At the Intersection of Gender and Class: How Were Newly Enfranchised Women Mobilized in Sweden?

Mona Morgan-Collins  
Assistant Professor, Durham University

Grace Natusch  
Graduate student, London School of Economics

Abstract

How were the most underprivileged women voters mobilized upon suffrage? Scholars document the importance of politicized networks for early women voters, but by doing so, overwhelmingly focus on privileged women. Taking an intersectional lens to the issue, we emphasize the role of politicized local networks through which working-class women acquired information and civic attitudes. We argue that the character of working-class women’s employment and domestic responsibilities provided the most opportunities, motivation and need for local networks, while limiting opportunities to establish external social networks via outside employment or voluntary associations. Utilizing an original dataset of individual voting records in a mid-sized industrial city during interwar period in Sweden, we employ a difference-in-differences design that isolates neighbor effects from confounders at the individual level. Consistent with our argument, we find that class homogeneity of one’s neighbors enhanced working-class women’s decision to vote for at least a decade after suffrage.

Keywords: women’s suffrage, voting behavior, political development, democratization

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While suffrage provides *de jure* access to the polls, it does not guarantee *de facto* electoral participation of previously disenfranchised groups. Given that groups barred from suffrage are typically socially and economically marginalized, newly enfranchised groups are likely to struggle taking advantage of their new rights (see Corder and Wolbrecht 2006, 2016; Kim 2017 on women). A careful study of how newly enfranchised groups, especially the most disadvantaged members of these groups, gain *de facto* access to the polls is therefore paramount to our understanding of equal representation. Indeed, while women’s suffrage cut a sharp end to the exclusion of women from the ‘public sphere’, gaining political rights did not immediately challenge the gendered image of work and family that limited women’s, especially working-class women’s, access to education, resourceful employment outside the home and associated organized networks. Through the analysis of women’s turnout in interwar Sweden, this paper explores how the most underprivileged women overcame a ‘double barrier’ of their gender and class and mobilized to vote. By doing so, this paper helps to uncover how social inequalities within the group of a newly enfranchised group shape the pathway to *de facto* inclusion upon suffrage.

Extant theories of women’s political participation emphasize women’s access to civic institutions, such as education and outside employment (Burns, Schlozman and Verba 2001; Iversen and Rosenbluth 2006; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993, p.160). As early as the 1950s, Duverger (1955, p.163) theorized that: ‘*the growth of employment for women, side by side wider educational opportunities [...] would help to do away with the present [electoral] disparity between the sexes.*’ In these accounts, women’s education and associated employment encourages women’s political mobilization by providing better information, independent income, and helps to cultivate civic skills, social networks, and gender consciousness. However, the link between women’s employment and political participation best explains married women’s entry to clerical and public sectors after World War II. At the turn of the twentieth
century, most married women faced formal and informal barriers to outside employment,\(^2\) while most jobs available to women seeking employment, such as domestic service, casual work, domestic manufacturing or work in family enterprises, were not unionized, did not provide independent income or access to external networks.\(^3\) Women’s employment therefore cannot comprehensively explain electoral participation of women voters at the turn of the twentieth century.

Given women’s barriers to employment at the turn of the twentieth century, political development scholars identify alternative pathways to women’s political knowledge and civic skills upon enfranchisement: voluntary politicized networks. Carpenter and Moore (2014) demonstrate how women’s anti-slavery canvassing provided organizational experience and networks that enhanced women’s future political mobilization. Morgan-Collins, forth., argues that suffragists helped to generate group consciousness and information that enabled women to mobilize on shared issues after the vote. In addition, suffrage movements provided infrastructures that facilitated mobilization of women by politicians (Skorge 2019 on Norway; Teele 2018 on the U.S.). However, these accounts often conceptualize women as more or less a homogeneous group, even though women’s engagement in voluntary associations overwhelmingly captures experiences of privileged women. While some working-class women participated in working-class associations, their opportunities to engage in external politicized networks were more limited than that of upper and middle-class women, reflecting weak unionization of women, and gendered responsibilities at home without access to alternative childcare. Despite repeated calls for greater attention of democratizations scholars to the interactive effects of gender with class and race (e.g. Caraway 2004; Baldez 2010, p.202), most empirical studies of early women’s voting behavior remain limited by the nature of aggregate election data that does not easily support the estimation of women’s

\(^2\)The proportion of women employed outside the home was rarely above 35% around 1900 and did not increase much until WWII (Mitchell 1998).

\(^3\)See Costa 2000 for overview.
voting behavior by another category (see also Corder and Wolbrecht 2006, 2016; Kim 2017; early works by Andersen 1996; Goldstein 1973). In this research, we rise to this challenge by taking advantage of a unique individual level data from electoral registers that allows us to apply intersectional lens to the study of early women’s voting behavior without the need to estimate it. By doing so, we propose a class-specific pathway to political resources: *politicized local* networks.

While all social groups are mobilized through politicized social networks, we argue that only some social groups typically cultivate *local* networks with their neighbors, while others rely on resources obtained through *external* networks. Working-class women had the most opportunities, motivation and need to cultivate *politicized* social ties with *neighbors* through typical economic, social and political engagements that were more often local in nature. Unlike upper and middle-class women, working-class women had *fewer* material and time resources to develop *external politicized* networks in voluntary associations, which fostered privileged women’s mobilization and supported politicization of a collective gender identity. Unlike working-class men, working-class women had *fewer* opportunities to develop *external politicized* networks in *outside* employment, which enabled mobilization of working-class men via unions and ties with *outside* co-workers.

Building on classic theories of social context, we theorize that ‘neighbor effects’ on electoral participation of social groups are conditional on (i) their propensity to forge politicized local ties and (ii) politicization strength of their shared identity. This implies that living in a socially homogeneous locality affects political participation of some social groups and some social identities more than others. Unless at least some members of the group politically interact with their neighbors (*politicized interaction condition*) and unless the groups’ social identity is politicized (*identity politicization condition*), ‘where one lives’ will not affect political participation. In contrast to traditional ‘neighbor’ studies, we therefore make an explicit conceptual distinction between living and politically interacting with neighbors and between shared social and political identity of neighbors. Applying this framework to working-class
women in the early twentieth century, we then expect that (i) the relationship between individual turnout and class homogeneity of neighbors will be stronger for working-class women than working-class men and non-workers, and (ii) working-class women were mobilized in majority working-class properties, not where working-class women were in a majority.

In testing the theoretical framework, we generate an original dataset of about 5,000 individual voting records from electoral registers in a city of Södertälje between 1921 and 1934. Of course, collecting individual level data of such quality and detail is not feasible for large populations, which naturally limits the geographical scope of our research in exchange for an intersectional approach to early women’s voting. To address the issues implied by such trade-off, we therefore devote special attention to case selection and generalizability. The character of a fairly typical industrializing mid-sized city provides a good testing ground: even though spatial proximity of neighbors in higher, it is a ‘tough’ test given the city’s high mobility, employment heterogeneity and opportunities for external social ties. If neighbor networks foster mobilization in Södertälje, we should expect such effects to prevail elsewhere in the country.

