XIII SEMINARIO DE INVESTIGACIÓN

UAM
UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA
DE MADRID

Máster en Democracia y Gobierno

Departamento de Ciencia Política y Relaciones Internacionales

Universidad Autónoma de Madrid

Working Papers Online Series

Estudio/Working Paper 184/2017

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

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Abstract

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

1. Introduction

According to Meltzer and Richard (1981), democracy is expected to produce redistribution from the rich to the poor, since the median voter is poorer than the average income. However, empirical studies have found only mixed support for the median voter hypothesis (Dallinger, 2010; Finseraas, 2008; Lübker, 2007; Moene and Wallerstein, 2003). To understand this puzzle, it is worth noting that the model assumes that, in democracies, the preferences of the median voter translate into policies automatically (Lübker, 2007). However, this assumption is highly problematic due to the pervasive agency problems in representative democracy. In practical terms, the model assumes that parties do not over(under)-represent the preferences of some particular social groups and ignores the fact that socio-economic status is a powerful driver of political participation (Brady, Verba and Schlozman, 1995; Lijphart, 1997). Yet, empirical evidence confirms that the pivotal voter is richer than the median in the income distribution (Larcinese, 2007) and, thus, parties have incentives to pay closer attention to the preferences of high income groups. Moreover, since the social extraction of politicians typically over-represents high socio-economic status, we can expect that representatives' preferences for redistribution will be biased against low socio-economic statuses (Bernauer, Giger and Rosset, 2015).

In this paper we 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 MPs 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, Giger and Rosset, 2015; Golder and Stramski, 2010; Rosset, Giger and Bernauer, 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).

We focus on the case of Spain, since Spanish public opinion is persistently supportive of redistribution (Calzada and Del Pino, 2011; Fernández-Albertos and Manzano, 2012) but, at the same time, actual levels of redistribution are quite low within the European context (Beramendi, 2007). 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 paper is organized as follows. Next section presents the theoretical foundations of the paper garnering insights from two strands of literature: research on political congruence and studies on preferences for social policies. Next, we present our data and variables for the Spanish case. 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 (Birch, 1971; Miller and Stokes, 1963; Pitkin, 1967). As Dahl (1971: 1) argued "a key characteristic of a democracy is the continued responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens, considered as political equals", and the more reasonable justification of democracy is that citizens can induce the government to do what they want (Dahl, 1989). Furthermore, in line with the median voter approach (Downs, 1957), candidates are expected to converge to the preference of the median voter (Nordin, 2014). Overall, theoretical expectations have been supported by empirical studies within the responsible-party model (Miller and Stokes, 1963; Powell, 2004), through the comparison between constituencies' preferences and legislators' behavior. Along these lines, Dalton (1985: 293) concluded that "in overall terms, there is substantial agreement between policy views of the Western European public and party elites" and Thomassen and Schmitt (1997) reached very similar conclusions a decade later in their analysis of party-linkages between citizens and candidates for the European Parliament. According to this account, congruence is explained by electoral accountability, which produces an interactive linkage between voters and parties: 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 (Dalton, 1985). Nevertheless, following a 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.

According to the responsible-party model, it is difficult to explain why public opinion is persistently highly supportive of redistribution in some countries but policy outcomes do not always produce high levels of redistribution (Weakliem, Andersen and Heath, 2005). This posits the question of why preferences for redistributive policies do not translate into policy outcomes. One possible explanation is that citizens' preferences are not well represented in the political process, as politicians might be less supportive of redistribution than their electorates. As Kitschelt (2000: 873) point out, democratic politicians can resist redistributive pressures from the electorate by "building clientelist citizen-elite linkages". A related question is whether representation of preferences is biased toward some particular groups. For Enns and Wlezien (2011), unequal representation is an inevitable outcome when preferences vary across groups, since one position has to win at the expense of others. In this vein, most empirical works on unequal representation, mostly focused on the US case, support the idea that economic inequality translates into political inequality (Bartels, 2006; 2008; Gilens, 2005; 2009; 2012; Hacker and Pierson, 2010; Jacobs and Page, 2005; Schlozman, Verba and Brady 2012).[1] However, Soroka and Wlezien (2008) cast some doubts about the big conclusions derived from little empirical evidence and Ura and Ellis (2008) show that preferences of all income levels are highly correlated, so the potential for unequal representation would be small. Even more surprisingly, Kelly and Enns (2010) conclude that economic inequality is self-reinforcing not because a bias in representation, but because both the rich and the poor become more conservative as inequality increases.

