

# The Electoral Impact of Newly Enfranchised Groups: The Case of Women's Suffrage in the United States.

## Abstract

How do newly enfranchised groups achieve representation of shared interests? I theorize that while suffrage expansion has the potential to sway electoral tides in favor of the newly enfranchised, such effects are conditional on the strength of a social movement that seeks to represent the group. A social movement defines the group's shared interests and creates a mobilized pool of voters that takes electoral action to foster common goals. In testing this argument, I use evidence from the adoption of the Nineteenth Amendment in the United States. I employ a difference-in-differences approach that exploits the heterogeneity in the proportion of women across counties to estimate preferences of women voters and show that these preferences vary with the strength of the suffrage movement. These findings highlight that de jure inclusion of a previously disenfranchised group is necessary but may not be sufficient for de facto representation of the group's shared interests.

Keywords: women's suffrage, social movements, American political development, democratization

How do newly enfranchised groups achieve representation of shared interests? While marginalized groups share common experiences and characteristics, it remains unclear when does loosening the group's formal barriers to political participation give rise to a new, politically salient, identity. Access to relevant resources of newly enfranchised groups has been historically compromised and restrictive social norms persist long after the removal of restrictive institutions. The shared experience of historical marginalization also masks substantial heterogeneity in characteristics, interests and experiences amongst the members of the group. This suggests that de jure inclusion of a historically marginalized group may not result in a coordinated effort by that group to demand de facto representation of shared interests. This is particularly likely in the case of women upon enfranchisement: a heterogeneous and large group historically lacking access to political resources and facing strong anti-participatory norms. Through the examination of American women following suffrage, this paper documents how group preferences of an otherwise heterogeneous and inexperienced electorate form and translate into a sufficiently coordinated electoral force fostering policy change in favor of the group.

Women's formal access to the polling booth was marked with mixed expectations, where some contemporaries pointed to women's distinct political priorities, while others questioned that women had the capacity to overcome social and resource barriers and to change politics for the years to come.<sup>1</sup> Today, scholars of American political development emphasize women's heterogeneity as a group and women's limited access to resources, overwhelmingly doubting that contemporary expectations of women's 'unified voting block' ever materialized (Corder and Wolbrecht 2016, pp.262-3; Cott 1990; p.170; Freeman 2002, p. 2; Lemons 1973, p.112; McConaughy 2013, p.8-15, p.51; Skocpol 1992, p.506). Indeed, women's partisan preferences are estimated to be sim-

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<sup>1</sup>Contemporary interviews with professionals and politicians in Maryland nicely summarize the mixed expectations about new women voters as 'better political conditions', end 'machine politics', 'benefit Democrats,' improve 'welfare of women and children', and 'educational and hygienic conditions.' Others warned against 'emotional women' voters or doubted a 'great change in politics.' (The Baltimore Sun; August 19, 1920).

ilar to men's at the national level, but heavily dependent on institutional and political contexts at the sub-national level (Andersen 1994; Alpern and Baum 1985; Corder and Wolbrecht 2006; 2016, pp.260-2; Goldstein 1973, p.124ff; Harvey 1998, p.106-7). While there is a substantial consensus that women did not consistently 'vote as one' in great numbers for the same party, scholars almost invariably omit the importance of external factors that improve women's capacity to coordinate electorally. The National American Women's Suffrage Association (NAWSA), especially, played a major role in raising women's consciousness, defining women's issues and mobilizing and informing women, all of which would have enhanced women's ability to coordinate electorally on shared interests. Once the importance of NAWSA's coordination capacity is taken into account, the inconsistent party preferences of women across states may be at least in part driven by a notable gender voting gap along women's, inherently non-partisan, issues. After all, Congress became more progressive after suffrage, not more Republican or Democratic, and the women's agenda revolved around progressive issues, not parties (Andersen 1996, p.153; Carruthers and Wanamaker 2015; Harvey 1998, p.106-7; Miller 2008).

Highlighting the role of social movements, I develop a theoretical framework that links *de jure* enfranchisement of new electorates with *de facto* representation of the group's interests. Building on standard models of political competition, I theorize that political responsiveness to shared interests of newly enfranchised groups is conditional on the group's capacity to overcome resource barriers and to coordinate electorally on group interests. The importance of capacities of electoral coordination has not been sufficiently acknowledged in the literature, wherein an 'automatic' policy representation of group interests is often implicitly or explicitly assumed following the group's enfranchisement (Carruthers and Wanamaker 2015; Kose, Kuka and Shenhav 2015; Kroth, Larcinese and Wehner 2016; Lott and Kenny 1999; Vernby 2013). Specifically, I argue that suffrage expansion creates an opportunity for social movements to cultivate electoral coordination of newly enfranchised groups on shared interests. A strong social movement defines and raises awareness of shared agendas, politically engages members of the group and may even directly inform and mobilize members of the group. In the absence of a strong social movement, the new electorate shares

common experiences, but may not have the capacity to take an effective electoral action to foster common goals. In such circumstances, incumbents are not incentivized to respond to the group's shared interests and the group's potential to turn de jure inclusion into de facto representation of shared interests will not materialize.

In testing this argument, I use evidence from the adoption of the Nineteenth Amendment and explore whether the impact of women's suffrage<sup>2</sup> was shaped by suffrage movement strength. Uncovering women's voting behavior in the absence of survey data is faced with several challenges, including the fact that the likely impact of women's votes shaped politicians' willingness to adopt women's suffrage (Przeworski 2009; Teele 2018b). In tackling this issue, I exploit variation in the size of the pool of enfranchised women within one country where suffrage was imposed by a Federal Amendment. I then employ a difference-in-differences approach that allows me to compare *trends* in incumbent support before and after suffrage in counties with a higher proportion of women to counties with fewer women. In estimating the electoral impact of women's suffrage by progressive issues and suffragists' influence, I correlate the estimated impact of the reform with incumbent's progressive voting record and the suffrage movement strength. The focus on a conservative-progressive dimension is warranted given that (i) the policy agenda of organized women was issue-focused and embedded in the progressive movement (Banaszak 1996, p.194-5; Goss 2013, pp.4, 27) and (ii) the differences on progressive issues were greater within than across parties (McDonaugh 1993; Sundquist 1983, pp.170-7).

Before proceeding to the main analysis, I run ten placebo tests and four tests with unique sex-separated data from Illinois, all of which indicate support for the validity of key assumptions that underline the ability of the differences-in-difference specification to estimate women's voting behavior. In the main analysis, I then show that conservative incumbents lost due to women's entry to the electorate in places where state suffrage organizations were strongest, while incum-

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<sup>2</sup>Note that the Nineteenth Amendment mostly enfranchised white, native-born women. African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanics, foreign-born groups and Native Americans, for example, were subject to persisting voter suppression laws that especially affected women (Montoya 2018).

bents elsewhere were not affected. This electoral retaliation against conservative incumbents was particularly notable with respect to incumbents' opposition to bills that enhanced women's welfare, namely the establishment of the Women's Bureau and a increase of pensions to veterans and their dependents. The electoral loss of conservative incumbents affected about a third of incumbents in states with a strong movement, affected both major party incumbents and persisted until at least the second election after suffrage. Consistent with the proposed argument is also the fact that movement strength coincides with a greater mobilization of women, more protest activities of suffragists, and an eventual retraction of a post-war conservative shift in Congress.

## **The Argument: When Group Enfranchisement Improves Representation of Group Interests**

I theorize that while suffrage expansion has the potential to shape policy outcomes in favor of group interests, such effects are inherently conditional on the ability of newly enfranchised groups to coordinate electorally on shared interests. Figure 1 depicts the logic of my argument and highlights the conditionality of the de facto enfranchisement on electoral coordination. Unless newly enfranchised groups threaten politicians electorally, politicians are not incentivized to shift attention to the group's shared interests and the promise of de facto representation of group interests may never materialize. The inherent conditionality of de facto representation of group interests has not been sufficiently acknowledged in the literature, wherein politician's ideological shifts are assumed to invariably follow group enfranchisement (e.g. Carruthers and Wanamaker 2015; Kose, Kuka and Shenhav 2015; Kroth, Larcinese and Wehner 2016; Lott and Kenny 1999; Vernby 2013). In a context where newly enfranchised groups face substantial barriers to an active and informed participation at the polls, social movements will be especially crucial in helping the group to develop a strong, coordinated, voice at the polls. A strong social movement defines the groups interests, develops shared consciousness among the members of the group, and may also provide relevant information, politically engage members of the group or even directly mobilize group members.

