Inequality in Congruence:
Gender Gap and Electoral Rules

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Summary

A number of studies on political representation focus on the comparative assessments of citizen ideological congruence. But this literature has largely overlooked an important topic: the representation of social groups. While present studies of congruence investigate whether some countries perform better than others in terms of the levels of median citizen congruence, they cannot say much about the extent to which political elites give adequate concern to every group of citizens in the representative process. In this paper I introduce the concept and measure of inequality in congruence and demonstrate its properties by comparing gender groups. I also ask whether virtues of proportional electoral arrangements endure when we consider group differences in ideological representation. Empirical tests that were conducted on data from 88 legislative elections in 33 countries strongly suggest that gender inequality in congruence is in fact considerably smaller in countries with majoritarian arrangements.

Keywords: Inequality in Congruence, Gender Gap, Electoral Rules, Representation, Comparative Politics

Over the last twenty years, a number of comparative studies on political representation have analyzed whether democratic systems fulfill their most important role: to enable citizens to influence policies. Democracies where the preferences of citizens correspond to the positions of political parties, median legislators or governments come closer to the ideals of good representation (Blais and Bodet 2006; Golder and Stramski 2010; Huber and Powell 1994; Kim *et al*. 2010; Powell and Vanberg 2000; Powell 2000, 2009, 2013). Empirically, the degree of ideological or preference agreement between representatives and citizenry is conceptualized and measured as "congruence" or "correspondence". A tacit assumption behind this strand of literature is that the positions of representatives should be a strong signal of their future policy-making and therefore a good measure of democratic performance.

Consequently, most of these studies also ask whether the relationship between congruence and political institutions exists. Among the institutions analyzed, most emphasis is placed on the differences between two main types of electoral systems, those which use proportional and majoritarian rules.

Findings suggest that ideological congruence is higher in proportional systems. Agreement over the merits of proportional rules for congruence, however, is limited only to the congruence between citizens and their parliaments. With respect to congruence at the government level the findings are still largely inconsistent, and often referred to as the ideological congruence controversy. The debate over the congruence at the government level has revealed that, until recently, much of this literature has not considered alternative ways to conceptualize and measure congruence. Golder and Stramski (2010) have partly filled this gap by suggesting different operationalizations of congruence and more appropriate measures. But, as this study will demonstrate, even in their careful examination of all possible conceptualizations of congruence, an important dimension is still largely unexplored – equality in congruence.

Virtually all congruence studies use the central tendency in mass opinion, median position, as a benchmark of representation. Such practice largely builds on the social choice theory and the widespread acceptance of the median citizen[1] as the most appropriate representation of a diversity of citizen opinions. Congruence literature argues that, while the median position does not actually capture the diversity of citizen opinions, it is the only position that minimizes the distance between all citizens (Dalton *et al*. 2011; Huber and Powell 1994). If the final result of policy-making is indeed influenced by citizens' preferences, than it should most closely match the position of a median citizen, since it is unrealistic to expect that enacted policies will incorporate the 'diversity' of all citizens' opinions (also see Cox 1997). However, by focusing on the median, we ignore an important aspect of political representation: the representation of politically relevant groups. Huber and Powell, who pioneered the comparative representation studies, also acknowledge this shortcoming and note that "to recognize the importance of majority positions in democratic theory is, of course, not to deny that taking account of intense minorities is an important theoretical and practical problem for democracy" (1994: 293). This leads to a serious problem: while studies of congruence might discover that some countries perform better than others in terms of the levels of aggregate

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[1] It has to be noted here that terms such as median voters or median citizens are used interchangeably, without any reference to the normative justification of the selected measures (Powell 2000). As several studies show, the difference can be meaningful, since representatives often selectively respond only to those citizens who are electorally active or more affluent (Bartels 2005, 2010; Gilens 2005, 2012; Griffin *et al*. 2012; Griffin and Newman 2005, 2007).

representation, they cannot determine whether some democratic practices are fairer than others.

Why should we care about the 'fairness' of representation? One only needs to recall Mill who pointed out that every citizen should be "fully privileged as any other" (Mill 1972 [1861]: 313), or the more recent lesson on democratic theory from Verba who argued that in every democracy "elected officials should give equal considerations to the needs and preferences of all citizens" (2003: 1). The analysis of the quality of political representation is imperfect without the analysis of its equality – the extent to which political elites give adequate concern to every citizen and every group of citizens in the representative process. This old idea has been given substantial consideration in studies of group representation. Many scholars address the representation of income, race or gender groups on various stages of representation (see for instance Bartels 2005, 2010 and Gilens 2005, 2012, or recent study in European countries by Adams and Ezrow 2009). Such studies include, but are not limited to, analysis of female descriptive representation, representation of racial minorities through legislative behavior, representation of different income groups in terms of actual political commitments such as budgetary spending or elite responsiveness towards particular groups of citizens who are better-equipped to voice their concerns in the representative process.