Utilizing our original individual-level dataset, we apply a cross-sectional difference-in-differences approach that allows us to isolate neighbor effects from individual confounders across properties. We find that working-class women were more likely to vote if surrounded by working-class neighbors than working-class women surrounded by mixed-class neighbors. This is consistent with our expectation that working-class women had the best motivation, need and opportunities to forge local rather than external social ties. Working-class men, on the other hand, did not consistently respond to class composition of their neighbors, relying on political resources obtained through external union or employment networks. Similarly, upper and middle-class women and men did not respond to class composition of neighbors, reflecting ample external social ties via employment and voluntary associations. We then provide supporting evidence that working-class women’s social conformity to local norms

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and access to local information help to drive the observed ‘neighbor effects’. Utilizing unique census data from 1928, we provide correlational evidence that our findings are generalizable beyond Södertälje to all Swedish towns and that our theoretical framework can explain observed patterns in the rural areas. Given that Sweden does not stand out in terms of women’s employment, industrialization and women’s and men’s turnout to most of Europe, we argue that our findings provide good basis for generalizations even beyond Sweden.

This paper has important implications for the vast scholarly literature on women’s representation. While scholars focus on de jure institutions such as quotas, power-sharing arrangements and party organizations (Folke and Rickne 2016 on Sweden; Hughes 2011 on 81 countries; Kittilson and Schwindt-Bayer 2010 on the 34 countries), this paper implies that we should also pay attention to de facto behavior of voters. To the extent that group electoral participation is a necessary step towards representation, uncovering mobilization channels of the most underprivileged group of women upon enfranchisement is paramount to our understanding of how social inequalities affect electoral behavior of the most marginalized groups and potentially limit their representation even under favorable institutions.

Theoretical Framework: The Conditionality of Neighbor Effects

Drawing on classic accounts that highlight the importance of social context for political participation (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995, ch.6; Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet 1944, ch.6), and the subsequent scholarship that identifies how social composition of neighborhoods shapes individual political behavior (e.g. Cho, Gimpel and Dyck 2006; Fieldhouse and Cutts 2012; Johnston et al 2005; McClurg 2006), we theorize that ‘where one lives’ affects some social groups and some social identities more than others. Specifically, we argue that ‘neighbor effects’ are conditional on (i) the groups’ propensity to forge politicized local ties and (ii) the level of politicization of the majority-minority identity. The conditionality of
‘neighbor effects’ on politicized interaction predicts that some groups are more responsive to local context than others. The conditionality on politicization predicts that some social identities are more likely to drive ‘neighbor effects’ than others. In the reminder of this section, we discuss both conditions and apply this framework to women voters at the turn of the twentieth century.

Social Interaction: Which Social Groups Forge Politicized Ties with Neighbors?

We propose that the social composition of one’s neighbors affects political participation only if neighbors cultivate politicized ties. If social homogeneity of one’s neighbors increases one’s opportunity for interactions with those ‘alike’, having homogeneous neighbors fosters one’s mobilization through two primary channels: political conformity and political information. First, frequent interactions with neighbors who are ‘alike’ induce conformity to the groups’ civic norms. This can be through strengthening group identity (Postmes and Branscombe 2002), or social pressure (Mutz 2002). Second, frequent interactions with neighbors who are ‘alike’ improve information flows. This can be through an exchange with a local opinion leader, or with an informed local canvasser (Sinclair 2013; Mutz 2002). This secondary mobilization is also especially valuable to canvassers, who have an incentive to target well-networked individuals (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993, p.24-9).

While the importance of social interaction for ‘neighbor effects’ has been recognized, most studies do not conceptually differentiate between ‘living’ in close proximity to neighbors and ‘interacting’ with neighbors. Yet unless neighbors look to one another for political interaction, conformity is unlikely to be enforced and information unlikely to be transmitted among neighbors. For example, professionals mostly forge politicized ties with other professionals in outside employment or a union, while having much less incentive to forge politicized ties with their neighbors. On the other hand, those without outside employment or those employed locally have an incentive to cultivate politicized networks with neighbors - the only social network readily available to them. Indeed, urban sociologists often point to the persistent
importance of neighbor ties, especially among women and low income groups that have fewer opportunities for outside relations (e.g. Henning and Lieberg 1996 on Sweden; Völker, Flap and Lindenberg 2007 on the Netherlands). The failure to account for neighbors’ likelihood of politicized interactions may explain why mobilization appeals do not spillover to neighbors on average (Sinclair 2012, ch.2), and why young people do not mimic voting propensity of their neighbors (Fieldhouse and Cutts 2012).

Applying this framework to early women voters at the turn of the century, we propose that working-class women had the most opportunities to forge politicized ties with their neighbors and the least opportunities to forge external ties. Despite the changing social and economic status of women that accompanied the first wave of suffrage, women’s role as mothers and wives continued being socially and institutionally supported (Kessler-Harris 2007, p.15). Formal employment outside the home, especially for married women, was discouraged through joint taxation, marriage bars, wage discrimination and occupational segregation (Costa 2000). At the same time, some upper and middle-class women had access to elite education and resources that enabled them to combine child rearing with activities in civic associations or even high status professions. Access to education, resourceful employment, alternative childcare and associated organized networks was thus most limited for working-class women. Single working-class women ‘filled up’ their time in non-unionized, often socially isolating jobs, such as domestic service, while married working-class women in need of income often sought local employment compatible with family responsibilities, such as casual work, domestic manufacturing, or work on family businesses and farms (Costa 2000). We therefore expect working-class women to be more likely to develop social ties with neighbors, and therefore more responsive to ‘where they live’ than men and privileged women.
Identity Politicization: Which Social Identity is Politicized?

We propose that social composition of neighbor networks affects political participation only if the majority social identity is politically salient. Given that not all social identities are politicized, at least not to the same extent, social composition of one’s most immediate surroundings will affect group mobilization only if the majority group shares a politically salient identity. In order for a social group to politicize, the group needs to internalize a sense of shared belonging, or share material or symbolic grievances (Huddy 2013). Shared group identity is also valuable to organized interests and politicians who have an incentive to define the group’s political issues and to respond to the group’s grievances (Morgan-Collins, forth.; Valenzuela and Michelson 2016).

While the importance of group identity for ‘neighbor effects’ has been recognized, most studies do not conceptually differentiate between ‘social’ and ‘political’ identity. Yet unless neighbors share a common political identity, interacting with neighbors will not induce mobilization along this shared identity. For example, those sharing marital status characteristics may identify as ‘married’, but political salience of being married is likely weak and therefore unlikely to enhance shared political behavior. On the other hand, individuals who share a working-class identity that is highly politically salient will respond to whether their neighbors are also working-class. The failure to account for politicization may explain why the strength of neighbor effects varies with respect to class and religion (Foladare 1968), or why there are no mobilization spillover effects to neighbors without taking into account their socio-economic composition (Sinclair 2012, ch.2).

