

Congruence between Voters and Representatives in Preferences for Social Policies in Spain

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Abstract: Public opinion in some countries are persistently highly supportive of redistribution, while policy outcomes do not always adjust over time. According to the literature on political congruence this might be the consequence of a biased representation of policy preferences in the political process, as the preferences of high socio-economic status are expected to be better represented than the preferences of low statuses. To shed some light on this puzzle we analyze congruence in preferences for social policies in Spain. We use data from two complementary surveys gathering data on preferences for citizens and members of parliament (MPs). We have found a high degree of congruence in political preferences between citizens and representatives. Secondly, although the preferences of the well-educated groups are better represented in the case of preferences for taxation, it cannot be argued that there is a pro-rich bias in MPs' preferences. We have found also a framing effect, according to which, congruence between parties and electorates vary across domains of preferences.

Keywords: ideological congruence; representation; preferences; social policies

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1. Introduction

According to the well-known model proposed by Meltzer and Richard (1981), we should expect a positive relationship between inequality and demand for redistribution. As a consequence, democracy will boost income redistribution from the rich to the poor, since the median voter is poorer than the average income earner and the difference between the two of them will increase as inequality grows. However, empirical studies have found only mixed support for the median voter hypothesis (Dallinger, 2010; Finseraas, 2008; Lübker, 2007; Moene and Wallerstein, 2003), and polities highly supportive of redistribution do not always produce high levels of redistribution. This puzzle is caused by a key assumption in the model: in democracies, the preferences of the median voter translate into policies almost automatically (Lübker, 2007). However, this assumption could be highly problematic due to the pervasive agency problems in representative democracy. Firstly, the model assumes that parties do not over(under)-represent the preferences of some particular social groups, which contradicts the literature on ‘unequal representation’ (Bartels, 2008) and the fact that socio-economic status is a powerful determinant of political participation and involvement (Brady et al, 1995; Lijphart, 1997). Secondly, even if parties were independent from interest and politically organized groups, there is still a potential source of bias in representatives’ preferences. Since the social extraction of politicians typically over-represents high socio-economic status, and since these groups tend to be less supportive of redistribution as the literature on preferences for redistribution has shown consistently (Alesina and Giuliano, 2011; Busemeyer, 2013; Owens and Pedulla, 2014), then we

can expect that representatives' preferences for redistribution will be biased against low socio-economic statuses (Bernauer et al., 2013).

These two problems might affect severely the quality of representation of preferences and have far reaching implications for representative democracy. However, to the best of our knowledge, no empirical test of these two propositions has been made up to date. To void this gap, in this paper we will investigate whether differences between policy preferences and policy outcomes are the result of an anti-redistributive bias in the preferences of the political elite. More specifically, we analyze how well represented are citizens' policy preferences by their elected representatives and to what extent representatives' preferences are determined either by their own self-interest or by the preferences of the groups they represent. Departing from previous studies on ideological congruence (Bernauer et al., 2013; Golder and Stramski, 2010; Rosset et al., 2013) we focus on the specific realm of preferences for social policies. To that effect, rather than using experts' assessments (Huber and Powell, 1994) or manifesto data (Budge and McDonald, 2007), we asked a representative sample of Spanish citizens and MPs their preferences for social policies (redistribution, taxes and public expenditure). That way we can compute the distance between citizens and their political representatives, figure out their similarities and attempt at explaining the distances.

Given the scarcity of comparative data for our purposes, we focus on the case of Spain, which shows an initial puzzle: data on public opinion show that Spaniards have been highly supportive of redistribution for a longtime but, at the same time, actual levels of redistribution are quite low within the European context. According to the most recent data from the European Social Survey (ESS, 2012) national average support for redistribution on a five-points scale is 4.11, only below some Eastern and Southern countries (Hungary, Slovenia, Italy and the Russian

Federation). However, Spain it is characterized by a weak welfare state (Moreno, 2000), with a relatively high level of inequality and low levels of redistribution within the European context. According to the data from the Luxembourg Income Study (LIS, 2014) the Gini index after taxes and transfers is 0.33, which is among the highest in Europe (only below United Kingdom and the Russian Federation). Moreover, taxes and government transfers reduce the market Gini (before taxes and transfers) only up to 11.2%, which is among the lowest redistribution levels in Europe (only above Italy, Belgium and the Russian Federation). Thus, the case of Spain can shed some light on the question of why a very pro-redistributive polity is not matched by a similar set of policies pursuing redistribution.

The case of Spain is also relevant from the perspective of representative democracy. According to different accounts, the economic crisis in Southern Europe has produced a political crisis of representation, which is reflected in a decline of several indicators of confidence in institutions and particularly in politicians (Magalhães, 2014; Morlino and Quaranta, 2014, Torcal, 2014, Zamora and Collier, 2014). In the case of Spain this has led to a number of protest movements (such as the 15M movement) and the emergence of new political actors. One of the main slogans of these movements has been “No nos presentan” [They do not represent us], which expresses a widely shared idea by Spaniards: politicians live apart from citizens both in terms of their material conditions and interests. Our empirical findings will allow us to determine whether politicians’ preferences are so different from the rest of the population. The paper is organized as follows: Next section presents the theoretical foundations of the paper garnering insights from two strands of literature: research on preferences for social policies and studies on political congruence. Next, we present our data and variables for the case of Spain. The next two sections present our empirical findings. In the first one we analyze the distances in preferences

for social policies between citizens and representatives and their determinants. In the second one, we analyze the determinants of preferences for social policies of the Spanish sample of representatives. Finally, there is a concluding section in which we summarize the main findings and derive some implications.

2. Representative Democracy and Policy Outcomes

The principle of political equality leads to expect from representative democracies at least some degree of congruence between citizens and representatives preferences (Pitkin, 1967, Miller and Stokes (1963). In an analysis of party-linkages between citizens and candidates for the European Parliament, Dalton (1985: 293) concluded that “in overall terms, there is substantial agreement between policy views of the Western European public and party elites”. Thomassen and Schmitt (1997), reached very similar conclusions a decade later. Following this longstanding tradition in the analysis of dyadic representation, several case studies in France (Converse and Pierce, 1986), Australia (McAllister, 1991), Britain (Norris, 1995), Sweden (Holmberg, 1989) or Italy (Barnes, 1977) have found different levels of congruence along with important variations in political congruence between policy domains. In that vein, congruence is explained by electoral accountability, which produces an interactive linkage between voters and parties. As Dalton (1985) pointed out, voters might change their vote looking for parties that represent their preferences better and parties might change their position or convince their voters to adjust theirs.

