

1992), list members have an incentive to become constituency MPs. They will need to build support in a geographical constituency by providing personal service. Alternatively, list MPs may cultivate service among those constituents not tied to a geographical area, such as business or ideological interest groups. Questions regarding the behaviour of list and constituency members and responsiveness to constituents will require further investigation as members adjust to working under MMP.

Notes

- 1 In 1996, 523,374 people identified with the Maori ethnic group. This is an increase of 20.4 per cent on the 1991 figure of 434,844. The Maori ethnic group is now 14.5 per cent of the population, up from 12.9 per cent in 1991 (1996 Census).
- 2 Two other MPs elected in 1993 acknowledge some degree of Maori descent, which would increase Maori representation to 8 out of 99 seats in 1993 and 17 out of 120 seats in 1996.
- 3 This assumes that the proportion of women candidates contesting electorate seats would have remained the same with or without MMP. It is possible that had the party list option not been available, more women would have stood as electorate candidates. Nevertheless, the proportion of women contesting electorate seats was similar if not more in 1996 than in 1993, and thus did not depart from the overall trend over the past 10 years.
- 4 James Carroll, who was part-Irish and part-Maori, stood successfully for two European seats from 1893 to 1919 after representing Eastern Maori for six years. For a history of Maori representation in Parliament, see Appendix B of the Royal Commission's Report (1986).
- 5 According to Downs, this depends on the distribution of preferences and not necessarily on electoral rules. Multi-party systems – those with three or more major parties – are likely to occur whenever the distribution of votes is polymodal (p.125). In these circumstances, parties will place themselves at each mode. Assuming an equal number of votes at each mode, parties will have little incentive to move toward one another if they cannot gain more votes. Later in his argument, Downs states that under a multi-party system with a unimodal distribution of opinion, the range of policy positions is likely to be much wider than in a two-party system (p.148).
- 6 See Chapters 1 and 3 for further discussion of these issues. While parties other than the two major contenders have incentives to develop more ideological policies, the two leading parties in a PR system may still have substantial incentives to remain 'catch-all' parties (Kirchheimer 1966).
- 7 A factor analysis derived seven factors. However, we have created a separate scale for environmental spending as it did not clearly load onto one factor.
- 8 The question reads: 'In politics, people sometimes talk about the left and the right. Where would you place yourself on a scale from 0 to 10?' Higher numbers indicate the left side of the scale; lower numbers indicate the right side of the scale.
- 9 Boston *et al.* (1996, 60) place the parties on a left-right continuum according to their general attitudes to the role of the state in the economy.
- 10 Since New Zealand's system is not purely proportional, voters who prefer extremely small parties might still vote strategically for fear of casting a wasted vote.

CHAPTER 10

VOTER SATISFACTION AFTER ELECTORAL SYSTEM CHANGE

Jeffrey Karp and Susan Banducci

In PR countries, voters vote more and complain less, and politicians enjoy greater popular respect and more satisfying professional lives. Perhaps this contrast between plurality and PR countries is the most convincing evidence in favor of PR!
(Arend Lijphart, 8 March 1995)

Growing cynicism has become one of the defining characteristics of the New Zealand electorate. Confidence in Parliament declined from 33 per cent in 1975 to less than 10 per cent in 1988 (Miller & Catt 1993, 31). Following the 1993 election, a majority of voters believed that public servants do not care much about what people think, and that the New Zealand government is largely run by a few big interests (Vowles *et al.* 1995, 133). Far fewer had trust in New Zealand's two major political parties, Labour and National.

The adoption of a new electoral system in 1996 raises the question of whether such high levels of discontent will remain a predominant feature of the New Zealand electorate. Proponents of MMP argued that voters would be more satisfied with a democracy that accommodates a more diverse representation of interests. Cross-national comparisons show that citizens in countries with proportional systems are more content and have higher rates of participation. Indeed, the adoption of MMP by voters in 1993 was partly due to discontent (Lamare & Vowles 1996). Has the new electoral system mitigated or reversed the trend of increasing cynicism? Though it may be too soon to judge whether a change in electoral systems has redefined how New Zealanders view government, we can nevertheless begin to approach this question by evaluating levels and sources of discontent.

Voter Discontent

Previous research in New Zealand has suggested that the source of discontent lies with the behaviour of politicians and parties. According to Miller and Catt

(1993), discontent arose from the following sources: the fast pace of reform, broken promises, and ineffectual leadership. Many of Labour's market liberal policies implemented in the 1980s, for example, were incompatible with the traditional beliefs and policies of the party. By 1990 support for Labour had collapsed because of a belief among its supporters that it had abandoned its core principles, and the perception that its policies had failed to make life better (Vowles & Aimer 1993, 162). These failings contributed to a National victory.

Although positioning itself as the party of stability and integrity, National soon disappointed its supporters as it continued to pursue unpopular social policy reforms in health care and retirement income that did not receive public debate during the election campaign (Vowles *et al.* 1995, 7). Among those who felt betrayed were the elderly. Following the imposition of the state-funded superannuation surtax by a Labour government in 1984, and again before the 1990 election, National condemned the surtax and promised to repeal it. Yet after coming to power in 1990, National reversed its policy and failed to repeal the surtax. Additionally, although National had criticised Labour for selling off the 'family silver' (Miller & Catt 1993, 23), its own policies furthered the privatisation of state assets including the sale of New Zealand Rail (Vowles *et al.* 1995, 101). Although most of the privatisation programme was completed in the early 1990s, a majority continued to favour some level of public ownership of a number of companies long since privatised (p.113). As a result, the business practices of these companies continue to cause a great deal of public anger and distrust (Miller 1997a, 44).