In the following section, I highlight two broad channels through which social movements help to develop the capacity of new electorates to coordinate electorally on shared interests to demand shared policy agenda: consciousness-raising and mobilization.

Figure 1: From De Jure to De Facto Enfranchisement



(i) **Consciousness-raising:** A social movement defines the group, helps to develop group consciousness, articulates the group's interests, and cultivates these shared preferences within the group. Where intergroup interactions are essential for defining the group's collective interests (Weldon 2002), the mere presence of unorganized individuals cannot bring electoral and policy change. Several studies recognize the role of social movements in the formation of group consciousness and shared interests. Popular movements shaped American political institutions by constructing new collective identities that were not sufficiently addressed by political parties at the turn of the twentieth century (Clemens 1997, p.63). The emergence of the modern civil rights movement in post-war America forged a new black collective identity that underpinned its grass-roots character (Omi and Winant 1994, p.98-9). With respect to women, women's organizational experiences acquired in an earlier anti-slavery movement served as an important precursor to an emerging collective identity of mid-nineteenth century women (Carpenter and Moore 2014). More directly, raising women's consciousness was a staple strategy of feminist suffragists, who believed in the necessity to change attitudes before institutions (Nelson 2018).

(ii) **Mobilization:** Once shared interests are sufficiently articulated and become engrained in collective consciousness, social movements also help to create an active, informed and mobilized pool of voters that takes electoral action to foster these interests. A social movement not only informs politicians about the group's preferences (Gillion 2012; Teele 2018a), it also informs voters about a politician's position on relevant issues. If newly enfranchised groups lack experience

with the political process, voting habit or face rigid social norms, strong social movements may help to overcome such challenges. Several studies recognize the importance of social movements for the group's electoral coordination. Organized farmers in the U.S. at the turn of the twentieth century were particularly successful in forming powerful electoral blocks that enhanced farmer's ability to obtain policy concessions (Clemens 1997, p.6-8, 169). Likewise, the success of the modern civil rights movement largely rested upon its ability to alter public views on race and mobilize ordinary individuals accordingly (Lee 2002, p.6-7, 13). On the other hand, the absence of a racially diverse labor movement undermined the ability of Democrats to capitalize on the mobilization strength of both the civil rights and labor movements (Frymer 2008). For women, prior organizational experience in suffrage petitioning endowed women with political experiences that improved women's electoral mobilization when women secured the vote (Carpenter, Popp, Resch, Schneer, and Topich 2018). The mobilization strength of suffragists was also recognized by politicians, who often aligned with suffragists in an attempt to exchange suffrage for women's loyalties (McConaughy 2013, p.8-15; Teele 2014).

In the reminder of the section, I consider how this theoretical framework fits with the context of the American suffrage movement. I focus specifically on women's organizations, suffragists' complex relationship with progressivism, and how suffragists forged women's consciousness and helped to inform and mobilize women voters.

### **Women, Suffragists and the Progressives in Context**

***Women's organizations and Progressive Agenda.*** Women's organizations were historically pre-occupied with social reform and the protection of women and children (Cott 1990, pp.157, 161-8; Flanagan 2007, pp.42-8; Goss 2013, pp.4, 27; Lemons 1973, p.83; Schuyler 2006, p.7, 138). This focus extended to the endorsement of many progressive issues of the day, including child welfare, military and maternal benefits, education, minimum wage, prostitution, food regulations, equal pay, working conditions, child labor, but also social control measures, such as prohibition and immigration restriction. Most women's organizations perceived suffrage as a means to the betterment of their conditions and their communities and prominent suffragists often explicitly linked suffrage

with social reform (Terborg-Penn 1998, p.115-6; Wheeler 1995, p.175-202).<sup>3</sup>

***NAWSA and Progressive Agenda.*** The largest suffrage organization, the National American Women's Suffrage Association (NAWSA), was embedded in a white, native-born and middle class progressive agenda (Kraditor 1981, p.65). While this progressive agenda was secondary to the suffrage cause, some policy focus was nonetheless welcomed by the organization (Harvey 1998, p.83).<sup>4</sup> NAWSA collected information on several bills and published analyses of the bill's effects. Of interest were bills that referred to women and children, but also included broadly progressive laws on industrial accidents, initiatives and referenda, prohibition, gambling, health measures, public schools and workmen compensation.<sup>5, 6</sup> Even though NAWSA eventually attempted to broaden its reach to working-class and immigrant women, the organization prioritized equal suffrage for white women over black women's suffrage (Kraditor 1981, Chs. 6&7). Fearing alienation of white Southern suffragists, NAWSA abandoned black women's interests and discouraged black women's organizations from joining (Graham 1996, p.82-6; McCammon and Banaszak 2018). Some black suffragists nonetheless worked within white women's organizations and, occasionally, NAWSA

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<sup>3</sup>For example, the prime suffragists' outlet emphasized women's role in post-war reconstruction. Suffrage was to be granted 'not so much of the women's abstract right as of the country's urgent need' (The Woman Citizen, October 26, 1918).

<sup>4</sup>Note that NAWSA's strict non-partisanship did not imply neutrality with respect to progressive policies.

<sup>5</sup>NAWSA's Woman's Suffrage Yearbook (1917, p.106); 'Mayors of Illinois on Chicago Woman Suffrage', Illinois Suffrage Association; 'Legislation that Interests Women', The Woman Citizen, January 4, 1919; A.G.Porritt's 'Law's affecting women and children in the suffrage and non-suffrage states', National Woman Suffrage Publishing Company, Inc., 1917.

<sup>6</sup>With ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, NAWSA transformed into the National League of Women Voters (NLWV), which directly aimed to lobby for women's policy agenda, and to educate and mobilize newly enfranchised women on such issues (Wilson 2007). See also Table A6 for full list of progressive bills supported by NLWV and allied women's organizations.



acknowledged the strategic importance of black women's organizational strength (Terborg-Penn 1998, p.1-13, Chs. 5&6).

*NAWSA's activities 'on the ground.'* Apart from intense lobbying, NAWSA sought to attract public support with educational, informational and mobilization activities (Banaszak 1996). Enforced by the centralization efforts of Catt's second leadership, NAWSA's headquarters led the national campaign, coordinated state campaigns and instructed state organizations to develop strong local machineries. The activities of state organizations, on the other hand, were more locally focused, including monitoring of state representatives and organizing state-wide collective actions. Suffrage demonstrations in states were especially likely to endorse negative campaigns against conservative legislative activities (Graham 1996, p.122).<sup>7</sup> Instructed by state and federal leaders, 'local' suffragists across the country aimed to contact non-members in person, educate women in citizenship classes on political and registration matters and inform women about incumbents' legislative activities (Andersen 1996, p.149). The goal for the so-called 'Helpers' of precinct Captains was to reach out to every voter in their section at least once a month, to read and distribute suffragists literature and to record the views on suffrage of all voters and non-voters.<sup>8</sup> Parallel to the efforts of NAWSA's workers, black women's organizations also aimed to mobilize and encourage the registration of black women (Schuyler 2006, p.50-1). While suffragists' activities did not provide instructions on *how* to vote, the mere exposure to suffrage workers on the ground would have increased women's consciousness, enhanced informed participation at the polls and directly encouraged registration.

## **Empirical Strategy**

In testing my argument, I take advantage of two facts. Firstly, the Nineteenth Amendment was forced on all states, whether they liked it or not. Even if some representatives supported the bill,

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<sup>7</sup>This is consistent with the fact that suffrage demonstrations were especially likely in conservative states (see Figure A19).