Building on the literature on equality in political influence this analysis widens the grasp of congruence studies by asking to which extent representative democracies fulfill the criterion of political equality, measured as the difference in legislative and government congruence between men and women across countries. I will first introduce the measure of inequality in group congruence by adapting the measure of relative congruence introduced by Golder and Stramski (2010). The new measure, calculated from available modules of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (henceforth CSES) and the most recent European Elections Study (henceforth EES), is then applied to analyze gender differences in ideological congruence. In line with standard practice this study also assumes that the policy preferences, especially the ideological positions, of average legislators as well as the government should be a decent proxy for the expected policy outcome. If elections and subsequent government formation mechanisms do not produce equal preference representation of gender groups, it is likely that political decisions and actual policy outcomes might reflect that bias. Although one could study inequality in congruence for various subgroups of the population, the existence of gender bias in other dimensions of political representation has steered the focus on gender equality in this paper. Also, the abundance of empirical research on gender difference facilitates the development of theoretical expectations and can be used to validate new findings.

Not only that, the analysis of a broad sample of parliamentary democracies enables me to study the role of different political institutions. Congruence has a different meaning depending on the underlying theory of democracy we apply. This is especially evident when we consider differences between two visions of democracy that define modern electoral systems: proportional and majoritarian. From a majoritarian standpoint, congruence of a median citizen position is certainly an appropriate normative and empirical standard for assessing the performance of democracies. However, if proportional rules help in establishing a fair reflection of voter preferences and policies responsive to as many people as possible, the median standard should not be the only criterion for the comparison of the quality of representation. As Powell notes, "the normative status of the median voter in the proportional vision depends on our accepting the principle that in the final decision majorities should have more influence than minorities..." (2000: 165). Median correspondence is a rather unfair standard to impose on countries with proportional systems. Hence, influenced by current research on comparative ideological congruence, namely investigations on the moderating impact of electoral rules on citizen-elite congruence, I also re-evaluate the claim about the virtues of proportional representation given an additional criterion: equality in gender congruence.

Concept and Measure of Inequality in Congruence

The basic premise of existing studies on the representation of social groups is that a group of citizens shares needs and desires which should in turn be equally represented in the policy-making process (Sapiro 1981; Verba *et al*. 1995). If a selected group does not have unique politically relevant characteristics, then this group's correspondence with representatives would be as good or as bad as the median congruence. In other words, if females hold the same preferences and interests as males, there cannot be inequality in gender representation, given that the distance of males and females from representatives would be equal. However, there is sufficient evidence to expect that women and men have different preferences and that they are, at least on a set of relevant issues, indeed distinguishable. Many authors have reported a notable left shift in female preferences (Inglehart and Norris 2000; Jelen *et al*. 1994; Pratto *et al*. 1997). Women are found to share more positive attitudes towards the welfare state and redistribution. Moreover, many studies repeatedly show that men and women differ with regards to all dimensions of political life; whether it is vote choice, ideological self-placement or levels of political participation.

In the empirical analysis that follows, I construct the measures of gender congruence as congruence in ideological positions. The left-right dimension, as the main denomination of the ideological position in contemporary politics, is consi-

dered as an abstract measure that incorporates all the relevant issues on which voters and parties could take a stand. Citizens can use the left-right continuum as an instrument that serves as a general reference point without the need to understand each policy in detail. Dalton and colleagues note that the reason the left-right placement is so valuable in empirical research is its inclusiveness; it is a "simple structure" that can "summarize the political positions of voters and other political actors" (2011: 85). Besides, although it might be considered an oversimplification of the multidimensional issue space, such oversimplification can only lead to a more "conservative estimate of the actual working of the party linkage in electoral politics" (*ibid*.: 86).

