

**Sidelined or Mainstreamed? Political Participation and Attitudes of
People with Disabilities in the United States***

Lisa Schur
School of Management and Labor Relations
Rutgers University
50 Labor Center Way, New Brunswick, 08901
schur@work.rutgers.edu

Meera Adya
Burton Blatt Institute
Syracuse University
900 S. Crouse Avenue
Crouse-Hinds Hall, Suite 300
Syracuse, NY 13244-2130
madya@syr.edu

* Direct all correspondence to Lisa Schur, School of Management and Labor Relations, Rutgers University, 50 Labor Center Way, New Brunswick, 08901, schur@work.rutgers.edu. We thank Doug Kruse for valuable discussions and assistance. Funding for the disability module for the 2006 General Social Survey was provided by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, Grant No. H133B980042-99, and the Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relations. Funding for the disability module on the Maxwell Poll of Citizenship and Inequality was provided by a BBI Innovation Grant to Professor Jeffrey Stonecash of the Maxwell School on Citizenship and Public Affairs. The authors wish to thank Peter Blanck and James Schmeling of Syracuse University, and Tom Smith of the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, for their work in arranging the General Social Survey disability module, and Professor Stonecash for arranging the Maxwell Poll disability module.

Sidelined or Mainstreamed? Political Participation and Attitudes of People with Disabilities in the United States

Abstract

Objective: We examine whether people with disabilities are part of the political mainstream, or remain outsiders in important respects, by studying political participation and the underexplored topic of how disability relates to attitudes toward politics. *Method:* We analyze new disability measures on the 2008 CPS voting supplement, and two other nationally representative surveys for 2006 and 2007. *Results:* Citizens with disabilities remain less likely than non-disabled citizens to vote. While there are few differences in political preferences and party affiliations, people with disabilities tend to favor a greater government role in employment and health care, and give lower ratings on government responsiveness and trustworthiness. *Conclusion:* People with disabilities continue to be sidelined in important ways. Fully closing the disability gap would have led to 3.0 million more voters in 2008, potentially affecting many races and subsequent public policies.

Introduction

An estimated 36 million people with disabilities in the United States, making them one of the largest minority groups (Erickson et al. 2009). While people with disabilities have made tremendous political gains over the past few decades, most notably with the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990, evidence indicates that they are not yet equal participants in the American political system, raising concerns that they remain marginalized and their interests are often neglected by politicians and elected officials.

This paper examines whether people with disabilities continue to have lower levels of political participation, and whether their political views and attitudes tend to differ from those of

citizens without disabilities. We base our analysis on three recent nationally-representative surveys: the 2008 Current Population Survey (CPS), the 2006 General Social Survey (GSS), and the 2007 Maxwell Poll on Citizenship and Inequality (“Maxwell poll”). In addition to shedding light on the political participation and views of this historically disadvantaged group, studying the constraints faced by many people with disabilities can also provide insights into factors that influence political views and participation more generally.

Theory and Prior Literature

Political participation

The factors affecting political participation can be divided into three categories: resources (“Are you able to participate?”), psychology (“Do you want to participate?”), and recruitment (“Did anyone ask you to participate?”)(Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Resources include time, money, and civic skills; psychological factors include political interest, civic values, feelings of efficacy, group consciousness, and commitment to specific policies; and political recruitment occurs through formal and informal networks. Research on the general population demonstrates that factors in each of these categories strongly influence the likelihood of voting (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Conway 2000).

Disability may affect voter turnout in a number of ways. Limited resources, including reduced physical stamina and mobility, can depress voter turnout. People with disabilities have lower average income and education levels than people without disabilities, and their financial resources are often further constrained by higher expenses for medical care and special equipment (Kruse 1998).

Political recruitment among people with disabilities is limited by their relative isolation. They are more likely than non-disabled people to live alone and face transportation problems,

and are less likely to be involved in community and social activities (NOD/Harris 2004). Recent empirical research demonstrates the importance of community and social involvement in influencing political participation (Anderson 2009). Physical and social isolation can be exacerbated by states' disenfranchisement of some individuals with disabilities, frequent neglect by candidates and parties, and negative messages about disability conveyed through public policy, the media, and inaccessible polling places.

Regarding psychological factors, the stigma and discrimination associated with disability (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights 1983; Yuker 1988) may combine with isolation and diminished resources to decrease feelings of personal efficacy and control, and lead some people to withdraw from society and reduce their political participation (Anspach 1979). Stigma and discrimination may, however, motivate other individuals to become politically active, as shown by the growth of the disability rights movement (Anspach 1979; Hahn 1985; Scotch 1988).¹

Resources, recruitment, and psychological factors all appear to contribute to lower voter turnout among people with disabilities (Schur et al. 2002). Ten studies over the 1992-2004 elections all indicate lower voter turnout among people with disabilities²:

Election year	Disability sample	Disability turnout	Non-disability turnout	Gap
1) 1992	People w/SCI's	56%	71%	15%
2) 1992	Broad disability sample	45%	56%	11%
3) 1994	Non-employed	33%	54%	21%
4) 1992-96	Non-employed	57%	71%	14%
5) 1996	Non-employed	44%	65%	21%
6) 1996	Broad disability sample	33%	50%	17%
7) 1998	Broad disability sample	54%	60%	6%
8) 2000	Broad disability sample	70%	82%	12%
9) 2000	Broad disability sample	41%	52%	11%
10) 2004	Broad disability sample	52%	56%	4%

In addition to lower voter turnout, people with disabilities have also been less likely to participate

in other forms of political activity, such as contacting elected officials, contributing money to campaigns or political groups, and attending political meetings (Schur 2003).

