Article

Disenfranchising the Enfranchised: Exploring the Relationship Between Felony Disenfranchisement and African American Voter Turnout

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Abstract
Felony disenfranchisement is the removal of the right to vote following a felony conviction. Although it is clear that felony disenfranchisement constitutes diminished political capacity for citizens with felony convictions, what is not clear is the extent to which disenfranchisement reduces participation among those who are eligible to vote; particularly among African Americans who are overrepresented in the disenfranchised citizen population. In assessing the relationship between felony disenfranchisement policy and political participation, scholars have argued that socialization is the primary mechanism linking felony disenfranchisement to the political behavior of voting eligible citizens, finding that in the most policy severe states, turnout is lower. However, what the policy-severity-based perspective fails to acknowledge is changes to disenfranchisement policy that affect the restoration of civil rights; changes that often occur without affecting the severity of felony disenfranchisement policy while dramatically changing the size of the disenfranchised population in a given state. Given

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the role of socialization in the transmission of participatory norms, assessing the impact of disenfranchisement requires using measures that take into consideration both severity and restoration. Utilizing estimates of state-level disenfranchisement and African American disenfranchisement from the 2004 presidential election, this analysis investigates the relationship between disenfranchisement and African American voter turnout. The findings suggest that African American disenfranchisement plays a unique role in predicting African American voter turnout and lend themselves to the need to further consider the community and neighborhood effects of disenfranchisement on political participation and civic engagement.

Keywords

disenfranchisement, felony, voting, African American, civil rights restoration, hyperincarceration

Introduction

Racial minorities in the United States make up the largest proportion of American citizens who are arrested, charged, prosecuted, and convicted for criminal offenses (The Sentencing Project, 2013).

> For the same criminal behavior, poor and/or non-white people are more likely to be arrested; if arrested, they are more likely to be convicted; if convicted, they are more likely be sentenced to prison; if sentenced to prison, they are more likely to be given longer terms, than well off and/or white people. (Reiman, 1995, p. 135)

The incarceration rate of African Americans today is about 7 times that of Whites (West & Sabol, 2009), consequently African Americans are significantly overrepresented in both the prison and disenfranchised American citizen population. In 2013, 37% of male prison inmates were African American and 22% were Hispanic/Latino (Carson, 2014), compared with 13.2% and 17.1% of the general population, respectively (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). If current incarceration trends continue, 33% of Black[1] men and 16% of Latino men can expect to serve time in prison during their lifetime compared with 5% of White men (Bonzcar, 2003; Mauer, 2011).

   An estimated 5.85 million American citizens are denied the right to vote due to laws prohibiting voting by people with felony convictions (The Sentencing Project, 2015). In 14 states, more than one in 10 African Americans may not vote due to a felony conviction, and four of those states

disenfranchise more than 20% of the African American voting age population (VAP; Manza & Uggen, 2004). The racial disparities of the carceral state which disproportionately diminish the social, political, educational, and economic opportunities for millions of American citizens are well documented (Chesney-Lind & Mauer, 2002; Lopoo & Western, 2005; Massoglia, 2008; Pager, 2003; Uggen, Manza, & Thompson 2006; Western, 2002). What has received less attention are the potential consequences of mass incarceration, more specifically the hyperincarceration of African Americans (Wacquant, 2010), and felony disenfranchisement that extend beyond those who have had direct contact with the carceral state. This research seeks to fill the void in the literature that has yet to address the consequences of felony disenfranchisement policies as they relate to the democratic citizenship and participation of African Americans; specifically, the extent to which current felony disenfranchisement policy and criminal justice practice diminishes the political participation of African Americans who are legally able to vote.

Felony Disenfranchisement

"Felony disenfranchisement is the practice of removing the right to vote upon conviction for a felony level offense" (Uggen, Behrens, & Manza, 2005, p. 307). As a practice, felony disenfranchisement has roots that stretch back to Roman Law (Pettus, 2005). The presence of felony disenfranchisement as a part of the American legal system is a result of English colonization. During the colonization of what would eventually become the United States, the English brought with them much of their legal tradition. This legal tradition included the imposition of civil disabilities[2] on criminals (Pettus, 2005; Reiman, 1995) such as the forfeiture of property, the corruption of blood,[3] and the loss of civil rights. The infliction of the above civil disabilities meant that the lawbreaker had no legal status, and his descendants were not permitted access to any inheritance (Pettus, 2005). Following the American Revolution, the newly formed states rejected some of this legal tradition. However, from 1776 to 1821, 11 states retained provisions in their state constitutions denying voting rights to convicted felons or giving power to their state legislature to do so. Prior to the Civil War, 24 of the 34 states had legal provisions that allowed for the exclusion of felons from the franchise (Keyssar, 2000).

Following the Civil War, states in the South expanded their disenfranchisement laws to include crimes not previously included (Keyssar, 2000). Many states expanded the criminal codes to punish offenses that they believed freedmen (former slaves) were most likely to commit, including

vagrancy, petty larceny, miscegenation, bigamy, and receiving stolen goods (Ewald, 2002).

