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Native American Voter Turnout in the 2000 Election Cycle and the Effectiveness of the Efforts by the Montana Democratic Party to Increase the Native Vote

Barb Wagner
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An Exploratory Research Paper on
Native American Voter Turnout in the 2000 Election Cycle and The Effectiveness of the Efforts by the Montana Democratic Party to Increase the Native Vote

A Research Project Prepared for the Partial Completion of Honors At the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John’s University

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150 word summary

The Montana Democratic Party conducted extensive mobilization efforts on Montana's Indian reservations during the 2000 campaign. This research evaluates the effectiveness of these efforts in increasing the voter turnout by Native Americans. The voting decision of Montana's Native Americans is examined for factors that influence turnout. The mobilization efforts of the Montana Democratic Party are evaluated for their quality and effectiveness. This paper concludes that the efforts by the Montana Democratic Party did not increase voter turnout, and suggests areas for further study on the voting decision of Native Americans.
Last November 7th, a snowplow plowed out families in Roosevelt County, Montana during one of the biggest snowstorms of the winter. This does not seem to be a noteworthy event at first. However, the snowplow was hired by the Montana Democratic Party, and it was working to elect Democrats on November 7th, Election Day 2000. The snowplow was busy plowing out five families of a low-voting minority, eleven members of the Assiniboine and Sioux Indian tribes in the effort to get Montana’s Indian People to the polls1. This snowplow represents the extensive efforts of the Montana Democratic Party in the 2000 elections to increase the electoral participation of Montana’s Native American people2.

Studies have shown that Native Americans are less likely to vote than non-Native Americans3. Along with a low socioeconomic status that leads to low voter turnouts, Montana’s Indian tribes have a long history of conflict with federal and state governments that has resulted in alienation from the political system. However, voter turnout on Montana’s Indian reservations has slowly been increasing in the past decade. The greater electoral participation of Native Americans has attracted the attention of the media, political candidates, and political parties. In the past eight years, efforts have been made by the Montana Democratic Party and Democratic candidates to register and mobilize Indian voters. During the 2000 elections, the Indian vote was considered the key to Democrats winning elections, the weapon that would push Democrat candidates to a majority in an otherwise Republican leaning state.

---

1 Story gathered from interviews with Brad Martin, Barb Bonifas, Joe Lamson, and Bill Whitehead.
2 The terms Native American, American Indian, Indian, tribal members, and native people are used to used to describe the descendants of the indigenous people of the North American that now identify themselves as members of Montana’s resident Indian tribes. It should be noted that Indian people prefer specific tribal names used, and then the term American Indian (The Committee on Indian Affairs “The Tribal Nations of Montana; a Handbook for Legislators”, Bird, Michael Yellow. “What We Want to Be Called; Indigenous Peoples’ Perspectives on Racial and Ethnic Identity Labels”). In Montana, Indian is the accepted terminology. The term ‘Native American’ is the term used by the government organizations.
While observing the 2000 election from within the Democratic campaign structure, I was skeptical about the emphasis placed on Native American voters as the key to a victorious election, knowing that Indians traditionally vote at lower rates than other groups. After the campaign, I chose to explore the efforts to mobilize the Indian vote as the topic for my honors research. My goal was to evaluate the effectiveness of the efforts of the Montana Democratic Party (MDP) in mobilizing voters, which is necessary for the evaluation of the use of party resources, as well as the improvement of future mobilization activities. To evaluate the effectiveness of the MDP mobilization efforts, the following steps were taken. First, a general exploration of Native American voting was undertaken to identify general patterns in the voter turnout of Montana’s Native Americans. These patterns suggest various factors that are consideration in the Native American voting decision. Mobilization efforts attempt to change one or more of these factors to encourage voting. Second, I examined the structure and characteristics of the mobilization efforts themselves to evaluate whether or not the mobilization was properly undertaken. Previous studies on mobilization have identified characteristics of mobilization that must be achieved for mobilization to be successful. Third, I tested for effects of the mobilization efforts of the MDP among all the reservations to determine whether or not the mobilization efforts increased voter turnout. There are a number of other organizations involved in the effort to increase the voter turnout of Montana’s Native Americans, but this study focuses on the efforts of the MDP. However, the conclusions regarding the voting decision of Native Americans are pertinent to other organizations that are attempting to increase the Native vote.

The results of the research are incomplete. The results of the test for the effectiveness of the MDP mobilization efforts in increasing turnout are statistically insignificant, and suggest that the MDP’s mobilization efforts did not increase the voter turnout of Native Americans. The
quality of the mobilization efforts requires further study before concluding whether or not the MDP's mobilization efforts met the characteristics of a successful mobilization effort. Further study is also necessary for the factors involved in the voting decision of Native Americans, although this paper presents many factors that appear to be influential.

This paper presents the results of my research in five chapters. The first chapter provides background information for this research. The second chapter presents five general observations about the voter turnout patterns of Montana's Native American tribes that suggest factors that may be involved in the Native American voting decision. The third chapter identifies the characteristics of successful mobilization efforts and determines whether or not the efforts of the MDP met these characteristics. The fourth chapter tests the relationship between mobilization efforts of the MDP and voter turnout on each reservation, which is followed by the fifth chapter recommending areas for further study.
Chapter One: Background on Native American Voting

1.1: Studies of Native American Voting:

I was hampered in my research by a lack of information regarding Native American voter turnout. While studies on other minority populations, especially African Americans, are more abundant, there have been few studies on Native American voting. Studies on other minority populations are of limited applicability because of the unique situation of Native Americans as members of separate sovereign nations and cultures. The study of the voting behavior of Native Americans is difficult as Native American voting information is not tracked by the U.S. Census Bureau as it is for many other minority populations, and many do not have the telephones needed for surveys.

There have been attempts made to describe Indian voting behavior. Helen Peterson (1957) studied the participation of specific tribes, and found that Indians select candidates based on a specific Indian issue. She also pointed out the ability of Indian tribes to decide elections in many states, if they voted as a bloc. Peterson’s findings are relevant in Montana, as Montana’s elections are very close and Native Americans do vote as a block. Studies by McCool, Engstrom, and Barrilleaux (1985) have had similar conclusions about the block voting of tribes. However, Geoff Peterson (1997) confirmed that Native Americans do not have high levels of voter turnout. In fact, their turnout is lower than what their socioeconomic status suggests. Peterson also found that Indians who reside in Montana have a 66% greater chance of voting than Indians of other states, but does not identify the causes of low turnout, or differences in turnout between states. Eileen Luna suggests that Native Americans participate at lower levels because of alienation from the political system due to past conflicts. She suggests inclusion into
leadership roles in the party system and personal contact of Indian voters as successful techniques to increase turnout. Luna's conclusions were mirrored by comments of Indian activists interviewed\(^4\); all mentioned alienation or apathy among the reservation population and the necessity for personal, in-depth discussion of issues to encourage involvement. Finally, Joe Lamson (2000) researched the voter turnout increases from 1998 to 2000, and concluded that the Native American voter turnout had increased.