Applying this framework to early women voters at the turn of the century, we propose that class identity was more strongly politicized than gender for working-class women. Organized women’s groups, especially suffragists, contributed to the politicization of women’s shared identity by defining women’s issues and pressing politicians to respond accordingly (Morgan-Collins, forth.). However, most early women’s movements were essentially middle-class in terms of their membership and agenda (Evans 1977, p.144-5). This may at least partly
reflect the fact that working-class women faced a double barrier of both class and gender, of which class was more strongly politicized and linked to material (primary) interests. Even though working-class women organized in separate women’s working-class associations, their participation was often limited due to women’s weak employment and unionization, and gendered commitments at home (Kessler-Harris 2007, ch.1). Social interactions with politicized male working-class neighbors, local opinion leaders and household relatives, but also with working-class women neighbors, thus mostly encouraged politicization of working-class women’s identity as working-class, not as working-class women. We therefore expect that working-class women were primarily mobilized in majority working-class contexts, not in contexts where working-class women were in a majority.

**Swedish Women in Context: Labour Force and Voluntary Associations in the 1920s**

In this section, we discuss how the theoretical framework fits with the historical context of early women voters in Sweden. We focus on women’s labour force and voluntary associations to demonstrate working-class women’s rich access to local politicized networks in exchange for limited access to external networks.

**Women’s Labour Force** At the turn of the twentieth century, Sweden did not stand out internationally with respect to women’s employment. Family policies sought to bring functionally divided family model to the working-class, employers were allowed to dismiss women workers upon marriage until 1938, maternity leave was not introduced until 1937, government subsidized childcare was not established until 1943 and joint household taxation favored one-earner household until the 1970s (Haavet 2006; Stanfors 2003, p.82-7). The incentives for women to work outside the home were further hindered by wage discrimination, occupational sex-segregation and educational disparities between women and men. The average hourly wage of female blue collar worker is estimated to be nearly half of the
corresponding male wage (Svensson 2004, p.204-6). Over 25% of gainfully employed women were in domestic service, 30% in agriculture and 20% in industry, compared to 40% of men in agriculture and another 40% in industry.\(^5\) Work in domestic service, a key domain of women workers, was undervalued, unregulated and deprived women from the companionship of colleagues (Svensson 2004, p.210). Importantly, until state financed secondary schools opened up to girls in 1927, girls were only required to attend elementary school, while girls of wealthy families were educated in private secondary schools (Stanfors 2003, p.73, 146-7).

Without policies supporting a dual-earner model, motherhood thus provided institutional and logistical barriers to outside work. Consequently, full-time work outside the home that generated independent income was typically an isolated part of women’s life course even for working-class women. Single working-class women were expected to exit the labour market upon marriage, while married working-class women were mostly marginal workers who worked at times of economic need or high demand for labour (Stanfors 2003, p.10,82). In 1920, only about a third of Swedish women above 15 years old were gainfully employed outside the home, of which less than 5% were married (Åmark 2006). While these statistics underestimate the total amount of women’s labour, they reflect women’s weaker participation in labour force outside the home. Woman’s labour that is not accounted in these statistics mostly includes women’s unremunerated, informal or part-time work in the home, such as in domestic manufacturing, family enterprises or other casual work (Stanfors 2003; Vikström 2003).

**Women’s Voluntary Associations** Swedish upper and middle-class women came to dominate charitable and philanthropic organizations in the second half of the nineteenth century (Lundström 1996). Women’s engagement in charitable organizations, and later in the loosely associated local poor relief boards, draw on ‘women’s solicitude’ (Sjögren 2012), but also reflected the resources of well-off women to devote time and effort to voluntary activities outside the home. For example, privileged women could rely on servants and private

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\(^5\)Statistisk Årsbok för Sverige 1930, Table 23, p.20.
kindergartens, while child care for working-class women only operated on a charity basis (Stanfors 2003, p.87). Consequently, the first women’s organizations draw organizationally on women’s experience in philanthropy, leaving middle-class women as the main component of the National Suffrage Society (LKPR) (Blom 2012; Florin 2009). While the LKPR sought to maintain a cross class alliance (Sainsbury 2001), working-class women often opposed ‘protective’ agenda of middle-class women (Evans 1977, p.147).

By 1920, separate Social Democratic Women’s Association united 120 local clubs that were predominantly concerned with economic vulnerability of single mothers and working conditions of women. However, most working-class women were not organized either in the party or unions. First, large proportion of working women were employed in domestic service, domestic manufacturing and in family enterprises, all of which limited opportunities for unionization. Second, women in industrial jobs were often single and expected to leave upon marriage, which discouraged unionization. Finally, the position of unions towards women was ambivalent, balancing class unity with the protection of men’s jobs. For example, while the industrial Textile Worker’s Union was equally successful in the unionization across sexes, the craft’s Tailoring Worker’s Union initially discouraged women’s labour and opposed the inclusion of women dominated trades (Upenberg 2012). In the end, only about 10% of all members of Trade Union Confederacy in 1920 were women (Upenberg 2012).

**Case Selection**

After carefully mapping data availability, we collect data to test our theoretical framework in a city district Södertälje East, which covers about half of Södertälje (map in Figure A1a), the largest city in the Stockhom county. Södertälje started industrializing in the 1890s, which

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7Local electoral registers survived (i.e. not destroyed or lost) in about half of municipalities for at least some elections between 1910-1940 in Stockholm county. About 10% of local archives did not respond to our requests.
its population over the next three decades (Nordström 1968, p.779-842). By 1910, only about 5% of workers were employed in the agricultural sector (Table A5). The city produced a variety of industrial products, from gas mantles by AB Keros and trolleys by Scania-Vabis, to bear, soda, matches, wooden boxes, wall tiles and fur hats (Nordström 1968, p.766-776). Predictably, industrialization was accompanied by economic hardship, repeated lockouts and a range of social issues (Nordström 1968, p.779-842). In the 1921 parliamentary elections Socialists received nearly ten percentage points more votes (46%) than in the rest of Sweden (Table A5). While men’s turnout in Södertälje was four percentage points below national average, women’s turnout was seven percentage points above national average (Table A5).