<sup>8</sup>'Information for Suffrage Workers - How to Organize.' NAWSA's Yearbook (1917, p.181-9)

the reform could not be adopted selectively in places where politicians hoped to benefit from it. Secondly, the proportion of women varied substantially across localities. This allows me to estimate the impact of a single suffrage reform by comparing counties with a larger pool of women that entered the electorate to counties with a smaller pool.<sup>9</sup> Within a difference-in-difference framework, I therefore estimate the impact of suffrage expansion by exploiting the intensity of exposure to treatment - as proxied by the proportion of women. The basic idea is that, as the proportion of women in a locality increases, the intensity of treatment strengthens and we should therefore observe a more profound change in incumbent support due to women's entry to the electorate.

In order to estimate the impact of enfranchisement along the progressive dimension, I then regress the change in incumbent support on a full interaction between the proportion of women and incumbents' progressive score. The rationale is that the estimated impact of the suffrage reform, using the proportion of women, should vary with incumbents' progressive voting record. In conservative districts, for example, we would expect the proportion of women to reduce incumbents' electoral fortunes, while no such effects may be observed in progressive districts. In order to estimate whether the impact of the suffrage expansion depends on the movement strength, I correlate these estimates with the strength of state suffrage organizations. To this end, I interact the proportion of women with progressive score separately in two groups of states based on movement strength, which effectively fits a three-way interaction between the proportion of women, progressive score and the strength of the suffrage movement.<sup>10</sup> I derive the cut-off value empirically, where I first explore various cut-offs and then apply the first cut-off which returns substantial and significant results.

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<sup>9</sup>For a similar approach see, for example, Berlinski and Dewan 2011; Carruthers and Wana-maker 2014; Kroth, Larcinese and Wehner 2015.

<sup>10</sup>The alternative is to fit a single model with a three-way interaction. I prefer using the approach above, as it has a more intuitive interpretation and easily captures non-linear effects. This seems particularly relevant, given that I find that state suffrage organizations need to be very strong (i.e. have a large number of members throughout the entire state) to impose substantial effects.

The difference-in-differences specification that estimates the impact of the suffrage expansion in either group of states takes the following form:

$$\Delta Inc_{i1920-1918} = \alpha + \beta Pty_d + \gamma PWom_i + \delta Prog_d + \theta Women_i * Prog_d + \Delta \varepsilon_{i1920-1918} \quad (1)$$

where  $\Delta Inc$  refers to a percentage point change in the electoral support for incumbents between the first post-suffrage election and the last pre-suffrage election in county  $i$ .  $Pty$  refers to the incumbent's party in a district  $d$ ,  $PWom$  refers to the proportion of adult women of eligible voting age in county  $i$  in the suffrage year and  $Prog$  refers to incumbent's progressive voting record in the last Congress before suffrage (66<sup>th</sup>) in district  $d$ . To address the fact that the progressive score varies at the district level, that is, counties within district are not independent, I cluster standard errors on district level. All models also include several control variables<sup>11</sup> and state fixed effects.

Note that equation (1) is equivalent to a fixed effects strategy with county and year dummies, which accounts for observed and unobserved *fixed* county characteristics that vary systematically with the proportion of women. The ability of the difference-in-differences specification to estimate the impact of women's entry to the electorate, however, relies on two basic types of assumptions about electoral trends and women's electoral behavior. I discuss both types of assumptions below.

### Threats to Inference

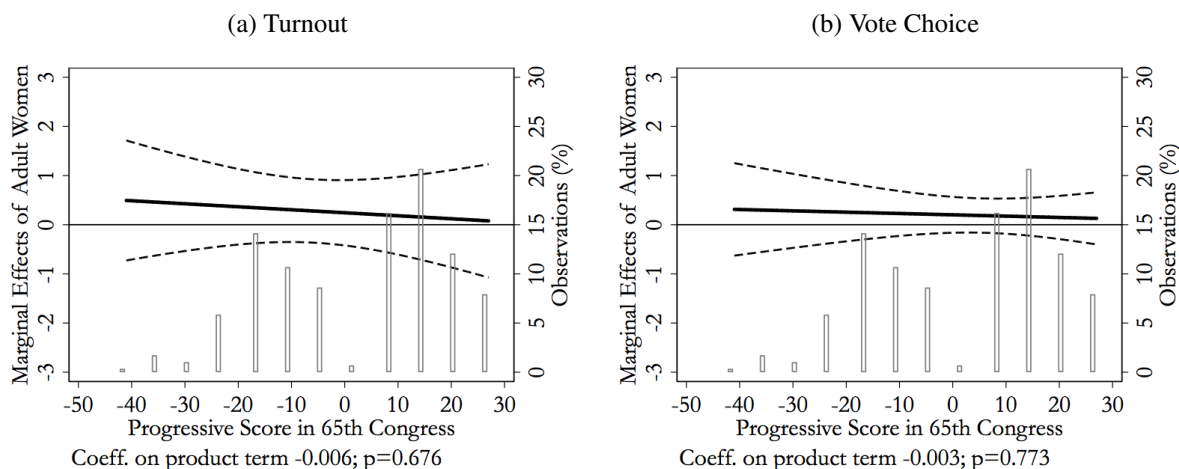
**Parallel Trends:** While men might change preferences and turnout between elections, it is required that this change does not vary with the proportion of women. This is the typical parallel trend assumption that underpins all difference-in-differences approaches. If *trends* in preferences, potentially driven by changes in turnout, varied with characteristics that were also correlated with the proportion of women, the difference-in-differences would fail to capture the impact of the suffrage reform. Placebo tests can reasonably strengthen our confidence in the validity of this assumption. I run ten placebo tests and show that neither the support for incumbents, nor turnout, was trending differently with the proportion of women and the progressive score in states with a

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<sup>11</sup>These include urban, black, dry, margin of victory and four binary indicators that capture Republican/Democratic entry/withdrawal.

weak and strong movement (i) in the election before the adoption of suffrage, (ii) in the election after suffrage and (iii) in 1920 election in states that enfranchised women before the 1920 election (see Figure 2 below for pre-placebos in states with a strong movement and Appendix G for remaining tests). Given that these placebo tests show that counties with more women were not trending differently without women's entry to the electorate, it seems unlikely that fixed county characteristics correlated with the proportion of women would drive the electoral trends I seek to capture in the 1920 election with women's entry.

Figure 2: Probing Parallel Trends with Placebo Tests

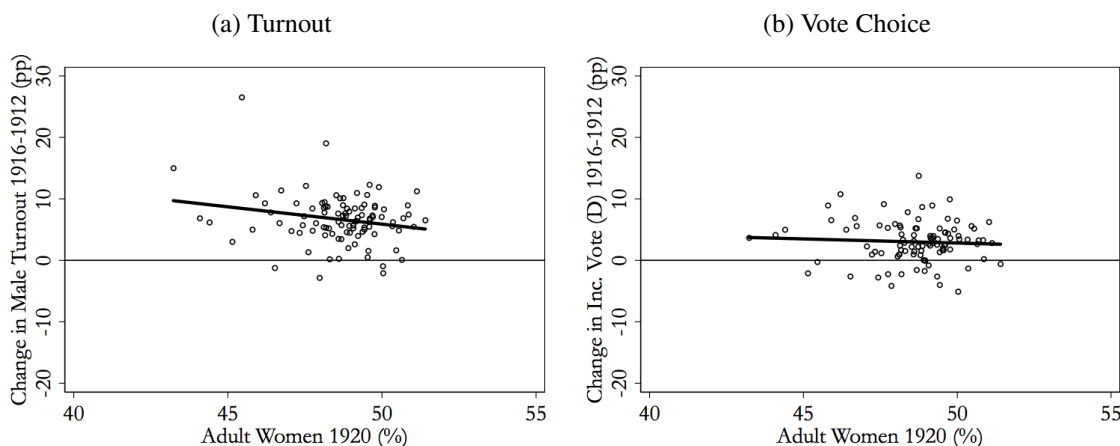


Notes: OLS estimates; 95% CIs; std. errors clustered on district; DV is change in (pp) turnout and inc. support between 1918 and 1916 election; only states with a strong movement included; see Appendix G for remaining tests.

