Social Background and Citizen-Legislator Congruence in Candidate-Centred Systems[1]

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Legislatures are arenas where diverse policy preferences are honed into practical policy proposals. Given that legislative membership is a result of free democratic elections, there is an assumption that the attitudes and opinions of MPs are representative of the population as a whole. Thus, pre-legislative bargaining is founded on an unbiased sample of public opinion. However, considerable opinion incongruence exists between citizens and the political elite in many systems, potentially undermining this ideal democratic starting point for legislative business. Candidate-centred voting systems offer the potential to remedy this disconnect. While citizens tend to emphasise personal characteristics as an explanation for vote choice in one of the most candidate-centred systems in existence, PR-STV, the disconnect of opinion congruence between citizens and elites persists. This paper finds that citizens' emphasis on MPs' personal characteristics when choosing representatives causes significant opinion congruence between citizens and elites on a demographic basis, particularly for under-represented groups such as the women, younger citizens and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, but aggregate congruence is undermined by the lack of demographic diversity among MPs.

Introduction

Parliamentary democracy assumes that a sufficiently diverse geographic distribution of legislators will produce a parliamentary membership that, on aggregate, is representative of public opinion. Compromises can then be considered from this distribution of opinion until practical legislative proposals are constructed. Proportional electoral systems (PR) aim to achieve this maximisation of opinion by awarding more seats in parliament to parties with small national or constituency vote shares than would be the case in a non-PR systems (Blais and Bodet, 2006; Cox, 1997; Katz, 1997; Lijphart, 1994). PR systems lack the centripetal pressure on parties ideological positions, allowing them to explicitly advocate minority opinions

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while minimising electoral costs (Mitchell, 2006). When PR systems are candidate-centred, emphasis on personal characteristics can override citizens' party considerations, particularly under PR-STV where these considerations are not mutually exclusive (Marsh, 2007; Carey and Shugart 1995).

This paper examines attitudinal congruence under PR-STV between Irish citizens[2] and elites at the system and individual levels. The purpose is to determine whether or not the candidate-centred nature of the system is likely to aid policy congruence between citizens and legislators. Moreover, can any incongruence at the system level can be explained by the under-representation of descriptive groups? The paper begins by discussing the theoretical importance of the question and the expectations for the analysis. It then presents the Comparative Candidate and Irish National Election surveys data and the proposed analytic method. The results in the subsequent section show that congruence is highest between citizens and MPs with an occupational background in farming, the lower-socioeconomic classes, the young, and females. It is lowest for those from rural backgrounds and the over-40s. Though there may be significant congruence on a demographic basis, the homogeneity of candidates and legislators' social backgrounds causes the system to fall short of its potential for attitude congruence. The implication is that raising the participation of under-represented groups will increase policy congruence between citizens and legislators. This needs to be addressed at the level of the parties themselves.

The Irish party system has been a puzzling case in political science for decades due to a lack of a left-right foundation for inter-party competition, as is commonly found elsewhere. In Ireland, there is typically more attitude variation within parties than between them and the party system is a European outlier in this regard (Courtney, 2015). However, the Irish political elite conform to international trends in that they are not demographically representative of the Irish population (Weeks, 2011). If it transpires that descriptive representation (Phillips, 1995) doesn't matter in this case, it is unlikely to matter anywhere. The high level of volatility in the 2011 election (Mair, 2011) also minimises the effect of party identification on vote choice. Coming in the wake of the economic crisis, citizens, particularly Fianna Fáil citizens (Marsh and Mikhaylov, 2012), threw off the shackles of party loyalties which had endured for decades allowing a more rational focus on the competence of the candidates and parties.

2.0 Attitudes, Congruence and Descriptive Representation

Attitudes are theoretically important to political science not simply because they represent a salient opinion that differentiate one party or MP[3] from

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[2] While it is tempting to use the term 'citizens' to describe the respondents to the Irish National Election Survey, we cannot assume that every respondent actually voted. The mass level will therefore be referred to as 'citizens' throughout.

[3] Members of the lower house of parliament in Ireland are referred to as Teachta Dála (TD). Throughout this paper they will be referred to as 'members of parliament' or MP.

political competitors, but also because attitudes are an intervening variable which complete the causal bridge between other important concepts, namely political socialisation and policy outputs. It is established in the psychological literature that attitudes at the individual level are a product of socialisation experiences (Allport, 1935). The complication arises in attempting to establish whether a broad demographic category such as gender can be associated with political attitude distinctions or whether socialisation and attitude formation processes are too idiosyncratic to be modelled in any meaningful way. Moreover, the link between any socialisation experiences and attitudes potentially weakens when a distinction is made between affective attitudes and those that have more cognitive and behavioural implications (Fishbein and Azjen, 1975; Bishin, 2006). For example, an MP might hold a positive affective attitude towards the idea that wealth inequality should be minimised but in turn disagree with raising taxes on the rich, either because it might cause "capital flight" and undermine the economy (cognitive), or because they know their party might not be receptive to the idea and ultimately whip the individual into voting against such proposals (behavioural). From this psychological starting point it can be inferred that if there is a deficit of socialisation experiences among members of parliament they will inadequately reflect the attitudes of society.