During the Jim Crow Era, states enacted felon voting bans alongside literacy tests and poll taxes. The legal barriers employed (including literacy tests, residency requirements, grandfather clauses, and poll taxes), while facially race neutral, were designed to prevent African Americans from voting (Behrens, 2004; Ewald, 2002; Keyssar, 2000). Where the 1965 Voting Rights Act nullified state policy that permitted the racial exclusion of American citizens from the franchise, states continue to disproportionally exclude millions of American citizens. In the 21st century, citizens with felony convictions (who are disproportionately minority and poor) constitute the largest population of American citizens legally denied the right to vote (Keyssar, 2000).

Current felony disenfranchisement policies in the United States fall into one of five categories: no disenfranchisement, voting rights restored automatically after release from prison, voting rights resorted after release from prison and discharge from parole (probationers may vote), voting rights restored after completion of sentence (incarceration, parole, probation),[4] and permanent disenfranchisement for some or all certain felony offenses. Only two states, Maine and Vermont, currently allow all citizens with felonies to vote, including those who are incarcerated (Chung, 2016; see Table 1).

In those states that impose a lifetime ban on voting for citizens with felony convictions, an estimated 40% of the next generation of African American males may suffer permanent disenfranchisement (Mauer, 2004). Because disenfranchisement laws disproportionately impact communities of color, one in every 13 Black adults is left voiceless in the electoral process (The Sentencing Project, 2014). Consequently, "the severity of these laws [coupled with trends in prosecution, sentencing and incarceration] have the significant potential to weaken the political power of minority voters" (Ochs, 2006, p. 89). The consequences of felony disenfranchisement laws are particularly important because they "dilute the voting strength of minorities" (Behrens, Uggen, & Manza, 2003, p. 559) and continue to exert dramatic effects that change the American political climate (Uggen et al., 2005).

Felony Disenfranchisement Policy and Participation

Scholars have suggested that socialization is the primary mechanism linking felony disenfranchisement to the political behavior of voting eligible citizens (Bowers & Preuhs, 2009; Mauer, 2004; McLeod, White, & Gavin, 2003;

Table 1. Summary of Felony Disenfranchisement Laws.

No restriction	Prison	Prison and parole	Prison, parole, and probation	Prison, parole, and post-sentence—Some or all
Maine	Hawaii	California	Alaska	Alabama
Vermont	Illinois	Colorado	Arkansas	Arizona
	Indiana	Connecticut	Georgia	Delaware
	Massachusetts	New York	Idaho	Florida
	Michigan		Kansas	Iowa
	Montana		Louisiana	Kentucky
	New Hampshire		Maryland	Mississippi
	North Dakota		Minnesota	Nebraska
	Ohio		Missouri	Nevada
	Oregon		New Jersey	Tennessee
	Pennsylvania		New Mexico	Virginia
	Rhode Island		North Carolina	Wyoming
	Utah		Oklahoma	
			South Carolina	
			South Dakota	
			Texas	
			Washington	
			West Virginia	
			Wisconsin	

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Miles, 2004; Walker, 2014). Through the interpretive effects of policy, individuals form an understanding of their role in society, their status in relationship to other citizens and government, and grow to understand the extent to which a policy has affected their lives. These effects lend themselves to the creation of a civic disposition which contributes to the extent to which an individual participates in public life and is engaged civically (Mettler, 2002). Living under, or coming into contact with, a certain policy can have an effect on who is drawn or welcomed into political life, a citizen's goals, beliefs, and identity. Because felony disenfranchisement limits or removes the political inclusion and resources of returning citizens, these individuals are relegated to a second-tier or second-class citizenship in which they have limited social citizenship and political access (Mettler & Soss, 2004; Shklar, 1991; Weaver & Lerman, 2010). Essentially, because voting (an avenue for participation in public life) is removed a diminished or limited civic disposition has the potential to form among returnign citizens (Mettler, 2002). This limited civic

disposition then reduces the prevalence of social norms that encourage political participation.

While felony disenfranchisement and diminished rights may be invisible and distant to most Americans (a public majority), for those who are directly affected (a public minority), their social networks and communities, felony disenfranchisement is both visible and proximate. The diminished capacity for participation experienced by returning citizens in turn reduces the likelihood of participation norm transmission to the returning citizen's family and broader community. Consequently, not only do citizens with felony convictions not participate due to his or her legal status but those who are eligible to vote are less likely to participate as well. Thus, when a significant portion of the population is denied access to vote through interaction with the criminal justice system, the civic disposition that is formed by citizens with felony convictions may affect the civic disposition of the proximate population by contributing to the reinforcement or creation of apathy which could lead to decreased political participation among those who are legally eligible to vote. Given what we know of arrest, prosecution, and sentencing trends in the United States, this should be especially profound for African Americans. Consequently, enfranchised African American citizens who are in closer proximity to citizens who have carceral contact, which has resulted in the removal of civil rights, should be less likely to participate politically and, more specifically, vote.