This is in contrast with the puzzle highlighted above. Public opinion in some countries is persistently highly supportive of redistribution but policy outcomes do not always adjust over

time. To illustrate this puzzle, in Figure 1 we plot the levels of inequality measured by Gini index after taxes and transfers, and the demand for redistribution in a sample of European countries, using data from ESS (2012) and LIS (2014). In fact, the correlation between inequality and demand for redistribution is positive (0.579) and significant ($p < 0.05$). This posits the question of why preferences for redistributive policies do not translate into policy outcomes. One possible answer to this question is that citizens' preferences are not well represented in the political process, as politicians might be less supportive of redistribution than their electorates. This explanation is in line with the literature on unequal representation, mostly focused on the US case, which has shown that economic inequality translates into political inequality (Bartels, 2008). According to this account, not every group has the same chances to be heard in the political process. Empirical evidence shows that political participation correlates with socio-economic status (Brady et al, 1995; Lijphart, 1997) and interest groups tend to represent the interests of the privileged (Bartels, 2008). Therefore, parties have lower incentives to represent the preferences of low status groups of voters.

[FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Even if parties do not collide with special interest groups, social extraction of politicians over-represents high-status groups and this might have an impact on representatives' preferences, since redistributive preferences depend on individual economic resources (Meltzer and Richard, 1981). A longstanding tradition of sociological studies argues that preferences for redistribution are shaped by social class, since people belonging to the same social stratum are supposed to share a common interest, which eventually would be reflected in preferences for social policies

(Svallfors, 1997). As a consequence, lower classes will be more supportive of redistribution than the upper classes. At the same time, less privileged groups of the population are expected to be more supportive of redistribution because they are dependent on welfare programs (Hasenfeld and Rafferty, 1989). These include old-age pensioners, the unemployed (Owens and Pedulla, 2014) and those who face greater risks of unemployment (Iversen and Soskice, 2001). Empirical studies have found also that women are more supportive of redistribution, since women are more dependent on welfare services either because they tend to have more precarious positions than men in the labor market or because they are employed in the public sector more often than men (Svallfors, 1997).

By the turn of the century, a few studies have taken these issues into account and investigate whether the representation of preferences in the political process are biased in favor of some specific groups. Following these lines, Rosset et al. (2013), using comparative data on ideological positions of parties in several countries, have found that preferences of high incomes are better represented in the political process. Moreover, they show that the gap in congruence between high and low incomes widens as inequality increases. In a similar study, Bernauer et al. (2013) confirm a bias in representation against low incomes and, to a lesser extent, women. However, none of these studies focuses specifically in the domain of preferences for social policies. Following this reasoning, it can be hypothesized that representatives' preferences will be more similar to high status individuals.

H1: Congruence in preferences for social policy between citizens and representatives will be higher for privileged social groups (i. e. male, high socio-economic statuses and middle age groups).

Nevertheless, as we consider different dimensions of policy preferences, there are reasons to believe that congruence between parties and electorates varies across dimensions. As Jacoby (1994) pointed out, individuals sustain coherent opinions toward public spending in social programs according to their preferences regarding freedom and equality because the political debate about distributive policies is driven mainly by ideology. This causes a framing effect, according to which, left-wing parties focus on the distributive impact of public spending, whereas conservative and liberal parties focus on the negative impact of public spending on taxes. Therefore, given the different salience of these dimension for different parties, we can expect that congruence will be higher for the most relevant dimension for each party.

H2: The congruence between parties and their electorates will vary across dimensions of social policy due to a framing effect. Congruence in preferences for taxes will be higher for liberal and conservative parties, whereas congruence in preferences for spending will be higher for social-democrat parties.

Finally, from the previous discussion, we can derive two alternative hypotheses regarding representatives' preferences for social policies. If lack of accountability leads representatives to have low incentives to follow the interests of their electorates, we should expect that MPs preferences are determined mostly by their personal interests. On the contrary, if representatives are held accountable by their voters, we can predict that they will not deviate from the preferences of the social groups they represent. These contradictory expectations are summarized in the following alternative hypotheses.

H3a: Preferences for social policies of representatives will be determined mostly by their social origin.

H3b: *Preferences for social policies of representatives will be determined mostly by their party affiliation.*

3. Data and Methods

Data and Variables

Since comparative data on preferences of citizens and political elites are unusual, we designed a new survey instrument granting comparison of both political actors. Our data come from two surveys that were conducted during the same period of time in Spain: a survey to MPs in national and regional Parliaments and a survey to the Spanish population. Since both surveys were part of a common research project we were able to measure citizens and representatives preferences using identical questions in order to avoid wording problems highlighted by Achen (1978). Furthermore, we need to operationalize the concept of political elites in order to determine our sampling procedure, which posits two main problems. Firstly, the concept of political elites is not very precisely defined in the literature and, secondly, the population of politicians (including professional politicians and amateurs) is too broad in a country with different levels of government, where there are many bodies of political representation. Following Putnam (1976:14), we decided to use a positional method and understood that political elites are composed by individuals holding seats in representative bodies both at the national (Congreso and Senado) and regional levels (regional assemblies). This gives a political elite composed by a few thousands of individuals virtually including all the relevant members of party elites.

The MPs survey was carried out face-to-face during 2009-2011 to a representative sample of members of 19 parliaments, including Congress, Senate and the 17 regional assemblies.¹ MPs were selected into a sample on the basis of sex, party and territory quotas so as to have the same distribution than the total population of Spanish MPs. The effective sample size was 580 subjects, which involves a margin of error of 5% for a confidence interval of 95%. The citizens survey was carried out also face-to-face during January 2012 over a representative sample of the adult population (aged 18 and over) in Spain. A probabilistic polietapic sampling design stratified by region and municipality size was used. Municipalities within each stratum were selected randomly with a probability proportional to their size. Households within each municipality were chosen using random walks, and the selection of the interviewee in each home was made in accordance with gender and age quotas to assure that the sample was representative of the demographic structure of the surveyed population. The effective sample size was 2,478, which involves a margin of error of 2% for a confidence interval of 95%.