All in all, there are reasons to believe that not every group has the same chances to be heard in the political process. In the first place, empirical evidence shows that political participation correlates with socio-economic status (Brady, Verba and Schlozman, 1995; Lijphart, 1997) and, therefore, political parties might have lower incentives to represent the preferences of low status groups. On the other hand, political legislators might be "captured" by interest groups (Peltzman, 1976), as we can expect that only well-organized groups are able to provide the kind of selective incentives needed for

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[1] See, however, Bhatti and Erikson (2011) and Brunner, Ross and Washington (2013) who find no empirical support for such a claim. See also Matsusaka (2001) for a critical review of methodological issues raised by this approach.

collective action (Olson, 1965)[2]. Indeed, the literature on interest groups has shown that they can affect policy choices by different means: acting on the agenda setting (Kollman, 1998), providing relevant information to legislators (Burstein and Hirsh, 2007), and funding political campaigns (Wright 2003). Finally, politicians might be more responsive to the demands of the affluent individuals as they use to share social milieus (Jacobs and Skocpol, 2005).

Even if parties do not collide with special interest groups, social extraction of politicians over-represents high-status groups (Best and Cotta, 2000; Mansbridge, 1999) and this might have an impact on representatives' preferences, since redistributive preferences depend on individual economic position (Meltzer and Richard, 1981). A longstanding scholarship in political sociology argues that preferences for redistribution are shaped by socio-economic status, since people belonging to the same social stratum are supposed to share common interests, 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, women (Svallfors, 1997), the unemployed (Owens and Pedulla, 2014) and those who face greater risks of unemployment (Iversen and Soskice, 2001).

Only recently, a few empirical studies analyzing survey data about preferences of citizens and representatives indicate that representation of preferences in the political process is biased in favor of some specific groups, although none of these studies focuses specifically in the domain of preferences for social policies. Following these lines, Adams and Ezrow (2009) show that opinion leaders (those who discuss politics and try to persuade others) are more influential on party-policy positions. Similarly, there is evidence that voters are better represented than non-voters in US Senate (Griffin and Newman, 2005) and ethnic minorities are worse represented than the dominant ethnic groups in US Congress (Griffin and Newman, 2007). Focusing on the effect of income on ideological congruence between citizens and representatives, comparative studies by Giger, Rosset and Bernauer (2012) and Rosset, Giger and Bernauer (2013) show that preferences of high incomes are better represented in the political process. Moreover, they

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[2] See, however, Denzau and Munger (1986), who show that voters can get represented under very general circumstances in the presence of interest groups.

find that the representation gap between high and low incomes widens as inequality increases. Similarly, Bernauer, Giger and Rosset (2015) confirm a bias in representation against low incomes and, to a lesser extent, women. 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).*

As we consider different dimensions of policy preferences (redistribution, taxation and public expenditure), there are reasons to believe that congruence between parties and electorates varies across dimensions, since "politicians attempt to mobilize voters behind their policies by encouraging them to think about those policies along particular lines" (Chong and Druckman, 2007: 106). As Jacoby (2000) argues, 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. Typically, conservative parties focus on broad appeals while liberal parties focus on specific targets of public spending. 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. For instance, Blechior, Tsatsanis and Teixeira (2015) find that congruence in redistributive and social policies is higher for left-wing parties than right-wing parties in Portugal. Therefore, 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 taxation will be higher for liberal and conservative parties, whereas congruence in preferences for spending will be higher for social-democrat parties.*

Finally, 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 personal self-interest. 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

Our data come from two surveys conducted during the same period of time in Spain to MPs in national and regional Parliaments and to the Spanish population. We measure citizens and representatives preferences using identical questions in order to avoid wording problems highlighted by Achen (1978). 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.[3] 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 to 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, Giger and Rosset, 2015; Rosset, Giger and Bernauer, 2013): the congruence between citizens and representatives, and the congruence between citizens

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[3] The fieldwork for both surveys was carried out by the research group DASP (Democracy and Autonomies: Society and Politics, http://www.upo.es/democraciayautonomias/) in cooperation with the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS) (2009; 2012).

and MPs of the party they voted for. 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)[4]. Following Golder and Stramski (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:

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

(1)

where N is the number of citizens, c_i is the preference of the ith citizen and R is the average position of representatives (either the full body of representatives or the MPs 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:

$$= \sum_{x} |F_c(x) - F_r(x)|$$

(2)

where $F_c(x)$ and $F_r(x)$ are the cumulative distribution functions (CDFs) for citizens and MPs preferences. In our multivariate analysis we use the many-to-one relationship to estimate the distances between citizens and the average MP in order to analyze the factors explaining unequal representation groups. Thus, in the models discussed in the next section, the dependent variables measure the absolute distance between the voter and the

