Germans' satisfaction consistently has been high compared to other European countries. We excluded East Germans from the sample because they were unlikely to have developed attitudes

relationships between individual attitudes and systemic properties, these surveys are complemented by information about the nature of democratic politics in a country, specifically, Lijphart's index of consensus and majority democracy.

Our research design calls for matching up-to-date measures of political institutions with mass surveys. Given that the Eurobarometer we selected was conducted in fall 1990, it coincides with our indicators of consensus and majoritarian democracy, which measure the constitutional reality in these countries up until 1990. Moreover, since this Eurobarometer is one of the few to include questions about respondents' economic situation, it also allows us to control for an independent variable previously found to be an important determinant of system support.

### THE DEPENDENT VARIABLE: SATISFACTION WITH DEMOCRACY

When analyzing support for the political system, many, if not most, studies refer to the work of David Easton (1965, 1975), who distinguishes between diffuse and specific support.<sup>5</sup> Researchers have pointed out that Easton's two categories do not exhaust the possible varieties of political attitudes toward democratic governance (Lambert et al. 1986; Thompson 1970; Weatherford 1984, 1987, 1992; Westle 1989). The object of citizen support does not have to be, and probably cannot be, reliably separated in terms of the system and the system's outputs (Craig 1993, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 1995). The difficulties of independently measuring diffuse and specific support are enormous, and separate indicators of the two generally are found to be highly correlated (Kaase 1988, Loewenberg 1971). Thus, the distinction between diffuse and specific support mainly has been relevant at the conceptual level, not in the world of empirical social research (Fuchs 1993).

In this paper, we do not seek to resolve the problems arising from operationalizing Easton's distinction (see Weatherford 1992 for an overview). Because it is difficult to classify citizen attitudes toward the political system either as purely diffuse support or as an exclusively evaluative, output-oriented specific support, we believe that those attitudes typically include both an affective and an evaluation dimension. We thus assume that "support reflects a sort of emotionally-biased running tally that citizens keep on the performance of a system" (Kuechler 1991, 280). We also do not seek to understand citizen attitudes toward democratic constitutions as the written rules of the game or as ideal

versions of them. Following Weil (1989), who argues that the informal rules of the game in a democracy (and their consequences) are the most important determinants of legitimacy beliefs in Western democracies, we are interested in gauging people's responses to the process of democratic governance. In other words, we are interested in analyzing citizen attitudes toward a country's "constitution in operation" (Lane and Ersson 1991, 194) or its "constitutional reality" (Fuchs, Guidorossi, and Svensson 1995, 328).

Given the state of the debate about the conceptualization and measurement of system support broadly conceived, we rely on a straightforward definition of political support as satisfaction with the way democracy works. The relevant survey measure asked citizens whether they are very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied, or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works. Combining the very and fairly satisfied respondents and the not very and not at all satisfied into two categories, Figure 2 shows the distribution of satisfaction with democracy across the countries investigated in this study, ordered according to the Lijphart index. Satisfaction ranged from 83.8% in West Germany to 21.7% in Italy, with a mean of 59.2% and a standard deviation of 17.2%. In eight of the eleven countries, more than 50% of respondents reported that they were very or fairly satisfied with the way democracy works in their country; the exceptions were France, Italy, and Greece.

Satisfaction with democracy measures system support at a low level of generalization. It does not refer to democracy as a set of norms but to the functioning of democracy.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, while this attitude is measured by responses to a question that is directed at the system, it also invites "an evaluative rather than a purely emotional response. Thus, it measures neither diffuse nor specific support in the Eastonian sense, but a form of support not recognized or inadequately conceptualized by Easton" (Kuechler 1991, 279; see also Fuchs and Klingemann 1995, Westle 1989). The phrasing of the question is a good match with the conception of support adopted for this study (see Appendix A).

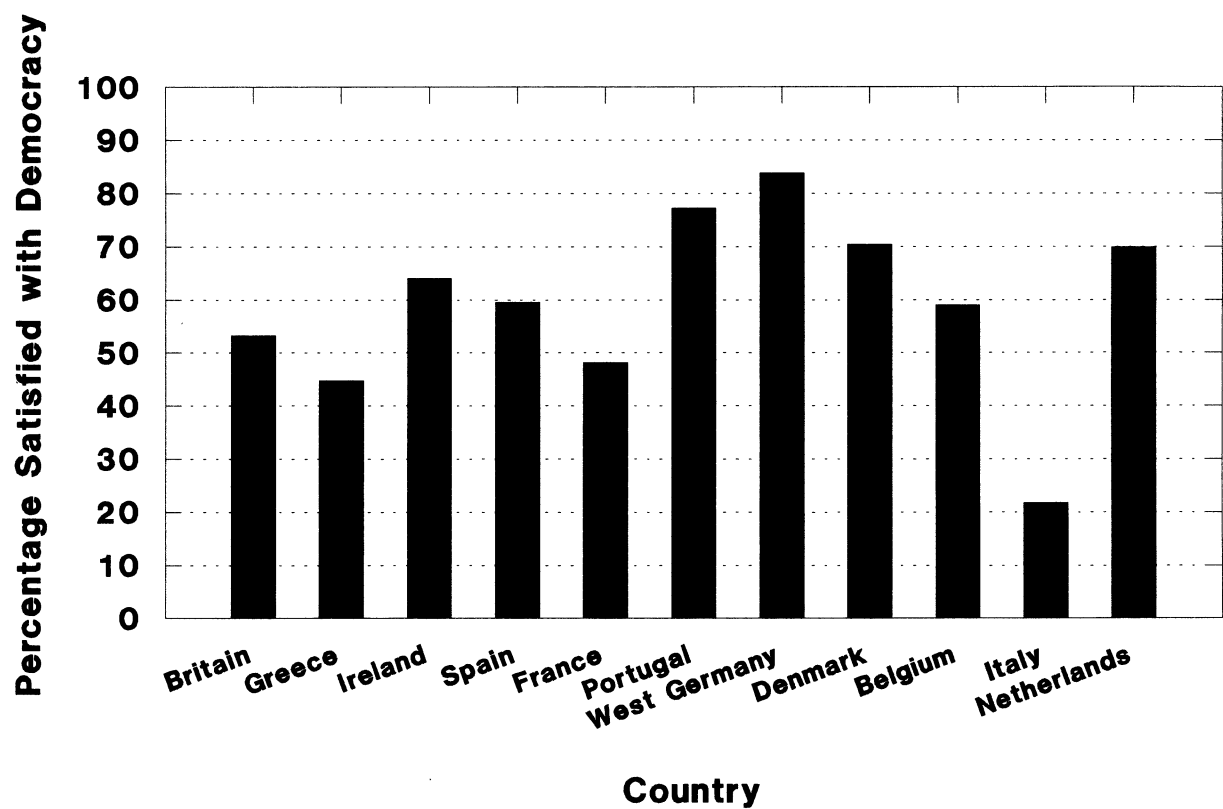
Clarke and Kornberg (1992, 47, n. 24) and Kornberg and Clarke (1992, 114–6; 1994) report on a variety of tests designed to establish construct validity of the satisfaction with democracy question as an indicator of system support. They find that satisfaction with democracy is clearly an indicator of actual system support and *not* coterminous with support for the incumbent government. Similarly, Fuchs (1993, 242) examines the validity of the satisfaction with democracy indicator and finds that the results constitute "a successful validation of the indicator as a measuring instrument for a generalized attitude towards the political system on the legitimacy dimension." Weil (1989, 692–3) also

toward democracy as conceptualized for the purposes of this study. We also excluded respondents from Northern Ireland and from Luxembourg, the former because of the special political situation there, and the latter because of the small sample size.