The urban character of a fairly typical mid-sized industrializing Södertälje provides a good testing ground for our theoretical framework. We highlight three main reasons: (i) It offers a ‘tough’ test. If local networks mobilize early women voters in an industrializing urban setting where geographical mobility, employment heterogeneity and opportunities for social ties outside one’s neighbors are high, we should expect local networks to play a significant role elsewhere in the country. (ii) It provides a ‘typical urban’ setting. The variety of industries in the city, together with its mid-sized character, makes it more likely to be generalizable across other urban areas in Sweden. (iii) It provides geographical closeness to neighbors. A detailed contemporary map suggests that Södertälje East was densely populated throughout the city, with fairly spaced properties on similar-sized plots (map in Figure A1b).8

We focus on the city’s local elections, which have a single election district, making sure that every voter is exposed to the same city-level campaign and candidates. Specifically, we collect data for two municipal (1921 and 1934) and one county election (1921) that span over a decade post-suffrage.9 This time span allows us to explore whether ‘neighbor’ effects vary

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8One central neighborhood, St. Ragnhild, has more closely packed upper & middle class town houses (see also Figure A1c,d). However, our results are not driven by a single neighborhood (Figure A7).

9Most women voted for the first time in 1919 (municipal) and 1921 (parliamentary).
with the increasing experience with voting after suffrage. The sampled elections also allow probing generalizability across two types of local elections (municipal and regional) under two types of calendars (general and off-year elections). Table 1 summarizes the sample.

Table 1: Sampled Elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Calendar</th>
<th>City District</th>
<th>County</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Municipal</td>
<td>1921</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>Södertälje East</td>
<td>Stockholm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County</td>
<td>1921</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>Södertälje East</td>
<td>Stockholm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal</td>
<td>1934</td>
<td>Off-year</td>
<td>Södertälje East</td>
<td>Stockholm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data & Variables**

The data set consists of individual level data from electoral registers that list all age-eligible electors in Södertälje East, whether they met eligibility criteria\(^{10}\) and whether they voted in a given election. The electoral registers also give information on sex, year of birth, occupation, and an address that indicates one’s property and a larger neighborhood. Taking advantage of the fact that families who live together share the same last name in a property\(^{11}\), and the fact that wives are consistently entered in the registers below their husbands, we also recover

Before 1919, very few women who paid taxed or owned property was eligible and voted (Sjögren 2012).

\(^{10}\)Registration was automatic, but the right to vote was denied to about 5% individuals for being on poor relief, in prison, incapacitated, declaring bankruptcy or not paying local taxes (Sjögren 2012).

\(^{11}\)One concern here is that we code two or more unrelated families with the same last name living in the same property as a single family unit. In our data set, about 7% of age-eligible electors live in a property with more than one wife, but may or may not share last name because of family ties. Even though some of these households are genuinely related (e.g. brother and sister), our results are robust to assuming that all multi-wife families are not related (Figure A6).
information on family units within the household and marital status. As shown in Table 2, the 1921 data set covers 4307 age-eligible individuals listed on electoral registers, that is 2398 families in 518 properties. Between 1921 and 1934, the city district has grown and the number of electors increased by 16.6% while the number of properties increased by 35.5%. Each property typically consists of four families and each family typically has two electors. About 5% of age-eligible electors live in properties that house more than 27 or 23 electors in 1921 and 1934 respectively. About 5% of properties consist of more than 14 or 12 families in 1921 and 1934 respectively. In the reminder of the section, we discuss measurement of key variables: class, class composition and turnout. Summary statistics for all variables in Table A2.

### Table 2: Data Structure: Properties, Households and Electors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1921</th>
<th>1934</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># Properties</td>
<td>518</td>
<td>702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electors per property (mean)</td>
<td>8.3 (8.4)</td>
<td>7.2 (8.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Families</td>
<td>2,398</td>
<td>2,599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families per property (mean)</td>
<td>4.6 (4.8)</td>
<td>3.7 (4.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Electors</td>
<td>4307</td>
<td>5023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electors per family (mean)</td>
<td>1.8 (1.0)</td>
<td>1.9 (1.1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Std. dev. in parentheses.

**Class** Using data on occupation in the registers, combined with occupation classification in the 1910 census, we assign each occupation into one of three categories: (i) upper class consists of owners (land, farm, building, factory), (ii) middle-class consists of white collar occupations in the public sector and service, professionals, merchants and small holders (iii) working-class consists of blue collar manual jobs in industry, agriculture, transport, service and domestic service. By relying on occupation rather than income, we therefore consider

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12For example, a family that consists of a husband, wife and an age-eligible unmarried daughter shares the same last name. If this family employs domestic servants who reside on the property, each family of servants then constitutes a separate family within the property.

13Here we follow classification of working-class occupations of the 1910 census that captures
class as both an economic and social concept. That is, while ownership status and income is taken into account as an objective-economic component, subjective-status component of class is also considered. As we argue in the theory section, a sense of (social and economic) ‘similarity’ facilitates the development of neighbor ties. This implies that even if some white collar workers such as clerks may earn the same income as some blue collar skilled tradesman, the former has a higher social status. This also implies that agricultural workers are considered working-class, as are more similar to industrial workers in terms of earnings and social status than to any other classes.\textsuperscript{14} Both implications are again in line with the contemporary classification of working-class occupations in the 1910 census.

The most severe limitation of the occupation data is that women’s gainful employment is overridden by their civil status and therefore only available for unmarried women. Occupation of formally ‘dependent’ women is listed as ‘wife’, ‘daughter’ or ‘widow’. Some formally ‘dependent’ women may therefore still be employed. We make two coding decisions in this respect. First, we assume that married women’s class is largely determined by their husbands, and classify all married women based on their husband’s occupation. Given the contemporary listing of wives as ‘dependents’, this assumption seems more plausible at the turn of the twentieth century than in more recent periods.\textsuperscript{15} ‘Wives’ are the most common ‘occupation’ manual jobs. We list all occupations by class in Tables A3-5.

\textsuperscript{14}While agricultural workers were mostly mobilized through separate channels and earned less on average, similar differences can be found between unionized and non-unionized industrial workers. Only about 0.6\% (1\%) of all electors classified as agricultural workers in 1921 (1934).

\textsuperscript{15}Our coding will nonetheless introduce some noise at the individual level. Some ‘wives’ of blue-collar husbands, for example, may own inherited property, or may be white collar workers, such as school teachers. However, our main results for married women is similar to a result for single women whose occupation is known (Figure A8). Importantly, using a household-level indicator of class is lesser concern in our study, which links property-level
category for women (54%), and the occupation of their husbands’ is easily determined given that they are always listed below husbands.\textsuperscript{16} Second, we classify all other formally ‘dependent’ women (daughters and widows) as a separate category of unclassified ‘dependents’\textsuperscript{17} In contrast to ‘wives’ we cannot easily determine the class of ‘daughters’ (2.6% of all women), as they are not systematically listed below fathers in the registers. The classification of ‘widows’ (11% of all women) is similarly challenging, given that their deceased husbands do not appear in the registers. \textsuperscript{18} Overall, we are able to assign over 93% of age-eligible electors into a one of the four class categories.\textsuperscript{19} Among eligible electors in the 1921 registers that we assign class, 68% are working-class, 20% middle-class, 2% upper class and 10% formally (not individual) class composition to individual propensity to vote.