Candidate-centred systems give citizens the opportunity to emphasise demographic characteristics when casting their vote, potentially maximising systemic attitude congruence. This is because politicians have a rational incentive to distinguish themselves from intra-party competitors by developing a personal following (Marsh, 2007; Carey and Shugart, 1995). Thus, an examination of the relationship between the social background characteristics and congruence in a highly candidate-centred system is appropriate.

2.1 System-level congruence
One ideal of democracy is that parliaments should begin their deliberations with an unbiased distribution of public opinion (Marsh, 1980). The debate on sufficient representation takes Pitkin's (1967) standard of acting in a manner responsive to citizens as a starting point. This means government's enacting legislation which is supported by the majority of the population (Page and Shapiro, 1983). However, legislation is an output measure of representation and falls short of the input ideal outlined by philosophers such as J.S. Mill (Gray and Smith, 2012; Miller, 2010), who argued that representation is improved by greater participation across social classes. Recently, it has been found that countries with proportional electoral systems tend to elect more congruent legislatures than those in majoritarian systems (Golder and Stramski, 2010)[4]. In Sweden, representatives hold preferences for higher

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[4] However, Golder and Stramski also show that there are no differences in congruence across the two system types on congruence between citizens and the government. Moreover, an earlier study (Blais and Bodet, 2006) showed that PR increases the distance between voters and parties, while showing that the government also tended to be congruent with voters.

levels of public spending than citizens (Ågren *et al*, 2007), while in Portugal citizens and MPs were more congruent on specific issue items than the more abstract left-right self-placement question (Freire and Belchior, 2013). Moreover, while Belchior (2010) found that MPs across Europe tend to be more ideologically extreme than citizens, parties within each system are fairly responsive to the electorate. Belchior states here that citizens' and elites' responses to survey questions are not entirely conceptually comparable, as the latter are more precise. Moreover, despite Belchior's content with citizen-elite distances as measured in the paper, she also states that it is worth comparing citizen and elite attitudes if better data are available[5].

With reference to how voting behaviour in Ireland is influenced by the candidate-centred nature of the system, Marsh (2007, pg. 503) provides evidence that candidates rather than parties are key to vote choice in Ireland. This presents a dilemma though as he states that

> "it makes little sense to look for reasons why a particular citizen supported a party if that citizen was rather supporting a particular candidate and would have done so whatever that candidate's party label."

But Marsh (2007, pg. 505) goes on to that state party and candidate preferences

> "are not necessarily exclusive: citizens may vote on
> locality, for instance, but do so within parties, picking the candidates
> of a preferred party according to how close their base is to the
> citizen's own area."

Thus, the operationalization of PR with STV in Ireland potentially permits a comparatively high level of congruence between citizens and legislators if citizens first choose a party that is closest to them, and then pick the legislator within that party that is closest to them. As Marsh points out, this sophisticated level of voting requires information. Based on the relationship between socialisation and attitudes outlined above, and descriptive and substantive representation theory outlined below, the assumption of this paper is that demographic characteristics provides this information by proxy if it is not readily available.

The first hypothesis to be tested is the extent to which the broad distributions of citizen and elite opinion are congruent. This is the system-level hypothesis, to be followed by the individual-level hypothesis below.

> H_1: The distributions of citizens' and MPs' attitudes systematically differ.

It is also necessary to consider issue salience (Jones and Baumgartner, 2004). The extent to which citizen-elite congruence matters at all may be dependent on the extent to which the issues being debated are of any

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[5]Due to these data restrictions Belchior (2010) does not present results for the main Irish opposition party at the time, Fine Gael.

significant level of importance to citizens. Assessing congruence would be a moot exercise if the issues on which congruence is achieved have very limited political implications. Salience may vary across issues (Page and Shapiro, 1983) as policies that affect citizens individually, such as taxation levels, may be more salient than policies which have collective benefits but individual costs, such as protecting the environment. Thus, the preferences of citizens and elites may be more congruent on issues which citizens are more interested in and are subject to higher levels of public discussion. However, preferences may vary between citizens and elites purely due to elites being more sensitive to the dynamics of policy-making and the effects of changes in policy (Page and Bouton, 2006). Taking mass-elite linkages and salience into account leads to an addendum hypothesis to the first.