Mobility problems in particular appear to contribute to the low turnout of people with disabilities. Turnout in 1998 was lowest among people who reported difficulty going outside their homes alone (Schur et al. 2002). Also, studies 1 and 7 found 30% of people with disabilities were not able to drive, and voter turnout was 15-20 percentage points lower among this group. Absentee voting can be an attractive alternative for people with mobility impairments or other transportation difficulties, and is about twice as high among voters with disabilities (Schur et al. 2002). Even with the option of absentee voting, however, turnout is lower among people with mobility problems, suggesting that greater mobility may have important social and psychological effects through increased social interactions, feelings of efficacy, and identification with mainstream society.

Turnout of people with disabilities may also be discouraged by barriers getting to or using polling places. The General Accounting Office (2009) found that only 27% of polling places in 2008 had no potential impediments to access by people with disabilities. In the 2000 election survey, 6% of people with disabilities who had voted in the past 10 years reported encountering problems in voting at a polling place, while one-third (33%) of all others with disabilities said they would expect problems, compared to only 2% of people without disabilities (Kruse et al. 2001).³

The Internet can help ameliorate transportation and accessibility difficulties by providing an easy way to share information and mobilize for political action. However, people with disabilities are less likely than non-disabled people to have access to computers and the Internet (Kaye 2000), which limits their opportunities to become involved in web-based political activity.

The above factors and evidence lead to our first hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: People with disabilities have lower levels of political participation than people without disabilities.

Political preferences and affiliations

In comparison to studies on voter turnout, very few studies have examined political views and attitudes among people with disabilities. While the disability population is heterogeneous, some patterns might be expected. As noted, disability is associated with lower levels of income and education, and with higher age (Kruse 1998). Age and education are generally associated with greater perceived responsiveness of government (Conway 2000), so the net effect of higher age and lower education of people with disabilities is unclear. People with higher education and income levels are more likely to follow politics (Conway 2000), so lower levels of education and income among people with disabilities are likely to lead to less political interest.

As members of an historically-disadvantaged group, it might be expected that people with disabilities would tend to favor Democrats since the Democratic party has traditionally been associated with the expansion of civil rights and social programs. As noted by Gastil (2000: 590), "Disability activists' contemporary emphases on civil rights, the ADA, and health care reform . . . have been more resonant with Democratic Party themes and progressive intellectual ideas than with those of the Republicans." The disability rights movement, however, worked with both parties in passing the 1990 ADA and 2008 ADA Amendments Act, which was sponsored by both Democrats and Republicans and signed by Republican Presidents (Bush Sr. and Jr.). A 1996 survey of New Mexico residents nonetheless found that people with disabilities were disproportionately likely to identify themselves as Democrats (Gastil 2000). In terms of top-down drives for affiliations, the Democratic party's website does have a page devoted to "Democrats with Disabilities" and a Facebook page of the same name; this was not found for the

GOP.⁴ This leads to our second hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: People with disabilities are more likely than people without disabilities to identify themselves as Democrats.

Many people with disabilities experience ongoing health problems and high medical expenses, and they are twice as likely as those without disabilities to worry that they will not be able to care for themselves and will be a burden on their families (NOD/Harris 2004: 69). It is also likely that employment will be a major concern, given their low employment rates and expressed desire for employment among a majority of non-employed people with disabilities (Erickson et al. 2009; NOD/Harris 2004). When asked what they considered to be the biggest problem facing their state, New Mexico residents with disabilities were twice as likely as non-disabled people to identify public health care (Gastil 2000). They nonetheless were more likely to identify jobs and the economy as the biggest problem. Among those who said that disability affected their political views, 48% said they had become more concerned about disability issues and many cited their fear of losing benefits (Gastil 2000, p. 599). In analyses of the American National Election Survey data (ANES) for 1976, 1992, and 2004, Lau and Heldman (2009) found that identification as “permanently disabled” predicted support for government health insurance in all three years, but disability status predicted support for guaranteed jobs and incomes only in 1976. Our third hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 3: People with disabilities tend to favor a greater role for government in health care and employment.

Disability experiences may also affect broader political values. Albrecht (1976) and Gastil (2000) suggest that a person with a disability may find it harder to be “a model of rugged individualism and economic success,” leading to greater identification with “liberal” values of

equality, compassion, and tolerance of social deviance. The experience of stigma may also lead people to have a more negative view of government. Gastil's survey of New Mexico residents found people with disabilities expressed more egalitarian values, although did not differ from those without disabilities on a liberal-conservative scale. When asked if disability had affected their political views, 45% of respondents with disabilities said yes, and 8% of these said it had made them more inclined to vote Democratic or embrace liberal values. Among the 45% who said that disability had affected their political views, 15% said that it had made them more cynical and antigovernment (Gastil 2000). Some prior evidence supports the idea that people with disabilities have lower levels of external political efficacy, the belief that government officials are responsive to their needs (Schur et al. 2003). This leads to our final hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: People with disabilities are less likely than people without disabilities to view government as responsive and trustworthy.

