

Does Institutional Design Modify Patterns of Inequality in Political Participation?

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Abstract

The question about inequality between citizens' political participation is often called democracy's unsolved dilemma. This paper make use of the policy feedback theory and asks to what extent the design of specific welfare state institutions modifies established patterns of inequality in political action on welfare state issues across citizens in Sweden. The results reveal that resource explanations of political action show weak and inconsistent effects. As a consequence patterns of individual inequality in political action about welfare state issues are less pronounced. Also, there are no clear-cut institutional differences. Rather, the results indicate that motivational explanations are more important. Empowering institutions make dissatisfied and politically interested citizens more inclined to engage in welfare state targeted political action compared to less empowering institutions. In sum, the results that institutional effects are clear regarding the relationship between motivations and political action which emphasis the close connection between policy design and democratic citizenship.

Political equality in citizens' political participation is a crucial democratic pre-requisite and without a doubt the most studied aspect of citizens' political activity. The differences in level and scope in political participation across citizens' is the most well-known empirical result in participation research, where resources such as education, class, income and political interest distinguishes those who participates from those who don't (see e.g. Rosenstone & Hansen 1993; Verba, Schlozman & Brady 1995).¹

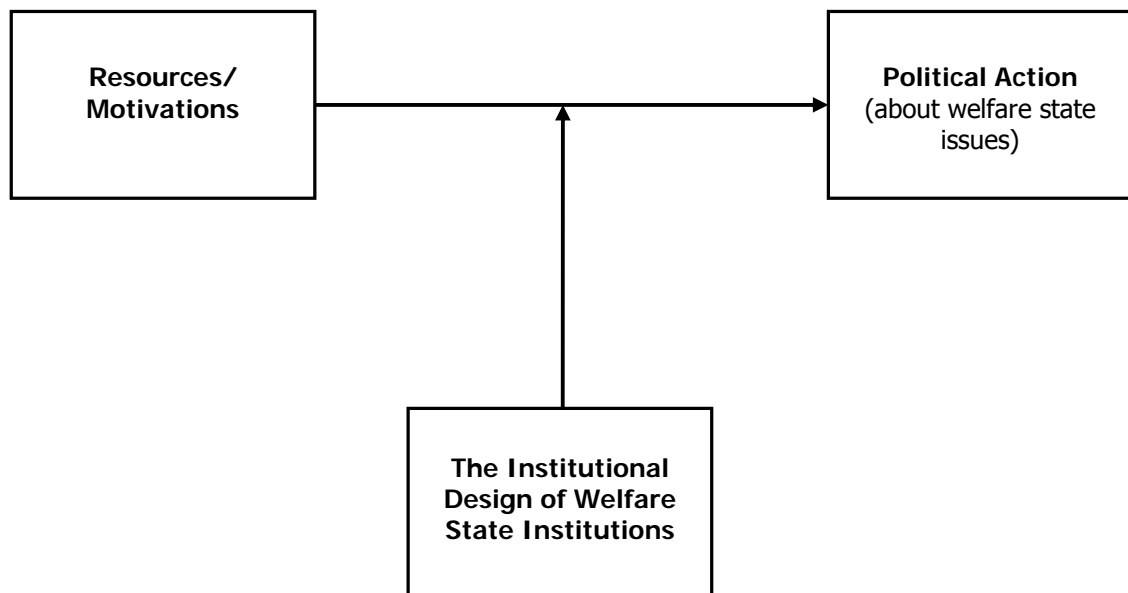
Traditionally, political equality in political participation is often viewed from the individual's perspective where questions about citizens equal rights, capacities and opportunities to participate are emphasized (Verba 2003). Usually, inequality is equal to group differences in political activity. As a consequence, political participation is mainly thought of as something affected by the individual's social or cognitive resources and less affected by or associated with the political or institutional surrounding of the individual. Although the importance of recruiting networks, together with resources and motivation, are well documented as an explanation of participation (Verba, Schlozman & Brady 1995), a discussion about whether *political* institutions affect citizens capacities and opportunities to participate is often absent in the mainstream literature (see Campbell 2003 for a similar argument). Two important exceptions can, however, be found. First, in research on voting, institutional explanations connected to electoral engineering are highly incorporated in the theoretical models and empirical tests. In short, although there are some deviations, voting usually increases with institutional mechanisms such as proportional representation, election on weekends, automatic registration and compulsory voting (see Lijphart 1997; Blais 2006 for an overview). Second, the institutional setting of a welfare state area has also been shown to impact citizens' political action. Welfare state institutions with empowering design have been

shown to increase both voting and other forms of political participation among groups that usually show low participation levels (Campbell 2003).

