

Annexe: §9. Proportionality without Inequality

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Abstract Political egalitarians tend to defend equal distributions of voting power at specific times, as in ‘one election, one vote’. Appealing as it is, the principle seems incompatible with distributing power proportionally to the stakes voters have at different elections, as in ‘one stake, one vote’. This article argues that the tension above stems from the temporal scope ascribed to political equality, as at specific moments of democratic decision-making instead of over entire lives. More specifically, ascribing a lifetime view to political equality renders equality compatible with proportionality at different elections. I first show that storable votes differ from standard votes in their distinctive commitment to lifetime political equality. I then argue that storable voting schemes are compatible with three key reasons to value political equality: equal consideration of interests, relational equality, and non-domination. Finally, storable votes are also consistent with proportionality at specific times. I conclude that the neglected idea of lifetime political equality can, through storable votes, deliver proportionality without inequality.

Keywords Political equality © Storable Votes © Distributive justice © Lifetime view © Equality

¹ Valente (2022b).

Introduction

When political egalitarians defend equal distributions of voting power, they typically commit to the slogan ‘one person, one vote’ whenever elections arrive (e.g., Dahl 2006: 9; Verba 2001: 2). Appealing as it is, the principle is said to be incompatible with distributing power proportionally to the stakes voters have at different elections, as in ‘one stake, one vote’ (Brighthouse and Fleurbaey 2010; Fleurbaey 2008). ‘One person, one vote’ seems to forbid voters with higher stakes from having a greater say in elections impacting them the most. In this article, I suggest that proportionality is, in fact, more compatible with political equality than it appears at first. More specifically, I argue that the tension above stems from the temporal scope ascribed to political equality, as equality *at specific moments* of democratic decision-making instead of *entire lives*. If proportionality offers a valuable criticism to political equality, as I believe it does, ascribing a lifetime view to political equality can plausibly accommodate the criticism.

The lifetime view is the typical temporal scope of distributive equality.² It is then peculiar that lifetime political equality remains a widely neglected topic (for an exception, see e.g., Wilson 2019: 90–95). While lifetime views face objections from principles such as *relational* equality (Bidadanure 2016, 2021; Lippert-Rasmussen 2019, 2018) and distributive *sufficiency* (Gosseries 2003, 2011; Bou-Habib 2011), no one has yet rejected the lifetime view to defend distributive equality at specific times instead.³ The only exception is the distribution of political power, which has been equal at specific times. This paper shows that political egalitarians would benefit from ascribing a lifetime view to an egalitarian distribution of political power. By *lifetime political equality*, I mean that what matters primarily is how each of us fares over one’s complete life instead of specific times (Gosseries 2014: 66–67). Proponents of lifetime equality essentially believe that inequalities at specific moments *can* be fair if they do not translate into inequalities over entire lives.

² See e.g., Mckerlie 1989, 2012: 22; Holtug and Lippert-Rasmussen 2007). This is expressed in Thomas Nagel’s claim that ‘the subject of an egalitarian principle is not the distribution of particular rewards to individuals at some time, but the prospective quality of their lives as a whole’ (1995: 69). In John Rawls’s view that ‘the claims of those in each phase [of life] derive from how we would reasonably balance those claims once we viewed ourselves as living through all phases of life...’ (2001: 174), or in Ronald Dworkin’s specification of equality of resources ‘as a matter of [equal] resources over an entire life’ (2002: 94–95).

³ Even those claiming that relational equality must limit distributive inequality do not defend distributive equality at all times (e.g., Schemmel 2011).

Here is an example. Many of us believe that preventing those under 18 from voting is not problematic, at least not as much as disenfranchising women or ethnic groups (Gosseries 2014). At any given time, underage girls have less political power than middle-aged men. If they have less political power due to their sex/gender, this will translate into inequalities of lifetime power as well. If the reason is their age, middle-aged men have had less power when underage, meaning that this political inequality at a given time can be consistent with equality over entire lives. Unlike sex/gender, or race/ethnicity, the fact that *we all age* means that age-based inequality can involve treating people equally over their lives (Bidadanure 2017; Gosseries 2014: 59).⁴ Lifetime political equality does not require child disenfranchisement (Umbers 2020), but it shows that some age thresholds *might* not violate political equality demands.

Lifetime equality is famous for its ability to accept inequality between age groups, making it particularly unappealing to those opposing such disparities. But the lifetime view also has normative appeal to those egalitarians who defend age-group equality, or so I argue. Hence, I shall not focus on whether political equality should accept disenfranchising some age groups (e.g., Van Parijs 1998). Instead, my concern is whether those who want equality between age groups can still benefit from ascribing a lifetime view to political equality. For the sake of argument, I take it for granted that a sensible conception of political justice requires equal voting power. Can political equality reflect the proportionality principle at different elections while retaining its egalitarian credentials? I shall argue that we should answer this question in the affirmative.