1.2: General Background Information About Montana's Reservations

Montana has seven Indian reservations as shown by the map found in Appendix A. Some reservations are home to more than one tribe, and in some cases these tribes inhabit the same reservation as historical enemy tribes. The Flathead reservation is 1.2 million acres located around Flathead lake that is the home of the Confederated Salish, Pend d'Oreille, and Kootenai tribes. The Blackfeet reservation, located next to Glacier Park, is a partial home to the Blackfeet tribe, with other Blackfeet members living on reservations in Canada. Rocky Boy Agency, the smallest reservation in Montana, located in North-central Montana, is occupied by the Chippewa and Cree tribes, which because of extensive intermarriage, is now recognized as one tribe, the Chippewa-Cree. Part of the Assiniboine tribe and the Gros Venture tribe are the residents of the Fort Belknap reservation, with about 700,000 acres of the highline as a part of their reservation. The Fort Peck Indian reservation is the largest in Montana, with the Sioux tribe and two bands of Assiniboine residing on the reservation. The Northern Cheyenne Reservation is located in Southeast Montana, has a single tribe, the Northern Cheyenne. Finally, the Crow Agency, home of Montana's Crow tribe, is located near the Northern Cheyenne reservation and Billings. The Little Shell tribe, which has just received federal recognition in 2000, is currently a landless tribe.

\(^4\) A listing of the interviewees and their positions is available in the bibliography.
without a reservation\textsuperscript{5}. As the Little Shell tribe has just received federal recognition, they will not be included in the report, as tribal voting information and tribal population data are not available.

Five of the seven reservations are represented in the state legislature by Native American representatives. The Flathead reservation is represented by Representative Joey Jayne, the Blackfeet reservation by Representative Carol Juneau, the Fort Peck Reservation by Representative Frank Smith, the Crow reservation by Representative Bill Eggers, and the Northern Cheyenne reservation by Representative Norma Bixby. Senator Gerald Pease represents both the Crow and Northern Cheyenne reservations. Representation by an Native American legislator does not appear to be a factor in the voting turnout of reservation voters, as those reservations not represented by a Native American have a slightly higher voter turnout (50\%) than those reservations represented by a Native American (48\%).

Montana’s Indian people are not the only residents on Indian reservations. There are many non-Indian people as well. These non-Indians are included into the voter turnout percentages. The number of Indians as a percent of the total reservation population is given below in Table 1:

\textsuperscript{5} The Committee on Indian Affairs “The Tribal Nations of Montana; a Handbook for Legislators” Montana Legislative Council, Helena MT. March 1995 and State of Montana Department of Transportation, ‘Map of Montana’s Indian Reservations”
Table 1  Percent of Voting Age Population that is Indian on Montana’s Indian Reservations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reservation</th>
<th>Total Population*</th>
<th>Indian Population</th>
<th>Indian Percentage</th>
<th>Voter Turnout**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blackfeet</td>
<td>10,100</td>
<td>8,729</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crow</td>
<td>6,894</td>
<td>5,335</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flathead</td>
<td>26,172</td>
<td>8,258</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Belknap</td>
<td>2,959</td>
<td>2,818</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Cheyenne</td>
<td>4,470</td>
<td>4,117</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocky Boy</td>
<td>2,676</td>
<td>2,604</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Peck</td>
<td>10,321</td>
<td>6651</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Census and Economic Information Center, Montana Department of Commerce, 4/16/01 from U.S. Census Bureau Data Released March 21, 2001
* Includes population on off-reservation trust lands
** Percentage of registered voters, 2000 elections

As well as non-Indians living on the reservation, it is estimated that almost half of Montana’s Indian population lives in off-reservation urban areas. Off-reservation Indians are not included in the voter turnout data.

The Indian percentage appears to be unrelated to voter turnout on the reservation, as shown in the following graph:

Graph 2. Percent Indian Compared to Voter Turnout

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Although the highest voter turnout is on the reservation with the lowest percentage Indian, there appears to be no strong relationship between voter turnout and percentage Indian on the reservation.

1.3: Organizations other than the Montana Democratic Party

Organizations other than the Montana Democratic Party have been involved in the efforts to increase in voter turnout among Native Americans. The effort to increase the voter turnout among Native American people originated within the Indian community and has only been adopted by the Democratic Party in recent years after the demonstration of effective participation from the Indian community. An influential group involved in the mobilization is Native Action, a non-profit organization dedicated to community empowerment and Native self-sufficiency. Native Action, active for the past 16 years, works to empower Indian communities politically and economically, receiving national recognition for its efforts to register and encourage the Indian vote. Native Action helped to organize the Honor the Earth tour in Montana, where artists Joan Baez, Bonnie Raitt, the Indigo Girls, and other artists performed to educate Indian voters on environmental issues and encourage Native Americans to vote. The concert was free to registered Indian voters, and included rallies on the Indian reservations to educate voters. The concert does not seem to have an impact on the level of voter turnout. Reservations that the concert visited, the Blackfeet, Northern Cheyenne, and Flathead reservations, actually had a lower average registered voter turnout (46%) than the reservations that were not visited by the concert (52%). The voting age turnout of the non-concert reservations was also higher (52%) than the reservations with the concert (30%). The Honor the Earth tour seems to have had an

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6 Honor the Earth Tour. "Honor the Earth Tour Pamphlet" honorthearth.org. 2000
impact on the number of registered voters however. The tour registered approximately 600 new
Indian voters during 2000. The reservations on which the Honor the Earth tour performed had
the greatest increases in the number of registered voters. Native Action organized other
mobilization efforts other than the concert tour, which possibly had an effect on the Native
American turnout.

The Tribal Councils have also encouraged participation in electoral politics, appointing
the Tribal College presidents as liaisons for elections. All the Tribal College presidents accepted
this appointment with vigor and planned campaign oriented activities, such as rallies or forums,
which encouraged the Indian vote. While the mobilization efforts of the Tribal Councils and of
Native Action probably influenced the Native American voter turnout, they are not the topic of
this study. This research is focused on the efforts of the Democratic party and the effects of
those efforts on voter turnout on Indian reservations.