Datasets and Method

We use three sources of data: the 2008 Current Population Survey (CPS), the 2006 General Social Survey (GSS) and the 2007 Maxwell poll. The CPS is a monthly representative survey of the U.S. population designed primarily to obtain employment information. In November of each even-numbered year it includes a Voting Supplement with several questions about voter turnout in the election that just occurred. The Bureau of Labor Statistics added six questions to identify disability status starting in June 2008, which are presented in the appendix. In November 2008, 92,360 people of voting age were included in the supplement, with a weighted disability prevalence is 12.5%. The questions allow identification of four major categories of impairment: visual, hearing, mobility, and mental/emotional. The total of 131.1 million voters estimated from this voting supplement is very close to the 131.3 million voters

recorded by the Federal Election Commission.⁵

The GSS is a long-standing nationally-representative survey of Americans age 18 or older, conducted every year or two since 1972 by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago.⁶ The Maxwell poll is also a nationally-representative survey of Americans age 18 or older, conducted every year by the Campbell Public Affairs Institute at Syracuse University from 2004 to 2007.⁷ The 2006 GSS and 2007 Maxwell poll had seven questions added to identify people with disabilities. The seven questions used in both surveys were drawn from the 2001-02 National Comorbidity Survey after an intensive analysis to determine the most efficient set of questions for identifying people with disabilities (McMenamin et al. 2006). The 2006 GSS has a total of 2,777 respondents with disability information of whom 590 were identified with a disability, with a weighted disability rate of 19.2%. The 2007 Maxwell poll has a total of 568 respondents, of whom 135 are identified with a disability and the weighted disability rate is also 19.2%. These disability rates are very close to the rate of 17.6% using the same disability identifiers in the 2001-02 NCS, and only slightly higher than the 17.7% rate using a different set of identifiers for those age 21 or older in the 2006 American Community Survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau.⁸ The seven questions identifying disability are presented in the appendix. As with the CPS, the questions allow identification of the four major categories of impairments.

An advantage of the CPS voting supplement is the much larger sample size than used in any prior study, providing strong power in testing prior results that found disability associated with lower voter turnout. A disadvantage is that the CPS does not have measures of political recruitment or efficacy, so it cannot be used to fully disentangle the reasons for any lower turnout. Therefore we use the CPS simply to see if past patterns continued to hold in the 2008

elections, and put our focus on how disability is related to political preferences and attitudes, which has received very little attention in prior literature.

The analysis is broken into three broad topics: political participation (Tables 1 to 3), political preferences and affiliations (Table 4), and views of government and politics (Tables 5 and 6). We use probit regressions for binary variables and ordered probits where the dependent variable can take several values in a natural ordering.⁹

Disability and Political Participation

Citizens with disabilities were less likely than non-disabled citizens to report voting in the 2008 elections, consistent with Hypothesis 1. As shown in Table 1, their overall voting rate was 7.2 percentage points lower than that of people without disabilities in 2008 using the CPS measure of disability.¹⁰ There were especially large voting gaps for people with mental/emotional impairments (18.4 points) and difficulty in going outside alone (18.8 points), despite the availability of absentee ballots. The latter result strongly suggests the importance of social or psychological factors associated with mobility outside the home. Among those who voted, the CPS data show voters with disabilities were more likely to vote by mail (25.8% compared to 15.2%), with an especially high rate among those who have difficulty with self-care (38.4%). Table 1 also shows people with disabilities were less likely to have contacted a public official or attended a political meeting or rally, and have a lower mean number of political activities.

Do these gaps remain after controlling for other factors? Table 2 first compares people with and without disabilities on the means of variables affecting voter turnout, and then presents regressions predicting voter turnout. People with disabilities are about 10 years older than non-disabled people on average, which should increase their participation since age is associated with higher participation (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Miller and Shanks 1996), but they are also

less likely to be married and have lower levels of education—only 14.3% have a college or graduate degree compared to 29.4% of people without disabilities—which could help account for lower participation since education is strongly linked to political participation.

We first control only for demographic factors apart from education, so that the estimated disability gap partly reflects the lower average education of people with disabilities. This indicates the long-term potential for increased turnout as educational levels rise among people with disabilities (Jolls 2004). Regression 1 shows that people with disabilities were 11.7 percentage points less likely than otherwise-similar people without disabilities to vote in 2008 (regression 1). When further controlling for education in regression 2, the gap reduces to 7.0 percentage points, indicating that education accounted for about 40% of the 11.7 point gap. When separated by disability measure in regression 3, the turnout gap is greatest for people with disabilities who have difficulty going outside alone (12.1 points), but is also large and significant for those with mental/emotional impairments (6.0 points) and those who report difficulty with self-care (5.4 points). In regressions done separately for each sample, the predictors of voting tend to be similar between the disability and non-disability samples (regressions 4 and 5).

How many more voters might there be if the disability gap were closed? The 11.7 point gap in column 1 implies that there would be 3.0 million more voters if people with disabilities voted at the same rate as non-disabled people of similar age, gender, race/ethnicity, and marital status.¹¹ Their lower levels of education play a substantial role in this gap. Holding education constant, column 2's estimate of a 7.0 point gap implies 1.8 million more voters if people with disabilities voted at the same rate as non-disabled peers with similar education levels.

Non-voting forms of political participation are examined in Table 3 with regressions using the Maxwell data that control for demographic and resource variables. People with

disabilities report performing .17 fewer political activities on average in the past year (column 1), consistent with evidence from 1998 and 2000 (Schur 2003). When broken out by disability type, people with mental/emotional disabilities perform a significantly lower .23 political activities, while people with hearing impairments have a similar gap (-.22) that narrowly misses statistical significance, and people with visual or mobility impairments did not perform fewer political activities than their non-disabled counterparts. Overall, the results support Hypothesis 1 on the lower political participation of people with disabilities.

Political Preferences and Affiliations

Do people with disabilities vote differently than people without disabilities? Table 4 shows that they were more likely to favor Kerry in the 2004 election, giving him a 3-point edge (51% to 48%) as opposed to the 8-point edge for Bush (53% to 45%) among voters without disabilities. Table 4 also shows, however, that there were no significant differences in their likelihood of being a Democrat or Republican (in contrast to the findings of Gastil 2000), or in their views of the Democratic and Republican parties. They were, however, more likely to give “other” as their party affiliation (20% compared to 7% for non-disabled people). Consistent with the data on party membership and views, people with and without disabilities are also very similar in their distributions along a conservative-liberal scale. When these comparisons are probed with regressions, there are no significant differences between people with and without disabilities on any of these variables, which does not support Hypothesis 2.