In this paper, I will argue in favor of a policy feedback perspective² on the relation between institutions and citizens' political participation *beyond* voting. In short, the policy feedback perspective asks how formal and informal rules of political institutions and policies affect citizens' political behavior (Pierson 1993). Put differently, such a perspective "asks how institutional context factors shape the desires, preferences and motives of individuals and social groups" (Mau 2003: 2). Disregarding whether an institution refers to electoral laws or the organization of welfare programs, how political institutions, widely defined, are designed matters for citizens' political behavior. This implies that we shall not only settle with explanations to political participation connected to the individual or his or her social surrounding only. We also need to take the *institutional* explanations to political participation into account (Campbell forthcoming; Holzner 2004; Mettler & Soss 2004). Thus, how institutions in general and welfare state institutions in particular are designed have democratic effects since it not only affects equality in citizens' life situation, but also political equality such as how citizens think and act politically.

To summarize, this paper adopts a policy feedback perspective on citizens' political activities and aims to explore how the institutional setting of specific welfare state institutions affects relationship between on the one hand individuals' resources and political action *about welfare state issues* and on the other hand individual's motivation and political action about welfare state issues. Using the policy feedback perspective, the overall question to be answered is whether welfare state institutions can be designed in ways that modifies established patterns

of inequality in citizens' political participation? Does it matter for citizens political action on welfare state issues whether a welfare state institution is characterized by universal or selective access, treats citizens as customer or clients or allows citizens to exert influence in the welfare state encounter or not? In other words, can the design of welfare state institutions reduce or increase established pattern of inequality in citizens' political action? The focal relationship to be investigated is illustrated in the model below:



Thus, the main argument is that the design of a specific welfare state institution acts as an interaction variable with the potential to modify the relationship between individuals' resources and political action about welfare state issues. By including the workings of political institutions into the explanatory model of political participation, I aim to contribute with a more comprehensive view about what affects citizens' propensity to engage in political action and highlight how different ways to organize welfare state programs could affect this propensity. Such a perspective also contributes to a better understanding of how the workings of the welfare state and the workings of democracy are intertwined. Somewhat

surprisingly, the results reveal weak resource effects on citizens' political action. That is, well-known explanations such as education, class and income does not affect political action about welfare state issues. Moreover, no clear cut institutional patterns arise, that is political participation is not more or less equal distributed depending on the institutional setting of a welfare state institutions. Instead, motivational aspects such as policy dissatisfaction and political interest are both a much stronger predictors of political action and the effects also vary across welfare state policy areas.

The rest of this paper is outlined as follows. The two following sub-sections deals with the two main theoretical perspectives and arguments – the individual and the institutional perspective on political equality and political participation respectively. After these two sub-sections, research design, data and measures will be discussed followed by a presentation of the findings. The paper ends with a concluding discussion about whether the design of single welfare state institutions create policy feedback processes that affects who and why citizens engage in political action.

The Individual Perspective on Political Equality and Political Participation

When discussing political participation and equality, a distinction between those who lack resources to participate and those who lack interest to participate is often made. As argued by Sidney Verba (2003: 666-667), the democratic implications are more severe if differences in political participation can be assigned to individual's resources rather than individual's motivation. Even though the author in a footnote acknowledges the connection between resources and motivation, at least two critical remarks could be made. First, the link between resources and motivation is evident in many studies, not least in the seminal work headed by

Sidney Verba himself (Verba, Schlozman & Brady 1995). Thus, those with ample resources are also more motivated to participate. Second, if those who are more motivated speak with a different voice than those un-motivated, one could argue that political inequality still persists at some level disregarding of whether the two groups share the same socio-economic features. In such case, the intensity problem arises where a loud minority might exert influence at the silent majority's expense (Lewin 1992). An additional point to be made is that the concept motivation as used in the famous Civic Voluntarism Model often equals latent engagement only, such as political interest, political efficacy and political information (Verba, Schlozman & Brady 1995: 269-273) (check pages) and not interest, salience or motivation connected to a specific policy area. However, the striving for better conditions and individual's discontent are important for their motivation to act politically (Dalton 2008). Thus, questions of equality and inequality in political participation need to be examined both from a resource perspective and a motivation perspective where the motivation perspective also includes elements connected to specific policy areas. To some degree, one could even talk about motivation as an important resource explaining political participation.

Empirically, one of the best-known results from this research is that, irrespective of country, citizens with ample resources participate to a higher extent than citizens with scarce resources. This general conclusion is well-illustrated by Rosenstone and Hansen: "Over and over again, we have shown that resources, interests and social position distinguishes people who participate in politics from people who do not" (Rosenstone & Hansen 1993: 228). In short, the results from this immense research show that resources, motivation and recruitment, independently and controlled for each other, play a significant role in explaining an individual's political participation. However, what emerges as the strongest