Lane (1959), for example, suggests that "members of ethnic minorities may become active in social and political affairs because of social pressures exerted upon them within their ethnic community or conform to the norms of that community" (p. 684). If, according to Olsen (1970), the norms of the community stress social and political activism, people will tend to exert pressure on one another to conform to the norms by taking part in political activities aimed at improving their position in society. In communities however, where these norms do not exist, we can then expect participation to be lower.

The studies that have previously addressed the relationship between political participation and disenfranchisement have frequently focused on the severity of felony disenfranchisement laws and voter turnout. These studies find that in the most (felony disenfranchisement) restrictive states, voter turnout is lower, particularly among African Americans, even among persons who are not themselves disenfranchised as a result of felony conviction (Bowers & Preuhs, 2009; Mauer, 2004). The exception being Miles (2004) who finds that over time laws that permanently disenfranchised citizens with felony convictions have no effect on the state-level turnout of African American men. What the policy severity approach fails to take into account are changes that may occur in a state's rights restoration policy which can

increase the number of eligible voters while maintaining the state's policy severity designation. Take, for example, Florida.

Florida has gone through a series of changes to its disenfranchisement policy in the last decade. In 2004, Governor Jeb Bush began a paperless restoration of civil rights (RCR) process that allowed individuals seeking restoration to call, send a letter to the Office of Executive Clemency, an email, or fill out a data form directly on the Florida Commission on Offender Review's website. In addition, the state adopted provisions that allowed individuals with felony convictions who were convicted of disqualifying offenses and remained arrest free for 5 years after the completion of their sentences to have their rights restored without a hearing, unless convicted of violent crimes or owed restitution. Those who remained arrest free for 15 years or more could have their rights restored without a hearing, regardless of crime unless they owed restitution. In 2007, under Governor Charlie Crist, automatic civil rights restoration became a reality for indiviudals convicted of nonviolent felonies upon release from prison. The revised rules no longer required the filing of a petition for restoration nor a hearing with the Clemency Board. Most recently, in 2011, under Governor Rick Scott, the automatic restoration procedures that were in effect under Governor Crist were rescinded. The new requirements not only required that each clemency application be reviewed by the Clemency Board but also that citizens seeking to have their rights restored must complete a 5- or 7-year waiting period upon the completion of their sentence to be eligible (Florida Commission on Offender Review, 2015).

Under each of these policy phases, the state of Florida remained classified as permanent disenfranchisement for some or all felonies. However, the 2007 rule change resulted in 152,000 Floridians having their rights restored as of June 2010 (Porter, 2010). In addition, following civil rights challenges regarding felony disenfranchisement laws, several states have changed their laws to include the return of voting rights to certain segments of the disenfranchised population. Between 1997 and 2010, 23 states reformed their laws to expand the franchise to ease voting rights restoration procedures (Porter, 2010). Eight states repealed or amended lifetime disenfranchisement laws, two states expanded voting rights to persons under community supervision, 10 states eased the restoration process for persons seeking to have their voting rights restored after the completion of a sentence, and three states improved data and information sharing. From these policy changes, it is estimated that 800,000 persons have regained the right to vote (Chung, 2016).

Focusing on the five-category policy severity masks the change in the percentage of the population that gained voter eligibility because of changes to the clemency or RCR procedures. It also fails to recognize that even in states that are less severe and do not impose permanent bans on voting for

felony convictions, a large portion of the population, particularly the African American population, may still experience disenfranchisement. Take, for example, Rhode Island. In 2004, the state of Rhode Island disenfranchised citizens during incarceration. At the time, the state had 3,775 African Americans on probation, 1,232 African Americans incarcerated, and 113 individuals on parole. Although those on probation and parole were eligible to vote, the incarceration of 1,232 African American citizens represents the disenfranchisement of 18.9% of the African American population in Rhode Island (Manza & Uggen, 2008). This rate of African American disenfranchisement is almost as high as that of Virginia (19.76%), a state that has permanent disenfranchisement. The severe impact of disenfranchisement for African Americans persists not only in states with less severe disenfranchisement policies but also in states with small African American populations (Table 2). And, given that community socialization has the capacity to facilitate participation, the consequences of disenfranchisement at all levels of severity and rights restoration should not be ignored. This research marks a shift in the focus of spillover effects from the laws themselves to the actual application and consequences of the laws, namely, the proportion of the VAP in a given state that is unable to vote and seeks to measure the effect of felony disenfranchisement and African American felony disenfranchisement on African American voter turnout.

Data and Analysis

The analysis presented is based on data from the 2004 Current Population Survey (CPS) Voting and Registration supplement that has been merged with state-level felony disenfranchisement, socioeconomic, demographic, and election policy measures for the 50 states. The CPS is a monthly survey of about 50,000 households conducted by the Bureau of the Census for the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The survey has been conducted for more than 50 years. The CPS is the primary source of information on the labor force characteristics of the U.S. population. The sample is scientifically selected to represent the civilian noninstitutional population. Respondents are interviewed in person and by phone to obtain information about each member of the household 15 years of age and older. However, published data focus on those ages 16 and over (http://www.census.gov/cps/).[5]

The use of the CPS is advantageous in that it provides representative samples of individuals from each of the 50 states. In addition, the CPS contains 50 state samples of individuals that range from a low of almost 1,000 respondents to a high of 6,000 respondents from all races and ethnicities. This is not true of many national surveys, including the American National Election

Table 2. Disenfranchisement Estimate Comparison, 2004.