Views of Government and Politics

Do people with disabilities have different views of what government should be doing? Table 5 shows that people with disabilities prefer a greater role for government in general. In line with their low employment rates and the higher salience of health care for people with

disabilities, they are more likely than people without disabilities to say it is the responsibility of government to provide a job for everyone who wants one, and provide health care for the sick, supporting Hypothesis 3. They also, however, are more likely to say that government has the responsibility to keep prices under control, provide industry with help to grow, give help to university students from low-income families, and provide decent housing for those who can't afford it. When asked about government policies and spending, however, there are only two policies on which people with disabilities differ from non-disabled respondents: they are less likely to favor decreased government regulation of business (perhaps reflecting the perceived importance of the ADA and anti-discrimination legislation), and more likely to favor increased spending on health care (lines 13 and 18, Table 5).

There is a striking difference in views of civil liberties. People with disabilities are more likely to say revolutionaries should be allowed to hold public meetings and publish books, and less likely to say government should be allowed to detain people without trial, tap telephone conversations, or stop and search people at random to protect against a terrorist act. The higher priority given to civil liberties among people with disabilities may reflect their perspective as part of a marginalized group whose privacy has often been violated.

Therefore while people with disabilities do not identify as more liberal or supportive of Democrats, they are more willing to support civil liberties and government action in several areas. This may show some effect of self-interest, but it is not expressed as endorsement of any one party or ideology. Research has consistently found that predictions of self-interest guiding support for various political measures do not empirically bear out and instead that more abstract symbolic attitudes often guide individuals' political beliefs (Lau and Heldman 2009). In their analyses of American National Election Survey data from 1972 to 2004, the exceptions to this

theory were for people identifying as “permanently disabled” who were more willing to support public programs in alignment with their self-interest.

Perhaps surprisingly, Table 6 shows that people with disabilities are no different than those without disabilities in evaluations of the government’s success in providing health care for the sick—this may reflect the widespread availability of Medicare and Medicaid among people with disabilities. They do, however, rate the government lower on fighting unemployment (line 5). Perceptions of overall government responsiveness (external efficacy) are lower among people with disabilities (line 7), with an especially large disability gap in agreeing that “most government officials can be trusted to do what is best.” This is consistent with Hypothesis 4 and past research (Schur et al. 2003), where it was suggested that pejorative messages received from public officials—especially among non-employed people with disabilities—may discourage feelings of external efficacy (Schneider and Ingram 1993).

Finally, we explore political interest, exposure to news, and perceived competence to participate in politics in Table 6, for which we do not have specific hypotheses. While the Maxwell poll indicates that people with disabilities are somewhat less likely to follow politics and public affairs, the GSS data do not show a significant difference in interest in politics. The Maxwell data do not show less exposure to news through the newspaper, television, or the Internet among people with disabilities, but people with disabilities are less likely to say that the Internet has affected their own level of political activity (line 7). There are no significant differences in perceived competence to participate in politics, consistent with earlier findings that lower internal efficacy of people with disabilities is primarily due to their lower average level of education, and the disability gap disappears when controlling for education (Schur et al. 2003).

Conclusion

People with disabilities are less likely than those without disabilities to vote and engage in other forms of political activity. Analysis of the CPS sample for 2008 confirms there is a substantial disability voting gap, indicating increased turnout of people with disabilities could make an important difference in elections. If the disability gap were fully closed, there would be an additional 3.0 million voters with disabilities. Much of the gap (about 40%) comes from the lower average education levels of people with disabilities. One encouraging trend is that the education gap has narrowed in the past 20 years as people with disabilities have increasingly been completing high school and attending college (NOD/Harris 2004; Jolls 2004).

While we did not find differences in general political attitudes or affiliations, people with disabilities tend to support a greater role for government in several areas, including health care and the economy. They also have more negative views of government performance in fighting unemployment (consistent with their low employment levels) and give lower ratings to government on responsiveness and trustworthiness, which may reflect negative messages and neglect from public officials (Schneider and Ingram 1993). While they appear to have the same exposure to news as people without disabilities, they are less likely to say the Internet has affected their own political activity, perhaps reflecting a digital divide (Kaye 2000).

While people with disabilities have made progress over the past several decades, their lower voter turnout and more negative views of government effectiveness and responsiveness lead us to conclude that they remain sidelined in American politics. It appears that much of this political inequality is not due to disability *per se*, but to economic and social inequalities associated with disability. Addressing the persistent barriers people with disabilities face and increasing their participation could make a difference in electoral outcomes and public policies, and help create a more vibrant and inclusive democracy.

Appendix: Variable definitions

Disability

CPS: The disability measure takes the value 1 if the respondent answered yes to any of these questions, and 0 otherwise:

- “Is . . . deaf or does . . . have serious difficulty hearing?”
- “Is . . . blind or does . . . have serious difficulty seeing even when wearing glasses?”
- “Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, does . . . have serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions?”
- “Does . . . have serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs?”
- “Does . . . have difficulty dressing or bathing?”
- “Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, does . . . have difficulty doing errands alone such as visiting a doctor’s office or shopping?”

GSS and Maxwell poll: The disability measure takes the value 1 if the respondent answered yes to either of the first two questions, or to two or more of the final five questions, and zero otherwise.

“Do you have:

A hearing problem that prevents you from hearing what is said in normal conversation even with a hearing aid?