In the surveys conducted by CSES and EES the respondents were asked to place themselves on the left-right scale and also to place a number of the most relevant parties in their country on the same left-right scale. The ideological positions of legislatures and governments are obtained from the respondents' estimates of the ideological positions of parties in the legislature and parties in government at the time of the closest elections. The literature suggests that the uninformed respondents tend to place parties for which they do not have enough information on the middle point in the scale, so the solution is to use answers of those respondents who are more likely to be familiar with the parties' true position (Dalton *et al*. 2011; Golder and Stramski 2010). I have calculated the mean placement of each party as reported by the respondents with the highest levels of education in the survey. Reliance on citizens' perceptions should also reduce the error associated with differential item functioning, since both citizen and elite positions were calculated from the same source, and both estimates are linked to the same point in time. Even if these party positions are not the true positions, they are still a good indicator of where the respondents, on average, place those parties and how those same respondents perceive the ideological space in their country (Golder and Stramski 2010).

The average ideological position of the legislature is calculated as the mean position of all parties in the legislature weighted by each party's share in the total number of seats. In some cases, the party positions could not have been calculated from the respondents' placements because that particular party was not mentioned in the survey. If the information on the ideological placement was missing for more than 6% of the total seats in the parliament, the country was eliminated from the analysis for the given year. The ideological position of the government, similarly to the average parliament position, was calculated as the weighted average of left-right positions of all the parties in the government. If only one party was in government, the ideological position of the government was equal to the ideological position of that party.

The most common measure of congruence between citizens and policy-makers is the simple absolute ideological distance between the median citizen and the mean or median position of the legislature or government. This measure, however, is not sensitive to the actual distribution of citizens' preferences. To avoid this problem, Golder and Stramski suggest an alternative approach, a measure of relative citizen congruence (2010). The measure of relative congruence takes into consideration both the absolute distance between all citizens and their representatives and the actual dispersion of the citizens' preferences in the given sample. This measure is calculated as the sum of absolute distances between the left-right positions of the members of a constituency ($C_i x$) and the most preferred position of the constituency, that of the median citizen (Cx), divided by the sum of absolute differences between the left-right mean positions of all the members of the empirical constituency ($C_i x$) and the average ideological position of the legislative (Lx) or government (Gx). I preferred this measure as it allows me to capture the ideological congruence of selected groups by using the positions of the members of the sub-constituency[2] ($Sub_i x$) and the most preferred position of the sub-constituency ($Subx$). Taking into consideration that ideological congruence can be different if we measure the positions of the representatives in parliament or in government, I will estimate measures of relative congruence for both levels of representation:

*Relative Sub-constituency Legislative Congruence (**RSLC**):*

$$1 - \frac{\Sigma_{i-1}^{N} \mid Sub_i x - Subx}{\Sigma_{i-1}^{N} \mid Sub_i x - Lx} \tag{1}$$

*Relative Sub-constituency Governmental Congruence (**RSGC**):*

$$1 - \frac{\Sigma_{i-1}^{N} \mid Sub_i x - Subx}{\Sigma_{i-1}^{N} \mid Sub_i x - Gx} \tag{2}$$

The measure of relative congruence goes from 0 to 1. Zero values indicate perfect congruence, where congruence is high because the absolute distance between the sub-constituents and their legislative or government is small relative to the dispersion of the preferences of sub-constituents. Low congruence occurs when the absolute distance between the groups and their legislative or government is large compared to the dispersion of the group preferences.

The left plot in Figure 1 on the next page shows the differences in left-right positioning between male and female respondents across all the selected countries. For clarity, the figure shows the average positions for both groups only for the first module of CSES. In most cases female respondents tend to place themselves more towards the left end of the scale than male respondents, as was also predicted by

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[2] The term sub-constituency is adopted from Adams and Ezrow (2009).