H_{1a}: Congruence varies across items by salience.

2.2 Individual-level congruence

It is expected that the membership of the Irish parliament does not reflect the views of the electorate owing to the under-representation of descriptive groups among MPs. If the relationship between socialisation and attitudes is correct, representatives' attitudes are primarily informed by their own personal experiences rather than an elastic conversation with the electorate. The prominent thesis in descriptive representation studies is Anne Phillips's *The Politics of Presence* (1995). Where Pitkin's (1967) standard for sufficient representation is merely 'responsiveness', Phillips sets a higher standard by arguing that substantive representation is dependent on descriptive representation. When legislators are drawn from a narrow social pool, the range of policy considerations is similarly limited. Many of society's diverse views and attitudes are automatically excluded from the deliberative process on account of the absence or under-representation of certain groups in parliament and parties. Phillips (1995) is referring here to the exclusion of women, minority ethnic groups and any groups that that have come to see themselves as marginalized, silenced or excluded. Phillips argues the most self-evident case is that of women's representation. Women make up fifty per cent of society yet typically make up a much smaller proportion of parliamentarians. As will be discussed further below, women have been shown to have significantly different issue priorities and preferences than men. Thus, congruence depends on legislators sharing the socialisation experiences of citizens.

Descriptive representation can have further democratic benefits beyond the heightened likelihood of advancing salient substantive interests. Mansbridge (1999) argues that political interests may not be crystallised on every issue at the point that citizens authorise the representative to act on their behalf. In this context, the best way to have one's most important substantive interests represented is often to choose a representative whose descriptive characteristics match one's own. Then, as issues arise unpredictably, a citizen can expect the representative to react more or less the way the citizen would have done due to descriptive similarity. Female legislators have typically been the ones to bring issues of sexual harassment

and violence against women to the forefront of the political sphere, particularly when these issues had not been crystallised by the two main parties in the United States. Mansbridge (1999) highlights the case of Illinois Commission on the Status of Women. Here a bipartisan legislative group, comprised entirely of women, proposed a bill of measures which, foremost among them, instituted the crime of rape in marriage. Mansbridge asserts that this descriptive effect on substantive issues has been evident in legislature after legislature. We can therefore expect that congruence will be high between citizens and elites with shared social backgrounds even on issues which have not been extensively discussed in public. A positive finding would also provide support for affirmative action measures to diversify the membership of the political elite in Ireland and elsewhere.

There is further comparative evidence of attitudinal variation among elites being related to socio-demographic characteristics. Generally, female and young MPs are found to be more left-wing, socially liberal and feminist than their male counterparts (Welch, 1985; Norris and Lovenduski, 1995; Narud and Valen, 2000; Wängnerud, 2000a; Wängnerud, 2000b)[6]. Though gender imbalance in legislatures is a more obvious representation gap, occupational class may be more important. The descriptive representation of occupational class was relevant in the US Congress (Carnes 2012) and Latin America (Carnes and Lupu 2015), as lawmakers from the different classes bring different economic attitudes to the legislative process. Similar class effects were observed in the Nordic countries (Narud and Valen, 2000) but not in the UK (Norris and Lovenduski, 1995).

There is less evidence of demographic congruence in the form being tested in this paper. Converse and Pierce (1986) found that French MPs were congruent with citizens of similar educational attainment. Across the Nordic countries, male MPs consistently represented the views of male citizens, but the evidence was mixed for a similar relationship between female MPs and female citizens (Narud and Valen, 2000). Rosset (2013) finds that Swiss MPs are less in favour of state intervention in the economy, with relatively poor citizens being less well represented than citizens with high incomes. Ågren et al (2007) find that attitudes vary among citizens and elites by gender, age and education level, but this dynamic does not explain the overall mass-elite incongruence. For Portugal, Freire and Belchior (2013) found that citizens of lower occupational status place themselves more to the left on the left-right scale than citizens of higher occupational status, though there is no comparable data for elites in this case. This literature leads to the final hypothesis:

> H[2]: Citizens and elites who share social background characteristics are attitudinally congruent.

3. Data and Method

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[6] This evidence is challenged in a previous study of the Irish case with a reverse finding of female conservatism within the Irish parties (O'Sullivan, 2002).