State	USEP (%)	Manza & Uggen (%)	African American (Manza & Uggen; %)	State's African American population (%)
Alabama	1.54	7.40	15.30	26.0
Alaska	1.73	2.40	7.60	3.5
Arizona	1.71	4.30	21.10	3.1
Arkansas	2.07	2.80	9.00	15.7
California	1.05	1.10	7.60	6.7
Colorado	0.79	0.80	5.40	3.8
Connecticut	0.85	0.90	6.70	9.1
Delaware	2.66	7.50	19.60	19.2
Florida	1.69	8.00	18.80	14.6
Georgia	4.33	4.40	9.60	28.7
Hawaii	0.60	0.70	1.70	1.8
Idaho	3.05	1.80	6.00	0.4
Illinois	0.47	0.50	2.70	15.1
Indiana	0.51	0.60	3.20	8.4
Iowa	1.04	5.40	34.00	2.1
Kansas	1.02	1.40	7.40	5.7
Kentucky	1.34	6.00	23.70	7.3
Louisiana	2.38	3.00	6.80	32.5
Maine	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.5
Maryland	1.83	2.70	5.80	27.9
Massachusetts	0.21	0.20	1.60	5.4
Michigan	0.65	0.70	2.90	14.2
Minnesota	1.82	1.00	7.90	3.5
Mississippi	1.55	6.90	13.20	36.3
Missouri	1.73	2.20	8.00	11.2
Montana	0.53	0.60	2.20	0.4
Nebraska	1.06	4.80	22.70	4.0
Nevada	1.17	2.60	12.40	6.8
New Hampshire	0.25	0.30	2.70	0.7
New Jersey	1.75	2.00	8.70	13.6
New Mexico	1.27	1.30	6.70	1.9
New York	0.82	0.80	4.20	15.9
North Carolina	1.44	1.20	3.30	21.6
North Dakota	0.25	0.30	1.00	0.6
Ohio	0.52	0.50	2.60	11.5

Table 2. (continued)

State	USEP (%)	Manza & Uggen (%)	African American (Manza & Uggen; %)	State's African American population (%)
Oklahoma	1.63	1.90	7.30	7.6
Oregon	0.48	0.50	4.40	1.6
Pennsylvania	0.43	0.40	3.20	10.0
Rhode Island	2.07	2.50	18.90	4.5
South Carolina	1.43	1.60	3.70	29.5
South Dakota	0.54	0.60	3.70	0.6
Tennessee	1.29	2.10	6.40	16.4
Texas	2.98	3.30	9.30	11.5
Utah	0.35	0.40	3.40	0.8
Vermont	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.5
Virginia	1.08	6.80	19.80	19.6
Washington	1.69	3.60	17.20	3.2
West Virginia	0.68	0.80	3.40	3.2
Wisconsin	1.54	1.50	11.10	5.7
Wyoming	1.21	5.30	20.00	0.8

Note. The USEP measure of disenfranchisement was calculated by dividing the total number of ineligible felons by the voting age population in each state and is derived from McDonald (2014b). The Manza and Uggen estimates reflect the percent of the total population that is disenfranchised and the percen of the African American population that is disenfranchised (Manza and Uggen, 2008). The measure for African American population is derived from the 2000 U.S. Census estimates of the Black or African American alone population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). USEP = United States Election Project. The states in bold are those that permanently disenfranchise citizens for some or all felony offenses.

Study (ANES). The downside, however, is that the CPS does not ask questions pertaining to many important attitudinal characteristics that are known to be related to voting behavior (McDonald, 2008).

Each November of even-numbered (national elections) years, the CPS includes a Voting and Registration Supplement. The CPS Supplement includes a set of questions about individual voting behavior, as well as the standard battery of monthly questions about respondents' income, education, age, race, and other sociodemographic characteristics.

The dependent variable, voter turnout, is derived from the respondent's response to the following question on the CPS: "In any election, some people are not able to vote because they are sick or busy or have some other reason, and others do not want to vote. Did [you/another household member] vote in

the election on November ___?" Binary coding is used for the dependent variable, individuals who reported voting are coded as one, individuals who reported not voting are coded as zero. Additional variables from the CPS include age, income, education, gender, marital status, employment, residential mobility, children, and geographic location; all of which have previously been shown to affect voter turnout.