Figure 1. Ideological Self-placement and Relative Group Congruence for Men and Women Calculated for Countries in CSES Module 1
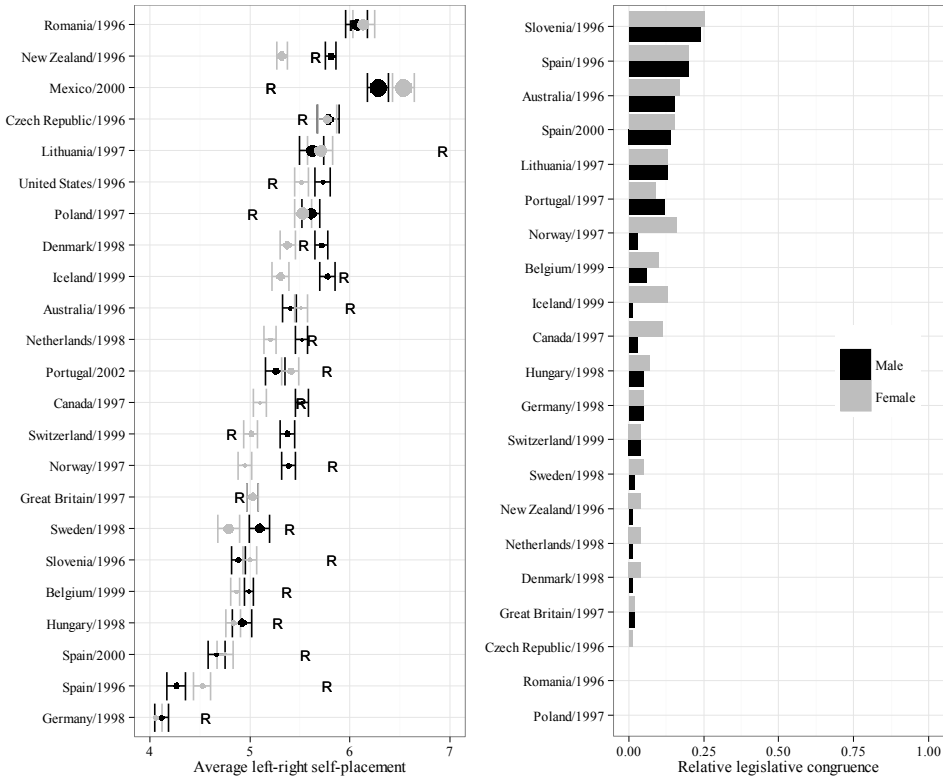

Note: In the left figure horizontal lines represent standard error values associated with each mean estimate. R refers to the position of the representative (weighted average of all parties in the parliament).

the recent gender gap theory (Inglehart and Norris 2000; Jelen *et al*. 1994; Pratto *et al*. 1997). There are also many countries in which there are no distinguishable differences in preferences between genders, as in Romania or the Czech Republic in 1996. However, even if the differences between males and females are not large, it is still possible that these groups are not equally represented. The letter 'R' in the plot shows the weighted average position of all parties in the parliament for the closest elections. The case of Belgium in 1999 illustrates this point, with no large gender differences in ideological positions, but while having men slightly closer to the parliament's position than females.

The right side of Figure 1 shows the levels of relative citizen congruence for each group. It is apparent that in most cases women have lower levels of congruence compared to men. It is important to mention yet again that both figures show only a subset of the cases that will be analyzed later. The distance of each group in relation to the position of the parliament will also depend on the group's preference distribution. If for some reason left-right placement is more dispersed among women than among men, the congruence measure will capture this difference and the levels of congruence might be lower for women. Another comparison demonstrates this properly. In Poland and Romania, both genders have zero values on relative legislative congruence which indicates perfect congruence. This result is unexpected for Poland given the differences in relation to representatives and gender as seen in the figure on the left; however, in Poland both groups have more dispersed preferences than in Romania. As Golder and Stramski explain, if two countries have the same values of median citizen left-right and representative positioning, the difference in the levels of relative citizen congruence might depend on the citizens' dispersion of preferences (2010). By adapting their measure for group congruence I also control for differences in dispersion of preferences between groups and between countries.

Consider the six hypothetical examples in Figure 2. To simplify the illustration, in the examples the distribution of group preferences is equal. In country A the position of the representatives on the left-right scale is 5. In the first example (a) women and men are equally congruent with their representatives. In the second and third example (b and c) one group is more congruent than the other indicating inequality in ideological representation. In country B the situation is slightly different since the position of the representatives is further away from both groups in all instances

Figure 2. Gender Inequalities in Congruence, Averaged by Country
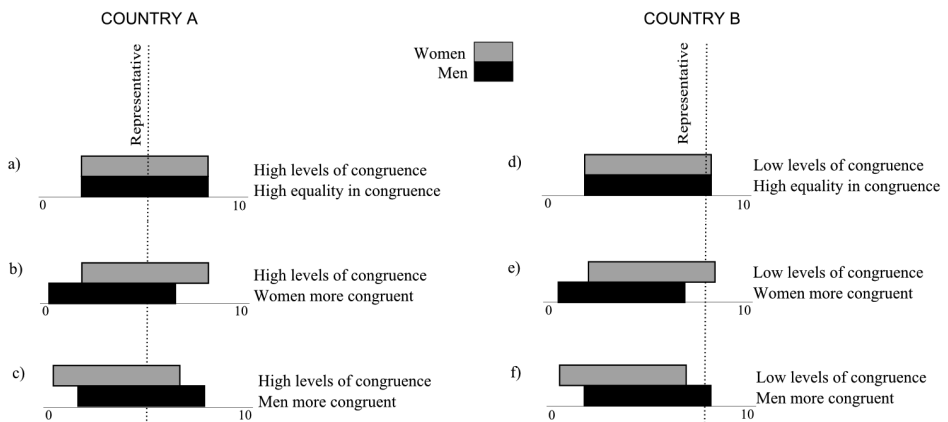
compared to that of country A. The first example (d) illustrates a situation where both women and men are quite distant from their representatives' position, but they are equally distant. The other two examples (e and f) show situations where one or the other group is closer to that of the representatives, but they are both less congruent than the groups in country A.