The article proceeds as follows. I begin by framing the distinction between electoral and storable votes as one between time-specific and lifetime political equality, respectively (§2). I then argue that storable voting is compatible with three key reasons to value political equality: equal consideration of interests, relational equality, and non-domination (§3). I show that storable votes are also compatible with proportional equality at specific elections (§4). Finally, I suggest that while lifetime political equality can offer proportionality *at specific electoral times*, it cannot reflect inequalities in lifetime stakes (§5). I

⁴ That is not to say that all forms of age discrimination are all permissible, and equally so. For instance, differential longevity can be a reason to prefer biases favouring the young over those favouring the elderly (e.g., Lazenby 2011).

conclude that lifetime political equality provides a rare opportunity of ‘marrying’ political equality with proportionality at moments of democratic decision-making.

1. Equal Voting Power and Storable Votes

Equality of voting power, the most important achievement for political equality, is immediately associated with the slogan ‘one person, one vote’. Most people assume that the temporal scope of the slogan is *time-specific*, claiming that votes must be equal at specific electoral moments. But the slogan’s scope can also be a *lifetime* and equalise voting power between entire lives. The saying can take the form of ‘one life, one vote’ (lifetime votes) or ‘one election, one vote’ (electoral votes). Lifetime votes are understood to include, but to be wider than, electoral votes. Electoral votes are lifetime votes if they distribute power equally over entire lives. If people have equal ballots per year and live equally long, they will have equal power over their lives. Yet, not *only* electoral votes satisfy lifetime votes. For instance, both of us can have equal lifetime votes in either world:

World 1	Election 1	Election 2	World 2	Election 1	Election 2
Me	3	1	Me	2	2
You	1	3	You	2	2

Table 1. Lifetime equality with time-specific inequality **Table 2.** Lifetime equality with time-specific equality

The numbers represent the number of ballots or voting weight we cast at each election. Both worlds are consistent with lifetime votes, but only the second is compatible with electoral votes. The possibility of allocating votes unequally across elections distinguishes lifetime votes from electoral votes. Lifetime votes permit that voters concentrate more power in some elections than in others, whereas electoral votes force people to store power equally across life. In mathematical terms, lifetime votes minus electoral votes yields ‘storable votes’—equal endowments of voting credits that voters may spread unequally across different elections (Casella 2005, 2012).⁵ What differentiates storable votes from electoral votes is also what sets lifetime equality apart from time-specific equality. In both cases, the difference lies in the possibility

⁵ Freedom to distribute power unequally across life is compatible with removing the freedom to do so equally, as with age-weighted voting rights. At least, if we assume that one is free to do what one is forced to do (Cohen 2011: 147). But since the conception I defend strives for age-group equality, it must also comprise the freedom to spread votes uniformly across life.

of accepting inequality at specific times if it does not translate into inequalities over entire lives. To be sure, this essay will take storable votes to *supplement* the electoral votes already available in democratic societies. More specifically, the scheme I propose gives people an instalment of storable votes once their democratic life begins, say 80 votes, while preserving their right to an unconditional electoral vote across life.

The first component consists of an initial grant to all voters. It allows voters to save more ballots for old age, spend more early in life, or spread them uniformly across elections. It is as they wish. The proposal permits saving ballots for old age, and yet it also treats voters who die young better than electoral votes. It increases the short-lived's chances of political influence, and I shall assume that the currency of political equality is *opportunity for political influence*.⁶ One difficulty with differential longevity is that we often do not know *ex-ante* who will be short- and long-lived. If we do not know who will die young and can only compensate people before they die, benefiting those who die young requires expanding access to goods (such as votes) early in life.⁷ The initial instalment of storable votes does this by permitting a greater voting weight at a young age. The short-lived might still have less time to spend their votes.⁸ But if there is nothing we can do to make them live longer, the second-best option is to prevent that early death is a source of political disadvantage.

The second component of guaranteed electoral votes across life ensures that we do not abandon voters who spend their storable votes. When resources are given in one go, it may not take long for some to squander all they have been given.⁹ Democratic societies cannot accept such political destitutes to be paying the price for squandering their endowments decades ago. For that reason, there must at least be sufficient political opportunities

⁶ I assume in this article that the currency of political equality is opportunity or access to political influence rather than political influence as such. Many egalitarians share this assumption (Cohen, 2001; Kolodny 2014, Scanlon, 2018; Swift, 2006: 298). Arguably, what I shall say holds for equality of political influence as well. Yet, one difference is that the latter would likely impose more restrictions on the extent to which voters may choose to allocate votes across life.

⁷ That is assuming, as we should, that the short-lived can also not be compensated *ex-post* (afterwards). On this, see Fleurbaey et al. (2014).

