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Representation in Wales: An Empirical Analysis of the Policy Divisions between Voters and Candidates

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Abstract

Politics in Wales is often portrayed as being relatively consensual when compared with the rest of the United Kingdom and enjoying healthy levels of trust between voters and elites. Recent events like the decision of Welsh voters to reject the European Union membership against the advice of most of its political establishment, however, are calling to question this perception. Using 2016 Welsh Candidate Study and 2016 Welsh Election Study data, this paper evaluates the extent of policy divisions between voters and candidates in Wales. I find that candidates hold more liberal policy positions and are less likely to think of immigration as the most important policy priority. In addition, they tend to favour a different approach to parliamentary representation, deeming it more acceptable for Assembly Members to discard the views of their voters in favour of their own views or those of their party.

Keywords: Devolution, policy divisions, voters, candidates, representation, Wales

Introduction

We live in an era where the majority of people in Britain do not trust politicians, believe that they do not care about what ordinary people think and that they prefer playing party political games over furthering public interests (Fieldhouse et al. 2016). In fact, politicians are now less trusted than estate agents or bankers, with less than a fourth of people expecting them to tell voters the truth (Ipsos MORI 2016). While sentiments like these are of course not unique to Britain (World Economic Forum 2016), they nonetheless raise concerns about the current state of British democracy and the ability of its elites to effectively engage with voters.

Against this backdrop of discontent, the political environment in Wales, however, is often portrayed as being relatively harmonious. Although certainly not without its own divisions, Wales has shown that cooperation between main political parties is possible in a way that cooperation between the Labour Party and the Conservative Party in Westminster seems improbable, that a broadly supported vision for the pace and extent of devolution can be reached so that debates on independence are not quite as partisan and divisive as those in Scotland, and that a formal cross-community power sharing agreement is not necessary to allow unionists and nationalists to work together within the devolved system unlike in Northern Ireland. Instead, political debates in Wales are often seen to play out on a slightly narrower ideological spectrum, characterised by soft-nationalist cultural politics, devolution-maximising constitutional reform, and a social democratic policy agenda (Jones and Scully 2008; Moon 2013, 2016). Welsh politicians also have a more positive reputation among voters. In contrast to the broader trend of disillusionment with politicians, most Welsh voters trust their Assembly Members and believe in their integrity (Scully and Jones 2015b).

Recent events, however, appear to be providing some evidence that the political environment in Wales is not particularly consensual after all. Although the 2017 general election in Wales saw a return of traditional two-party politics,ⁱ one does not have to look hard to find instances of disconnect between voters and elites. In contrast to the widespread cross-party campaign in Wales backing the membership of the European Union,ⁱⁱ 52.5% of the voters opted to ‘take back control’ instead, and the Abolish the Welsh Assembly Party and UKIP Wales surprised many with their good performances at the 2016 devolved election. The political environment in Wales appears to be in flux as voters seem increasingly willing to challenge the status quo. Policy divisions between voters and elites in Wales may in fact be more substantial than often portrayed.

This paper looks at the extent to which policy divisions exist between voters and candidates in Wales. It does so by using data from the 2016 Welsh Candidate Study and the 2016 Welsh Election Study to compare voters’ and candidates’ views on policy agenda, policy positions on a range of policy issues, and whose interests they believe that Assembly Members ought to prioritise when carrying out their duties in the National Assembly for Wales. As such, this paper provides a complex account of voter-candidate congruence (or the lack thereof) at the different points of the policy-making process.

The analysis uncovers strong evidence that the relationship between voters and candidates in Wales is not particularly harmonious. Significant differences exist between them in all three aspects of the policy-making process focused on in this paper. First, voters are more inclined than candidates to believe that immigration is the most important issue facing Wales, while less likely to think that about economy. Second, voters tend to adopt more authoritarian policy positions than candidates. Third, voters and candidates differ in their beliefs about

whose interests Assembly Members ought to prioritise when carrying out their duties in Cardiff Bay. Candidates find it considerably more acceptable for Assembly Members to discard the views of their voters in favour of their own views or those of their party. Taken together, these differences suggest that the political environment in Wales is not particularly consensual after all.

The article is organised as follows. It first describes the different elements of consensus that have been associated with Wales and the recent events that appear to challenge these. Second, it outlines the different aspects of the policy-making process that are focused on. It then illustrates data and measures, presents the empirical findings, and concludes with a discussion on their implications.