Because of these broken promises, it comes as no surprise that more people distrust the parties than trust them. In 1990, 55 per cent believed that the party in government, Labour, was untrustworthy. In 1993, when National was the government, similar levels of distrust were evident and just a third of the electorate agreed they could trust government to do what is right most of the time (Vowles *et al.* 1995). In November 1991, 95 per cent of the respondents believed that Jim Bolger broke promises, compared with 44 per cent a year earlier (Miller & Catt 1993, 29). New Zealanders' discontent, however, is not confined to politicians and political parties.

Expressions of cynicism may reflect dissatisfaction with the people in government, or they may reflect a more serious withdrawal from the political system. Conceptually, it is useful to distinguish between short-term evaluations of the incumbent government's performance and longer-term attitudes about the political system. Likewise, it is useful to distinguish between evaluations of the political decision-making process and evaluations of the responsiveness of elected representatives. Evaluations of governmental responsiveness relate to whether representatives are attentive to citizen input. Trust in the political process, however, reflects more broadly generalised orientations toward the government's activities and institutions. When citizens begin to express doubts about the fairness of procedures, they are questioning the rules of the game rather than the behaviour of the players.

Declining support for incumbent politicians may lead to a new party being elected; declining trust in government may have more serious consequences, such as increasing alienation or a willingness to support radical

reform. At present there is little evidence to suggest that New Zealanders are withdrawing from the system. Despite high levels of discontent, New Zealanders still maintain relatively high levels of political involvement. A majority of New Zealanders continue to express an interest in politics and nine out of ten believe that the act of voting is important, regardless of the outcome. Strong civic mindedness is reflected in New Zealand's high rate of participation: in 1993 turnout was 77 per cent of the eligible population (Vowles *et al.* 1995, 139). Although turnout has been declining, these figures place New Zealand at about the median when compared to turnout in other democratic nations (p.139).

Given New Zealanders' strong sense of civic duty, a more likely consequence of disenchantment is support for radical institutional reform. There is a fair amount of evidence to suggest that political disenchantment helped pave the way to MMP. Although political élites were primarily responsible for first putting electoral system change on the agenda, it rapidly became a popular cause – so much so that both major parties promised to put it to a referendum. Previous studies have identified declining government accountability as one long-term cause of support for electoral reform in New Zealand (Vowles 1995b). Other studies show that perceptions about the responsiveness of politicians to public opinion – or feelings of external political efficacy – are related to support for MMP (Lamare & Vowles 1996). Consequently, we find that voters are more willing to support reform when they perceive the political process as unjust and when they are dissatisfied with current government performance. As the data in Table 10.1 reveals, those who did not trust government are almost twice as likely to vote for MMP than those who trust government.

Table 10.1: Trust in Government by Vote for MMP (%)

	Trust	Distrust
Voted for MMP	33	58
Voted for FPP	54	25
Did Not Vote	13	16

chi-square = 146.52 $p < .01$ $N = 1653$

Source: 1993 NZES

Note: Data based on agreement and disagreement responses to the statement 'You can trust the government to do what is right most of the time'.

Aside from discontent with the status quo, citizens might support a change in the rules if they stood to benefit. The obvious suspects are those who were losing under the old system: third or minor parties whose votes are 'thrown away', as well as the Labour Party, which twice failed to receive a majority of seats despite winning a plurality of the vote. Not surprisingly, these groups were more likely to vote in favour of the referendum (even after controlling for cynicism), while National identifiers voted for the status quo. A question then arises over the effects of institutional change on citizens' evaluations of system performance and accountability. When the process changes in accordance with citizen preferences, do citizen evaluations of the process also change?

Turning Discontent Around

Among the principal arguments made in favour of PR systems are those that concern trust and faith in the political system. Proponents argue that such systems are fairer than FPP systems because they provide for a more diverse representation of interests. Under plurality systems, certain groups or parties that have a reasonable amount of support may nevertheless be denied representation, which may have the effect of alienating these supporters from the political system. Besides alienating under-represented groups, the outcome of the election may not be viewed as legitimate when the seats won by a party are not equal to its share of the popular vote. In the 1978 and 1981 elections, for example, Labour failed to win a majority of the seats in Parliament even though it won more votes than National. Moreover, all of the governments since 1954 have been formed without the support of a majority of voters.

In their report recommending the introduction of MMP, the Royal Commission on the Electoral System (1986) argued that MMP would enhance democracy by leading to greater political integration, more effective parties, and increased voter satisfaction (p.52). The flexibility of proportional systems not only allows for diversity but also aids the formation of protest parties that provide the disaffected with an outlet within the political arena (Miller & Lijphart 1990, 364-66). By adopting a system based on party lists, political parties would also be able to enforce party discipline, promoting collective responsibility. Finally, voting would be more satisfying because votes cast for minor parties would no longer be wasted and, as the Royal Commission anticipated (p.56), voters would have more flexibility with two votes (one for the party and the other for the MP) instead of one.