The analysis presented here is built on citizen and elite survey data conducted in the wake of the 2011 Irish General Election. These are the Irish National Election Survey 2011 (INES) (N = 1843) and the Comparative Candidate Survey 2011, Ireland (CCS) (Response Rate = 42%, N = 249 of which N_{MP} = 75 and $N_{DEFEATEDCANDIDATE}$ = 174)[7]. The distributions of party affiliations and demographics are broadly similar between the full membership of the parliament and respondents to the CCS survey. Table 1. below compares the proportion of survey respondents by party affiliation and demographics to the full population of TDs. While the Irish case is un-typical in terms of being a system dominated by two centre-right parties, it is quite typical in terms of elite composition. Upper class, middle-aged men are over-represented in the Dáil compared to their distribution in the electorate. In terms of social class, the upper class AB[8] group are over-represented among politicians, at the expense of lower class C2DEs, who are typically low-level clerical and manual workers[9].

Eighteen survey items are included here covering a range of political issues from high salience items focused on the management of the economy[10] to low salience social, nationalist and post-materialist items[11]. These items use a range of response criteria from five-point and seven-point agree/disagree scales to 11-point (0-10) closeness scales, with opposing statements at each extreme point. In order to keep the interpretation of statistical coefficients consistent across all of the items within the tables below, all items were rescaled so that the mid-point lies at zero and items on a 7-point or 5-point scales were normalised to range between -5 and + 5[12].

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[7] For the purpose of this paper the analysis does not include respondents from the CCS who were unsuccessful, thus bringing elected MPs into clear focus.

[8] The class scheme used in this paper broadly maps onto those used by survey companies and Marsh *et al.* (2008). The AB category collapses two categories, a and B, and refers to upper professionals such as doctors, lawyers and managers. The C1 category is lower professionals and refers to the likes of middle managers and teachers. The C2DE category collapses three categories from low-level administrators to semi-skilled and unskilled workers. There are very elites in this study that fall into the this broad low-class category. A category code for Farmers is also included.

[9] The urban/rural divide is institutionally set, but a dichotomous control variable is included, where 0 is urban representative and 1 rural indicates a rural representative, as geographical background type may have a strong influence on their attitudes (Miller and Stokes, 1963; Fenno, 1978; Converse and Pierce, 1986)

[10] These include left-right self-placement, taxation, privatisation, regulation and mortgage relief for highly-indebted homeowners, whether citizens should get a fair share of the nation's wealth and whether it is ok for some people to be a lot richer than others..

[11] These include restricting immigration, two items on environmental protection, EU integration, re-unification of the island of Ireland as one political entity, gender quotas for political parties, the effect of more women in politics on ethical standards, working women's relationship with their children, reducing the number of MPs, belief in God, whether it is better to have religious people in public.

[12] This is similar to the approach taken by Blaydes and Linzer (2012), who rescaled items so that all values lie between 0 and 1. My modification simply makes the table coefficients, particularly the party intercept terms, more easily interpretable.

Negative numbers represent economically left-wing, socially liberal attitudes or the best interpretation of such.

Categories	Full Dáil	CCS sample
Table 1. Distribution of the independent variables between the full membership of the Dáil and the CCS sample		
Party-level		
Fine Gael	0.45	0.39
Labour	0.23	0.26
Fianna Fáil	0.12	0.13
Sinn Féin	0.08	0.06
ULA	0.04	0.03
Other	0.08	0.13
Gender		
Male	0.84	0.78
Female	0.16	0.22
Age		
Age 18-39	0.20	0.19
Age 40-59	0.54	0.58
Age 60+	0.26	0.23
Education		
Less than University Education	0.30	0.27
University Education	0.70	0.73
Social class		
Class AB	0.51	0.61
Class C1	0.29	0.24
Class C2DE	0.10	0.08
Farmer	0.10	0.07
Constituency type		
Urban	0.35	0.38
Rural	0.65	0.62
N	166	75

Values are the proportion of respondents in the column/sub-category. Each column/sub-category sums to one.

To take issue salience into account I follow Marsh et al. (2008)'s approach for the INES survey[13]. The survey asked citizen respondents the question; 'What has been the issue most (and second most) important to you personally in this election?' While the CCS asked 'In your opinion, what are the three most important political problems facing Ireland today?' The results are summarised in Table 2. below in order of citizen priority according to a broad categorical type across citizens and MPs. The economy is the overwhelming issue with about three quarters of both groups mentioning an item which has implications for the government's policies on economic management. The second most mentioned item type was political reform, although the drop-off in mentions is considerable with only 14 percent of citizens and 8 percent of MPs mentioning an item that has implications for political reform. These tended to be focused on emotions such as anger at, trust in, and perceived corruption among, public representatives. Two of the most relatively salient issues of political reform during the 2011 election were reducing the number of MPs and a drive to implement quotas for female party candidates (Gallagher and Marsh, 2011). Attitudes to these items were measured in the surveys. Immigration, the environment and EU integration are extremely low salience issues with 1 per cent or less of mentions across both groups.