Political environment in Wales

The perception of less divisive politics in Wales is usually based on the idea that a degree of common understanding exists over politics, policy, and implementation, which together lead to a more positive relationship between voters and elites. First, the political climate in Wales has been characterised by stability and cooperation. On the one hand, the Labour Party has been the cornerstone of Welsh politics. It has been so central to the political life of the nation, having won the most votes in Wales at every general election since 1922 and led the Welsh Government through Welsh Labour ever since it was first formed in 1999, that the state of one-party politics has earned Wales the nickname LabourLand (Morgan and Mungham 2000). On the other hand, there are examples of cooperation between the main parties in Wales. In instances where Welsh Labour has fallen short of a majority in Cardiff Bay it has found willing partners to form coalition governments in Plaid Cymru (2007-2011) and the Welsh Liberal Democrats (2000-2003; 2016-...). The dominance of Welsh Labour, together

with the willingness of other parties to support an administration led by it, is seen to highlight a rare degree of political stability and collaborative will. No other nation in the United Kingdom (UK) has witnessed such consistency and dominance of a single party.

Second, policy debates in Wales are often perceived to play out on a quite narrow ideological spectrum. This has been labelled the Welshminster consensus, embodying i) devo-maximising constitutional reform, ii) social democratic policy agenda, and iii) soft-nationalist cultural politics (Moon 2013, 2016). In practice, this consensus manifests in broad acceptance of interventionist government programmes, willingness to extend the welfare state, asking for additional devolved powers but not independence, and the continuing commitment to Welsh language and heritage. Public opinion data suggests that these broad preferences are not only shared by the elites, but that they also enjoy strong support among the Welsh public (Scully 2017; Scully and Jones 2015a). Wales does not seem to play host to issues quite as divisive as the independence debate in Scotland or the unionist-nationalist clash in Northern Ireland.

Third, scholars point to emerging evidence of a ‘made in Wales’ approach to administering public policies. A well-documented example of this concerns youth justice which tends to be implemented less punitively in Wales than in England (Haines 2010; St.Denny 2016). In fact, it can be seen as part of a broader trend towards an approach that prioritises prevention over punishment and the balancing of short term needs with long term needs, as set out also in the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The emergence of a distinctive ‘made in Wales’ approach to administering public policy and delivering public services contributes to defining the rules of the game and specifying the accepted framework within which policy implementation strategies need to fall. In doing so, it restricts the extent to which policy

divisions are likely to emerge as potential disagreements over policy implementation should be more confined.

Recent events, however, challenge the idea of congruence between the attitudes of voters and elites in Wales. Perhaps the most striking example of this was the decision of Welsh voters to reject the membership of the European Union by 52.5% to 47.5% in 2016 despite the prominent campaign by the Welsh political establishment to cast a remain vote. The latter also had economy on its side as Wales is widely accepted to benefit from the European Union budget, with the net annual gain estimated around £245m in 2014 (Wales Governance Centre 2016). Despite the strong remain messaging from the elites, the majority of voters opted for a leave vote, signalling a lack of trust in the judgements of the political elites. This is of course not an only recent challenge to the idea of harmonious politics. The 2016 devolved election saw the Abolish the Welsh Assembly Party win 4.4% of the regional vote despite it being publicly launched only in late 2015 and UKIP Wales gain seven Assembly Members with 13% of the regional vote. Their successes indicate that the desire among voters to halt the pace of devolution and for right of centre politics may be stronger than the conventional idea of consensus would suggest. Taken together, it appears that the idea of business as usual is being challenged in Wales. It does not of course necessarily mean that there is a fundamental disconnect between voters and elites in Wales, but there are reasons to suggest that the extent of it might be greater than often portrayed.

From policy positions to policy process

Studies of voter-elite congruence are of course not novel. In particular, considerable attention has been given over the years to assessing how well elites represent public opinion on a range of policy issues. Scholars do so by typically utilising one of two approaches. Some choose to

focus on the comparison of voters' and elites' positions one issue at a time even if they later aggregate the observed trends (e.g., André and Depauw 2017; Krimmel et al. 2016; Lax and Phillips 2012; McAllister 1991), while others opt for comparing aggregate 'ideology scores' such as placements on the left-right scale (e.g., Belchior 2013; Blais and Bodet 2006; Golder and Stramski 2010; Kim et al. 2010). This body of literature has reached a broadly accepted understanding that there are three main issue dimensions – the left-right dimension associated with economic issues, cultural dimension, and European integration dimension – that capture political contestation, with congruence generally high on the economic dimension but weak on the cultural dimension. These insights are informative, but they are nonetheless limited to the narrow comparison of policy positions.