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[4] 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.

average representative as defined in Equation 1. We use three dependent variables (absolute distances), one for each dimension of social policy: preferences for redistribution, preferences for lower taxes and preferences for public 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 public expenditure is computed as the average distance for all of the following items: environment, health, law enforcement, education, defense, pensions and unemployment benefits[5]. 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 congruence between voters and MPs. 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 our database does not contain 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 are computed using a causal model that links occupational status, education and income, controlling for age. Labor market status is measured by a dichotomous variable for those who are unemployed. A descriptive analysis of these variables is reported in Table 1.

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[5] 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 is 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.

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).

4. Congruence in Preferences for Social Policies

It is useful to begin with a descriptive analysis of the distribution of preferences among citizens and MPs. In Table 2 we report the averages and standard deviations of preferences for citizens and MPs in two different dimensions of social policy: preferences for redistribution and preferences for lower taxes. The row overall refers to the whole

samples of citizens and MPs, whereas the rows PP and PSOE refers to voters and MPs of these parties. Overall, citizens prefer more redistribution and lower taxes than their representatives, although distances between the two of them are relatively small. Both citizens and MPs are highly supportive of redistribution, although citizens score on average 0.25 higher than their representatives. The distance is wider in the case of preferences for taxation (0.78), in which citizens' support for lower taxes is also higher. Furthermore, there is a key difference between the two parties regarding policy congruence. Voters and MPs are closer in the PSOE than in the PP, regarding preferences for redistribution. In contrast, PP voters and MPs are closer while PSOE voters and MPs appear further away, concerning preferences for taxation.

**Table 2: Preferences for redistribution and taxes. Citizens and MPs**

		Citizens		MPs	
		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

Source: CIS (Studies 2827 and 2930).

Another important finding reported in Table 2 is that the dispersion of preferences (as measured by their standard deviation) is higher for MPs than for citizens (except for the case of preference for lower taxes for PSOE). That means that the internal composition of parties reflects a great deal of variation in preferences. Furthermore, polarization of preferences among MPs is higher than among voters, which is consistent with McAllister (1991) findings for Australia. To have a better understanding of the congruence between citizens and representatives, we turn now to the many-to-many measure of congruence defined in Equation 2. In Figure 1 we plot the distribution of preferences for the same two

dimensions of social policy. The right-side plots show that the distribution of preferences for redistribution of citizens and MPs is 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 taxation, differences between citizens and representatives are larger, especially in the case of PSOE because their MPs are much less in favor of reducing taxes than their voters.

