Democratic Reflections

To what extent do representatives mirror their constituents, and how does it affect the challenges modern, representative democracy are facing?

Troy Saghaug Broderstad

Thesis for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor (PhD)
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Abstract

This thesis addresses the important challenges that contemporary, representative democracies are facing, and shows how (better) representation can contribute to tackling them. In doing so, I limit the scope to one specific aspect of the research on representation, namely congruence. As such, the main question that I address in my thesis is: In what way does congruence matter for contemporary, representative democracies? To answer this question, I focus on four important challenges to contemporary democracy, namely democratic legitimacy, growing demand for direct democracy, political polarisation and emerging cleavages, and growing economic and political inequalities. In turn, I show how each of these challenges can be linked to the congruence between citizens and elites and how better representation can remedy some of the worrying developments in contemporary democracies.

Specifically, this thesis contributes with four articles, which stand as independent contributions to the literature, and, in the context of this dissertation, contributes to answering the overarching research question. In the first article, An *Empirical Evaluation of Explanations for Political System Support*, I focus on democratic legitimacy and study which variables best predict citizens' satisfaction with democracy. I find that, among other things, congruence is an important predictor of regime support and argue that this covariate is understudied and under-theorised in the literature on satisfaction.

The second article, *Procedural Congruence and the Delegate-Trustee Dilemma* focuses on how elites evaluate a direct democratic procedure and whether they are congruent with citizens in their evaluations of such procedures. Using a novel survey experimental design, the article shows that elites have changing perceptions of the legitimacy of a referendum depending on whether the turnout and size of the majority are low or high. Representatives also have an outcome favourability bias. Additionally, we demonstrate that representatives are less likely to think that a referendum is legitimate compared to citizens. To understand this, we turn to the tension between the role of representatives as either trustees or delegates. The incongruence can be explained by the fact that trustees think referendums are less legitimate compared to delegates.

The third article, *Conditional Satisfaction: Political Support, Congruence, and the (Un)certainty of Political Marginalization*, uses insights from the first paper and study the conditional relationship between citizens' satisfaction with democracy, ideological congruence, and government type. Article III pays particular attention to the conditioning effects of coalition governments' ideological make-up and individual-level education. The findings show that higher educated citizens are more sensitive to being ideologically distant from single-party governments compared to coalition governments. In addition, the findings also show that higher-educated citizens are more satisfied, when incongruent, as the ideological diversity of multi-party

governments increases.

The fourth article, *Beliefs About the Income Generating Process and Social Preferences – a Comparison Between Elected Representatives and the Citizens* explore how beliefs about the income generating process shape preferences for redistribution. The findings show that preferences for redistribution negatively associate with believing in meritocratic factors, both for citizens and politicians. Contrary to previous findings, the article provides evidence that the politicians' redistribution preferences are more aligned with the less affluent compared to the more affluent and that elites want to redistribute more than citizens. Finally, the article shows that people who vote for parties on the left of the political spectrum are more congruent on income redistribution with their representatives than people on the right.

The thesis contributes to the existing literature on congruence with theoretical, conceptual, empirical, and methodological advances. Theoretically, I develop an argument about how malfunctioning representation may be a source of many of the challenges discussed above. Conceptually, I develop the concept of congruence based on existing research and I contribute with two new concepts, procedural and meta-belief congruence. Empirically, I show that congruence is related to satisfaction, that citizens and elites are procedurally incongruent, and that meta-beliefs shape redistribution preferences. Methodologically, I employ diverse, state-of-the-art methodological approaches such as machine learning and survey experiments administered to elites and citizens. Taken together, the dissertation highlights the importance of congruence for the challenges facing contemporary, representative democracies and argue that better functioning representation can contribute to tackling these challenges.

List of articles

1. Broderstad, Troy Saghaug. "*An Empirical Evaluation of Explanations for Political System Support.*"

2. Broderstad, Troy Saghaug, Sveinung Arnesen, Mikael Poul Johannesson, & Jonas Line. "*Procedural Congruence and the Delegate-Trustee Dilemma.*"

3. Mayne, Quinton & Troy Saghaug Broderstad. "*Conditional Satisfaction: Political Support Congruence, and the (Un)certainty of Political Marginalization*"

4. Broderstad, Troy Saghaug, Cornelius Cappelen, Alexander Cappelen, & Bertil Tungodden. "*Beliefs About the Income Generating Process and Social Preferences – a Comparison Between Elected Representatives and the Citizens*"

Contents

Chapter 1

Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to expand our understanding of how the democratic representation process can be improved so that democracies are better able to deal with the challenges they face. Democracies around the world are facing an array of challenges, and scholars have argued that they are suffering from regression, broadly defined as a loss of democratic quality and support (Diamond 2021). These challenges include, among other things, maintaining democratic legitimacy as well as contending with the erosion of support for political actors and the consequent growing demand for direct democracy, political polarisation, the surge of populist parties, new cleavages, and growing economic and political inequalities.

More specifically, to ensure their legitimacy, democratic regimes require citizen support, and many scholars have recorded a decline in support over time and a surge in dissatisfied or critical citizens (Norris 1999). For instance, Dalton (2004) finds that public support and trust in politicians, parties, and political institutions has eroded. While this decline in legitimacy is not consistent across time and space in all established democracies (cf. Norris 2011; Ham et al. 2017), ensuring the legitimacy of the regime remains an important challenge in ensuring a well-functioning democracy.

Relatedly, there has been an erosion of citizen support for representative democracy and, in particular, its main actors—parties and politicians (cf. Norris and Lovenduski 1995; Dalton 2004). There has simultaneously been a growing demand for and use of direct democracy over the last several decades (Qvortrup 2018).

This development has led to calls for alternative forms of political participation to supplement existing representative democratic procedures. These complementary forms of citizen participation include referendums and citizen initiatives. In many cases, these demands have led to institutional changes that allow for the use of referendums or more frequent use of referendums on both national and subnational levels (Scarrow 2001; Bengtsson and Mattila 2009). While referendums *per se* do not pose a challenge to democracy per se, they can certainly be viewed as a challenge to *representative* democracy.

Another important obstacle for democracies to overcome is growing polarisation between different groups. Political leaders can, for instance, fuel societal conflicts along pre-existing cleavages or create new cleavages. This polarisation is not a new phenomenon. According to social identity theorists, humans tend to associate themselves with certain groups based on shared socioeconomic, cultural, and other traits. The members of an "in-group" then tend to develop more favourable views about their own group and less favourable feelings towards the "out-group". The pre-existing cleavages form the basis for party formation and voter identification, and they are often used by the political elite for electoral gains. That said, cleavages and the formation of parties along those lines are not bad in and of themselves. If parties form along these cleavages, representative systems can function better. However, if actors use cleavages to fuel conflict to such an extent that one group is unwilling to negotiate or compromise with the other group, this poses a problem for democracy. Thus, the sweeping nature of this political polarisation and the danger it poses to democratic regimes is increasingly prevalent in contemporary politics (Arbatli and Rosenberg 2021).

This polarisation, coupled with the newly emerging cleavage in Western European states around education (Ford and Jennings 2020) also poses problems for democracies. The expansion of higher education has been one of the major social trends in postwar Europe, with all countries investing heavily in increasing access to university education. This has led to a sharp increase in the number of university graduates from one generation to the next. This is relevant because these graduates have distinctive social identities, values, and interests, and scholars argue that there has been a computational shift in the electorate with the potential to create new cleavages and party alignments (Stubager 2008, 2009, 2010; Hakhverdian 2015; Spruyt 2014; Spruyt and Kuppens 2015). A consequence of this is that we have seen a decline in and marginalisation of the working class, which, in turn, can negatively affect the support for those who experience marginalisation. At the core of the polarisation along socio-economic lines stand growing inequalities, and this can result in a concentration of power in the hands of few wealthy individuals. (Piketty et al. 2014; Bovens and Wille 2017).

Taken together, these challenges have become a cause for concern among political scientists. As a result, they have paid increasing attention to understanding this crisis—and how it may be remedied. This crisis, consisting of a decline in trust in politicians, the rise of authoritative, populist political leaders, and growing political polarisation, has further resulted in a flourishing of movements that question the willingness and capacity of elected governments to stop race-related violence, contain pandemics, and tackle climate change. Publications like *Democracy in Decline?* (Diamond, Plattner, and Rice 2015), *How Democracies End* (Runciman 2018), *How Democracies Die* (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018), and *Why We Are Polarized* (Klein 2020) show that the dynamic endurance of political systems hinges on their ability to handle inherent political tensions related to the authoritative allocation of societal values in legitimate ways (Easton 1965; Kane and Patapan 2012; Runciman 2018).

How can voters and leaders in modern representative democracies tackle these challenges, and how can comparative political behaviour help address these problems? As is evident from the brief overview above, many scholars have investigated how democracies can avoid regression. Following this line of research, I argue that it is, therefore, highly important to further contribute to our understanding of these issues.

In this thesis, I argue that many of the challenges facing modern democracy today can be linked to the malfunctioning of democratic representation, i.e., the relationship between citizens and the elected representatives to whom they delegate their power to rule.This thesis will contribute to the field by focusing on the representational aspects of modern democracies. Some of the challenges to democracy discussed here are partly due to a loss in quality in substantial and descriptive representation and responsiveness (cf. Gilens 2012; L. M. Bartels 2018) Thus, I argue that the malfunctioning representation of people's preferences is one of the root causes of all these democratic challenges. Part of the solution to these problems is, therefore, to improve the democratic representation function. In sum, a better and more equal representation of citizens will increase the legitimacy of democracy (L. M. Bartels 2018), which will make democracies work better.

In order to limiting the scope of this dissertation, the focus is centred on the concept of *congruence*, as this is one of the most important diagnostic tools for understanding how well representation works Congruence can be broadly defined as the alignment of preferences between citizens and their representatives. As I will discuss in more detail in the next chapter, congruence can take many shapes and forms, both in terms of the subjects being compared, i.e., citizens and elites, and the objects being compared, i.e., their preferences (cf. Golder and Stramski 2010). As the title of this dissertation indicates, representatives should ideally mirror their constituents in order for democracy to function properly, but if representatives are unable to do so, this will have severe consequences for democracy[1] By understanding representation and how representation can work better, we can mitigate the consequences of some of these challenges to democracy.

The theoretical argument of this thesis is that studying congruence can expand our understanding of these challenges and how they can be mitigated or resolved. Starting with regime legitimacy and citizen satisfaction, I argue that congruence is an understudied covariate in the literature (see Mayne and Hakhverdian 2017, for a

1. An important side note to this is that a democracy is also responsible for ensuring that economic and other national interests are met – even if citizens do not necessarily agree on how to do so. In that sense, there is a tension between a government that is responsible and government that is responsive.

notable exemption,). Scholars have, in the past, focused only on who wins and who loses in elections (cf Anderson and Guillory 1997; Curini, Jou, and Memoli 2012; Bernauer and Vatter 2012); however, the concept of congruence is a more nuanced tool that gives us more information about the state of representative democracy than the rather crude measure of who wins and who loses. This also implies that the role of congruence is understudied; in this way, the current thesis develops and contributes to the theoretical debate on how congruence can improve regime legitimacy. By studying the role of congruence and thus also representation, I contribute to existing research by bridging the study of regime legitimacy and the study of congruence.

Additionally, I focus on polarisation and how newly emerging cleavages shape patterns of legitimacy. To date, few empirical works have explicitly explored how polarisation is associated with democratic erosion (Arbatli and Rosenberg 2021), and this thesis contributes to this area of research by examining the role of representation in this causal chain. By shedding light on how citizen heterogeneity and contextual factors work in tandem with congruence, my dissertation builds a theoretical argument about political sophistication being a key component in how citizens perceive the workings of democracy.This speaks to the emerging cleavage regarding education and furthers our understanding of how citizen heterogeneity and representation shape legitimacy perceptions. Thus, one of the main contributions of this thesis concerns how representation and congruence affect regime legitimacy.