⁸ I thank one of the anonymous reviewers for pointing this out. One solution is allowing voters to still cast their remaining votes after they die (e.g., Mulgan 2003), for instance, by bequeathing votes to others. Still, assuming it is better to cast votes alive rather than dead, the possibility of post-mortem voting should be seen as a complement to, rather than a substitute of, the initial storable voting grant.

⁹ The argument applies to all cases where the timing of resource distribution is at stake. For instance, it is why Van Parijs prefers a basic income to a lump-sum endowment of unconditional income early in life (1997: 40–45).

across life through unconditional electoral votes. I write ‘at least’ not to exclude the possibility that protecting voters against the risk of a long life can require more than this, such as some prudential hoarding of storable votes in a manner akin to old-age pensions. Complementing storable votes with electoral votes nonetheless advances lifetime political equality, because introducing storable ballots on top of electoral votes invites inequality that is consistent with equality over entire lives, but not with time-specific equality.

2. Storable Votes as Political Equality

Storable votes distribute power equally between entire lives. They, therefore, comply with political equality understood as an egalitarian distribution of voting power. However, they might not respect our reasons to value political equality. Dictatorships also give voters equal power over entire lives: *none* (Dworkin 1987: 9). But they are not consistent with our reasons to value political equality. Yet, I argue that lifetime political equality through storable votes is consistent with three reasons to value political equality: equal consideration of interests, relational equality, and non-domination.

2.1. EQUAL CONSIDERATION OF INTERESTS

Political equality commands equal consideration of interests, which is often assumed to imply electoral equality (e.g., Waldron 2012). Yet, electoral equality faces the ‘problem of intensity’ by failing to consider the intensity of interests at different elections.¹⁰ As Robert Dahl (1956) once famously asked, ‘what if the minority prefers its alternative much more passionately than the majority prefers a contrary alternative?’ (90). Intuitively, minorities with intense interests (or preferences¹¹) should be able to prevail over an indifferent majority, but only if the majority is indeed indifferent and the minority is not (Dahl 1956: 118; Casella 2019). Storable votes follow this very same idea. They allow the minority to win when its interests are high enough to justify spending a large number of votes (Casella 2013: 65). Yet, since the majority

¹⁰ As we shall see, it is possible to accommodate voting intensity within a single election. For instance, each voter can express the intensity of interests in different candidates within the same election, while all votes are equally important (e.g., Vargas 2016). My point is rather that expressing interests intensity for different elections contradicts electoral equality.

¹¹ While I refer to interests throughout the article, the same can be said of preferences. Indeed, discussions of storable votes are often put in terms of preferences rather than interests. I only stick to ‘interests’ to avoid alienating those who consider it important to maintain the distinction, and because expressing ‘interests’ tends to, all else equal, have more normative weight than expressing ‘preferences’.

can typically outvote the minority, the minority wins only if its interests are stronger than the majority's (*ibid.*).

Storable votes overcome a fundamental flaw of electoral votes, which is that they fail to consider *the intensity* of interests. Indeed, they forbid people with more intense interests to have a greater say in certain elections. Imagine two friends, Tom and Jerry, need to decide which path to take, say, concerning the religious freedom of cats. Being a cat himself, Tom has a strong interest in taking the way on the left, whereas Jerry has no interest in either course (but chooses 'right' just to trigger Tom). Since electoral votes only account for the direction of interests, not their intensity, the outcome is indifferent between left and right. The problem is that, intuitively, equal consideration of interests should require Tom to have his interest prevail over Jerry's. And since this intuition arises in the case of two individuals, it is independent of majorities and minorities.

The problem worsens when Tom and Jerry are not individuals but groups who differ in size. If there are more Jerrys than Toms, the scheme is no longer indifferent between going left and right. The decision will be to go right regardless of how intense Tom's interests in going left are. We have good reasons to build democratic systems upon majoritarian principles, but these very principles allow majorities to disregard the legitimate interests of minorities (Casella 2012: 63, 2013; Polsner and Weyl 2015). We should therefore distinguish between cases where minorities should be able to have their way and situations where they should not:

Equally Strong Interests: A minority has a strong interest in favour of *a* and the majority has an equally strong interest against it.

Unequally Strong Interests: A minority has a strong interest in favour of *b*. The majority is relatively indifferent to, but slightly against, *b*.

Using the majority rule in case *a* expresses our core democratic commitments and is not unfair to minorities. However, following Dahl, it seems unjust if minorities cannot win in case *b*. Minorities lose in both cases with electoral votes. In contrast, storable votes allow the minority to win, but *only* when its interests are strong and the majority's are weak, which is precisely when the minority should win (Casella 2012: 65). Storable votes are sensitive to the intensity of interests while distributing voting power equally to all. That is their main advantage.