However, if men responded to the suffrage reform by changing behavior strategically based on the intensity of women's entry, the parallel trends assumption would be violated in the 1920 election only and the placebo tests above would fail to capture it. This would happen if, for example, progressive men expected women to vote progressive *and* therefore mobilized in greater numbers in places with the strongest intensity of women's entry. In this case, the difference-in-differences would estimate the overall impact of the reform, but not women's preferences. Note, however, that one of the strengths of the difference-in-differences design is that the proportion of women across localities does not vary greatly, so it seems unlikely that men would have been able to respond

strategically to small geographical nuances in the proportion of women. I nonetheless explore this possibility with unique data from Illinois, which record women's and men's behavior separately before and after the introduction of presidential suffrage in 1913. As expected, these tests show that men did not strategically change turnout and preferences for the Democratic (progressive) incumbent Woodrow Wilson in response to the proportion of women in the first election after women's suffrage (see Figure 3 and Table A13). These tests therefore strengthen our confidence that the difference-in-differences does not falsely attribute men's strategic response to women.

Figure 3: Testing Men's Response in Illinois



Note: County-level data from presidential elections in 1916 & 1912 in Illinois; presidential suffrage implemented in 1913.

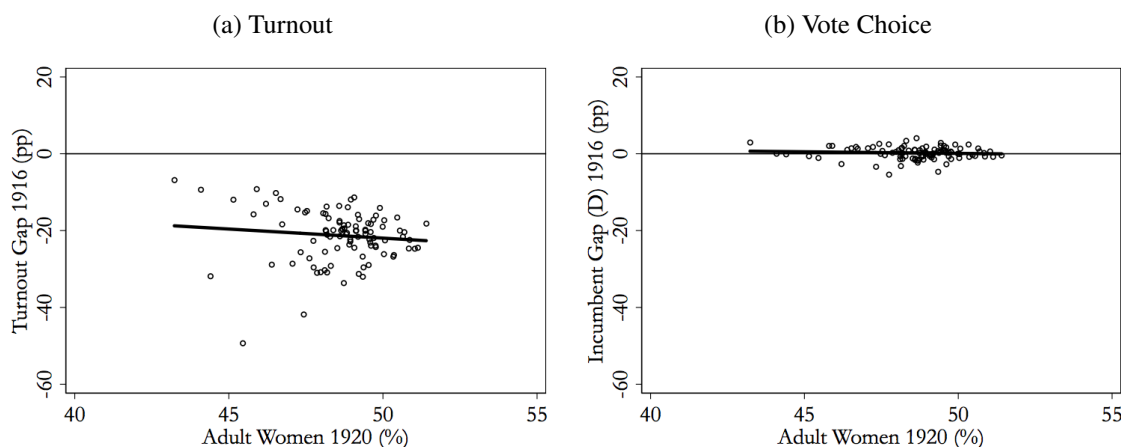
**Women's Behaviour:** While women (and men) may have different preferences and turnout levels across localities, the difference-in-differences requires that the gender gaps in turnout and vote choice (i.e. the percentage point *difference* between men's and women's behavior) do not vary with the proportion of women's voting behaviour.<sup>12</sup> For example, if women voted less than men

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<sup>12</sup>Note that this assumption is required to hold for all socio-economic groups correlated with the proportion of women. While the correlation between adult blacks and adult women is weak, counties with more women tend to have fewer naturalized groups (Table A2). Evidence from Illinois, a state with a sizable foreign-born population, provides some support for this assumption in this respect (Figure 3, but also see Figure A23 and further discussion in Table A2).

in places with more women, the proportion of women would not adequately capture the intensity of women's entry to the electorate. Similarly, if women were more progressive than men in places with less women, for example, the difference-in-differences would fail to estimate women's preferences. In probing the validity of these assumptions, I again utilize the unique data from Illinois and show that (i) women did not have more or less progressive preferences compared to men in localities with more women and that (ii) women did not vote more or less than men with respect to the proportion of women (see Figure 4 and Table A14).<sup>13</sup> Beyond a single state, the main concern is that women may vote less than men to a greater degree in places with voter suppression laws, which may be correlated with the proportion of women. However, the distribution of adult women is fairly similar in states with and without four key voter suppression laws (Figure A3), and the substantive interpretation of the main result is especially robust to the exclusion of states with restrictions that may pose the biggest threats (Table A11).

Figure 4: Testing Women's Behaviour in Illinois



Note: Data from presidential elections in 1916 & 1912 in Illinois by county; presidential suffrage implemented in 1913.

<sup>13</sup>Consequently, women's share of the overall turnout increases with the proportion of adult women (see Figure A23), which provides support for the ability of the proportion of women to proxy the intensity of exposure to the suffrage reform.

## Data and Variables

The data set is essentially a panel that consists of county level electoral returns in states where women could vote for the first time to Congress in 1920. The analysis is based on two elections before and two elections after suffrage. Given that the main goal is to identify the immediate effect of the suffrage reform in 1920 elections, the two elections after World War I are of particular interest. The units of analysis are counties that are embedded in electoral districts and states. Counties that were uncontested before and after suffrage are excluded from the sample,<sup>14</sup> as are counties with boundary changes between relevant elections, counties that were reassigned to another district between relevant elections, counties that do not map perfectly into the boundaries

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<sup>14</sup>Where one of the relevant elections was uncontested, the change in incumbent vote reflects contestation rather than electoral support. Excluding uncontested counties mostly affects the South, where about three-quarters of counties drop from the analysis. While being excluded from analysis, the lack of competitiveness would have likely altered, rather than eliminated, suffragists activities by shifting the focus of their activities to open primaries (Schuyler 2006, p.126-8). I also show below that the impact of suffrage is comparable in the more rural and conservative (competitive) South and elsewhere (Table A9), which is consistent with the argument that movement strength, rather than socio-economic context, determines the impact of newly enfranchised women.

of congressional districts,<sup>15</sup> districts with by-elections,<sup>16</sup> and at-large seats.<sup>17</sup> A full list of sample states, data sources, variable description and summary statistics are presented in Appendix A. In the reminder of this section, I discuss the measurement of the key concepts. Supplementary material for each of the key variables are in Appendices B, C and D.

**Adult women:** The key independent variable refers to the proportion of adult women – women of eligible voting age – in a county in 1920.<sup>18</sup> The kernel density plot in Figure 5 reveals substantial variation in the distribution of women across counties around the 50% mark. While women in most counties compromise between 45% and 50%, there are counties with as few as 33% and as many as 55% women. In the sample, there are more women in urban and dry counties and fewer women in manufacturing and foreign-born counties. In states with a strong suffrage movement, counties with more women also have a more progressive representation (see Table A2). These patterns

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<sup>15</sup>One concern here is that the excluded counties often included very large cities with multiple congressional districts. While there were relatively few multi-district cities in the sample, the generalizability of my findings to large cities may be compromised. One concern here is that large cities tended to be machine-dominated and women in these cities could have been more anti-machine than anti-conservative. However, while some suffragists emphasized women's resistance to machine politics, most machine politicians did not expect vote loss among women and eventually supported women's suffrage (Cott 1990, p.158; Buenker 1971).

<sup>16</sup>Incumbents who did not serve full term did not have an equal chance to vote on all progressive bills.

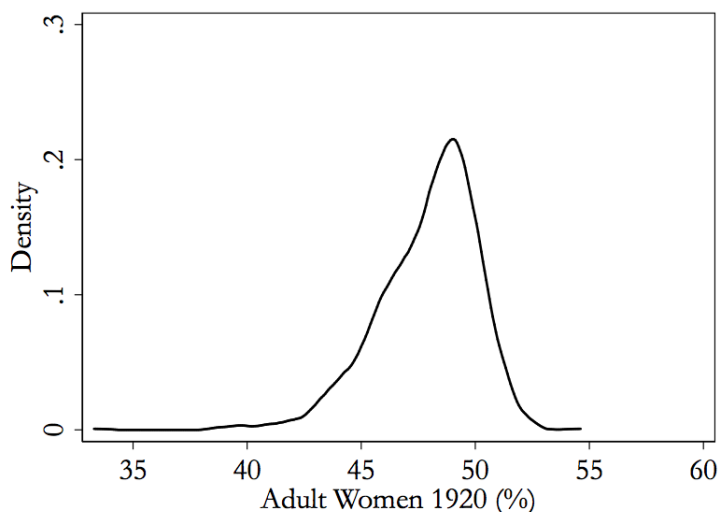
<sup>17</sup>States with a single district are not dropped from the analysis.