Another key contribution of the thesis relates to how new concepts of congruence can better our understanding of representation. By utilising these concepts, scholars can be better equipped to understand and prevent some of the major challenges facing modern democracies. First, I look at the demand for representation and develop the concept of procedural congruence. To broaden our understanding of representation, it is important to investigate how both citizens and elites view alternative forms of democratic representation beyond those offered by regular elections. As will be discussed in detail below, this novel theoretical construct of *procedural congruence*, i.e., whether the opinions of elites and citizens are congruent in regard to procedures, is an important avenue for future research and shows how congruence research can help us understand and theorise about new challenges to democracy.

The growing demand for direct democracy discussed above presents representative democracy with yet another challenge. At the core of this challenge is the fact that whether direct democracy improves or weakens the functioning of democracy is still debated in the field of comparative political behaviour (cf. Peters 2016; Bengtsson and Mattila 2009). If representatives see direct democratic mechanisms as challenging their role and work, they can purposefully cultivate distrust among representatives and citizens alike. Gaining insight into how direct democratic procedures are evaluated and understood is therefore important. This thesis contributes to our understanding of procedural congruence and how citizens and elites evaluate these procedures.

The second innovation of this dissertation is the introduction of the concept of meta-beliefs to this conceptual sphere. I conceptualise meta-beliefs as beliefs that guide citizens and representatives when they form opinions about general or specific congruence objects. By studying the various forms of meta-beliefs about the income generating process, this thesis tries to understand the underlying beliefs of citizens and representatives and the degree to which these beliefs are congruent. This helps explain why some subgroups in society are better represented than others. By focusing on another important challenge to democracy, inequality and redistribution, I will show how, theoretically, meta-belief congruence is important for understanding how to tackle both polarisation and the growing inequality in the world.

1.1 Research question and scholarly contributions

As seen above, there are many substantial challenges to representative democracy, and there is a large body of literature that seeks to understand the causes and correlates of these challenges. The purpose of this thesis is to shed light on how better representation can help tackle these challenges. In this thesis, I look for an answer in the way representation works in democracy. More specifically, this thesis examines how representational congruence can help in tackling these challenges. The thesis focuses on specific aspects of research on representation, namely, congruence, and asks the following question: *In what way does congruence matter for contemporary representative democracies*?

In answering this question, this dissertation uses the major challenges to representative democracy discussed above, namely, mass system support, growing demands for direct democracy, polarisation and new cleavages, and (political) inequality, as the backdrop for the subsequent analyses. By focusing on how congruence relates to the democratic challenges listed above, we can improve our understanding of how representation works and, in turn, better understand how representation can improve the workings of democracy.

The thesis makes several theoretical, conceptual, empirical, and methodological contributions to the existing research on congruence and the study of democratic representation more generally. Theoretically, I build the argument that the malfunctioning of representation may be the source of many of the challenges facing modern democracy. Further, I argue that there is much we do not yet know about congruence, context, and citizen heterogeneity. Specifically, this dissertation contributes to the literature on democratic satisfaction and presents a theoretical argument about how congruence, government type, and political sophistication shape patterns of support for democracy.

Conceptually, this thesis introduces two new concepts of congruence: procedural and meta-belief congruence. Adding these concepts to our understanding of congruence allows for a fuller evaluation of the state of representation by focusing on new dimensions of representation, namely, on procedures and how meta-beliefs shape policy preferences. As I show below, these concepts are valuable for furthering our understanding of congruence and how the study of congruence is paramount for addressing contemporary democratic challenges.

Empirically, this thesis demonstrates that congruence is related to democratic support, something that the existing empirical literature has largely ignored. It also demonstrates that the procedural aspects of democracy matter for regime support and that citizens and elites have incongruent procedural assessments. The research presented in this dissertation also shows that congruence and context have different effects depending on the level of education. Another empirical contribution of this dissertation that enriches the study of congruence comes from the data on elected legislators, which I use to carry out a more comprehensive study of congruence. Further, I demonstrate that meta-beliefs about income generating process are related to redistribution preferences, thus bringing the economic literature on redistribution into direct conversation with the congruence literature.

Methodologically, this thesis employs new data-mining techniques, using prediction to address long-standing debates about what affects regime support. The machine learning approach is also used in the context of a survey experiment where we innovate the earth mover's distance (EMD) to measure marginal EMD, or many-to-many congruence, in a conjoint experiment. Another methodological expansion involves field survey experiments with both citizens and representatives, which has not been widespread in comparative political research.

Each of the articles included in this thesis stands on its own while also contributing to the overall research question. Table 1.1 shows a list of the articles and summarises the main findings of the articles in relation to the overarching research question. The articles contribute to the literature on congruence and demonstrate how new perspectives on congruence can help in tackling the various challenges to representative democracy laid out above.

The rest of the thesis proceeds as follows: First, I discuss the concept of congruence and why it matters for democracy and representation. Second, I summarise the conceptual debates in congruence research and argue that the literature is focused on the subjects and objects of congruence, as explained in detail below. Third, I introduce the novel concepts of procedural and meta-belief congruence and show

how they relate to existing concepts of congruence. Fourth, I discuss the causes and correlates of congruence and show how my research contributes to the related literature. Fifth, I show how the papers in this dissertation address the pressing challenges that contemporary democracies face. Finally, I discuss the research bases and methodological considerations employed here before summarising the research designs and main findings of the individual articles. In a concluding section, I argue that by focusing on congruence and thereby also on equal representation, modern democracies can combat the challenges they are currently facing. In addition, I also discuss the limitations of the dissertation and make some suggestions for further research.

Table 1.1: Short summary of the articles included in this thesis

#	Article	Summary
1	*Explanations for Political System Support*	This paper investigates the most common predictors of satisfaction with democracy. Using a machine learning approach, I find satisfaction with the economy, procedural fairness, congruence, and responsiveness to be the most important predictors of satisfaction with democracy.
2	*Procedural Congruence and the Delegate–Trustee Dilemma*	In this article, we investigate whether elites assess referendum results in the same way their voters do. Our results demonstrate an incongruence between elites and citizens. To investigate the source of this *procedural incongruence*, we turn to the well-known tension between the role of representatives as either trustees or delegates.
3	*Conditional Satisfaction*	Drawing on article I in this thesis, we use congruence as an explanatory variable for satisfaction. We focus on how levels of uncertainty regarding political marginalisation vary by government type, paying particular attention to the conditioning effects of individual-level political sophistication and the make up of coalition governments. We find that government type and political sophistication interact to shape how citizens evaluate the functioning of their democracy. Additionally, the ideological composition of coalition governments conditions the relationship between citizen satisfaction and congruence among higher-educated citizens.
4	*Beliefs About the Income Generating Process and Social Preferences*	In this paper, we explore how beliefs about inequality shape redistribution preferences among politicians and citizens. We find a strong association between beliefs and redistribution preferences; we also find an indigence bias and people on the left to be more congruent than their right-leaning counterparts.

Chapter 2

Democracy, representation, and the role of congruence

In his seminal book, *Democracy and Its Critics*, Robert A Dahl (1989) argues that a democratic regime must meet the five criteria outlined in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Dahl's five criteria for democracy

Effective participation	Citizens must have equal opportunities to form and express their preferences and to question the public agenda.
Voting equality at the decisive stage	All votes cast must be counted and treated with equal weight.
Enlightened understanding	Citizens must enjoy equal opportunities for enlightenment.
Control of the agenda	The people must have the opportunity to decide what political matters should be brought up for deliberation.
Inclusiveness	Equality must extend to all citizens within the state.

However, the question remains: how can democracies ensure that they live up to or strive towards this ideal type of democracy? In modern democracies, this is done through representation. Representatives are given the authorisation to act on behalf of citizens, usually through the power of free and fair elections in which there is a true probability of the incumbent party/parties giving up their power (Pitkin 1967). This agreement to make collective decisions ensures that all citizens have an equal opportunity to influence the outcome (Urbinati and Warren 2008) . Representation in a democracy can thus be seen as a mechanism to achieve the equal representation of interests and views within the collective decisions that are made, although this does not always entail a one-to-one translation from preferences into policy. This idea of equal representation is in line with what Manin (1997) outlined regarding the conscious choice for representation since it delegates the power of citizens to elites, as opposed to the simply being a practical alternative to direct democracy.

The implications of this are that the representative body is supposed to reflect citizens' views. Hence, the preferences of the representatives should match those of the citizens, often referred to as preference congruence. If there is a temporal change in the preferences or views of citizens, representatives are meant to take this into account too, often termed preference responsiveness. Furthermore, the outcome of representatives' legislative behaviour is supposed to reflect the interests of citizens. This implies that there should be a match, or congruence, between citizens' preferences and policy outputs, which can be termed policy congruence. A policy response to changes in citizens' opinions can be termed policy responsiveness. Last, it is also important that representatives have the freedom to diverge from citizens' preferences or inform citizens about why they think it is a good idea to do so (Manin 1997). As Pitkin (1967) and Manin (1997) note, representatives do not just translate preferences into policies; they can contribute to this translation by exercising their own judgment. From a democratic point of view, this can mean that the representatives are concerned with the protection of democratic principles, such as the protection and equality of the rights of minorities. It can also mean expressing concern with something like the protection of the future or even the credibility of the political unit, such as avoiding wars or economic crises or upholding international commitments made by a previous government (Peters 2018).

In the context of representative democracy, congruence between citizens and elites plays an important role since representatives are supposed to be held accountable for the policy they produce. Further, congruence matters because representative democracies are supposed to turn voters' preferences into policy. Measuring congruence is therefore one way to evaluate whether representation works. Citizens delegate their power to rule to their representatives, and congruence between the two implies the empowerment of citizens, which is a key feature of a functioning representative democracy. Voters should replace elites that do not represent their preferences with other representatives who will. If voters cannot replace unrepresentative representatives, they can become disillusioned with democratic institutions, disaffected with politics, and disapproving of the political elite (Lupu and Warner 2017). When governments are seen as responsive, they build up a "reservoir of goodwill" that they can use to survive more challenging periods (Linde and Peters 2020).

Advancing the theory of representation beyond the classic account of Pitkin (1967), the seminal article "Rethinking representation" by Mansbridge (2003) expresses an ambition to move beyond Piktin's previously groundbreaking work. In Mansbridge's thinking, the traditional model of representation focused on the idea that during campaigns, representatives make promises to constituents, which they then either keep or fail to keep, is called promissory representation. Mansbridge (2003) identifies three other forms of representation called "anticipatory", "gyroscopic", and "surrogate" representation. *Anticipatory representation* refers to the idea of retrospective voting. Here, representatives focus on what they think their constituents will approve of when it comes time for the next election, assuming that voters vote on the basis of past performance, not on what representatives promised to do the last time they were elected. *Gyroscopic representation* refers to representatives using their own conceptions and principles derived, in part, from their own background. Finally, *surrogate* representation occurs when legislators represent constituents outside their own districts.

In response to this, Rehfeld (2009) suggests an alternative way of conceptualising representation along three different dimensions. Theoretically, Rehfeld places representative types along a continuum from more to less sensitive to sanctions, from self-reliant to dependent judgement, and from aiming for what is good for all to aiming for what is good for some. Rehfeld then constructs ideal types of representatives, in contrast to Mansbridge, who is mainly concerned with representation. A recent innovation was proposed by Saward (2006), who breaks with the trustee-delegate dichotomy and the understanding of representation as a principle-agent relationship. In this understanding, representation is essentially a claim that is put forward by an actor – a claim to represent someone regardless of whether the representative's actions will affect that person. Here, representation is disconnected from electoral procedures and does not even need to be political. Rather, representation denotes all sorts of formal and informal practises of claiming to speak or act in the interests of others.

These theoretical models of representation all try to understand how democracy ought to produce policies that reflect the will of the people, which is arguably one of the main features of democracy (see, e.g., Robert A Dahl 1956; Pitkin 1967; Przeworski 2010). Scholars have tried to understand the relationship between public opinion and the output a government produces, and it has been widely established that public opinion has a strong but far from deterministic influence on public policy (for recent reviews, see Shapiro 2011; Wlezien 2017).