\textsuperscript{16} We nonetheless capture class heterogeneity within family units beyond that of wives. That is, a son of a white collar profession who lives in a blue collar parental home is coded as middle-class living in a working-class family. This allows us to better proxy one’s likelihood of forming local vs external politicized ties. A white collar son may be more likely to establish politicized social networks with other white collar professionals outside his blue collar neighbors.

\textsuperscript{17} Few men were also classified as ‘son’ (N=19) or ‘student’ (N=16), and those are also coded as ‘dependents’. While some men whose occupation is listed as ‘son’ may also work outside the home, the registers regularly list an actual occupation of live-in sons in most cases.

\textsuperscript{18} While some ‘dependents’ may have worked outside home, others may have worked informally or at home, or not worked at all. While there are relatively few ‘daughters’, not knowing the class for widows inevitably introduces noise. Somewhat reassuring against this concerns is that both married and unmarried (incl. widows and daughters) working-class women respond similarly to ‘where they live’ (Figure A8).

\textsuperscript{19} About 6.6% remains unclassified due to (i) missing data on occupation, (ii) unclear occupations (e.g. assistant) or (iii) abbreviated occupations were translation was not possible.
‘dependent’. Electoral registers in 1934 return nearly identical distribution (Table A2).

**Class Composition** To proxy the size of one’s in-group neighbors, we prefer to combine upper and middle-class categories into a single category that refers to all non-working-class, that is those in non-manual jobs.\(^{20}\) We measure the size of one’s in-group as the proportion of in-group neighbors living in the same property.\(^{21}\) The rationale here is to capture the smallest geographical units, property, with the most regular social interactions.\(^{22}\) Note that, by definition, properties with a single family do not have neighbors in a property and therefore are not considered in the models.\(^{23}\) The measure also considers only electors with a known class (worker, middle or upper). That is, the proportion of working-class neighbors in a property is calculated as the total number of known workers among neighbors divided

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\(^{20}\)Note that only about 2% of electors are classified as upper class, making it empirically difficult to consider each classes separately. Considering only middle class returns similar results to combining upper and middle class (Figure A5).

\(^{21}\)One concern here is that by calculating a proportion, this indicator may be related to the number of electors per property, which is not the case in 1921 - and only weakly true in 1934 (Figure A2).

\(^{22}\)While social ties are likely to form with both neighbors in one’s property, and neighbors in a nearby property, we expect geographical proximity to be positively related to the propensity of neighbor ties. If anything, restricting the analysis to property-neighbors may therefore underestimate the overall neighbor effects.

\(^{23}\)About 26% and 32% of families lived in a single-family property in 1921 and 1934 respectively, but single-family properties housed only about 7.4% and 11.6% of electors in 1921 and 1934 respectively. One concern is that excluding single-family properties introduces biases. However, single and multi-family properties have a similar age, sex, and class composition. While single family properties have a higher proportion of married electors, our results do not vary by marital status (Figure A8).
by the total number of neighbor electors with a known class (worker, middle or upper).  

The proportion of one’s in-group property-neighbors varies substantially (Figure 1). While the vast majority of workers have a majority of working-class neighbors, less than 25% of workers live in properties that are occupied only by workers (Figure 1a). Properties with 100% upper and middle-class individuals are not very common, and less than a third of upper and middle-class electors lives in properties with a majority of upper and middle-class neighbors (Figure 1b). The ‘mixed’ class living reflects several factors: (i) owners often live in own apartment buildings, (ii) upper and middle-class families often employ domestic workers who reside on their property, and (iii) some middle-class families live in the same properties as some highly skilled working-class families.

**Turnout** Turnout varies by elections, from over 44% and 39% in the 1921 municipal and county elections, to less than 18% in the off-year 1934 municipal elections (Table A6). In all three elections, women voted less often than men, but the gender turnout gap ‘shrinks’ over time from about 15 and 12 percentage points difference between women and men in the 1921 elections respectively, to slightly above 2pp in the 1934 election (Table A6). In all three elections, workers voted less often than upper and middle-class. However, the gap between turnout of workers and non-workers remained at 15, 10 and 11pp across the three election respectively (Table A6). In 1921, the difference in turnout between women and men varies

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24 This leaves out about 10% of electors classified as ‘dependent’ and about 7% of electors who could not be categorized into either of the four class categories. However, our results are robust to using total number of all (known and unknown) electors in the denominator (Figure A4). In addition, the proportion of ‘dependents’ among all property electors does not vary with our measure of class composition (Figure A9). This supports our argument that ‘dependents’ are a truly heterogeneous group made up of all classes.

25 The proportion of in-group neighbors, in turn, does not vary noticeably across the seven neighborhoods (Figure A1c,d). This further supports relatively weak geographical clustering by class.
by class, as working-class women are the least likely to vote, while upper class women are as likely to vote as upper class men, although the latter is not the case in county elections (Figure 2a,b). In 1934, the difference between women and men does not vary by class, but upper-class women are again closing the gender turnout gap (Figure 2c). In all elections, electors classified as ‘dependents’, mostly consisting of widows, vote least often.

Notes: First bar (lighter) indicates women’s turnout, second bar (darker) indicates men’s turnout; ‘Up’ refers to upper class, ‘Mid’ to middle-class, ‘Work’ to working-class, ‘Dep’ to unclassified dependents; only age-eligible electors who retained their right to vote included.
Empirical Strategy

Identifying ‘neighbor effects’ is not an easy task, given that specific types of voters tend to live in geographic proximity. For example, a worker living in a majority middle-class property is most likely different from a worker who lives in a majority working-class property. Comparing individuals across properties therefore cannot differentiate neighbor effects from individual level confounders. In tackling this problem, we apply solution proposed by Barber and Imai (2015). Instead of comparing electors across properties, we compare electors within properties. In other words, we first compare turnout of workers and non-workers within each property and then estimate how this within-property difference varies with the ‘type of property’ they live in. This cross-sectional difference in differences specification allows us to control for observed and unobserved characteristics shared by everyone (workers and non-workers) living in the same property, and therefore to better isolate neighbor effects from individual confounders. While eliminating property-level confounders does not mitigate the possibility of individual-level bias within the same property, it seems very likely that electors in a - relatively small - property are fairly homogeneous on both observed and unobserved confounders (Barber and Imai 2005). In all our main specifications, we fit linear probability models, which cope better with a large number of fixed effects and are easier to interpret. Specifically, we estimate average neighbor effects for workers (non-workers) of the following general form:

\[ Y_i = \alpha_i + \beta \text{Group}_i + \gamma \text{Group}_i \times \text{InGroup}_p + \varepsilon_i \]

26See Amat et al (2017) for recent application.