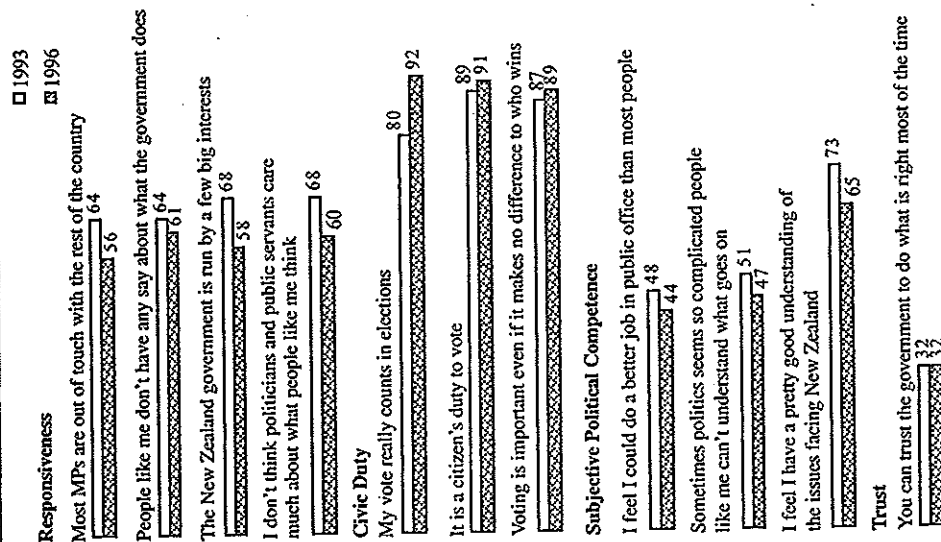
Voters in the political minority may also have more faith in the democratic system under MMP than under FPP. The structure of New Zealand's government under FPP was such that a majority could impose its will with little regard for the minority. New Zealand's system of governance had been characterised as a 'virtually perfect example' of the Westminster model or majoritarian democracy (Lijphart 1984, 16), because of its unicameral legislature, its centralised system, and the concentration of executive power in the hands of one of two parties. In contrast, consensual democracies, which represent the other end of Lijphart's spectrum, aim at restraining majority rule by requiring or encouraging the sharing of power between the majority and the minority.

Yet, because of other aspects of New Zealand's political and social structure, a complete move towards the consensus model was always unlikely. Arguably, MMP makes it possible for real broad-based majoritarianism as opposed to single-party 'pluralitarian' governments, which relied on a much smaller voter base than that of a majority (Nagel 1997). This shift, according to PR proponents, is expected to foster improved representation. There is some empirical support that such systems do indeed lead to greater public satisfaction. Anderson and Guillery (1997), in a study of 11 European democracies, found that the more consensual the democracy, the more likely it is that losers are satisfied with the functioning of democracy (p.78). For these reasons we might expect New Zealand's transition to MMP to lead to a

renewed faith in the political system, particularly among minor party supporters whose voices would otherwise be discounted.

Any dramatic improvements in public confidence are not likely to occur in the short run. Attitudes towards government are deep-seated, and many of the same protagonists occupy the political stage, so that it would be naive to expect sudden and dramatic improvements in public confidence after a single election under PR. Nevertheless, in the longer run, after New Zealanders have an opportunity to evaluate the consequences of MMP, we will have a better idea of how political reform might alter otherwise stable evaluations of government.

Figure 10.1: Changes in Perceptions of Responsiveness, Civic Duty, Subjective Competence and Trust, 1993-96



Note: Data show % of 1993-96 panel in agreement with statement given

To examine changes in public confidence, we rely on panel data from the 1993-96 New Zealand Election Studies. The panel consists of 1,173 respondents who answered questions after the 1993 and 1996 elections (see Appendix A). Figure 10.1 includes questions that measure four dimensions of political legitimacy: government responsiveness, sense of civic duty, subjective political competence, and trust in government. In 1993, nearly two thirds of the respondents questioned the responsiveness of politicians. In 1996, the percentage of such people fell across all indicators of responsiveness. A sense of civic duty, already high in 1993, increases very slightly, but the largest change is in the percentage of respondents who believe that their vote counts in elections - up from 80 per cent in 1993 to 92 per cent in 1996. Despite the apparent increase in efficacy, turnout remained relatively stable, up about 2 per cent to about 79 per cent.¹ While turnout was not substantially higher, the adoption of MMP could have stemmed any further decline.

Fewer people were likely to feel politically competent in 1996 - possibly related to the finding that while in 1993 almost three-quarters of the respondents felt that they had a good understanding of the issues facing New Zealand in 1996, this figure dropped to two-thirds. The percentage of respondents feeling that politics seems too complicated falls only slightly, despite the adoption of a new and potentially more complicated electoral system. On the other hand, respondents felt a little less confident in 1996 that they could do a better job in public office than most. Finally, only a third of the respondents agreed that government could be trusted most of the time in both 1993 and 1996. Taken together, these figures reveal a fair amount of stability in attitudes toward government, though they do suggest a change consistent with the expectations of proponents of PR.

