Gender Inequality, Participation and Policy*

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ABSTRACT:
The scholarship on voter turnout has made a significant empirical and theoretical contribution to the understanding of the factors that influence political participation. These studies have focused on the influence of individual resources, party mobilization efforts and electoral rules at both the individual and aggregate levels. In this paper, I consider electoral participation as a collective resource that has consequences for collective outcomes. I consider the implications of gender inequalities in turnout for policy outcomes. I find that as women’s participation exceeds that of men’s priorities in social expenditures shift. As women’s turnout increases, the proportion of spending on sickness and maternity benefits increases while pension benefits decline.

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INTRODUCTION

The scholarship on voter turnout has made a significant empirical and theoretical contribution to the understanding of the factors that influence political participation. These studies have focused on the influence of individual resources, party mobilization efforts and electoral rules at both the individual and aggregate levels. These studies, either explicitly or implicitly, have sought to explain why there are inequalities in turnout across groups within a population. Less developed is the study of how these inequalities in turnout influence the political process. In other words, the literature on voter turnout has tended to examine which individuals participate rather than what effect this activity has on phenomenon such as election outcomes, public policy or a representative’s behavior. In this paper, I consider electoral participation as a collective resource that has consequences for collective outcomes. After developing a general argument about the link between electoral participation and policy outcomes, I examine the specific case of sex differences in turnout and their consequences for policy outcomes. Generally, the literature shows decreasing differences in rates of participation between men and women. However, gender differences remain in other forms of political activity. In some ways then, equality in voter turnout can act as a “democratic counterweight” (Teixera 1992, 4) to inequality in other forms of participation. Because sex differences in participation touch upon the power relationship between men and women and between gender and the state, the are important aspect when considering inequality in turnout.

In most Western democracies, the participation rates of men and women are nearly equal. In many countries, the turnout rate of women is higher than that of men. However, most of the focus on been on how women’s representation in national parliaments influences policy and the links between the effects of women’s participation on policy outcomes has been largely unexplored. By examining women’s electoral participation in the context of policy outcomes, there are several puzzles that can be addressed. First, considerable attention has been paid to the policy consequences of women’s representation in legislative bodies. The results tend to be mixed and suggest only indirect effects of women’s representation on policy outcomes. Second, while

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1 The literature in this area suggests that women place priority on different issues (Thomas 1994, Welch and Thomas 1991, Rosenthal 1998) but do not necessarily differ in terms of ideology or voting from their male party colleagues (for example see Reingold 2000).
participation differences are minimal women still show lower levels of other types of activity and engagement in politics.\(^2\)

**Turnout and Inequality**

Inequalities in turnout have important consequences for who is ultimately elected and for the nature and shape of public policies. In his APSA presidential address, Lijphart (1997) suggested that low voter turnout is problematic because there is a “systematic bias against less well to do citizens” and that this bias translates into unequal political influence. He cites V.O. Key, “[T]he blunt truth is that politicians and officials are under no compulsion to pay much heed to classes and groups of citizens that do not vote” (cited in Lijphart 1997). He also cites Burnham who more recently wrote, “the old saw remains profoundly true: if you don’t vote, you don’t count” (cited in Lijphart 1997).

Some argue that low levels of participation and the concomitant inequalities in the electorate do not undermine democratic legitimacy (Polsby 1963, Berelson et al. 1954). Others suggest that there are substantial reasons for concern (Lijphart 1997, Piven and Cloward 1988, Teixeira 1992, Burnham 1987). Others occupy a middle ground of sorts, offering evidence that minor policy implications do exist and ought not be ignored, but in the end low levels of turnout and unequal participation rates among socio-economic characteristics do not pose a threat to democracy (Bennett and Resnick 1990). Other research argues that differences would not be great because policy preferences of non-voters are similar to voters. For evidence, these studies largely rely on public opinion surveys where voting is over-reported and participation in the survey already indicates a higher level of political engagement.