27Somewhat reassuring is also the fact that both workers and non-workers are similar on average in terms of their likelihood to be female, get married and their average age (Table A7).

28In a robustness section, we show that estimates from logistic regression are similar (Figure A10).
In specifications that estimate average neighbor effects for working-class women and men, $Group_i$ refers to a dummy variable indicating a working-class elector and $InGroup_p$ refers to the proportion of working-class neighbors in property $p$. In specifications that estimate average neighbor effects for upper and middle-class women and men, $Group_i$ refers to a dummy variable indicating an upper and middle-class elector and $InGroup_p$ refers to a proportion of upper and middle-class neighbors in property $p$. In all equations, $Y_i$ refers to individual level turnout and $\alpha_i$ refers to property fixed effects. The effect of interest is captured by $\gamma$, which estimates how the proportion of in-group among one's neighbors affects one's turnout. In all models, we also include individual level controls for age, age squared and marital status and cluster standard errors at the property level. In gauging gender-specific neighbor effects, we fit the equation above separately for women and men. If, for example, working-class women respond to class composition of their neighbors, we expect that working-class women’s probability to vote compared to all other women in the same property increases with the proportion of workers among her neighbors. We do not expect to find the same effects for men or for upper and middle-class women and men.

Results

In this section, we fit the main equation above to examine whether the proportion of one’s class in-group neighbors affects one’s likelihood to vote. Figure 3 below depicts point estimates of the interaction term between one’s class and class composition of one’s neighbors $\gamma$ that indicates the average neighbor effects for each class. Sub-figure a) identifies whether worker’s probability to vote increases with the proportion of workers among their neighbors and sub-figure b) identifies whether upper and middle-class electors are more likely to vote as the proportion of upper and middle-class neighbors increases. In order to gauge gender-specific effects, we also fit each model separately for women (gray) and men (black).

The first three models in Figure 3a show that workers are more likely to vote if surrounded by working-class neighbors. The effects are statistically significant at 5% level or less in
all three sampled elections. However, a very different picture emerges once we examine neighbor effects separately for women and men. The middle set of models Figure 3a shows that working-class women are more likely to vote if surrounded by working-class neighbors than all other women. These effects are slightly larger than the overall neighbor effects and again statistically significant at 5% or less. The models suggest that one standard deviation increase in the proportion of workers among neighbors in a property increases the probability of women workers to vote by 9.1, 9.2 and 12.1 percentage point in the three elections respectively. The third set of models in Figure 3a, on the other hand, show that neighbor effects are not observed for men workers. All three coefficients are close to zero or half-sized and far from being statistically significant at conventional levels. The overall neighbor effects for workers are therefore driven by women, which is consistent with our argument that working-class women were especially responsive to ‘where they lived’ by forging politicized networks with their neighbors to a greater extent than working-class men who had more opportunities on average to forge politicized ties outside the home via employment, unions or voluntary associations.

Figure 3b shows that upper and middle-class women and men also did not respond to ‘where they lived.’ Neither of the three sets of coefficients in Figure 3b show large or statistically significant estimates for upper and middle-class electors. This is consistent with our argument that upper and middle-class electors had more opportunities and resources to forge politicized networks outside the home - such as through outside employment or voluntary associations.

Next, we probe our expectation that gender-class composition - in contrast to class alone - does not matter for the mobilization of working class women (Figure A3). Indeed, while working class women respond to how many other workers (men and women) live nearby (Figure 3 above), they do not respond as strongly to how many other women workers are among their neighbors. In 1921, the estimated average neighbor effects that consider both gender and class composition are smaller in magnitude and imprecisely estimated. In 1934,
the estimated average neighbor effects are of similar size and significance. This is consistent with our theoretical framework where working class women adopted a shared politicized identity of workers - perhaps through secondary politicization via male neighbors and family members - not of working-class women. By 1934, working-class women’s participation in unions and women’s party clubs would have increased, plausibly enhancing working-class women’s group consciousness as both workers and women.

Figure 3: Average Neighbor Effects By Class and Gender

![Figure 3](image)

Notes: Linear probability models; all models include controls for age, age squared, married and a constant; coefficients in gray refer to models for women, black for men, red for both women and men; dependent variable is a binary indicator of turnout among eligibles; standard errors clustered at the property level; ‘M21/M34’ denotes municipal elections in 1921/1934, ‘C21’ denotes county elections in 1921; 95% CIs.

In Appendix D, we run several sensitivity and robustness analyses to our main result (Figure 3). First, we address potential issues raised by missing values for most women’s occupations. We plot the proportion of one’s in-group neighbors among electors with a known class (our independent variable) on the proportion of dependents and widows among all of one’s neighbors and show that there is no correlation between the two (Figure A9). Given that we do not know class of electors classified as dependents, the equal distribution of dependents across the ‘type’ of properties is reassuring against a potential bias caused by
missing values. We then run the main model for working class women separately for married and unmarried women (Figure A8). This addresses the issue of missing values on women’s occupation in two additional ways: (i) if assigning class to married women based on their husbands’ occupation introduces too much noise, we should observe effects only among single women and (ii) if not assigning class to women dependents (largely widows) drives the main results, we should also observe effects only among single women. However, we do not observe systematic differences between the two sub-samples by marital status. This provides further reassurance that our main result is not driven by missing data on women’s occupation.

Second, we show that the main result is robust to an alternative measure of class composition of neighbors as a proportion of known in-group neighbors out of all electors living in the property, that is out of electors with both known and unknown class (Figure A4). Third, we show that the main result is robust to excluding families with more than one wife (Figure A6). This is a conservative test to ensure that our results are not driven by erroneously classifying neighbors with the same last name as related. Fourth, we show that the main result for both non-working classes remains unaltered when we only run models for middle class as a single in-group (Figure A5). Fifth, we probe robustness of the main result to excluding one of the seven neighborhoods (Figure A7). The results are remarkably stable across all specifications, suggesting that the effects are not driven by a single administrative sub-unit. Sixth, we show that logistic regression returns comparable results (Figure A10).

Mechanisms

In the theory section, we propose two mechanisms behind ‘neighbor effects’ for groups that have motivation, need and opportunities to forge local ties: political conformity and political information. The extent to which each drives the observed effects is hard to disentangle. For example, well-networked individuals may both be compelled to conform, but also have better information access. We nonetheless explore the most direct implications of each mechanism.

Political conformity One way to identify whether working-class women were more likely
to mobilize if surrounded by working-class neighbors because of increased conformity is to exploit variation in the length of residence among electors. We expect those who live longer in the same property to be more likely to develop stronger politicized ties with neighbors of the same class, which should increase their identification with and social pressure to local norms. To this end, we take advantage of the time span in our data and identify age-eligible electors in 1934 who were also registered in 1921. About 29% of age eligible electors in 1934 could be matched into the same neighborhood in both election years. Exploiting this data, we fit the main result for working-class women in the 1934 election separately for women who appeared on the electoral registers in 1921 and for those who would have been eligible to vote in 1921 but were not matched between the two registers (Figure 4a). Consistent with the proposed mechanisms, the estimated ‘neighbor effects’ are larger in size for women who remained in the same neighborhood for at least 13 years.