This line of research is mainly concerned with how responsive governments are to public opinion in order to understand how representation works. Another strain of research closely related to this is research on congruence. In the context of political representation, congruence refers to the state of representation and is thus a criterion for assessing whether representation works. This research focuses on the extent to which citizens' opinions are reflected by the preferences or behaviour of representative elites. Comparing whether citizens' opinions are reflected in the preferences of policy-makers helps assess the core of functioning political representation (Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2012). Since citizens delegate their power to representatives, congruence between the two implies the empowerment of the constituency, which is a major promise of democracy.

Relating this back to theories of democratic representation, congruence plays an important role here. For Mansbridge (2009), it can give citizens tools to sort out candidates at the election booth and help them choose representatives whose objectives align with their own. Aligned objectives are an important key for citizens to—indirectly—have a say over policy outcomes without the need to monitor and punish their representatives, who are assumed to be self-motivated to pursue good public policy. In contrast, models based on sanctions assume representatives to be self-interested actors whom voters need to punish to avoid enacting policies they do not prefer. Regardless of our understanding of representation, congruence plays an important role in democracy because all the models discussed above assume that the preferences of the represented and their representatives will not be too divergent.

As discussed above, the question of whether representatives reflect the preferences of citizens is central to understanding how representative democracy works and under what circumstances it works best (Robert A Dahl 1971; Pitkin 1967; Urbinati and Warren 2008). Additionally, one of the fundamental questions in political science concerns who gains and who loses in politics. Since elected representatives sometimes fail to reflect the preferences of their constituents or represent some groups at a cost to others, it is important to understand what causes representatives to exhibit these biases.

Recent evidence from the U.S. suggests that there is a large degree of unequal representation (e.g., D. M. Bartels 2008; Gilens 2012; Jacobs and Page 2005), while other studies contest these findings (Erikson, Bhatti, et al. 2011; Branham, Soroka, and Wlezien 2017; Brunner, Ross, and Washington 2013; Enns 2015, e.g.,). However, most researchers agree that this finding holds when looking at the larger picture. Outside the US, a growing body of work has uncovered inequalities in representation. A growing body of studies on other countries also finds similar patterns of unequal representation (e.g., Bernauer, Giger, and Rosset 2015; Giger, Rosset, and Bernauer 2012; Lupu and Warner 2017; Peters and Ensink 2015; Schakel, Burgoon, and Hakhverdian 2020). Ultimately, this supports the argument that representation is not working as well as it should.

Therefore, I argue that the study of congruence, perhaps the most important diagnostic tool in assessing representation, is important for our understanding of the challenges facing modern democracy. If the preferences of citizens and elites are incongruent, policy outputs may be undesirable and even perpetuate inequalities in society. This, in turn, will lead to a decline in democratic support and fuel many of the challenges addressed in this thesis. On a theoretical level, incongruence also poses problems with the principles of democracy and ensures that democracy cannot live up to its potential—certainly not to the ideal described by Robert Alan Dahl (1989). By focusing on congruence and thus also representation, we can improve our understanding of how the mechanisms of representation can function better.

2.1 Two debates in congruence research

There are two principal ways in which scholars have conceptualised and measured congruence: on the basis of the subjects concerned and on the basis of the objects concerned. When scholars study congruence, they typically gather information about public opinion and the government's position on multiple or specific issues. For example, if we want to know how congruent the preferences of the median voter are with those of the government on a left–right scale, we gather information about all voters and calculate the left–right score of the median voter. We then compare this to the mean left–right score of the government.

In doing so, we have to make choices about the subjects and objects of congruence. The subject refers to how we understand the key actors, i.e., elites and citizens. This can, again, be broken down into two components: the actors and their relation to citizens. Across congruence studies, there is little disagreement about who the actors are: citizens and elites. However, as will be discussed in length below, how their relation is studied has empirical, theoretical, and conceptual consequences. The object refers to the relationship between the subjects, i.e., the actual congruence.

In this section, I will first summarise the early debates in congruence research. I will then discuss the debate concerning the research object and how different conceptualisations of the citizen–elite relationship can be understood. Next, I will discuss the different conceptualisations and measurement strategies employed to capture the object of congruence. Last, I will situate my theoretical and empirical innovations in this thesis within the larger field of research and show how they are used in my individual articles and how they can be used in further research on congruence.

2.1.1 The subjects of congruence

The subjects of congruence can be broken down into two key components: the actors and their relationship. The actors stay constant throughout, while their relationship can differ based on theoretical arguments and empirical constraints. In an influential article, Golder and Stramski (2010) introduced a new framework for understanding and studying congruence. They argue that the representational relationship should be considered in light of whether the relationship in question is between one legislator and many citizens or between one citizen and many legislators. As such, we can distinguish between one-to-one, many-to-one, and many-to-many representational relationships. The first two relationships correspond to the concept of dyadic representation, while the third concept concerns collective representation. Based on the scholarship on economic voting, Mayne and Hakhverdian (2017) distinguish between "egocentric" congruence, which involves a one-to-one relationship, and "sociotropic" congruence, which involves a many-to-one or many-to-many relationship.

To begin with, one-to-one congruence is conceptualised as the relationship perceived by individual citizens and is measured by the distance from each individual citizen to their specific representative. According to Golder and Stramski (2010), congruence is high when the absolute distance between the citizen and the representative is small, and the inverse is true as well. In their reading, this conceptualisation provides marginal returns for scholars because one legislator always represents many citizens. The perspective has, however, proven useful for examining citizens' behaviour in pursuit of policy representation, such as the party choices of a cross-pressured voter (Lefkofridi, Wagner, and Willmann 2014), vote-switching across electoral arenas (Bakker, Jolly, and Polk 2018), and turnout (Lefkofridi, Giger, and Gallego 2014); it has also been used in work assessing the effects of congruence on mass attitudes (Mayne and Hakhverdian 2017).

For Golder and Stramski (2010), many-to-one congruence refers to many citizens and one representative. Research using this conceptualisation usually compares groups of citizens (e.g., those living in a particular constituency or the citizenry as a whole) to one representative. There is, however, one distinction worth making here: The representative can be measured as an individual deputy, a party, or a government. Some studies examine the ideological distance between citizens and the government (Golder and Stramski 2010; Huber and Powell 1994). Others focus on congruence between parties and voters, i.e., by matching one party to many voters of that specific party (e.g., Giger and Lefkofridi 2014; Thomassen 2012; Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2012). In addition, some studies investigate the distance between many representatives and the median voter (e.g., Powell 2006; Blais and Bodet 2006; André and Depauw 2017b).

The last, many-to-many congruence, examines the distance between all citizens collectively and the body of representatives or the legislature (e.g., Thomassen and Schmitt 1999; Holmberg 1999a; Thomassen 1994). From a measurement perspective, this concept has been operationalised as the median citizen's position to the median legislator's position (e.g., Golder and Lloyd 2014). Following Golder and Stramski (2010), another way to operationalise this conceptualisation is to compare the distributions of citizens and representatives (e.g., Andreadis and Stavrakakis 2017; von Schoultz and Wass 2015; Andeweg 2011; Golder and Stramski 2010). When comparing distributions, congruence is high when the distribution of citizens' and representatives' preferences overlap. In the methodology section, I will discuss different ways to measure this overlap.

2.1.2 The object of congruence

Most scholars have examined what is termed "ideological congruence" between citizens and elites, which is typically understood as their distance on the left–right ideological scale (cf. Golder and Stramski 2010; Blais and Bodet 2006; McDonald, Budge, et al. 2005). The left–right scale summarises divergent policy positions and provides an organising principle for party competition and voting behaviour. By using, for example, the left–right dimension, we can capture a great deal of valuable information about the alignment between parties and their supporters in terms of their general ideological orientation. This approach has been particularly useful for comparative research on congruence and for related works that study parties' dispositions in relation to the distribution of citizens' preferences (cf. Ezrow 2007, 2008).

However, this generalist approach has received some criticism. Thomassen (2012) suggested that focusing on only the left–right dimension offers a much too optimistic picture of the effectiveness of representation. This is exemplified by a reexamination of Dutch data from Andeweg and J. Thomassen (2011) where the ideological congruence is almost perfect, while the congruence on specific issues, especially those that relate poorly to the general left–right dimension, are far from perfect. This has also been confirmed by other studies looking at specific issues or policies rather than ideological congruence (cf. Dalton and Welzel 2014; Lefkofridi, Wagner, and Willmann 2014; Costello, Thomassen, and Rosema 2012; Lefkofridi and Casado-Asensio 2013; Lupu and Warner 2017).

This form of congruence is referred to as issue congruence, i.e., whether citizens and elites have the same opinions on a range of issues. However, it can be complicated to measure since it relies on specific survey data on the opinions of legislators, who are naturally harder to survey than citizens. Luckily, new data sources such as the Comparative Studies of Electoral Systems (CSES) project and others have started systematically surveying elites. With ideological congruence, we usually rely on expert-coded data on party placement and, using various calculations, impose the findings on the national government. Researchers, therefore, have to accept a trade-off between the specific diagnosis of one representational system and more general accounts of congruence across space and time.

In addition to examining issue and ideological congruence, researchers have also studied how issue salience and priorities can be used to measure congruence (Traber, Giger, and Häusermann 2018; Reher 2014; Giger and Lefkofridi 2014). This is referred to as priority congruence (Reher 2014). This idea rests on the assumption that the issues that citizens consider important may exert a stronger influence than those they consider nonsalient or than broad ideological orientation when they decide whom to vote for. For instance, the party choices of left-authoritarian voters, who hold left-wing socioeconomic views and right-wing sociocultural views, are often shaped by their level of concern about the economy or immigration (Lefkofridi, Wagner, and Willmann 2014).

Finally, some studies examine congruence between citizens and their representatives in terms of the preferences of the former regarding the latter's representational roles or how the former view the latter. This form of representational congruence, which is often studied alongside issue congruence (e.g., André and Depauw 2017b; Belchior, Tsatsanis, and Teixeira 2016), concerns citizens' views of elites in the representation process. Styles of representation have been found to have close links to citizen–elite congruence regarding political preferences (Önnudóttir 2014). Since such data are not always available in comparative data sets, this line of inquiry has been mainly advanced by single-country research. Studies of Spain (Méndez-Lago and Martínez 2002) and the Netherlands (Andeweg and J. J. Thomassen 2005) show less positive findings for this type of congruence than, for instance, studies of Finland (Åsa Von Schoultz and Wass 2016) and Sweden (Holmberg 1989).

In sum, there are four conventional conceptualisations of congruence in the literature: ideological, issue, priority, and representational congruence. In this thesis, I offer an empirical extension of the objects of congruence, which will be discussed in the sections below. First, I add to the conceptual understanding of ideological congruence by introducing the concept of meta-belief congruence. I argue that ideological congruence can be thought of as a meta-belief that guides citizens when forming opinions about general or specific congruence objects. Additionally, I introduce a more concrete conceptualisation of these meta-beliefs and link them directly to, for instance, policy preferences. Thus, I show how specific meta-beliefs about important issues in politics shape policy preferences and thereby move beyond a general left–right self-placement or GAL/TAN conceptualisation, which can be thought of as more abstract and all-consuming concepts that go beyond specific policies. Second, I build upon the notion of representational congruence and add a procedural element to this concept. While representational congruence mainly concerns how citizens and elites ideally want elites to behave in a given situation, procedural congruence deals with citizen–elite congruence on specific procedures. This can be understood in several ways, and in the following section, I will discuss how we can understand, study, and measure this congruence. Finally, I discuss meta-belief congruence.

2.1.3 Procedural congruence

Previous research on ideological congruence has investigated the link between public opinion and policy and/or elite preferences (e.g., Wlezien 1995; Jones, Larsen-Price, and Wilkerson 2009; Lax and Phillips 2009; Golder and Stramski 2010; Lupu and Warner 2017; Siavelis 2009). However, other studies on procedural evaluations by voters and the elite are scarce. Some studies (Kornberg, Clarke, and Goddard 1980; Méndez-Lago and Martínez 2002; Andeweg and J. J. Thomassen 2005; Åsa Von Schoultz and Wass 2015; André and Depauw 2017a) have investigated what sort of representational relationship citizens and representatives want. The focus in these aforementioned studies has been constrained to the process of representation(André and Depauw 2017a), which I refer to as representational congruence. These studies have argued that scholars should take this type of congruence into account when studying perceptions of regime performance. Thus, by simultaneously scrutinising procedures and congruence, we can expand our understanding of both concepts.