Who Has Become More Satisfied?

In order to look more closely at the reasons for these changes we use another set of questions, this time focusing on attitudes about government responsiveness and the political process. Six questions in the 1996 election study are used to tap into responsiveness. These questions ask respondents whether or not parties and MPs pay attention, if MPs are out of touch, if they feel they have no say in politics, if politicians care, and if government is run by a few big interests; there is also a general indicator of trust in parties. Questions about trust in government to do what is right, whether or not the election was conducted fairly, satisfaction with democracy and corruption in New Zealand politics are related to the institutions and processes of government rather than the responsiveness of MPs or government itself and are, therefore, included in a separate scale.

A factor analysis performed on these 10 items lends support to the view that these indicators form two separate dimensions. The six questions asking respondents if they perceived government, elected representatives and political institutions as being attentive were combined to form a single scale (alpha = .81). The other questions, involving citizens' perceptions of procedural and distributive fairness, form the fairness scale (alpha = .61). The scales created

from these questions have traditionally been labelled as political trust in government, but they are more specifically related to evaluations of the fairness of the political process. Therefore, we refer to the scale as both a political trust and fairness index. High scores on both scales indicate cynicism about the political process and responsiveness of representatives.

Using these two scales, a majority of New Zealanders (56 per cent) believe that representatives are not attentive, though far fewer (22 per cent) believe that the political process is not fair. Table 10.2 displays the results of these measures against a series of demographic and attitudinal variables. We have also included the 1993 measures for comparison over time. Unfortunately, not all the questions used in the 1996 scales are available in the 1993 survey. The 1993 responsiveness scale does not include the question, 'Do political parties care what ordinary people think?' Nevertheless, the two scales are nearly identical ($r = .98$). As for fairness, only trust in government was asked in 1993, so we include that measure along with the 1996 counterpart.

When the rules change, we might expect those who were disadvantaged by the old system to experience a change in their attitudes toward government. While the proportion of women (21.2 per cent) represented in the New Zealand Parliament under FPP is high by comparative standards, the proportion still falls far short of 50 per cent. Although electoral arrangements on their own cannot guarantee further increases in the number of women elected, PR systems are nevertheless considered to provide greater opportunities for women to be placed on party lists (and thus be represented) than stand in electorates in SMD (single-member district) systems (for further discussion see Chapter 9). This expectation was borne out during the 1996 campaign. Consistent with the under-representation hypothesis, women are more likely than men to believe that the government is not responsive.

Unexpectedly, the gap between men and women on all three measures widened in 1996. While women's level of trust remained relatively stable, men became more trusting of government. In addition, men became more likely than women to say that government is more responsive. This might suggest that women's attitudes toward government have nothing to do with descriptive representation, and the survey data tend to support this interpretation. Women who perceive a lack of responsiveness are no more likely than men to believe that there should be more MPs who are women. Therefore, to explain the sources of women's discontent, we must look elsewhere. As the data in Table 10.2 reveals, the more educated one is the more likely one is to view government as responsive and the system as fair. Since women are less likely to have received university degrees than men, we might attribute these differences to education. When controlling for education, the gender differences disappear, supporting this hypothesis.

Like women, Maori also stood to gain representation under MMP. Maori appear to be far more likely than non-Maori to believe that government is not responsive, though inferences from this data, because of the small number of Maori panellists, should be made with some caution. Nevertheless, those who identify themselves as Maori do appear to have become more likely to view the government as responsive in 1996. This data is comparable to the larger samples in the cross-sectional data for both 1993 and 1996.² However, the

change was not exclusive to Maori and consequently Maori remain more cynical than non-Maori. Why are Maori less likely to view the government as responsive? The answer again does not appear to be representation; Maori who favour increased Maori representation are no more likely to be cynical than Maori who do not. Maori are also higher on distrust and more likely to view the political process as unfair than non-Maori. Clearly Maori are worse off than non-Maori. Wide gaps between the educational achievements of Maori and non-Maori remain and Maori unemployment has been consistently higher than that among New Zealanders of European descent (see Chapter 11). If level of education and economic evaluations are controlled for, the differences between Maori and non-Maori disappear. Thus improvements in education rather than changes in electoral systems are likely to have the most significant impact on both women and Maori's attitudes toward government.

While the elderly are likely to question the attentiveness of representatives, they are more likely than younger voters to believe that the political process is fair, regardless of education. This suggests that the elderly are not alienated from the political system but rather dissatisfied with policy outputs. The imposition of the superannuation surtax in spite of protests by the elderly might very well explain the view among the elderly that the government is inattentive. This might also explain why persons above the age of 40, who are more likely to be thinking about their retirement, were not as likely as young voters to perceive the government as more attentive in 1996. Indeed, those in their thirties experienced the sharpest increase in satisfaction with governmental responsiveness.