A vision problem that prevents you from reading a newspaper even when wearing glasses or contacts?

Any condition that substantially limits one or more basic physical activities such as walking, climbing stairs, reaching, lifting, or carrying?

Any other physical disability?

Any emotional or mental disability?

Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition lasting 3 months or longer, do you have difficulty doing any of the following...

Learning, remembering or concentrating?

Participating fully in school, housework, or other daily activities?”

References

- Anderson, Marian. R. 2009. "Community Psychology, Political Efficacy, and Trust." *Political Psychology* 31(1): 59-84.
- Anspach, Renee. 1979. "From stigma to identity politics: political activism among the physically disabled and former mental patients." *Social Science and Medicine* 13A: 765-773.
- Conway, M. Margaret. 2000. *Political Participation in the United States*. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly.
- Erickson, W., C. Lee, and S. von Schrader. 2009. *2008 Disability Status Report: the United States*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Disability Demographics and Statistics.
- Gastil, John. 2000. "The political beliefs and orientations of people with disabilities," *Social Science Quarterly*, 81, 588-603.
- GAO 2009. *More Polling Places Had No Potential Impediments than in 2000, but Challenges Remain*. GAO-09-685. Washington, D.C.: General Accounting Office.
- Hahn, Harlan. 1985. "Toward a Politics of Disability: Definitions, Disciplines, and Policies." *The Social Science Journal*, 22: 87-105.
- Jolls, Christine. 2004. "Identifying the Effects of the Americans with Disabilities Act Using State-Law Variation: Preliminary Evidence on Educational Participation Effects." *American Economic Review*, 94: 447-453.
- Kaye, H. Stephen. 2000. "Disability and the Digital Divide," Disability Statistics Report No. 22. San Francisco: University of California, Disability Statistics Center.
- Kruse, Douglas. 1998. "Persons with Disabilities: Demographic, Income, and Health Care Characteristics." *Monthly Labor Review*, 121(9): 13-22.

- Kruse, Douglas, Lisa Schur, Kay Schriener, and Todd Shields. 2001. "Fact Sheet on Voter Turnout, Voting Difficulties, and Disability in the 2000 Elections." School of Management and Labor Relations, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ.
- LoBianca, Anthony F. 1998. "Are the Costs Too High? Political Participation Among Disabled Americans." Draft, Department of Political Science, University of Kentucky
- McMenamin, Terence, S.M. Miller, and Anna Polivka. 2006. "Discussion and Presentation of the Disability Test Results from the Current Population Survey," Working Paper 396, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, August.
- Miller, Warren E., and J. Merrill Shanks. 1996. *The New American Voter*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- NOD/Harris 2004. *2004 N.O.D./Harris Survey of Americans with Disabilities*. Washington, D.C.: National Organization on Disability.
- Rosenstone, Steven, and John Hansen. 1993. *Mobilization, Participation and Democracy in America*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.
- RRTC 2007. *2006 Disability Status Report*. Ithaca, NY: Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Disability Demographics and Statistics, Cornell University.
- Schneider, Anne, and Helen Ingram. 1993. "Social Construction of Target Populations: Implications for Politics and Policy." *American Political Science Review* 87(2): 334-347.
- Schur, L. 2003. "Contending with the 'Double Handicap': Political Activism Among Women with Disabilities." *Women and Politics*, 15(2): 31-62.
- Schur, Lisa, and Douglas Kruse. 2000. "What determines voter turnout? Lessons from citizens with disabilities." *Social Science Quarterly* 81(2): 571-587.
- Schur, Lisa, Todd Shields, Douglas Kruse, and Kay Schriener. 2002. "Enabling democracy:

- Disability and voter turnout." *Political Research Quarterly* 55(1): 167-190.
- Schur, Lisa, Todd Shields, and Kay Schriener. 2003. "Can I Make A Difference? Efficacy, Employment, and Disability." *Political Psychology*, 24(1), 119-149.
- Schur, Lisa, Todd Shields, and Kay Schriener. 2005. "Voting." In G. Albrecht (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Disability*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Scotch, Richard. 1988. "Disability as the basis for a social movement: advocacy and the politics of definition." *Journal of Social Issues* 44: 159-172.
- Shields, Todd, Kay Schriener, and Ken Schriener. 1998. "The disability voice in American politics: Political participation of people with disabilities in the 1994 election." *Journal of Disability Policy Studies* 9: 33-52.
- U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. 1983. *Accommodating the Spectrum of Individual Abilities*, Clearinghouse Publication 81. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.
- Verba, Sidney, Kay Schlozman, and Henry Brady. 1995. *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Yuker, Harold, ed. 1988. *Attitudes Toward Persons with Disabilities*. New York: Springer.

Table 1: Political Participation

	People without disabilities	People with disabilities						
		Overall	Visual	Hearing	Mobility	Mental/emotional	Difficulty dressing/bathing	Difficulty going outside alone
Voting								
Voted in 2008 (CPS)	64.5%	57.3% **	56.8% **	63.1%	56.8% **	46.1% **	46.4% **	45.7% **
Disability gap		-7.2% **	-7.7% **	-1.4%	-7.7% **	-18.4% **	-18.1% **	-18.8% **
If voted, did so by mail	15.2%	25.8% **	28.7% **	24.9% **	28.0% **	25.3% **	38.4% **	34.8% **
n	80333	12027	1798	3377	7234	3501	1923	3946
Other political participation in past year (Maxwell)								
Contacted a public official	44.5%	34.3% **	35.6%	32.4%	35.6%	33.3%		
Attended political rally or meeting	17.8%	5.2% **	6.7% **	7.9%	1.4% **	2.2% **		
Contributed money to campaign	27.5%	17.8% **	10.0% **	21.1%	15.1% **	13.3% **		
Worked on campaign	8.5%	5.9%	5.0%	13.2%	6.8%	2.2%		
Joined Internet political group	4.4%	2.2%	0.0%	2.6%	1.4%	2.2%		
Sum of above 5 activities (mean)	1.032	0.659 **	0.586 **	0.784	0.603 **	0.533 **		
(s.d.)	(1.19)	(0.92)	(0.77)	(1.13)	(0.79)	(0.76)		
n	429	132	58	37	73	45		

* Significantly different from people without disabilities at $p < .10$ ** $p < .05$

Table 2: Predicting Voter Turnout in 2008

Coefficients represent marginal effects on probabilities based on probit regressions. Dep. var.=voted.