There is more to the policy process and understanding policy outcomes, however, than policy positions. Policy agenda and principles that guide parliamentary behaviour also matter (e.g., Howlett et al. 2009; Knill and Tosun 2012; Sabatier 1991). For example, it is conceivable that voters and elites may share similar policy positions but prioritise different issues, which could lead to contrasting preferences on the allocation of resources and a sense of dissatisfaction among the public with policy outcomes. At the same time, if there is a shared understanding among voters and elites about whose views parliamentarians should prioritise when carrying out their legislative duties, the impact that differences in their policy agenda or policy positions have on policy outcomes is mitigated. Given that policy positions tell only part of the story about how policies are enacted and whether voters are likely to feel represented at the end of the process, it is important to think of voter-elite congruence in broader terms. It is necessary to compare voters' and elites' policy positions, but also their policy agenda and preferred approach to parliamentary representation to offer a truly multifaceted account of policy divisions between voters and elites.

Existing insights on voter-elite congruence over policy agenda and approach to parliamentary representation, however, remain limited. In terms of policy agenda, some studies have looked at the priorities of voters and elites (e.g., Bevan and Jennings 2014; Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008; Jennings and John 2009; Spoon and Klüver 2014), but their underlying aim has been to assess policy responsiveness by comparing elites' issue attention at T with public opinion at T-1. The study by Reher (2014) is a notable exception as it compares voters' and candidates' policy priorities at virtually the same time, but even that focuses predominantly on evaluating how issue congruence influences turnout and not on the nature of this congruence. In terms of how parliamentarians ought to approach representation, existing studies tend to focus on the perceptions of voters (e.g., Bengtsson and Wass 2011; Bowler 2017; Carman 2007; Doherty 2013) or elites (e.g., André et al. 2016; Heitshusen et al. 2004; Rush 2001; Önnudóttir 2014), but do not compare these. Those that do, explore the effect of congruence on satisfaction with democracy and do not focus on the nature of congruence (André and Depauw 2017) or reveal mixed insights. While Andeweg and Thomassen (2005) and Méndez-Lago and Martínez (2002) uncover considerable differences between voters' and elites' visions of parliamentary representation, Campbell and Lovenduski (2015) and von Schoultz and Wass (2016) find the levels of congruence between voters' and elites' preferences for the focus of representation to be rather strong. Existing insights on voter-elite congruence for policy agenda and approach to parliamentary representation remain limited and have raised as many questions as provided answers.

It is important to expand the study of voter-elite congruence from the conventional focus on policy positions alone to simultaneously compare voters' and elites' views on policy agenda,

policy positions, and approach to parliamentary representation. This comparison should focus on voters and elites within the same political context and at the same point in time.

Data and methods

The analyses presented here rely on compatible survey data from the 2016 Welsh Candidate Study and the 2016 Welsh Election Study. These surveys are ideally suited for comparing the views of candidates and voters in Wales as they were conducted within a couple of months of each other, include compatible questions on the different aspects of the policy process, and have an extensive reach in terms of the number of respondents.ⁱⁱⁱ

The 2016 Welsh Candidate Study is a survey of candidates who stood for election to the National Assembly for Wales.^{iv} It was carried out immediately after the 2016 devolved election and used a mixed mode design whereby candidates could cast their responses online or via post. The survey was conducted in English and Welsh. The final sample includes 159 candidates (35% of all candidates)^v and is highly representative of the general population of candidates. When using the Duncan index of dissimilarity on the distributions of two major characteristics – partisanship and candidacy type – within the sample and the full population of candidates, it yields values of 0.07 and 0.01, respectively (Duncan and Duncan 1955).^{vi} Moreover, the percentage of women among all candidates and those in the sample is similar at 34% versus 37%, as is the percentage of successful candidates at 13% versus 12%.

The 2016 Welsh Election Study is used to capture the views of voters as it includes a three-wave survey of a representative sample of the Welsh electorate.^{vii} The analyses presented here rely on data from the pre-election wave of the voter survey as it has the greatest overlap

with the 2016 Welsh Candidate Study questionnaire. This wave was carried out by YouGov in March 2016, for Cardiff University, and the final sample includes 3,272 respondents.

Policy agenda

The comparison between voters' and candidates' policy agenda is based on the question 'As far as you are concerned, what is the single most important issue facing Wales at the present time?'. Both sets of respondents were invited to provide open-ended answers and these were later coded into the following broader categories: i) economy, ii) living standards, iii) health, iv) education, v) immigration, vi) European Union, and vii) devolution.^{viii} For each category, respondent is coded 1 if she considers the policy area to top her policy agenda and 0 if not.