In congruence research, many scholars have focused on how electoral context affects congruence, providing mixed evidence for whether single-district or multiparty systems produce more or less congruence (cf. Lupu, Selios, and Warner 2017). This has also been scrutinised from a procedural congruence perspective by Arnesen et al. (2021), who study the willingness to accept change in parliamentary electoral systems in an article comparing elite and citizen responses to information through a survey experiment. In addition, Esaiasson and Öhberg (2019) show that the way elites and citizens assess the fairness of a process leading to a controversial policy decision is affected by outcome favourability.

Beyond these two accounts, few studies have investigated procedural congruence. It is well-known that across different contexts, the attributes of a procedure must be considered when evaluating the legitimacy and outcome of that procedure (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002; Tyler 2006; Van Ryzin 2011). In recent years, a growing body of research has been devoted to studying the micro-level mechanisms within democratic procedures and affecting how, when, and why they produce legitimate outcomes (Arnesen et al. 2019; Christensen, Karjalainen, and Nurminen 2015; Esaiasson 2011; Esaiasson et al. 2016; Marien and Kern 2017; Persson, Esaiasson, and Gilljam 2013; Werner 2019). Nevertheless, knowledge about how representatives and citizens evaluate democratic procedures remains limited.

Building on this emerging literature, I advance the conceptual and theoretical understanding of congruence. The following discussion seeks to fill this gap and establish a sound concept that scholars can use to scrutinise different aspects of procedural congruence. I depart from the wider literature on congruence in defining the concept of procedural congruence. Specifically, procedural congruence is defined as the distance between elites' and citizens' evaluations of the same democratic procedure. Starting with the procedural aspect, this can encompass all minor and major democratic procedures, such as elections, referendums, and mini-publics. As seen in Arnesen et al. (2021), researchers can compare citizens' and representatives' opinions on changes to electoral rules. Additionally, scholars can introduce various mini-public approaches and compare how citizens and elites view group composition, the size of the discussion groups, and the length of the deliberation. Focusing only on the outcome of these procedures, we can also see why procedures dealing specifically with decision-making are of substantive interest to scholars. These procedures include MP sanctioning, bill proposals, citizen initiatives, and more. Furthermore, researchers can gauge congruence by evaluating these outcomes. This is not unrelated to the attributes of the procedure, yet the specific procedural outcome of congruence must be viewed as a separate entity.

When assessing procedural congruence, we can imagine different areas where the perceptions or evaluations of elites and citizens regarding a certain procedure matter: first, in their evaluation of the importance of the procedure; second, in their perceived legitimacy of a procedure; and third, in the outcome of the procedure. We can therefore define procedural congruence as *the degree of overlap between voters' and representatives' perceptions of a democratic procedure*.

There are different ways in which researchers can measure procedural congruence. As with priority congruence, scholars can investigate how elites and citizens evaluate the importance of a given procedure. How one conceptualises importance can, of course, vary. For instance, scholars can ask citizens and elites to rank democratic procedures and investigate the congruence of their answers or ask more precise questions about trade-offs between different procedures and how those procedures can, say, improve the quality of representation.

This thesis focuses on procedural evaluations. Here, we treat citizens and elites with a hypothetical democratic procedure and ask them whether or not they think the outcome of the procedure and recommends its implementation, thus gauging the legitimacy of the procedure. This is done to understand how citizens and elites think about democratic procedures and how different attributes of a procedure affect its legitimacy. Theories of procedural fairness (cf. Thibaut and Walker 1975; Tyler 2006) tell us that the procedure and legitimacy are closely related and that the attributes of a procedure certainly have a contingent relationship with each other.

In this dissertation, I have chosen to focus on referendums as a procedure and legitimacy as the outcome, which is used to assess congruence. The justification for choosing referendums is that recent evidence points to an increase in demand for majority-rule decisions in European countries and represents a major challenge to representative democracy (Ferrin and Kriesi 2016). It is therefore important to know the degree to which citizens and elites are congruent in their assessment of this procedure.

More broadly, the focus on procedural congruence in this thesis is related to the challenges of ensuring regime legitimacy and to how scholars and policy-makers should understand demands for referendums. In terms of the former, this gives scholars a new diagnostic tool to evaluate how citizens and elites evaluate a procedure. This is important because procedural fairness is a key element in ensuring support for democracy. In terms of the latter, this concept also allows researchers to understand whether or to what extent referendums can be a good supplement to representative democracy. By focusing on procedural congruence, we are better equipped to understand how referendums relate to democratic legitimacy and whether citizens and elites are congruent in their legitimacy evaluations of this specific procedure.

2.1.4 Meta-beliefs congruence

As discussed above, the scholarly literature on ideological congruence is vast. The adjective "ideological" plays an important role here because it indicates that the primary focus is on views instead of policy output. It is related to responsiveness because researchers assume that the beliefs citizens have about various aspects of political life are translated into policy.

I thus argue that ideological congruence can be viewed as a meta-belief that guides citizens in forming opinions about specific policies. We can of course also imagine the reverse to be true; i.e., a policy can become the anchor for the formation of a belief. In abstract terms, ideological congruence is often conceptualised along the traditional left/right spectrum. In recent years, scholars have introduced other conceptualisations of these beliefs, more related to the cultural space, and argued that they are distinct from the traditional left/right spectrum, such as the GAL/-TAN scale (green/alternative/libertarian vs. traditional/authoritarian/nationalist) introduced by Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson (2002) or the libertarian–authoritarian dimension introduced by Kriesi et al. (2006). In congruence research, Costello, Thomassen, and Rosema (2012), for instance, show that these concepts, mostly used to place parties in a multidimensional space, are useful for congruence research as well.

In addition, recent studies have found that beliefs about the income generation process have been linked to policy preferences (e.g., Alesina and Angeletos 2005; Alesina and Giuliano 2011; Bénabou and Tirole 2006; Merlo and Paula 2017). This underscores the importance of examining these types of beliefs from the perspective of congruence. For instance, in recent years, some studies have found that the reason we observe the acceptance of growing economic inequalities is that voters believe in meritocracy, i.e., that the affluent work harder to earn their money than do the less well-off (Mijs 2016).

In congruence research, scholars have paid increasing attention to unequal representation by measuring congruence between different income groups. In the most comprehensive comparative study of data thus far, Lupu and Warner (Forthcoming) find that mass–elite congruence on the left–right dimension is significantly and substantially higher for the affluent than for the poor. Interestingly, they also find that the preferences of the affluent in economic issues are better represented, and the preferences of the poor seem to be overrepresented in terms of cultural issues. They conclude that representation appears to be both more unequal than previously thought and to be unequal in different ways across issues.

While this approach clearly has merit, there are different ways in which we can understand the two concepts of congruence and inequality. Usually, scholars utilise elite surveys and compare left–right self-placement between citizens and representatives. In this thesis, I focus on issue congruence in terms of redistribution preferences and the sources of inequality. This represents a new type of congruence that focuses on more deep-rooted sentiments that are thought to shape and affect policy preferences and party choice. As already indicated, I refer to this type of congruence as *meta-belief congruence*.

With the introduction of this new concept of congruence, we are interested in studying the individual beliefs that may shape preferences. While this dissertation focuses on redistribution because that relates to the increasing levels of economic inequality observed in many contemporary democracies, the concept of meta-belief congruence can be employed in other policy, issue, and ideological areas. For instance, we can speculate that there are underlying beliefs that shape people's preferences regarding the deservingness of refugees.

Thus, this thesis will extend our empirical and theoretical understanding of these meta-beliefs and relate them to specific policy outputs. The focal point of this part of the thesis revolves around the democratic challenge of inequality and how meta-beliefs about the income generation process shape issue preferences. By establishing that beliefs are related to policy preferences while simultaneously observing their congruence, we can gain new insights into economic inequality. This is important, given the overall framework of this dissertation, because it can provide answers to why we observe rising inequalities in society. In addition, this points to how important it is for citizens to know about their legislators' meta-beliefs.

2.1.5 Conceptual clarification of congruence

Figure 2.1 shows the different conceptualisations of congruence described above along two dimensions. This figure applies frameworks from Easton (1965) and Norris (1999) to the concept of congruence; the vertical axis, running from general to specific, refers to how concrete the object of congruence is. I then divide the congruence objects into categories, procedural and nonprocedural, depending on whether they refer to an object that is related to, again borrowing from Easton (1965), policy outputs or democratic inputs and throughputs. The connected arrows point to an example of congruence within each object. The figure also places the object of congruence on a scale running from procedural to nonprocedural congruence. On the bottom, the most specific type of congruence is the one related to policy. Here, we can compare a concrete policy proposal for which we can assess the exact relationship between elite and mass opinion. Closely related is issue congruence, for which we do not compare a specific policy. In simple terms, we can assess a policy area, but there is no specific policy connected examined.

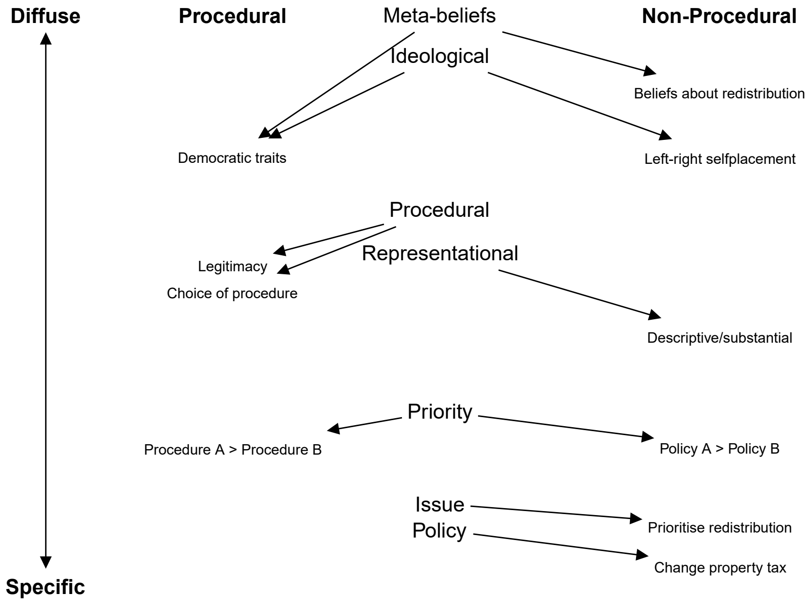

Figure 2.1: Conceptual map of congruence

The most general congruence type, meta-belief congruence, first introduced by this thesis, is theorised to shape policy preferences. In our case, different beliefs about the fairness of social competition and what determines income inequality influence redistributive policy preferences. Following Alesina and Angeletos (2005), we assume these beliefs to be fundamental for policy preferences. These meta-beliefs are an overarching concept of which ideological congruence is an important component. Whether meta-beliefs shape ideological congruence or vice versa is an empirical question that future research should seek to answer.

Below, we identify the procedural and representational objects. The two concepts are related but often connected to both procedural and nonprocedural objects. With procedural congruence, we are interested in how citizens and elites evaluate outcomes, i.e., legitimacy, or traits related to a democratic procedure. With representational congruence, we are concerned with how representatives should act. For instance, we could ask whether citizens and elites prefer delegate- or trustee-style representation or whether they prefer descriptive or substantive representation.

Moving to the more specific types of congruence, we first find priority congruence. Here, we can once again divide the concept into both procedural and nonprocedural forms—i.e., whether direct or representative democratic procedures should be used to decide what action to take on a certain issue. Would citizens and elites exhibit different priorities? Alternatively, in relation to policy, we could ask citizens and elites to prioritise policy A and policy B.

The most specific type of congruence relates to issues and policies. Issue congruence is placed slightly higher because the object is slightly more abstract than a specific policy. Say, for example, that congruence on a question like, "Should the government act to halt climate change?" is slightly less specific than that on the assertion that "the government should tax fossil fuels". Both concern environmental issues, yet the object of policy congruence is more concrete in the latter.