Methods and Congruence Measures

We operationalize congruence using two different approaches usually found in the literature (Bernauer et al., 2013; Rosset et al., 2013): the congruence between citizens and representatives, and the congruence between citizens and MPs of the party they voted. In the analysis of congruence by party choice, we restrict the analysis to the two major parties in Spain: the Popular Party (PP) and the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE)². Following Golder and Stramski

¹ The fieldwork for both surveys was carried out by the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS) (2009; 2012) in cooperation with the research group DASP (Democracy and Autonomies: Society and Politics)

² PP is the largest conservative party in Spain and the ruling party since 2011. PSOE is a social-democrat party and the largest leftist party up to date. The share of vote of the two parties adds up to 73.35% in the last election.

(2010), we use two different measures of congruence between citizens and representatives. The first one is called the many-to-one relationship in which congruence is computed as the absolute citizen congruence. Using that measure, “congruence is high when the average absolute distance between the citizens and the representative is small” (Golder and Stramski, 2010: 93). Formally, it can be defined as:

$$= \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N |c_i - R| \quad (1)$$

where N is the number of citizens, c_i is the preference of the i th citizen and R is the average position of representatives (either the full body of representatives or the representatives of a particular party). The second measure we use is called the many-to-many relationship and it is intended to capture the differences between citizens and representatives using information about the complete distribution of preferences. In that sense, “congruence is high when the distribution of citizen and representative preferences are similar” (Golder and Stramski, 2010: 93). Formally, it can be defined as:

$$= \sum_x |F_c(x) - F_r(x)| \quad (2)$$

where $F_c(x)$ and $F_r(x)$ are the cumulative distribution functions (CDFs) for citizens and representatives preferences. In our multivariate analysis we use the many-to-one relationship to estimate the distances between citizens and the average representatives in order to analyze the factors explaining why the preferences of some voters are better represented than others. Thus, in the models discussed in the next section, the dependent variables measure the absolute distance

between the voter and the average representative as defined in Equation 1. We compute three dependent variables (absolute distances), one for each dimension of social policy: preferences for redistribution, preferences for lower taxes and preferences for expenditure. Preference for redistribution is measured by agreement with the statement “The government should take measures to reduce differences in income levels”. Preference for lower taxes is measured by agreement with the statement “It is better to reduce taxes, even if it means to spend less on social benefits and public services”. The response scale for both items range from 1 (“Disagree strongly”) to 5 (“Agree strongly”). The distance in preferences for expenditure is computed as the average distance for all of the following items of public expenditure: environment, health, law enforcement, education, defense, pensions and unemployment benefits³. For each item, the respondents were asked to rate whether the government should spend “much less” (1), “less” (2), “the same as now” (3), “more” (4) or “much more” (5).

The explanatory variables include socio-demographic characteristics that are expected to have an impact on the representativeness of preferences. In other words, these variables identify groups with different levels of political empowerment: gender, age, education level, socio-economic status, and labor market status. Education distinguishes between primary education or less, secondary education, and University. As we do not have information about income, socio-economic status is measured by the International Socio-Economic Index of Occupational Status (ISEI) scores proposed by Ganzeboom and Treiman (1996), which is computed using a causal model that links occupational status, education and income, controlling for age. Labor market

³ We decided to include all the items of expenditure for which we have information for both citizens and representatives, although not all of them are connected to social policy. The reason why was to include as much information as possible regarding preferences for public expenditure. Nevertheless, we estimate additional models in which the dependent variable was the average of the distances in social expenditure only: health, education, pensions and unemployment benefits. Results were in line with the models we present in the next section. For the sake of brevity, these models are not reported here but they are available upon request to the authors.

status is measured by a dichotomous variable for those who are unemployed. A descriptive analysis of these variables is reported in Table 1.

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

4. Congruence in Preferences for Social Policies

It is useful to begin with a descriptive analysis of the distribution of preferences among citizens and representatives. In Table 2 we report the averages and standard deviations of preferences for citizens and representatives in two different dimensions of social policy: preferences for redistribution and preferences for lower taxes. As a benchmark comparison, we also report political preferences over a ten-points left-right scale. The row overall refers to the whole samples of citizens and representatives whereas the rows PP and PSOE refers to voters and representatives of these parties. Distances between citizens and representatives are relatively small, especially in the case of preferences for redistribution. Both citizens and representatives are highly supportive of redistribution, although citizens score on average 0.25 higher than representatives. That amounts to a distances of 5% of the range of the five-points scale. The distance is higher in the case of preferences for taxes, in which citizens' support for lower taxes is 0.78 higher than representatives' support. There are important differences between the two parties. In terms of preferences for redistribution, it seems that voters and MPs are closer in the PSOE than in the PP. Contrary, in what lowering taxes is concerned, PP voters and MPS seem closer while PSOE voters and MPs appear furthered away.

[TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

Another important finding reported in Table 2 is that the dispersion of preferences (as measured by their standard deviation) is higher for representatives than for citizens (except for the case of preference for lower taxes for PSOE). That means that the composition of parties reflects a great deal of variation in preferences. Furthermore, the polarization of preferences between representatives is higher than between voters, which is consistent with McAllister (1991) findings for the Australian case. To have a better understanding of the relationship between citizens and representatives distributions of preferences we turn now to the many-to-many measure of congruence. In Figure 2 we plot the distribution of preferences for the two dimensions of social policy. The right-side plots show that the distribution of preferences for redistribution of citizens and representatives are quite similar, especially in the case of PSOE, in which the distribution of voters and representatives are almost indistinguishable. In the case of preferences for taxes, differences between citizens and representatives are bigger, especially in the case of PSOE because their MPs are much less in favor of reducing taxes than their voters.

[FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE]

The next important question is whether preferences of some particular groups of citizens are better represented in the political process either by the whole sample of representatives or by their party choice. To that effect, in Table 3 we report a series of OLS regressions in which the dependent variable is the distance between the individual citizen and the average representative in three dimensions of social policy (redistribution, lower taxes and public expenditure). The

evidence presented in this Table tries to answer two related questions. In Models 1-3 we analyze whether there are some groups in society whose preferences are better represented by the political elite. In Models 4-6 we focus on the representation of preferences by parties and analyze whether parties over-represent the preferences of any particular group among their voters. Therefore, we focus here only on citizens for whom we have information about their party choice. Moreover, Models 4-6 test whether there is a framing effect, according to which preferences for different dimensions of social policy are not equally represented by every party. Thus, in those Models we include party choice as an explanatory variable. Following this logic, in Models 1-3 distances are computed over the whole sample of political representatives. The explanatory variables include gender, age, education level, ISEI and unemployment. In Models 4-6 distances are computed over the representatives of the party choice and we add party choice as an explanatory variable in order to know which party is closer to their voters in each dimension. Models presented in Table 3 show that the influence of socio-demographic variables have a rather limited influence on congruence in preferences for social policies in Spain.

[TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

Gender does not seem to affect the quality of representation of preferences for social policies, although Bernauer et al. (2013) findings indicate that ideological preferences of women are less represented in the political process. Age has an inverted U-shaped relationship with preferences for redistribution (Model 1), as the coefficient for age is positive and highly significant and the coefficient for age squared is negative and highly significant too, but only in the case of overall distances. Thus, contrary to what was expected, the distance between citizens

and representatives is bigger for middle-age individuals than for the young and the elderly. It is worth noting that both the young and the elderly are more willing to support redistribution than any other age group (Alesina and Guiliano, 2011; Busemeyer, 2013), because they typically have lower incomes and are more likely to be in a vulnerable position. Thus, this finding means that the average representative is more supportive of redistribution than those who are at the top of their professional careers. A possible explanation for the low distances between the average representative and the elderly is in line with the theory of the ‘elderly power’, according to which, the aging process creates a demand for more redistribution (proportional to the increase in the number of potential beneficiaries) (Galasso and Profeta, 2007). And as the elderly constitute a highly visible group characterized by high levels of electoral participation, parties are expected to pay careful attention to the preferences of this group (Tepe and Vanhuysse, 2009).

The effect of education is consistent with what was expected, but only in the case of preferences for lower taxes (Model 2). The distances with the average representative are lower for those who have secondary education or college degree than for those who have primary education or less. The preferences for taxes of highly educated individuals are better represented in the political process, which is consistent with the higher electoral participation and higher internal political efficacy of these groups (Brady et al., 1995). In sharp contrast, socio-economic status (as measured by ISEI scores) has a significant but positive effect in the case of preferences for public expenditure (Model 3) and, to a lesser extent, redistribution (Model 1) (the latter was only significant at $p < 0.10$). It means that preferences of high status individuals are represented worse than those of low status individuals by the average representative, which is in contradiction with what we should expect from the literature on political participation. Finally,

preferences of the unemployed are poorly represented by the average representative, which is consistent with expectations (Owens and Pedulla, 2014), but only in the case of taxes.

Estimates from Models 4-6 are in line with findings reported by Models 1-3, regarding the representation of preferences of specific groups of voters by parties. Preferences for taxes of the well-educated and those who have a job are better represented than preferences of the low-educated and unemployed (Model 5), while preferences for expenditure of the low statuses are better represented than preferences of the high statuses (Model 6). However, age and ISEI scores become insignificant in the distance in preferences for redistribution (Model 4). All in all, we can conclude that evidence reported in Table 3 is not supportive of H1 insofar that there are not privileged groups, in terms of their political power or potential influence, whose preferences are systematically better represented than others. Nevertheless, unemployed and low educated are poorly represented in the dimension of taxes. Even in the latter case, a qualification must be made. It is possible that differences in representation of preferences for taxes do not reflect a bias against the interest of low-educated citizens (which would be reflected eventually in the effect of ISEI scores as well), but a difference in cognitive abilities. Highly educated individuals and representatives (who are typically high-educated too) might be more aware than the low-educated of the effects of reducing taxes on public expenditure. For this reason, they might be less willing to support tax-cuts and congruence with representatives might be higher. Supporting that, in the survey of citizens, education has a negative and significant effect on preferences for lower taxes after controlling for the other relevant variables (gender, age, socio-economic status and labor market status).

Another important finding appears in Models 4-6. The effect of party choice on distances between voters and parties is highly significant. Since PP is the reference category in all the

models, the negative effect for PSOE means that the distance between PSOE representatives and their voters is lower than the distance between PP representatives and their voters in preferences for redistribution (Model 4) and preferences for public expenditure (Model 6). At the same time, the distance between PP representatives and their voters is lower in the case of preferences for lower taxes (Model 5). This finding is highly robust to different econometric specifications and strongly supports the framing effect predicted by H2. This indicates that parties try to concentrate preference representation in issues highly salient for their electorates while, at the same time, they reinforce the framing effect by means of the way they frame public policy alternatives to public opinion. In the case of Spain, the differences between PP and PSOE in political discourse on welfare policies follow these lines, as PP's discourse usually focus on tax effects of policies and PSOE's discourse is more oriented to welfare policies and redistributive consequences.

Several robustness checks has been done in order to assert the validity of the result presented so far. The main potential concern has to do with the way we measure political preferences of the political elite, as the average preference of representatives might not reflect properly the position of parties and political elite broadly speaking. This is because, given the different levels of government included and the hierarchies within the political parties, members of the political elite might differ broadly in terms of their political power and influence. For this reason, we estimated all the models presented in Table 3 using alternative measures of party and political elite preferences to compute distances. First, in order to restrict the composition of the political elite to the key players, we compute distances using a more restricted definition of the political elite in which we only include members of Congreso and Senado. Secondly, since political groups are organized hierarchically, we compute a weighted average of preferences in

which the weight of each MP's preference is determined by his/her position in the parliamentary group⁴. Finally, according to the median-voter approach, one might argue that the average do not truly reflect party preferences and, thus, we compute an alternative measure of distances based upon the median instead of the average preference. However, after re-estimating the models using these alternative measures results do not differ substantially from those reported in Table 3.