Following this, seven parallel difference of means tests (i.e., independent sample t-tests) are conducted to evaluate the comparative likelihood of voters and candidates to prioritise each of these seven policy areas.^{ix}

Policy positions

The 2016 Welsh Candidate Study and the 2016 Welsh Election Study include questions that explore respondents' views on three issue dimensions: i) European integration, ii) economy, and iii) authoritarian versus liberal values. In order to account for the possibility that voter-candidate congruence may vary across and within the different issue dimensions, their policy positions are compared separately across each available survey item.^x

Attitudes towards European integration are measured as the self-placement of respondents on a scale from 0 'European integration has gone too far' to 10 'European integration should be pushed further'. Economic positions are captured through the respondents' level of agreement

with three statements: i) government should redistribute income from the better-off to those who are less well-off, ii) big business benefits owners at expense of workers, and iii) ordinary working people do not get their fair share of the nation's wealth. Authoritarian versus liberal attitudes are inferred from the respondents' level of agreement with another three statements: i) young people today don't have enough respect for traditional British values, ii) people who break law should receive stiffer sentences, and iii) schools should teach children to obey authority. Responses to the policy statements range from 1 'strongly disagree' to 5 'strongly agree'.

The extent to which voters' and candidates' policy positions differ is addressed through seven parallel difference of means tests, each focusing on a particular policy position.

Approach to parliamentary representation

People can also have different ideas about the principles that ought to guide the behaviour of elected representatives. Some may believe that elected representatives should be party agents and prioritise the interests of their party, while others may believe that they should be constituency parliamentarians and prioritise the interests of their voters or that they should be entirely independent-minded instead.

The manner in which voters and candidates believe that Assembly Members should approach parliamentary representation is captured through survey questions that ask respondents about how Assembly Members should act if the views of certain stakeholders are in conflict. These conflicts are as follows: i) party versus voters, ii) Assembly Member versus voters, and iii) Assembly Member versus party. For each choice, respondent is coded 1 if she believes that Assembly Members should prioritise the views of the former and 0 if the views of the latter.

Following this, three separate difference of means tests are conducted to compare how likely voters and candidates are to believe that Assembly Members should i) prioritise the views of their party over those of their voters, ii) prioritise their own views over those of their voters, and iii) prioritise their own views over those of their party.

Policy divisions between voters and candidates

I start by comparing the percentage of voters and candidates who prioritise each of the seven policy areas. These are presented in Table 1. The differences between voters and candidates do not appear overly great, but some discrepancies are still standing out. The negative score of -10.3% (22.3% versus 32.6%) for economy indicates that voters are less likely to consider it the most important issue than candidates, whereas the positive score of 5.5% (6.9% versus 1.4%) for immigration shows that they are more likely to think that about immigration than candidates. Both differences are statistically significant at $p < .05$ level, with the respective t-statistics being 2.88 and -2.59. The percentage of voters who prioritise living standards is also higher than the corresponding percentage of candidates (29.4% versus 22.2%), even if not statistically significant. In fact, living standards is the most frequently mentioned issue by voters, whereas economy topped the list for candidates. Taken together, these differences do not reveal a fundamental disconnect between voters and candidates. Instead of telling a story of contrasting visions about what the most important issues facing Wales are, they tell a story of limited discrepancies. Candidates are modestly more inclined to prioritise structural, ‘big picture’ issues, while voters tend to attach greatest importance to issues that have more immediate personal implications.^{xi}

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Considering the varying likelihood of voters and candidates to treat concerns about economy and immigration as the most important ones, we need to understand whether these differences are present across the ideological spectrum or limited to candidates and voters of a certain ideological leaning. Table 2 shows the percentage of voters and candidates, by party, who consider economy and immigration as the most important issue.^{xii} Note first that differences in voters' and candidates' likelihood of prioritising economy are most salient within the more leftist parties. The percentage of Plaid Cymru candidates who consider economy as the most important issue is more than double than the corresponding percentage of Plaid Cymru voters (52.6% versus 24.6%). It is rather telling that economic issues are mentioned by Plaid Cymru candidates more often than everything else combined, whereas by less than a quarter of its voters. This disconnect is weaker, but still salient, within Welsh Labour (43.8% versus 22.3%) and the Welsh Liberal Democrats (47.4% versus 27%). Interestingly, however, this pattern is not present when looking at the Welsh Conservative Party and UKIP Wales. Candidates of both these parties are in fact less likely to prioritise economy than their voters, but the differences here are small. The disconnect between voters and candidates over whether economic issues should take priority is driven by differences within the more leftist parties.

A closer look at the saliency given to immigration reveals an even starker discrepancy. While immigration is not considered as the most important issue by any candidate of the five parties represented in the National Assembly for Wales following the 2016 devolved election, it is by some voters of all these parties. The percentage of voters who prioritise immigration as the most important issue is highest among those who support UKIP Wales at 27.3% and notable among those who support the Welsh Conservative Party at 7.2%, while dropping below 5%

for the more leftist parties. There is variation in how likely voters of different parties are to prioritise immigration, but the saliency of the issue is still evident right across the ideological spectrum. Voters of all main parties in Wales are more inclined to believe that immigration is the most important issue than the corresponding candidates.

[TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

Next, I compare voters' and candidates' policy positions. Table 3 presents their responses to seven policy statements which, taken together, capture attitudes on European integration, the economic left-right dimension, and the cultural dimension. Perhaps somewhat surprisingly I do not find meaningful differences between voters' and candidates' attitudes towards European integration. The difference of 0.4 (4.0 versus 3.6) is small, given the scale of the measure, and does not reach conventional levels of statistical significance. In fact, both an average voter and an average candidate feature a strong dose of Euroscepticism as they are in the 'integration has gone too far' half of the spectrum. The former is of course unsurprising as Wales voted for the UK to leave the European Union by 52.5% to 47.5% in 2016, but the latter is somewhat unexpected since most politicians were thought to have campaigned for a remain vote in the lead up to the referendum. What this data suggests is that the remain stance was a grudging acceptance of the European Union membership rather than an expression of one's Europhile nature for more Welsh politicians than perhaps is often perceived.

Moving on to voters' and candidates' economic positions, two of the three policy statements reveal statistically significant differences. On average, candidates are more inclined to favour governmental policies that re-distribute income than voters (3.9 versus 3.5) and less likely to believe that big business benefits at the expense of workers (3.7 versus 4.0). Both differences

are statistically significant at $p < .01$ level. However, they are of relatively minor scope and do not reveal contrasting economic visions. Voters and candidates are both, on balance, positive about income re-distribution and critical about big businesses. The differences in voters' and candidates' views on economic issues are not substantively meaningful.

Salient and consistent disconnect in voters' and candidates' policy positions is, however, very much evident when focusing on issues on the cultural dimension. Voters tend to hold notably more authoritarian attitudes than candidates. They are more likely to agree that young people have no respect for British values (3.6 versus 2.9), that breaking law should lead to stiffer sentences (3.8 versus 3.0), and that schools should teach children to obey authority (3.8 versus 2.9). These differences are statistically significant ($p < .01$) and large in scope, but they also reveal contrasting beliefs. Whereas the average scores for candidates are consistently in the middle of the scale, revealing a neutral collective stance in response to these statements, an average voter tends to agree with all three statements. This suggests that voters in Wales hold considerably stronger authoritarian views than candidates.^{xiii}

[TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

Finally, I compare how voters and candidates believe that Assembly Members should behave when carrying out their duties in the National Assembly for Wales (Table 4). Note first that they are almost equally likely to suggest that Assembly Members should prioritise their own views over those of their party in case of a conflict (62.8% versus 59.2%; $p = .82$). However, when asked about whether Assembly Members should discard the preferences of their voters in favour of their party position or own views, voters and candidates have different visions of how representation ought to be carried out. Voters are considerably more inclined to suggest

that Assembly Members should prioritise their voters' views over their party position in case of a conflict than candidates (83.7% versus 59%). They are also more likely to suggest that Assembly Members should prioritise their voters' views over their own opinion if in conflict (75.3% versus 45%). These differences are statistically significant at $p < .01$ level and reveal a telling mismatch between voters' and candidates' vision of representation. Whereas a clear majority of voters believes that Assembly Members should prioritise voters' views over their party line or own views, candidates are almost evenly split in their belief of whether voters' views should dictate parliamentary behaviour or not.^{xiv} The greater tendency of candidates to suggest that discarding voters' views, in favour of party line or Assembly Members' own views, is acceptable is also particularly relevant in the current political climate. It re-enforces the perception that there is a substantial disconnect between voters and elites, with the views of the former being cast aside too readily.

[TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE]

Overall, it is apparent that there are salient policy divisions between voters and candidates in Wales. These differences are by no means big enough to suggest that the political system is fundamentally unrepresentative, but they do exist and should be addressed. This is especially the case in the current political environment where the levels of public trust in politicians and politics more broadly are uncomfortably low.

Conclusions

Elites in the UK, and beyond, are increasingly seen as being out of touch with voters, with the growing disconnect between them seen as a salient feature of the current political climate. It has been argued that public disillusionment with politics has led to not just growing levels of

electoral volatility (Denver et al. 2012), but also helped to fuel the successes of populist parties who have made it a key element of their political identity (Ford and Goodwin 2014). In few places seems this pattern to have played out more clearly in recent years than Wales where voters rejected the membership of the European Union against the almost unanimous advice of the political establishment and delivered notable election success for UKIP Wales at the 2016 devolved election.