Party identification is also related to evaluations of government. In 1993, Alliance identifiers were the most likely to distrust government. In 1996, while Alliance voters remained almost stable in their view, New Zealand First identifiers became the most cynical on all measures of discontent. Those who identify with National are the most trusting – only a quarter said that government could not be trusted and only one out of ten questioned the fairness of the political process. These differences are probably related to incumbency, and had National been the opposition party we would see similar levels of cynicism among National supporters. The effects of ideology on trust and responsiveness are also probably related to policy. Those who place themselves on the right side of the ideological spectrum have higher levels of trust and responsiveness. We might usually think that neo-liberals would be less trusting of government, since they prefer a limited role for government. Given the liberal nature of the economic reforms since 1984, however, it is not surprising that those on the right are more trusting of the smaller government and a deregulated economy. The data supports this interpretation, indicating that people on the right experienced the sharpest increase in satisfaction between 1993 and 1996.

We should also keep in mind that attachments to all of these parties are fairly weak. Social and psychological ties are weakest for Alliance and New Zealand First because they are newer parties (Vowles *et al.* 1995, 38). Those who have a greater psychological attachment are more likely to be committed to the political system, but not necessarily to current government policies if they identify with an opposition party. Like those identifying with Alliance

and New Zealand First, those who do not feel close to any of the parties are also disillusioned. This is consistent with research overseas, which indicates that party attachment promotes a more positive attitude toward the political system. Independents in the United States and Sweden, for example, were found to be consistently less trusting than stronger partisans (Miller & Listhaug 1990, 371–72). We might expect that a shift to an electoral system which provides the opportunity of representation for more than two parties would strengthen independents' attitudes toward the system in a more profound way than it would with strong party identifiers. This does not appear to be the case. Non-identifiers were no more likely to experience a change than party identifiers.

Table 10.2 also shows whether respondents who voted for MMP are more likely to be satisfied with the responsiveness of government and the political process. While it is too soon for respondents to evaluate MMP in terms of its long-term performance (although see the Conclusion for short-term evaluations), it is reasonable to assume that those who voted for change and got it are more satisfied. Iyengar (1980) finds voting success, reflected by the number of winning candidates the respondent voted for, to be associated with greater satisfaction with government responsiveness. Because electoral reform represents a more significant change than a change in elected representatives this expectation becomes more plausible. Furthermore, since self-interest played a role in determining who supported reform, we should expect those groups who were disadvantaged by FPP to be more supportive of government. The data supports this hypothesis, indicating that those who voted for MMP in 1993 had a greater increase in responsiveness than those who voted for the status quo.³ While these voters remain more dissatisfied than those who voted for FPP, the differences in 1996 are not quite as great. The losers – those who voted for FPP – do not appear to have become more disenchanted with the political process, presumably owing to their larger reservoir of support for the political system. An alternative explanation is that while being on the losing side of the referendum, these voters, who are most likely to support the National Party, are more supportive of government because their party has retained control of government.

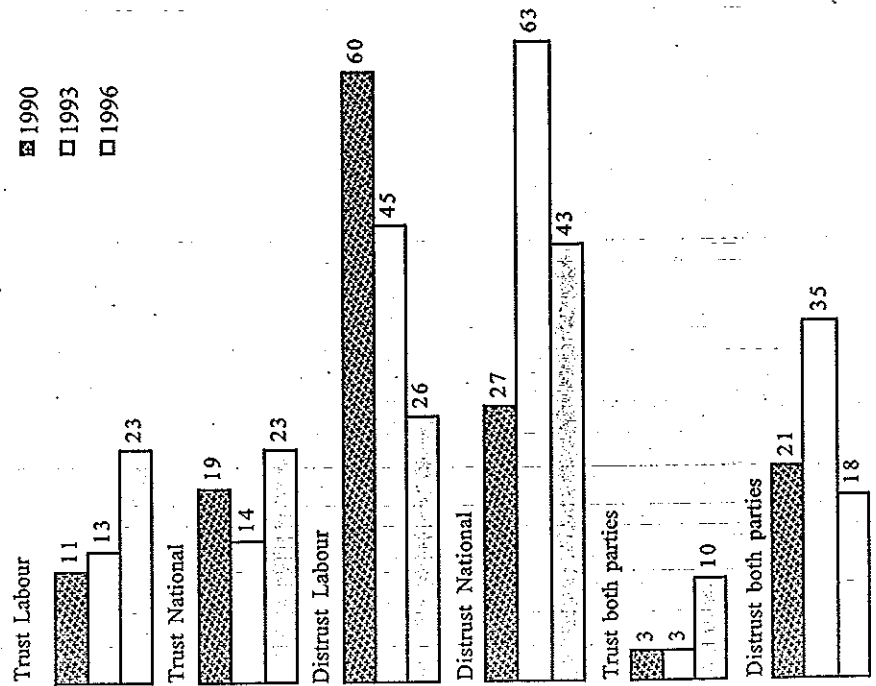
Policy and Government Performance

Aside from the outcome of elections and a change in electoral systems, policy satisfaction should clearly influence evaluations of government responsiveness. As the data in Table 10.2 suggests, this is indeed the case. Those who desire a change in social spending (either more or less) – ranging from health, education, assistance for low-income families, and superannuation – are far more likely to be dissatisfied than those who do not. The gap widened even more in 1996, as those who preferred no change in spending became much more satisfied.