determinant of participation is education and political interest (Verba, Schlozman & Brady 1995: 366f, 388-390, 513f). The prominent position of education is also supported by numerous empirical results from the 1970s and onwards (examples can be found in Verba & Nie 1972; Verba, Nie & Kim 1978; Barnes & Kaase 1979; Rosenstone & Hansen 1993; Verba, Schlozman & Brady 1995; Norris 2002; Teorell, Sum & Tobiasen 2007; Dalton 2008). Besides education, other well-known relevant empirical results from research on political participation are that men participate to a higher extent than women (Kaase & Marsh 1979: 175, 181; Verba, Schlozman & Brady 1995: 254; Norris 2002: 201; Teorell, Sum & Tobiasen 2007: 410)³, that middle-aged individuals are more politically active than both younger and older people (Verba & Nie 1972: chapter 9, although this trend is adjusted by controlling for e.g. education; Kaase & Marsh 1979: 181; Norris 2002: 89f; Teorell, Sum & Tobiasen 2007: 410), and that people from higher social classes or those with higher income engage in political action to a higher extent than people from lower social classes (Rosenstone & Hansen 1993: 236-238; Verba, Schlozman & Brady 1995: 189-191). Other studies also confirm that motivational aspects such as dissatisfaction increases citizens' propensity to engage in political action (Farah, Barnes & Heunks 1979; Goul Andersen & Hoff 2001; Goul Andersen & Roßteutscher 2007; Kriesi & Westholm 2007; Lyons & Lowery 1989).

The Institutional Perspective on Political Equality and Political Participation

The institutional perspective on political participation beyond voting has been paid much less attention. As discussed earlier, the impact of political institutions such as electoral laws is one of the most important explanations of turnout in a comparative perspective (Franklin 2004; Norris 2004; Blais 2006). Institutional effects within the welfare state realm are also

well-documented when it comes to aspects such as poverty rates, welfare state redistribution and social spending (Esping-Andersen 1990; Korpi & Palme 1998). All of these aspects are, among other things, connected to what kind of welfare state arrangements that prevail in a country. For example, countries with large encompassing welfare states, so called social democratic welfare regimes, enjoys lower levels of poverty and inequality compared to countries with liberal or conservative welfare regimes (Korpi & Palme 1998).

The institutional argument to political participation I put forward stems from the same logic, although further developed. Political institutions influences both the strategies and preferences of elites and citizen by providing formal rules and procedures; that is, they “shape and constrain” the attitudes and strategies of different actors, making some attitudes or actions a more likely outcome than others (Hall & Taylor 1996; Rothstein 1996). Question we should ask include how the variation in welfare state arrangements affect individual political behavior, the political distribution of power and the outcomes of political processes (Rothstein 1996).

Policy feedback, then, is about how the formal and informal rules of both political and social life affect different actors’ political behavior (Pierson 1993: 596, see also; Mau 2003: 2). To what extent welfare states’ policies are likely to give rise to policy feedback is, among other things, dependent on to what degree citizens directly or indirectly can experience the products of the welfare state through transfers and services (Pierson 1993; see also Soss & Schram 2007). Thus, how the work of welfare state institutions is carried out matters not only for how citizens view a welfare program in particular and the welfare state in general, but also how they view their own political capabilities and the political system itself which

also potentially affects political equality. Mettler and Soss express this as “/.../policy designs shape citizens’ personal experiences with government and hence influence processes of political learning and patterns of political belief” (Mettler & Soss 2004: 62). This indicates that citizens generalize their encounters with the welfare state to government as a whole (see also Soss 1999; Kumlin 2004)

Empirical evidence from studies conducted in this tradition speaks in favor of that policy feedback effects exist. By comparing two means-tested American welfare programs, Soss (1999; 2002) found that the design of welfare programs affected how individuals receiving welfare thought and acted, not only within the program, but also in politics generally. The degree of discretionary power and clients’ influence in the assessment process influenced the individual’s perceptions of political efficacy; low levels of empowerment negatively affected recipients’ beliefs in the effectiveness of participation and their trust and view of government’s responsiveness. Conversely, a high degree of empowerment had positive effects on political action, trust, and sense of political efficacy. Andrea Campbell’s comparison of Social Security, the most universal American welfare program, and other non-means-tested and means-tested American welfare programs, confirms the conclusions from Soss’ study. Interestingly, Campbell also found that, in controlling for age, income, and other resources, recipients of universal programs had higher participation levels than recipients of means-tested programs, which she concluded was due to the institutional design of the welfare programs (Campbell 2003). Campbell’s conclusion indicates that explanations of political action are not just a matter of individual background features, but also the actual design of welfare state institutions.⁴ Findings from Swedish research show that experiences with welfare state institutions associated with low bureaucratic discretion and good exit-options had

positive effects on political trust, while experiences with institutions associated with high bureaucratic discretion and poor exit-options had exactly the opposite effect (Kumlin 2004).

The common underlying mechanism in the referred studies as well as in this paper is (as was shortly mentioned above) that citizens generalize both their direct welfare state experiences, as users of public service or as public sector employees, and indirect welfare state experiences, as media consumers or taxpayers (Johansson 1998; Kumlin 2004; Edlund 2007). This idea is also supported by Schneider and Ingram (Schneider & Ingram 1997: 79) who states that “Even without direct experiences of policy, the language and symbols contained in policy sends messages about what people counts as important, whose interests are likely to be taken seriously, and whose problems will probably be ignored. Policies are lessons in democracy.” Thus policy feedback processes are contingent upon how far these direct and indirect experiences travels (Soss & Schram 2007).