Indep. vars.	Means		Full sample	Full sample	Full sample	No disability	Disability
	No disab.	Disab.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Disability							
Any disability	0.000	1.000	-0.117 (19.57) **	-0.070 (11.51) **			
Hearing impairment	0.000	0.267			0.017 (1.57)		(omitted)
Visual impairment	0.000	0.151			-0.010 (0.73)		-0.014 (0.91)
Mental/emotional impairment	0.000	0.294			-0.060 (5.33) **		-0.073 (5.64) **
Mobility impairment	0.000	0.607			-0.012 (1.39)		-0.020 (1.65)
Difficulty w/self-care	0.000	0.165			-0.054 (3.42) **		-0.052 (3.22) **
Difficulty going outside alone	0.000	0.339			-0.121 (9.58) **		-0.122 (9.40) **
Other demographics							
Female	0.517 **	0.545	0.049 (13.01) **	0.042 (11.00) **	0.044 (11.47) **	0.046 (11.32) **	0.026 (2.30) **
Black	0.120 **	0.129	0.023 (3.65) **	0.063 (10.13) **	0.064 (10.25) **	0.056 (8.31) **	0.124 (7.16) **
Hispanic	0.097 **	0.077	-0.130 (19.25) **	-0.067 (9.84) **	-0.066 (9.70) **	-0.069 (9.70) **	-0.025 (1.17)
Other race/ethnicity	0.058 **	0.046	-0.140 (16.81) **	-0.157 (18.36) **	-0.156 (18.21) **	-0.168 (18.63) **	-0.056 (2.05) **
Age	44.7 **	60.6	0.011 (16.52) **	0.007 (9.73) **	0.006 (9.39) **	0.006 (7.60) **	0.005 (2.52) **
Age squared	2276.5 **	3988.9	-0.00007 (10.38) **	-0.00002 (2.73) **	-0.00002 (2.40) **	-0.00001 (1.22)	-0.00001 (0.55)
Married	0.568 **	0.429	0.064 (11.62) **	0.058 (10.30) **	0.055 (9.78) **	0.052 (8.77) **	0.092 (5.12) **
Separated or divorced	0.120 **	0.180	-0.059 (8.14) **	-0.047 (6.43) **	-0.048 (6.53) **	-0.051 (6.52) **	-0.014 (0.72)
Widowed	0.045 **	0.212	-0.071 (7.30) **	-0.048 (4.88) **	-0.045 (4.55) **	-0.035 (2.97) **	-0.034 (1.52)
Education							
High school degree	0.311 **	0.363		0.136 (22.02) **	0.134 (21.65) **	0.135 (19.22) **	0.146 (10.63) **
Some college, no degree	0.209 **	0.176		0.254 (41.16) **	0.252 (40.61) **	0.251 (36.54) **	0.267 (16.98) **
Associate's degree	0.093 **	0.075		0.251 (36.22) **	0.250 (35.99) **	0.248 (32.98) **	0.271 (13.68) **
Bachelor's degree	0.198 **	0.091		0.309 (50.12) **	0.308 (49.77) **	0.309 (45.64) **	0.303 (16.12) **
Graduate degree	0.096 **	0.052		0.314 (46.76) **	0.313 (46.43) **	0.313 (43.65) **	0.294 (12.83) **
Pseudo R-sq.			0.041	0.090	0.092	0.090	0.099
n	80333	12027	92360	92360	92360	80333	12027

* Difference is significant at p<.10 ** p<.05

Table 3: Predicting Other Forms of Political Participation

Dependent variable=political participation index. Based on OLS regressions using Maxwell data.

Indep. vars.	Means					
	No disab.	Disab.	(1)		(2)	
Any disability	0.000	1.000	-0.173	(1.70) *		
Hearing impairment	0.000	0.285			0.127	(0.64)
Visual impairment	0.000	0.424			-0.220	(1.64)
Mental/emotional impairment	0.000	0.369			-0.233	(1.93) *
Mobility impairment	0.000	0.532			0.013	(0.10)
Other demographics						
Female	0.491	0.609	-0.109	(1.04)	-0.101	(0.96)
Black	0.165	0.117	-0.078	(0.44)	-0.066	(0.37)
Hispanic	0.173	0.104	0.207	(1.04)	0.187	(0.92)
Other race/ethnicity	0.029	0.011	-0.069	(0.26)	-0.043	(0.16)
Age	44.1	52.1	0.012	(3.58) **	0.011	(3.33) **
Married	0.565 **	0.513	0.016	(0.11)	0.014	(0.09)
Separated or divorced	0.104	0.115	-0.208	(1.18)	-0.218	(1.24)
Widowed	0.057 **	0.157	-0.023	(0.11)	-0.035	(0.16)
High school or less (omitted)	0.22 **	0.44				
Some college	0.27	0.26	0.425	(3.43) **	0.450	(3.54) **
College degree	0.31 **	0.18	0.467	(3.47) **	0.501	(3.71) **
Graduate work	0.20 **	0.11	0.708	(4.25) **	0.742	(4.39) **
Income less than \$25,000 (omitted)	0.11 **	0.36				
Income 25,000-50,000	0.20	0.13	0.165	(1.04)	0.133	(0.82)
Income 50,000-75,000	0.21	0.12	0.062	(0.36)	0.022	(0.13)
Income 75,000-100,000	0.13 **	0.05	0.476	(2.34) **	0.449	(2.18) **
Income 100,000-125,000	0.06	0.04	0.102	(0.51)	0.048	(0.23)
Income 125,000-150,000	0.04	0.01	0.186	(0.50)	0.152	(0.40)
Income 150,000+	0.11 **	0.03	0.011	(0.05)	-0.034	(0.17)
Income DK/refused	0.14 **	0.25	-0.154	(0.98)	-0.214	(1.34)
Constant			-0.173	(0.88)	-0.144	(0.72)
R-sq.			0.172		0.176	
n	433	135	527		526	