<sup>5</sup> Diffuse support is a long-standing predisposition that "refers to evaluations of what an object is or represents—the general meaning it has for a person—not of what it does" (Easton 1965, 273, cited in Kuechler 1991, 278). Specific support derives from a citizen's evaluation of system outputs; it is performance based and may be short term.

<sup>6</sup> Studies that have employed this measure as a dependent variable include Clarke, Dutt, and Kornberg 1993; Fuchs, Guidorossi, and Svensson 1995; Harmel and Robertson 1986; Kornberg and Clarke 1994; Kuechler 1986, 1991; and Lockerbie 1993 (see also Powell 1986, who employs satisfaction with democracy as an independent variable).

FIGURE 2. Satisfaction with Democracy, by Country



Note: Countries are ordered according to the Lijphart index (horizontal axis). Britain is most majoritarian, the Netherlands most consensual. Values on the vertical axis are based on responses to the question: "On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in (your country)?" The values combine the percentage of respondents saying they were "very" or "fairly" satisfied.

provides some indirect construct validity for the satisfaction with democracy indicator by reporting high positive correlations with political trust.

This dependent variable is useful because of our research design. The Eurobarometer data used here are among the few available sources that permit an analysis of mass political support across a meaningful number of contemporary democracies (Kaase 1988, Weil 1989). Moreover, we can match survey and institutional data very precisely. Although researchers have pointed to problems with the question wording that may not be shared by other measures of attitudes toward the political system,<sup>7</sup> the Eurobarometer data set is the only one that permits a systematic investigation of political institutions and citizen attitudes across a large enough number of countries (Fuchs, Guidorossi, and Svensson 1995; Kaase 1988).

THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

The independent variables in this study are *Type of Democracy*, *Majority/Minority Status*, *Economic Perfor-*

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, the political support-alienation scale employed by Muller, Jukam, and Seligson (1982). We believe, however, that the advantages of comparability of an identically worded survey item across a number of systems clearly outweighs the disadvantages of potentially ambiguous meaning.

*mance Evaluations, Interest in Politics, and Demographic Characteristics.* Each is discussed below.

Type of Democracy

We measured type of democracy with the help of Lijphart's index of consensus and majority democracy, which was calculated on data from (roughly) 1945 to 1990.<sup>8</sup> It thus constitutes an ideal and up-to-date measure of democratic reality in these countries that can be used in conjunction with the 1990 Eurobarometer data. For ease of interpretation, we reversed the original index, which is centered around zero. The more positive the values, the more consensual is the democracy. The Netherlands scores highest at 1.08, whereas Britain is the most majoritarian democracy, with a value of -1.56. The mean value is 0.04, and the standard deviation is 0.85.

Majority/Minority Status

We classified respondents as belonging to the political majority or minority with the help of a survey question

<sup>8</sup> The values for Greece, Portugal, and Spain reflect constitutional reality over a shorter span, given these countries' authoritarian histories until the mid-1970s.



asking for which party the individual voted in the last national election (see Appendix A). We then combined these responses with information about the party or parties that controlled the parliaments of the countries at the time the survey was conducted. If the respondent's past vote choice matched the actual party in power, that is, if the person was among the winners of the electoral contest, we scored that individual as zero. Those on the losing side were scored one.

### Economic Performance Evaluations

Any study of satisfaction with the way democracy works would be incomplete without citizen evaluations of system outputs. This observation is directly related to Easton's work, much of which is concerned with outputs generated by the political system. Studies that examine the connection of system outputs with political support typically accept that the two are related because "the government is assumed to possess the tools and abilities to solve social problems" (Weatherford 1984, 189). Thus, performance evaluations shape the reputation of political institutions and of the political system as a whole. Because the policy process involves multiple governmental agents and a lengthy gestation period, citizens have more evidence available about the system as an institutional design for problem solving than about specific political actors (Weatherford 1987).

For the purposes of this study, we focus on economic performance as a system output that affects citizen satisfaction with the way democracy works. Such a focus is valuable because the politics and economics of democratically governed societies have long been intertwined.<sup>9</sup> Substantial evidence suggests that economic performance and public perceptions of both personal and national economic conditions are related to system support (Clarke, Dutt, and Kornberg 1993; Finkel, Muller, and Seligson 1989; Franz 1986; Kornberg and Clarke 1992; Listhaug and Wiberg 1995; Weatherford 1984, 1987). Yet, the relationship between economic performance and system support may not necessarily be clear-cut or direct. Monroe and Erickson (1986) find, for example, that poor economic conditions can affect support for the system, but this effect is mediated by whether citizens hold the government responsible for the economy, and the effect is filtered by perceptions of party differences on economic priorities or managerial skills. Related evidence suggests that both sociotropic and egocentric evaluations of the economy are related to system support

(Citrin and Green 1986, Lockerbie 1993). Other performance-based factors not necessarily tied to economic performance per se include citizen satisfaction with policy outputs in general. Several scholars have noted that trust in the government declines with an increase in policy dissatisfaction or when citizens' policy preferences go unrepresented (Craig and Maggiotto 1981; Ho 1991; Miller and Borelli 1991; Miller, Goldenberg, and Erbring 1979; Miller and Listhaug 1990), while others note the predominance of incumbent personalities and political events in the evaluation of system support (Citrin and Green 1986, Howell and Fagan 1988).

Independently of individuals' sociodemographic characteristics and attitudes or of a country's institutional structure, we argue that those who evaluate economic performance negatively also are less satisfied with the way democracy works. Moreover, it is reasonable to expect that political majority/minority status also mediates the relationship between economic evaluations and satisfaction with democracy. Winners are expected to discount negative information about the economy because of their status as supporters of the incumbent government. The effects of negative evaluations on satisfaction with democracy therefore should be attenuated among the winners compared to the losers. Conversely, there should be a ceiling effect for winners such that the incremental increase in satisfaction in the case of positive economic evaluations will be larger for losers than for winners. Overall, the effects of economic evaluations on satisfaction with democracy should thus be smaller for winners than for losers. We measure economic assessments by responses to two Eurobarometer questions that asked respondents to evaluate national and personal economic conditions, that is, to form sociotropic and egocentric evaluations of economic performance (Appendix A).<sup>10</sup>