To summarize, it is evident that institutional design of welfare state institutions affect citizens’ political attitudes and behavior which implies that the welfare state has democratic effects. Put differently, “Like no other institutional intervention, the welfare state has taken on a bridging function between the economy, democracy and the social world” (ref see Mau 2003:4 similar argument). This means that institutional design potentially also affects the political equality in citizens political participation since different institutions to different extent “encourage active responsible citizenship by providing arenas for participation and expectation that citizens will become involved” (Schneider & Ingram 1997: 80). The expectation is therefore that the relationship between citizens’ resources, motivations and political participation varies depending on the institutional design.

Research design, data and measures of variables

To assess how institutional design affects political equality in citizens' welfare state oriented political participation, four Swedish welfare state institutions are compared: public school, hospital care, primary care (local health care centers) and elderly care. These four institutions all handle some kind of public service and are also core public service institutions in the Swedish welfare state. The within-country comparison are chosen over a cross-national comparison in order to keep the country-context constant implying that factors such as the overall welfare state setting, the normative welfare state expectations and the political veto points are held constant. By using the Swedish case, I aim to shed light upon the political effects of institutional variation in welfare state design within a large encompassing welfare state. Although welfare state more often are categorized according to welfare state generosity (Esping-Andersen 1990; Scruggs & Allan 2006), variations across welfare state institutions and welfare state programs exist within all welfare states. That is, selective welfare state programs exist in more encompassing social democratic welfare states and universal welfare programs exist in smaller and less encompassing liberal welfare states. Moreover, although welfare state regimes have been shown to affect welfare state support (Svallfors 2003), it is less likely that type of welfare regime should affect the extent to which citizens engage in political activities per se (see also Pettersson 2007). Therefore, to investigate whether design of welfare state institutions modifies patterns of inequality in citizens' political participation and to look for these more fine tuned mechanisms, it is more fruitful to conduct within-country comparisons. If variations in institutional design affect the relationship between citizens' social and political resources and political action about welfare state issues in Sweden, it is likely that similar patterns could be found in other country contexts as well.

Even though the four selected institutions are embedded within the Swedish social democratic welfare regime characterized by a large and encompassing welfare state, the institutions differ in terms of institutional design. By comparing the degree of institutionalized citizen empowerment, i.e. the degree to which the citizen can exercise power in the institutional encounter, Solevid (2009: ch. 3) found that public school showed the highest degree of empowering design while elderly care showed the lowest degree of empowerment. Hospital care and primary care took a middle position. To specify, while the public school system is characterized by universalism, no bureaucratic discretion (as in needs- or means-testing), good exit-options, established mechanisms of user influence and strong legal rights, elderly care was rather the opposite in many aspects. Elderly care in Sweden is far from universal, is highly needs-tested and provides few exit-options. Also voice opportunities are more circumscribed and the legal rights not as strong as in the case of public school. The results from Solevid's study are in line with results from a previous study (see Kumlin 2004). If we take a step back and think about the mechanisms behind empowerment, the general idea is that higher degree of institutionalized citizen empowerment equippes citizens with political efficacy and autonomy at the same time as lower degree of empowerment counteracts these processes. Therefore, the expectation is that the degree of political inequality in citizens' political participation is lowest for public school issues and highest for elderly care issues.

The data used for the empirical analyses comes from the Swedish survey on Society, Opinion and Media (SOM⁵) 2004. The survey is conducted annually since 1986 and provides opportunities for researchers to participate with survey questions. The variables used for the

analyses here have been exclusively designed for the purposes of this study. The SOM survey 2004 was sent out to 6000 randomly chosen respondents ages 15-85 years through out Sweden and the net response rate was 65 per cent. Since parallel questionnaires with slightly different themes are used (sent to 3000 respondents each), the maximum number of valid respondents in the analyses below are 1774 (Nilsson 2005).

To measure political action, the dependent variable stems from the survey question “Have you, during the last 12 months, expressed your point of view about any of the following public institutions?” The institutions are: Public school, Hospital care, Primary care and Elderly care, and the action alternatives are No viewpoints expressed, Contacted civil servant, Contacted politician, Contacted mass media, Work in action group/organization, Signed petition, Demonstrating, Work in political party. The different forms of political action included in the survey question are chosen to correspond to the elements of political participation asked for in previous research (Pettersson *et al.* 1998; Norris 2002; Bäck, Teorell & Westholm 2006; Teorell, Torcal & Montero 2007; Johansson 2007). What distinguishes the survey question used here from many other is the immediate connection to a policy area. To get a straightforward and comparable measure, the dependent variable used in the analysis consists of an *index* of political action, one for each of the four public service institutions. For every institution, an index has been created where the value 0 indicates no action and value 1 action, irrespective of which and how many forms of action were used.

The first set of independent variables measures citizens’ social resources and are derived from previous research on political participation (see section “The Individual Perspective of Political Inequality in Political Participation” for references). Education, age, gender, income

and social class are used as measures of individual resources. The resource variables enter in model 1 in the regression analyses.