The measure of relative congruence for each group provides information about the level of representation for gender groups and countries. However, this study further investigates the fairness of representative democracies, so it is important to determine to which extent the relative congruence of women differs from that of their male counterparts (formulas 3 and 4). If there is no difference in the congruence of males and females, they are equally represented. Also, as the illustrations show, an equality measure is not sensitive to the levels of congruence. The estimates of congruence inequality for the example pairs a-b, b-e or c-f would be exactly the same. In country A their levels of congruence are equally good and in country B equally bad.

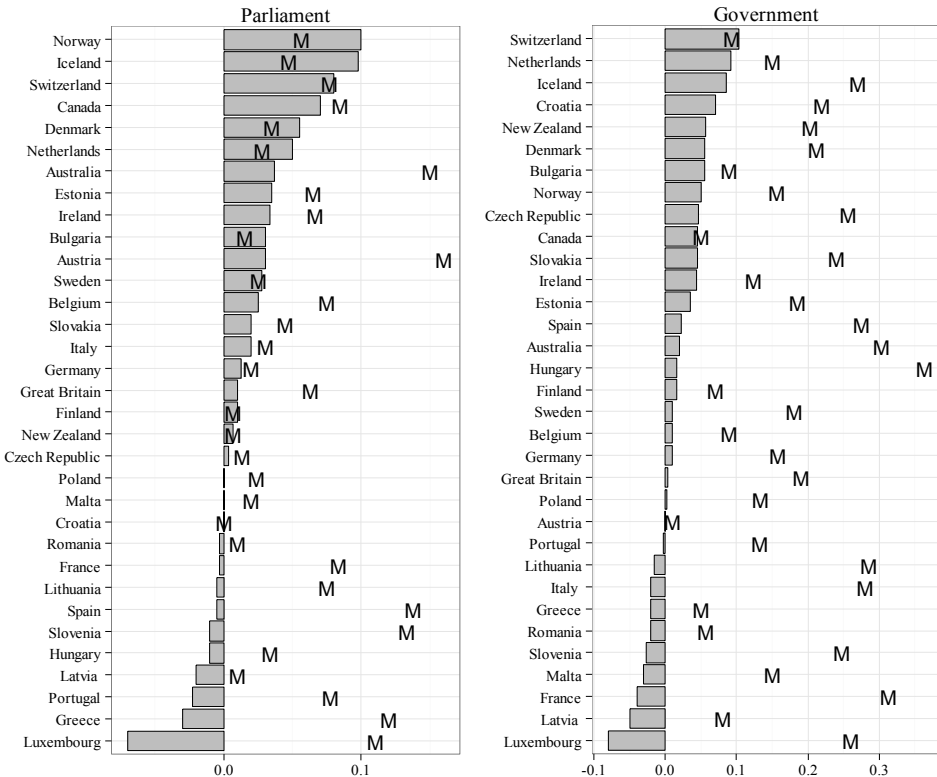Inequality in Legislative and Government Congruence:

$$ILC_{gender} = RSLC_{female} - RSLC_{male} \qquad\qquad (3)$$

$$IGC_{gender} = RSGC_{female} - RSGC_{male} \qquad\qquad (4)$$

Figure 3 shows the difference in congruence levels (ILC and IGC) between groups for a sub-sample of countries from CSES and EES. Since the measure represents a simple difference between groups, as the formulas above demonstrate, the sign of the value indicates which group is closer to the parliament and to the government's position. The ideological congruence of women is subtracted from the ideological congruence of men, so the positive values indicate that women's preferences are further from the average parliamentary position than are those of men. Females are generally less congruent compared to men; however, there are several countries, such as Luxembourg or Greece, where the direction of inequality indicates bias for male respondents.