Implicit in much of the research on voter turnout is that inequalities in turnout have consequences for outcomes in representative democracies. There have been some attempts to connect empirically connect participation and policy. The extant literature on the effects of participation has emphasized how turnout differentials influence the fortunes of various parties in electoral contests. For example, studies in the U.S. focus on how higher turnout rates affect the fortunes of

\(^2\) Women are as likely as men to vote in elections, yet they are consistently shown to be less interested in politics than men; therefore, the participation gap has disappeared but the interest gap persists (see Verba, Burns and Schlozman 1997).
the Democratic party. The assumption among politicians is that higher turnout will advantage Democratic candidates. Generally this is the case; however, uncompetitive elections in the U.S. translates into very few cases where higher turnout would have changed election outcomes (Citrin, Schickler and Sides 2003).

Comparative studies suggest that higher turnout is associated with tax and welfare policies that are more favorable to lower classes (Hicks and Swank 1992) and increased vote shares for parties on the left (see for example, Pacek and Radcliffe 1995). The assumption is that there is a gap between voters and nonvoters' policy preference to which elected officials respond. Being strategic, parties and governments will direct resources to groups that potentially can alter the outcome of an election in their favor so that groups that vote at higher rates will be privileged over groups that vote at lower rates.

However, this comparative research has tended to focus on how low turnout rates among the poor result in public policy that favors higher-status voters. This connection has been established indirectly in studies that links aggregate turnout levels to the share of votes for left parties (Pacek and Radcliffe 1995) and in studies linking turnout to welfare spending (Hicks and Swank 1992). Voter mobilization is linked to the expansion of social policy (Amenta 1998, Manza and Brooks 1999, Skocpol 1992). Turnout has also been found to indirectly reduce poverty through the expansion of the welfare state (Brady 2003). In the US case, there is some evidence that the allocation of federal dollars is to some extent directed toward high turnout districts (Martin 2003).

In this study, I propose to expand on the existing studies about the consequences of low voter turnout by examining how gender inequalities in political participation influence policy outcomes. I develop a general model demonstrating the links between group participation and policy outputs under different conditions and then apply this to women’s political participation. In general, the expectation is that women’s participation will have a greater impact on policy outputs as women’s political voice is more cohesive and parties are more receptive to this message.

**Turnout and Policy Consequences**

Electoral turnout is a group political resource: greater participation equals greater influence. There are at least three lines of research that can help explain the translation of turnout into favorable policy outcomes. The areas of research are: party strategies and mobilization;
government composition and political rewards. These lines of argument are not necessarily mutually exclusive but they do present different paths of influence.

Most studies examining the consequences of turnout focus on the implications of a change in the composition of the electorate. The overrepresentation of resource rich in the population has been demonstrated across countries (see for example Powell 1986; Dalton 1996) though the strength of the relationship between turnout and class bias varies across countries (Topf 1995). Therefore, increases in turnout change the composition of the electorate to include lower resource individuals. For Lijphart (1997), “the obvious way to make voting more equal is to maximize voting turnout” (1167). Citing Tingsten’s (1937, 230) law of dispersion, Lijphart suggests that higher turnout will always lead to greater equality in turnout. Arguably, at some critical point of the turnout distribution any additional increase in turnout will always reduce inequalities in the composition of the electorate. In other words, at some level of turnout all of the resource rich individuals will have voted and the electorate can only be expanded by the inclusion of those of lower socio-economic status. This line of argument also rests on the notion that the resource poor who tend to vote in lower numbers have different policy and party preferences; if they made up a larger portion of the electorate election outcomes and thus policy outcomes would be different. If the resource poor turned out in larger numbers, left political parties are more likely to be represented resulting in expanded social policies (for example, see Esping-Andersen 1990 on the link between unions, left parties, socialist movements and the expanded welfare state ). The causal reasoning follows: (1) those with greater resources participate at higher rates than those without resources; (2) voters with more resources favor parties on the right while voter with fewer resources favor parties on the left; (3) parties adopt policies that benefit their core supporters. Therefore, changes in the composition of the electorate alter the collective policy preferences of the voting electorate.