Table 1. Issue Salience among Voters and MPs

Issue	% Mentions	
	Voters	*TDs*
Job creation	25	33
Economic Management	16	18
Problems with the banks/Banking crisis	10	8
Anger with the government	10	-
Health services	9	5
Deficit in the public finances	7	13
IMF/EU bailout	6	4
Social spending cuts	4	-
Taxation	3	
Education/Local Schools	3	1
Stable government	2	-
Political Reform	2	6
Universal social charge	1	-
Negative Equity	1	-
Immigration	1	-
The environment	0	1
Corruption		-
Inequality		3
Trust in public representatives		2
N	**1650**	**75**

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[13] This approach is criticised by Wlezien (2005) who argues the most appropriate way to measure salience is ask citizens to rank a prepared list of issues. Other inferential methods of assessing the salience of issues such as the lowest percentage of 'don't know' responses to each item (Page and Shapiro, 1983).

Confirmatory factor analysis is conducted to determine the extent to which items load onto one of five latent variables assumed *a priori*[14]. An overall left-right variable incorporates all of the items and a "second dimension" item (GAL/TAN[15] and feminism) combines all of the non-economic variables. These factor analyses are conducted on MPs' responses as elite attitudes tend to be more highly structured and to prevent dependence in the following stage, which is to predict MPs' and citizens' positions on these latent factors. The factors which emerge from the MP analysis are forced for the citizens using the same items, even if this factor does not strictly exist according to an independent factor analysis of citizen attitudes.

The first stage of the analysis addresses the J.S. Mill question as to whether the distribution of opinion in the legislature is broadly congruent with public opinion. It uses simple Kolmogorov-Smirnoff (KS) tests of distribution differences to determine the level of congruence (Golder and Stramski, 2010) between citizens and MPs. This test is performed for the overall distributions of citizens and MPs and between subsets of citizens and MPs identified by social background characteristics. While the KS tests of all respondents has potentially $N = 1928$ before NAs are excluded, the KS tests comparing male MPs and male citizens has $N = 985$ and the test comparing female citizens with female MPs has $N = 943$. These Ns continue to vary depending on the distributions of citizens and MPs under each social background categorisation. The KS test statistic reports the distance (D) between the two distributions being compared in each test. We can interpret the significance of the statistic for inferential purposes by examining the significance of the p-value. That is, for every accepted threshold of significance we declare that distributions are further apart. A p-value of less than 0.05 indicates that the distributions are two standard deviations apart. A p-value of less than 0.01 indicates three standard deviations of difference and less than 0.001 indicates four standard deviations of difference. Variations in D statistics with $p > 0.05$ and D variations not associated with variation in statistical significance are assumed to be random and the null hypothesis of inter-group equality is accepted.

For the purpose of this paper, congruence can be defined at different levels. First, overall congruence can exist between citizens and elites. Second, congruence can be achieved between sub-categories of demographic groups such as female citizens and female MPs. Third, a subcategory of MPs can be significantly incongruent with survey respondents who share their characteristics, but closer to these respondents than their comparator sub-category. Thus, female MPs may not be congruent with female citizens,

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[14] The economic index, the post-materialist GAL/TAN index and a feminism index are assumed to be independent.

[15] An interpretation of the 'second dimension' constructed by Hooghe *et al* (2002) with the letters standing for Green, Alternative, Libertarian, Traditional, Authoritarian, Nationalist. Courtney (2015) demonstrates that the grouping of nationalism on the right of this dimension is somewhat inappropriate in the Irish case, so the results should be treated cautiously.

but they may be one or more standard deviations closer to female citizens than male MPs are to male citizens (hereafter, the better-than-comparator test). Fourth, a sub-category of MPs may be further from citizens than their comparator, but closer than overall congruence. If there was three standard deviations between citizens and MPs generally, two standard deviations between males citizens and MPs, and one standard deviation or less between female citizens and MPs, the males would be said to have achieved better-than-all congruence and females better than-comparator congruence.

In the second stage of the analysis the overall level of congruence by background category is inferred in two ways. The first runs the tests on predicted scores from the factor analysis. The second calculates a representation score at the item level with weighted sums of the number of items which achieve congruence. Three representation scores are calculated. The first (R_1) is weighted in favour of the number of items for which full congruence (C) on each demographic sub-category is achieved by dividing the better-than-comparator items (BTC) by two and dividing the better-than-all (BTA) values by three. The second (R_2) removes the weight on the better-than-all count and only divides the better-than-comparator by 2. The third (R_3) applies no weights. The number of items for which overall congruence (A) was achieved is subtracted from the count for the individual categories. The scores are simply

$$R_1 = (C + (BTC/2) + (BTA/3)) - A$$
$$R_2 = (C + BTC + (BTA/2) - A$$
$$R_3 = (C + BTC + BTA) - A$$

Where C is the sum of items where the p-value of the D statistic in a KS test is greater than 0.05, indicating no significant difference in attitudes between the groups. BTC is the better-than-comparator count, BTA is the better-than-all count and A is the count of items for which overall congruence is achieved.