The second set of independent variables measures citizens' motivation to political action. The first variable takes citizens evaluations of welfare state policy account and relies on established measure of service delivery dissatisfaction used in many Swedish studies—comparisons of citizens' evaluations of various public services have been performed since the early 1990s (some examples from this research are Johansson 1998; Johansson, Nilsson & Strömberg 2001; Nilsson 2008). The measure captures general assessments of public service performance and is thus a more general view of public service institutions and the services they provide. Thus, the variable measures respondents' *evaluations of public service delivery* for different institutions. The question asks: "What is your opinion about the service in the municipality you live in on the following areas?" The answer options ranges from Very satisfied (0) to Very dissatisfied (4) and a Don't know answer, which has been removed from the analysis below. In addition to policy evaluations, I have chosen to include political interest which, along with education, is the most important explanation of political action, as well as position on the political left-right scale (see section "The Individual Perspective of Political Inequality in Political Participation" for references). The motivational variables enter in model 2 in the regression analyses.

A final variable included is the distinction between those who encounter the public institution in question and those who do not. Studies show that users are more satisfied with public service than non-users (see for example Nilsson 2008: 102-103), and that there are good reasons to believe that users in general are more politically active since they are affected

directly by the institution. For this purpose, I use a variable distinguishing between users and non-users of public service—a distinction between those who have direct contact of the actual welfare state output through service delivery and those who do not. The user-variable enters in model 3.

To summarize, the variables chosen for the statistical analyses correspond both to social resources and motivational aspects and together they provide different perspectives on the question of political inequality in political participation. All variables are tested against each other in model 4 in the regression. Since the dependent variable is dichotomous, logistic regression will be used. To ease interpretation, predicted probabilities has been calculated for the significant coefficients (see table 6)

Findings

Table 1 presents an overview over the variables included in the regression analyses. Two sets of variables are worth special mentioning. The mean values for the four action variables show that 10 per cent of the respondents have used political action on public school and hospital care issues respectively and 7 per cent have taken political action on primary care issues and elderly care issues respectively. The mean value of the four evaluation variables, where 0 equals very satisfied and 4 very dissatisfied show that Swedish citizens overall are satisfied with public services. Swedes are most satisfied with hospital care (mean 1.35) and least satisfied with elderly care (mean 1.95).⁶

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Table 2 shows the relationship between resources and motivational explanations respectively and political action about public school issues. In general, the resource variables performs poorly (model 1)– only education and age 30-49 years, compared to age 15-29 years, show significant effect, i.e. citizens between 30 and 49 years of age have higher level of political action. Both effects disappear in model 4 when all variables are included together. Of the motivational variables (model 2), both evaluation of public school and political interest show relatively strong effect. Dissatisfied citizens and citizens with high political interest show, not so surprising, higher levels of political action about public school issues. As evident from model 3, being a user of public school has positive impact on political action. When all variables are tested together in model 4, only the effects of the motivational variables stands the test.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Moving on to table 3 and hospital care, the effect of age is evident among the resource variables in model 1. To simplify, all age groups with citizens 30 years and older show higher levels of political action about hospital care issues compared to the youngest citizens. There is also a weak negative effect of income, i.e. those with lower income have higher participation levels. Among the motivational variables in model 2, both dissatisfaction and political interest has positive effects on political action on hospital care issues and these effects holds when controlling for all variables in model 4. Again, as in the case of public school, institutional contact also increases the propensity to take political action about hospital care issues.

TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

The results for the relationship between resources, motivation and political action on primary care issues in table 4 highly resemble the previous results. There are few significant effects of the resource variables in the final model 4. There is a positive effect on political action among the oldest citizens compared to the youngest and weak negative effect of income. Again, dissatisfaction (with primary care service), political interest and being a user of primary care positively affect political action about primary care issues

TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

The results for the analysis of political action on elderly care issues deviates somewhat from the established pattern so far (see table 5). Occupational status (class) show significant effect; there is positive effect on political action among lower white collar workers and intermediate employers compared to lower technical and routine occupations. There is a positive effect on political action in all age groups, compared to the youngest. Among the motivational variables, dissatisfaction with elderly care service initially show no significant effect (model 2), but when controlling for all other variables, the coefficient reaches significance although the effect is weaker compared to the other dissatisfaction effects (see table 6). Once again, political interest shows a positive effect.

TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE

To summarize, the poor performance of the resource explanation to political participation are evident, and it is especially surprising to see the insignificance of education. Instead, age where often the older more than the younger uses political action stands out as the most consistent effect among the resource explanations. The motivational explanations show, however, much stronger effects. Judging from the predicted probabilities calculated in table 6, the effect of dissatisfaction is often as strong as or stronger than the effect of political interest, although both variables consistently show positive effects on political action on different public service issues. What is also evident is that the institutional design does not seem to affect the resource effects on political action. The only result that could speak in favor of an institutional effect is the total lack of resource effects in political action on public school issues. However, what is more evident is that the dissatisfaction effect varies with institutional design. The dissatisfaction effects is relatively strongest on political action on public school issues, weakest in political action on elderly care issues and intermediate in political action on hospital care and primary care issues. This pattern clearly follows the degree of empowering design—the more empowering design, the stronger the dissatisfaction effect on political action

TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE

Conclusions

This paper has been an attempt to reassess the always relevant question of inequality in citizens' political participation by adopting an institutional perspective. The aim was to investigate whether within-country variation in design of welfare state institutions modified established patterns of inequality in citizens welfare state oriented political participation. The

expectation was that resources would matter less, that is political participation would be more equal, for highly empowering welfare state institutions such as public school and vice versa, that resources would matter more for political participation targeted at less empowering welfare state institutions, such as elderly care. The findings showed somewhat surprisingly that well-known resource explanations such as education, income and class only had marginal impact on political action about issues such as public school, health care and elderly care. In other words, resources don't seem to matter much for citizens welfare state oriented political participation. Since the resource effects on political participation in general were both weak and inconsistent, few institutional patterns could be detected. If one stretches the results somewhat, resources do not seem to matter at all for political action on public school issues at the same time as the different resource measures show mixed results for political action on hospital care, primary care and elderly care issues. In summary, it is hard to assess the institutional effects on patterns of inequality in welfare state oriented political action since traditional resource explanations are not valid.

A clear pattern that does emerge is the impact of institutional design on the relationship between motivational explanations and welfare state targeted political action. The effect of public service dissatisfaction on political action clearly follows the expected institutional pattern where the dissatisfaction effect is strongest for political action about public school issues and weakest for political action about elderly care issues. Although a less clear-cut, the relationship between political interest and political action partly to some extent follows the expected institutional pattern. In other words, while the degree of institutionalized citizen empowerment could not be associated with the relationship between resources and political action, it is highly associated with the relationship between motivations and political actions.

Empowering welfare state institutions make dissatisfied and politically interested citizens more inclined to engage in welfare state targeted political action. Thus, a policy feedback process, implying that the design of a specific institution affects' citizens political action, affects who expresses welfare state dissatisfaction through political action.

The results in this paper are actually quite good news to any researcher interested in political inequality. The universal welfare traits in Sweden seem to make the (very low levels of) welfare state targeted political action more equally spread, disregarding of design of a specific welfare state institutions. However, empowering institutions tend to make citizens' resources matter slightly less for political action at the same time as motivation seems to matter more. Moreover, differences in political action associated with motivations are generally not seen as a democratic problem. However, I would argue that a couple of warnings are in place. First of all, as discussed earlier, we know that political interest often is associated with ample resources which imply that these dissatisfied and interested citizens share certain background features. Second, one can always question whether the minority of citizens' who raise their voices are representative for the silent majority. As long as these motivational patterns are associated with policy oriented political action, I agree that we don't need to be that worried about the democratic implications in terms of political equality. An important task for future research is then, I argue, to investigate whether the policy feedback effects of institutional design on the relationship between motivation and political participation travels beyond the welfare state area and could be traced to citizens' democratic political participation in general.

Tables

Table 1 Overview of variables

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Standard deviation
Political action, public school issues	1667	0	1	.10	.31
Political action, hospital care issues	1667	0	1	.10	.30
Political action, primary care issues	1667	0	1	.07	.26
Political action, elderly care issues	1667	0	1	.07	.25
Education	1743	0	3	1.34	1.06
Age 15-29	1774	0	1	.18	.39
Age 30-49	1774	0	1	.34	.47
Age 50-65	1774	0	1	.26	.44
Age 65-85	1774	0	1	.22	.42
Income	1653	0	7	3.11	1.85
Gender	1774	0	1	.50	.50
Class Lower technical/routine occupation	1774	0	1	.15	.36
Class Lower white collar	1774	0	1	.16	.36
Class Small employers and farmers	1774	0	1	.05	.21
Class Intermediate employers	1774	0	1	.15	.35
Class Salaried	1774	0	1	.30	.46
Evaluation of public school	1076	0	4	1.44	.92
Evaluation of hospital care	1456	0	4	1.35	.99
Evaluation of primary care	1599	0	4	1.47	1.04
Evaluation of elderly care	909	0	4	1.95	1.01
Left-right position	1682	0	4	2.00	1.08
Political interest	1721	0	3	1.53	.78
User of public school	1606	0	1	.50	.50
User of hospital care	1650	0	1	.71	.45
User of primary care	1670	0	1	.83	.38
User of elderly care	1604	0	1	.26	.44