Figure 1: Distribution of preferences for citizens and representatives
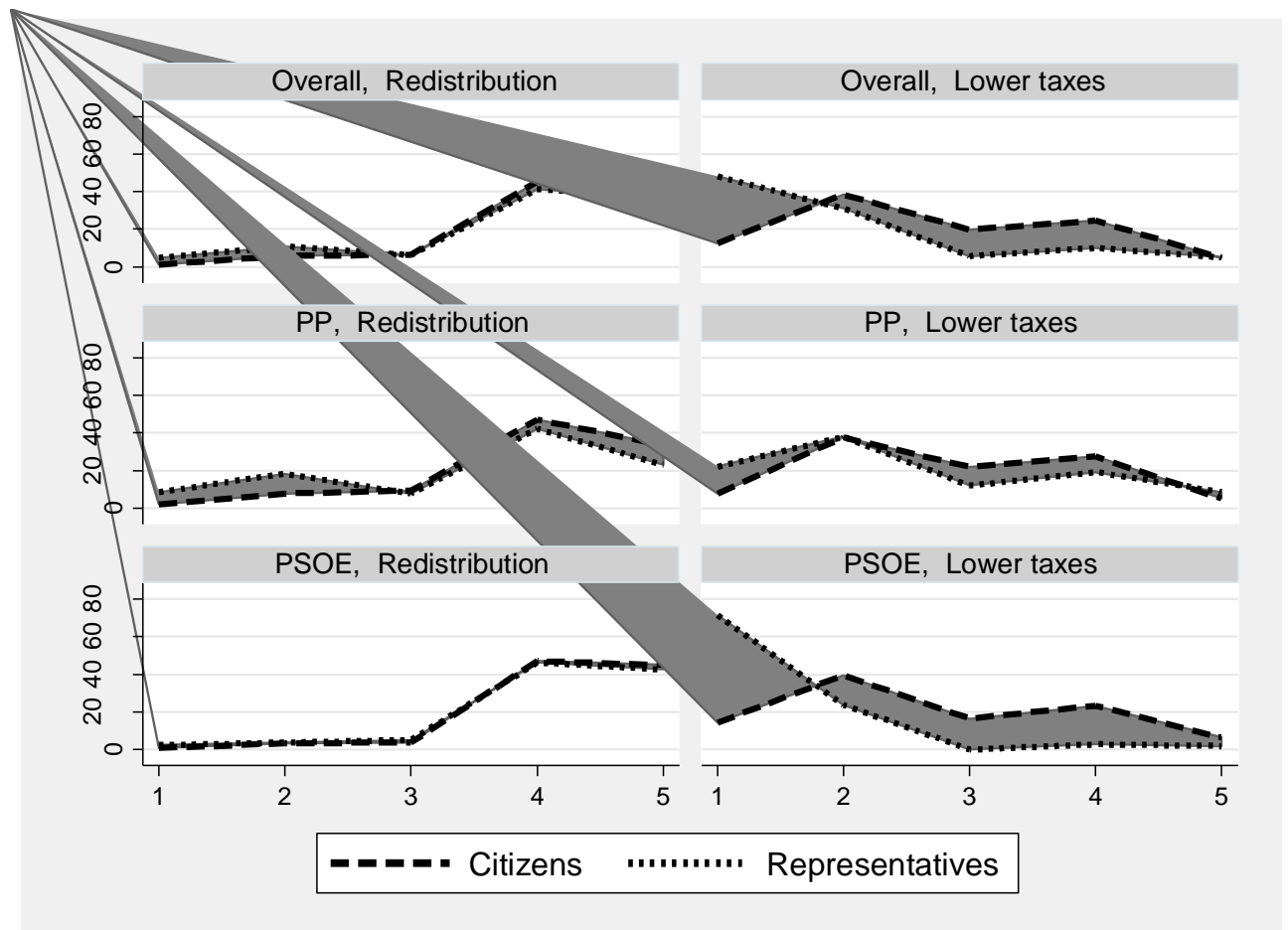
Notes: Total refers to the whole samples of citizens and representatives, while plots for each party refers to voters and representatives of each party. Source: CIS (Studies 2827 and 2930).

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 MPs or by their party choice. For this purpose, in Table 3 we report several OLS regressions in which the dependent variable is the distance between citizens 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 social groups whose preferences are

better represented by political bodies of representation. 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 distances between parties and voters vary across policy dimensions. To that end, we include party choice as an explanatory variable. Following this logic, in Models 1-3 the dependent variable measures the distance between an individual and the average MP. The explanatory variables include gender, age, education level, ISEI and unemployment. In Models 4-6 the dependent variable measures the distance between an individual and the average MP in the party for which she/he has voted in the previous election. Furthermore, we add party choice as an explanatory variable in order to know which party is closer to their voters in each dimension.

Table 3: Distances in preferences for social policies. OLS

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

Models presented in Table 3 show that socio-demographic variables have a rather limited influence on congruence in preferences for social policies in Spain. Contrary to Bernauer, Giger and Rosset (2015), gender does not seem to affect the quality of representation of preferences for social policies. Age has an inverted U-shaped relationship with preferences for redistribution (Model 1), as the coefficient for age is positive and highly significant ant the coefficient for age squared is negative and highly significant too. Thus, contrary to what was expected, the distance between citizens and MPs is larger 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 Giuliano, 2011; Busemeyer, 2013), because they typically have lower incomes and are more likely to be in a vulnerable economic position. A possible explanation for the lower distances between the average MP 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 expectations, 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. This is consistent with the higher electoral participation and higher internal political efficacy of these groups (Brady, Verba and Schlozman, 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 $p<0.10$). That means that preferences of low status individuals are represented better 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 the findings reported so far. Contrary to Ezrow, Lawrence, de Vries, Steenbergen and Edwards (2011) there is no conclusive evidence that mainstream parties are closer to the whole electorate instead of their supporters, as there is not a clear pattern in the effect of party choice on distances. For