4.0 Analysis

4.1 Factor Congruence

This section discusses the extent to which items load onto hypothesised factors and the extent of congruence between citizens and MPs on these factors. Confirmatory factor analysis is conducted for five factors among the MPs. The eigenvalues for each hypothesised factor determine whether the factor exist in the data. Eigenvalues of greater than one demonstrate that a clear factor exists. In these tests all of the values for each of the factors are greater than one. Thus, a general left-right factor exists which underlies all of the data ($e = 3.164$). An economic factor binds responses to economic items ($e = 2.658$), though the eigenvalue is lower than the 'all items' factor. The eigenvalues for the second dimension ($e = 1.566$) and the GAL/TAN ($e = 1.746$) dimension are equally lower again but still above the acceptable threshold while the feminist factor ($e = 1.081$) is the lowest but acceptable also. Figure 1. illustrates the variation in eigenvalues for various numbers of

factors within the economic items. There is one clear factor as the eigenvalues drop off dramatically after the first factor.

Figure 1. Factor Analysis of Economic Items
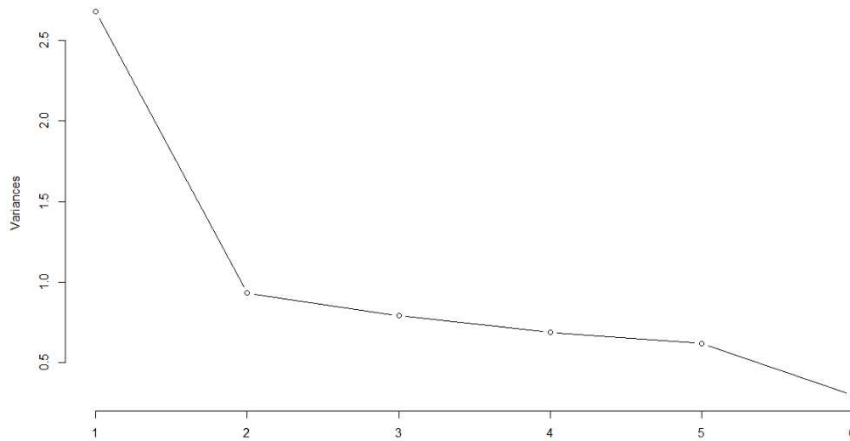
Attitudes are predicted along these factors for citizens and MPs separately. A series of *KS* tests are then presented that compare citizens and MPs as described in section 3 above. Table 3 below presents the results of testing the relationship between citizen and MPs attitude distributions with, and without, social background distinctions for each factor variable. Each cell in the table is a *KS* test for distribution differences accompanied by their standard error.

Table 2. Voter-MP Congruence on Factor Variables by Social Background

Social Background	All		Economy		2nd Dimension		GAL/TAN		Feminism	
	D	SE	D	SE	D	SE	D	SE	D	SE
All	0.65***	0.00	0.71***	0.00	0.36***	0.00	0.54***	0.00	0.78***	0.00
Male	0.70***	0.00	0.75***	0.00	0.37***	0.00	0.59***	0.00	0.84***	0.00
Female	0.48**	0.00	0.57***	0.00	0.3	0.12	0.41*	0.01	0.72***	0.00
Over 40	0.59***	0.00	0.70***	0.00	0.29***	0.00	0.52***	0.00	0.76***	0.00
Under 40	0.88***	0.00	0.81***	0.00	0.74***	0.00	0.59***	0.00	0.90***	0.00
Secondary Education	0.64***	0.00	0.8***	0.00	0.38***	0.00	0.64***	0.00	0.81***	0.00
University Education	0.69***	0.00	0.68***	0.00	0.37***	0.00	0.52***	0.00	0.77***	0.00
Class: AB	0.70***	0.00	0.77***	0.00	0.38***	0.00	0.63***	0.00	0.77***	0.00
Class: C1	0.63***	0.00	0.61***	0.00	0.3	0.09	0.43**	0.00	0.84***	0.00
Class: C2DE	0.36	0.34	0.49	0.08	0.49	0.11	0.41	0.26	0.85***	0.00
Class: Farmer	1.00***	0.00	1.00***	0.00	0.81***	0.00	0.96***	0.00	1.00***	0.00
Urban	0.55***	0.00	0.62***	0.00	0.25	0.15	0.44***	0.00	0.77***	0.00
Rural	0.69***	0.00	0.75***	0.00	0.38***	0.00	0.58***	0.00	0.79***	0.00

Coefficients are *D* statistics from Kolmorgorov-Smirnoff tests for distribution differences. Standard errors in right-adjacent cells. Statistical significance indicates incongruence of attitudes to the extent *** p < 0. 001, ** p < 0.01

and * p < 0.05.