<sup>18</sup>I prefer using the proportion of adult women without 'adjustments', as proxying the number of eligible or registered population is not straightforward and may therefore cause bias. Citizenship status is often unknown, voter suppression was often informal and most formal restrictions did not prevent an entire targeted group from voting. All attempts to approximate more 'precise' measures are highly correlated with adult women (Figure A2) and therefore return highly comparable results (Table A10).



are consistent with accounts of predominantly male migration that often targeted sex-segregated manufacturing industries.<sup>19</sup>

Figure 5: Kernel Density of Adult Women in 1920.



Note: Kernel density of the proportion of adult women in 1920 in the sample.

**Progressive score:** Incumbents' ideological position is indicated by progressive score, which is defined as a proportion of 'yea' votes on all progressive bills in the previous Congress.<sup>20</sup> The coding of progressive bills is adapted from Miller (2008), and uses a textbook definition of progressive legislation typical of the day: aiming to reduce sale of alcohol, regulate child labor and sweatshops, manage natural resources, restrict immigration, regulate trusts, eliminate corruption, regulate business practices, ensure pure water and milk, address health hazards, improve working conditions, adopt women's suffrage and direct control over government.<sup>21</sup> Figure 6 depicts ker-

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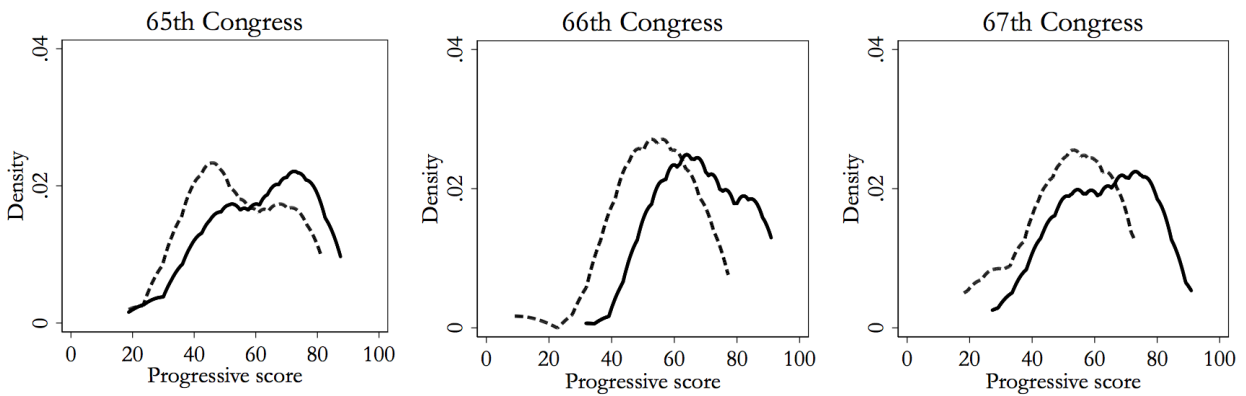
<sup>19</sup>To the extent that these correlates do not violate the diff-in-diff assumptions, they do not threaten its ability to estimate the impact of women's suffrage (see notes in Table A2)

<sup>20</sup>Continuously inactive incumbents were excluded. Only votes that support progressive issue in a progressive direction are coded as progressive. See Appendix C for further details on coding of progressive bills.

<sup>21</sup>Alternative definitions of progressivism that emphasize the pro-welfare sentiment over social control measures return highly comparable estimates (Table A9).

nel densities of the progressive score by party in 65<sup>th</sup>-67<sup>th</sup> Congresses. The plots show that there was a substantial overlap between Republican and Democratic representatives on the progressive dimension in all Congresses under study, with Republican representatives being slightly more progressive. This is consistent with the Republican Party taking a lead on progressive agenda that otherwise cut across party lines (Sundquist 1983, p.170-7). Accordingly, DW-NOMINATE scores from the first dimension are orthogonal to the progressive score (Figure A4).

Figure 6: Kernel Densities of Progressive Score in 65<sup>th</sup>- 67<sup>th</sup> Congress, by Party.



Notes: Solid (dashed) line depicts Republican (Democratic) incumbents in the sample.

***Movement Strength:*** The strength of the suffrage movement is measured as a membership per capita in NAWSA, the largest ‘umbrella’ organizations that boasted two million members nationwide in the last year before suffrage.<sup>22</sup> The rationale is that more members indicate better organizational capacity, including an increased *potential* for (i) raising awareness of women’s agenda, (ii) informing women voters on political matters, and (iii) mobilizing women voters. In contrast to

<sup>22</sup>Despite NAWSA’s strategic inclusiveness (Szymanski 2003, p.10), not all organizations working for suffrage were part of NAWSA, while black women’s organizations were discouraged from joining. However, some overlap in agendas (see Table A6), activities (see Figure A6) and memberships (see Appendix D) was common across most affiliated and non-affiliated white organizations. While some black women decided to work for suffrage in both black and white women’s organizations (Terborg-Penn 1998, Chs. 5 & 6), NAWSA was mostly built on the mobilization strength of white suffragists. See Appendix D for further discussion.

alternative activity-based measures, membership in NAWSA grew steadily overtime (Figure A5), and is therefore less affected by concurrent political events.<sup>23</sup> The measure captures organizational capacity of state organizations, NAWSA's main building blocs. In contrast to local organizations, state organizations had resources to support state-wide activities that reached non-members across the entire states.<sup>24</sup> The mean NAWSA membership in states with a strong suffrage movement – which refers to approximately top tercile – is more than double that of states with a weak suffrage movement (Table 1). The two groups of states are fairly comparable in the proportion of counties under Republican incumbents, and counties located in the South, while the mean progressive score of incumbents in states with a strong movement is slightly lower. The two groups are remarkably similar on socio-economic indicators and there is no consistent difference across various indicators of progressive preferences among men and politicians over time (Figure A18).<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>For example, only 3 out of the 25 collective actions in states with a strong movement were *not* related to concurrent legislative activity (Tables A7, A8).

<sup>24</sup>Vast majority (18/25) of pre-Nineteenth Amendment collective events in states with strong movement were organized by state organizations (Tables A7 & A8). A highly organized state organization is built upon the geographical reach of local machineries, which suggests spatial correlation between local and state level memberships (see Woman's Suffrage Yearbook (1917, p.186) 'Information for Suffrage Workers - How to Organize.').

<sup>25</sup>The only exception is that states with a strong movement are more 'dry.' Rather than pre-existing progressive preferences, it seems more likely that NAWSA's strength was built on the organizational capacity of the somewhat ideologically aligned temperance movement.

Table 1: Comparing States by Suffrage Movement Strength

	‘Weak’ Movement	‘Strong’ Movement
Membership pc (mean)	0.47 (0.19)	1.07 (0.3)
Membership pc min	0.05	0.65
Membership pc max	0.64	2.17
Progressive score (mean)	68.9 (16.2)	64.4 (14.8)
% Republican	71.18	78.82
% Southern counties	23.2	28.53

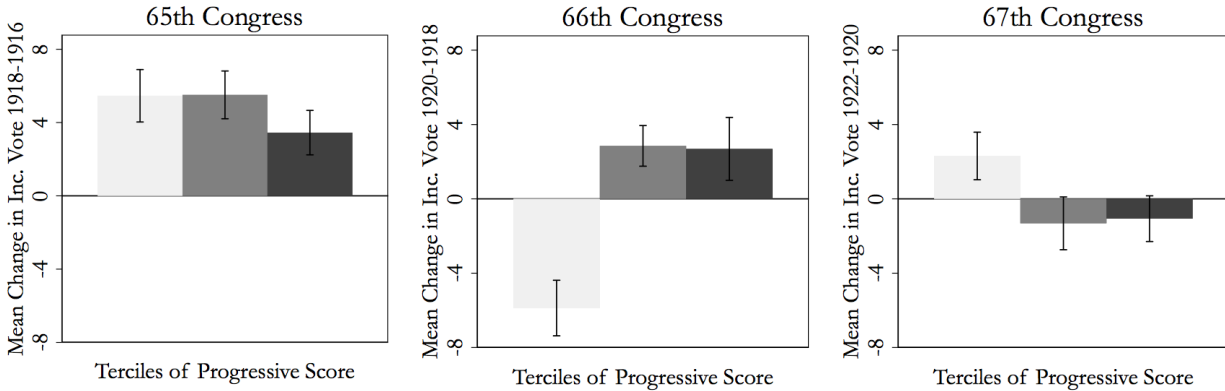
Notes: Cutoff refers to a 60<sup>th</sup> percentile of a county level distribution of NAWSA’s membership.