2.2 Understanding the causes and correlates of congruence

Beyond the conceptual debate on how to measure congruence, scholars are also interested in the determinants and effects of congruence. A substantial part of existing research has been devoted to understanding how different micro- and macro variables shape congruence between citizens and elites. Scholars have examined how political institutions (cf. Huber and Powell 1994; Powell and Powell Jr 2000; Powell and Vanberg 2000; McDonald, Budge, et al. 2005; Powell 2006; Blais and Bodet 2006; Golder and Lloyd 2014), parties and party systems (cf. Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2012; Walczak and Van der Brug 2013; Lefkofridi and Casado-Asensio 2013; Lupu and Warner 2017), citizen heterogeneity (cf. Lupu, Selios, and Warner 2017; Giger, Rosset, and Bernauer 2012; Walczak and Van der Brug 2013), and macroeconomic factors (cf. Lupu and Warner 2017; Dalton 2017; Rosset, Giger, and Bernauer 2013; Traber, Giger, and Häusermann 2018; Belchior, Tsatsanis, and Teixeira 2016) affect congruence.

Given the importance of congruence for how representation works, it is not surprising that much of the scholarship is concerned with explaining the determinants of congruence. Recently, however, a growing body of work has exhibited interest in the effects of congruence on various attitudinal outcomes in political science. These outcomes include citizen participation (Lefkofridi, Giger, and Gallego 2014) (Lefkofridi et al. 2014b) and satisfaction with the functioning of democracy (Mayne and Hakhverdian 2017; Stecker and Tausendpfund 2016; André and Depauw 2017a; Reher 2015).

These latter studies, which focus on satisfaction as the outcome variable, use different conceptualisations of congruence. Mayne and Hakhverdian (2017) find an association between satisfaction and ideological congruence, but their findings paint a nuanced picture of how congruence relates to citizen satisfaction. Egocentric congruence, the ideological match between one or more elected representatives and an individual citizen, affects satisfaction, especially for politically sophisticated representatives. Sociotropic congruence, i.e., the ideological distance between one or many representatives and the electorate as a whole, does not impact satisfaction. This relationship between congruence and satisfaction holds when looking at multiple issue dimensions and policies (Stecker and Tausendpfund 2016; André and Depauw 2017a). Finally, policy priority congruence impacts the likelihood of nonpartisans participating in elections (Reher 2014), while its effect on satisfaction increases with democratic experience (i.e., the age of democracy and the quality of governance) (Reher 2015). We can therefore conclude that the relationship between various forms of congruence and satisfaction seems robust across a variety of conceptualisations of congruence.

In contrast to the vast body of literature trying to identify the determinants of congruence, only a handful of studies have examined the effects of congruence on attitudinal outcomes. From the ample literature on satisfaction, we know that winning and losing politically are associated with different levels of satisfaction (cf. Anderson and Guillory 1997). However, electoral losers can still be congruent with the regime, and thus, scholars have started to look for more nuanced measures to capture the (un)certain role of political marginalisation in electoral outcomes.

There is, however, much we do not know about this relationship. The literature on congruence and "losers' consent" (Anderson and Guillory 1997) make it clear that we need to take context seriously. The message from these scholars is that electoral rules and governing arrangements impact the political attitudes of national electoral winners differently than those of national electoral losers.

This body of work has produced mixed evidence about how voting rules impact both the average levels of satisfaction (see, e.g., Aarts and Thomassen 2008; Anderson et al. 2005; Bernauer and Vatter 2012; Ezrow and Xezonakis 2011; Pefley and Rohrschneider 2014; Wagner, Schneider, and Halla 2009) and individual levels of satisfaction among winners and losers (see, e.g., Anderson and Guillory 1997; Bernauer and Vatter 2012; Curini, Jou, and Memoli 2012; Han and Chang 2016; Martin and Vanberg 2014; Martini and Quaranta 2019; Singh 2014; Wells and Krieckhaus 2006). These studies, along with those on the determinants of congruence, underscore the importance of taking context seriously. Moreover, they point to how satisfaction–congruence patterns can change as a function of contextual variation, something that has been largely ignored by the literature that examines the effects of congruence.

Moreover, citizen heterogeneity can shape congruence patterns. As Mayne and Hakhverdian (2017) argue, an individual citizen's level of political sophistication enhances their sensitivity to ideological congruence. Considering the vast literature on economic voting and voting behaviour, citizen heterogeneity is likely to be important in furthering our understanding of citizen–elite congruence. Specifically, political sophistication is hypothesised to shape how citizens understand and react to government performance (Gómez and Palacios 2016; De Vries and Giger 2014).

The main reason for this hypothesis is that politically sophisticated citizens are believed to be more attentive to the workings of government and politics and therefore more aware of the marginalisation of their preferences. This, coupled with a focus on context, is a promising avenue for further research to better our understanding of the workings of congruence.

2.3 Linking the quality of congruence to the quality of democracy

In this section, I will show how all the different components discussed above at length fit together and answer my overarching research question – namely, *in what way does congruence matter for modern representative democracy?* The main argument in this thesis is that by better understanding representation, democracies can face contemporary challenges more easily. The section is structured around the four democratic challenges discussed in the introduction – the need to ensure the legitimacy of democracy, the growing demand for direct democracy, increased polarisation and new cleavages, and high or rising (political) inequality.

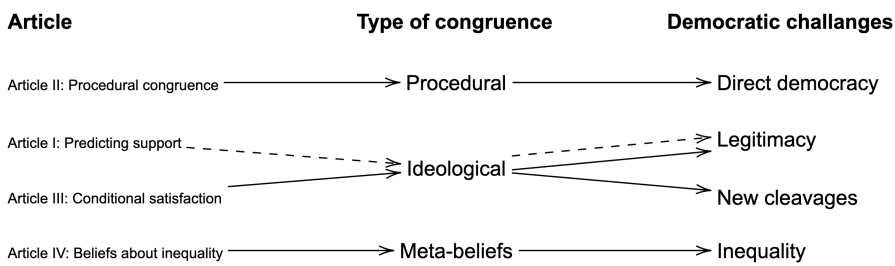

Figure 2.2: How congruence matters for representative democracy

In Figure 2.2, the arguments of the thesis are graphically displayed. The overarching research question asks why congruence matters for democracy, and the preceding discussion has framed representation, and thus congruence, as a central part of equipping modern representative democracy to tackle these imminent threats, thus leading to a strengthened democratic regime. Each article deals with how the study of certain types of congruence sheds light on the democratic challenges discussed above. Following the structure of Figure 2.2, I will now show how each of these studies, individually and combined, contributes to answering the overarching research question.

Articles I and III try to understand how congruence is related to political support or legitimacy while also paying attention to the new "graduate class" and how this shapes patterns of support in tandem with ideological congruence. This relates to the most specific and perhaps most pressing challenge for modern representative democracy: ensuring the legitimacy of democracy. Recent worrying developments have signalled a widespread democratic malaise, eroding political support, and declining trust in political leaders and politics. In an era in which democracy is desired, demanded, and even literally fought for by citizens around the world, it seems that established democracies are faltering, giving rise to a worrying paradox: large majorities of citizens want democracy, but once it is attained, very few seem to be happy with it.

If we accept the premise that this is true and that democracy is facing an important challenge we must ask ourselves how democracy can ensure its legitimacy. Legitimacy is important for democracy because it ensures citizens' compliance with their leaders, facilitating a solution to collective action problems and enhancing the stability of the political system. If citizens consider political authority legitimate, they will accept and abide by laws even if the laws do not benefit their individual interests because the laws were passed according to legitimate procedures (Ham et al. 2017). This also shows that the quality of representation is important. If how elites behave is at odds with what citizens want, their democracy falls short of expectations (André and Depauw 2017a).

In comparative political behaviour, the concept of legitimacy is often operationalised in terms of political support, either diffuse or specific (Easton 1965; Norris 1999). One of the most frequent indicators of regime support is satisfaction with the way democracy works. This indicator is measured by a survey item that is thought to capture how citizens evaluate the overall performance of their political regime (Linde and Ekman 2003; Norris 1999; Anderson et al. 2005). Pioneered by Anderson and Guillory (1997), the item is thought to gauge people's response to the process of democratic governance. Democratic satisfaction thus represents a useful indicator for measuring citizens' positive or negative reactions to different outcomes of the political system. It is, however, a contested measure. Linde and Ekman (2003), for instance, criticises the use of satisfaction as an indicator of support for the principles of democracy, thus tapping into the level of support for the way the regime works in practice. Similarly, Canache, Mondak, and Seligson (2001) critique the use of the indicator.

As seen above, there are reasons to expect congruence to be related to this attitudinal outcome, but the phenomenon has until quite recently been ignored in the scholarly literature. Assessing the quality of representation and its effect on satisfaction is one of the main contributions of this thesis. This, in turn, contributes to a richer understanding of how ideological congruence can impact satisfaction.

Specifically, I pay attention to context and citizen heterogeneity. The assumption that the relationship between congruence and satisfaction is consistent across all citizens may be too strong. First, the literature on "losers' consent" (cf. Anderson and Guillory 1997) tells us that political context is important for understanding patterns of satisfaction. Second, different people may react differently to various aspects of politics. In particular, politically sophisticated citizens may be better equipped than others to understand the workings of democracy and may thus differently evaluate how well democracy is working.

For this reason and because of the newly emerging cleavage created by education as discussed above, I argue that focusing on education, and thus also on political sophistication, in examining patterns of congruence is important for understanding how representative democracies can navigate this development. The hypothesized conditioning effect of education and congruence on satisfaction is further grounded by the idea that citizens can perceive the degree to which their policy preferences are being marginalised.

In article II, elite–citizen procedural congruence is scrutinised, providing important insight regarding what policy-makers and citizens think about implementing more or less direct participation. As seen above, citizen initiatives and ad hoc referendums can strengthen representative democracy if and only if elites and citizens are congruent in their evaluation of the procedure. This is further complicated when we introduce the delegate – trustee dilemma. If trustee-style representatives on a particular issue have the majority in parliament, this can marginalise the policy preferences of citizens, thus leading to a legitimacy deficit.

This is related to a decline in political support, and a large body of literature in the social sciences is concerned with the importance of fair, democratic procedures and how they moderate the effect that political marginalisation has on political support. However, not all decision-making procedures can be harmonised with representative democracy. As seen above, another challenge for representative democracy is the growing demand for majority-rule procedures, such as referendums. However, we know little about how elites evaluate the legitimacy of a referendum or about whether their evaluations are congruent with those of citizens.

Indeed, whether majority-rule procedures help or hurt democratic legitimacy certainly depends on whether citizens view such procedures as legitimate. As Arnesen et al. (2019) show, evaluations of the legitimacy of a procedure depend on features of the procedure itself, specifically, turnout, the size of the majority, and which side wins. In addition, citizens need to be certain that elected officials can be trusted to follow this referendum, but we know little about how representatives view the legitimacy of referendums.

If representatives have diverging evaluations of a referendum, it is likely to hurt the support for representative institutions. In contrast, referendums have a negative impact on parliamentary will-formation when representatives simply follow the results of a referendum without providing any substantial arguments related to the issue itself. The problem is particularly pertinent whenever the quality of public deliberation preceding the referendum is poor. The de facto binding character of advisory referendums may also undermine parliamentary accountability since it may lead to the failure of representatives to deliberate and justify their position on the issue in question (Jäske and Setälä 2020).

For the reasons discussed above, procedural congruence plays a direct role in the challenge of regime legitimacy and the growing demands for more direct participation. By introducing the novel concept of procedural congruence, we can gain more insight into whether elites and citizens have the same evaluations of a referendum.

In article IV, we investigate how meta-belief congruence is related to issue congruence, specifically in questions of redistribution. The direct link to the challenges of democracy is not the focal point of the article itself; however, the direct link to how representatives and citizens respond to rising inequalities is striking. If citizens and representatives are congruent in their beliefs and, from a normative point of view, agree that inequalities are caused by factors beyond the control of individuals, they will be better equipped to respond to this pressing challenge.