Since minorities must spend more votes to get their way, storing votes still makes it cheaper for the majority to realise what they want.¹² Hence, the proposal still treats majorities better than minorities. However, what minorities pay by having to spend more votes is the price of political equality. In giving each voter an equal voice, political equality must grant victory to those with the most support. All else equal, it ought to remain difficult for minorities to prevail over majorities, but not impossible. Whereas storable votes make it *difficult*, electoral votes make it *impossible*.

2.2. RELATIONAL EQUALITY

Justifications of political equality often appeal to the ideal of relational equality and tend to conclude that the latter requires equal voting power at each election (e.g., Anderson 1999; Kolodny 2014). In her seminal article, Elizabeth Anderson (1999: 313) defends a relational conception of equality that involves both a negative and a positive aim. The negative goal is to abolish social relationships in which some dominate or exploit others. Its positive aim is to realise a ‘social order in which persons stand in relations of equality’ (*ibid.*). For now, I focus on the positive aim and leave the negative one to the next section. Anderson’s conception of relational equality aims at guaranteeing all law-abiding citizens effective access to ‘the social conditions of their freedom at all times’ [emphasis added] (Anderson 1999: 289). In this section, I offer two reasons why departing from electoral votes in the direction of storable votes can be better for egalitarian relations, even if one aims at relational equality at all times.¹³

First, and again, storable votes contribute to better egalitarian relations between minorities and majorities. Under electoral votes, minorities must always seek the majority’s approval to have their way in a democracy. However, it is not a particularly egalitarian relationship if the outcome is what the majority wants because it is the latter that always decides (Bengtson 2020: 5; Viehof 2014: 354). Majorities may then regard themselves as superiors if they can solely decide the polity’s future (Bengtson 2020: 1058). To the extent that majorities composed of individuals with low stakes can impose their will on minorities with more significant stakes (Brighthouse and Fleurbaey 2010:

¹² I thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.

¹³ One could indeed wonder whether relational egalitarians should (also) endorse a lifetime view. For a discussion and defence, see Lippert-Rasmussen (2018: 130–135). I shall not assume that the lifetime view is included in the temporal scope of relational equality.

143), electoral votes reduce the access of minorities to the social conditions of their freedom. While electoral votes under majority rule give everyone an equal chance to influence outcomes, they fail to assign a proportional weight to people whose interests in a social outcome are stronger (Polsner and Weyl 2015). Storable votes are better for egalitarian relations because they give minorities with higher stakes the freedom to have a greater say in those elections. Offering minorities democratic protection when their interests are intense (or their stakes high) is necessary to promote equal standing against the majority in collective decisions.

Second, storable votes trust people's sense of self-respect more than electoral votes. Relational egalitarians care about both equal respect and self-respect (Anderson 1999). It is often assumed that only electoral votes show equal respect for our ability to judge collective matters. However, storable voting makes no judgement regarding who is most fit to decide, as it endows all with equal votes. Both proposals fare equally in terms of equal respect, but not regarding self-respect. According to Rawls (1999 [1971]: 386), self-respect (1) 'includes a person's sense of his own value, his secure conviction that his conception of his good, his plan of life, is worth carrying out'; and (2) 'implies a confidence in one's ability, so far as it is within one's power, to fulfil one's intentions'. Allowing voters to decide how to allocate votes in life is sensitive to their conceptions of 'the good political life', whatever they may be. Surely, electoral votes do not entrust citizens with choices they could make. Instead, voters have no say in whether they need more power in some elections than others. Thus, storable votes contribute to better egalitarian relations by placing greater trust in voter's ability to fulfil distinct political intentions. In so doing, they expand the social conditions of voters' democratic freedom.

Let me emphasise that it is possible to retain the benefits that storable votes have for relational equality without the problem that one may use all votes at once, which the unconditional electoral vote prevents from happening. I take this vote to be enough to ensure the levels of functioning *sufficient* to stand as an equal in society at all times that relational equality demands (Anderson 1999: 318–319). Of course, if one electoral vote does not suffice, there can be more than one. What matters ultimately is that people have enough to stand as equals at all times. Yet, above the level of unconditional votes that relational equality requires across life, one must welcome storable votes for their contribution to better egalitarian relations.

Any remaining relational egalitarian objection to lifetime political equality through storable votes should then appeal to the negative aim of non-domination.