In this study, the current extent of voter-candidate congruence in Wales is explored. Using data from the 2016 Welsh Candidate Study and the 2016 Welsh Election Study, it compares voters' and candidates' views on policy agenda, policy positions on a range of policy issues, and whose interests they believe that Assembly Members should prioritise when carrying out their duties in the National Assembly for Wales. The analysis reveals some salient differences between the attitudes of voters and candidates. Voters are notably more likely than candidates to think about immigration as the most important policy priority, whereas less likely to think that about economy. In addition, voters tend to hold considerably more authoritarian attitudes than candidates. The most fundamental difference between the two, however, is in their views towards whose interests Assembly Members should prioritise. Voters find it significantly less acceptable for Assembly Members to discard their voters' views in favour of their own views or those of their party. There are some salient policy divisions between voters and candidates in Wales.

There are three broader points arising from this study. First, these findings support a growing body of evidence that the political environment in Wales is not particularly consensual after all and the relationship between voters and elites is characterised by considerable disconnect. Welsh voters are not just willing to go against the advice of the political establishment as was

shown by the European Union membership referendum in 2016, but they also hold somewhat different attitudes than candidates. They are more likely to think of immigration as the most important policy priority, hold considerably more authoritarian policy positions, and believe in a more voter-centred style of representation. Rather than telling a story of shared attitudes, the dynamic of voter-candidate congruence in Wales emphasises a degree of disconnect.

Second, the presence of significant policy divisions between voters and candidates in Wales suggests that elites need to intensify their efforts to engage with the public. It has been shown that higher levels of voter-elite congruence are linked to greater satisfaction with democracy (e.g., André and Depauw 2017; Brandenburg and Johns 2014; Mayne and Hakhverdian 2017) as well as electoral turnout (Heath 2016), both of which are seen to contribute to the health of a democracy. Not only do they encourage a strong civic culture and compliance with public policies, but they also empower and legitimise political institutions. In contrast, disconnect between voters and elites implies that counting on permissive consensus is not sufficient. It is evident that elites need to engage in greater dialogue with voters over the different aspects of the policy-making process to counter the perception of being out of touch.

Third, this study contributes to the broader debates on how the idea of elite-voter congruence should be conceptually thought of and empirically studied. The presence of salient divisions between voters and candidates with regards to all three aspects of the policy-making process focused on here suggests that the conventional reliance on policy positions alone to capture congruence is not sufficient. The level of disconnect between voters and candidates can, and does, vary across the different aspects of the policy-making process and this possibility needs to be accounted for. It is vital to take a more nuanced approach to evaluating the degree of voter-elite congruence and not simply compare policy positions, but also policy priorities and

preferred approach to parliamentary representation. Ideally, this should be done by focusing on voters and elites in the same political context and at the same point in time.

Appendix A: 2016 The Welsh Candidate Study

The 2016 Welsh Candidate Study includes 158 candidates who revealed their partisanship and 148 candidates who disclosed their candidacy type (see Table A1). In order to show that the sample is representative on these two characteristics, the Duncan index of dissimilarity is used. It ranges from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating greater discrepancy between the full population and the sample (Duncan and Duncan 1955). The comparison of partisanship in the sample and the full population of candidates yields a value of 0.07, while the comparison of candidacy type has a value of 0.01. The survey sample is highly representative of the general population of candidates on these two key characteristics.

Table A1: 2016 Welsh Candidate Study Sample

	Candidates (%)	Sample (%)
Partisanship		
Abolish the Welsh Assembly Party	4.4	5.1
Plaid Cymru	14.0	13.3
UKIP Wales	9.2	10.8
Wales Green Party	8.8	9.5
Welsh Communist Party	4.4	4.4
Welsh Conservative Party	16.4	18.4
Welsh Labour	12.5	12.0
Welsh Liberal Democrats	10.7	12.7
Welsh Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition	4.4	3.2
Other	15.3	10.6
	Duncan index = 0.07	
Candidacy type		
Constituency	33.5	34.5
Regional list	45.5	44.6
Constituency and regional list	21.0	21.0
	Duncan index = 0.01	

Appendix B: Successful candidates' views and parliamentary activity

This appendix provides a supplementary analysis of whether candidates' views are evident in their parliamentary behaviour. Although most candidates do not get elected, the 2016 Welsh Candidate Study includes 15 candidates who did and whose responses can be compared with their parliamentary behaviour in the first year of the 2016-21 assembly term. This analysis remains exploratory, given the small-n, but offers a useful preliminary indication of whether a connection between the views and parliamentary activity of successful candidates exists.