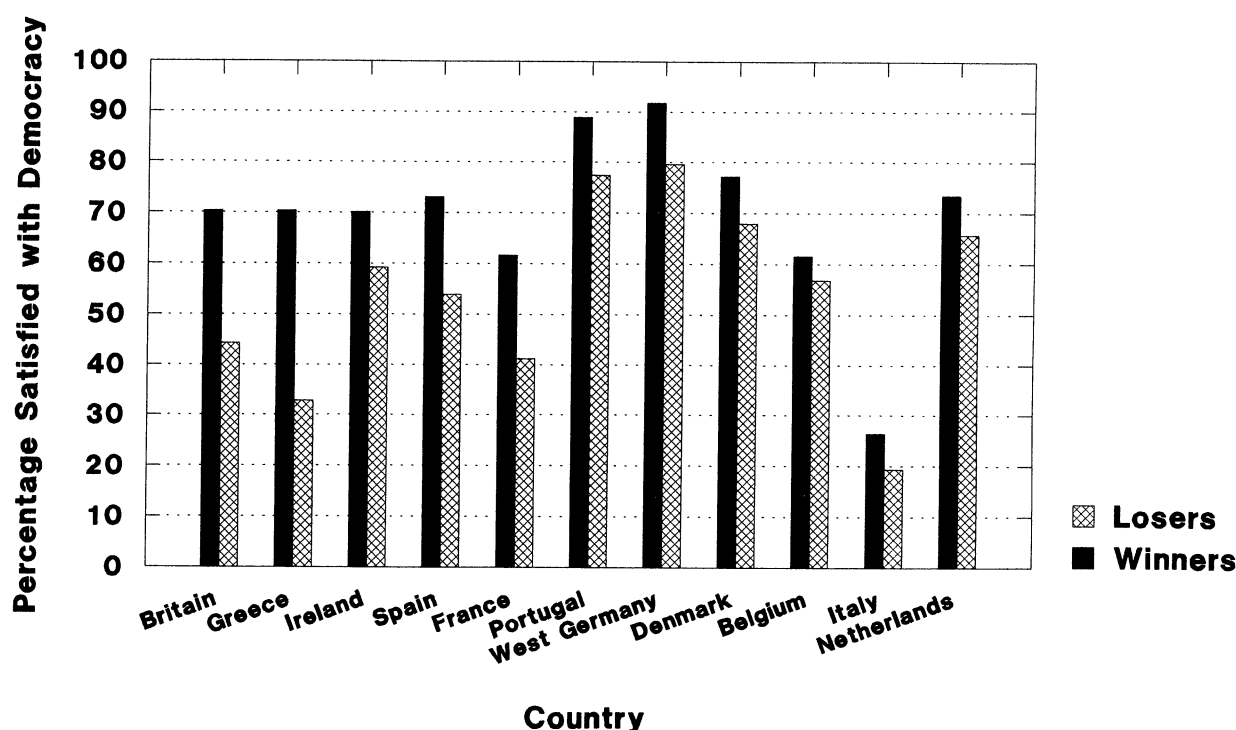
### Interest in Politics

With regard to interest in politics, an extensive literature has demonstrated that it is related to political efficacy and political support (Almond and Verba 1965, Lambert et al. 1986, Weatherford 1991). In turn, citizens who understand the political process and believe that their participation can influence policymaking are likely to take a more optimistic view of democratic governance. Therefore, we hypothesize that political interest and satisfaction with democracy are associated, conceivably in a relationship that can work both ways. We do not account for the possible simultaneity here but hypothesize only that those who are more interested in politics also are more likely to be satisfied with the way democracy works.

<sup>9</sup> It is, for example, widely accepted political lore that democratic governments are more likely to fall when economic performance is less than satisfactory (Norpoth 1991). Moreover, an extensive literature has examined the relationship between economic performance and democratic stability (Lipset 1959, Powell 1982). We assume that economic performance is a crucial performance-related output produced by the political system. It is a particularly appropriate indicator of system outputs in Western Europe, where the economy has always been a highly salient political issue (Alt 1979, Anderson 1995). During the late 1980s and early 1990s, in particular, the period under investigation here, high rates of unemployment continued to plague European economies.

<sup>10</sup> These survey questions evoked retrospective evaluations from respondents, which is suitable for our interest, that is, an assessment of past performance rather than future expectations. For a discussion of retrospective versus prospective economic performance evaluations, see Clarke and Stewart 1994; Lewis-Beck 1988; and MacKuen, Erikson, and Stimson 1992.



**FIGURE 3. Satisfaction with Democracy among Winners and Losers, by Country**

Note: Countries are ordered according to the Lijphart index. Britain is most majoritarian, the Netherlands most consensual. Satisfaction is scored as described in the note to Figure 2. "Winners" and "losers" are based on a comparison of respondents' votes in last general election to governing party.

### Demographic Variables

Finally, we also control for the usual sociodemographic variables: education, income, gender, and age (Appendix A). Descriptive statistics for the variables used in this study are shown in Appendix B.

### THE EFFECTS OF INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL VARIABLES ON SATISFACTION WITH DEMOCRACY

#### The Effects of Majority/Minority Status at the Aggregate Level

Are winners more satisfied than losers with the way democracy works? Figure 3 offers some preliminary evidence at the aggregate level. To examine differences in satisfaction between winners and losers at the level of the country, we compared satisfaction with the way democracy works between those who supported the incumbent government in the last election (winners) and those who did not (losers) across the eleven countries, ordered according to the Lijphart index.

Figure 3 shows clearly that there is a gap in satisfaction between winners and losers, regardless of the general level of support for the system. Although there is variation across countries in the strength of the relationship, the gap exists in every country examined.

### Multivariate Single-Country Models

We also examined the performance of the individual-level variables in a series of multivariate single-country models. Using least-squares estimations, we regressed the satisfaction scale on the individual-level variables separately for each country.<sup>11</sup> Table 1 shows the results.

**Majority/Minority Status.** We find that the effects of political minority/majority status remain even when we control for a number of other factors. The effects are powerful and consistently in the expected direction. The relationship holds in all eleven countries, indicating that losers are almost always significantly less satisfied with the way democracy works than are winners. The effects are strongest in Britain, France, and Greece and are weakest in Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands.

**Economic Performance Evaluations.** Economic performance evaluations also play an important role in satisfaction with democracy. The coefficients for both sociotropic and egocentric evaluations of the economy are consistently significant (except for egocentric evaluations in Denmark and the Netherlands) and are in the expected direction. The effect of sociotropic assess-

<sup>11</sup> We show only the results of OLS regressions. We also obtained maximum likelihood estimates with Probit, using a dichotomous dependent variable (1 = satisfied; 0 = not satisfied). Note, however, that such estimates do not deviate from the ones presented here.

TABLE 1. Effects of Individual-Level Variables on Satisfaction with Democracy in Eleven Countries											
Independent Variable	Belgium	Denmark	France	Great Britain	Greece	Ireland	Italy	Netherlands	Portugal	Spain	West Germany
Majority/minority status (losers high)	-0.093 (0.063)	-0.097 (0.060)	-0.335** (0.060)	-0.451** (0.063)	-0.458** (0.067)	-0.273** (0.070)	-0.169** (0.059)	-0.096* (0.050)	-0.127** (0.054)	-0.260** (0.067)	-0.218** (0.047)
National economic performance (sociotropic)	0.182** (0.034)	0.124*** (0.030)	0.209** (0.032)	0.173** (0.033)	0.199** (0.032)	0.106** (0.034)	0.169** (0.032)	0.099** (0.030)	0.229** (0.027)	0.131** (0.033)	0.145** (0.028)
Personal economic performance (egocentric)	0.140** (0.038)	0.038 (0.031)	0.100** (0.031)	0.087** (0.027)	0.133** (0.033)	0.074* (0.038)	0.112** (0.039)	0.045 (0.031)	0.124** (0.030)	0.076* (0.043)	0.111** (0.034)
Interest in politics	0.033 (0.035)	-0.022 (0.035)	0.043 (0.033)	-0.032 (0.036)	0.057* (0.032)	-0.001 (0.037)	0.027 (0.033)	0.042 (0.031)	0.002 (0.027)	0.045 (0.033)	0.067** (0.027)
Income	-0.013 (0.014)	0.017* (0.007)	0.007 (0.009)	0.005 (0.010)	0.007 (0.010)	0.028* (0.012)	0.001 (0.012)	0.010 (0.008)	0.011 (0.007)	0.012 (0.018)	0.014* (0.007)
Education	-0.013 (0.010)	0.010* (0.005)	0.016* (0.009)	-0.013 (0.010)	-0.002 (0.006)	0.003 (0.016)	-0.009 (0.007)	-0.003 (0.005)	0.000 (0.005)	-0.005 (0.008)	-0.004 (0.006)
Gender (female high)	0.066 (0.063)	0.048 (0.054)	-0.001 (0.058)	-0.040 (0.059)	-0.028 (0.058)	-0.172** (0.069)	-0.063 (0.057)	0.019 (0.050)	-0.099* (0.044)	-0.002 (0.062)	0.013 (0.045)
Age	0.001 (0.002)	-0.003* (0.002)	-0.003 (0.002)	0.000 (0.002)	0.000 (0.002)	0.001 (0.002)	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.001 (0.002)	0.003* (0.001)	0.005** (0.002)	0.002 (0.001)
Intercept	1.682** (0.288)	2.224** (0.229)	1.401** (0.239)	2.497** (0.276)	1.688** (0.236)	2.126** (0.317)	1.499** (0.235)	2.238** (0.214)	1.682** (0.187)	1.969** (0.265)	2.017** (0.200)
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.09	0.04	0.15	0.15	0.25	0.07	0.08	0.03	0.21	0.08	0.13
N	645	863	742	691	751	597	729	830	773	668	817

