

# Summary of “Income Inequality and Policy Responsiveness”

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## Part 1: Influence of Elites

- **Core Theme:** Examining the influence of elites, including political leaders and wealthy individuals, on shaping public opinion and political decisions in the United States.
- **Data:** References studies like Gilens (2012) to support the claim that elites have a substantial impact on policy outcomes.
- **Key Points:**
  - Elites play a central role in shaping public discourse.
  - They control media outlets, impacting the content and tone of news.
  - Elites can influence policy decisions, effectively molding the opinions of the general population.

## Part 2: Inequality in Voter Participation

- **Core Theme:** Analyzing the disparities in voter turnout based on income levels and the resulting unequal distribution of political power.
- **Data:** Cites studies like Verba and Nie’s work to highlight the significant gap in voter turnout between lower-income and higher-income citizens.
- **Key Points:**
  - Voter turnout rates vary significantly by income, with higher-income individuals more likely to vote.
  - This unequal participation leads to an imbalance in political power.
  - Low-income individuals often face barriers that limit their ability to vote.

## Part 3: Information Inequality

- **Core Theme:** Investigating the substantial information gap in political knowledge between affluent and lower-income citizens.
- **Data:** Refers to Zaller’s (2004) information scale and data from the American National Election Studies (ANES) for analysis.
- **Key Points:**
  - Wealthy individuals tend to have better access to political information.
  - Income disparities translate into differences in political awareness.
  - The more informed one is, the more likely they are to support policies aligned with their economic interests.

## Part 4: Political Preferences by Income

- **Core Theme:** Analyzing the alignment of policy preferences with income levels and how this affects voting behavior.
- **Data:** Utilizes ANES data from presidential elections 1980–2004 and measures of social welfare policy preferences.
- **Key Points:**

- Examines the relationship between income and policy preferences, particularly on wealth redistribution.
- Shows that for more knowledgeable voters, support for spending is greatest among the poor and least among the rich.
- Highlights that informed individuals tend to vote in line with their income level on redistributive issues.

## Part 5: Political Influence of the Rich

- **Core Theme:** Discussing how the wealthy exert influence on policy decisions and why politicians may prioritize their views.
- **Data:** Cites studies by Bartels (2008), Bhatti & Erikson (2011), and Rigby & Wright (2013) to estimate the relative influence of income groups.
- **Key Points:**
  - Politicians may prioritize the views of the wealthy due to their economic power and influence over interest groups.
  - The influence of the rich in policy decisions can lead to overrepresentation of their interests.
  - Questions the extent to which politicians ignore the preferences of less affluent voters.

## Part 6: Status Quo Bias

- **Core Theme:** Emphasizing the prevalence of a status quo bias in U.S. policy decisions and its implications.
- **Data:** Mentions analysis by Gilens (2012) regarding the success rates of policy changes based on income percentiles.
- **Key Points:**
  - Policy decisions often favor maintaining the status quo rather than implementing change.
  - Policies that pass tend to align with public opinion.
  - Despite status quo bias, policy changes typically lean leftward, not rightward.

## Part 7: Political Awakening of the Poor

- **Core Theme:** Exploring strategies to enhance the political participation of lower-income individuals.
- **Data:** References studies about barriers to voting and the role of money in politics.
- **Key Points:**
  - Suggests strategies such as lowering barriers to voting and reducing the role of money in politics to empower lower-income citizens.
  - Raises questions about the potential for a social movement among the economically disadvantaged.

## Part 8: Conclusions

- **Core Theme:** Summarizing the major insights from the text and calling for further research.
- **Key Points:**
  - Public opinion matters, but wealth has a substantial impact on policy decisions.
  - Emphasizes the importance of investigating the political influence of income groups.
  - Encourages research into strategies to empower economically disadvantaged individuals.