A second potential concern regarding the findings reported in Models 4-6 is the fact that parties might differ in the way they represent different social groups. That is, some parties might under-represent one particular, while other parties might over-represent it, which would lead eventually to heteroskedasticity issues. Moreover, if that is the case, we would expect to estimate different coefficients for different parties. For this reason, we run the White (1980) and Breusch-Pagan (1979) tests of heteroskedasticity, which do not allow to reject the null hypothesis of constant variance across groups for any of the models discussed. Therefore, pooling the data for different parties seems to be a more suitable econometric strategy, which, in addition, is the most common in the literature (Bernauer et al., 2013). In addition, we estimate additional models in which we add interaction terms between party choice and the other explanatory variables but none of them turn out to be significant.

5. Explaining Representatives' Preferences for Social Policies

The empirical evidence presented in the previous section supports the idea that the representation of preferences in the political process in Spain is not highly biased against

⁴ Position in the parliamentary group is measured by a question in the MPs survey in which respondents were asked to assess their political influence within the group on a ten-points scale.

political disadvantaged groups (i. e. women, low socio-economic statuses, the young and the elderly). However, as the recruitment of political elite over-represent the political and economic advantages groups, it could be the case that preferences are still biased if representatives' preferences are determined by their own self-interest, as predicted by H3a. Conversely, if representatives were truly committed to pursue the agenda of their voters, their preferences will be independent from their social origins and they will have similar preferences to the groups that support their party, as predicted by the alternative hypothesis H3b. To find out which hypothesis is more accurate in the case of Spain, in this section we will analyze the factors determining preferences for social policies among the sample of MPs. Results are reported in Table 4.

We consider two dependent variables (preferences for redistribution and preferences for lower taxes) and we estimate three different models for each dependent variable. Since the responses for the dependent variables are ordinal, we estimate the effect of each predictor using ordinal logistic regressions. In Models 1 and 4 we estimate the effect of socio-demographic traits on preferences for redistribution. We consider the following explanatory variables widely used in the literature on public opinion and redistribution (Alesina and Giuliano, 2011): gender, age, education, social origin and religiosity (Stegmueller, 2013). Age is measured by cohorts: born before 1959 (the reference category), born between 1959 and 1973 and born after 1973. Social origin is measured by the father's occupation, as it is done in studies of social mobility (Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992). Given the distribution of occupations (where high-status occupations are overrepresented), we distinguish between managers (the reference category), professionals, lower grade professionals, and others. We decided to use father occupations because a relevant fraction of MPs either have no previous occupation or left this occupation a long time ago. Thus, we think that father occupation capture better the social milieu from which the MP is extracted.

Nevertheless, as an additional control, we include a dichotomous variable for those who have a job before entering politics. Religiosity distinguish between observant catholic (the reference category), non-observant catholic and agnostic or atheist⁵.

In Models 2 and 5 we add party as an explanatory factor (PP is the reference category) in order to test whether differences in preferences are explained by the ideological principles of the party, as predicted by H3b. Furthermore, we include an additional control that distinguish between MP in regional assemblies and Congreso-Senado (the reference category), since in Spain social policy choices are made both at the national and regional level. Finally, in Models 3 and 6 we add interaction terms between party and the variable commitment to ideological principles.⁶ These interaction terms test the hypothesis that those MPs who are more committed to their ideological principles would have more extreme preferences than their party fellows. In contrast, those who give less importance to ideology are expected to have less extreme preferences.

[TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE]

Results reported in Table 4 clearly indicates that the socio-demographic traits of the MPs have no impact of their attitudes toward redistribution and taxation. Neither gender, age, education nor social origin has a significant impact on preferences for redistribution or lower taxes. This is at odds with the literature on preferences for redistribution (Alesina and Giuliano,

⁵ There were four member of other confessions in our sample of representatives, which cannot be included in any of the previous categories. For the purposes of the models presented in Table 4 they were discarded from the analysis. However, this has no effect on the estimated coefficients for any other variable in the models.

⁶ This variable is measured by the agreement with the statement “when negotiating agreements or making decisions, the important thing is that the politician sticks to his/her ideology” as opposed to “when negotiating agreements or making decisions, the important thing is to get good solutions, even if it means to deviate from his/her ideology” (the reference category).

2011; Busemeyer, 2013; Owens and Pedulla, 2014) and taxation (Jaime-Castillo and Sáez-Lozano, 2014), which has reported consistently that deprived groups are more supportive of redistributive policies. The only individual variable that has a significant effect on preferences is religiosity and the direction of the estimates is in line with previous findings (Stegmueller, 2013). Agnostics and atheists as well as non-observant catholic MPs are less willing to support lower taxes than observant catholic MPs, even after controlling for party in Models 5 and 6, although the size of the coefficients reduces to roughly a half with respect to Model 4. At the same time, agnostics and atheists are more supportive of redistribution in Model 1, but the effect of this variable almost vanishes after controlling for party in Models 2 and 3. That suggests that the effect of religiosity is mostly a compositional effect, since there are more religious MPs in PP than in PSOE.

In sharp contrast, the effect of party is highly significant and robust to different econometric specifications. PSOE representatives and members of other parties are consistently more supportive of redistribution than PP representatives, whereas the latter ones are more supportive of tax cuts. Furthermore, this is consistent with the distribution of preferences among the electorate, since supporters of PSOE are more in favor of redistribution than supporters of PP and the opposite occurs in the case of preferences for lower taxes. We do not find, however, a significant effect of the interaction between party and commitment to ideological principles. That means that preferences are equally distributed among different levels of ideological entrenchment. All in all, these findings strongly support the alternative hypothesis H3b, according to which MPs preferences are somehow isolated from MPs social origin or background, and suggest that representatives are committed to pursue the agenda of the social groups supporting them.