2.3. NON-DOMINATION

Relational egalitarians share a concern with the republican ideal of freedom as non-domination. The relation between lifetime equality and domination is the elephant in our room, as the former is somewhat famous for being compatible with the latter (Mckerlie 1989, 2012). Perhaps it is not the fault of the lifetime view that this is the case. It can be that the relation between domination and distributive equality is generally one of mutual indifference. Nevertheless, if we are to defend a plausible conception of political equality, such a conception must stand against domination at all times. Consider, then, the following example:

“Imagine a new kind of (...) feudal society in which peasants and nobles exchange roles every ten years. The result is that people’s lives as whole are equally happy. Nevertheless during a given time period the society contains great inequality, and in one sense this always remains true. (...) If equality between complete lives were all that mattered, an egalitarian could not object to it.” (McKerlie 1989: 479)

The example does not tell us why this inequality is objectionable, but I suppose the reason is that it permits continuous domination across life. Here, domination arises between nobles and peasants, but Mckerlie (1989) also reminds us of egalitarian couples who dominate each other in turns. The same can be said of storable votes. If I use most of my votes now, I might dominate you and allow you to dominate me in the future. Take Pettit’s seminal definition of domination, according to which ‘someone has dominating power over another (...) to the extent that (a) they can interfere (b) on an arbitrary basis (c) in certain choices that the other is in a position to make’ (Petitt 1997: 52).¹⁴ The first question we must ask is whether storable votes satisfy condition a) such that some have the power to interfere in others’ choices. Imagine that Jerry spends more storable ballots at once, whereas Tom allocates his more prudently. It is not clear that they would necessarily be

¹⁴ I assume that storable votes meet c); if people can choose whether to cast one vote or none and on which candidate to cast their single vote, they can also express their political interests more accurately, if they so wish.

dominating each other because Tom cannot interfere with Jerry's decision concerning how many votes to cast, and vice versa. No matter how many votes Jerry uses, Tom's option-set remains the same. If Jerry uses most of his voting credits, Tom could still not interfere with the unconditional electoral vote(s) that always remains available to Jerry. Storable votes do not permit that one interferes in the *voting* choices of another.

Storable votes allow people to interfere in each other's lives more generally. Those who have more votes left, such as new generations who still have all of their votes, have greater ability to interfere with democratic outcomes that affect everyone. In such cases of interference, the question is whether storable votes allow for interference to be done on an arbitrary basis. Here, I take arbitrariness to mean uncontrolled power (Lovett 2018; Pettit 2012). Storable votes give no such power to voters, since they reflect choices for distributing ballots across life that are under our control. Nor do they give voters a costless, ready ability to interfere in another's life. Even then, we could do more to avoid periods of large inequality between Tom and Jerry, such that they do not have too much power over each other at certain times. Though not costless, domination in the Pettit sense may arise if it is too cheap for Tom to cast many votes in a single election, completely overwhelming Jerry's say in that decision. This is a reason for lifetime egalitarians to care about the distribution of inequality across life and make decisions to spend more votes at once costlier. We can easily do this through a minor refinement of storable votes; a sub-case known as quadratic voting (e.g., Polsner and Weyl 2015)¹⁵:

Storable Voting: Vote credits available = (number of extra electoral votes)¹

Quadratic Voting: Vote credits available = (number of extra electoral votes)²

Quadratic voting promotes equality across life because using extra ballots on Election Day is increasingly expensive. It requires four credits to multiply a single vote by two, nine credits to multiply it by three, and so on (Posner and Weyl 2015). The exponent sets up a progressive tax on vote multiplication that

¹⁵ The variant that I shall now explore might not fully coincide with the proposal by Polsner and Weyl (2015) because our focus is only on the quadratic aspect of the voting menu. Other elements of their proposal are more controversial. One is that voters may buy as many votes as they want (Polsner and Weyl 2015: 30, 38), allowing the wealthy to buy more votes than the rest. The intuitive solution to this problem would be to assume that quadratic voting is instead attached to an artificial currency distributed equally to all (e.g., as considered in *ibid.*: 45).

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incentivises people to spend fewer votes per election, controlling the size of inequality at specific times. It promotes time-specific equality without assuming that differential voting power on Election Day is always impermissible. Suppose Jerry is endowed with a hundred voting credits in life. If Jerry uses all of them in one go, storable voting allows him to multiply his vote by a hundred. In contrast, quadratic voting only allows Jerry to multiply his single vote by ten ($\sqrt{10}$). The exponent could even be *three*, preventing Jerry from spending more than four votes per election (as $5^3 > 100$). The higher the exponent is, the stronger is the penalty against inequality at specific times and the fewer votes people can spend per election. As long as non-domination does not require setting the exponent at zero, as electoral votes do, a plausible version of the lifetime view prevents domination and still allows for some electoral inequality.¹⁶

Does non-domination require the exponent to be zero? Non-domination is usually cast as a limit to inequality, not as a commitment to strict equality at all times. If it implied strict equality, then there would be a dilemma in the political realm. For the minority not to be subject to the majority's arbitrary will, its say must count more at times. However, if non-domination requires that no voice ever counts more than any other, domination will be inevitable. In such cases, the strategy that minimises domination seems to be one where the exponent is neither too low nor too high. It cannot be zero or too high, as that would not protect minorities at all against the majority's will. At the same time, it cannot be too low because that would allow some to have too much power over others at specific times. One can say the same by appealing to interests. Setting the exponent as zero or too high prevents people from reflecting their interests. In turn, a low exponent makes it too easy for people to vote against their lifetime interests. For instance, it increases the possibility that young selves benefit from their first-come advantage, and dominate their future selves by voting imprudently. It is sensible to assume a desire to protect voting freedom at older ages against the weakness of will at younger ages. By promoting a stable distribution of votes across life, quadratic voting and unconditional electoral votes seem to minimise the extent of domination

¹⁶ The distribution incentivises voting inequality on Election Day when $0 < x < 1$, and the opposite is true when x is either zero or > 1 .