One of the main policy areas that parties are held accountable for is their handling of the economy. If people agree that parties can solve a problem they are more likely to trust them (Weatherford 1984). The dramatic eco-

omic reforms implemented between 1984 and 1994 resulted in severe disruptions in the economy. A change in the welfare state, deregulation, and privatisation not only affected economic growth and unemployment but also changed benefit levels. Despite recovery from a recession in the early 1990s, National was returned to power in 1993 with only a slim majority. After the election the economy continued to improve with sustained growth and declining unemployment (see Chapter 2). Although economic growth declined from 6.6 per cent in March 1995 to a modest 2.4 per cent prior to the 1996 election, unemployment levels had remained largely unchanged since 1994 and inflationary pressures remained low (Key Statistics March 1997 and Dalziel & Lattimore 1996, 93). How did these changes affect confidence in the political parties?

Figure 10.2: Changes in the Perceptions of the Trustworthiness of the Parties, 1990–96



Because data on the trustworthiness of the parties is available from the first wave of the panel in 1990, we are able to examine longer-term change, albeit with a slightly smaller sample. As Figure 10.2 reveals, during the six years that Labour was out of power distrust fell from a height of 60 per cent to 26 per cent in 1996. Most of those associated with the market liberal reforms were no longer in politics in 1996, or had left the party for ACT, suggesting that the absence of these players may have helped the party repair its image. When National took over power, the result was a transfer in discontent. Distrust in National increased dramatically from 27 per cent to 63 per cent in 1993 but fell in 1996. Why the change?

As Table 10.3 reveals, voters who are not predisposed to trust National in 1993 are more likely to trust the party in 1996 if they believe that its policies had a positive effect on the economy. Positive evaluations of National's handling of the economy also lead to significant increases in trust among non-partisans and Labour identifiers. Non-partisans who believe that National's policies had a positive effect on the economy are almost five times more likely to have increased trust in National than those who believe that National's policies have had a bad effect. Similarly, even Labour identifiers – who would not otherwise trust National – who thought the economy had improved under National were more likely to trust National in 1996 than they were in 1993, while Labour identifiers who thought National had a bad effect were likely to remain distrustful of National. There are negligible differences among those who identify with National, presumably because they would already be inclined to trust National regardless of economic performance. Not surprisingly, evaluations of National's economic policies do not produce a significant difference in trust in Labour. Thus while both parties experienced a decrease in distrust (see Figure 10.2), National's decrease seems largely related to economic performance.⁴

While economic performance appears to influence people's confidence in the players, it is not yet clear if this confidence alters assessments of the system. As we discussed earlier, the correlations between the 1993 and 1996 measures of responsiveness are strong, indicating a high level of stability over time. Stability might suggest a diffuse support for the political system. An alternative interpretation is that nothing dramatic enough has happened to alter these attitudes. Given the change in electoral systems, this interpretation seems unwarranted. If these are indicators of diffuse support, then short-term forces such as evaluation of the incumbents and satisfaction with policy should not be related to evaluations of responsiveness and fairness.

To test this hypothesis, we employ a model which uses our panel data to explain 1996 levels of responsiveness and trust as a function of short-term forces, while controlling for initial levels of responsiveness and trust in 1993. As explained earlier, the 1993 scales are not identical to the 1996 scale: in 1993, only the trust in government question was asked, so this is added as a control in the fairness model, but fairness as a dependent variable is the scale built from all four trust and fairness items.⁵ The 1993 responsiveness scale is constructed without the 'do political parties care?' questions and ranges from –10 to 10. If these attitudes are completely stable then all of the variance in the dependent variables should be explained by their previous indicators. This

Table 10.3: Change in Attitudes Toward Government According to Evaluation of Economic Policy by Party Identification

Effect of National's economic policy on country in last year	National			Labour			Non Partisan		
	Increased	Decreased	n	Increased	Decreased	n	Increased	Decreased	n
Good Effect	37	8	45	3	8	11	29	6	35
Not Much Difference	45	8	53	45	35	80	29	6	35
Bad Effect	36	0	36	14	6	20	11	8	19
	$\chi^2 = 3.37 \text{ p} > .05$			$\chi^2 = 11.21 \text{ p} < .05$			$\chi^2 = 33.86 \text{ p} < .01$		
	n=346			n=204			n=323		

Note: Data obtained from the 1993-1996 panel.

method of using lagged indicators of the dependent variable is well suited to examining real change in panel data (Markus 1979, 47). The correlation between the 1993 and 1996 measures of responsiveness is $R = .67$; therefore 45 per cent ($R^2 = .67^2 = .45$) of the variance in the 1996 scale is explained by that in the 1993 scale, indicating some degree of stability in these attitudes. The correlation between the 1993 trust question and the 1996 trust/fairness scale is 0.37 ($R^2 = .14$).

Our indicators of short-term forces are described as follows. Evaluations of the economy (economic satisfaction, personal household finances, country's economic situation, future evaluations of the economy) are summarised in a single scale that ranges from -1 (improving economy) to 1 (poor economy). In addition to the economy, policy satisfaction might also influence attitudes toward government in the short run. As a measure of policy satisfaction we created a scale ranging from 0 to 8 that indicates a desire for changes in spending (either more or less) on health, education, assistance for low-income families, and superannuation. Aside from spending, we include a measure of distance from the incumbent government as measured by the respondent's self-placement on tax and environmental policy compared to the respondent's placement of National. This scale ranges from 0 to 6. We also expect those who believe that the government should not sell off any further assets to be more disillusioned with government given National's criticism of Labour's privatisation policies and subsequent sale of New Zealand Rail. To measure views on privatisation, we use a 28-point scale that summarises questions of whether the government should own or regulate seven formerly state-owned companies, including Telecom, Air New Zealand, and Television New Zealand. We also include a scale measuring civic duty based on the three questions listed in Figure 10.1 that ranges from -8 to 8. Presumably, those who have a stronger sense of civic duty are more inclined to believe the system is responsive and fair. The dependent variables are standardised on a scale ranging from 0 to 100, allowing for comparisons across models.