Note: Unstandardized OLS estimates; standard errors are in parentheses. All significance tests are one-tailed: \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, \*\*\*p < .001.

ments is greater than egocentric ones in each case, demonstrating that perspectives on the national economic situation are more powerful determinants of satisfaction with democracy than are those on personal economic conditions. These results are sensible given that the question used to measure satisfaction with the system presumably prompts individuals to assess the performance of national political institutions. The strongest sociotropic effects were in Portugal, France, Greece, and Belgium, whereas the weakest were in Denmark, Ireland, and the Netherlands. Egocentric evaluations were strongest in Belgium, Portugal, and Greece and had virtually no influence in Denmark and the Netherlands.

**Political Interest.** Political interest was a statistically significant and positive predictor of satisfaction with the way democracy works in only two of the eleven countries (West Germany and Greece).

**Demographic Variables.** Demographic factors had no consistent effects in the eleven countries on satisfaction with the way democracy works. Although the coefficients for income, education, gender, and age reached statistical significance in some cases, the substantive influence of these variables was small and not consistently in the same direction. Income displayed significant coefficients in Denmark, West Germany, and Ireland, suggesting that individuals with higher income are more satisfied with the way democracy works in their country. Education was statistically significant in

Denmark and France, suggesting that individuals with a higher level of formal education display a higher level of satisfaction. The coefficient for gender is negative and reaches statistical significance only in Ireland and Portugal, denoting that women in these two countries are less satisfied than men with the way democracy works. Age had significant effects in three countries, leading to the conclusion that older respondents in Portugal and Spain displayed a higher level of satisfaction with democracy than did younger respondents, whereas the opposite was true in the Danish case. All three effects were extremely small, however.

**Differences across Consensual and Majoritarian Democracies.** In what can be termed the traditional consensus democracies (Denmark, Belgium, and the Netherlands), we found that political majority/minority status had weaker effects on satisfaction with democracy than in Britain (the classic case of the Westminster model), in Greece (which scores as the second most majoritarian country on the Lijphart index), and in France (which has a mixed parliamentary/presidential system).

The weakest egocentric economic effects were found in Denmark and the Netherlands, that is, in countries that score high on the consensus scale, whereas egocentric economic evaluations had the strongest influence in Greece, Portugal, and Belgium. Based on this preliminary evidence, we can surmise that personal economic conditions have less effect on satisfaction with democracy in European countries with consensual

political institutions. A separate section below more fully explores the effects of the institutional variable.

### The Pooled Model

To test whether these relations hold generally, we estimated an identical model with the pooled sample. Because of possible fixed effects across the countries in the study, we estimated the model with several techniques that control for heteroskedasticity in the data, including ordinary least squares (OLS), with and without dummy variables for the countries, and generalized least squares (GLS). Moreover, to guard against the possibility that the results are driven by the use of least-squares techniques on an ordinal dependent variable, we collapsed satisfaction with democracy into two categories (1 = satisfied; 0 = dissatisfied) and reestimated the models with a maximum likelihood technique (Probit) appropriate for dichotomous dependent variables. The results are shown in Table 2.

The results obtained with different estimation methods are very similar. Although the coefficients across maximum likelihood and least-squares estimations are not strictly comparable, with small exceptions the same variables turn out to be significant across the five models, both statistically and substantively. Thus, the results obtained with different statistical techniques led us to conclude that the results are very robust.

The substantive conclusions drawn from the pooled model are similar to those presented in the previous section. Majority/minority status is a powerful determinant of satisfaction with democracy. Moreover, assessments of economic performance are significantly and positively related to satisfaction with democracy, with sociotropic evaluations more influential than egocentric ones. Finally, individuals of high status (measured by income) display a higher level of satisfaction with the way democracy works.

### WINNERS AND LOSERS IN CONSENSUAL AND MAJORITARIAN SYSTEMS

So far, the individual-level analyses have provided support for our contention that winners and losers have systematically different attitudes about the way democracy works in their country, even when we control for evaluations of personal and national economic conditions, interest in politics, and a number of demographic factors. To test whether political institutions mediate this relationship between political majority/minority status and satisfaction with democracy, this section examines those variables in relation to the system of governance. We performed an aggregate analysis at the country level and tested multivariate individual-level models of satisfaction with democracy that include measures of type of democracy along with individual-level variables.

### Aggregate Analysis

Because losers are less likely to be satisfied with the way democracy works than are winners, and because,

as shown in figures 2 and 3, there are significant cross-national differences in the level of system support, we expect that the gap in satisfaction between winners and losers can be explained at least partially by institutional variation. We do not argue that overall levels of satisfaction with democracy depend on institutional differences, but that the difference in satisfaction between winners and losers is driven by the nature of representation in a country. To control for cross-national differences in satisfaction levels, yet at the same time examine differences between winners and losers by type of system, we calculated the differences in satisfaction between winners and losers and plotted the results by type of democracy, as shown in Figure 4.

The graph depicts a strong relationship between type of system (consensual versus majoritarian) and differences between winners and losers regarding their satisfaction with the way democracy works (Pearson's  $r = -0.77$ ;  $p < 0.006$ ). The gap in satisfaction is larger the more majoritarian the democracy, and it is smaller the more consensual the political institutions.

### Multivariate Analysis

To examine whether losers (winners) who live in consensual (majoritarian) systems exhibit a higher level of satisfaction with democracy than do those who live in majoritarian (consensual) democracies, once we control for significant differences at the individual level within countries, we estimated pooled multivariate models that included the consensus/majority index separately for winners and losers, again with the help of least-squares and maximum likelihood techniques. The results for losers are shown in Table 3, those for winners in Table 4.<sup>12</sup>

The results are robust regardless of the type of estimation employed. The same variables turn out to be statistically and substantively significant across OLS, GLS, and Probit estimations. Moreover, their relative ranking (e.g., sociotropic effects being stronger than egocentric effects) is identical in all three models. Thus,

<sup>12</sup> There are two ways to deal with qualitative independent variables that represent two populations and that are hypothesized to have an interactive effect with another independent variable on the dependent variable of choice: stratifying the sample into two subsamples or specifying the behavioral differences within the overall model (Hanushek and Jackson 1977, 101). There are drawbacks to both procedures. The use of interaction terms assumes that the other behavioral relationships are the same across observations; that is, that the other independent variables have essentially identical effects in both populations. Stratification reduces the sample size. For the purposes of our analysis, we employed separate regressions instead of interactive terms because we had reason to assume that the other behavioral relationships were dissimilar across observations. The different effects of economic performance evaluations and political interest for winners and losers (tables 3 and 4) indicate that this was an appropriate concern. Moreover, a reduction in sample size did not constitute a problem in our case, given the large sample. Furthermore, since separate regressions are easier to interpret, we opted to present these results. To ensure that this approach was reasonable, we also estimated the interactive relations, the results of which are not shown here. They are fully consistent with our main findings concerning the interaction of institutions and political majority/minority status reported in the text.