(minorities/majorities and old/young selves) while giving everyone enough to avoid political domination at any point in time.

3. Storable Votes as Proportional Equality

Thus far, I argued that storable voting is compatible with our reasons to value political equality. The argument seems even to indicate that storable voting outperforms the alternative of electoral votes by overcoming some of its flaws (such as intensity of interests and self-respect) without faring worse in other respects (such as non-domination). Bearing this in mind, I shall argue that storable votes offer a rare opportunity of marrying political equality with proportionality at specific elections. Recall that justifications of political equality, such as equal consideration of interests and relational equality, support P1:

P1 *Proportionality Principle*: opportunity to have a say should (or at least may) be proportional to the degree to which these decisions affect those involved.¹⁷

Time-specific political equality embodied by electoral equality permits *some* sensitivity to proportionality, as one can accommodate voting intensity inside a single election. For instance, each voter can express the intensity of interests for different candidates within the same election, while all votes are equally important (e.g., Vargas 2016). From ‘one person, one vote’, one could also accept ‘one person, X votes’ where each can apportion according to the size of their stake across issues and places (Goodin and Tanasoca 2014). However, proponents of proportionality can go further than this. If P2 is true, proportionality should then also apply *across elections*:

P2 Electoral decisions affect different people to unequal degrees.

When P1 and P2 are true, C follows:

C Opportunity to have a say should (or at least may) be unequal for different people in electoral decisions.

Proportionality across elections contradicts time-specific equality and electoral votes, except when stakes in elections are incidentally equal (Angell and Huseby 2020: 371). In contrast, lifetime political equality through storable

¹⁷ I consider the proportionality version of the famous ‘all-affected principle’, where ‘power in any decision-making process should be proportional to individual stakes’ (Brighouse and Fleurbaey 2010: 138). As Angell and Huseby (2020: 378) note, proponents of the all-affected principle have not yet refuted this version. For a seminal discussion of the principle, see Goodin (2007).

votes is compatible with departing from electoral votes further in the direction of proportionality. If stakes are unequal, storable votes expand proportionality by allowing voters to reflect their higher stakes whenever they so wish. Evidently, storable votes do not guarantee that higher stakes win and convert votes into actual interest. Yet, for two reasons, the proportionality principle so described cannot require that they do. First, it would be implausible to promise that one person with higher stakes wins over a hundred persons with slightly lower stakes. Second, such a promise would also be impossible because people with high stakes are likely to have interests in different democratic results. Storable votes cannot undermine proportionality just because voters with higher stakes might not convert votes into actual interest.

One possible objection against storable votes is that voters with higher stakes may still not vote more strongly in those elections. Note that this possibility is a certainty with electoral votes. Yet, it is unclear what the problem would be if what matters is having the opportunity to vote in proportion to 'affectedness'. While non-participation can under-represent fundamental interests, it also approximates the proportionality principle by signaling that voters' stakes on a decision are not as high as expected.¹⁸ Of course, there would be a problem if people refrained from casting more votes in some elections because they fear running out of votes. Yet, since our proposal includes unconditional electoral votes, there is no reason for such fears. Note that guaranteeing that voters are not too afraid of reflecting their higher stakes should also not induce them to cast their votes too lightly. It seems that storable quadratic voting together with electoral votes can offer a reasonable middle ground here.

Perhaps a more serious objection is that storable votes give people with lower stakes in certain elections the chance to exercise greater voting power than what their stake permits. While electoral voting is also vulnerable to this objection, it is more pressing in schemes that allow voters the freedom to choose when their stakes are greatest. Yet, the quadratic variant of storable voting attenuates this possibility by asking voters to pay costs for each additional vote they cast. It ensures that the importance that people attach to

¹⁸ Note that storable votes do not also have to reward those who abstain from voting. For instance, voters can be deducted one storable vote per election in which they abstain, possibly stimulating turnout more than standard 'one person, one vote' schemes.

each election reflects the price they are willing to pay and, hence, the number of votes they cast.