The first thing to note is that incongruence is the norm rather than the exception. Thus, most coefficients indicate that citizens and MPs hold significantly different attitudes to most of these issues. This is not what we expect for a political system that allows citizens to interact party and personal characteristics when formulating their vote choice. In the 'All' row, the entire sample of citizens is compared to the sample of MPs. The *D* statistic indicates highly significant distance between both groups for all items. The *D* statistic is highest on the economic dimension and lowest on the 2nd dimension though this variation is random as *p*–values are equivalent.

As the dominant demographic group in the gender category, it is no surprise that the preferences of male MPs is driving overall incongruence from citizens. But what is surprising is that the comparison of male MPs with male citizens mirrors the overall incongruence so closely. We might have expected to see more variation given that women make up 50% of the citizen sample. The representation of female citizens by female MPs is somewhat of an improvement on the comparable male relationship. Although female MPs are significantly incongruent with female citizens on the 'All' variable, they are one standard deviation of statistical significance closer to male citizens than male MPs. This is being driven by the complete congruence on the second dimension, which includes all of the GAL/TAN and feminism items. When split into separate factors, congruence is not as impressive.

The class category also highlights a similarly interesting dynamic. The C2DE category includes all individuals with the lowest-skill occupational backgrounds. They are also severely under-represented in national politics. Complete congruence is achieved between citizens and MPs in this category on all factor variations except the feminism item. Moreover, the higher skill C1s also achieve complete congruence on the second dimension and C1 MPs are closer to C1 citizens on the GAL/TAN factor than the over-represented ABs. Farmers are almost completely incongruent with farming citizens on each of these factors. Geography is a source of congruence for urban citizens and MPs on the 2nd dimension.

4.3 Item Congruence

With some MP groups containing as few as five (farmers) and six (C2DEs) observations, the inference from aggregated factor variables may not convey the whole picture. Indeed , Freire and Belchior (2013) found that congruence was higher for substantive issue items in the Portuguese case. The congruence patterns are described here on an item-by-item basis. It is also the case here that the overall distributions for citizen and MPs self placement on the affective left-right scale are incongruent ($D = 0.41$, $p < 0.001$) while their respective attitudes to the cognitive item of privatisation do not differ. The results of all the statistical tests are summarised in Table 4 below.

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Table 3. Social Background Congruence across Items

Variable	Category	R_1	R_2	R_3
Class	Farmer	11.5	12	12
Class	C2DE	10.5	12	12
Age	Under 40	9.83	12.5	13
Class	C1	6	8	8
Education	Secondary	5.83	7.5	8
Gender	Female	5.33	7.5	8
Geography	Urban	5	7	7
-	All	5	5	5
Education	University	4	4.5	6
Class	AB	4	5	5
Gender	Male	3.5	5	5
Age	Over 40	1.5	2	2
Geography	Rural	1.33	1.5	2

The striking finding here is that farmers are the top category for congruence, contrary to the factor analysis-based test above. Demographic congruence is achieved on 11 items for which overall congruence is not. Indeed, on only two items, environmental protection and reducing the number of MPs, are farming citizens and MPs incongruent. The next pattern to note is that the demographic categories achieving higher representation scores are those that are severely under-represented in politics; individuals from lower socio-economic and educational classes, young people and women. These categories have higher representation scores than the 'All' category. However, it is not a deterministic outcome that the over-represented groups should have lower scores than the 'All' category. 'All' could have been the lowest scoring group with each demographic achieving high congruence with their comparable citizens. Nonetheless it seems that congruence is lower than 'All' for these groups, perhaps because their attitudes represent a mid-way point between their own demographic among citizens and the rival demographic. Thus, women MPs may be closer to women citizens than male MPs to male citizens because male MPs represent the middle ground between male and female citizens. This should be investigated in future research.