The results show that policy satisfaction and incumbent approval continue to have a strong influence on attitudes toward government, after controlling for 1993 evaluations.⁶ Income levels, which appeared to have a strong effect in the bivariate results in Table 10.2, do not appear to have any influence on responsiveness or fairness, although education, which is associated with income, is negatively associated with discontent. Age remains significant in both models but the relationship is quite different. The elderly are more likely to believe that the system is fair but less likely to believe in the responsiveness of public servants and government generally. While disenchanted with policy outputs, the elderly clearly do not appear to be otherwise alienated from the political system. Both measures of incumbent approval appear to influence both responsiveness and fairness, suggesting that these measures may also be subject to shorter-term forces.⁷ As evident in the previous tables, economic evaluations continue to have a strong influence, though much more so for fairness than for responsiveness. More specific measures of policy satisfaction, such as opinions on taxes and privatisation, influence responsiveness but not fairness, though social spending is significant on both indicators.

Table 10.4: Explaining Changes in Discontent

	Responsiveness t_2		Fairness t_1	
	B	Std Error	B	Std Error
(Constant)	49.82**	(2.75)	44.30**	(3.38)
Age	0.06*	(0.03)	-0.07*	(0.03)
Female	-0.48	(0.74)	1.05	(0.92)
Education	-0.86**	(0.27)	-0.60	(0.33)
Income	0.20	(0.22)	0.26	(0.27)
Maori Identity	-0.74	(2.08)	2.11	(2.62)
Labour	-5.56**	(1.29)	-2.35	(1.60)
Alliance	-5.79**	(2.03)	1.09	(2.52)
New Zealand First	1.42	(2.13)	1.84	(2.58)
Other	-1.32	(8.71)	7.25	(10.53)
No Party	-1.46	(1.05)	1.72	(1.2)
Ideology	0.10	(0.22)	-0.29	(0.27)
Economy	4.63**	(1.07)	11.02**	(1.32)
Privatisation	0.17**	(0.05)	0.11*	(0.06)
Spending	0.68**	(0.22)	1.21**	(0.27)
Distance from National on Taxes	0.89**	(0.26)	0.60*	(0.32)
Distance from National on Environment	0.22	(0.29)	-0.09	(0.37)
Disapproval of MP	1.55**	(0.40)	1.17*	(0.49)
Disapproval of Bolger	1.05**	(0.17)	1.16**	(0.21)
Voted Yes on MMP	-0.83	(0.84)	-2.22*	(1.03)
Don't Understand MMP	0.80*	(0.37)	2.03**	(0.46)
Civic Duty	0.23	(0.18)	0.64**	(0.22)
Responsiveness (1993)	2.76**	(0.12)	-	-
Trust in Government (1993)	-	-	3.14**	(0.51)
Adj R-square	.57			.37
N	1147			1108

Note: Missing values set to mean values. Standard errors are in parenthesis.

**p<0.01 *p<0.05

*Approaching statistical significance (p=.06).

In the multivariate analysis, both Labour and Alliance identifiers are less likely to view government as non-responsive. This may indicate that when controlling for policy and economic satisfaction, those identifiers who tend to be on the left side of the political spectrum have greater faith in the ability of government to find solutions to everyday problems. More probably, it indicates that these persons are happier under MMP, given that the model controls for the effects of 1993 perceptions of responsiveness. Unless these Labour and Alliance voters in 1996 have changed their views on the role of the state since 1993, we must assume that their greater likelihood of perceiving government as responsive is due to electoral system change. There are no significant differences among party identifiers on procedural fairness.

Our results suggest that those who voted for MMP are more likely to trust government and be satisfied with the way democracy works, but that the size of the coefficient on trust in government indicates that the differences are slight. The transition to MMP does not appear to have made supporters feel that government and elected representatives are more attentive when policy satisfaction and partisan preferences are taken into account. Those who indicated that they did not understand the new electoral system of MMP were more likely to have negative evaluations of fairness and responsiveness. Whether or not an individual understands the electoral system is an indicator of subjective political competence, and as such should be related to overall evaluations of the political system.

Conclusion

The legacy of people's experiences of policies and processes prior to 1993 remains strong. Despite the transition to PR, attitudes toward government remain largely the same as they were in 1993. Within the electorate, many groups who were previously disadvantaged by the existing FPP system do not appear to have altered their view toward government any more than those who were not disadvantaged. An exception appears to be Alliance and Labour voters, who perceive government as more responsive since 1993 (once policy variables are taken into account). Recent changes in perceptions of government responsiveness and trust in government have been shaped by short-term factors that relate to the government's performance on policy issues such as the economy. We also find evidence that the government's position on policies such as privatisation and social spending influences political support. Given the strong relationship between the economy, incumbent government evaluations, and other policy issues and trust and responsiveness, the small decline in discontent and a slight decrease in distrust among New Zealand voters since 1993 seems to be policy based. Government's performance on the economy influences not only evaluations of responsiveness, but also what New Zealanders think about the political process itself. Change in the electoral system has so far had little or no effect on perceptions of responsiveness and, if anything, only a small effect on trust in government.