I start by looking at the extent to which successful candidates' contributions in the National Assembly for Wales focus on policy areas they considered most important in the 2016 Welsh Candidate Study.^{xv} First, the comparison of their committee membership and policy priorities shows that nearly two-thirds of these candidates (64.3%) became members of a committee which remit covers the policy area they considered the most important one in the first year of the 2016-21 assembly term. This rises to 92.9% when considering membership in committees which remits cover policy areas of either primary, secondary, or tertiary importance. Second, successful candidates are raising questions related to the policy areas they consider important with regularity. On average, 33.2% of the oral question they tabled in the same twelve-month period related to the policy area they considered the most important one. This rises to 67.4% for questions related to any of the three most important policy areas. This evidence does seem to suggest that the focus of successful candidates' parliamentary behaviour, in terms of policy agenda, is consistent with the views they voiced in the 2016 Welsh Candidate Study.

Moving on, I look at whether those successful candidates who attached greater importance to following party positions in the 2016 Welsh Candidate Study were in fact less likely to defect from their party line during the first year of the 2016-21 assembly term. There are fourteen

successful candidates who revealed their views on whether an Assembly Member should vote according to her party position if her voters have a different opinion of if she has a different opinion herself, seven saying ‘no’ in both instances and seven saying ‘yes’ in at least one of these instances. When comparing the roll call voting records of these Assembly Members, it is evident that the former not just hold less partisan views but they also act in a less partisan manner in the National Assembly for Wales. Although the level of party loyalty – measured as the percentage of roll call voting occasions when Assembly Members cast the same vote as the plurality of their fellow partisans – is high among both groups, as one would expect given the strong whipping practice in Cardiff Bay, it is higher among Assembly Members who believe in a more partisan approach to parliamentary representation (99.7% versus 98.8%). The difference is small in absolute terms, but Assembly Members who hold a less partisan view of representation are still four times (1.2% versus 0.3%) more likely to defect from their party line than Assembly Members who hold a more partisan view. There does seem to be a link between successful candidates’ views on how representation ought to be carried out and their subsequent parliamentary behaviour.

Although no causal claims can be drawn from this, the initial insights suggest that there is a connection between successful candidates’ views and parliamentary activity. Their behaviour as Assembly Members, in terms of what is focused on here, appears largely compatible with the views they voiced in the 2016 Welsh Candidate Study.

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Table 1. Most important issue facing Wales

	Voters (%)	Candidates (%)	Δ	T-statistic	P-value
Economy	22.3	32.6	-10.3	2.88	0.00
Living standards	29.4	22.2	7.2	-1.85	0.06
Health	27.3	25.7	1.6	-0.43	0.67
Education	3.5	5.6	-2.1	1.30	0.19
Immigration	6.9	1.4	5.5	-2.59	0.01
European Union	5.3	4.9	0.4	-0.22	0.82
Devolution	5.3	7.6	-2.3	0.23	0.23
N	2,440	144			

Table 2. Most concerned about economy and immigration by party

	Economy		Immigration	
	Voters (%)	Candidates (%)	Voters (%)	Candidates (%)
UKIP Wales	11.5	5.6	27.3	0.0
Welsh Conservative Party	24.3	18.5	7.2	0.0
Welsh Liberal Democrats	27.0	47.4	1.8	0.0
Welsh Labour	22.3	43.8	3.9	0.0
Plaid Cymru	24.6	52.6	3.4	0.0

Table 3. Policy positions

	Voters	Candidates	Δ	T-statistic	P-value
EU integration*	4.0 (3.5)	3.6 (3.1)	0.4	-1.41	0.16
Policy statements**					
Government should redistribute income	3.5 (1.2)	3.9 (1.1)	-0.4	4.11	0.00
Big business benefits at expense of workers	4.0 (1.0)	3.7 (1.1)	0.3	-3.35	0.00
Workers do not get fair share of nation's wealth	4.0 (1.0)	3.9 (1.0)	0.1	-1.04	0.30
Young people have no respect for British values	3.6 (1.2)	2.9 (1.2)	0.7	-7.98	0.00
Breaking law should lead to stiffer sentences	3.8 (1.1)	3.0 (1.2)	0.8	-8.67	0.00
Schools should teach children to obey authority	3.8 (1.1)	2.9 (1.2)	0.9	-9.44	0.00

*coding: 0 'gone too far' – 10 'push further'; standard deviations in parentheses

**coding: 1 'strongly disagree' – 5 'strongly agree'; standard deviations in parentheses

Table 4. Approach to parliamentary representation

	Conflict 1		Conflict 2		Conflict 3	
	Party	Voters	Own	Voters	Own	Party
Voters (%)	16.3	83.7	24.7	75.3	62.8	37.2
Candidates (%)	41.0	59.0	55.0	45.0	59.2	40.8
T-statistic	-7.59		-8.24		0.40	
P-value	0.00		0.00		0.85	
N (voters/candidates)	2,174/144		2,418/149		952/147	

ⁱ The return of two-party politics was characteristic to the 2017 general election in general as the Labour Party and the Conservative Party won a combined 82.4% of the popular vote across the UK.