Table 4. Congruence by Item and Salience

Item	Category	R_1	R_2	R_3
Working women can have the same relationship with their children as women who stay at home	Feminism	12	12	12
Gender Quota should be introduced for political parties	Feminism	11	11	11
State assets should be privatised	Economy	10	10	10
Government should raise taxes and increase spending	Economy	10	10	10
The British Government should withdraw from Northern Ireland	GAL/TAN	8	8	8
The environment should be protected even if this affects economic growth	GAL/TAN	8	8	8
I would accept a cut in living standards to protect the environment	GAL/TAN	8	8	8
God definitely exists	GAL/TAN	7.33	7.5	8
State and industry should be regulated by the state	Economy	7	7	7
EU Integration should be pushed further	GAL/TAN	6.5	7	7
Immigration should be reduced	GAL/TAN	5.83	7.5	8
Citizens should get their fair share of a nation's wealth	Economy	5	8	8
It is ok for some people to be a lot richer than others	Economy	5	5	5
Politics would improve if more women were elected	Feminism	4.5	7	7
The government should assist people in mortgage difficulty	Economy	3.5	5	5
The number of MPs should be reduced	Reform	3	3	3
Left-Right Self-Placement	Economy	2.5	3	3
It is better to have more people with religious belief in public office.	GAL/TAN	1.5	2	2

In section 2.1 we discussed how items might vary depending on the broader issue area they are associated with. Table 5. evaluates the importance of salience in achieving congruence. Items associated with high salience concepts such as economic performance should be associated with higher levels of congruence. The table above calculates a representation score by summing the number of background variables for which congruence was achieved on each item. If an item achieved overall congruence but sub-categories of demographics were incongruent, these counts were subtracted from the score. The dimensions are coded for economic left-right, GAL/TAN, feminist and political reform items. Thus, some items for which overall congruence was achieved, and demographic categories were incongruent with each other, have negative values.

There is no clear overall pattern to the representative scores for each item when grouped by ideological dimension. There is a slightly higher likelihood for the feminist and GAL/TAN dimension to achieve high levels of congruence between demographic groups. Although, this is some support for H_{1a}, the evidence demonstrates almost random variation in congruence by issue area. It does demonstrate that congruence is higher between

demographic groups on issues that are not as routinely discussed during Irish elections, particularly the Irish general election of 2011. This supports Mansbridge's (1999) claim that descriptive groups can represent the preferences of people who share their descriptive characteristics on issues where those preferences have not been as clearly communicated as on other issues. However, given that overall congruence was achieved on the specific high salience items, privatisation and taxation, means that congruence is quite high on the economic dimension also.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The objective this paper is to assess whether congruence exists between citizens and representatives on the basis of shared social background. The candidate-centred feature of the Irish electoral system provides an opportunity to assess the extent to which the electoral system can facilitate political attitude congruence. The paper has gone beyond overall levels of congruence between institutionally-defined groups, to assess whether congruence varies depending on shared social background characteristics of citizens and elites. This has implications for our theoretical understanding of representation as party labels may not sufficiently represent citizens' opinions in a manner consistent with our evolving democratic standards. Party affiliation may be the primary basis of the institutional relationship, but biased distributions of social background characteristics among representatives may be under-mining the degree to which the views of under-represented groups are expressed in parliamentary deliberations.

The paper has found some support for the hypotheses put forward in section 2. For the most part, H_1 is rejected. More often than not, MPs' views differ significantly from citizens. This demonstrates that there are limits to which the permissiveness of the electoral system for vote choice can facilitate ideological congruence. However, congruence is achieved on two high salience items, taxation and privatisation. Perhaps congruence is not a problem if representatives are responsive to the issues of most importance to citizens? Although the analysis of salience (H_{1a}) does not provide clear patterns, in quantity terms the feminist and GAL/TAN items tend to be clustered towards the top. This indicates that social background congruence tends to be associated with items on which attitudes are not clearly communicated in a noisy election campaign. Thus, social background congruence is more important for low salience issues.

The main focus of this paper (H_2) has some significant support. Under-represented groups such as women and low-skilled citizens have higher attitudinal congruence with representatives who share their life experiences than over-represented groups do with their representatives. However, groups who are in the majority at the elite level are driving the incongruence observed at the overall level. That the dynamics are clearer for specific issue items rather than factor or abstract variables is consistent with previous research, most significantly Freire and Belchior (2013). That similar inferences are drawn from another country-case beyond Portugal bodes well for the validity of both papers' results.

The results of this paper are interesting because it means that the existing representatives are not exclusively representing the views of their own social groups, but possibly adopting a median position between their own groups and under-represented groups, though this directional speculation was not explicitly tested here. Indeed, incongruent representatives could be an extreme position away from all citizens. This should be explored in further study. Moreover, the candidate-centred nature of the electoral system is insufficient to ensure congruence between citizens and legislators. Other barriers to diverse social background representation must be having significant influence on delivering the biased distributions of demographic categories among MPs.

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