In Figure 3 the letter 'M' marks the levels of relative citizen congruence, the original measure used by Golder and Stramski (2010). Levels of inequality in representation are not always higher in countries where the average citizen is further away from the ideological position of the parliament. In Austria, the relative citizen congruence is very low, but at the same time the congruence differences between gender groups are very small, indicating high levels of gender equality. Hypothetically, it is possible to differentiate between various clusters of countries: countries with high median citizen congruence and low or high inequality, and countries with low median citizen congruence and low or high inequality. Ideally, high quality

Figure 3. Gender Inequalities in Congruence, Averaged by Country

Note: M refers to the position of the representative (weighted average of all parties in the parliament and in government). Presented values are average inequality in legislative congruence and inequality in governmental congruence by country.

representative democracies, at least in terms of gender ideological differences, would have high levels of median citizen congruence and low levels of inequality. The example of Norway perfectly captures the missing dimension in previous studies of ideological congruence. While the median citizen congruence in Norway is satisfactory, the gender gap is very large. If we compared men and women on specific policy issues on which differences might be more pronounced, the gaps in ideological congruence would be even higher.

Another difference between the standard measure of congruence and inequality in congruence is visible in Figure 3. The average position of the government varies more substantively across the ideological scale compared with that of the

parliament, so larger gaps in the relative median citizen congruence (M) are present in most of the countries. However, the gap between genders does not significantly increase when we move from the parliamentary representation to the group distance from governments. What is noticeable is that the direction of inequality might change. In Malta there are no differences between genders given legislative congruence, but in terms of government congruence females seem to be better off than male citizens. In Croatia we see the opposite: while both inequality in congruence and relative citizen congruence are perfect at the legislative stage, female inequality is quite prominent at the governmental level.

Electoral Rules and Gender Gap in Congruence

An explanation for the differences in congruence inequality between gender groups might be related to the existence of different electoral systems, or more broadly to the choice between proportional and majoritarian visions of democracy. Electoral systems determine the context in which citizens, candidates and parties interact and serve as a main mechanism through which citizens' preferences are translated into policies. Any sort of distortions in congruence and cross-country variation in congruence, regardless of the way we empirically measure the constituencies, should at least partly depend on the constellations of electoral systems in liberal democracies (Ezrow 2010). There are strong theoretical arguments why both the majoritarian and the proportional electoral systems might enhance citizen-elite correspondence, particularly the median voter proximity to parliaments and governments (Blais and Bodet 2006; Golder and Stramski 2010; Huber and Powell 1994; Kim *et al*. 2010; Powell and Vanberg 2000; Powell 2000, 2009, 2013).

Predictions from Duverger's theory (1963) and spatial theories of party competition (Downs 1957; Cox 1990) suggest that majoritarian and proportional democracies can both, under specific conditions, produce high citizen-elite congruence. If there are two competing parties in the elections that win most seats, as Downs median voter theorem implies, the party with legislative majority should be very close to the median voter. In PR systems, with multiple parties dividing seats in parliament, it is very likely that at least one of the parties will be located close to the median voter position (Golder and Lloyd 2014). So far the findings suggest that conditions required to produce higher legislative congruence are less stringent in proportional systems than those required in majoritarian systems (Golder and Stramski 2010; Huber and Powell 1994; Powell 2000; Powell and Vanberg 2000). Majoritarian electoral rules, contrary to theoretical advantage, in practice do not consistently produce parties at the median position.

On the other hand, empirical research on the mediating effect of electoral rules on government congruence has been largely inconclusive. The expected mecha-

nisms do not necessarily work in the way suggested by theory. One group of researchers finds that the countries that employ proportional representation electoral rules fare much better at government ideological congruence than majoritarian democracies (Huber and Powell 1994; Powell and Vanberg 2000). More recent research, however, offers compelling evidence that the previous findings might be erroneous (Blais and Bodet 2006; Golder and Stramski 2010), suggesting that there is no evidence to conclude that the median citizen congruence is better or worse in countries that apply majoritarian arrangements. The main problem in the assessment of the impact of electoral rules on government representation revolves around the complexity of causal mechanisms connecting legislative and government formation. In majoritarian systems the causal chain is straightforward, "the position of the government is likely to be the same as that of the median legislative party" and, as a consequence, "there should be no change in either the level or variability of ideological congruence as one moves from the legislative to the governmental level" (Golder and Lloyd 2014: 207). In contrast, a median or plurality party can often be included in coalitions formed in proportional systems, but whether this happens or not will ultimately depend on the decisions of elites.