**Dependent Variable:** The key outcome of interest is county-level change in percentage point incumbent vote share before and after suffrage. The 1918 midterm election is used as a pre-suffrage reference year for the first post-suffrage election in 1920.<sup>26</sup> Only Republican and Democratic incumbents who run in both elections for the same party are included. Figure 7 below depicts the mean of the outcome by terciles of progressive score. The graph shows that conservatives with the lowest progressive score lost on average 5.9% point in 1920. A conservative loss is not observed before and after 1920. In turn, progressives in the medium and the highest terciles of the progressive score gained on average about 3% point of votes in 1920, which is similar to the gain of progressive and conservative incumbents in 1918. This loss of support for conservative incumbents in 1920 is mainly driven by states with a strong suffrage movement (Figure A7). Regressing the change in incumbent vote on progressive score by the movement strength and party reveals that Republican conservatives did worse than progressives only in states with a strong movement in 1920, while no such effects are observed before and after suffrage. However, conservative Democrats did not do worse than progressive Democrats in 1920 in states with a strong movement.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup>I prefer using the midterm 1918 election as a reference year for the 1920 general elections, which maximizes sample size and minimizes the interval between the two relevant elections. It also allows for a direct comparison of elections that were both held after the war and the ‘end’ of the Progressive era. While voters tend to vote less and against the presidential party in the midterm election, this should not affect inferences if these trends are not related to the proportion of women. The null results from the placebo tests provide some support for this assumption.

<sup>27</sup>One possibility is that while conservative Democrats lost due to women’s votes in 1920, this

Figure 7: Change in (pp) Incumbent Support by Terciles of Progressive Score



Note: 95% CI; Darker colors denote higher terciles of progressive score.

## Results

In this section, I explore whether the poor electoral fate of conservative incumbents in the 1920 election, as identified in Figure 7 above (and in Figure A7), was related to the suffrage reform and suffrage movement strength. I first test if the impact of the suffrage reform varied with incumbents' progressive score. In the second part of this section, I identify which set of bills was most relevant for new women voters.

### Progressive Score

If suffragists were at least partly responsible for the electoral loss of incumbents in the 1920 election, we would expect the effect of the proportion of women to vary with progressive score only in states with a strong suffrage movement. Figure 8 below depicts the marginal effects of the proportion of women conditional on incumbent's progressive score separately in states with a weak and strong suffrage movement. The graph uses the first cut-off – approximately the top tercile of movement strength – that returns significant results.<sup>28</sup> A histogram of the progressive score is

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was countered by a gain among conservative men who called for the end of 'Wilson's progressivism.'

<sup>28</sup>The empirically derived cut-off that splits the sample into states with strong and weak suffrage movement is relatively high, which suggests that the strength of state suffragists needs to

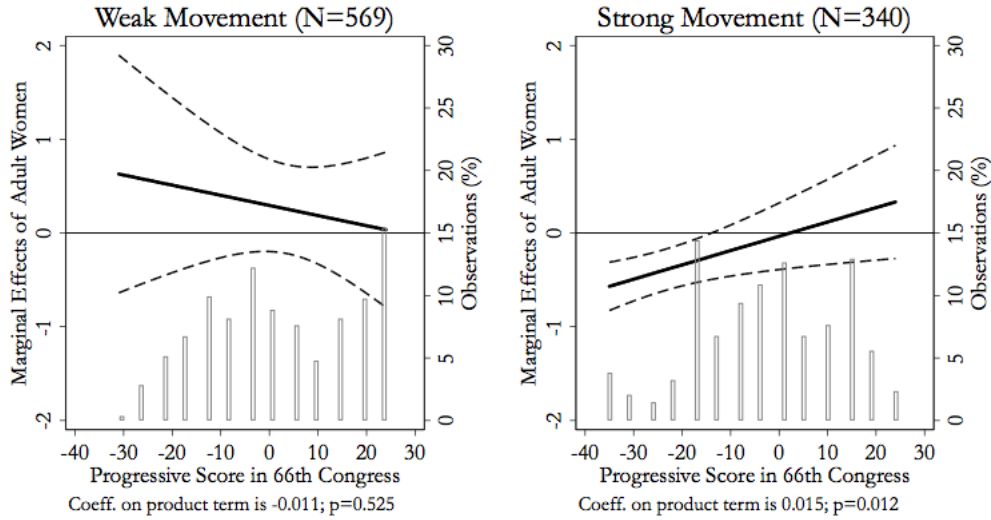
superimposed on each plot.

The first model in Figure 8 returns a negative product term of the interaction between the proportion of women and progressive score (-0.011), with a p-value of 0.525. When the suffrage movement is relatively weak, the effect of the proportion of women is not conditional on the progressive score. This suggests that suffrage expansion did not have an effect on the electoral fortunes of conservative politicians in states with a weak movement in 1920 election. The second model in Figure 8, on the other hand, shows that when the suffrage movement is strong, the incumbent's conservative voting record diminishes their electoral support after suffrage. Specifically, conservative incumbents did worse in counties with a high proportion of women, that is, they lost due to the 1920 suffrage reform. The model returns a positive product term of the interaction between the proportion of women and progressive score of 0.015, with a p-value of 0.012. When incumbent's progressive score is at the mean, the effect of the proportion of women on change in incumbent vote before and after suffrage is -0.035. For every additional percentage point decrease in incumbent's progressive score, the effect of the proportion of women decreases by 0.015. Looking closely at the marginal effects of the proportion of women depicted in Figure 8, the model suggests that incumbents with a progressive score about twelve or more points below average did significantly worse in places with more women. When incumbent's score is twelve points below average, ten percentage point increase in the proportion of women decreases incumbent's vote by 2.2%. In turn, the model does not suggest that progressive incumbents were rewarded. This is consistent with an explanation where suffragists were more successful in harboring women's votes against conservatives or devoted most resources to 'voting out' incongruent politicians.

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be substantial for women to penalize conservatives. This may not be surprising, given that state level membership in NAWSA would have been very high only when suffragists were sufficiently organized across the entire state. For alternative cut-offs, see Table A9.

Figure 8: 1920 election: Marginal Effects of Adult Women, by Movement Strength



Notes: OLS estimates; 95% CIs; std. errors clustered on district; DV is (pp) change in inc. support between 1920 and 1918; Progressive score and adult women centered around mean. The histogram in the figure for weak movement does not include one district [N=5] with centered progressive score at -58 for clarity of presentation. This district is included in the model.

In substantive terms, the model suggests that, provided that the capacity of state suffragists is strong, incumbents who are discernibly conservative lost votes with the introduction of women with the 1920 reform. The effect is substantial, where about a third of incumbents in those states lost votes.<sup>29</sup> While the suffrage reform did not sway the 1920 election against all conservative incumbents across the country, a large number of conservative incumbents suffered electoral loss. This suggests that the efforts of suffragists paid off and, at least in highly organized states, suffragists enabled the electoral coordination of newly enfranchised women. It is also worth pointing out that the estimated effects in Figure 8 are potentially on the conservative side. If the suffrage movement was strong only in some parts of the state, the overall strength at the state level would have been low and most incumbents in those states would not have been affected. However, conserva-

<sup>29</sup>While only five incumbents in competitive contests were not reelected in states with strong suffrage movement - a result that might have been reversed in the absence of women's suffrage - a mere 'vote loss' as opposed to a 'seat loss' would have been sufficient for organized women to credibly threaten politicians and obtain policy concessions.

tive incumbents in those states in places with relatively high strength, such as the state's capital, might have still been punished at the polls, although such effects would not have been captured in the models above.