The Republican party has not been as active in encouraging the Indian vote, which is not
surprising as Montana’s tribes tend to vote Democratic. Early in the 2000 campaign, some
attempts were made to court the Indian vote by individual candidates although that attention
was limited. The Republican Party platform did not have a presence at Indian pow-wows or
community events during the Montana elections. Matt Denny, the chair of the Montana
Republican party stated that the Republican party was not targeting Indian voters, saying “the
Republican Party of Montana targets all voters and we don’t have a special program for one kind

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7 Honor the Earth Tour. “Honor the Earth Tour Pamphlet” honortheearth.org. 2000
Hagengruber, James. “Concert
tour to Honor Earth, aid Indians” Billings Gazette.com. 9/29/00
8 Hagengruber, James. “Concert tour to Honor Earth, Aid Indians” Billings Gazette.com 9/29/00
9 Bonifas, Barbara. Correspondence. December 5, 2000
10 Rehberg for Congress Campaign “Rehberg Announces Support for President’s American Indian Program; Education Funding Important to Montana” Rehberg for 2000 webpage 4/1/00 and “Rehberg Supports Blackfeet Indian Tribe: Calls For GSA to Honor Tribal Sovereignty” 3/8/00
of voter or another”\textsuperscript{13}. As the Republican party does not attempt to encourage Indian voters to get to the polls, their effect on Indian turnout is negligible.

\textbf{1.4: How Mobilization Affects Voter Turnout:}

An understanding of the theory behind mobilization efforts and the voting decision may be helpful to the reader to understand the ways that mobilization can increase voter turnout. Voter turnout is the aggregate measure of the voting decision of many individuals in a population. This individual voting decision has been modeled by Anthony Down’s rational voter model, which has been adapted by subsequent studies\textsuperscript{14} since its conception in 1957. The rational voter bases the voting decision on the costs and benefits of voting as perceived by the voter, which can be modeled into the voting equation shown below:

\[ VD = P(B) + S - C \]

Where \( VD \) is the voting decision, \( P(B) \) is the perception of the gains to the voter from benefits of the chosen candidate with consideration of the probability of your vote making a difference, \( S \) is the social satisfaction gained and duty fulfilled when voting, and \( C \) is the opportunity costs of voting. The rational voter undergoes the measurement of each of these variables and consideration of all the costs, benefits, and satisfaction of voting when deciding whether or not to vote. The individual will vote if the result of the equation, \( VD \), is positive.

Each of the variables in the voting equation ((\( P(B) \), \( C \), \( S \)) are influenced by a number of other factors. For example, studies have shown that the cost term (\( C \)) is influenced by changes in

\textsuperscript{13} The top two Republican candidates, Senator Burns and then Congressional Candidate Rehberg did not attend the candidate Forum at the Race conference in Helena, the only forum specifically for an American Indian audience. "Candidates meet Tribal Leaders" Missoulian 8/11/00
\textsuperscript{12} LaMere, Darrell. Correspondence, April 25, 2001
\textsuperscript{13} McLaughlin, Kathleen. "Indian voters could Hold Key to Election". Billings Gazette.com. 9/17/00
\textsuperscript{14} A summary of this work is provided by Niemi, Richard G. and Wiesberg, Herbert, editors. in Classics in Voting Behavior. Congressional Quarterly. Washington D.C. 1993 pg 9. Scholars include Gordon Tullock (1967),
registration costs, ease of voting, driving time to the polls, availability of day care during polling hours, and many other opportunity costs to voting. Any factor that alters any of the variables in the above equation has an effect on voting behavior.

The goal of mobilization efforts is to alter the factors that are involved in the evaluation of the variables in the voting decision. The reduction of registration requirements, offering day care facilities, providing rides to polling places are all ways to influence the cost variable (C) in the voting equation, and affecting the decision to vote. Mobilization theory, presented by Jackson (1993) and Aldrich (1993), states that very small changes to factors involved in the voting decision can have a large impact on voter turnout, as the margins involved in the voting decision are small. Aldrich points out that while the benefits are diffused throughout the whole of society, the costs and social satisfaction are received by the individual voter, suggesting that the voter is more susceptible to changes in the C or S terms than P(B) in their decision to vote. Thus, most mobilization efforts target the C or S terms of the potential voters.

The process of how mobilization efforts influence the voting decision is modeled in Figure One below. The voting decision is a function of three different variables, each of which are influenced by a number of factors. Mobilization efforts target these other factors in an attempt to influence the voting decision.

![Figure 3: Process mobilization influences voting decision](image)

William Riker and Peter Ordeshook, John Ferejohn, Morris Fiorina, Richard Niemi (1971), Steven Rosenstone and RaymondWolfinger, Mancur Olson, and Popkin, Samuel
In the following chapters, we will see if the Montana Democratic Party properly conducted their mobilization efforts by changing factors influencing the voting decision and therefore increased the voter turnout of Native Americans. The next chapter suggests some of the factors that influence the voting decision of Native Americans that could be possible targets of mobilization efforts.
Chapter Two: General Observations about Native American Voting Behavior

There are five general observations in Native American voting behavior in Montana, which suggest the influence of various factors on the voting decision of Native Americans. This chapter explores these observations and provides possible explanations for these patterns. The five observations are listed below:

1. Reservation voters vote at lower levels than non-reservation voters.
2. Indians vote predominantly Democratic.
3. Indians have greater participation in tribal elections than in non-tribal elections.
4. Native Americans have increased their voter turnout from 1998 to 2000 more than the rest of the state.
5. Voter turnout varies among reservations.

There are a number of possible explanations for the observed patterns in Native American voting behavior. These explanations are provided by previous research on the voting decision, which will be utilized below to explore the five observations about Native American voting behavior.

2.1: Observation One: Reservation voters vote at lower levels than non-reservation voters.

Both the registered voter turnout and the voting age turnout of Montana’s Native Americans are lower than the turnout the rest of the state, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Reservation Voters Vote at Lower Levels than Non-reservation Voters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reservations</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registered Voter Turnout</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voting Age Turnout</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are a number of possible explanations for the lower turnout of Native American voters\textsuperscript{15}, but two of greatest significance are low socioeconomic status and the disconnectedness of the Native American voter. Socioeconomic status has a strong influence on the voting decision, and some studies\textsuperscript{16} claim it is the best predictor of whether or not an individual will vote. Groups with lower income, lower education levels, and higher levels of unemployment and poverty are less likely to vote than those of higher social levels. Socioeconomic status influences the costs (C) variable in the voting decision according to Brady, Verba, and Scholzman (1995, 1997), as those with higher socioeconomic status have less costs of becoming informed about issues, and have higher political skill levels. Higher socioeconomic citizens have stronger educational backgrounds to give them greater knowledge of issues, and are more likely to be exposed to political information in their workplace\textsuperscript{17}. Studies have also shown that people of higher socioeconomic status are also more active in community organizations that develop political skills that facilitate political participation.