6. Conclusions

Representative democracy is based upon the idea that representatives' preferences are dependent on to their voters' preferences. At the same time, however, the literature on political congruence has shown that the distribution of preferences within Parliaments differs from the distribution of preferences within citizens (Bernauer, 2013). Several institutional and socio-economic factors explaining the differences in the quality of representation have been found: electoral system proportionality (Blais and Bodet, 2006; Golder and Stramski, 2010; Powell, 2006; 2009) or the level of inequality (Rosset, 2013). Here we have focused on the analysis of congruence in the specific domain of preferences for social policies in one case-study (Spain) considering three dimensions: preferences for redistribution, taxation and public expenditure. Drawing on the literature of political congruence and the literature on redistribution, we tried to shed some light on the following puzzle: why a highly pro-redistributive polity does not translate into higher levels of redistribution. More specifically, we asked whether this is the consequence of a pro-rich bias in the representation of preferences for social policies and whether this is due to the social extraction of representatives, in which privileged backgrounds are overrepresented.

Our empirical findings suggest a negative answer to both questions. First, there is a high degree of congruence in political preferences between citizens and representatives. Secondly, although the preferences of the well-educated groups are better represented in the case of preferences for taxation, it cannot be argued that there is a pro-rich bias in representatives' preferences, as previously found by Rosset et al. (2013). Thirdly, there is a framing effect explaining the differences in congruence between parties and their electorates. The leftist party is

closer to its electorate in preferences for redistribution, whereas the conservative party is closer to its electorate in preferences for taxes. Finally, representatives' preferences are independent from their social origin, which is in line with the high degree of political congruence. Findings suggest that party composition reflects accurately the distribution of preferences within the electorate, regardless of the social extraction of MPs.

The contribution of the paper has been twofold. Departing from previous studies on political congruence that analyzed congruence in ideological preferences we focused on a specific domain and measured congruence in three different dimensions. This allows us to study differences in congruence by parties across dimensions, which have led to identify a framing effect that has not been addressed in the literature. Secondly, our measure of representatives' preferences comes from a survey to MPs instead of relying on experts' assessments as it is common in the literature. This limits the scope of the analysis to one case-study due to the scarcity of comparative data, but it provides a more accurate measure of preferences as well as a more fine grained analysis of the distribution of preferences among representatives.

Finally, our findings have clear implications for representative democracy in the context of the economic and political crisis that is affecting Southern Europe. Contrary to common wisdom, preferences for social policies seem to be well represented by parties in Parliaments. This leaves the initial puzzle open for further research, as the distribution of preferences within representatives do not explain why policy outcomes do not adapt to the preferences of public opinion. One might argue that representatives' answers about preferences for social policies might be driven by social desirability but this could not explain entirely the congruence between parties and their electorates. Another possible explanation for the puzzle would be that parties' preferences cannot be easily translated into policies depending on the political and economic

context. Further research should address the relationship between representatives' preferences and policy outcomes. Moreover, from the perspective of the literature on political congruence, it would be important to analyze congruence in other specific realms of political preferences to find out whether there are common patterns across domains. In addition, comparative research should promote availability of comparable data to understand the factors explaining the differences in congruence in specific areas of political preferences.

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TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Distance redistribution (overall)	0.673	0.632	0.055	2.945
Distance lower taxes (overall)	1.011	0.906	0.072	3.072
Distance expenditure (overall)	0.660	0.269	0.088	2.602
Distance redistribution (by party)	0.768	0.566	0.130	3.870
Distance lower taxes (by party)	1.140	0.838	0.091	3.773
Distance expenditure (by party)	0.660	0.272	0.060	2.238
Female	0.512	0.500	0	1
Age	47.261	17.713	18	92
Education				
Primary	0.253	0.435	0	1
Secondary	0.537	0.499	0	1
University	0.211	0.408	0	1
ISEI	36.835	14.011	16	83
Unemployed	0.234	0.423	0	1
Vote				
PP	0.404	0.491	0	1
PSOE	0.319	0.466	0	1
Other	0.276	0.447	0	1

Source: CIS (Studies 2827 and 2930).

Table 2: Preferences for redistribution and taxes. Citizens and representatives

		Citizens		Representatives	
		Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Redistribution	Overall	4.19	0.89	3.94	1.14
	PP	4.02	0.97	3.53	1.27
	PSOE	4.32	0.77	4.23	0.89
Lower taxes	Overall	2.71	1.11	1.93	1.18
	PP	2.85	1.07	2.54	1.27
	PSOE	2.68	1.16	1.40	0.80
Ideology	Overall	4.81	1.92	4.49	1.50
	PP	6.55	1.59	5.88	0.85
	PSOE	3.70	1.27	3.52	0.82

Source: CIS (Studies 2827 and 2930).

Table 3: Distances in preferences for social policies. OLS

	Overall distances			Distances by party choice		
	(1) Redistribution	(2) Taxes	(3) Expenditure	(4) Redistribution	(5) Taxes	(6) Expenditure
Female	-0.028 (0.041)	-0.067 (0.063)	-0.009 (0.018)	0.003 (0.049)	-0.073 (0.076)	0.001 (0.025)
Age	0.019*** (0.007)	0.006 (0.010)	-0.002 (0.003)	0.010 (0.008)	0.003 (0.013)	-0.001 (0.004)
Age ²	<-0.001*** (0.000)	<-0.001 (0.000)	<-0.001 (0.000)	<-0.001 (0.000)	<-0.001 (0.000)	<-0.001 (0.000)
Education (ref. cat. Primary or less)						
Secondary	-0.015 (0.060)	-0.322*** (0.091)	0.019 (0.027)	0.029 (0.075)	-0.414*** (0.114)	0.028 (0.038)
University	-0.053 (0.087)	-0.492*** (0.133)	-0.029 (0.039)	-0.024 (0.106)	-0.546*** (0.163)	-0.087 (0.054)
ISEI	0.003* (0.002)	-0.001 (0.003)	0.002** (0.001)	<0.001 (0.002)	0.001 (0.003)	0.003** (0.001)
Unemployed	0.068 (0.050)	0.169** (0.076)	0.029 (0.022)	-0.023 (0.061)	0.228** (0.093)	0.033 (0.031)
Vote (ref. cat. PP)						
PSOE				-0.326*** (0.053)	0.499*** (0.082)	-0.077*** (0.027)
Other parties				-0.316*** (0.070)	0.241** (0.108)	0.013 (0.036)
Constant	0.125 (0.172)	1.344*** (0.264)	0.656*** (0.077)	0.738*** (0.218)	1.421*** (0.335)	0.643*** (0.111)
Observations	937	898	955	530	522	541
R ²	0.015	0.036	0.015	0.085	0.116	0.046

Notes: ***, **, and * indicate significance level at 1%, 5%, and 10%, respectively. Standard errors in brackets. Source: CIS (Studies 2827 and 2930).