The felony disenfranchisement and African American disenfranchisement variables measure the percentage of the VAP and percentage of the African American VAP who are ineligible to vote due to a felony conviction in each of the 50 states. For the analysis, we rely on the 2004 felony disenfranchisement and African American disenfranchisement[6] estimates calculated by Manza and Uggen (2008). This is the most recent presidential election for which both measures of disenfranchisement have been calculated. Furthermore, given that the African American population is disproportionally affected by felony disenfranchisement, the use of the Uggen and Manza estimates allows for the consideration of the direct effect of both overall state disenfranchisement and African American disenfranchisement on African American voter turnout, a consideration that has not been evaluated to date. This is particularly concerning given that in many states, particularly those that permanently disenfranchise felons for some or all felony offenses, the rate of disenfranchisement for African Americans is consistently several times the rate of overall disenfranchisement (Table 2). The specific consideration of African American disenfranchisement is also important given that socialization is often used as the theoretical connection between disenfranchisement and the political behavior of the enfranchised. Although studying disenfranchisement at the state level does not allow for the direct assessment of individual proximity to the population of citizens with felony convictions in neighborhoods or communities, we do know that neighborhoods and communities in the United States are highly racially and economically segregated (Massey, 2001; Wright, Ellis, Holloway, & Wong, 2014). While the country becomes more diverse, neighborhoods and communities remain and continue to become more and more homogeneous. That said, when considering African American disenfranchisement we can with a certain degree of confidence expect that African Americans are more likely to be in relational or close physical proximity to disenfranchised African Americans than Americans with other racial or ethnic identities. Given this, in addition to disenfranchisement, African American disenfranchisement may be particularly important.

Beyond this, the use of the Manza and Uggen estimates of disenfranchisement is advantageous over other estimates because in estimating the number of disenfranchised citizens who are no longer under supervision, they account not only for the restoration of voting rights but also for recidivism and

mortality. This method of estimation paints a more accurate picture of felony disenfranchisement than other measures which only count disenfranchised individuals who are currently under supervision (prison, probation, or parole). If, for example, we compare the 2004 United States Election Project (USEP) disenfranchisement estimates which only include those individuals who were incarcerated during any given election year (McDonald, 2014a) with those calculated by Manza and Uggen (2008), the Manza and Uggen estimates are consistently higher than those of the USEP. As demonstrated in Table 2, this distinction is most notable in states with the most severe disenfranchisement policies—those that permanently disenfranchise citizens for some or all felony offenses (in bold).

State-level variables are included to account for descriptive representation in the state legislature, geographic region of the state, racial segregation, and voting policies. Descriptive representation is included to account for the effect of elected representatives that are racially similar on turnout (Gay, 2001; Griffin & Keane, 2006). Descriptive representation is measured as the percentage of the state legislature in each individual state that is African American. In many state-level analyses, a regional dummy variable of "South" is included to account for the historical structural racism perpetuated by the southern states (Key, 1949). Instances of structural racism include slavery, literary tests, poll taxes, property requirements to vote, and so on. Following this tradition, a variable "South" is included as an additional state-level variable. Because levels of segregation could potentially impact social networks, a variable is included to account for Black-White segregation in each state. The segregation measure is a dissimilarity index which measures the degree to which the minority group is distributed differently than Whites across census tracts. The values range from 0 (*complete integration*) to 100 (*complete segregation*). The values indicate the percentage of the Black population that would have to change residences to be distributed similarly to Whites (Frey, 2010). Variables are also included to account for variations in state voting regulations, specifically, voter registration closing date, Election Day registration (Hill & Leighley, 1999; Leighley & Nagler, 1992; Rhine, 1995), and in-person early voting (Fitzgerald, 2005; Stein, 1998).

Closing date refers to the number of days prior to an election that one must register in order to vote. The specific number of days prior to the election that a voter must register is included in the analysis. Closing date ranges from 0 to 30 days. Binary measures are included for Election Day registration and in-person early voting; states that had either regulation in place at the time of the election are given a value of one, and those that did not are given a value of zero. The early voting and Election Day registration data

come from the National Conference of State Legislatures. States designated as early voting states are those that allow voters to cast a regular ballot prior to Election Day at specific polling locations for which there were no special eligibility requirements (Election Assistance Commission, 2007). The early voting measure does not include states that allow an individual to cast an absentee ballot in person. Election Day registration states are those that allow a voter to register and cast a ballot on Election Day. Provisions that provide voters with more time to register and/or vote are expected to increase turnout.

Because the CPS does not include questions that account for individual political interest, binary measures are included to account for statewide senatorial and gubernatorial elections. These are included to capture the effect of other political races that may increase salience during an election year and affect turnout.

A series of multilevel models are used to evaluate the relationship between felony disenfranchisement and individual voting behavior. Hierarchical generalized linear modeling (HGLM) is used to ascertain how the, state-level, primary explanatory variable (disenfranchisement) affects the individual level dependent variable (vote). Hierarchical general linear models are useful in this regard because the assumption of independence of all observations is violated when data are grouped by states, that is, observations from one state are generally more similar than the observations from another state. HGLM accounts for this while analyzing the interaction of key individual-level factors with state-level measures.