Native Americans are of a lower socioeconomic status than the rest of the state, which helps to explain their lower voter turnout. The following Table 5 presents the socioeconomic indicators of unemployment rates, high school and college graduation rates, and per capita income on each of Montana’s Indian reservations, compared to the state averages of these indicators:

\textsuperscript{15} One alternative explanation is racism, where Native Americans are discouraged to vote because of their race. This is considered to be included in the causes for disconnectedness of Native American voters.


\textsuperscript{17} Conway, Margaret M. \textit{Political Participation in the United States}, Third Edition. CQ Press, Washington DC. 2000
Table 5  Socioeconomic Status Indicators on Montana’s Indian Reservations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reservation</th>
<th>Unemployment Rate</th>
<th>High School Graduation Rate</th>
<th>College Graduation Rate</th>
<th>Per Capita Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blackfeet</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>66.3%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>$4,718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crow</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>69.8%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>$4,243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flathead</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>73.3%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>$6,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Belknap</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td>66.6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>$4,536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Peck</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>61.4%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>$4,778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheyenne</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
<td>61.6%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>$4,479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocky Boy</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
<td>64.3%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>$4,278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montana Reservations</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>66.1%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>$4,776</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of Montana</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$19,660</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The socioeconomic status of Montana’s Native American tribes is much lower than the rest of Montana using all of the indicators presented in the table. While this socioeconomic status is an important consideration in the Native American voting decision, there is little mobilization efforts can do to improve the socioeconomic status in an effort to increase voter turnout.

However, mobilization efforts attempt to decrease the effects of low socioeconomic status by providing political information at low cost to voters and by developing the political skills and abilities of local community members.

Socioeconomic status is not the only reason given for the lower voter turnout of Native Americans compared to the rest of Montana. Studies have shown that Indians vote at lower
levels even when controlling for socioeconomic status. The increase in voter turnout in the 2000 election cycle is not explained by socioeconomic status, as little change in the socioeconomic indicators has occurred. Other factors must also be involved in the low voter turnout of Montana’s Indian people.

Another possible factor is the disconnectedness or apathy felt by Native Americans towards the state political system. Disconnectedness, expressed as apathy, alienation, or distrust of the political system and political leaders, has been found by Doppelt and Shearer (1996) to be a factor in the decision not to vote. Social disconnectedness influences the perceived benefits of voting (P(B)) in the voting equation (Popkin, 1991), decreasing both the perception of the benefits that could be received from the government and the perception of political efficacy. Voters chose not to vote because they feel they are not a part of the system, that the system is unresponsive, or they have previously felt negative effects of participation. Luna (2000) and Peterson (1997) give the disconnectedness of Indian voters as a major reason for their low participation rates. Studies done on other minority populations found this to be a factor in their participation as well (Leighley, 1999).

All the Native American activists interviewed indicated that Indians feel an apathy or alienation from state government that limits their political involvement in state elections. The reasons that Indian voters are disconnected from state government revolves around the sovereign status of Indian tribes and the complicated relationship between political participation and benefits received from government programs. Because Native American tribes are sovereign nations, the benefits of voting in state elections are often unclear to many Native Americans, as government programs are run by tribal government. International law and treaties between U.S. and tribal governments guarantee the sovereign status of Indian tribes which requires that tribes

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18 Peterson, Goeff. “Native American Turnout in the 1990 and 1992 elections”. The Native American Quarterly,
govern and provide services on their reservation area. As a duty to tribes specified by treaties and the U.S. Supreme Court, the U.S. government provides the tribes with allocations to carry out their own programs. Thus, Indian people see social benefits from coming from the federal government and tribal government, but state governments seem uninvolved in the process. State governments are not a party in the treaties between the federal government and tribes, and thus only have jurisdiction over tribal matters when “Congress has delegated specific authority to it or in situations in which neither federal nor tribal law preempt state law”\(^{19}\). However, a portion of state funds must also go to Indian tribes, as Indians are state citizens. The funneling of federal and state funds through the tribal government complicates the relationship between voting in state elections and benefits received through government programs.

The complicated relationship between the state and tribal government has also resulted in many reservation residents feeling that there is a lack of effective policy from the state government. Poor social and economic conditions on the reservation seem to go unaddressed by policy makers, as Indian activist Pat Smith explains:

> Indian people look out from their reality of poverty, high crime, high drug rates, and cultural oppression, and see state government and its political system doing nothing about it. They seem completely oblivious to the problem... the reservation eyes glaze over when they focus on state politics and government. Alienation would be a polite way of saying it.

The observations made from their environment, and knowing the fact that Indian people do not receive a proportionate share of the state’s budget compared to their population\(^{20}\), many Native Americans feel that the state government is unresponsive to their needs. The lack of effective policy has added to the feelings of disconnectedness of Native American voters.
Activists attempt to counteract these feelings of disconnectedness by stressing that increased participation at the state level is necessary to gain effective government programs that address the social and economic problems present on reservations. Increasing the understanding of the relationship between state government and voting on the reservation will result in less feelings of disconnectedness. However, the distrust of state government systems by Native Americans is a multi-faceted problem. Disconnectedness results not only from lack of understanding of the relationship between voting and state government benefits and lack of effective policy, but also from resentment of state government in tribal affairs and a historical mistrust between Indian tribes and non-tribal government. Activists must attempt to address all of the issues involved in the disconnectedness of Indian voters.

Many Indians resent the involvement of state government in Indian affairs, as Indian tribes are sovereign nations. One Indian Montana legislator, Representative Carol Juneau, expressed this resentment: “Indians want tribal government. They don’t feel that states should have jurisdiction”\(^{21}\). Indians may express this resentment by remaining uninvolved in the state government process, a government they feel is not their own. Activists explained to voters expressing this notion that involvement in state elections was necessary to protect the tribes sovereign status and limit state control of Indian lands\(^{22}\).