This is related to the last challenge discussed in this dissertation—namely, the study of representation and political equality, which can hardly be timelier. Income and wealth inequalities within Western democracies have increased dramatically over the last few decades: the rich are becoming richer, and the poor are becoming poorer (D. M. Bartels 2008; Piketty et al. 2014). These growing inequalities are problematic for democracy. (Piketty et al. 2014) argues that this can even result in social and economic instability. Therefore, I focus on inequality and redistribution and how beliefs shape views on redistribution preferences (Gilens 1999; Williamson 1974). Recently, modern political studies have indicated that one's support for redistribution depends on one's beliefs about the sources of income inequality (cf. Aarøe and Petersen 2014; Alesina, Glaeser, and Sacerdote 2001; Alesina, Stantcheva, and Teso 2018). This literature, rooted in the field of economics, tells us that people who believe that income inequality is a result of choices within the individual's control are less willing to redistribute than people who believe that inequality is a structural problem.

As seen above, this literature has clearly been a prosperous avenue of research, but we know little about how elites' meta-beliefs are related to their policy and issue preferences. Because societal inequality is translated into political inequality, at least in terms of income, gender, education, and age (D. M. Bartels 2008; Carnes 2013; Gilens 2012; Kissau, Lutz, and Rosset 2012; Peters and Ensink 2015; Reher 2018; Rosset, Giger, and Bernauer 2013), it is important to understand how crucial inequalities can lead to political inequality and representational deficit.

In sum, the four papers each relate to how the study of certain types of congruence sheds light on the democratic challenges discussed above. All of these articles support the main theoretical argument of this thesis, namely, that the malfunctioning of representation may be the source of many of the challenges facing contemporary democracies. In the next section, I will discuss the case selection, methodological considerations, and research design for these individual articles before outlining the specific research designs and discussing the main findings in relation to the overarching research question.

Chapter 3

Single-country and comparative study designs

In this thesis, I use two different designs: a single-country study of Norway and a comparative case study of European countries. When carefully conducted (for further discussion on this, see George, Bennett, et al. 2005), single-case studies can be highly useful instruments (Lijphart 1971). Social developments do not, however, happen in a void, and the main advantage of a comparative approach is that it allows for understanding a social phenomenon relative to something else, ceteris paribus. Furthermore, a comparative approach allows us to test our hypotheses in a rigorous manner. In articles I and III, I use all available data (limited by the research question) to gain a richer understanding of the social phenomena being scrutinised. For articles II and IV, the lack of available data is an important constraint. I do, however, argue that the data at hand nevertheless provide sufficient information for answering the research questions posed in the individual articles. In the next section, I lay out the arguments for why that is the case.

3.1 A single-country study of Norway

In two of the articles in this dissertation, I compare representative data from citizens and elites in Norway. While single-case studies are not ideal for testing a theory (see

Gerring 2007, for a discussion), my approach in these two articles is mainly descriptive and seeks to determine whether elites and citizens are procedurally congruent and congruent in their meta-beliefs. We thus circumvent potential issues of generalisation to other cases and use the case studies to generate theories and test the viability of the theoretical construction laid out above.

Norway is a consensual, multiparty representative democracy where representation is thought to function well. As pointed out by Eckstein (2015), these traits are shared with many other OECD countries and may not be as unique a case as one might think. Thus, Norway provides a good laboratory to test and develop the concepts laid out in the theory section above. In addition, it is important to note that the study of representation and congruence in a multiparty system is important for the theoretical development of the scholarly literature. The structure of the welfare state can shape preferences for redistribution but does not necessarily affect beliefs about the income generation process. In tandem with the rich and representative data on elected officials, Norway is a good case for studying how meta-beliefs and procedural legitimacy are distributed among citizens and elites.

Much of the literature on representation is based on U.S. case studies (Wolkenstein and Wratil 2020) and comparativists often take their cues from their North American colleagues, keeping the relationship unilateral (Saris and Sniderman 2018). For this reason, it is important to perform new theoretical and empirical inquiries into how representation functions outside the single-member district system in the U.S.

Norway, similar to most European countries, is a multiparty system. The most prominent feature of this way of organising political life is the multi-dimensional nature of cleavages (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). These cleavage structures are important for understanding which central political conflicts between groups are important in society. The most prevalent cleavage structure, perhaps, is centre-periphery cleavage. Norway is a large country consisting of many regions with a low population per square kilometre, which results in the separation of linguistic and religious groups along territorial lines (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). In addition, left–right economic cleavages have also been important, and comparative analyses of class voting have documented that traditional class voting was, and still is, more prevalent in Scandinavian countries (Knutsen 2017). Coupled with urban–rural conflicts between rural and urban populations, which have been additionally strengthened by recent structural reforms leading to more centralisation of the police and other public services, these cleavages have historically made up the key elements of the Norwegian political system.

Importantly, Norway is also a welfare state whose early social policy schemes date back to the late 19_{th} century. The Nordic model, as it is often referred to, relies on substantial levels of taxation and the extensive redistribution of wealth and resources, thus allowing the country to provide a social safety net, free public education, and universal health care. Through such actions, the welfare state has been thought to facilitate high levels of civic participation (Syvertsen et al. 2014; Pedersen and Kuhnle 2017).

For testing procedural congruence, we use the Norwegian case because Norway has held two referendums on EU integration. In 1972 and 1994, Norwegians voted on whether Norway should apply for membership in the European Union (EU). In both cases, a majority voted against EU membership (53.5 and 55.2 percent; turnouts of 88.6 percent and 79.2 percent, respectively). Additionally, the 2016 Brexit referendum in the U.K. received substantial media attention in Norway. Hence, we expect that many Norwegians participating in this survey experiment are informed about the actual procedures and potential consequences of this type of referendum (Arnesen et al. 2019). Local referendums are also very common in Norwegian municipalities. For example, Folkestad et al. (2021) found that 221 consultative referendums were recently held across Norway.

Norway can be viewed as a "least likely" case for investigating meta-beliefs and redistribution preferences. Scandinavian countries are characterised by a compressed income distribution, and they have a significantly higher tax levels, a more generous welfare state, and more income mobility than other OECD countries (Barth, Moene, and Willumsen 2015; Landersø and Heckman 2017). The striking differences between, for instance, the U.S. and Scandinavia, have attracted attention from social scientists (Edlund 1999; Aarøe and Petersen 2014; Kleven 2014; Fochesato and Bowles 2015; Landersø and Heckman 2017; Acemoglu, Robinson, and Verdier 2017).

Experimental evidence suggests that Norwegians are more egalitarian than libertarian in their fairness views; however, Norwegians have also been found to be as meritocratic as citizens of the U.S. (Almås, Cappelen, and Tungodden 2020). This suggests that there is probably more variation in fairness views in Norway than the Gini coefficient can capture. This particular finding about fairness views reveals the opportunity for further analysis about what citizens in Norway believe to be the source of income inequality and is an argument for Norway not being such a "least likely" case after all. This suggests that citizens in Norway will accept inequality if it is caused by merit. It is, therefore, important to gauge whether their elected representatives hold the same fairness views.

3.2 Data

This thesis combines several data sources to answer the overarching research question. In article I, the main data source is the sixth round of the European Social Survey (ESS 2012). This survey contains a module of questions related to the performance of democracy, making it an ideal choice for the analytical purposes of that paper. For article III, we merged 27 waves of the Eurobarometer survey (which included data on respondents' satisfaction with democracy and their individual left–right self-placement), covering 2002–2018, with 47 waves of the Eurobarometer Mannheim Trend File survey (Schmitt H. and M. 2008) spanning 1976–2002. The data set includes information on one million respondents covering 28 countries. We measure ideological congruence based on data from the ParlGov database (Döring and Manow 2018) combined with individual-level information on respondents' left–right self-placement. Using the ParlGov data, we estimate the ideological composition of the national governing cabinet at the time each survey was fielded.

In articles II and IV, I use original data from the Norwegian Panel of Elected Representatives (PER) (Peters and Broderstad 2018, 2019). This is an annual survey of all elected representatives in Norway collected by the Politics of Inequality Project led by Yvette Peters as the principal investigator. In collecting these data, we first gathered the addresses of all elected representatives (some 11,000 politicians) in Norway on all levels—municipal, regional, and national. All respondents were invited to participate in writing with three follow-up email reminders. The data used in article II come from the first and second waves of the survey. The first wave had a response rate of 38 per cent. For the second wave, we did not conduct new recruitment, meaning that we invited only the people who had answered the first survey. The response rate for the second wave was also approximately 40 percent, yielding approximately 2,500 respondents. The data on citizen respondents in article II came from a country sample from Norway that was part of the larger European Internet Panel Study (EIPS) (Arnesen 2018). EIPS is a high-quality probability-based online panel with representative samples. We used the same sample from article II in article IV, but the items were fielded only to a random subsample of local representatives, yielding 1,200 respondents.

Table 3.1: Summary of data sources and cases in the articles

Article	Source	Time	Case(s)	N
I	ESS wave IV	2012	EU	26,168
I	Parlgov	2019	EU	4,685
II	PER wave I	2018	NO	4,321
II	PER wave II	2019	NO	2,717
II	EIPS wave I	2017	NO	1,568
III	Eurobarometer	1976-2019	EU	1,010,443
III	Parlgov	2019	EU	4,685
IV	PER wave II	2019	NO	1,245
IV	Norstat	2019	NO	1,023

Note: Sample size across the PER wave II differ because article 4 uses a random sub-sample of the full PER wave II sample. EU is an abbreviation indicating a Europe-wide sample. NO is an abbreviation for Norway.

Online panels on citizen samples have become important and popular tools in the social sciences, as they enable the low-cost collection of easily available data. Some online panels use opt-in methods, where the participants are self-recruited though the random sampling of the target populations. Such self-recruitment strategies can produce biased samples, as politically engaged and highly educated people are more likely to self-recruit. My papers rely, however, on probability-based sampling. The advantage of using a probability-based panel is that the samples are more representative of the general population than opt-in panels are (Callegaro et al. 2014). Collecting data on elites poses similar challenges to those found in collecting data on other citizens. Additionally, the same ethical considerations apply. On that note, all our survey items and experiments were approved by a scientific committee.

Chapter 4

Methodological considerations

To answer my dissertation's overarching research question and to address the subquestions of the individual articles, I use several innovative methodological approaches. In article I, I use a prediction-based machine learning approach. In article II, we use a conjoint experiment combined with a new application of the earth mover's distance to make causal inferences about procedural congruence. In article IV, we use a regression-based approach named dyadic regression to measure many-to-many congruence. In this section, I provide details about the different methods chosen, outline them, and explain how they relate to the dissertation's research questions. The first section discusses observational studies. I use hypotheses based on theoretical assumptions to outline these studies' causal arguments about a social phenomenon. In the second section, I discuss experimental approaches that are more explicit tests of causal arguments.

4.1 Observational studies

Model-based approaches—like regression analysis—are the most common empirical strategy used in political science when researchers want to test hypotheses and explain phenomena (Druckman et al. 2006). In this thesis, I use an array of regression-based techniques while also paying attention to prediction accuracy. Observational studies provide empirical investigations of exposures and their effects, but they differ from experiments in that the assignment of a treatment to the subjects is not controlled (Rosenbaum, Rosenbaum, and Briskman 2010). Observational studies often use a variety of methods for data collection, applying alternative study designs, and employing a range of analysis strategies. Using theory-guided hypotheses, observational studies provide rich insights into social phenomena and enable researchers to test hypotheses in an environment in which it is difficult to deploy experimental methods.

4.1.1 Prediction

In this dissertation, I use a predictive approach to evaluate satisfaction with the state of knowledge if democracy literature. According to Cranmer and Desmarais (2017), the lack of emphasis on model validation in political science risks creating a situation in which most inferences rely on models with potentially poor fit and makes the contributions of new research on established topics ambiguous at best.

In the first paper of this dissertation, I will try to resolve some of these controversies and empirically evaluate what best predicts satisfaction. Output-oriented studies, i.e., those that focus on satisfaction being contingent upon elites producing desirable outcomes, have long dominated the field. In recent years, however, scholars have also focused on the input aspects of regime performance. I argue that an alternative empirical strategy is merited to guide further inquiries and build a stronger causal theory for what affects satisfaction.