**TABLE 2. Effects of Individual-Level Variables on Satisfaction with Democracy: Pooled Model Estimates**

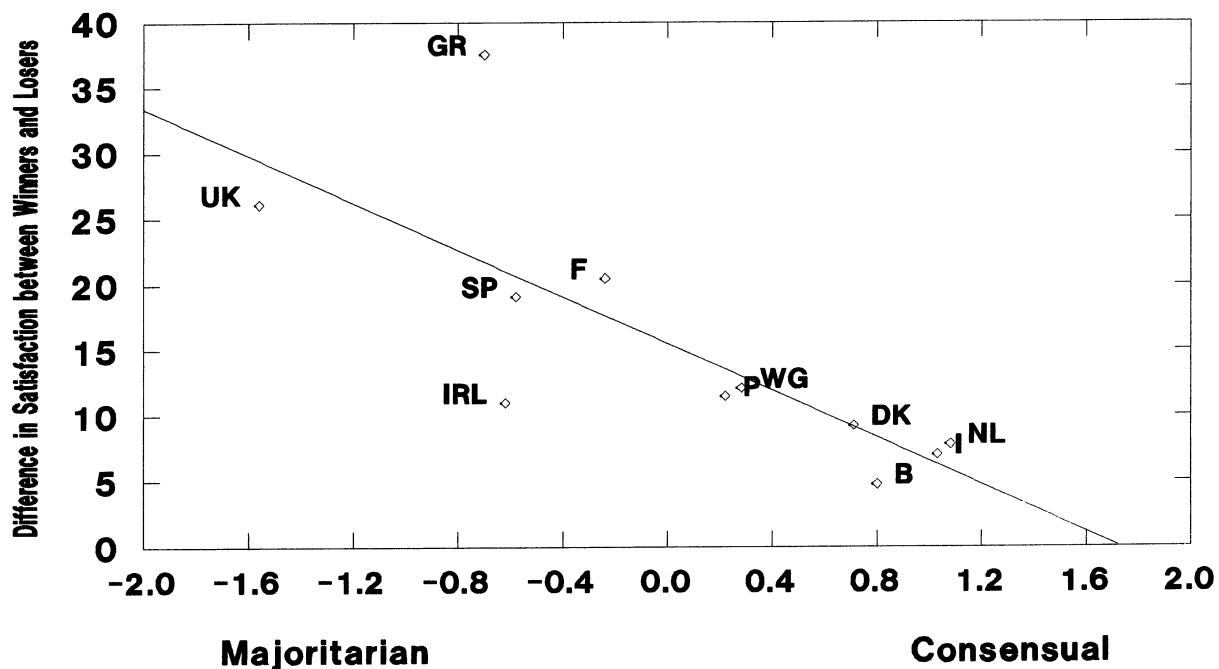
Independent Variables	Model				
	1 (OLS)	2 (OLS incl. country dummies)	3 (GLS)	4 (Probit)	5 (Probit incl. country dummies)
Majority/minority status (losers high)	-0.190** (0.018)	-0.238** (0.018)	-0.201** (0.019)	-0.293** (0.031)	-0.401** (0.033)
National economic performance (sociotropic)	0.210** (0.009)	0.169** (0.009)	0.200** (0.010)	0.325** (0.016)	0.265** (0.017)
Personal economic performance (egocentric)	0.101** (0.010)	0.102** (0.010)	0.113** (0.011)	0.127** (0.017)	0.136** (0.018)
Interest in politics	0.042** (0.010)	0.020* (0.010)	0.034** (0.010)	0.038* (0.017)	0.018 (0.018)
Income	0.024** (0.003)	0.008** (0.003)	0.017** (0.003)	0.041** (0.005)	0.012** (0.005)
Education	0.000 (0.002)	-0.002 (0.002)	0.001 (0.002)	-0.002 (0.003)	-0.004 (0.004)
Gender (female high)	-0.005 (0.018)	-0.019 (0.017)	-0.002 (0.018)	-0.025 (0.030)	-0.045 (0.031)
Age	0.002** (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)	0.002** (0.001)	0.002* (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)
Belgium		-0.463** (0.040)			-0.741** (0.076)
Denmark		-0.086* (0.037)			-0.244** (0.073)
France		-0.513** (0.039)			-0.870** (0.073)
Great Britain		-0.281** (0.040)			-0.561** (0.076)
Greece		-0.470** (0.039)			-0.861** (0.075)
Ireland		-0.400** (0.040)			-0.684** (0.077)
Italy		-0.970** (0.040)			-1.642** (0.079)
Netherlands		-0.267** (0.037)			-0.518** (0.072)
Portugal		-0.201** (0.039)			-0.178* (0.078)
Spain		-0.212** (0.040)			-0.542** (0.077)
Intercept	1.476** (0.070)	2.222** (0.078)	1.550*** (0.076)	-1.173** (0.119)	0.039 (0.143)
N	8,116	8,116	8,117	8,117	8,117
R <sup>2</sup> /pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.14	0.22	0.14	0.12	0.19
Log likelihood				-4966.94	-4624.62
Correctly predicted			64.4%	67.1%	

Note: Models 2 and 5 include  $N - 1$  country dummies; the reference category is West Germany. Unstandardized estimates; standard errors in parentheses. All significance tests are one-tailed: \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

we are confident that the results are reliable and not a consequence of the estimation method used.

The results reported in the tables provide largely consistent support for our hypotheses. Since higher values on the Lijphart index indicate that a system is

more consensual, the positive coefficient for the consensus/majority index variable suggests that losers who live in consensual systems show a higher level of satisfaction with the way democracy works than do those who live in majoritarian systems. In other words,

**FIGURE 4. Differences in Satisfaction of Winners and Losers, by Type of System**

Note: B = Belgium; DK = Denmark; F = France; GR = Greece; I = Italy; IRL = Ireland; NL = Netherlands; P = Portugal; SP = Spain; UK = United Kingdom; and WG = West Germany. Values on the vertical axis are based on the question: "On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in (your country)?" The values show the percentage point differences in satisfaction between winners and losers ("very" and "fairly" satisfied less "not very" and "not at all" satisfied).

the more consensual the system, the more likely are losers to be satisfied with the way democracy works in their country (Table 3).

The coefficients for the consensus/majority index are positive in all three types of estimations and are statistically significant in two of the three (GLS and Probit). Moreover, when we control for the most significant outlier on the dependent variable (Italy) by including a country dummy variable in the OLS estimation, the results for the consensus index become highly significant, both substantively and statistically.<sup>13</sup> Thus, independent of economic performance evaluations or political interest, the type of system in which losers live affects their propensity to be satisfied with the way democracy works. It is noteworthy that the individual-level variables maintain their significant relationship with the dependent variable even when we incorporate information about the type of democracy in which people live.