Another commonly expressed reason for disconnectedness is the mistrust of government based on a historical background of racist government policies. Darrel LaMere explains the reasons behind the mistrust of government:

I must mention two predominate fact that stand out when discussing any facet of the indigenous people of Montana, and every Indian tribe in the United States. I speak of the past and present treatment Indians have received. If you dare to read between the lines, past to the present, you will read about calculated actions of religious intolerance, greed, death marches, starvation, disease, broken treaties,

\(^{21}\) Juneau, Carol. Personal Interview, Jan. 30, 2001
\(^{22}\) LaMere, Darrell. Correspondence and Interview, April 25, 2001, April 19, 2001 and January 14, 2001
relocation, Sand Creek and Wounded Knee, and Genocide. This is our history, and the motivation that will invoke indifference or concern. Even today, Indians continue to experience government encroachment upon our constitutional rights and liberties as sovereign people and nations. It is not the product of disorganized oversight. It is referred to as institutional racism.

LaMere expresses the feelings of mistrust of the government that is shared by many Native American voters that creates feelings of disconnectedness in Native American voters. This mistrust is commonly found among Native Americans and is at times encouraged by tribal elders. It is difficult for activists to overcome this distrust and encourage voting. However, the history of poor treatment can actually become a motivation for political action.

It is due to these complications with sovereignty, lack of effective policy, and historical conflicts with state governments that Indians often feel disconnected from state government systems. This disconnectedness results in the perception of the benefits of voting (the term P(B) in the voting equation) to be much lower than normal. Mobilization efforts should attempt to address the disconnectedness of Indian voters if mobilization is to be successful. Disconnectedness of Indian voters is suggested as major reason why Native Americans have lower turnout in Montana elections than the non-Indian population, along with the low socioeconomic status of Native Americans.

There is one characteristic of Native American’s voting patterns that would suggest that their turnout should be greater than the rest of Montana’s citizens: strong party affiliation. Montana’s Native Americans demonstrate a strong affiliation with the Democratic party, which has been proven to encourage greater voter turnout. This is discussed in the next portion of this paper on the Democratic lean of Montana’s Indian tribes.

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2.2: Observation 2: Indians Vote Predominately Democratic:

Indians overwhelmingly vote Democrat, in contrast to their non-reservation neighbors whom are Republican leaning. In the 2000 election, reservation precincts preferred the Democratic candidates in all of the top tier races:

Table 6  Percentage Voting For Democratic Candidates in Montana 2000 Elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reservation Total</th>
<th>State Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presidential Candidate Gore</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US Senate Candidate Schweitzer</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US House Candidate Keenan</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US Governor Candidate O’Keefe</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Lamson, Joe “2000 Montana Indian Reservation Voting Analysis”

On reservation voters strongly preferred the Democratic candidates. Furthermore, six Indians were elected to the Montana legislature in the 2000 election; all six were Democrats. The high percentage of Native Americans voting for Democratic candidates creates a Democratic voting block.

According to Brad Martin, the Executive Director of the Montana Democratic Party, the tribes’ preference for Democrats is due to their natural constituency to the Democratic Party. Minority populations usually affiliate with the Democratic Party and its ideology, but the ties between the Indian nations and the Democratic Party also are based on the issue positions held by the Native American population. These issue positions are supported by the Democratic party platform.

Indian preference for the Democratic party may be something other than natural constituency however, as research by Corntassel and Witmer (1997) and a few tribal organizers

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24 The issue positions of Native Americans are primarily based on economic development, with strong support for increased education, poverty, and development programs. Their economic development needs are often in conflict with their strong environmental stance that seems to be based on cultural belief systems. Brad Martin Interview, January 2001, Honor the Earth tour, other interviews of Indian activists.

in Montana believe that Indian voters are influenced by the endorsements of their tribal leaders. Tribal leaders decide party preference based on the best interests of the tribe. If this is true, Indian voters would continue to vote as a block, but the party preference of that block would depend on the opinion of the tribal leaders. This suggests that tribal membership and the political position of the tribe is important in the Native American voting decision.

The strength of the Native American affiliation with the Democratic party suggests that their voter turnout should be higher than the rest of the state, as studies by Shanks and Miller (1993) claim that party affiliation increases voter turnout. It may be that the effects of party affiliation are countered by other factors that decrease voter turnout, such as the disconnectedness or socioeconomic status, or that tribal members feel affiliation to their tribal government rather than the Democratic party. Tribal members may be supporting the endorsed candidate of their tribe, rather than the Democratic candidate. The effects of tribal membership on the voting decision of Native Americans should be explored further in future studies.

The bloc voting of tribes also has important implications for the increased political power of Montana’s Indian tribes. As Montana’s elections are traditionally very close\textsuperscript{26}, the support of the small population of Native Americans may be a deciding factor in electoral races. In the 2000 elections, Montana’s U.S. Senate seat was decided by 13,652 votes, the U.S. House seat by 21,447 votes, and the Montana Globerial race by 16,004 votes. The voting age population of Native Americans in Montana is 33,986. Indian voters in Montana would not have the political power to change electoral outcomes if they were distributed equally over the political spectrum. However, assuming that the votes of tribal members follows the endorsement of the tribal government as suggested in studies by Corntassell and Witmer (1997), the continued bloc voting and development of competition between Montana’s political parties and candidates for the
endorsement of tribal governments will put Montana’s Native American population in a powerful political position in Montana politics.

Mobilization efforts could possibly take advantage of the bloc voting tendencies of Native Americans and emphasis their potential political power if they demonstrated high participation rates, which would increase the perception of benefits ((P(B) in the voting equation). Currently, the Native American population votes as a bloc, but low participation rates prevent the bloc voting from being effective. The preference of Native Americans for Democratic candidates suggests that either party affiliation is strong among tribal members, or that the endorsement of the tribal leaders has a strong influence on the voting decision of Native Americans. Further research is necessary to determine the tribal effect on voting, but the greater participation of Native Americans in tribal elections than in non-tribal elections suggests that tribal membership is a factor in the voting decision.

2.3: Observation Three: Greater Participation Rates in Tribal Elections:

Native Americans have greater participation rates in tribal elections that in non-tribal elections. Indians seem to have very high participation in tribal elections, usually 60% to 85% of all tribal members over 18 vote in tribal elections. This is in sharp contrast to turnout in state and federal elections, where voter turnout by Native Americans in state and federal levels is around 20% nationally and around 49% in Montana elections.