The full disenfranchisment multilevel model is as follows:

$$\text{Vote} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \left(\text{Income}\right) + \beta_2 \left(\text{Education}\right)$$
$$+ \beta_3 \left(\text{Employment}\right) + \beta_4 \left(\text{Age}\right) +$$
$$\beta_5 \left(\text{Age Squared}\right) + \beta_6 \left(\text{Male}\right) + \beta_7 \left(\text{Married}\right)$$
$$+ \beta_8 \left(\text{Children}\right) + \beta_9 \left(\text{Residential Mobility}\right) +$$
$$\beta_{10} \left(\text{Urban Resident}\right) + \beta_{11} \left(\text{Rural Resident}\right) + \varepsilon,$$

and

$$\beta_0 = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} \left(\text{Felony Disenfranchisement}\right) + \gamma_{02} \left(\text{Closing Date}\right)$$
$$+ \gamma_{03} \left(\text{Election Day Registration}\right) + \gamma_{04} \left(\text{Early Voting}\right)$$
$$+ \gamma_{05} \left(\text{Descriptive Representation}\right) + \gamma_{06} \left(\text{Gubernatorial Election}\right)$$
$$+ \gamma_{07} \left(\text{Senate Election}\right) + \gamma_{08} \left(\text{Segregation}\right) + \gamma_{09} \left(\text{South}\right) + \varepsilon.$$

The full African American disenfranchismet model is as follows:

$$\text{Vote} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \left(\text{Income} \right) + \beta_2 \left(\text{Education} \right)$$
$$+\beta_3 \left(\text{Employment} \right) + \beta_4 \left(\text{Age} \right) +$$
$$\beta_5 \left(\text{Age Squared} \right) + \beta_6 \left(\text{Male} \right) + \beta_7 \left(\text{Married} \right)$$
$$+\beta_8 \left(\text{Children} \right) + \beta_9 \left(\text{Residential Mobility} \right) +$$
$$\beta_{10} \left(\text{Urban Resident} \right) + \beta_{11} \left(\text{Rural Resident} \right) + \varepsilon,$$

and

$$\beta_0 = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} \left(\text{African American Disenfranchisement} \right)$$
$$+\gamma_{02} \left(\text{Closing Date} \right) + \gamma_{03} \left(\text{Election Day Registration} \right)$$
$$+\gamma_{04} \left(\text{Early Voting} \right) + \gamma_{05} \left(\text{Descriptive Representation} \right)$$
$$+\gamma_{06} \left(\text{Gubernatorial Election} \right) + \gamma_{07} \left(\text{Senate Election} \right)$$
$$+\gamma_{08} \left(\text{Segregation} \right) + \gamma_{09} \left(\text{South} \right) + \varepsilon.$$

Results[7]

Prior to evaluating the effect of voting policy which may reduce the costs of voting and facilitate turnout, the analysis looks at the effect of disenfranchisement and African American disenfranchisement on African American voter turnout. In 2004, there was no relationship between disenfranchisement and voter turnout (Table 3—Model 1). Although Election Day registration is significant, felony disenfranchisement remains insignificant when the voting policies are included in the model (Table 3—Model 2). However, when consideration is given to Black felony disenfranchisement, there is a negative relationship between Black disenfranchisement and Black voter turnout (Table 3—Model 3). The relationship between African American disenfranchisement and African American voter turnout remains negative and significant when the voting policies are added to the model (Table 3—Model 4).[8]

Essentially, eligible African American voters who live in states where a greater percentage of the voting age African American population is barred from voting due to a felony conviction are less likely to vote. The negative relationship between Black disenfranchisement and Black voter turnout remains in spite of the inclusion of state voting policies. While one might expect that the inclusion of more liberal voting policies that reduce the cost of voting and provide voters with increased opportunities for participation may significantly contribute to overcoming barriers to participation, the inclusion of closing date, Election Day registration, and early voting in the models does not affect the relationship between Black felony disenfranchisement and voter

Table 3. Hierarchical Linear Model of Voter Turnout, 2004.