Party mobilization serves as another process by which turnout can influence policy outcomes. While not distinct from the composition argument, this line of research emphasizes the role of parties and party appeals in mobilizing the electorate. The spatial theory of party competition emphasizes how parties shift policy positions in order to attract the greatest share of voters (Downs 1957). A body of research focuses on how effectively party positions are translated into policy the assumption being voters are sending a message with their votes. However, as Lijphart (1997), Key and Burnham note, parties have little incentive to appeal to those groups that do not vote. Therefore, if parties are instrumental they will appeal in policy proposals to those groups
more likely to vote. If turnout is resource biased then party appeals will be as well. According to this explanation voters respond to the strategic appeals of parties: (1) parties are vote maximizers (2) parties propose policies that will appeal to the median voter (3) voters with more resources place themselves to the right of center; (4) those with greater resources participate at higher rates than those without resources.

While the previous link between turnout and policy outcomes suggests a prospective vote, another explanation suggests a retrospective voter who will remember political rewards during the tenure of a government and reward it at the next election. For example in the U.S., Martin (2003) has found that Members of Congress shift political rewards such as federal grants to areas of their districts that have higher rates of participation. While this study focuses on geographical differences in participation rates similar arguments could apply to group differences in turnout and the extent to which geography is segregated by social classes, these links can produce class biases in policy. The causal reasoning follows: (1) Governments are interested in re-election (2) governments will enact policies to please the largest share of the electorate; (3) those with greater resources participate at higher rates than those without resources.

**Examining the Case of Gender Inequality and Policy Outcomes**

The studies examining directly or indirectly the links between inequalities in turnout and policy outcomes focus on inequalities in resources such as income, education, and class. However, gender has been a major classification in the study of electoral behavior. As suggested by the literature on the welfare state and political participation, electoral participation has important instrumental benefits. Therefore, if one group traditionally or historically has participated at a lower rate its policy interest have a greater chance of being ignored.

The earliest comparative studies on electoral participation in the 1960s concluded that gender was an enduring influence on electoral participation (Almond and Verba 1963). Looking at reported turnout in national elections, they found that women were less likely to participate than men. This conclusion was further elaborated on in the 1970s and the gender gap in voting was found to persist even after controlling for factors such as education and levels of political interest (Verba, Nie and Kim 1978). Citing research from these two decades, Randall (1987) concluded that “[o]f all the charges brought against women’s political behavior, apparently the most solidly founded is
that they know less about politics, are less interested and less psychologically involved in it than men. Evidence can be cited from the United States, Britain, Australia, Canada, France, West Germany, Italy and Denmark amongst Western Democracies.”

The gender differences in turnout, however, have been influenced by secular trends that reflect women’s increased access to resources such as education, increased participation in the workforce and, generally, the removal of legal, structural and cultural barriers to women’s political participation. There has been a decline in the difference between men and women’s rates of electoral participation since the 1980s such that the persistent gap noted in the 1960s and 1970s has disappeared and in many countries the rate of women’s participation is higher than that of men (Christy 1987, Conway, Steuernagel and Ahern 1997). In one of the most recent comparative treatments of the question of gender and turnout, Norris (2002) suggests factors such as political interest and trade union membership condition the effect of gender and these “cross cutting secondary characteristics explain any residual effects of gender on turnout, rather than gender alone” (Chapter 5).

The existence of a gender gap in electoral behavior may have implications for party strategies and policy outcomes. Variations in turnout between the sexes, if accompanied by a divergence in policy preferences and priorities, may alter party appeals and the distribution of political rewards. The expectation that turnout differences can be linked to differences in policies rests on the notion that policy preferences and priorities differ between voters and non-voters. Despite Duverger’s conclusion in 1955 that “women vote much as men do”, he cautioned that this did not mean women’s suffrage had no substantial impact of election and policy outcomes. He noted that: ‘Because they [women] vote, because they must be reckoned with electorally, women receive attention from the political parties. In this way, an indirect influence on political life may develop, difficult to measure but probably considerable” (72). Women’s influence can either be felt through affecting the outcomes of elections, influencing the positions parties take or affecting how governments distribute awards.