With such a complex phenomenon, it is difficult to include all possible covariates in the same regression model. This would unreasonably assume linearity and the independence of the variables as well as yield conditional results that are difficult to interpret (Achen 2005; Hindman 2015; Lee Ray 2005). The traditional regression-based approach could also lead to overfitting, that is, finding relationships among variables that fit noise in the data but are unlikely to be generalisable beyond the sample. In addition, like in many regression analyses, making such arbitrary modelling choices would lead to underestimating the modelling uncertainty

(L. M. Bartels 1997; Montgomery, Hollenbach, and Ward 2012).

To address these shortcomings, I turn to machine learning, which has been shown to handle these issues well (Molina and Garip 2019; Athey and Imbens 2019; Breiman 2001). Machine learning allows researchers to estimate models in which the parameters are algorithmically focused on providing a better model fit while also keeping in mind that the model should be parsimonious. Machine learning algorithms allow for nonlinearities, interactions, and a number of other complexities that are difficult to study in a standard linear regression. Used with cross-validation, machine learning also provides a more rigorous approach to measuring the out-of-sample predictive power. This is done to guard the model against overfitting. Additionally, this approach overperforms standard linear regression, allowing us to also study the same model that can be estimated using OLS regression. All these advantages have led political scientists to use machine learning tools to study questions related to topics as diverse as interest group politics, voting behaviour, survey research methods, legislator ideology, genocide, civil war onset, and congruence (Bonica 2018; Cohen and Warner 2021; Grimmer and Stewart 2013; Hainmueller and Hazlett 2014; Muchlinski et al. 2016; Becker, Fetzer, and Novy 2017; Lupu and Warner 2021).

4.1.2 Time-series cross-sectional analysis with repeated survey data

In article III, we compile a large number of surveys to understand how congruence and context affect satisfaction. A fundamental problem with this is that our observations at the individual level are not repeated throughout the samples. We must therefore adopt an empirical strategy that can address this problem. A further problem that can arise in these types of studies is that the higher-level units, countries, in our case, might be too few in number and thus bias our model (Schmidt-Catran and Fairbrother 2016).

A solution to this is to adopt a multilevel longitudinal model that can account for individual- and macrolevel variations. The assumption is that even though repeated survey data on the country level are not panel data per se, as societies are units of analysis and are at least as important as the individual of which observations are made, then in an important sense, the data derived from such survey are in fact panel data since societies are observed multiple times. Additionally, survey data are collected on individuals, and such data are often sought specifically because they are, in aggregated form, an effective means of measuring differences among societies and of tracking changes in societies over time. However, despite the frequency with which survey data are considered in aggregated form, the statistical analysis of aggregate data can be misleading and risk committing an ecological fallacy in which aggregate-level relationships are assumed to hold for individual units on which the preaggregated data were collected (Fairbrother 2014). Therefore, I argue that using multilevel longitudinal models is the most appropriate method to test the hypotheses postulated in article III.

4.1.3 Methods to study congruence

I also use advanced techniques to identify meta-belief congruence. Specifically, I employ dyadic regression analysis. This consists of desegregating survey data on citizens and elites into dyads. This allows for inferences about descriptive and substantive representation in a many-to-many conceptualisation of congruence beyond the existing studies that look only at congruence (Golder and Stramski 2010; Bengtsson and Wass 2012; Espana-Najera and Martıénez-Rosón 2012; Corral Gonzalez 2013). By shifting the analysis to the dyadic level, we can estimate how congruence depends on demographic characteristics while simultaneously controlling for individual-level covariates for citizens and representatives (Boas and Smith 2019; Lupu and Warner 2017, 2021).

To build the data set, I match one citizen with all representatives in the sample and estimate the absolute distance between their preferences on the attitudinal variable of interest—in this case, the highly salient issue of the redistribution of income. With this data set, I can predict levels of incongruence for party voters and examine what parties have more congruent voters and how citizen heterogeneity affects congruence. This is done in a regression framework with cluster-robust standard errors to account for the same respondent being paired with all representatives.

Additionally, in the same article, I use the earth mover's distance (see Lupu, Selios, and Warner 2017, for a discussion and application of this), a machine learning algorithm, to gain insight into many-to-many operationalisation and meta-belief congruence. This machine learning algorithm allows for sound inference about the difference between the two distributions in our sample instead of simply comparing means. This allows for causal inference in line with what leading scholars (cf. Golder and Stramski 2010; Lupu and Warner 2021) deem to be the preferred method of assessing congruence.

4.2 Causal inference with survey experiments

Almost two decades ago, McDermott (2002) noted that few studies published in political science focused on causal inference. In recent years, this has changed, and survey experiments, in particular, have become increasingly common in political science (Mutz 2011), allowing for sound causal inference. The concept of causal inference is often defined as leveraging theory and deep knowledge about institutional details to estimate the impact of events and choices on a given outcome of interest (Cunningham 2020). These new methods for causal inference are combined in this thesis with a novel data source, namely, elected representatives. Additionally, access to this unique sample combined with experimental methods allows me to make robust and novel contributions to the field.

Survey experiments have the advantage of using the random assignment of treatments, which helps the research establish unbiased causal inference (Mutz 2011). This can thus improve theory by providing reliable information regarding the direction of causality and helping establish a causal effect (Druckman 2001). Another key advantage of survey experiments is that they can be fielded to a representative sample of a population. In this case, both the target populations are citizens and representatives in Norway. This allows me to generalise the results to the population, which is often not possible in laboratory settings.

Furthermore, I make use of a conjoint experiment in this thesis. The conjoint experiment is a more complex design in which multiple features can vary at the same time. This new methodological innovation has proven very fruitful in testing complex theories with competing hypotheses and has been called one of the most promising innovations in survey experiments developed in the last decade (Sniderman 2018). The key advantage of this method is the possibility of varying multiple factors and testing how variations in treatments work together (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014; Leeper, Hobolt, and Tilley 2018). In addition, I use the earth mover's distance (Lupu, Selios, and Warner 2017). This method has never been employed in the context of survey experiments, but I demonstrate that it is very useful for other areas of research as well.

Chapter 5

Presentation of the articles

In this section, I highlight the results and designs of the four individual articles in this dissertation and show how they contribute to answering the overarching research question. The four articles take different perspectives to shed light on why congruence matters for modern representative democracies by addressing some of the contemporary challenges they face. All four articles build on and complement each other theoretically, empirically, and methodologically.

Briefly, the first article looks at the most important covariates related to regime support and, using a prediction approach, finds that evaluations of the economy, procedural fairness, responsiveness, and congruence are among the best predictors of satisfaction. The second article uses some of these insights and looks at how elites and citizens evaluate democratic procedures, i.e., procedural congruence. Using a conjoint experiment, I show that citizens and elites are procedurally incongruent and that much of this incongruence can be explained by the classic dichotomy between trustee- and delegate-style representation.

The third article also uses the findings from article I and provides the most comprehensive test of the relationship between satisfaction and congruence. We find that congruence is related to satisfaction but only in specific contexts and for political sophisticates. The last article, article IV, looks at a novel conceptualisation of congruence, namely, meta-belief congruence. We find that meta-beliefs about the income generating process are related to redistribution preferences, not affluence bias, and that liberals are better represented on this matter in politics than their conservative counterparts.

5.1 Article I: *An Empirical Evaluation of Explanations for Political System Support*

In the article "An empirical evaluation of explanations of political system support", I use a prediction approach to understand and evaluate the state of knowledge in the field on satisfaction with democracy. The paper relates to the main research question by laying out what the important predictors of satisfaction are and helps guide the focus of the other studies in this dissertation. On its own, the article can be seen as a meta-analysis where prediction models are used to evaluate the state of knowledge in the field.

Satisfaction with democracy is one of the most commonly used indicators for political support in cross-national political science analysis. While satisfaction is a contested measure, most researchers agree that it tells us something meaningful about how well citizens feel a democratic regime works (Linde and Ekman 2003; Norris 1999; Anderson and Guillory 1997).

I argue that a prediction-oriented approach is well suited to assess the state of knowledge in the literature. I therefore use a machine learning approach, specifically the random forest algorithm, to identify the most important features related to citizens' satisfaction. For the most exhaustive test of the most important features of satisfaction, the sixth round of the European Social Survey (ESS) is used. As argued by Sirovátka, Guzi, and Saxonberg (2019), this round of the ESS is well suited for this type of study because it includes a rotating module on the functioning of democracy. [1] The potential problems with using only one survey round are solved by using cross-validation (cf Neunhoeffer and Sternberg 2019). The results show that procedural fairness, social trust, responsiveness, and congruence are among the

1. See Ferrin and Kriesi (2016) for a thorough discussion of the entire module.

most important predictors of satisfaction.

Adding to the literature on the much-studied relationship between satisfaction with the economy and democracy, my study finds that procedural fairness, responsiveness, and congruence are important predictors of satisfaction. These features all have a large body of literature tied to them, and this dissertation's main aim is to shed light on how they can be understood in relation to regime legitimacy. Beyond this, the main contribution of the paper is to evaluate the state of knowledge in the satisfaction literature and demonstrate how new statistical techniques can be used to further develop and improve scientific inquiry. This gives a strong, robust empirical baseline for understanding what affects regime support, which in turn helps guide future research.

5.2 Article II: *Procedural Congruence and the Delegate-Trustee Dilemma*

In the second article, "Procedural congruence and the delegate–trustee dilemma", the main objective is to compare the legitimacy beliefs of citizens and representatives. This is done to empirically observe what we call *procedural congruence* in the paper. The analysis is conducted by implementing a novel conjoint experimental design with both representatives and citizens and asking them to evaluate the outcome of a referendum. By measuring the congruence between these two samples, we can empirically assess the extent to which the vast literature on ideological congruence can expand into the realm of procedural congruence. This is empirically observed by experimentally separating the outcome from the procedure. Previous research has shown that the outcome of any decision-making procedure tends to mediate how respondents view the procedure (Tyler 2006; Thibaut and Walker 1975), and recent evidence suggests that outcome favourability is the strongest determinant of individuals' willingness to accept authoritative decisions (Esaiasson et al. 2019; Werner 2019). In democratic procedures, the losers—i.e., the voters who do not obtain the outcome they prefer—will retrospectively reevaluate the procedure as less legitimate, given its attributes; in our case, these attributes include the level of turnout and size of the majority.

When attempting to measure procedural congruence, it is critical to separate the outcome from the procedure because the outcome will be strongly correlated with the pretreatment preferences of citizens and representatives. The design described below enables us to effectively assess the procedural congruence of the legitimacy of a referendum without risking bias due to faulty sampling techniques and endogeneity. Thus, we argue that separating the outcome from the procedure allows us to make sound inferences about both the ideological and the procedural congruence between citizens and representatives.

We find that citizens and representatives are incongruent in their evaluation of the legitimacy of the hypothetical EU referendum, especially if they are faced with an unfavourable outcome. Further, we show how this difference is mainly driven by the tension between different styles of representation, i.e., trustee or delegate. Trustee-style representation involves representatives following their own convictions rather than the will of the voters; constituents in such a system are likely to consider majority-rule decisions to be less legitimate than those reached by representatives who behave like delegates. This has clear implications for our understanding of procedural congruence in terms of how representatives view representation.

This article speaks to the growing demands for referendums by providing insights about how elected representatives view direct democratic procedures and to what extent they are congruent with citizens. Measuring and understanding this procedural congruence is important to understand the challenge of legitimacy and demands for referendums.

5.3 Article III: *Conditional Satisfaction: Political Support, Congruence, and the (Un)certainty of Political Marginalization*

In this article, "Conditional satisfaction: political support, congruence, and the (un)certainty of political marginalization" is an applied study that draws on some of the insights from article I, "An empirical evaluation of explanations of political system support". We investigate whether satisfaction with democracy is affected by congruence, context, and political sophistication. We merge the large literature on satisfaction with the literature on ideological congruence and argue that the effect of ideological distance on satisfaction depends on how different types of government affect citizens' sense of (un)certainty about whether their preferences will be marginalised as a result of bargaining within the national government.