A possible explanation for the differences in turnout between tribal elections and non-tribal elections is the differences in the costs of voting between the two election systems. The costs to voting variable (C) in the voting equation is influenced by any changes to the registration

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26 Montana is #1 in the US for the closeness of our elections. Center for Voting and Democracy “Montana Vote” Takoma Park MD. 2000
27 Smith, Pat. Correspondence, April 25, 2001 and Stanfield, Rochelle, “Getting out the Tribal Vote” National Journal, 7/25/92
28 Stanfield, Rochelle, “Getting out the Tribal Vote” National Journal, 7/25/92
or other institutional costs to voting and by other costs incurred due to voting, such as travel time to the polls. Institutional costs include all costs involved with the electoral system which are costs to all voters, such as registration costs and absentee voting costs. Grofman, Rose, and Smith argue that the reduction of these costs increases voter turnout. Montana has fairly strict registration laws, requiring the voter to register 45 days before the election while tribal members are automatically registered to vote in tribal elections. Furthermore, the State of Montana further increases the costs to registering by placing all registered voters into the jury duty pool. Potential voters know that they will risk being called for jury duty when registering to vote. Many Native American citizens cited this as a reason not to register to vote. The jury duty requirement increases the costs of registering to vote. A citizen is much more likely to vote if they have already incurred the costs of registration from a previous election or through mobilization efforts, suggesting that registration costs are a significant factor in the voting decision. The reduction of registration costs are often targeted by mobilization efforts through registration drives, relieving the potential voter of any costs to registering such as time spent filling out the card, stamps to mail it in, or increasing the availability of registration materials. The institutional costs involved in registering to vote is a possible factor in the voting decision of Native Americans, as are other institutional costs such as absentee ballot procedure and requiring jury duty.

One cost to voting that has recently changed is the absentee ballot eligibility requirements. Absentee voting procedure in Montana was just revised in 1999 by the Montana State Legislature. The new requirements allow for absentee voting without disclosing reasons

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31 Wolfinger, Raymond, in Tipp and Wekeser, editors. Politics in America: opposing viewpoints
for choosing to vote absentee. Previously, absentee voters had to sign an affidavit claiming to be unable to vote on Election Day because of a serious illness or absence from the district\textsuperscript{32}. The increased availability of absentee ballots may have increased the voter turnout of Native Americans, as considered in section 2.4, but were also used by activists as a tool to decrease the costs of voting, as the potential voter could then vote in the comfort of their own home without making an extra trip to the polls on Election Day. Other costs of Election Day voting, such as driving distance to the polls and time to vote, are often targeted by mobilization efforts\textsuperscript{33} such as they were in the 2000 Native American voter mobilization efforts.

The difference in costs between tribal and non-tribal elections may be the cause of the varied levels of turnout between the two types of elections. There are other possibly explanations which require further investigation. The greater personal connection of Native Americans to the tribal government and the candidates may be a factor. Tribal candidates are usually well-known and well-respected in their community, and candidates may be extended family members or a family friend. There is a greater personal connection to the outcome of tribal elections than non-tribal elections. It is also possibly that greater efficacy at the local tribal level is present, as voters feel as though their vote has more impact among the small population of Indians voting in tribal elections compared to the large number of voters in the non-tribal elections. Finally, the impact of tribal policy decisions on the life of Native Americans is greater than the impact of the state government because of tribal sovereignty. Tribal councils will determine where the resources are spent, but also the direction of the tribe culturally. The tribal elections seem to be much more relevant in some way to Native American voters than non-tribal

\textsuperscript{32} House and Senate Democratic Staff “1999 Legislative Session End-of-Session Summary” Montana Democratic Party 1999 Cooney, Mike, Montana Secretary of State. “Frequently Asked Questions on Montana Voter Registration, Voting and Election Laws”. Montana Secretary of State webpage http://www.state.mt.us/sos/election/FAQ/faq.html accessed 4/18/01

elections, as their turnout in the tribal elections is much higher. Greater turnout could be due to
differences in registration costs. Registration costs also may play a role in the next observation
about Native American voting also, as the decrease in costs from 1998 to 2000 may have been
involved in increasing the voter turnout between those years.

2.4: Observation Four: Increase in Voter Turnout Greater than Rest of State:

Montana's Native Americans increased their voter turnout from 1998 to 2000 more than the
rest of the state of Montana. In the 2000 election, Native American increased their registered
voter turnout by 29% compared to the 23% of non-Indian voters. Every reservation displayed
increases in the number of registered voters, increases in the registered voter turnout, and
increases in the voting age population turnout.

Lamson (2000) suggests that these increases are part of a trend of the increases of Native
American voting over the last ten year period. Originally, this study would have verified the
results of Lamson's research, but difficulties experienced obtaining information about the voter
turnout by Native Americans prevented this analysis. Native American voting information is
not tracked by the U.S. Census Bureau as it is for many other minority populations, and many do
not have the telephones needed for surveys, discouraging other studies that track voter turnout.
State or local election bureaus are barred from gathering information about the race of the voter,
and exit polls which might suggest the race of the voting population are usually only done in
urban areas away from reservations. While I attempted to compile aggregate data of the voter
turnout in precincts on the Indian reservation for the past decade, difficulties experienced while
obtaining Census 2000 information prevented that information from being available.24

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24 The Census Bureau software that gave population reports at the precinct level had a glitch, which also hampered
the Montana redistricting commission. The glitch was repaired and the information was made available April 17th,
Furthermore, a change in voter registration procedure during the past decade\(^{35}\) distorts the registered voter turnout pattern. Therefore, I am relying on the accuracy of the study by Lamson on the increase in voter turnout on reservations from 1998 to 2000, which he has adjusted for changes in registration procedure.

An attempt has been made to estimate the increase in Native American voter turnout in the past ten years using the voter turnout percentages from the seven counties in Montana with the highest Indian percentage. This is considered an inaccurate estimate, as it includes both on reservation and off-reservation precincts in the county data, including many non-Indian voters.

The following Table 7 presents the voter turnout of these counties for the 1992, 1996, and 2000 elections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Big Horn</td>
<td>59.7%</td>
<td>52.3%</td>
<td>56.4%</td>
<td>39.8%</td>
<td>-4.1%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blaine</td>
<td>45.4%</td>
<td>59.5%</td>
<td>63.1%</td>
<td>45.7%</td>
<td>-3.6%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glacier</td>
<td>61.8%</td>
<td>50.3%</td>
<td>52.1%</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
<td>-1.8%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>56.0%</td>
<td>59.5%</td>
<td>46.9%</td>
<td>-3.5%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>60.7%</td>
<td>58.7%</td>
<td>50.8%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pondera</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>56.2%</td>
<td>55.3%</td>
<td>50.4%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roosevelt</td>
<td>55.8%</td>
<td>57.0%</td>
<td>58.7%</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>-1.7%</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosebud</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
<td>57.2%</td>
<td>58.9%</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
<td>-1.7%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MT Secretary of State Office. Map Stats of Montana fedstats-mapstats@lists.census.gov

The table shows that there has been little increase in the voter turnout of Montana’s Indian tribes from 1996 to 2000. However, it should be mentioned that Native American Congressional Candidate Bill Yellowtail had a large showing of support for Indian voters during his 1996

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\(^{35}\) The change was to keep inactive voters on voter registration lists for two presidential elections instead of one, increasing the number of registered voters. This change results in an increase in registered voters and a decrease in the registered voter turnout.
campaign, which probably inflated the 1996 voter turnout. Therefore, the 1992 data is perhaps a
better comparison. The 1992 data shows large increases in the voter turnout in these counties
between the 1992 and 2000 elections. As mobilization efforts by the Montana Democratic
Party’s staff have only occurred since 1998, this increase is probably due to other organizations’
efforts.