The results shown in Table 4 indicate that the consensus/majority index has an even larger substantive and statistically highly significant association with satisfaction among the winners of democratic contests. The more consensual the democracy, the *less* satisfied are winners with the workings of the system. Conversely, the closer the democracy to a pure majoritar-

ian type, the more satisfied are winners. Given that the individual-level variables again maintain their significance, we conclude that the type of system is a somewhat more important determinant for satisfaction with democracy among those who belong to the majority than among those who belong to the minority.

Note also that the results presented in tables 3 and 4 support the interaction hypothesis about the effects of political status on the relationship between economic performance evaluations and satisfaction with democracy. The effects of economic assessments on satisfaction with the way democracy works are less powerful for winners than for losers.

## CONCLUSION

The study of what citizens think about the political system requires the combination of information about political institutions and about individuals and their attitudes. Based on micro- and macrolevel evidence from eleven European democracies, we found that demographic and attitudinal differences, such as economic performance evaluations and political interest, as well as the type of system in which people live systematically affect citizen satisfaction with democracy. Thus, the results provide ample testimony for the view that people are influenced by the particular political context to which they are exposed.

Overall, our analysis of citizen satisfaction with democracy shows that the level of satisfaction is influ-

<sup>13</sup> The unstandardized regression coefficient for the consensus/majority index was 0.125 when we included a dummy variable for Italy in the model (standard error 0.016;  $p < .001$ ), while the coefficients for the other variables did not change appreciably.

**TABLE 3. Models of Citizen Satisfaction with Democracy among Losers: Pooled Model Estimates**

Independent Variables	Model		
	1 (OLS)	2 (GLS)	3 (Probit)
Political system type (consensus high)	0.009 (0.015)	0.069** (0.017)	0.043* (0.024)
National economic performance (sociotropic)	0.233** (0.012)	0.220** (0.013)	0.344** (0.020)
Personal economic performance (egocentric)	0.107** (0.013)	0.119** (0.014)	0.135** (0.021)
Interest in politics	0.019 (0.012)	0.011 (0.013)	0.006 (0.021)
Income	0.025** (0.003)	0.020** (0.003)	0.040** (0.005)
Education	0.003 (0.003)	0.002 (0.003)	0.001 (0.004)
Gender (female high)	-0.003 (0.023)	-0.001 (0.023)	-0.037 (0.037)
Age	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)
Intercept	1.224** (0.086)	1.333*** (0.092)	-1.457** (0.144)
N	5,060	5,061	5,061
R <sup>2</sup> /pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.14	0.13	0.12
Log likelihood			-3177.80
Correctly predicted		62.1%	

Note: Unstandardized estimates; standard errors are in parentheses. All significance tests are one-tailed: \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, \*\*\*p < .001.

enced by whether people belong to the political majority or minority. Those who voted for the incumbent government in the most recent election are significantly more satisfied with the way democracy works than are those who did not. Furthermore, political institutions—measured by Lijphart’s index of consensual and majoritarian institutions—mediate the extent to which there is a gap in satisfaction with democracy between winners and losers. The more consensual the democracy, the more likely it is that losers are satisfied with the functioning of democracy and the less likely it is that winners are satisfied. This relationship holds even when we control for powerful economic and other individual-level effects, such as political interest and socioeconomic status. Thus, the research presented here not only is consistent with earlier individual-level work on system support but also adds an institutional dimension hitherto overlooked.

This analysis generates important and generalizable insights into the nature of attitudes about political systems and enhances our understanding of institutions of representative democracy. The results show that those who study attitudes about governance from a comparative perspective are well advised to pay attention to the political context in which people form those attitudes. On a theoretical level, this paper reveals that

explanations of citizen satisfaction with democracy are more comprehensive when we incorporate both individuals and institutions into the analysis. In other words, 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.

The findings presented here provide additional evidence that institutional variation is an important mediator of public opinion toward political authorities. As recent research on government support has shown, institutional variation is an important element in understanding citizens’ ability to assign credit and blame to incumbents for economic performance (Anderson 1995, Powell and Whitten 1993). Regarding the study of democratic institutions, our analysis also documents important and systematic consequences for different kinds of democracies at the level of mass publics. Aside from affecting policy outcomes (Crepaz 1996, Lijphart 1994), cabinet stability and conflict (Powell 1986), or the congruence of elite and mass policy preferences (Huber and Powell 1994), to name just a few, different forms of democratic organization also have consequences for public attitudes toward democracy as a form of government.

**TABLE 4. Models of Citizen Satisfaction with Democracy among Winners: Pooled Model Estimates**

Independent Variables	Model		
	1 (OLS)	2 (GLS)	3 (Probit)
Political system type (consensus high)	-0.123** (0.017)	-0.076** (0.018)	-0.158** (0.031)
National economic performance (sociotropic)	0.173** (0.014)	0.161** (0.015)	0.293** (0.026)
Personal economic performance (egocentric)	0.088** (0.017)	0.091** (0.018)	0.109** (0.030)
Interest in politics	0.085** (0.016)	0.084** (0.017)	0.100** (0.028)
Income	0.016** (0.004)	0.012** (0.004)	0.038** (0.008)
Education	0.000 (0.003)	0.000 (0.003)	-0.005 (0.006)
Gender (female high)	-0.008 (0.028)	-0.006 (0.028)	-0.007 (0.050)
Age	0.003** (0.001)	0.003** (0.001)	0.004* (0.002)
Intercept	1.532** (0.109)	1.625*** (0.116)	-1.235** (0.196)
N	3,055	3,056	3,056
R <sup>2</sup> /pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.11	0.10	0.09
Log likelihood			-1762.10
Correctly predicted		70.3%	

Note: Unstandardized estimates; standard errors are in parentheses. All significance tests are one-tailed: \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, \*\*\*p < .001.

Our general findings are likely to hold in a variety of systems outside the European contexts we examined. If it is true that political winners and losers evaluate the performance of the system differently depending on how the system treats them, analogous phenomena should be observable in other democracies. Moreover, the nontrivial effects of economic performance evaluations on satisfaction with democracy indicate that system performance consistently matters in a variety of systems, although there is some debate about how much weight citizens in new and unstable systems give to such assessments (Duch 1995).

Before extrapolating our findings to new democracies, however, several caveats are in order. First, we have not considered the role time plays in the relationship of political institutions and mass publics. Our argument implies that citizens have to experience the functioning of the system before evaluating it on the basis of their status as a political winner or loser. This also implies that systems have to function over some period before people make judgments about them based on system type. Thus, the results presented here may hold only if enough time has passed to generate a sufficient understanding of the nature of the system among the population. This could mean that public opinion about a new democracy immediately following a transition may not be much affected by the kind of democratic system established, but this may matter more after some time has passed. Future studies are needed to establish whether and how the type of democracy affects system support in newly established democracies.

Second, the relationships shown here are subject to change over time. On the basis of these findings we might expect the gap in satisfaction with democracy between winners and losers to increase over time if those in the minority never become the majority. Moreover, one should see more individual-level fluctuation in satisfaction with democracy among winners and losers in a majoritarian system than in a consensual system after a change in government, given the documented differences in how the type of democracy affects citizens' evaluations.