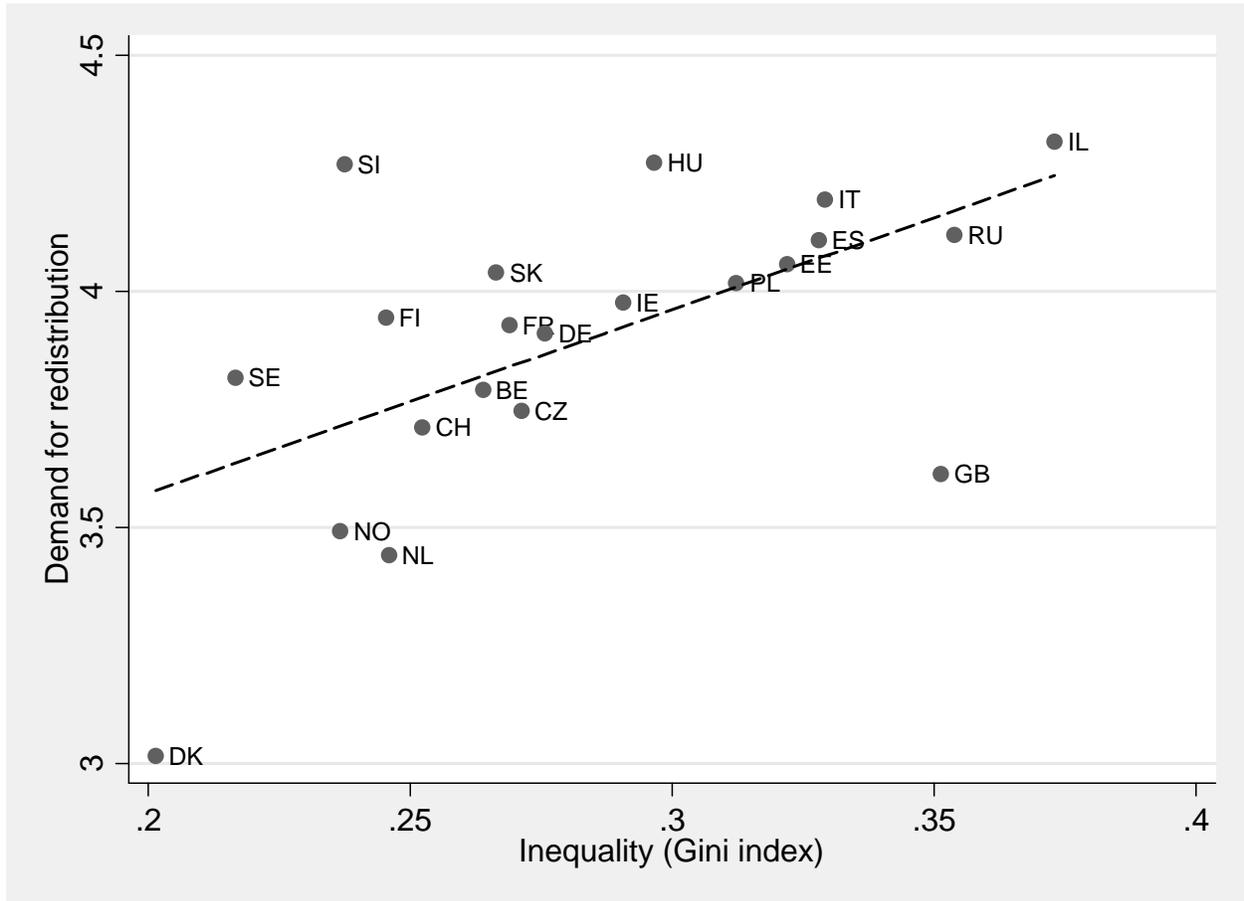
Table 4: Determinants of representatives' preferences for social policies. Ordinal logits

	Redistribution			Lower taxes		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Female	0.180 (0.173)	0.181 (0.177)	0.171 (0.180)	-0.352* (0.185)	-0.247 (0.190)	-0.294 (0.195)
Cohort (ref. cat. Born before 1959)						
Born 1959-1973	0.117 (0.178)	0.088 (0.181)	0.048 (0.185)	-0.153 (0.192)	-0.255 (0.198)	-0.257 (0.202)
Born after 1973	0.359 (0.291)	0.357 (0.294)	0.315 (0.296)	-0.045 (0.297)	-0.232 (0.307)	-0.222 (0.313)
College degree	0.198 (0.263)	0.136 (0.267)	0.107 (0.273)	-0.454 (0.276)	-0.538* (0.283)	-0.474 (0.289)
Had a job before politics	0.227 (0.321)	0.185 (0.325)	0.179 (0.326)	0.461 (0.352)	0.545 (0.362)	0.524 (0.366)
Father occupation (ref. cat. Managers)						
Professionals	0.050 (0.260)	0.077 (0.262)	0.133 (0.268)	0.393 (0.281)	0.367 (0.285)	0.393 (0.290)
Lower professionals	0.217 (0.315)	0.100 (0.320)	0.081 (0.323)	-0.192 (0.339)	-0.127 (0.348)	-0.103 (0.354)
Other occupations	0.130 (0.226)	0.089 (0.229)	0.125 (0.233)	-0.090 (0.241)	-0.041 (0.248)	-0.041 (0.253)
Religion (ref. cat. Observant catholic)						
Catholic (non-observant)	0.325 (0.217)	0.052 (0.231)	-0.018 (0.236)	-0.909*** (0.228)	-0.490** (0.241)	-0.481** (0.246)
Agnostic or atheist	1.106*** (0.218)	0.494* (0.279)	0.434 (0.284)	-2.303*** (0.247)	-1.340*** (0.300)	-1.317*** (0.305)
Regional Parliament		0.092 (0.206)	0.068 (0.212)		0.248 (0.233)	0.306 (0.240)
Party (ref. cat. PP)						
PSOE		0.748*** (0.248)	0.657** (0.269)		-1.567*** (0.270)	-1.658*** (0.298)
Other parties		1.077*** (0.264)	0.908*** (0.294)		-0.699*** (0.263)	-0.635** (0.295)
Commitment to principles			-0.330 (0.342)			0.123 (0.362)
Commitment*PSOE			0.441 (0.459)			0.133 (0.516)
Commitment*Other			0.466 (0.543)			-0.225 (0.556)