The increase in voter turnout from 1998 to 2000 can be attributed to a number of factors
that may have influenced the Native American voting decision. One of these is the political
environment during the election cycle. Two studies, by Pomper and Servekos\textsuperscript{36} and Shanks and
Miller\textsuperscript{37}, explore the effects of the political environment on voter turnout and find that the
atmosphere of the elections, the level of offices in contest, the candidates and the issues
supported, and the closeness of the races all raise the awareness and excitement about the
campaign and influence voter turnout. Both the level of office in contest and the amount of
money spent in the elections are positively related to voter turnout\textsuperscript{38}. Schachar and Nalebuff
(1999) suggest that close elections also lead to greater mobilization efforts, as candidates are
motivated to mobilize followers based on the marginal benefits gained by the leader, which is
greater in close elections. The motivational efforts are seen as a result of a close election. The
political climate influences voter turnout by altering the social satisfaction of voting, variable S
in the voting equation by creating greater excitement and fun derived from voting.

Intense political climates with competitive races are correlated to higher levels of turnout.
The political climate of Montana was fairly intense during the 2000 elections. All of the
statewide seats were up for election, and most were very competitive races. The Senate, House,
and Gubatorial races were all extremely close, and the victory margins between the two

\textsuperscript{36} In Tipp and Vekesser, editors. \textit{Politics in America: Opposing Viewpoints}
\textsuperscript{37} \textit{The New American Voter, 1996}
candidates for all three of these races narrowed leading up to the election rather than spread\textsuperscript{39}. With the majority of Congress in question, the Montana races were targeted by both the national parties as well as many special interest groups, raising the campaign spending to a level previously not experienced in Montana\textsuperscript{40}. This increased intensity in the political atmosphere of the state could have had an influence on Native American voter turnout, and is a probable reason for the increase from 1998 to 2000. The greater increase of Native American voters from 1998 to 2000 more than the rest of the state suggests that some part of the political atmosphere had a greater impact or was more intense on Indian reservations than off reservations. This was possibly the mobilization effort of the Montana Democratic Party targeting Native American voters.

Another factor that may explain the increase in voter turnout of Native Americans from 1998 to 2000 is the greater availability of absentee ballots, mentioned in the previous section. It is possible that the absentee ballot procedure was utilized more by Native Americans than other voters, resulting in the greater increase in turnout than the rest of the state\textsuperscript{41}. However, the absentee ballot procedure was also extensively used as a tool by the MDP activists in mobilizing Indian voters, so it would be difficult to separate whether the increase is due to mobilization effects or the absentee ballot requirement change.

Political environment is greatly influenced by voter mobilization efforts. In fact, mobilization efforts can be seen as a part of the political atmosphere, as they create excitement and interest in the campaign. Mobilization efforts should take advantage of the political excitement surrounding the election and use it to motivate voters to go to the polls. Mobilization

\textsuperscript{39} Center for Voting and Democracy “Montana Vote” Takoma Park MD. 2000

\textsuperscript{40} Brad Martin interview

\textsuperscript{41} Arguments made that lowering restrictions on voting, such as making absentee ballots more accessible, benefit low income groups more than high income groups. This would increase the effect of absentee ballots on the Indian population. However, studies have shown that they may actually benefit higher income and middle income voters more than low income. See Grofman (2001)
effort combines with the closeness and intensity of the elections to creates a political
environment that may be an explanation for the increase in Native American turnout from 1998
to 2000 that was greater than the rest of the State of Montana. Mobilization efforts are also the
suggested cause of the varied turnouts between reservations, the next observation about the
voting behavior of Native Americans

2.5: Observation 5: Voter Turnout Varies Among Reservations:

Variations in the level of voter turnout can be seen between reservations. Registered
voter turnout varies between reservations ranging from 36% on the Northern Cheyenne
reservation to 58% on the Flathead reservation. Voting age turnout ranges from 11% on the
Flathead reservation to 74% on the Fort Belknap reservation. Part of the variations between
reservations may be cultural. Each reservation holds a unique culture, and some may encourage
political participation in state elections more than other reservations. Congressional candidate
Nancy Keenan identified the cultural differences as important in the voting decisions of Native
Americans, pointing out that some tribes were more traditional than others, and did not
courage participation as much as other tribes. The cultural differences may also impact the
political skills and abilities of tribal members, as some tribes may encourage or discourage
characteristics that facilitate public action. Indian Legislator Norma Bixby describes these
cultural traits:

I was taught to keep my eyes down, be respectful of others. We were to listen,
and not speak up with our own opinions. I finally decided not to be silent
anymore, and began to tell others of my opinions. That is when I became
involved politically, but it was against all of the customs I learned as a child.

Some tribes may encourage the skills necessary for political action, and some may not.

This may be a reason behind the varied voter turnout among reservations.
The second possible explanation for the variances between voter turnout on each reservation is the focus this paper: mobilization. The intensity of mobilization efforts varied among reservation, as did the quality of the mobilization efforts. Mobilization efforts on some reservations may be more effective than others in increasing the voter turnout, as they utilized successful mobilization techniques. These mobilization techniques will be discussed in the next chapter.

In this section of the paper, five general observations about Native American voter turnout were examined to find factors that influence voter turnout. These observations were the following:

1. Reservation voters vote at lower levels than non-reservation voters.
2. Indians vote predominantly Democratic.
3. Indians have greater participation in tribal elections than in non-tribal elections.
4. Native Americans have increased their voter turnout from 1998 to 2000 more than the rest of the state.
5. Voter turnout varies among reservations.