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Level 1 predictors				
Income	0.056 (0.012)***	0.057 (0.012)***	0.056 (0.012)***	0.057 (0.012)***
Education	0.417 (0.035)***	0.419 (0.036)***	0.418 (0.036)***	0.420 (0.036)***
Employment	0.317 (0.070)***	0.316 (0.070)***	0.318 (0.070) ***	0.317 (0.070)***
Age	0.026 (0.010)*	0.027 (0.010) *	0.026 (0.011)*	0.027 (0.011)*
Age-squared	$-0.108e^{-03}$ ($0.113e^{-03}$)	$-0.109e^{-03}$ ($0.113e^{-03}$)	$-0.108e^{-03}$ ($0.114e^{-03}$)	$-0.109e^{-03}$ ($0.114e^{-03}$)
Male	-0.372 (0.066)***	-0.373 (0.066)***	-0.372 (0.067)***	-0.373 (0.067)***
Married	0.094 (0.085)	0.095 (0.085)	0.093 (0.086)	0.094 (0.086)
Children	0.242 (.090)*	0.245 (0.091)**	0.244 (0.092)**	0.246 (0.092)**
Residential mobility	0.580 (0.061)***	0.581 (0.061)***	0.582 (0.061)***	0.583 (0.062)***
Urban	0.277 (0.106)**	0.273 (0.104)**	0.280 (0.107)**	0.275 (0.105)**
Rural	0.117 (0.126)	0.102 (0.125)	0.115 (0.126)	0.100 (0.126)
Level 2 predictors				
Disenfranchisement	-0.043 (0.039)	-0.041 (0.040)		
Black disenfranchisement			-0.021 (0.010)*	-0.020 (0.009)*
Election Day registration		0.786 (0.344)*		0.773 (0.303)*
Closing date		0.008 (0.005)		0.006 (0.006)
Early voting		-0.295 (0.171)		-0.294 (0.164)*
Descriptive representation	0.009 (0.008)	0.007 (0.007)	0.007 (0.007)	0.004 (0.006)
Gubernatorial election	0.020 (0.219)	0.032 (0.227)	-0.015 (0.217)	$-0.381e^{-03}$ (0.237)
Senatorial election	-0.005 (0.190)	0.020 (0.164)	-0.031 (0.179)	-0.004 (0.156)
Segregation	0.022 (0.008)**	0.021 (0.008)*	0.020 (0.008)*	0.019 (0.008)*
South	0.404 (0.203)	0.042 (0.171)**	0.324 (0.165)	0.439 (0.155)**
Intercept	-3.619 (0.569)***	-3.727 (0.602)***	-3.349 (0.616)***	-3.398 (0.649)***
Intraclass correlation	.058	.048	.053	.043
−Log likelihood function	$-7.103e^{+003}$	$-7.102e^{+003}$	$-7.122e^{+003}$	$-7.120e^{+003}$
Level 1 n	5,044	5,044	5,044	5,044
Level 2 n	49	49	49	49

Note. The dependent variable is whether the respondent voted, coded one if yes and zero otherwise. Hierarchical generalized linear models estimated using HLM7. Models estimated using a Bernoulli distribution and logit link function. Population-average model with unstandardized logistic regression coefficients and robust standard errors are shown in parentheses. Models were run without centering around the mean.

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

turnout. While this may seem counterintuitive, it is worth noting that 47% of the Black population resides in 10 southern states (Texas, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Maryland, Louisiana, Virginia, South Carolina, Alabama, and Mississippi; U.S. Census Bureau, 2001), none of which had Election Day Registration and few of which had early voting during the 2004 Presidential election. Thus, while these policies may be accessible to other voters and facilitate turnout, disenfranchisement continues to have profound effects on potential African American voters that extend beyond the addition of increased access to voting and registration.

Interestingly, segregation is positive and significant across each model presented. This would suggest that African Americans who live in states that are more racially homogeneous are more likely to vote. The consistently positive and significant coefficient may be an artifact of Democratic Party mobilization efforts. For Democrats, African Americans represent a significant voting bloc. Consequently, it would stand to reason that they would utilize targeted voter mobilization efforts in states where there are large numbers of potential African American voters. Although the limitations of the CPS data do not allow for the testing of this assertion, it would appear that in relation to African American voter turnout, there may be two competing forces working: African American disenfranchisement which suppresses voter turnout and racial homogeny which if effectively coupled with voter mobilization efforts may potentially be used to facilitate voter turnout.

To better understand what these coefficients mean in terms of estimated probability of voting, predicted probabilities were estimated for turnout by calculating predicted logits and then transforming them into probabilities (Snijders & Bosker, 1999). In 2004, the average African American,[9] living in a state with no disenfranchised African Americans, had an 81.5% likelihood of voting. Those living in a state with Black disenfranchisement at the maximum (34%) were 69.1% likely to vote. This represents a 12-point decrease in voting probability.

While the probabilities remain relatively high, it is important to note that at the time, the 2004 presidential election was the highest recorded voter turnout since the 1968 presidential election with 60.7% of eligible voters participating (Faler, 2005). Increased turnout in presidential elections, which are highly salient among the American public, typically generate greater turnout than state elections (Campbell, 1966; Jackson, 2000; Wolfinger, Rosenstone, & McIntosh, 1981). Given this, the effect of felony disenfranchisement, specifically African American disenfranchisement during local and state races or midterm election years, may be even more profound. The effect of felony disenfranchisement on turnout may be particularly detrimental to the political preferences of African Americans, because it is during

midterm elections when a political party is in position to lose or gain control of state offices. With respect to felony disenfranchisement, governor's races have been particularly important in recent years as dramatic changes to policies pertaining to the RCR which allow individuals to regain the right to vote among other civil rights, in Florida, Iowa, and most recently Kentucky, were enacted (and rescinded) not through legislative action but by executive orders issued by governors.

Although both felony disenfranchisement and Black disenfranchisement are not consistently significant predictors of turnout (see Note 8), the findings suggest that felony disenfranchisement can suppress the voter turnout of African Americans. Specifically, the size of the disenfranchised African American population reduces turnout. While one might expect this to be true for African Americans who occupy a lower socioeconomic status, the analysis suggests that controlling for socioeconomic status, African American felony disenfranchisement has a profound effect on African American voter turnout. This effect also exists in spite of voting policies that have the expressed goal of facilitating voter turnout by providing increased access to registration and voting.