New findings from Powell (2009) and Golder and Lloyd (2014) offer some evidence to resolve this "ideological congruence controversy". Powell argues that the different results can be an artifact of the different time frame which was used in newer studies (2009). Even though the advantage of proportional systems disappears in the period from 1996 to 2004, Powell goes on to say that this is simply an anomaly and that PR systems do produce greater government ideological congruence in general (2009). Furthermore, he suggests that the competing results presented by other authors might have something to do with the greater variability in government congruence in majoritarian systems compared to PR systems. Golder and Lloyd follow up on this claim and find no evidence to support it; their analysis indicates that PR systems exhibit greater variability at the governmental level, but the results still do not support the claim that PR systems also outperform majoritarian systems at the governmental level (2014).

A descriptive analysis of gender congruence demonstrates that the considerable country differences exist both in terms of the levels of inequality and the direction of inequality. Given previous findings on the relationship between electoral rules and median correspondence it is logical to ask whether chosen electoral system mechanisms moderate inequalities among subgroups of the population. Since the distinction between the two visions is often presented in terms of tradeoffs between the accurate representation of diverse preferences and government accountability, theoretically proportional systems should reduce gender differences in congruence. Advocates of proportional systems, most notably Lijphart, argued that "the

beauty of PR is that, in addition to producing proportionality and minority represen-
tation, it treats all groups – ethnic, racial, religious, or even noncommunal groups –
in a completely equal and evenhanded fashion" (2004: 100). Although some might
argue that this idea of proportionality should not be extended to gender groups, as
they are not ethnic or religious minorities, Lijphart himself notes that women's re-
presentation can "serve as an indirect proxy of how well minorities are represented
generally" (2012: 280).

It should be noted that the impact of the electoral systems can also be largely
dependent on the distributions of group preferences across policy space. If women
have more leftist preferences their congruence will be better in countries where
parliaments and governments include more leftist parties. Elections in majoritarian
systems result in parliaments and governments where ideology is "off-set consider-
ably to the left or to the right of the median voter" and thereby resulting in higher
women congruence than in countries with proportional rules (Carey and Hix 2009).
Also, a party system can shape the views of citizens so public preferences are not
always exogenous to party system offerings. In majoritarian systems voters' prefer-
ences can be expected to be more homogeneous than they would be if they lived in
countries with proportional arrangements (Downs 1957). As a consequence, group
differences in ideological positions might be rather small in systems with a smaller
number of parties simply because of the supply side of the process.

Moreover, while majoritarian election results might be unfair for certain groups
at the legislative formation stage, proportional systems always involve a great deal
of uncertainty over the government formation. Inequality in preference aggrega-
tion in majoritarian systems will be visible right after elections, while additional
sources of subversion for proportional systems might occur during the government
formation. For instance, if inequality in congruence is lower in PR systems at the
legislative stage, beneficial impacts of proportionality can easily be cancelled at
higher stages of the representative process. Given different findings in previous lite-
rature and different causal pathways through which electoral rules might influence
the outcomes, it remains to be tested whether gender inequality in representation is
lower in countries with proportional electoral arrangements than in countries that
apply majoritarian electoral rules. I now turn to examine this question empirically.

The above-mentioned hypotheses are tested on 88 elections, with a focus on
parliamentary democracies only. To measure the differences in electoral systems I
use Gallagher's continuous measure of disproportionality rather than a simple major-
itarian-proportional binary measure, approach as suggested by Golder and Stramski
(2010). The least squares index ranges from 1 to 100 where higher numbers indicate
greater difference in the percentage of votes and seats obtained by parliamentary par-
ties in each country. As an illustration, the lowest disproportionality is in Denmark,

which uses a highly proportional Hare plus largest remainders formula, while the highest is in the countries that use plurality or majority formulas such as France in 2002 and Great Britain in 2009. As an additional test, models also include average district magnitude as an alternative indicator for the type of electoral system.

To ease interpretation, the measures of inequality in representation, presented in formulas 3 and 4, are taken as the absolute differences between the relative ideological positions of females compared to males. Several models with robust standard errors clustered by country are estimated, as shown in Table 1. In all models, I control for the overall levels of relative median congruence, since in those countries where the average citizen is poorly represented it is also most likely that group inequality will be higher. The results support that expectation for both stages of representation.