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29 We match electors based on year of birth, name and neighborhood. While matching individuals into the same neighborhood rather than property - which is not possible given data limitations - introduces noise, it seems reasonable to assume that those who remain in the same neighborhood will, on average, be more likely to remain in the same property.

30 The relatively low number of matched electors likely reflects: high mobility due to internal migration and emigration (Nordström 1968, p.779-842) and the fact that electors in 1934 below 35 years would not have been eligible to vote in 1921.
Figure 4: Unpacking Mechanisms: Average Neighbor Effects for Working-Class Women

(a) Conformity

(b) Information

Notes: Linear probability models; all models include controls for age, age squared, married and a constant; standard errors clustered at the property level; all models fitted for working-class women in the 1934 election; sub-figure a splits the sample by length of residence; sub-figure b splits the sample by whether one lived in a property with a member of a Women’s Social Democratic Club; 95% CIs.

**Political information** One way to identify whether working-class women were responsive to class composition of their neighbors due to a better information from local opinion leaders and canvassers is to exploit variation in the ‘type’ of one’s neighbors. We expect those who live in class homogeneous properties with a politicized member to be more likely to obtain political information. To this end, we take advantage of the fact that socialist women in Södertälje were organized in a women’s wing of the Swedish Social Democratic Party. The membership records of Södertälje Women’s Social Democratic Club indicate 304 entries between 1917-1932. Out of the 304 entries, we match 81 women to Södertälje East and 18 with individual women in Södertälje East in the 1934 electoral register. As we would expect, working-class women living in property with a member of the Women’s Social

31Another 106 women are matched to Södertälje West (35%), and another 117 (38%) entries could not be matched to either district. These mostly consist of entries with illegible or partial addresses.

32Out of the 81 women matched to Södertälje East, we therefore identify 18 individual members in the 1934 register. This is because (i) some members only appear in the 1921
Democratic Club were twice as likely to vote in the 1934 election than other working-class women. We then fit the main result for working-class women in the 1934 election separately for those who lived in a property with a member and those who did not (Figure 4b).\textsuperscript{33} Consistent with the proposed mechanism, the albeit imprecisely estimated ‘neighbor effects’ are larger in size for working-class women who lived in properties with a woman party member.

**Alternative Mechanisms**

**Were working-class women responsive because they were new voters?** Given that new voters lack experience with political process, they may be particularly susceptible to ‘soak’ in the influence of their most immediate surroundings. The responsiveness of working-class women to class composition of their neighbors may therefore reflect working-class women’s ‘new’ status as voters, rather than their access to politicized local networks. This explanation, however, is at odds with the fact that working-class women were still responsive to class composition of their neighbors in the 1934 election, which is a sixth election since women’s equal admittance to a local ballot box in 1919, and an election where we no longer observe a sizable gender turnout gap. In addition, the estimated effects of class composition of one’s neighbors are not smaller in 1934 than in 1921, which is also at odds with this alternative explanation. It therefore seems unlikely that it would affect only working-class women who would not have learned anything in six election years, even though, by then, they would have voted at a similar level as men. We nonetheless probe this possibility by splitting our sample by ‘new’ electors who came to voting age for the 1\textsuperscript{st} or 2\textsuperscript{nd} time in the 1934 election and all other ‘established’ electors (Figure A11). While we find that ‘new’ voters of all social groups indeed tend to be more responsive to class register, and (ii) some addresses did not allow match with individual women. About 441 (8.8\%) of age-eligible electors in 1934 lived in a property with at least one identified member.

\textsuperscript{33} Only about 8\% (N=80) of long-term residents in 1934 lived in a property with a member. Each sub-figure of Figure 4 thus identifies largely separate populations.
composition than ‘established’ voters, only working-class women are responsive to neighbor context among the established electors. Overall, this suggests that while new voters indeed respond more to ‘where they live’, this cannot explain why working-class women were more responsive to class composition than all other social groups, including upper & middle class women who also mostly voted for the first time in 1919.

We working-class women responsive because they were domestic servants? While our theory predicts that domestic workers would have been especially unlikely to vote given that most of them resided in upper and middle-class properties, and were therefore most isolated from in-group politicized networks, it seems important to assess whether our findings can be driven entirely by domestic servants. However, the average neighbor effects are similar in size and precision level regardless of whether we include or exclude women domestic servants (Figure A12a). Even though most women domestic servants were single, it may still be that some married women were employed as domestic servants, but we cannot exclude these women from the data set for missing occupation of married women. However, further restricting the data set to single women, for which we have information on occupation, the coefficients for all three municipal elections are positive, larger in size, and significant at 5% level in two of the three elections (Figure A12a). Overall, these two tests provide evidence that is consistent with the explanation that our result is not driven by domestic servants.

Were working-class women responsive because of pressure by employers? Another possibility is that women were more vulnerable to employers’ pressure, especially in large working-class apartment buildings, perhaps because of weaker unionization and easier exertion of pressure. To probe this possibility, we identify women whose occupation is listed as ‘factory worker’ and who should therefore be most vulnerable to employer’s pressure. However, the average neighbor effects are similar in size and precision level regardless of whether we include or exclude women factory workers (Figure A12b). Even though most women factory workers were single, it may still be that some married women worked in
factories, but we cannot exclude these women from the data set for missing occupation of married women. However, further restricting the data set to single women, for which we have information on occupations, the coefficients for municipal elections in 1934 and 1921 are positive and of similar size (Figure A12b). The effects for county elections in 1921 are smaller in size and imprecisely estimated. Overall, these two tests provide evidence that is consistent with the explanation our result is unlikely to be explained by working-class women’s exposure to factory owners in the largely working class properties.

**Were working-class women responsive because their husbands voted for them?**

While voting by proxy has been abolished in 1919, married couples continued being allowed to vote by proxy (Sjögren 2012). This raises a concern that married women’s votes may have been ‘hidden’ second votes of their husbands. We therefore pay special attention to the possibility that the main result is driven by working-class husbands, but find no indication in the data that proxy voting has been utilized by working-class husbands in a systematic way. First, if marital proxy voting explained our main finding, we would observe neighbor effects only among married women, which is again not the case (Figure A8). Second, if most votes of married women were ‘hidden’ votes of their husbands, we would expect marital status to impact women’s turnout, especially working-class women’s, to a greater degree than men’s, but this is not the case (Table A8). Third, If married working-class men casted two votes only in majority working-class properties - which could explain our main finding on woking-class women - we would expect turnout gender gap among married workers to ‘shrink’ in majority working-class properties, which is again not the case (Table A8).