Different policy preferences may lead to different policy outcomes if men and women participate at different. Parties may make appeals to or reward groups that turnout and vote. The comparative studies on sex differences in political attitudes suggest that from when measurement of such things began women have move from being to the right of men, in general, to being on the left (Duverger 1955, Almond and Verba 1963 and Inglehart 1990). In a summary of this early
research, Randall (1982) notes that in all countries studied women were more likely to vote for conservative parties than men. Norris (1988) suggests that this difference can be attributed to women’s greater religiosity. However, as religion has waned and the social role of women has changed, the conservative gender gap has shifted and now reflects a tendency to be more left on issues (de Vaus and McAllister 1989, Jelen, Thomas and Wilcox 1994). Some of the gender differences in ideology, policy preferences and party choice can be explained by differences in resources (e.g. education and labor force participation), but this is not the case in all countries (Studlar, McAllister and Hayes 1998).

If women’s participation exceeds (or lags behind) that of men, we would expect spending on social benefits that redistribute wealth to be more (or less) favorable to women. Past research has established that women tend to rely more on the insurances provided by an active government: they tend to be more risk averse (Jianakoplos and Bernasek 1998), have lower income levels, and are primarily responsible for the care of children and the elderly. While not able to determine are being rewarded for their participation or mobilized by party election promises, I can initially examine whether there is a link between women’s participation and policy outcomes.

Possibly the greatest impact of women’s participation in election is felt when women first gained the right to vote. When women were granted full enfranchisement in the US, studies devoted considerable time to the influence of women’s electoral participation on support for prohibition (see citations from studies in 1920s cited in Leithner 1997). In a more recent study, Lott and Kenny suggest that the increase in the size of government in the US can be linked to the enfranchisement of women (1999): “Suffrage coincided with immediate increases in state government expenditures and revenue and more liberal voting patterns for federal representatives…” (1163). The changes seemed to occur despite the fact that women’s ‘full’ participation in elections did not happen until much later. Lott and Kenny (1999) suggest that only about half of the percentage of women who ultimately vote did so after gaining the right (p. 1188). Women’s suffrage “caused expenditures to rise immediately by 14 percent” (1176). This increase accounts for 16 percent of the growth in state spending over the nine year period after the passage of the 19th amendment.

Rather than entering the debate over expansion in the welfare state, I examine whether gender inequality in turnout is related to policy outputs. To the extent that sex differences cannot be
explained by resources, gender inequality in turnout may cut across the traditional social
cleavages and provide a distinct influence on policy outcomes.

Testing the Policy Consequences of Inequality in Turnout

As an initial examination of the links between participation and policy outcomes, I examine the
hypothesis regarding turnout and welfare policies in the context of women’s participation rates.
Much of the literature testing the effects of turnout on the growth of the welfare state assumes
that, given the class bias in turnout, high turnout indicates an electorate that is likely to be skewed
in favor of those from the lower socio-economic ranks. It is difficult to make this assumption in
the case of gender inequality; as turnout rates have been declining, women’s participation rates
have generally been increasing. Therefore, I rely on data from countries where men’s and
women’s participation rates in parliamentary elections is reported.3

In examining the effects of turnout on policy several different indicators of policy outcomes are
used: income inequality (Mahler 2002, Meuller and Stratmann 2003; Filer, Kenny and Morton
1993), poverty (Brady 2003) or social expenditures (Hicks and Swank 1992, Crepaz 1998).
Because income inequality and poverty are assumed to be indirectly affected by turnout through
government policy, I rely on social expenditures as the most direct measure of government policy
outputs. Benefit expenditures rather than total expenditures (benefits plus administrative expenses
and transfers to other schemes) are used.4 Because some areas of social expenditures may have
higher priorities for women, I also use a measure of social spending priorities which is the percent
of total social spending on (1) unemployment (2) employment injuries (3) pension (4) sickness
and maternity and (5)family allowances. Social spending related most specifically to traditional
roles (i.e. maternity and families) is expected to have a stronger link to female participation.
Because women do not participate equally in the labor force, employment related and pension
benefits may be less of a concern than family and maternity benefits.