* Difference is significant at $p < .10$ ** $p < .05$ (t-statistics in parentheses)

See descriptive statistics of dependent variable in Table 1.

Table 4: Political Preferences and Affiliations

	People without disabilities	People with disabilities				
		Overall	Visual	Hearing	Mobility	Mental/emotional
Voting preference in 2004 (GSS)						
If voted, voted for:						
Kerry	45.4%	50.6% *	46.7%	50.4%	49.2%	50.2%
Bush	53.2%	47.8% *	52.8%	47.6%	48.8%	48.8%
Other	1.4%	1.6%	0.5%	2.1%	1.9%	1.0%
n	1526	378	103	115	226	155
If didn't vote, would have voted for:						
Kerry	43.2%	49.6%	45.7%	54.4%	47.3%	50.8%
Bush	38.8%	33.9%	34.0%	29.5%	39.0%	33.7%
Other	18.0%	16.4%	20.4%	16.1%	13.7%	15.5%
n	454	148	53	39	88	82
Political affiliation (Maxwell)						
Democrat	43.5%	36.1%	38.4%	37.4%	40.2%	37.4%
Republican	25.1%	23.6%	30.1%	20.4%	21.0%	17.1%
Independent	24.0%	20.8%	19.4%	18.4%	21.5%	20.9%
Other	7.4%	19.5% *	12.1%	23.8%	17.3%	24.7% *
n	408	125	56	36	67	41
Views of parties (Maxwell)						
Democratic: favorable	37.4%	28.7%	22.4% *	32.5%	35.7%	35.1%
Democratic: unfavorable	40.0%	43.3%	45.4%	30.6%	43.1%	38.3%
Republican: favorable	25.4%	24.3%	30.7%	24.0%	20.7%	25.7%
Republican: unfavorable	50.4%	47.4%	47.9%	42.0%	53.8%	50.1%
n	432	133	58	37	73	45
Political ideology (GSS)						
Mean of 1-7 scale (7=very liberal)	3.85	3.87	3.65	3.68	3.81	3.84
(s.d.)	(1.39)	(1.47)	(1.51)	(1.50)	(1.46)	(1.51)
Liberal (5, 6, or 7)	26.3%	26.2%	22.8%	24.0%	24.9%	26.1%
Moderate (4)	38.4%	40.0%	38.3%	38.5%	40.9%	36.4%
Conservative (1, 2, or 3)	35.3%	33.8%	38.9%	37.5%	34.2%	37.5%
n	2124	556	160	160	336	251

* Significantly different from people without disabilities at p<.10 ** p<.05

Table 5: Views of What Government Should Be Doing

Each row represents results from a separate ordered probit, with dependent variable at left.^

Row ent variable	Disability		n	Pseudo R-sq.
	coeff.	(Z-stat.)		
Should be gov't responsibility to:				
1 Provide job for everyone who wants one	0.182	(2.19) **	1391	0.065
2 Keep prices under control	0.155	(1.64) *	1391	0.081
3 Provide health care for the sick	0.323	(3.45) **	1392	0.062
4 Provide decent standard of living for the old	-0.003	(0.03)	1398	0.07
5 Provide industry with help to grow	0.151	(1.74) *	1372	0.034
6 Provide decent standard of living for the unemployed	0.106	(1.25)	1372	0.047
7 Reduce income differences between rich and poor	0.101	(1.23)	1366	0.035
8 Give help to university students from low-income families	0.175	(1.88) *	1398	0.07
9 Provide decent housing for those who can't afford it	0.207	(2.27) **	1381	0.056
10 Impose strict laws on industry to protect environment	0.111	(1.27)	1384	0.016
Favor gov't policies to:				
11 Cut gov't spending	-0.059	(0.65)	1376	0.028
12 Finance projects to create jobs	0.037	(0.42)	1398	0.02
13 Have less gov't regulation of business	-0.167	(2.16) **	1371	0.011
14 Support new products and industry	0.038	(0.41)	1392	0.005
15 Support declining industries to save jobs	-0.047	(0.55)	1389	0.037
16 Reduce workweek to create jobs	0.007	(0.08)	1387	-0.012
Should be more gov't spending on:				
17 Environment	0.065	(0.77)	1373	0.013
18 Health	0.162	(1.95) *	1392	0.03
19 Police and law enforcement	-0.013	(0.15)	1390	0.007
20 Education	0.084	(1.01)	1398	0.035
21 Military and defense	-0.113	(1.39)	1388	0.017
22 Retirement benefits	0.040	(0.45)	1378	0.049
23 Unemployment benefits	0.073	(0.80)	1380	0.058
24 Culture and the arts	0.044	(0.51)	1375	0.022
Protection of civil liberties				
18 Okay to allow revolutionaries to hold public meetings	0.232	(2.61) **	1390	0.016
19 Okay to allow revolutionaries to publish books	0.248	(2.66) **	1393	0.032
To protect against terrorist act, authorities should be able to:				
20 Detain people without trial	-0.320	(3.98) **	1382	0.022
21 Tap telephone conversations	-0.236	(2.86) **	1387	0.018
22 Stop and search people at random	-0.212	(2.55) **	1394	0.015

* Significant at p<.10 ** p<.05

^ Control variables include female, black, Hispanic, other race, age, married, separated/divorced, widowed, years of education, and family income.