Proponents of the proportionality principle can appeal to individual autonomy, holding that our stakes in decisions should depend, at least partly, on how these affect our abilities to control our lives (e.g., Angell and Huseby 2020: 375–376). Storable voting promotes autonomy because it allows voters to choose which elections affect their life the most. And if what affects the ability to control a life depends on our conceptions of the good life, those best positioned to know this are voters themselves. Of course, it is also true that voters cannot predict the future, so they will never know if one election is most important or whether there is an even more important one in the future. This problem is pervasive in democracies. We already vote on candidates we expect to adopt the best policies, but perhaps we would have voted differently if we knew the future. To this, our proposal adds a layer of uncertainty regarding the importance of each election. Again, we can attenuate this problem if voters pay for each vote they cast at an exponential cost. By raising the price of additional ballots, those who continue purchasing at exponential costs reveal increased certainty that this election is crucial for them. And since the future is uncertain, it can be acceptable for governments to intervene to ensure some prudential hoarding of votes, such that voters never spend too much at any given time. Nevertheless, none of this should weaken our broader conviction that it is permissible to spend more votes in some times than in others, within the limits of acceptable inequality, which is all we need to advance lifetime political equality through storable votes.

The most serious complaint that proportionalists can have against our proposal concerns those with higher stakes than others all through their lifetime. Such voters cannot always cast more votes than others with storable votes. For instance, the votes they use early in life will constrain their ability to reflect their stakes later in life. Indeed, voters must carefully decide at which specific moments they want their voting power to be higher. Note that, in so doing, storable voting introduces a unique form of proportionality upon voters. Proportionality tends to be conceived solely in *interpersonal* terms— as a comparison between stakes that different voters have at time T. On top, storable votes introduce *intrapersonal* proportionality, which obliges voters to compare stakes at time T with other times in their life. If Jerry casts more ballots than Tom on a decision, it does not necessarily mean that Jerry thinks

that he has more stakes than Tom on that decision. Jerry may consider that this election is the most important one of his life. In showing sensitivity to the subjective importance that elections have for us, the intrapersonal feature advances proportionality. For instance, an election may affect Tom and Jerry equally. Still, if it is the most important one in Jerry’s life, and the least important one for Tom, it can be plausible to reflect how more important this election is for Jerry than for Tom. Doing so is consistent with the principle that voting chances should (or at least may) be proportional to the degree to which these decisions affect the lives of those involved. Such intrapersonal decisions should not pose problems for proportionality. The only potential problem that storable votes can pose for proportionality is that they do not give more votes to those with higher lifetime stakes. Yet, I shall now argue that storable votes *can* be sensitive to unequal lifetime stakes but that they can only be so at the expense of political inequality.

4. Inequality of Lifetime Stakes and Voting Discounts

Some voters might always have higher stakes than others throughout their democratic life. At first, it may seem that reflecting such inequalities in lifetime stakes means abandoning our commitment to distributing storable votes equally. Contrary to what may seem at first, equality of storable votes can still show sensitivity to unequal lifetime stakes. Yet, doing so is inconsistent with political equality. If the proportionality principle moves from electoral stakes to lifetime stakes, then this will inevitably sacrifice the commitment to political equality. It does not, however, weaken the case in favour of equal storable votes.

Let us suppose that Tom always has twice the stakes as Jerry in every election. The tables below shows two ways of distributing power between them. The first (W1) is stake-sensitive because it reflects Tom’s higher stakes in both elections. In contrast, the second (W2) is equality-sensitive because it only gives more power to Tom provided the same is done for Jerry afterwards. While W1 is less egalitarian than W2 (e.g., Holtug and Lippert-Rasmussen 2007), only W1 is sensitive to differences in lifetime stakes (Tables 3, 4).

W1	Period 1	Period 2
Tom	4	4
Jerry	2	2

Table 3. Lifetime inequality with time-specific inequality

W2	Period 1	Period 2
Tom	4	2
Jerry	2	4

Table 4. Lifetime equality with time-specific inequality

It is worth noting that W1 can be consistent with equal storable votes. A minor adjustment in the proposal enables Tom to have more political opportunities than Jerry without holding more votes. The adjustment I have in mind involves discounts in the ‘voting’ menu so that it is cheaper for Tom to multiply his voting weight than it is for Jerry.¹⁹ Despite having equal votes, Tom could have greater voting power than Jerry in such a way as to reflect his higher lifetime stakes. Simply put, Tom would then be able to acquire more power with the same number of votes. Such discounts are typical with economic resources: among two equally wealthy persons, the one who receives discounts on more goods has more purchasing power than the one obtaining fewer discounts. Storable votes can then be sensitive to differences in lifetime stakes by using voting discounts.²⁰