Discussion

The right to vote is an essential element of American citizenship. Depriving others of this fundamental right of citizenship benefits those who do possess full citizenship, because it allows them to maintain their hierarchical dominance. When one system of control eventually crumbles, a new and more subtle system generally takes its place. This has certainly been the case for people of color. Systems of discrimination based on color, gender, and class have been intertwined in seemingly complex ways to continue social caste systems, particularly racial caste systems, in attempts by the powerful to retain power. In contemporary American politics, mass incarceration and the hyperincarceration (Wacquant, 2010) of African Americans coupled with felony disenfranchisement represent a system that continually excludes large segments of the American citizen population and even larger segments of the African American citizen population from political participation. Although felony disenfranchisement laws are race neutral on the surface, historical and contemporary disparities in prosecution, sentencing, and incarceration suggest that racism underlies the practice of felony disenfranchisement (Alexander, 2012; Manza & Uggen, 2004; Manza, Uggen, & Behrens, 2008).

Although limited in the number of elections, this analysis has shown that felony disenfranchisement, the removal of the right to vote, affects not only the political power of the individual but also the collective political power of

the communities and states to which they return after the completion of their sentences. Communities with high rates of people with felony convictions have fewer votes to cast, all residents of these neighborhoods, not just those with a felony conviction, become less influential than residents of more affluent neighborhoods.

Over the course of American history, there have been many legal barriers established to exclude Americans from the franchise. These legal and discriminatory structures in turn become imbedded in our legal system and traditions. Through amendments to the U.S. Constitution and the 1965 Voting Rights Act, poll taxes and literacy tests have been outlawed; felony disenfranchisement, however, continues to represent a variation in structural inequality; one that is demonstrated by this analysis to have consequences that extend beyond the population of citizens with felony convictions.

While some may argue that the disenfranchised themselves may not be interested in participation (Haselswerdt, 2009; Miles, 2004), Judith Shklar (1991) asserts that the exercise of voting is not what matters, it is the right to do so. Felony disenfranchisement represents a barrier to participation that not only limits the ability of formerly incarcerated citizens to be fully reintegrated back into society and restored to full citizenship but also affects political outcomes by contributing to decreased turnout among and representaiton for enfranchised citizens. While the effects of community imprisonment and incarceration on political participation have been documented (Burch, 2014; Walker, 2014), felony disenfranchisement has yet to receive the same attention. The findings regarding African American disenfranchisement and racial segregation in particular coupled with the spatial concentration of citizes with felony convictions at the local level (Beaulieu & King, 2016) lend themselves to the need for continued research that investigates felony disenfranchisement at the neighborhood and community level. While the present analysis does not allow us to definitively assert why, what the analysis has shown is that the removal of the right to vote from a significant portion of the citizen population in a state has negative consequences on those citizens who are eligible to vote.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

Funding

Notes

1. The terms *Black* and *African American* are used interchangeably throughout the text.
2. Civil disabilities refers to a condition of a person who has had a legal right or privilege revoked as a result of criminal conviction.
3. Corruption of the blood arises from being condemned for a serious capital crime (felony or treason). It entails losing not only one's property and hereditary titles but typically also the right to pass them on to one's heirs (Black's Law Dictionary, 2009).
4. Also includes states that require a waiting period following the completion of sentence prior to rights restoration.
5. Prior to analyzing the data, respondents who were ineligible to vote (noncitizens and those younger than 18 years of age) were removed from the Current Population Survey (CPS) sample in order to model whether a respondent reported voting. Black respondents are those who identify as Black, non-Hispanic.
6. Disenfranchisement is the percentage of the voting age population in each state who are ineligible to vote due to a felony conviction. African American disenfranchisement is the percentage of the voting age, African American population in each state who are ineligible to vote due to a felony conviction.
7. Vermont was dropped from the analysis due to inadequate data (i.e., an inadequate number of Black respondents) across all Level 1 predictors in a group (state). The exclusion of Vermont due to inadequate data is not surprising given that the actual Black population in Vermont was 0.7% according to the 2000 Decennial Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001).
8. Although not discussed in the text, the models were also estimated using disenfranchisement estimates from the 2000 presidential election (Uggen & Manza, 2002). Neither disenfranchisement nor Black disenfranchisement was significant across any of the 2000 election models. Segregation, however, was positive and significant across all four models.
9. All individual-level explanatory variables are held at their mean, median or modal values. The respondent is assumed to earn US$40,000 to US$49,999, be a high school graduate or equivalent, female, not married, employed, reside in an urban area, and have lived at their residence for more than 5 years (modal values). States are assumed to have a Senate election but not a gubernatorial race (modal values). The variable age is held at the mean value. All states are assumed not to be in the South, have early voting, or Election Day registration (modal values). Closing date is set at the modal value of 30 days. Descriptive representation and segregation are held at their mean values, varying the rate of African American disenfranchisement in the state. Vote probability was also calculated for the average rate of African American disenfranchisement (8.8%); the probability of voting was 62.4%.

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