Table 1. Electoral Rules and Gender *Inequality* in Congruence

	Parliament		Government	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Disproportionality	-0.04** (0.22)		-0.03** (0.01)	
Average district magnitude		0.01 (0.01)		0.02** (0.01)
Median citizen congruence	0.17* (0.09)	0.14* (0.07)	0.09*** (0.02)	0.08*** (0.02)
Inequality in legislative congruence			0.81*** (0.11)	0.84*** (0.12)
N	88	88	88	88
R squared	0.10	0.13	0.57	0.57

Note: *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01, two-tailed test. The table reports estimated coefficients and robust standard errors (in parentheses) clustered by country. The dependent variable is the inequality in congruence (0-1). The definitions of the independent variables are given in the text; all variables are recoded on a scale from 0 to 1. The results are also robust for bootstrap re-sampling schemes.

In the case when inequality in congruence is calculated for gender distances from the government I also control for the levels of inequality at a lower stage. If parliament – government stages are closely linked, we should also expect a significant spill-over effect of inequality created during interest aggregation in legislature onto the higher stage. Furthermore, since gender inequality is more likely to be higher in

countries where group preferences significantly differ, inequality in legislative congruence should also capture that national-level difference. As expected, inequality in legislative congruence accounts for a large part of the variation in government congruence. As normative theory suggests, representation is a process of interconnected stages, if there is distortion in the relationship between gender groups at the legislative stage, this distortion will be transferred to governmental representation.

More relevant for my initial question, regarding the relationship between proportionality and levels of inequality, the results imply that gender equality in congruence is significantly higher in countries with disproportional electoral outcomes – majoritarian systems. Majoritarian systems outperform proportional systems given gender inequality levels in legislative and in government congruence. Note, however, that the findings are more robust for government congruence since the coefficients on the disproportionality index and average district magnitude both point to significant differences between electoral systems. Interestingly, the same rationale used to explain the lack of median correspondence in majoritarian systems might clarify these results. The conditions under which proportional systems induce good group representation are in empirical reality much less likely than mechanisms through which majoritarian systems satisfy this specific dimension of gender equality. The very fact that majoritarian systems do not produce parliaments and governments close to the median position apparently closes the gap between women and men. Additional tests reveal that the differences in left-right self-placement between genders are slightly more pronounced in proportional systems, with an average difference of 0.21 compared to 0.16 for majoritarian countries, which could party explain this finding. However, if it is true that party system characteristics also have an impact on the differences in preferences between social groups, majoritarian systems will still rank better on the gender equality scale.

Conclusion

Good correspondence between popular preferences and the positions of elected officials, enabled primarily by the electoral process, is the driving force of any representative democracy. The success of democracy in any country should, therefore, be evaluated on the grounds of the quality of citizen-elite linkages. So far comparative studies have predominantly focused on the quality of those linkages by examining the distance between median citizens and their parliaments and governments. In this paper, I have argued that the quality of representation cannot be assessed merely on the grounds of the median citizen congruence. Studies that focus on median citizens might only discover that some countries perform better than others in terms of the degree of good correspondence, but they cannot say whether the elites give equal consideration to every citizen in the representative process. As a contribution to the present studies of comparative congruence, I have suggested a modification of the

measure of relative citizen congruence to study the differences of congruence between politically relevant groups.

This measure is not only useful for comparing the congruence of groups with median correspondence but can also be used to gauge the level of group inequality. It would, also, be interesting to see whether gender equality in ideological congruence, as one of the minimal conditions for substantive representation, is enhanced by legal and voluntary implementations of women's quotas. Even more, one could ask to which extent is the increased number of women in parliaments related to a greater congruence of women with their country's representative institutions. This is particularly important if we consider the fact that ideological congruence is only one dimension of representation. High congruence does not imply that the government will actually act in the interest of its constituents, but if there is low congruence, it is questionable whether policy outcomes will equally reflect the needs and desires of all relevant groups.

In the second part of the paper, I analyzed whether the most frequent explanation of variation in congruence, namely differences between majoritarian and proportional systems, holds when we consider gender equality in representation. I find that the case for proportionality, at least one that emphasizes the inclusive features of this vision of democracy, is not strong. The results are more strongly in favor of government congruence – majoritarian systems outperform PR systems when it comes to gender equality at both stages of representation. Since much cannot change between two stages of a representative process in these countries, the benefits of majoritarian arrangements for gender equality in congruence remain significant across levels. This issue certainly warrants additional research and discussion. To a certain extent this paper echoes the conclusion reached by Golder and Stramski, who argued that "empirical results about citizen-representative congruence can depend in many situations on exactly how we conceptualize congruence" (2010: 104). I would just add that it also depends on who exactly do we regard, both normatively and research worthy, as constituents.

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