Even though storable voting is consistent with W1, lifetime inequality between Tom and Jerry increases to the extent that Tom receives more discounts than Jerry. By distributing more political power to Tom than to Jerry, the stakes discounts I have described undermine lifetime equality of political power. Distributions of power are no longer egalitarian when those with higher lifetime stakes obtain greater lifetime voting power than others. Discounts can only be compatible with lifetime political equality if they are egalitarian discounts—favour A over B provided the subsidy reverses in future elections. Unless lifetime stakes are incidentally equal, egalitarian and stakes discounts yield different distributions of power. Whereas the former promises equality, the latter tracks electoral stakes no matter how many benefits one has already received in life. Hence, while proportionality to electoral stakes is consistent with political equality, sensitivity to lifetime stakes is not. Given our initial assumption that a sensible conception of political justice requires equal power, it follows that egalitarian discounts are preferable to stakes discounts. Again, the commitment to political equality is one that I assume rather than defend.

¹⁹ Posner and Weyl (2017: 12) consider a different version of voting discounts to counter the inequalitarian effects of quadratic voting between the wealthy and the poor by making votes more expensive for the former than for the latter. On this, see also Laurence and Sher (2017). However, the voting discounts more general and are supposed to attach to groups with higher electoral stakes, whoever they may be.

²⁰ One of the anonymous reviewers points out that prices might turn out to be too high (or too low) for the number of votes circulating in society at a given time. Discounts can regulate these cases of voting inflation by changing the cost of each vote. It would ensure the stability of a political system, such that the number of votes circulating at a given point in time does not distort future democratic decisions.

Ageing as Equals

In some cases, it is intuitively better to have egalitarian discounts than stakes discounts. For instance, take the case of women and men. Insofar as women are worse off than men over their lives, one might conclude that lifetime stakes are generally higher for women than for men.²¹ Even though this may be true, many of us might find it objectionable if a society always aims at women having more political power than men because of the political inequality it instils between them. However, the imbalance that seems problematic here is one over entire lives rather than at specific times. It can be plausible if voting on specific decisions is cheaper for women than for men, say on abortion laws. Time-specific egalitarians are against both cases, whereas lifetime egalitarians can accept the second one. The same point holds in other cases, such as between skilled and non-skilled workers. Although the latter tend to fare worse in life and have fewer options than qualified workers, it seems objectionable if voting discounts only favour non-skilled workers. Yet, it can be plausible if votes are, at times, cheaper for non-skilled workers than for qualified ones, say on minimum wage laws. If these intuitions are correct, then our commitment to benefiting these groups at times, but not *at all times*, shows that it may be right for lifetime equality to prevail over proportionality to lifetime stakes.

With this, I do not mean to deny that there may be cases where stakes discounts ought to prevail over egalitarian ones. Still, one must be careful when introducing stakes discounts because political resources necessarily enjoy positionality—the value of our opportunities depends on how much others have (e.g., Ben-Shahar 2017). Hence, giving more political power to those with higher stakes inevitably imposes negative externalities on the value of other's political resources. If the political disadvantages created by discounts are not reversed later on, the additional small gains they bring to proportionality sacrifice political equality altogether. Given how far equality can already accommodate proportionality, it does not seem worth sacrificing equality further, especially if it is a necessary part of what political justice requires.

²¹ This example assumes that one's position in terms of social justice is necessary for affectedness. On why it would be necessary, see Brighouse and Fleurbaey (2010). See why it is at least insufficient, see Angell and Huseby (2020: 376).

Conclusion

Political equality is compatible with proportionality at different elections if it ascribes to a lifetime view instead of a time-specific one. To show this, I focused on the specific good of voting power. Yet, I am aware that equalising voting power may not suffice for political equality. For instance, if money begets political power, wealthier persons receive more political consideration because of their economic status, despite holding equal votes.²² These issues require going beyond the distribution of specific goods, such as votes, and addressing the *all-things-considered* distribution of power instead.²³ Also, I did not take a stance on which context it is more sensible to implement lifetime political equality, if in parliamentary elections or referenda. The discussion assumes that storable votes make the most sense in decisions that enjoy regularity, be these parliamentary elections or referenda. While the examples I have given mainly refer to votes on particular issues, the argument also applies to parliamentary systems where we vote on several policies at once. Storable voting is possible regardless of how direct the democratic system at stake is, which is not to say that it should be insensitive to the context of its implementation. A fully-fledged answer to such questions is beyond the scope of this article, whose aim is merely to discuss the consequences that the temporal scope of political equality has for the tension between political equality and proportionality. Introducing the lifetime view in the political realm is of value because, as Ronald Dworkin once noted, we may need to depart from equality at certain moments to be sensitive to people's projects, plans, and ambitions in life (2002: 87–90). Lifetime political equality may thus rejuvenate our democracies by offering the possibility of proportionality without inequality.

²² On this, see e.g., Gilens (2012) and Bartels (2009).

²³ For the distinction between good specific and all-things-considered perspective, see Brighthouse and Swift (2006).