instance, regarding preferences for taxation, the distance between PP representatives and their voters is lower than the distance between small parties representatives and their voters (the same happens for PSOE), but the opposite is true concerning preferences for redistribution. On the other hand, preferences for taxation 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). 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 taxation. Even in the latter case, it is possible that differences in representation of preferences for taxation 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 skills. 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, highly educated individuals, as well as MPs, might be less willing to support tax-cuts. Supporting that, in citizens' survey, 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 concentrate preference representation on issues highly salient for their electorates while, at the same time, they reinforce the framing effect by means of the way they present 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 have been performed in order to assert the validity of the results presented so far[6]. The main potential concern has to do with the way we measure political preferences of the political elite. The average preference of representatives might not truly reflect the position of parties and political elites broadly speaking, since 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 group[7]. Finally, according to the median-voter approach, one might argue that the average MP does 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 group, while other parties might over-represent it, which would lead eventually to heteroskedasticity. Moreover, if that is the case, we would expect to estimate different coefficients for different parties. However, neither the White (1980) nor Breusch-Pagan (1979) tests of heteroskedasticity 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 is the most common in the literature (Bernauer, Giger and Rosset, 2015). Yet, if we estimate separate models by party choice, results are in line with the findings discussed so far.

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[6] Results of robustness checks are not reported here for the sake of brevity. They are available upon request.

[7] 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.

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 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 advantaged groups[8], 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 their voters' agenda, their preferences will be independent from their social origin and they will have similar preferences to the groups that support the 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[9]. In Models 1 and 4 we estimate the effect of socio-demographic variables 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, according to their socialization period: born before 1959 (the reference category) and socialized during Francoism, born between 1959 and 1973 and socialized during late Francoism and the transition, and born after 1973 and fully socialized in democracy. 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 fathers' occupations because a relevant fraction of MPs either have no previous occupation or left his/her occupation long time ago. Thus, we think that father occupation

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[8] For the Spanish case see Coller et al. (2008) and Coller and Santana (2009).
[9] We use the Brant (1990) approach to test the parallel regression assumption for ordinal logit models reported in Table 4. The results of the test indicates that the assumption hold for every model estimated.

capture better the social milieu from which the MP is extracted. Nevertheless, as an additional control, we include a dichotomous variable for those who had a job before entering politics. Religiosity distinguishes between observant catholic (the reference category), non-observant catholic, and agnostic or atheist[10].

In Models 2 and 5 we add party as an explanatory factor (PP is the reference category) to test whether this variable explains differences in preferences, as predicted by H3b. Furthermore, we include an additional control that distinguishes between MPs in regional assemblies and Congress-Senate (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".[11] These interaction terms test the hypothesis that those MPs who are more committed to party ideology 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.

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[10] 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.

[11] 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).

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

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

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
PSOE		0.748***	0.657**		-1.567***	-1.658***
		(0.248)	(0.269)		(0.270)	(0.298)
Other parties		1.077***	0.908***		-0.699***	-0.635**
		(0.264)	(0.294)		(0.263)	(0.295)
Commitment to principles			-0.330			0.123
			(0.342)			(0.362)
Commitment*PSOE			0.441			0.133
			(0.459)			(0.516)
Commitment*Other parties			0.466			-0.225
			(0.543)			(0.556)
μ_1	-1.920***	-1.865***	-1.992***	-1.597***	-1.646***	-1.545***
	(0.497)	(0.523)	(0.530)	(0.504)	(0.543)	(0.551)
μ_2	-0.536	-0.461	-0.613	0.145	0.214	0.326
	(0.470)	(0.498)	(0.505)	(0.495)	(0.532)	(0.540)
μ_3	-0.138	-0.055	-0.197	0.605	0.689	0.802
	(0.467)	(0.496)	(0.503)	(0.495)	(0.532)	(0.541)
μ_4	1.788***	1.923***	1.773***	1.960***	2.065***	2.182***
	(0.473)	(0.503)	(0.509)	(0.520)	(0.556)	(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).

Results reported in Table 4 clearly indicate that socio-demographic variables do not explain representatives' 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, 2011; Busemeyer, 2013; Owens and Pedulla, 2014) and taxation (Jaime-Castillo and Sáez-Lozano, 2016), 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 magnitude of the effect gets sharply reduced 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' choices 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 among citizens (Bernauer, Giger and Rosset, 2015). 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, Giger and Bernauer, 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, Giger and Bernauer (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 taxation. 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 the specific domain of social policy 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 conventional 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. A third one relates to the role of executives' decisions about public policies and bureaucracies' implementation of these decisions, which may run counter to public opinion preferences. Further research should address the relationship between representatives' preferences, executive decisions and implementations, 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.

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