Consistent with previous research, we find that ideological distance shapes patterns of satisfaction. A citizen who is distant from the current government is more likely to be dissatisfied with it. On average, we find limited evidence that this relationship is affected by government type. However, for politically sophisticated governments, we find that these groups are more sensitive to being ideologically distant from a single-party government than from a government controlled by a coalition. Additionally, we show that the ideological composition of the government conditions the relationship between citizen satisfaction and congruence, but it does so only for politically sophisticated citizens. Specifically, we find that as the ideological diversity of a multiparty government increases, the relationship between citizen satisfaction and incongruence weakens. Ultimately, it becomes insignificant for more highly educated individuals when governments are controlled by a highly diverse coalition of parties.

The contribution of this article relates to the growing body of work using congruence as an independent variable and to the satisfaction literature. In terms of the former, we build on the emerging research about what outcomes are shaped by varying congruence (cf. Reher 2015; Mayne and Hakhverdian 2017). In terms of the latter, we contribute with a direct test for the effect of government type (a covariate that has been much studied, albeit mostly through the lens of electoral rules) on satisfaction, thus arguing that context, as well as congruence, shape satisfaction outcomes, but only for politically sophisticated outcomes. We examine this by leveraging a set of harmonised survey data covering one million respondents in 28 European countries over a 40-year period.

This article addresses the challenge of declining support in democracy and how new, emerging cleavages shape patterns of support. By simultaneously scrutinising how citizen heterogeneity and context can affect support via congruence, we can gain new insights into the basic dynamics through which congruence affects support.

5.4 Article IV: *Beliefs about the Income Generating Process and Social Preferences*

In the article *Beliefs about the Income Generating Process and Social Preferences*, we investigate meta-belief congruence on questions related to the income generating process. By asking a set of questions about why the rich are richer than the poor to citizens and elites, we are able to compare and study citizen–elite congruence on these meta-beliefs. Further, we relate these beliefs to redistribution preferences and show that people who believe more strongly that inequalities are related to meritocratic factors are more incongruent with their representatives than are citizens who believe that inequalities in society are caused by nonmeritocratic factors. Additionally, when examining within-party congruence, there is a liberal congruence bias among representatives, and citizens who vote for conservative parties are far more incongruent with their representatives on the issue of redistribution than are liberal voters.

Early political science literature argued that people's beliefs about the less affluent shape their views on redistribution policies (Gilens 1999; Williamson 1974).

In recent years, more studies have found that support for redistribution policies depends on people's beliefs about the sources of inequality (Aarøe and Petersen 2014; Alesina, Di Tella, and MacCulloch 2004; Alesina, Stantcheva, and Teso 2018; Linos and West 2003). These findings tell us whether people believe that affluence is generated by hard work and good choices are more likely to favour less distribution. On the other hand, people who believe that affluence is generated by arbitrary factors, such as luck, tend to favour more redistribution.

In this article, we test whether citizens and elites are congruent in their evaluations of what causes societal inequality and show how these evaluations shape their redistribution preferences. For the latter point, contrary to other studies (cf. Gilens 2012; L. M. Bartels 2018) we find that overall, representatives in Norway favour more redistribution than citizens do. We also show that elites are more congruent with less well-off citizens than with high-income earners. We theorise that this phenomenon, which we call an *indigence bias* in discussing these findings, can be caused by systemic features of Norwegian governance, such as tripartite cooperation and a generous and universal welfare state.

When studying the association between beliefs about the income generating process, we find that these beliefs are associated with redistribution preferences, thus confirming other findings cited above. We find that for both citizens and elites, believing in meritocratic factors, such as working hard, being talented, and taking risks, makes them less likely to favour redistribution. Elites and citizens are congruent in their beliefs about the income generating process. However, we find important heterogeneity among both elites and citizens. Specifically, we show that liberal voters are more congruent with their elected representatives than their conservative counterparts are. We provide evidence that this *liberal bias* can be explained by liberals being less likely to believe that inequalities are caused by meritocratic factors.

Chapter 6

Conclusions and future research

This thesis set out to explore how better representation can help address some of the most pressing challenges faced by modern representative democracy. The challenges laid out above have been studied from many different perspectives in comparative political behaviour research. I argue, however, that scholars should further look at representation to overcome many of these challenges. One of the main features of responsive governments, and thus of more accurate representation, is congruence. If citizens and elites are congruent in general and specific terms, their democracy is likely to function better.

This last point is the main theoretical argument of this thesis. As I have shown above, many of the challenges facing modern representative democracy can be addressed with better functioning and more equal representation. I shed light on this by scrutinising congruence and developing theoretical accounts of how congruence affects attitudes and how various forms of incongruence harm representation and, in turn, democracy.

Research on congruence has traditionally focused on ideological congruence. One of the main contributions of this thesis, beyond showing why congruence matters for today's representative democracies, is its conceptual expansion of the larger concept of congruence. I have laid out a new conceptual scheme for how we can understand and measure congruence and provided examples of how it can be used in applied research. This allows for an examination of congruence in relation to the worrying challenges faced by contemporary democracies. More specifically, I have also presented two new concepts that can be used in future congruence research. As is evident from the findings of this thesis, focusing on these new concepts provides fresh insights into the workings of democracy.

The empirical contributions of this thesis relate to the role that congruence plays in shaping the legitimacy and quality of democracy. First, I find that congruence is indeed related to regime support, even though it has largely been ignored in the current literature on satisfaction with democracy. Second, I argue that scholars should pay more attention to input-oriented variables when studying and developing theories about democratic legitimacy. Related to this, I also show how context, government composition, and political sophistication relate to different perceptions of support. This confirms the assumption that citizen heterogeneity is important. Put differently, congruence, and thus political marginalisation, affect citizens in different ways depending on their socioeconomic background.

Third, I show that citizens and elites are incongruent in their legitimacy perceptions. This has important implications for our understanding of the role of referendums as a potential supplement to representative democracy. While my findings do not settle the debate on whether elements of direct democracy aid or harm representative democracy, they suggest that citizens and elites have different legitimacy beliefs about referendums. This lack of congruence could be read to mean that referendums may harm democracy if representatives and citizens cannot agree on their use by possibly undermining citizens' preferences for how democracy should work. However, if representatives ignore the outcome of a referendum initiated by citizens, this will foster distrust towards politicians and hurt the overall legitimacy of the regime. An effective incorporation of referendums into democratic decision-making will thus depend on representatives' responsible use and implementation of referendums.

Fourth, we find that overall, citizens and elites are congruent in their beliefs about the income generating process. We also show that these beliefs are related to preferences for redistribution. For instance, both citizens and elites who believe in meritocratic factors are in favour of less redistribution. When we scrutinise the data further, we find that, contrary to other findings, representatives are more congruent with less well-off citizens. In addition, we find what we call a *liberal congruence bias*. This entails that liberal voters, in general, are more congruent with their representatives than their conservative counterparts are. The main reason for this incongruence is that conservative representatives believe, to a larger extent, that income differences are caused by meritocratic factors.

My findings are based on unique data on elected representatives from one of the largest survey data sets available and a variety of different quantitative methods, some of which have never been used in the context of congruence research. Most important in this respect is perhaps the use of machine learning to both validate findings and make predictions, which allows us to learn more about whether the theories posed here have merit. In addition, I show that the earth mover's distance can be used in survey experiments, and I also show how to effectively compare the experimental outcomes between citizens and elites by applying the same module to both of these groups. This is an endeavour that many other scholars have also found useful in the past.

Summarising the findings across the four articles, this thesis finds that there are multiple ways for citizens and elites to be congruent and that congruence affects the quality of representative democracy. It is clear that congruence matters for regime legitimacy, and both political actors and voters should be aware of this when showing up at the voting booth. Looking beyond what I call the most specific forms of congruence, i.e., policy congruence, I argue that voters should also pay attention to their meta-beliefs and procedural perceptions.

Specifically, I find that there is a link between satisfaction and congruence, but this relationship is moderated by what type of coalition government is in power and by individual voters' levels of political sophistication. Further, I show that citizens and elites in Norway are procedurally incongruent depending on the representative roles assumed by representatives and that representatives exhibit a large degree of unfavourable outcome bias, which has also been found in other studies (Sheffer, Loewen, Soroka, et al. 2018). I also find a strong link between beliefs about the income generating process and preferences related to redistribution. This ultimately shows that meta-beliefs, although somewhat harder to gauge than policy preferences, are very important for determining what representatives and citizens think the government should do about inequality.

By including observational and experimental evidence on elected representatives, this dissertation contributes to the growing body of work seeking to understand elite behaviour. By surveying large numbers of politicians, I demonstrate that the tools used to evaluate non-elites can also be validly applied to representatives. This also provides empirical evidence on exactly how politicians differ from their constituents. In so doing, these contributions can directly inform existing models in other areas of social science research. As pointed out by Sheffer, Loewen, Walgrave, et al. (2018), scholars often assume that elites are not prone to the same biases as their voters. The findings from this dissertation further emphasise that these assumptions should be updated in light of the evidence on how politicians actually confront different policy scenarios and how they systematically differ from one another when they face such choices.

Based on the findings of my thesis, I believe there are several avenues for future research that scholars studying democratic challenges should focus on. Future research should look to the findings from article I when forming theories about satisfaction with democracy. For instance, there seems to be too much emphasis in the literature on outcome legitimacy. Studies should therefore look beyond traditional variables, such as winner-loser status, and direct their attention to input-oriented variables, such as procedural fairness.

Article III uses some of this new knowledge to show how predictive studies can guide hypothesis-testing studies. This is an approach that is lacking (although on the rise, as seen above) in contemporary political science. In general, scholars should focus their attention more on prediction and less on statistical significance, especially in observational studies. Article III also invites researchers to take context more seriously and focus on citizen heterogeneity in congruence research. Future studies should investigate these conclusions in other contexts using different conceptualisations and measurement strategies.

Additionally, research on satisfaction should direct its attention to congruence and the workings of democracy by, for instance, determining the conditions under which the relationship between satisfaction and congruence changes and the mechanisms through which it does so. Importantly, scholars must also be attentive to the notion that democracy crucially implies the protection of minority rights and national interests. Studying this issue from a multilevel governance perspective could also prove useful. For instance, it can help us determine how these structures affect the satisfaction-congruence nexus, whether lower levels of governance produce higher levels of satisfaction, and under what conditions they do so.

This thesis has argued for an empirical and theoretical expansion of the concept of congruence by focusing on meta-beliefs and procedures. I have shown how the concept of procedural and meta-belief congruence can be meaningfully used in studies of congruence. While I have focused on one specific decision-making procedure here, future research should examine whether other processes and procedures can increase the legitimacy of decisions. For example, mini-publics or other forms of democratic innovation may do so (cf. Newton and Geissel 2012).

Moreover, we do not know whether the results from articles II and IV can be generalised to other contexts. The results of this might differ depending on how frequently direct democracy mechanisms are employed. As I have argued above, it is important that citizens and elites have congruent beliefs about procedures and meta-beliefs. Future research should thus examine whether citizens and elites are congruent in their beliefs and how they evaluate procedures.

Scholars have a particular responsibility to guide democracies in the right direction. Specifically, they should guide policy-makers and the general population in navigating the challenges facing modern democracies. Finally, several new avenues of research arise from this thesis. First, we need to evaluate the procedural congruence of new, innovative democratic decision-making procedures. The experimental design presented in article II can easily be modified to evaluate different democratic procedures. We can, for instance, present citizens with a scenario of a mini-public and have them evaluate the legitimacy of the outcome while simultaneously varying attributes of the procedure (cf. Grimes 2006; Esaiasson et al. 2016; Werner 2019). For example, do the number of participants in these deliberations, the level of discussion—both intellectually and conflictwise—and the representativeness of the participants affect the legitimacy evaluations?

Overall, I argue that scholars should continue to focus on better representation to improve democratic performance, on both the input and the output side of politics. Voters should look beyond political actors' stances on specific issues and pay attention to their more general preferences. Political actors should, in turn, continue to inform voters of both their specific and their general beliefs and seek to inform voters of their convictions while remaining accountable for their actions. By electing representatives who are congruent with their voters, democracies will continue to prosper and will, in turn, lead to more equal politics and improved responsiveness. If representation functions well, democracies will perhaps be better equipped to address some of the many challenges they face.

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Chapter 7

Individual articles

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