Political institutions will also play a crucial role in conditioning the relationship between
democratic participation and policy outcomes (Lijphart 1999). Left political institutions are

3 IDEA reports men’s and women’s participation rates in the following countries: Finland, Sweden, USA,
Barbados, Chile, Iceland, India, Malta and Puerto Rico.
4 Data on social expenditures come from the Comparative Welfare States Data Set (Huber, Ragin and
Stephens 1997). Data for women’s participation and social expenditures only overlap for three countries.
Therefore, the analysis in this paper is limited to the United States, Sweden and Finland.
associated with expansions in the welfare state (Hicks and Swank 1992) while women’s representation is expected to lead to more women friendly policy (for example see Lovenduski and Norris 2003 but for evidence to the contrary see True and Mintron 2001). These factors are also considered when examining the consequences of inequality in turnout.

RESULTS

Even though comparative studies suggest a convergence of participation rates between men and women, in some countries there is still a wide gap or historically there has been a gap. Also, if women participate at greater rates than men this also suggests an impact on policy outputs. In some elections and in some countries women participate at higher rates and prove to be more loyal voters. For example, in Tanzania women are regarded as a “safe and sure” constituency and “whoever controls them is guaranteed victory” (Chris Peters cited in Tripp 2003). The first step is to examine differential rates of participation where data are available. The results presented in Figure 1 show turnout differences for available countries and years. The countries have been separated to show the turnout differences for countries included in the later analysis (Sweden, Finland and the United States) and those not included. The figures report the difference between the proportion of women and men voting in parliamentary elections.  When the difference exceeds 0, women vote at higher rates than men.

[Figure 1 about here.]

As is evident from Figure 1, the rates of participation have been converging in developed countries. However, two additional points should be made. First, the trend toward convergence is not universal. In Barbados, Chile and Malta women’s participation exceeds that of men and this is the case in all years for which data exist. While there tends to be convergence in Sweden, Finland and the United States, the other countries shown to do not exhibit the strong trend toward convergence. Generally more data points are available for Sweden, the United States and Finland; however, Iceland, which has a similar number of data points, show much more variance over time. Also, in Iceland there is not a general trend since the 1980s of increasing participation by women.

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5 Turnout rates are calculated as proportions using voting age population as the denominator. The difference in turnout is equal to (#Women Voting/Female Voting Age Population) - (#Men voting/Male Voting Age Population).
Second, much of the increases in women’s turnout compared to men in Sweden, Finland and the United States occurred between 1945 and the mid 1970s.

Figure 2 addresses the question regarding the effect of these turnout differences on social expenditures. The time period covered is between 1960 and 1998. There appears to be a general curvilinear relationship between turnout differences and social expenditures. There is a slight increase in expenditures as women’s participation converges toward men’s and then a sharper increase in expenditures as women’s participation exceeds that of men’s. However, the relationship between turnout and expenditures varies by country. While the slope is positive in the United States, it is much flatter and is not curvilinear suggesting that institutional context may play a role in the relationship. Because there has been an increase in women’s participation over time, we also may just be witnessing general growth in social expenditures as a share of the GDP. However, after controlling for time, there is still a significant relationship between differences in turnout and outcomes.

[Figure 2 about here.]

Women’s representation could also produce a spurious relationship between women’s participation and social expenditures. In general, women’s share of legislative seats has increased over time. Trends in women’s greater representation and electoral participation can be linked to increasing levels of education and labor force participation. Women’s greater representation in the policy making process could be producing more policy beneficial to women rather than women’s mass participation. In order to examine whether this is the case, Figure 3 examines the effect of women’s representation on social expenditures in the 3 countries under study and then across a much larger sample of countries. In each graph, there does appear to be a relationship between women’s representation and social expenditures. Social expenditures as share of GDP increases as women’s share of seats increases. Because there is greater variation in women’s representation in Sweden and Finland, the relationship between representation and social expenditures appears to be much stronger.