Next, I provide supplementary analyses in Appendix E, where I examine whether the main result identified in Figure 8 (i) persisted into the second election after the Nineteenth Amendment (Figure A8), (ii) was indeed cross-partisan (Figure A9), and (iii) persisted across regions (Table A9). While these tests put a hefty demand on the sample size and therefore return imprecisely estimated coefficients, the product term of the main interaction is of similar size and of the same direction for the second election after suffrage, for both Republicans and Democrats and across regions. These results are consistent with an explanation that suffragists strength was crucial for women's electoral coordination against conservative incumbents from both major parties, from the South as much as outside the South and persisted at least until the second election after suffrage.

In Appendix E, I also probe the robustness of the main result identified in Figure 8 in states with a strong movement. These alternative specifications consistently return the product term of the same direction, of comparable size and which is significant at least at a 10% level (Tables A9, A10 and A11). These include removing social control measures - immigration and prohibition - from the progressive score, using alternative definitions of the proportion of eligible women in states with voting restrictions, removing all controls, adding controls for naturalized, Catholics and manufacturing output, excluding districts with strong (above 15%) support for third parties, excluding counties with an upper bound on the dependent variable (above 80%), excluding states with voter suppression laws and excluding South Dakota, where women voted for the first time to Congress in 1920, but were enfranchised prior to the Nineteenth Amendment. One notable exception is that when removing disenfranchised alien women from the proportion of women, the confidence intervals widen and therefore the interaction effect is no longer significant at conventional levels. However, the magnitude of the product term remains comparable and the p-value is close to conventional levels of significance. It seems plausible that the measurement of citizenship status in the 1920 census was not precise – as indicated by the 'unknown' category in the census.



As we would expect, reducing the sample size to states without voter suppression laws widens the confidence intervals, but returns product term of the same sign and magnitude. Finally, dropping one state at a time does not affect the substantive interpretation of the results, although excluding Indiana or West Virginia increases the size of the product term, while excluding Maine or Missouri decreases its magnitude (Figure A11).

### **Salient Bills**

While incumbents' votes on progressive bills tend to be correlated, it is important to assess whether the main result identified in Figure 8 is driven by progressive legislation that was endorsed by suffragists, and by women's groups that ideologically, organizationally and operationally aligned with suffragists. To this end, I explore four bills: (i) the Women's Bureau Act, a flagship focus of the women's lobby that was supported by NAWSA's successor and the National Women's Trade Union League immediately prior to the Nineteenth Amendment (see Table A6); (ii) an increase of veteran's pensions with direct payments to dependents (widows and children), an issue historically supported by various women's groups; (iii) the suffrage bill supported by most women's organizations and; (iv) the prohibition bill, broadly aligned with NAWSA's policy interests, and supported by NAWSA's coalition partner, WCTU, in Congress immediately before the Nineteenth Amendment (see Table A6).

I present the results in Figure 9 for states with a strong suffrage movement (results for states with weak movement in Figure A10). The graphs in Figure 9 depict the marginal effects of the proportion of women on change in incumbents' support when these incumbents support and do not support each bill. The first two graphs show that incumbents who did not vote for the establishment of the Women's Bureau, and for an increase in veteran's pensions, did significantly worse in places with more women in states with a strong movement.<sup>30</sup> These bills also directly aimed to improve

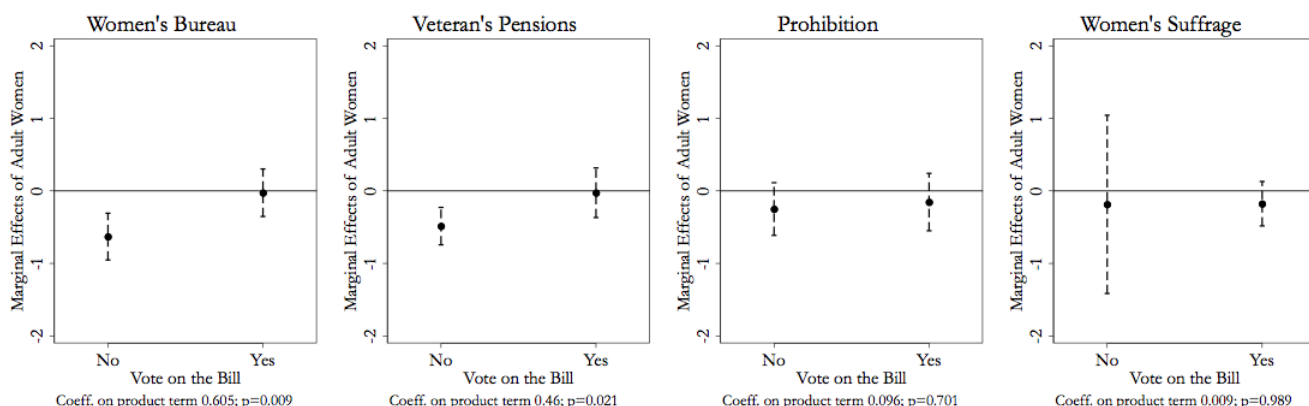
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<sup>30</sup>Despite the overwhelming support of the Women's Bureau Act (only nine representatives voted against the bill), a large proportion of incumbents (additional 170 representatives) did not vote in support of the bill. A sizable pool of incumbents therefore couldn't claim to women voters that they had supported the legislation and women couldn't be sure to have these incumbents 'in

women's welfare, which suggests the importance of electoral mechanisms for the post-suffrage increase in public, maternity and education spending (Carruthers and Wanamaker 2015; Kose, Kuka and Shenhav 2015; Lott and Kenny 1999; Miller 2008).

The latter two graphs in Figure 9 refer to the suffrage bill and the National Prohibition Act. Neither of these two bills return substantively or statistically significant results. This suggests that incumbents who supported suffrage or prohibition, but did not vote for women's welfare measures, would not have been protected from electoral loss. After all, the prohibition bill was adopted as a war-time measure rather than directly targeting women voters. Similarly, to the extent that suffrage was a means to other women's legislation, incumbents' support of suffrage would have been secondary to other pro-women bills.

Figure 9: Salient Bills in the 66<sup>th</sup> Congress: Marginal Effects of Adult Women; States with Strong Suffrage Movement



Notes: OLS estimates; 95% CIs; std. errors clustered on district; DV is change in (pp) inc. support between 1920 and 1918 election; Only states with strong suffrage movement included; N=340.

Two additional bills in the 66<sup>th</sup> Congress improved indirectly the welfare of women, although neither return substantively or statistical significant result: the Vocational Rehabilitation Act and Civil Service Retirement Act. While these bills increased security of dependents in case of disability or death of a breadwinner, neither bill was endorsed by women's groups in the 66<sup>th</sup> Congress (Figure A10). None of the remaining salient bills, namely those aimed at immigration restric-

their camp.' See Appendix C for further details on coding decisions of progressive bills.

tion and compensation for veterans of WWII, return significant interaction effects (Figure A10). Altogether, the analysis of salient bills presented in Figure 9 and Figure A10 suggests that the punishment of conservative incumbents in states with a strong movement was driven mostly by incumbents' lack of support of women's progressive legislation that centered on women's welfare and was supported by women's groups.

## **Mechanisms**

In this section, I probe three channels through which suffragists enhanced the capacity of new women voters to coordinate electorally. I then discuss the plausibility of three alternative mechanisms that could explain the anti-conservative effects of the suffrage reform.

***Did suffragists mobilize women?*** If a strong suffrage movement mobilized women, we should see that more women voted in states with a strong movement. I therefore estimate women's turnout by regressing percentage point change in the overall turnout between 1920 and 1918 on the proportion of adult women separately for the two groups of states (Table A12). As we would expect, the overall turnout grew less in counties with more women, suggesting that women voted less than men. Importantly, the size of the effect is nearly twice as large in states with a weak movement, suggesting that women were especially mobilized in states with a strong movement. This result is further supported with placebo tests in Table A12 and with respective tests using the Illinois data, as presented above.