ⁱⁱ Notable exceptions were UKIP Wales that was the only major party in Wales to campaign for a leave vote and Andrew R.T. Davies, leader of the Welsh Conservatives in the National Assembly for Wales, who campaigned for a leave vote in contrast to most of his colleagues.

ⁱⁱⁱ The exact number of candidates and voters included in the analyses of their comparative policy agenda, policy positions, and approach to parliamentary representation varies slightly as only those who answered the relevant survey question are included in the corresponding analysis. These sub-samples, however, remain representative of candidates and voters in general.

^{iv} Focusing on candidates' views is a widespread practice in representation and congruence literature to capture elite attitudes (e.g., Belchior 2013; Costello et al. 2012; Leimgruber et al. 2010; Reher 2015; Teperoglou et al. 2014). Other data have of course been used as well as some scholars have instead opted for party or government positions (e.g., Golder and Stramski 2010; Hakhverdian 2010; Huber and Powell 1994; Powell 2009) and others for the positions of elected parliamentarians (e.g., Hanretty et al. 2017; Karyotis et al. 2014; Vasilopoulou and Gattermann 2013). Reliance on candidates' views, however, has some useful advantages. Whereas focusing on party or government positions, by treating these as unitary actors, does not account for what elites actually think on individual level, and the reliance on parliamentarians' positions fails to account for the broader political class and full range of political cues that voters receive, candidate survey data captures attitudes that are exogenous to parliamentary and party institutions like whipping and log rolls as well as the views of a wider range of political actors. The trade-off here is that the focus on candidates, as opposed to governments or elected representatives, restricts the analysis to the comparison of attitudes and views without capturing their effect on policy outcomes.

^v In total, 457 candidates stood for election to the National Assembly for Wales. This includes 153 constituency candidates, 208 regional list candidates, and 96 dual candidates.

^{vi} See Appendix A for further information.

^{vii} For further information on the 2016 Welsh Election Study, see its project page on the Research Councils UK website (Research Councils UK 2017).

^{viii} Responses that did not fall under these categories were omitted from the analysis. They constituted less than 10% of the total responses.

^{ix} There is no formal baseline standard established in representation literature to classify the differences in policy agenda, policy positions, and approach to parliamentary representation as small, large, etc. As such, the analysis presents not only the extent of the differences but also the underlying average scores for voters and candidates in order for that the substantive meaning of the observed differences to be easier to understand.

^x It is important to compare voters' and candidates' policy positions separately across the different survey items as a growing body of literature suggests that voter-elite congruence can vary according to the issue at stake (e.g., Costello et al. 2012; Freire and Belchior 2013; Walczak and van der Brug 2012).

^{xi} Although there is little evidence from other Western democracies regarding voter-elite congruence on policy agenda at a specific time as existing studies tend to compare elites' issue attention at T with public opinion at T-1, there is some indication that the differences observed here are not unique to Wales. Lindeboom (2012) shows that Dutch voters were more likely than elites to prioritise issues surrounding immigration between 1981-2006, and Reher (2014) finds that German voters were more likely than candidates to consider immigration and labour issues as the most important ones in 2009 but less likely to think that of economy.

^{xii} Table 2 is limited to parties that won seats in the National Assembly for Wales at the 2016 devolved election. Information on candidates and voters of other parties is available upon request.

^{xiii} These patterns of congruence in policy positions are common in Western democracies. It has been frequently shown that voter-elite congruence in Europe is high in terms of the left-right dimension and specific economic policies, but elites tend to hold more liberal views than voters (e.g., Belchior and Freire 2012; Costello et al. 2012; Dolný and Baboš 2015; Vasilopoulou and Gattermann 2013).

^{xiv} As highlighted earlier, existing evidence from other Western democracies is mixed. While some studies find considerable differences in voters' and elites' visions of parliamentary representation (Andeweg and Thomassen 2005; Méndez-Lago and Martínez 2002), others find high levels of congruence between the two (Campbell and Lovenduski 2015; von Schoultz and Wass 2016).

^{xv} Information on Assembly Members' parliamentary contributions is obtained from the website of the National Assembly for Wales (National Assembly for Wales 2017a, 2017b).