The third caveat applies to those interested in constitutional engineering and reform. The recent change in the electoral system in New Zealand may provide a quasi-experimental setting that could produce important insights into how a change in democratic institutions affects citizen attitudes about democracy. By moving from a first-past-the-post electoral system to a proportional one, such as that used in Germany, New Zealand may find that the way governments form, how policy is made, and who is part of the democratic majority and minority were altered in significant ways after the general election of 1996. Since this change in all likelihood will move New Zealand more closely toward a consensual democracy, it is an important test case of how the type of democracy affects the way people think about the system. Although our results indicate that people think about the political system in

consensual and majoritarian terms (see also Jones 1996), they do not suggest there is a magic formula that can be used to produce high levels of citizen satisfaction with the system. The mediating nature of institutions as conceptualized here requires constitutional engineers to determine whether it is more important to reward winners with the power to implement their ideas or to compensate losers with some kind of formal influence on policy decisions. And while it is clear that those who are dissatisfied with system outputs are less satisfied with the system itself, what may matter equally is the kinds of people who want things from the government, given the differences across countries in the inclusiveness and consensuality of the democratic process. Our results show that losers are more likely to be satisfied with the way democracy works—despite their minority status—if there are mechanisms for procedural justice in the democratic process and opportunities for input into the decisions made by the government. Institutional reforms that allow those in the political minority more access to the decision-making process, while ensuring that winning is still meaningful and allows for the implementation of policies preferred by the majority, may go a long way toward increasing citizen satisfaction with democracy and toward ensuring the viability of democratic systems in the long term.

## APPENDIX A

Several items on the 1990 Eurobarometer survey provided data for this study.

*Satisfaction with Democracy.* "On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in (your country)?" Very satisfied (4), fairly satisfied (3), not very satisfied (2), not at all satisfied (1).

*Loser.* "Which party did you vote for in the last general election?" If matches with governing party (0), if matches with opposition party (1).

*Income.* "Here is an income scale. We would like to know in what group your family is, counting all wages, salaries, child allowances, pensions, and any other income that comes in. Just give me the letter of the group your household falls into before tax and other deductions." Scale ranging from 1 to 12.

*Education.* "How old were you when you stopped full-time education?"

*Age.* Respondent's actual age.

*Sex.* Male (1) or Female (2).

*Interest in Politics.* "To what extent would you say you are interested in politics?" A great deal (4), to some extent (3), not much (2), not at all (1).

*National Economic Performance.* "Compared to 12 months ago, do you think that the general economic situation in this country is . . .?" A lot better (5), a little better (4), stayed the same (3), a little worse (2), a lot worse (1).

*Personal Economic Performance.* "Compared to 12 months ago, do you think the financial situation of your household now is . . .?" A lot better (5), a little better (4), stayed the same (3), a little worse (2), a lot worse (1).



## APPENDIX B

## Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Consensus/majority index	0.04	0.85	-1.56	1.08
Satisfaction with democracy	0.56	0.84	1.00	4.00
Loser	0.65	0.48	0.00	1.00
National economic performance evaluations	2.78	1.03	1.00	5.00
Personal economic performance evaluations	2.97	0.93	1.00	5.00
Interest in politics	2.35	0.94	1.00	4.00
Income	6.71	3.60	1.00	12.00
Education	17.28	4.55	6.00	74.00
Age	42.43	18.04	15.00	99.00
Sex	1.50	0.50	1.00	2.00

## REFERENCES

- Abramson, Paul, and Ronald Inglehart. 1995. *Value Change in Global Perspective*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Almond, Gabriel A., and Sidney Verba. 1965. *The Civic Culture*. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Alt, James. 1979. *The Politics of Economic Decline*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Anderson, Christopher J. 1995. *Blaming the Government: Citizens and the Economy in Five European Democracies*. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe.
- Barber, David. 1984. *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Barnes, Samuel, and Max Kaase, eds. 1979. *Political Action: Mass Participation in Five Western Democracies*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Brittan, Samuel. 1975. "The Economic Contradictions of Democracy." *British Journal of Political Science* 5 (April):129-59.
- Citrin, Jack, and Donald Green. 1986. "Presidential Leadership and the Resurgence of Trust in Government." *British Journal of Political Science* 16 (October):431-53.
- Clarke, Harold D., Nitish Dutt, and Allan Kornberg. 1993. "The Political Economy of Attitudes toward Polity and Society in Western European Countries." *Journal of Politics* 55 (November): 998-1021.
- Clarke, Harold D., and Allan Kornberg. 1992. "Support for the Canadian Federal Progressive Conservative Party since 1988: The Impact of Economic Evaluations and Economic Issues." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 25 (March):29-54.
- Clarke, Harold D., and Marianne C. Stewart. 1994. "Prospections, Retrospections, and Rationality: The 'Bankers' Model of Presidential Approval Reconsidered." *American Journal of Political Science* 38 (November):1104-23.
- Craig, Stephen C. 1993. *The Malevolent Leaders: Popular Discontent in America*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Craig, Stephen C., and Michael A. Maggiotto. 1981. "Political Discontent and Political Action." *Journal of Politics* 43 (May):514-22.
- Crepaz, Markus M. L. 1996. "Constitutional Structures and Regime Performance in 18 Industrialized Democracies: A Test of Olson's Hypothesis." *European Journal of Political Research* 29 (January): 87-104.
- Dalton, Russell J. 1996. *Citizen Politics: Public Opinion and Political Parties in Advanced Industrial Democracies*, 2d ed. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishers.
- Duch, Raymond. 1995. "Economic Chaos and the Fragility of Democratic Transition in Former Communist Regimes." *Journal of Politics* 57 (February):121-58.
- Easton, David. 1965. *A Systems Analysis of Political Life*. New York: John Wiley.
- Easton, David. 1975. "A Re-Assessment of the Concept of Political Support." *British Journal of Political Science* 5 (October):435-7.
- Finkel, Steven E., Edward N. Muller, and Mitchell A. Seligson. 1989. "Economic Crisis, Incumbent Performance and Regime Support: A Comparison of Longitudinal Data from West Germany and Costa Rica." *British Journal of Political Science* 19 (July):329-51.
- Franz, Gerhard. 1986. "Economic Aspirations, Well-being and Political Support in Recession and Boom Periods: The Case of West Germany." *European Journal of Political Research* 14 (January): 97-112.
- Fuchs, Dieter. 1993. "Trends of Political Support." In *Political Culture in Germany*, ed. Dirk Berg-Schlosser and Ralf Rytlewski. New York: St. Martin's.
- Fuchs, Dieter, Giovanna Guidorossi, and Pelle Svensson. 1995. "Support for the Democratic System." In *Citizens and the State*, ed. Hans-Dieter Klingemann and Dieter Fuchs. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Fuchs, Dieter, and Hans-Dieter Klingemann. 1995. "Citizens and the State: A Changing Relationship?" In *Citizens and the State*, ed. Hans-Dieter Klingemann and Dieter Fuchs. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gabriel, Oscar W. 1989. "Regierungswechsel und politische Unterstützung: Implikationen des Parteienwettbewerbs für die Struktur politischer Unterstützung in der Demokratie." *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* 30 (March):75-93.
- Hanushek, Eric, and John Jackson. 1977. *Statistical Methods for Social Scientists*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Harmel, Robert, and John Robertson. 1986. "Government Stability and Regime Support: A Cross-National Analysis." *Journal of Politics* 48 (November):1029-40.
- Held, David. 1987. *Models of Democracy*. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press.
- Hibbing, John, and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse. 1995. *Congress as Public Enemy: Public Attitudes toward American Political Institutions*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Ho, Szu-yin. 1991. "A Study of Political Trust in the 1980 American Election." *Issues and Studies* 27 (June):102-19.
- Howell, Susan E., and Deborah Fagan. 1988. "Race and Trust in Government: Testing the Political Reality Model." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 52 (Fall):343-50.
- Huber, John, and G. Bingham Powell. 1994. "Congruence between Citizens and Policymakers in Two Visions of Liberal Democracy." *World Politics* 46 (April):291-326.
- Huntington, Samuel. 1974. "Postindustrial Politics: How Benign Will It Be?" *Comparative Politics* 6 (January):163-91.
- Inglehart, Ronald. 1990. *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Jennings, M. Kent, and Jan van Deth, eds. 1989. *Continuities in Political Action*. New York: de Gruyter.
- Jones, Mark P. 1996. "Assessing the Public's Understanding of Constitutional Reform: Evidence from Argentina." *Political Behavior* 18 (March):25-49.
- Kaase, Max. 1988. "Political Alienation and Protest." In *Comparing Pluralist Democracies*, ed. Mattei Dogan. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Kaase, Max. 1995. "Demokratie im Spannungsfeld von politischer Kultur und politischer Struktur." In *Jahrbuch für Politik*, Vol. 5, ed. Werner Link, Eberhard Schuett-Wetschky, and Gesine Schwan. Baden-Baden: Nomos.
- Kaase, Max, and Kenneth Newton. 1995. *Beliefs in Government*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kornberg, Allan, and Harold D. Clarke. 1992. *Citizens and Community: Political Support in a Representative Democracy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Kornberg, Allan, and Harold D. Clarke. 1994. "Beliefs about Democracy and Satisfaction with Democratic Government: The Canadian Case." *Political Research Quarterly* 47 (September):537-63.
- Kuechler, Manfred. 1986. "A Trend Analysis of System Support in West Germany, 1976-1986." Presented at the annual meeting of the Southern Political Science Association, Atlanta.
- Kuechler, Manfred. 1991. "The Dynamics of Mass Political Support in Western Europe: Methodological Problems and Preliminary