***Did suffragists inform women?*** If suffragists provided information to women voters, conservatives should lose votes particularly in places where suffragists organized informative activities. To this end, I exploit the original data on collective actions (Tables A7 & A8) and fit the main result in Figure 8 in states with a strong suffrage movement by the presence of suffrage demonstrations prior to the 1920 election (Figure A12). While imprecisely estimated, the size of the interaction term between the proportion of women and progressive score is considerably larger in states with at least one demonstration than in states where suffragists did not organize any suffrage demonstration. This is consistent with an explanation where conservative incumbents in states targeted

by organized protests were particularly susceptible to vote loss.<sup>31</sup>

***Did Congress become more progressive?*** In line with previous work that links progressive shifts in Congress to the introduction of state suffrage (Lott and Kenny 1999; Miller 2008), I find that House representatives in the affected states became more progressive after the Nineteenth Amendment (Figures A16 & A17). The progressive shift is driven mostly by Democrats, who were on average less progressive before suffrage. However, these shifts did not occur until after the second post-suffrage election, and both Republicans and Democrats initially turned conservative in states with a strong movement. Altogether, these observations are consistent with an explanation where suffrage movement prevented the post-war conservative return to ‘normalcy.’ Even though suffragists were not systematically stronger in conservative states (Figure A18), suffragists in states with strong movement protested conservative legislative activities (Figure A19). These conservatives were one of the driving forces of the ‘normalcy’ calls, but have been forced to eventually abandon its post-war conservative ‘crusade’.

***Could suffragists prevent incumbents’ ability to mitigate electoral loss?*** If incumbents in states with a strong movement were less able to mitigate the effects of suffrage, the conservative loss would still depend on suffragists presence, albeit for different reasons. Perhaps the greater public awareness of past legislative activities of incumbents brought on by suffragists impedes these politicians’ ability to adapt or perhaps it mobilized conservative men that disincentivized politicians to adapt. In this scenario, we should see politicians in states with weak movement to adapt better to women’s entry and endorse progressive agenda *prior* to the reform, particularly in places with the most women. However, this has not been the case. The ideological shifts among incumbents before suffrage are neither correlated with the movement strength (Figure A13), nor are they correlated with the proportion of women in either group of states (Figure A14).

***Could anti-suffragists counter suffragists’ success?*** If, for example, anti-suffragists were present mostly in states with a weak suffrage movement, the observed null effect in those states may

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<sup>31</sup>No such effects are observed with respect to parades (Figure A12). This likely reflects the fact that parades mostly celebrated legislative successes in progressive states (Figure A19).

have been due to anti-suffragists activity rather than the relative weakness of suffragists. However, I find that organized presence of anti-suffragists does not alter the substantive interpretation of the main result in states with both a weak and a strong suffrage movement (Figure A15). This is consistent with the fact that anti-suffragists did not have a coordinated national strategy, relied on rich donations of organized interests rather than on membership dues and were less active in Congress (Freeman 2002, p.52, see also Table A6).

*Could women be progressive regardless of suffragists?* The approach applied in this paper allows me to observe a correlation between suffragists strength and the electoral impact of the implemented suffrage reform. However, it remains plausible that women's progressivism was driven by other factors than the activities and influence of suffragists, or that suffragists directly built their membership base where women were already progressive. While I cannot exclude this possibility, the fact that suffrage movement strength predicts the electoral impact of women's suffrage seems novel and relevant. Importantly, there are several reasons to believe that the observed correlation is indeed related to suffragists: (i) Suffragists' strength is not systematically related to most socio-economic indicators that should predict women's pre-existing progressive preferences (Figure A18). (ii) Neither is suffragists' strength related to the progressive preferences among men and politicians (Figure A18). (iii) In turn, suffragists strength is associated with 'dry' legislation at the local level, which is consistent with an explanation where NAWSA's strength was built on the capacity of the somewhat ideologically aligned temperance movement (Banaszak 1996, pp.134-5). (iv) Importantly, previous research suggests that women's movements have the power to cultivate preferences, rather than targeting places where such preferences are already prevalent (Carpenter and Moore 2014; Clemens 1997; Weldon 2002).

## **Discussion**

Through the examination of women's electoral impact, this paper explores the conditions under which newly enfranchised groups achieve representation of shared interests. Contrary to political economy accounts (Carruthers and Wanamaker 2015; Kose, Kuka and Shenhav 2015; Kroth, Larcinese and Wehner 2016; Lott and Kenny 1999; Vernby 2013), the paper shows that the path-

way from enfranchisement to representation is by no means automatic. While de jure access to the polling booth would seem *necessary* to secure the representation of disadvantaged groups, it may not be *sufficient*. The enfranchisement of previously marginalized groups will not translate into a ‘better life for all’ (Kroth, Larcinese and Wehner 2016), unless a strong movement successfully defines interests of the new electorate, generates group consciousness and politically engages the electorate along those interests.

This paper also challenges the conventional narratives of women either as uninterested voters who doubled the votes of their husbands (Duverger 1955) or as conservative elements who moved ‘left’ only when outside employment became the norm (Inglehart and Norris 2000). Even if newly enfranchised women lacked resources to engage politically in the electoral arena to the same extent as men (Corder and Wobrecht 2006, 2016), organized women helped to bring more knowledgeable women to the polls who could vote on women’s progressive interests. Much like the feminist wave of the 1970s, the surge of women’s mobilization that accompanied the suffrage movement raised women’s group consciousness and significantly shaped the way women tended to cast their votes.

In addition, this paper also sheds light on the pathway towards women’s enfranchisement. Several accounts suggest that ideologically aligned politicians supported the reform in expectation of electoral gains (Przeworski 2009; Teele 2018b), or directly responded to programmatic demands of established electorates (McConaughy 2013; see also Lizzeri and Percico 2004 on men’s suffrage). From either point of view, we would expect new and established electorates to reward progressives at the polls. Contrary to these accounts, I find that admitting most women to the voting public shaped politics by penalizing conservatives, who were eventually incentivized to abandon some of the post-war conservative ‘crusade.’ Rather than expecting electoral gains, progressives may have won the battle over whose interests should be represented (Bateman 2018), hoping to use women’s votes as a constraint on the rising conservative sentiments.

A pertinent question is whether the theoretical insights formulated in this paper may be applied to women’s enfranchisement in other countries. A quick glance at histories of the suffrage movements suggests that organized women endorsed progressive issues and mobilized women on these

issues also outside candidate-centered contexts. Given that politicians neither have an incentive to consider the agenda of disenfranchised electorates, nor to incorporate them into parties (Gustafson 1997), women at the time of suffrage are likely to organize along issues regardless of institutional setting. The interests of newly enfranchised women are more likely to be ‘uncrystallized’, in a sense of not taken up by parties, and outside of the primary political cleavages (Mansbridge 1999; Weeks 2016). Consequently, much like their American counterparts, suffragists in party-centered contexts also organized around issues, such as married or working women’s rights (Blom 2012). While certain parties may have had an easier inroad to incorporating women’s issues in party-centered contexts, the jury is still out about the extent to which conservative parties suffered electoral loss.

Future research should also explore whether social movements may provide an explanation for the underrepresentation of minorities today. On the one hand, women are numerically larger in numbers, more evenly distributed across districts, and have familial ties to established male electorates with a similar socio-economic status. The unique character of the women electorate in the 1920s may have therefore made it impossible for politicians to neglect a sizable pool of voters from all socio-economic groups in every district. On the other hand, much like women in the 1920s, Hispanic and Asian Americans today are less often habitual voters, more often register as independents and more likely to be first-time voters. Whether the lower mobilization of minority groups today reflects differences in resources across groups (Verba, Schlozman, Brady, Nie 1993), differences in the strength of group identity (Valenzuela and Michelson 2006) or undermobilization by politicians (Barreto 2018), a strong social movement may help to improve the representation of historically marginalized minorities by adding to the group’s electoral resources, forging group consciousness and incentivizing politicians to respond to articulated interests of a highly mobilized and coordinated electorate.

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