In order to examine whether the relationship is conditioned by the institutional context, the bottom graph controls for the effects of cabinet composition. Under left governments we might expect a stronger relationship. Separate equations are estimated for each of five different types of
cabinet composition according to the Schmidt index. Clearly, the strength of the relationship is partially dependent on the composition of the cabinet. There is not a significant relationship between women’s representation and social expenditures in left-right coalition governments or in governments dominated by social democratic parties. There is a significant relationship in hegemonic social democratic governments, hegemonic right governments and dominant right party governments. In the hegemonic and right dominated governments, women’s representation tends to be lower and a few cases with high representation and expenditures seem to be influencing the relationship.

[Figure 3 about here.]

Because women may tend to have different policy priorities than men, the next step is to compare priorities in social expenditures. Figure 4 looks at the effect of the gender difference in participation on different types of social expenditures as a percentage of the total social expenditures (used in the previous figures). Figure 4 compares the relationship between turnout differential and percentage of social expenditures going to unemployment benefits, employment injury benefits, pensions, family allowances and sickness and maternity benefits. Social expenditure priorities do shift as women’s rates of participation exceed those of men. The share of pension and employment injury benefits declines and the share spent on sickness and maternity benefits increases as female voter turnout surpasses that of men. There is no clear pattern for unemployment and family allowances benefits.

[Figure 4 about here.]

Examination of these bivariate figures does suggest that turnout differentials have some impact on policy. These effects seem to be in addition to the effects of government composition and women’s representation. Some of these relationships remain even when controlling for the effects of women’s representation, left governments and overall turnout. These estimates for these models, reported in Table 1, are obtained from a feasible generalized least square maximum likelihood estimation. This method of estimation takes into account that the data are pooled-dross sectional panel data.

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6 The five different categories of cabinet composition are; (1) hegemony of right-wing parties [all right parties] (2) dominance of right-wing (and center) parties [right(center)] (3) coalition between left and right [left and right], (4) dominance of social-democratic and other left parties [social dem], (5) hegemony of social-democratic and other left parties [all social dem].
The results in Table 1 show that there is a significant positive relationship between women’s participation and sickness/maternity benefits and a significant negative relationship between women’s participation and social spending devoted to pensions. These results fit with the expectation that as women’s political voice increases favorable policy is more likely to be implemented. The significant effect of women’s participation on these two social policy priorities are in addition to the significant effects of women’s representation. Women’s representation in parliament increases spending on sickness/maternity benefits and reduces spending on pensions. Because women’s role as mothers and caregivers, they benefit from increased spending in these areas deferring interest in old age pensions.

For the general measure of social spending (social expenditures as % of GDP) and unemployment, accident and family benefits, the gender turnout differential has no significant impact on policy. However, women’s representation has a significant impact on all but family and unemployment benefits. As women’s representation increases, overall social expenditures increase and higher priority is given to sickness and maternity benefits. For employment related injuries and pension benefits, the opposite is the case. Both indicators of women’s political voice – representation and mass political participation – demonstrate a relationship with more favorable policy outcomes.

DISCUSSION

While the focus on electoral participation tends to focus on the declining rates of participation, the implications for electoral outcomes, inequalities in the composition in the electorate and policies are also important for democratic theory. In this paper, I have presented some data that suggest gender differences in participation rates have consequences for social spending priorities in several countries. In a recent book, Campbell (2003) contends that making the link between participation and policy requires three steps: demonstrating inequalities in turnout between the group of interest and the rest of the population; that the participation of this group is sending a cohesive message to parties and government and that elected officials are responding to this message. There is evidence of turnout differentials between men and women and some evidence to suggest that governmental policy outputs are sensitive to women’s participation.
Gender inequalities present an interesting turnout in terms of its relationship to overall turnout. If turnout rates are declining, then inequalities are likely to increase according to Tingsten’s law of dispersion. However, in most countries gender inequalities are turnout are declining. Women’s rates of participation appear not to be adversely affected by overall rate of participation. In other words, when turnout rates decline the effects seem to be uniform across gender groups. There is also some evidence that women are more positively affected by reforms that are aimed at facilitating voting. For example, ‘motor voter’ registration laws in the United States had a more significant impact on women’s participation than on men’s (Parry and Shields 2001). As countries adopt measures to make voting easier (postal voting, early voting and Sunday voting), women’s participation rate may far exceed that of men. This study suggests the possible policy implications of this shift in turnout.