- Findings." In *Eurobarometer: The Dynamics of European Public Opinion, Essays in Honor of Jacques-René Rabier*, ed. Karlheinz Reif and Ronald Inglehart. New York: St. Martin's.
- Lambert, Robert D., James E. Curtis, Steven D. Brown, and Barry J. Kay. 1986. "Effects of Identification with Governing Parties on Feelings of Political Efficacy and Trust." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 19 (December):705-28.
- Lane, Jan-Erik, and Sven Ersson. 1991. *Politics and Society in Western Europe*, 2d ed. London: Sage.
- Lewis-Beck, Michael. 1988. *Economics and Elections: The Major Western Democracies*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Lijphart, Arend. 1984. *Democracies*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Lijphart, Arend. 1994. "Democracies: Forms, Performance, and Constitutional Engineering." *European Journal of Political Research* 25 (January):1-17.
- Lijphart, Arend, Thomas Bruneau, P. Nikiforos Diamandouros, and Richard Gunther. 1988. "A Mediterranean Model of Democracy? The Southern European Democracies in Comparative Perspective." *West European Politics* 11 (January):7-25.
- Lipset, Seymour Martin. 1959. *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
- Listhaug, Ola, and Matti Wiberg. 1995. "Confidence in Political and Private Institutions." In *Citizens and the State*, ed. Hans-Dieter Klingemann and Dieter Fuchs. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lockerbie, Brad. 1993. "Economic Dissatisfaction and Political Alienation in Western Europe." *European Journal of Political Research* 23 (April):281-93.
- Loewenberg, Gerhard. 1971. "The Influence of Parliamentary Behavior on Regime Stability." *Comparative Politics* 3 (January):177-200.
- MacKuen, Michael B., Robert S. Erikson, and James A. Stimson. 1992. "Peasants or Bankers? The American Electorate and the U.S. Economy." *American Political Science Review* 86 (September):597-611.
- Miller, Arthur H., and Stephen A. Borrelli. 1991. "Confidence in Government during the 1980s." *American Politics Quarterly* 19 (April):147-73.
- Miller, Arthur H., Edie N. Goldenberg, and Lutz Erbring. 1979. "Type-Set Politics: Impact of Newspapers on Public Confidence." *American Political Science Review* 73 (March):67-84.
- Miller, Arthur H. and Ola Listhaug. 1990. "Political Parties and Confidence in Government: A Comparison of Norway, Sweden and the United States." *British Journal of Political Science* 29 (July):357-86.
- Mishler, William, and Richard Rose. 1996. "Trajectories of Fear and Hope: Support for Democracy in Post-Communist Europe." *Comparative Political Studies* 28 (January):553-81.
- Moe, Terry M., and Michael Caldwell. 1994. "The Institutional Foundations of Democratic Government: A Comparison of Presidential and Parliamentary Systems." *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics* 150 (March):171-95.
- Monroe, Kristen, and Lynda Erickson. 1986. "The Economy and Political Support: The Canadian Case." *Journal of Politics* 48 (August):616-47.
- Muller, Edward N., Thomas Jukam, and Mitchell Seligson. 1982. "Diffuse Political Support and Antisystem Political Behavior." *American Journal of Political Science* 26 (May):240-64.
- Nadeau, Richard, and André Blais. 1993. "Accepting the Election Outcome: The Effect of Participation on Losers' Consent." *British Journal of Political Science* 23 (October):553-63.
- Norpoth, Helmut. 1991. *Confidence Regained: Economics, Mrs. Thatcher, and the British Voter*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Powell, G. Bingham. 1982. *Contemporary Democracies: Participation, Stability and Violence*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Powell, G. Bingham. 1986. "Extremist Parties and Political Turmoil: Two Puzzles." *American Journal of Political Science* 30 (May):357-78.
- Powell, G. Bingham. 1989. "Constitutional Design and Citizen Electoral Control." *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 1 (April):107-30.
- Powell, G. Bingham, and Guy Whitten. 1993. "A Cross-National Analysis of Economic Voting: Taking Account of the Political Context." *American Journal of Political Science* 37 (May):391-414.
- Przeworski, Adam, and Henry Teune. 1970. *The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry*. New York: Wiley-Interscience.
- Reif, Karlheinz, and Anna Melich. 1993. Eurobarometer 34.0: Perceptions of the European Community, and Employment Patterns and Child Rearing, October-November 1990. Conducted by INRA (Europe), Brussels. Ann Arbor: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research.
- Schmitt, Hermann. 1983. "Party Government in Public Opinion: A European Cross-National Comparison." *European Journal of Political Research* 11 (December):353-76.
- Thompson, Dennis. 1970. *The Democratic Citizen*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Weatherford, M. Stephen. 1984. "Economic 'Stagflation' and Public Support for the Political System." *British Journal of Political Science* 14 (April):187-205.
- Weatherford, M. Stephen. 1987. "How Does Government Performance Influence Political Support?" *Political Behavior* 9 (March):5-28.
- Weatherford, M. Stephen. 1991. "Mapping the Ties that Bind: Legitimacy, Representation and Alienation." *Western Political Quarterly* 44 (June):251-76.
- Weatherford, M. Stephen. 1992. "Measuring Political Legitimacy." *American Political Science Review* 86 (March):149-66.
- Weil, Frederick. 1989. "The Sources and Structure of Legitimation in Western Democracies: A Consolidated Model Tested with Time-Series Data in Six Countries since World War II." *American Sociological Review* 54 (October):682-706.
- Westle, Bettina. 1989. *Politische Legitimität: Theorien, Konzepte, empirische Befunde*. Baden-Baden: Nomos.