**Beyond Södertälje**

One remaining question is to what extent our results from Södertälje can tells us something general about the mobilization of early women voters. In this section, we therefore discuss the generalizability of our findings both across and beyond Sweden.

**Across Sweden** In order to asses generalizability across Sweden, we take advantage of
unique data presented in the 1928 census. The census reports averages of municipality-level women’s and men’s turnout by class composition and urban status, and these averages are consistent with our findings. This data therefore provides descriptive reassurance that our findings in Södertälje are generalizable across all 113 urban municipalities in Sweden (Figure A13a) and can provide insights into generalizability beyond urban settings (Figure A13b).

**Urban** In 1928, the average municipality-level turnout of working-class women varied with the proportion of workers in a municipality to a greater extent than men’s. While only about 55% of working-class women voted on average in cities where workers were in a minority, over 65% of working-class women voted on average in majority working-class cities. This lends support to our argument that urban working-class women relied on local networks to a greater extent than working-class men and privileged women. Also in accordance with our findings, the difference in average aggregate level turnout of men between the two types of municipalities (minority working-class vs majority working-class) is only few percentage points. Importantly, neither upper-class women nor upper-class men responded to class composition of their cities. This lends support to our argument that men of all classes and privileged women did not politically rely on their local networks.

**Rural** While all gender and class social groups respond to class composition of rural municipalities in 1928, these effects are always stronger for women. That is, in a rural setting, class-homogeneous localities appear to be mobilizing to both working and upper class, but especially to women within each class. This is consistent with our argument that opportunities to forge external politicized networks in a rural setting are more limited in general, reflecting lower population density, and agricultural character of local economies. At the same time, the graphs show that working - and potentially upper class - women were more responsive to local context than men, which is again consistent with our argument that

\[^{34}\text{Sveringes Officiella Statistik, Riksdagsmannavalen aren 1925-1928. Stockholm, 1928.}\]

\[^{35}\text{Given that the raw data were not retained, we can only report the final analysis as it is compiled in the census.}\]
working-class women especially, were more likely to forge politicized ties with neighbors than men, reflecting more socially and economically determined opportunities to form local ties.

**Beyond Sweden** In order to discuss the generalizability beyond Sweden, we collect census data for Western countries that also enfranchised women during the first wave of women’s suffrage and compare Sweden with other countries with respect to four relevant characteristics: urbanization, industrialization, women’s labour force and women’s and men’s turnout.

One concern here is that if Swedish working-class women were comparatively more or less likely to seek outside employment, our findings may not be easily generalizable to other countries. Similarly, if Sweden’s population was more or less industrialized than the rest of Western European countries, we would not expect our findings from Sweden to generalize to other countries. However, Sweden does not appear to be an outlier with respect to either of these economic factors (Figure A14c,d). At the same time, Sweden was less urbanized than the rest of non-Scandinavian Europe (Figure A14b). Given that our findings rest on a mid-sized city, our findings from Södertälje should speak to even larger urban populations in other countries. Another concern here is that if Sweden displayed exceptionally low turnout, especially among women, generalizability to highly mobilized countries may be compromised. However, what we find is that Sweden’s overall turnout levels, as well as the size of the gender turnout gap (difference between women’s and men’s turnout) are fairly typical to other comparable cases. The gender gap in the first parliamentary elections upon suffrage in Sweden is at around 15 percentage points, which is highly comparable to most other countries in Europe at the time of suffrage (Figure A14a).

Of course, several other factors may also limit generalizability, such as the frequency of neighbor contacts or strategies of political mobilization, especially if shaped by different institutions. At the same time, however limited in nature, the data we present above do not flag any immediate ‘warning’ signs that would provide a strong theoretical basis for limited generalizability across countries in Western Europe that enfranchised women at the turn of
the twentieth century.

Discussion

Scholars often emphasize that limited electoral participation of the most underprivileged groups bears weak political representation (APSA Task Force 2004; Barreto 2018). If social inequalities drive electoral inequalities that in turn limit representation of marginalized groups, we have to better understand their pathways to mobilization. A thorough examination of all socio-economic sub-groups among newly enfranchised voters provides a unique opportunity to enrich our understanding of how the most underprivileged groups gain *de facto* access to the polls upon *de jure* inclusion to politics. Through the study of early working-class women voters, this paper uncovers one such pathway: politicized local networks.

In contrast to comparative suffrage scholarship that often speaks of newly enfranchised women as a ‘single group’ (e.g. Corder and Wolbrecht 2016; Kim 2017; Morgan-Colins, forth., Skorge 2019; Teele 2018), this paper deepens our understanding of how class shaped their mobilization. At the turn of the twentieth century, the channels to electoral participation of the most underprivileged groups among newly enfranchised groups were different from the mobilization channels typically identified for the more privileged women. In contrast to upper and middle-class women who could acquire political resources through external politicized networks, the strength of local politicized networks became vital for the mobilization of working-class women. Despite the troubling social and economic implications of geographic segregation of marginalized groups, this paper therefore demonstrates how living close to ‘those alike’ may empower electorally those whose access to politically relevant resources in limited the most.

In contrast to dominant accounts in political science that emphasize women’s access to education and associated employment for electoral participation (Burns, Schlozman and Verba 2001; Iversen and Rosenbluth 2006; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993, p.160), this paper
therefore highlights the importance of an ‘alternative’ political resource available to newly enfranchised groups even if access to education or outside employment is limited. At the turn of the twentieth century, women were institutionally and culturally incentivized to leave employment upon marriage, while non-unionized, casual, unremunerated or domestic-based jobs were mostly available to married women in economic need. While this limited access of the most underprivileged women to external social ties typically available to men of all classes and some upper & middle class women, the social and economic presence of working-class women in the local community did not necessarily impede their mobilization - it became their pathway to vital resources, at least until better paying, stable careers outside their local community became available to most women.

Future research should explore the extent to which social composition of one’s neighbors promotes women’s mobilization even in contemporary settings. While this paper focuses on early post-suffrage period which provides a unique opportunity to uncover how social inequalities after suffrage expansion affect mobilization of the most underprivileged sub-groups among newly admitted voters, it makes one wonder whether women retained higher responsiveness to their neighbors on average several decades after suffrage. While the differences in the level and character of women’s and men’s labour force are by no means as stark as they were a century ago, women’s reproductive responsibilities, alongside other factors, continue interfering with women’s outside employment through absence, part-time work and occupational segregation. Even today in the West, women are more likely to take part-time jobs, work fewer hours, enter different types of jobs, stay home, and commute shorter distances (Crane 2007; Lewis, Campbell and Huerta 2008). Despite the cultural and structural changes of the twentieth century, economic and social disparities between women and men persist. The extent to which these differences are strong enough to warrant distinct pathways to mobilization of women and men, however, remains to be determined.
References