Table 6: Government Effectiveness and Political Interest

Each row represents results from a separate ordered probit, with dependent variable at left.^

Row	Dependent variable	Disability coeff.	(Z-stat.)	n	Pseudo R-sq.
How well gov't is doing (GSS)					
1	Providing health care for the sick	0.039	(0.50)	1379	0.01
2	Providing decent standard of living for the old	-0.013	(0.16)	1383	0.013
3	Dealing with threats to America's security	-0.083	(0.13)	1385	0.016
4	Controlling crime	-0.127	(1.59)	1390	0.023
5	Fighting unemployment	-0.192	(2.29) **	1364	0.027
6	Protecting the environment	-0.106	(1.22)	1383	0.015
Perceptions of gov't responsiveness (GSS)					
7	External efficacy (index of six items below)	-0.178	(2.34) **	1404	0.014
8	How often public officials deal fairly with people like you	-0.140	(1.71) *	1367	0.044
9	Treatment from public officials depends on who you know^^	0.006	(0.07)	1384	0.015
10	People like me don't have say about gov't^^	-0.103	(1.23)	1393	0.024
11	Average citizen has influence on politics	-0.104	(1.26)	1393	0.013
12	Congressional reps. try to keep promises	-0.133	(1.63)	1389	0.012
13	Most gov't officials can be trusted to do what is best	-0.231	(2.86) **	1385	0.011
Political interest					
14	Follow public affairs on regular basis (Maxwell)	-0.323	(1.72) *	534	0.108
15	How interested in politics (GSS)	-0.109	(1.33)	1402	0.04
Exposure to news (Maxwell)					
16	How often read newspaper	-0.078	(0.56)	533	0.056
17	How often watch TV news	-0.205	(1.36)	533	0.033
18	How often use internet for news	0.12	(0.84)	532	0.152
Effect of internet on politics (Maxwell)					
19	Affected ability of average citizens to influence politics	-0.041	(0.27)	439	0.079
20	Affected your own level of political activity	-0.281	(1.77) *	485	0.103
Perceptions of personal competence in politics (GSS)					
21	Internal efficacy (index of two items below)	-0.116	(1.39)	1403	0.046
22	Have good understanding of political issues	-0.084	(0.95)	1397	0.038
23	Most people better informed about politics than me^^	-0.104	(1.26)	1395	0.051

* Significant at p<.10 ** p<.05

^ Control variables include female, black, Hispanic, other race, age, married, separated/divorced, widowed, education, and family income.

^^ Reverse scored so that more positive value indicates more gov't responsiveness, or more personal compet

¹ For example, in one study of mental health consumers' experiences of stigma, individuals reported feeling hurt, angry, discouraged, and having lower self-esteem, but almost half of them also noted getting constructively engaged in advocacy (Wahl 1999). Another study of published narratives by persons with mental illness found that reactions of individuals who are stigmatized fall into three groups: (1) those who react to stigma with a loss of self-esteem, (2) those who ignore others' prejudice, and (3) those who are energized and become "righteously angry" (Corrigan and Watson 2002).

² These ten data sources use very different samples: the first is based on a survey of New Jersey residents with spinal cord injuries (SCI's)(Schur and Kruse 2000); numbers 2, 6, 8, and 10 are based on surveys by Louis Harris and Associates (NOD/Harris 2004); numbers 3, 4, and 5 are based on non-employed respondents to national surveys who answered an employment question by saying they have a disability (Shields, Schriener, and Schriener 1998a; LoBianca 1998); and numbers 7 and 9 are based on broader samples of people with disabilities (identified by questions based on the 2000 Census)(Schur et al. 2002; Schur et al. 2005).

³ The Department of Justice's Project Civic Access is examining civic access in communities around the United States (<http://www.ada.gov/civicfac.htm>), including common problems such as inaccessible voting places (<http://www.ada.gov/civiccommonprobs.htm>).

⁴ <http://my.democrats.org/page/group/Democratswithdisabilities> and <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=46277949794>, retrieved Oct. 25, 2010.

⁵ <http://www.fec.gov/pubrec/fe2008/2008presgeresults.pdf>.

<http://gss.norc.org/>

⁷ <http://www.maxwell.syr.edu/campbell/programs/maxwellpoll.htm>

⁸ Calculated from RRTC (2007) using estimates for the 20-64, 65-74, and 75 or older age categories.

⁹ All question wordings are available at <http://gss.norc.org/> or <http://www.maxwell.syr.edu/campbell/programs/maxwellpoll.htm>, or from authors.

¹⁰ As noted, the reported voting rate is close to the actual voter turnout in 2008. There is no reason to think that any under- or over-reporting differs by disability status, as discussed in Schur et al. (2002). The 2006 GSS has a measure of voter turnout in 2004, and the 2007 Maxwell poll has a measure of general voting likelihood. We analyzed these data as well (results available on request), but here focus on the more recent CPS data with a much greater sample size.

¹¹ This is based on the .125 disability prevalence rate and the 206.1 million people eligible to vote in 2008 (CPS weighted estimate).