Comment: Source: the Swedish SOM study 2004. The question on political action reads as follows: "Have you, during the last 12 months, expressed your point of view about any of the following public institutions? For every public institution, mark with a cross in what ways you have expressed your viewpoints." For every public service institutions, the action alternatives are 'No viewpoints expressed', Contacted civil servant, Contacted politician, Contacted mass media, Work in action group/organisation, Signed petition, Demonstrating, Work in political party. The Yes answer of all the alternatives (but No viewpoints expressed) have been put together into a dichotomous index and corresponds to the Yes column in the table above. The question on *education* is: "What level of education do you have?". Eight different options are included in the question, but are transformed into four categories (Low education (0), Medium low education (1), Medium high education (2) and High education (3)). The category Low education corresponds to Not completed compulsory school/completed compulsory school and the category High education corresponds University degree/Ph.D. degree. *Income* refers to household income. The wording in the questionnaire is "Please mark with a cross the box that corresponds to the approximate annual income of all members in your household (including pensions and study allowances). Category 0 corresponds to Less than SEK100,000 (approx. €10,000) and 7 corresponds to More than SEK700,000 (approx. €70,000). For the class variable, the European Socio-economic Classification (ESeC) Five Class Versions has been used. For more information on coding, please visit <http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/research/esec>. The question on *service evaluation* is as follows: "What is your opinion about the service in the municipality you live in on the following areas? The answering options are Very satisfied (coded as 0), Fairly satisfied (1), Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (2), Fairly dissatisfied (3), Very dissatisfied (4) The question of *left-right placement* is: Sometimes one can talk about placing political attitudes on a left-right dimension. Where would you place yourself on a left-right dimension? 0=Far to the left, 1=Slightly to the left, 2=Neither left nor right, 3=Slightly to the right, 4=Far to the right. The question on *political interest* is "How interested are you in general in politics?" The options are Very interested (0), Somewhat interested (1), Not that interested (2) and Not at all interested (3). The question for the *user* of public services is: "Have you or a close relative used any of the following services the last 12 months?". The answer options are: Yes, I have used it myself, I don't use it myself, but a close relative does and No, neither myself nor a close relative uses it. The category User (coded as 1) in the table above refers to both people who are users themselves of the particular welfare service and people where a close relative is a user.

Table 2 Effect of resources, motivation and institutional contact on political action about public school issues (unstandardized logit coefficients)

	Dependent variable: Political action about public school issues (0-1)			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Resources				
Education (0-3, 3=High education)	.22*			.19
Age (Age 15-29 reference category)				
Age 30-49	.58**			.42
Age 50-64	.00			-.03
Age 65-85	-.46			-.79*
Income (0-7, 7=High income, ≈ €73 000)	.06			.03
Gender (Woman reference category)	.00			-.13
Class (lower technical/routine occupation reference category)				
Lower white collar	-.18			-.19
Small employers and farmers	-.30			-.31
Intermediate employers	-.21			-.14
Salaried	.27			.30
Motivation				
Evaluation of public school (0-4, 4=Very Dissatisfied)		.41***		.48***
Left-right placement (0-4, 4=Far to the right)		.02		-.01
Political interest (0-3, 3=Very interested)		.41***		.46**
Institutional contact				
User of public school (0-1)			1.20***	1.32***
Constant	-2.55***	-3.07***	-2.59***	-4.66
Pseudo R ²	.05	.04	.04	.13
N	906	906	906	906

* p<.10 ** p<.05 *** p<.01

Comment: Source: the Swedish SOM study 2004. For information on survey questions and coding, see table 1.

Table 3 Effect of resources, motivation and institutional contact on political action about hospital care issues (unstandardized logit coefficients)

	Dependent variable: Political action about hospital care issues (0-1)			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Resources				
Education (0-3, 3=High education)	.15			.06
Age (Age 15-29 reference category)				
Age 30-49	.63*			.70**
Age 50-64	.89*			.97***
Age 65-85	.74**			.85**
Income (0-7, 7=High income, ≈ €73 000)	-10*			-.11*
Gender (Woman reference category)	-.13			-.31
Class (lower technical/routine occupation reference category)				
Lower white collar	.07			.09
Small employers and farmers	-.17			-.31
Intermediate employers	-.18			-.34
Salaried	.21			.06
Motivation				
Evaluation of hospital care (0-4, 4=Very Dissatisfied)		.28***		.34***
Left-right placement (0-4, 4=Far to the right)		-.04		.01
Political interest (0-3, 3=Very interested)		.55***		.57***
Institutional contact				
User of hospital care (0-1)			.86***	1.02***
Constant	-2.66***	-3.39***	-2.82***	-4.71***
Pseudo R ²	.02	.04	.01	.07
N	1236	1236	1236	1236

* p<.10 ** p<.05 *** p<.01

Comment: Source: the Swedish SOM study 2004. For information on survey questions and coding, see table 1.

Table 4 Effect of resources, motivation and institutional contact on political action about primary care issues (unstandardized logit coefficients)

	Dependent variable: Political action about primary care issues (0-1)			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Resources				
Education (0-3, 3=High education)	.27**			.16
Age (Age 15-29 reference category)				
Age 30-49	.41			.38
Age 50-64	.57			.56
Age 65-85	.98**			1.06**
Income (0-7, 7=High income, ≈ €73 000)	-.15**			-.17**
Gender (Woman reference category)	.26			.07
Class (lower technical/routine occupation reference category)				
Lower white collar	.35			.22
Small employers and farmers	-.40			-.58
Intermediate employers	-.21			-.36
Salaried	.37			.23
Motivation				
Evaluation of primary care (0-4, 4=Very Dissatisfied)		.42***		.49***
Left-right placement (0-4, 4=Far to the right)		-.05		-.02
Political interest (0-3, 3=Very interested)		.65***		.55***
Institutional contact				
User of primary care (0-1)			.68*	.76**
Constant	-3.30***	-4.28***	-3.17***	-5.34***
Pseudo R ²	.04	.06	.01	.10
N	1359	1359	1359	1359

* p<.10 ** p<.05 *** p<.01

Comment: Source: the Swedish SOM study 2004. For information on survey questions and coding, see table 1.