Comparative data from the United States shows that discontent there is due more to perceptions of 'procedural injustice' (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse 1995) than to the culmination of policies that are out of step with the wishes of voters. While there is a tendency in the US for discontent to be higher among those who say they are worse off financially compared to a year ago, the relationship is not strong (Craig 1993, 47). Analysis of New Zealand panel data suggests that short-term factors such as economic policy can explain change in both the trustworthiness of the players and in more general evaluations of the responsiveness of the political system.

The existence of a link between performance and perceptions of responsiveness and trust in government in New Zealand and not in the US may be attributable to parliamentary government, where the enactment and implementation of policy occurs much more quickly than in federal systems with

separated powers. The structure of New Zealand political institutions makes it easier to assign credit and blame for economic and policy performance. Therefore, for citizens, performance evaluations may be more easily linked to evaluations of political institutions and process, making it easier for voters to know whom to reward and punish. It remains to be seen whether this will be true under a new electoral system that allows for a more diverse representation of interests, probably resulting in the formation of coalition governments and therefore less clear-cut responsibility. It also remains to be seen if other implications of the change in the electoral system have longer-term effects than are so far apparent. Many New Zealand voters in 1996 were still cynical about politicians and distrustful of government because policies between 1984 and 1993 had been out of step with their preferences. If in the longer term MMP leads to more centrist policies and more responsiveness in government, we might expect voter cynicism and distrust to decline.

Notes:

- 1 The party vote on a base of the estimated adult population. Turnout was slightly less for those casting electorate votes; 85% of registered electors cast a party vote.
- 2 In the 1993 cross-section, 97.4% (N = 116) of persons identifying themselves as Maori view government as non-responsive, compared to 96% of the panellists (N = 44). The 1996 cross-section suggests that the percentage of Maori viewing the government as non-responsive (78%; N = 263) had fallen more than the panellists (86%; N = 50).
- 3 Because we have panel data we are able to use the reported vote for MMP in 1993 rather than rely on respondents' recall in 1996. Not surprisingly, more people in 1996 recall voting for MMP than actually voted for it in 1993.
- 4 However, while economic and incumbent evaluations influence political support, the reverse may be true also -- high levels of political support may lead to positive performance evaluations (Weatherford 1984).
- 5 The correlation in the 1996 data between trust in government alone and the fairness index (for which it is a part) is .64, indicating a high enough correlation for the variable in 1993 to act as a lagged previous value.
- 6 All other things being equal, for every 1 point movement up the 1993 responsiveness scale of -10 to +10, a respondent is likely to be 2.76 points higher on the 1996 scale, which runs from 0 to 100. When the lagged variables are dropped from the model, the adjusted R² (explained variance) is .40 for the responsiveness scale and .43 for the fairness scale.
- 7 For every 1 unit increase in disapproval of Bolger, citizens' feelings of lack of responsiveness increase by 1.55 units on a 100-point scale. Therefore, moving from strongly approve (-5) to strongly disapprove (5) increases cynicism about responsiveness by 17 points.

CHAPTER 11

REALIGNMENT? MAORI AND THE 1996 ELECTION

Ann Sullivan and Jack Vowles

We want our land back, we want our culture back, and we want our mana back. I believe the young are seeking a new sense of purpose and morality . . . The role of the Labour MP is diminishing and the Maori is taking a more independent political role.
(Matu Rata, 1979)

Among long-established democracies, New Zealand is unusual because it has a separate electoral system for its indigenous minority. One of the most remarkable developments of the 1996 election was a huge shift in the Maori vote from Labour to New Zealand First. New Zealand First's Tau Henare had won the Northern Maori electorate at the 1993 election, breaking the half-century Labour monopoly of the Maori seats. Before the transition to MMP there had been four Maori electorates, with no effective variation since their establishment in 1867. Changes to the Electoral Act associated with MMP made the number of Maori electorates for the first time based on the numbers of New Zealanders of Maori descent choosing to enter their names on the Maori roll.¹ In 1994 Maori once more made their choice of rolls, and the result was an increase in the number of Maori electorates to 5 (out of 65 electorates under MMP as compared to 4 out of 99 under FPP).

All five Maori electorates were won by New Zealand First in 1996. Moreover, the New Zealand First caucus of 17 members was led by a Maori, Winston Peters, and nearly half its members were Maori. Maori numbers in the House overall also increased to 15, a proportion virtually identical to that of Maori in the New Zealand population. And by going into coalition with National, New Zealand First propelled Maori into the powerhouse of New Zealand politics, with Winston Peters and his New Zealand First colleague John Delamere becoming Treasurer and Associate Treasurer respectively.

Among the many issues raised by these significant events are the following: how substantial was the shift of Maori votes from Labour to New Zealand First? In the language of electoral theorists, did it amount to a 'realignment'