

## Benefits to Voting Literature Summary

Addie Sandler, April 2016

### Increased Influence over Policy Decisions

- Voter turn-out affects government policies related to income inequality. Greater voter turn-out by lower income populations leads to long term policy enactment that reduces income inequality. Avery, J. M. (2015). Does who votes matter? Income bias in voter turnout and economic inequality in the American states from 1980-2010. *Political Behavior*, 37, 955-976.
- Who votes matters, not just to elect a candidate, but to determine policy. Elected officials base policy decisions not on the greatest need of all citizens, but on the needs of groups most likely to vote. Significant differences exist between policy interests of voters and nonvoters, especially regarding economic and redistributive issues. Leighly, J. E., & Nagler, J. (2014). *Who votes now?* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- High voter turn-out of low income citizens promotes progressive thinking and reduces income inequality, by affecting who gets elected and the policies and programs they support. Franko, W. W., Kelly, N. J., & Witko, C. (2014, July). Class bias in voter turnout and income inequality. *Manuscript under review*.
- High voter turnout by low-income citizens results in greater spending on healthcare for children, higher minimum wages, and more regulations of predatory lending. Franko, W. W. (2013). Political inequality and state policy adoption: predatory lending, children's health care, and minimum wage. *Poverty & Public Policy*, 5(1), 88-112.
- Voting is an effective strategy to protect and promote, policy interests of lower-income citizens. In states where lower-income citizens voted at rates similar to affluent citizens, lawmakers were less likely to enact restrictive welfare eligibility requirements. Avery, J. M., & Peffley, M. (2005, Spring). Voter registration requirements, voter turn-out, and welfare eligibility policy: class bias matters. *State Politics & Policy Quarterly*, 5(1), 47-67.
- Policy preferences of voters, rather than non-voters, predicts how Senators cast roll-call votes that surpasses the relationship of any shared political party affiliation. This is significant because voters are more conservative than nonvoters therefore, policy enacted by elected officials will be more conservative. Three factors explain this relationship: voters elect those with policy positions similar to their own, voters are more likely to communicate with Senators, and Senators need to please citizens who vote, in order to be reelected. Griffin, J. D., & Newman, B. (2005). Are voters better represented? *Journal of Politics*, 67(4), 1206-1227.
- Statistical evidence shows that states with the highest levels of voter turn-out by lower-income citizens, have the least restrictive social welfare policies. Hill, K., Leighley, J. E., & Hinton-Andersson, A. (1995, February). Lower class mobilization and policy linkage in the U.S. states. *American Journal of Political Science*, 39(1), 75-86.

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- State social welfare policies reflect the interests of those who vote. Because citizens who are have the highest levels of education and incomes are also the most likely to vote, class bias becomes reflected in state policy. Hill, K. Q., & Leighley, J. E. (1992, May). The policy consequences of class bias in state electorates. *American Journal of Political Science*, 36(2), 351-365.

### Greater Access to Community Resources

- The Hartford Department of Health and Human Services' Community Health Needs Assessment (2012) found low rates of voter registration are associated with fewer community resources. Community Health Needs Assessment Consortium. (2012). Community Health Needs Assessment. Hartford Department of Health and Human Services, Hartford, CT. Retrieved October 26, 2014, from <http://hhs.hartford.gov/Shared%20Documents/Community%20health%20needs%20assessment%202012.pdf>
- The act of voting is a means to increase federal resources within a geographical area. Members of Congress strategically use the allocation of federal funds within their district to reward the areas with the highest voter-turnout. Counties with the highest voter turnout receive higher per capita federal resources. Martin, P. S. (2003, January). Voting's rewards: voter turnout, attentive publics, and congressional allocation of federal money. *American Journal of Political Science*, 47(1), 110-127.
- The interests of communities with high voter turn-out receive greater political attention, resources, and representation of their policy interests than those with less voter-turnout. Areas in a district with the highest levels of voter turn-out receive the most attention from legislators and their staff. Martin, P. S., & Claibourn, M. P. (2013). Citizen participation and congressional responsiveness: new evidence that participation matters. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 38(1), 59-81.

### Benefits to Overall Health

- Including assessment of and educational opportunities for political knowledge and civic engagement is essential for empowerment-based social work practice. Without it, "the worker is effectively preventing the person's full participation as a citizen, not by commission but by omission" (Davis, 2010, p.255). Davis, J.K., (2010). Voting as empowerment practice. *American Journal of Psychiatric Rehabilitation*, 13, 243-257.
- Regardless of who wins an election, engaging in political activity provides internal benefits to voters. Being politically active increases an individual's sense of satisfaction, provides them an opportunity to feel positive and connected other others. In general, voting increases happiness and life satisfaction. Klar, M., & Kasser, T. (2009). Some Benefits of Being an Activist: Measuring. *Political Psychology*, 30(5), 755-777.
- Political participation and community involvement lowers the risk of psychological problems, especially in women with a history of depression. Political engagement lessens some of the negative mental health consequences related to oppression and

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discrimination and increases overall well-being. Sanders, L. M. (August 30- September 2, 2001). The psychologocial benefits of political participation. *Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association*. San Francisco. Retrieved January 13, 2016, from <http://www.nonprofitvote.org/documents/2010/11/the-psychological-benefits-of-political-participation.pdf>

- **An association exists between inequality in political participation and less adequate health policies that perpetuates poor health.** Blakely, T. A., Kennedy, B. P., & Ichiro, K. (2001). Socioeconomic inequality in voting participation and self-rated health. *American Journal of Public Health, 91*(1), 99-104.