Further analysis is needed that incorporates more countries. Conditions specific to Scandinavian welfare states may be driving the results presented in this paper. More attention to how political institutions may condition the relationship is necessary. Economic restraints on social spending due to recessions in the 1990s limit the range of government responses to citizen demands. Women’s increasing participation should also be considered.

Additionally, several other trends may complicate the relationship between inequalities in turnout and policy outcomes in general. Several trends have implications for the relationship between electoral participation and policy outcomes: decline in parties both organizationally and among the public, the increasing use of mediated campaigns (largely through television), an increase in public disengagement from politics (both in terms of voter participation and general indicators of attachment or trust in political system) and a change in the social structure of voting choices.

If parties are confronted with declining turnout, the strategy in mobilizing voters with policy appeals may be less effective. In other words, the links between turnout and policy outcomes largely through prospective or retrospective voter strategy needs to be altered. Changes in the factors affecting vote choice can also alter the relationship between turnout and policy. Dalton (2002) documents a partisan dealignment among electorates in western democracies and notes that weakening partisan attachments has implications for responsible party model of representative democracy. The links between vote choice and policy outcomes becomes more tenuous when parties lack a core group of supporters (Dalton 2002, 36).
Social cleavages in vote choice can serve the same purpose. The empirical comparative study of elections and vote choice began largely with the observation that social class structured the relationship amongst parties as well as the vote choice of citizens (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). However, in most post-industrial democracies, there is evidence of the declining importance of social class on vote choice (Dalton 2000). Socio-structural changes have led to a decline in inequality in the electorate and this is reflected in less reliance on social cleavages in vote choice. If this is the case, in post-industrial societies low turnout would not matter because the electorate would not reflect a class bias. Also, party appeals on the basis of class would have little mobilizing effect.

In place of social class cleavages, some have argued that values have become more important in terms of voting choice. Values can take on several different dimensions. The left/right ideological dimension is the most familiar and simplest of these values and represents summary positions of parties and voters along a number of different issues. Inglehart (1997, 1990) has argued that a new generation of voters, freed from the economic and security concerns of older generations, is influenced more by concerns about libertarian/authoritarian values. Younger generations of voters are more concerned about issues such as the expansion of individual rights and that new issues such as the environment and women’s rights are replacing the ‘old’ social cleavages. Therefore, parties could still mobilize using appeals based on post-material issues. Issues such as gender equality can replace the traditional economic and welfare issues that parties use to mobilize voters. Therefore, the context of voting choices are important to understand when examine the links between turnout inequality and policy outcomes.
REFERENCES


Figure 1. Gender Differences in Turnout
Figure 2. Gender Difference in Turnout and Social Expenditures
Figure 3. Women’s Representation and Social Expenditures
Figure 4. Gender Differences in Turnout and Social Benefit Priorities
Table 1: Gender Inequality in Turnout and Policy Outputs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Social Benefits Expenditures</th>
<th>Sick/Maternity Benefits</th>
<th>Employment Injury</th>
<th>Pension Benefits</th>
<th>Unemployment</th>
<th>Family Benefits</th>
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<td>Gender Differences in Turnout</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>-3.22</td>
<td>-0.42</td>
<td>1.86</td>
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<td>Left Cabinet Seats</td>
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<td>-4.75</td>
<td>-1.67</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>-0.53</td>
<td>4.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Women in Parliament</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>-0.57</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardized Turnout</td>
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<td>-0.66</td>
<td>-0.28</td>
<td>-1.88</td>
<td>-1.60</td>
<td>-0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
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<td>19.96</td>
<td>7.83</td>
<td>63.48</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>3.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cross-sectional time-series FGLS regression estimates, adjusted for first-order auto correlation.

N=27