μ_1	-1.920*** (0.497)	-1.865*** (0.523)	-1.992*** (0.530)	-1.597*** (0.504)	-1.646*** (0.543)	-1.545*** (0.551)
μ_2	-0.536 (0.470)	-0.461 (0.498)	-0.613 (0.505)	0.145 (0.495)	0.214 (0.532)	0.326 (0.540)
μ_3	-0.138 (0.467)	-0.055 (0.496)	-0.197 (0.503)	0.605 (0.495)	0.689 (0.532)	0.802 (0.541)
μ_4	1.788*** (0.473)	1.923*** (0.503)	1.773*** (0.509)	1.960*** (0.520)	2.065*** (0.556)	2.182*** (0.565)
Observations	511	511	492	488	488	469
Log-likelihood	-641.26	-632.34	-614.23	-560.36	-542.01	-520.04

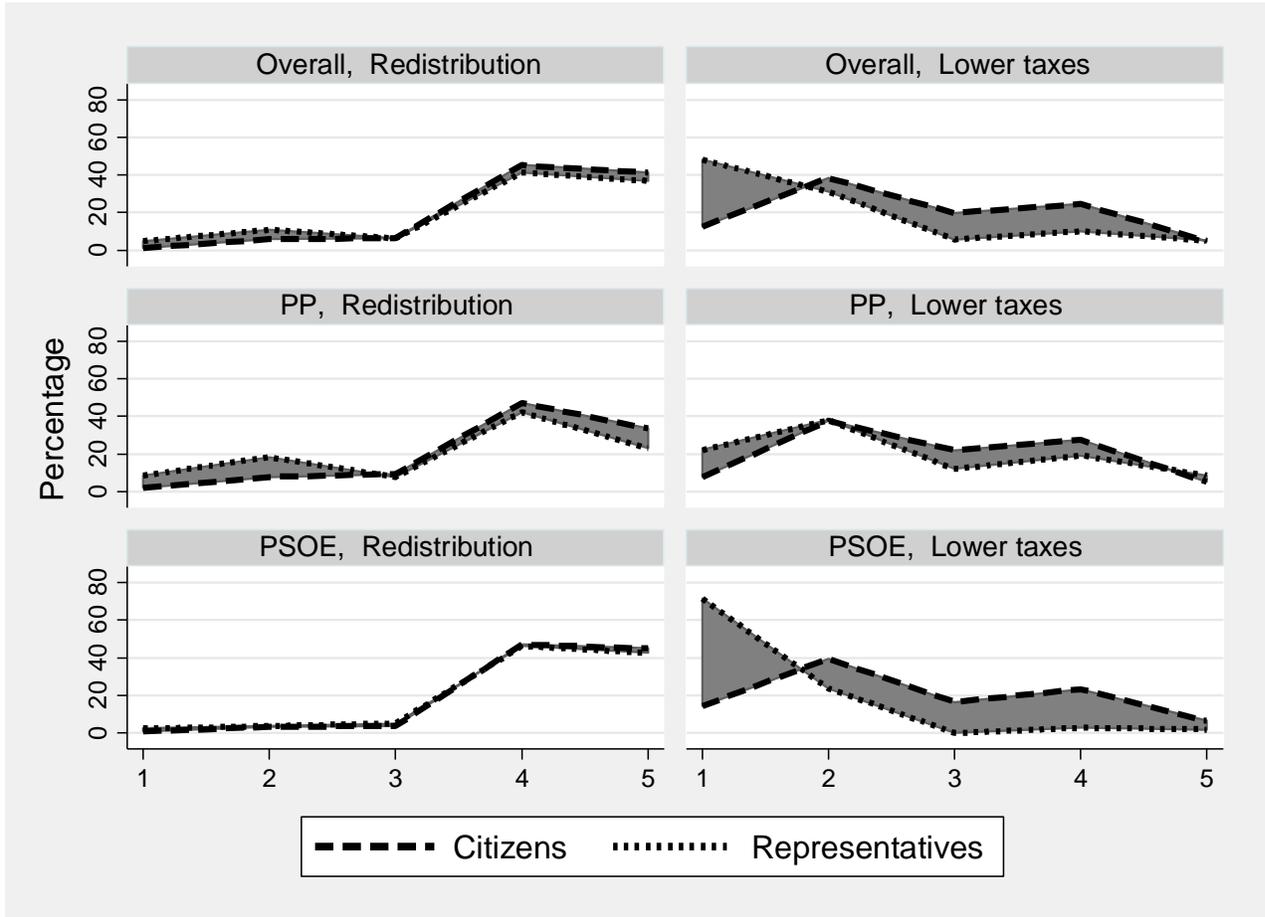
Notes: ***, **, and * indicate significance level at 1%, 5%, and 10%, respectively. Standard errors in brackets.
Source: CIS (Study 2827).

Figure 1: Inequality and demand for redistribution in a sample of European countries



Notes: Demand for redistribution is measured as the country average (the scale ranges from 1 to 5). Inequality is measured by the Gini index after taxes and transfers. Gini index is computed for the population between 29 and 59 years, as proposed by Bradley et al. (2003). Source: LIS (2014) and ESS (2012).

Figure 2: Distribution of preferences for citizens and representatives



Notes: Total refers to the whole samples of citizens and representatives, while plots for each party refers to voters and representatives of each party.
 Source: CIS (Studies 2827 and 2930).