Table 5 Effect of resources, motivation and institutional contact on political action about elderly care issues (unstandardized logit coefficients)

	Dependent variable: Political action about elderly care issues (0-1)			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Resources				
Education (0-3, 3=High education)	.19			.10
Age (Age 15-29 reference category)				
Age 30-49	.60			.92*
Age 50-64	1.11**			1.23**
Age 65-85	1.33***			1.49***
Income (0-7, 7=High income, ≈ €73 000)	-.05			-.06
Gender (Woman reference category)	-.09			-.37
Class (lower technical/routine occupation reference category)				
Lower white collar	.76**			.99**
Small employers and farmers	-.46			-.51
Intermediate employers	.79**			.79**
Salaried	.11			.13
Motivation				
Evaluation of elderly care (0-4, 4=Very Dissatisfied)		.15		.26**
Left-right placement (0-4, 4=Far to the right)		-.08		-.06
Political interest (0-3, 3=Very interested)		.57***		.60***
Institutional contact				
User of elderly care (0-1)			1.29***	1.57***
Constant	-3.36***	-3.20***	-2.72***	-5.50***
Pseudo R ²	.04	.03	.06	.14
N	747	747	747	747

* p<.10 ** p<.05 *** p<.01

Comment: Source: the Swedish SOM study 2004. For information on survey questions and coding, see table 1.

Table 6 Predicted probabilities from significant coefficients in table 2-4, model 4

	Dependent variable: Political action (0-1)			
	Public school	Hospital care	Primary care	Elderly care
Resources				
Education (0-3, 3=High education)				
Age (Age 15-29 reference category)				
Age 30-49		0=.07 1=.13		0=.05 1=.13
Age 50-64		0=.07 1=.16		0=.05 1=.16
Age 65-85	0=.13 1=.06	0=.08 1=.16	0=.04 1=.11	0=.05 1=.20
Income (0-7, 7=High income, ≈ €73 000)				
		0=.12 7=.06	0=.09 7=.03	
Gender (Woman reference category)				
Class (lower technical/routine occupation reference category)				
Lower white collar				0=.06 1=.15
Small employers and farmers				
Intermediate employers				0=.07 1=.13
Salariat				
Motivation				
Evaluation of elderly care (0-4, 4=Very Dissatisfied)	0=.06 4=.31	0=.06 4=.19	0=.03 4=.16	0=.04 4=.12
Left-right placement (0-4, 4=Far to the right)				
Political interest (0-3, 3=Very interested)	0=.06 3=.20	0=.04 3=.18	0=.02 3=.11	0=.03 3=.16
Institutional contact				
User of elderly care (0-1)	0=.05 1=.17	0=.04 1=.11	0=.03 1=.06	0=.04 1=.18

Comment: The predicted probabilities has been calculated from model 4 in table 2-5 and shows the probability of political action when all other variables are held at their means.

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² To be more precise, the policy feedback perspective stems from the new institutional tradition (see section The Institutional Perspective in Political Equality and Political Participation). As a consequence, the words policy feedback and institutional will be used interchangeably.

³ Gender differences in political action levels are nowadays very small or non-existent in Sweden, see Bergqvist *et al.* 2008: 76-77 .

⁴ By comparison, Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (Verba *et al.* 1995) also investigated the participation level among recipients of non-means-tested welfare programs (Social Security, Veteran's Benefits, Medicare, and student loans), finding that they participated to the same extent as other American citizens. They also investigated recipients of means-tested welfare programs (AFDC, Medicaid, Food Stamps), finding that they had considerably lower levels of political participation. The authors' explanation of this pattern does not include welfare program design. Instead, they find the explanation in the individual characteristics of the

recipients. Campbell's work (Campbell 2003) indicates that individual level explanations are not enough; also, there are institutional explanations due to the feedback mechanisms at work.

⁵ See www.som.gu.se for more information.

⁶ Important to mention is that citizens' social and political resources only to some extent affects dissatisfaction per se. As shown in Solevid 2009:170, users of public service are more satisfied than non-users and citizens age 50 or older are more satisfied with public service, compared to citizens age 29 and younger. Education, gender and income and does not affect public service dissatisfaction. Interest in politics affects dissatisfaction with primary care, but not any other public service dissatisfaction. Citizens to the right (left-right ideology) are more dissatisfied with public school and primary care compared to citizens to the left (but no effect of ideology on dissatisfaction with hospital care or elderly care). In general, the effects are moderate.