These observations were explained by possibly influences of factors that previous studies have identified as factors that influence voter turnout. These factors were socioeconomic status, disconnexteness, party affiliation, registration costs, absentee voting procedures, tribal affiliation, cultural differences, political environment, issues with sovereignty, and mobilization efforts. Each of these factors influence variables in the voting decision, and thus influence voter turnout. Further study should be done on the degree of influence each of these factors may have on Native American voter turnout, as only mobilization was measured in this research. It is important to identify these factors and their influence so that mobilization efforts can work to encourage factors that increase turnout and counteract factors that discourage turnout. Mobilization efforts that utilize their

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knowledge of these factors will be much more successful. In the next chapter of this paper, we identify characteristics of successful mobilization efforts, how the characteristics help activists target factors involved in the voting decision, and whether or not the mobilization efforts of the Montana Democratic Party demonstrated these characteristics.
Chapter Three: Characteristics of Effective Mobilization Efforts

Mobilization methods can vary in their effectiveness depending on whether or not the proper methods were used in mobilizing voters. This section of the paper presents the characteristics of successful mobilization efforts and suggests whether or not the Montana Democratic Party’s (MDP) efforts demonstrated these characteristics. Each of these characteristics are essential to successful organizing as the allow activists to greater influence the factors affecting the voting decision. Studies on mobilization techniques identify five characteristics of successful mobilization: empowerment from within the community; a high degree of organization and data processing capabilities; high-intensity, one-on-one contact with voters; an emotionally charged message; and adequate funding for the operation. These five characteristics must be present for mobilization efforts to be effective. Information gathered from interviews with MDP party activists will give us some insight to the extent of these characteristics that were present in the mobilization efforts of the MDP in the 2000 election.

3.1: Successful Mobilization Characteristic #1: Adequate Funding:

Adequate funding is considered the primary factor in successful mobilization efforts by Cramer; without funding, other characteristics of successful mobilization cannot be achieved. Activists never have the opportunity to address any of the factors influencing the voting decision. Abel and Kahn suggest that when mobilizing low-income groups, such as Native Americans, outside organizations may have to be relied on for financial support. The inclusion of the Indian vote program into the core budget of the MDP Coordinated Campaign suggests that the MDP did provide funding, although financial information about the Indian vote efforts was unavailable. Some local activists expressed a need for additional funding for GOTV efforts, specifically for the compensation of volunteers involved in the efforts, as many are from financially strapped families and are dedicating time away from income earning activities. Because of the lack of
financial information from the MDP, it cannot be determined the extent that their mobilization efforts were adequately funded.

3.2: Successful Mobilization Characteristic #2: Emotional Message:

An emotionally charged message is the second component of a successful mobilization effort. Democratic campaign manuals define message as a body of information communicated to an undecided voter that should be targeted to a specific audience to include the values and issues of the targeted group. Cramer focuses on the emotional element of message, saying that message needs to contain “hot buttons” appealing to the self-interest of the voter that will motivate voters to go to the polls. The message should give potential voters an extra emotional push that is the motivating force to get them to the polls.

Creating an emotional message increases the effects of political environment on the voter, influencing the variable S in the voting equation. An emotional message will direct the excitement and intensity of the political climate to the voter on an individual basis, increasing the impact. An emotional message can also help to overcome feelings of disconnectedness in voters by emphasizing that their vote will make an impact on policy decisions.

The emotional context used by the MDP Tribal coordinator to empower Indian voters was pointing out anti-Indian comments made by candidates. This appeal to the self-interest and values of Native Americans was effective in pushing the “hot buttons” of Indians and “stirred many to register on the spot and learn more about the Democratic candidates”. Emotional content was used to charge the message, giving Indians a reason to vote.

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44 Darrell LaMere, correspondence April 25, 2001
Emotional content of a message can be enhanced by including issues specific to Indian voters, according to Luna, as many voters focus on a single issue. Popkin\(^{45}\) believes a message is effective only when the voter can see a connection between himself, the issue, and voting. MDP tribal coordinator Darrell LaMere agrees:

I feel many people were detached because issues just did not relate to them. For example, the typical Indian voter could care less about Medicare reform, campaign reform, global economics, global warming...albeit important issues. However, if you talk about tribal water rights or sovereignty, a candidate will surely get more interest. In other words, you must give the Native American electorate a sense of ownership, a close up sense that they have something to gain and something to lose\(^{46}\).

LaMere emphasized these issues during his mobilization efforts. Indian legislator Bill Eggers also believes that the message of the MDP could be restructured to include issues of greater importance to Indians, citing economic development, poverty programs, and funding to tribal colleges as issues to be considered. Bettencourt suggests that the personal relevancy of an issue also helps keep activists involved in the mobilization efforts, which will aid mobilization efforts.

One last component to an emotionally charged message is related to the candidates who are running for election, as Kahn explains. If a citizen has a strong feeling of identity with the candidate, and feels as though the candidate will provide positive representation of the voter in office, they will be more emotionally involved with the election, and more likely to vote. A voter could possibly go to the polls simply to vote for a specific candidate. The 2000 Democratic candidate for U.S. Congress, Nancy Keenan, credits her long history of cooperation with tribal educators for the strong support shown to her on the reservations:

It was critical that they felt represented by the Congressional candidate, and that Indian country wouldn’t be left behind. It was a relationship that was built on trust. I didn’t just show up there when I needed votes. From the time I was State Superintendent, I had a long history of working with the tribes, and having

\(^{45}\) *The Reasoning Voter* 191, p 100
\(^{46}\) Correspondence, April 19, 2001
representatives from each of the tribes advise me on education policy. So now, when I went to the Indian reservations as a Congressional candidate, I was family. They knew me from working together for twelve years, and they trusted me. It came back to honoring their culture, their language, and their government. Their support had been nurtured for twelve years.\textsuperscript{47}

LaMere mentioned increased interest shown by Native Americans when discussing local Indian candidates. Indian legislators Eggers and Smith hoped representation by an Indian legislator improved the political efficacy of local Indians, but were unsure if it had made too much of an impact. Eggers believes that many Indians have yet to experience the major successes of Indian legislators in the Montana Legislature, but as pro-Indian legislation and state programs develop, more Indians will come to realize the importance of Indian representation at the state level.

It is important that voters feel the need to vote with an emotionally charged message that includes issues specific to Native Americans and support candidates whom the voters trust. The emotionally charged message will increase the social benefits to voting (variable $S$ in the voting equation). Emotional content seems to have been used in the 2000 election cycle to mobilize Indian voters; however, the message may not have effectively addressed the concerns of the Native Americans.

3.3 Successful Mobilization Characteristic #4: One-on-one, high-intensity contacts with voters

The emotionally charged message needs to be communicated to potential voters in high-intensity contacts to ensure the proper reception of the message. The reception of the message is essential, as it educates potential voters, overcoming deficiencies in their educational background or atmosphere that are a characteristic of low socioeconomic backgrounds. Delivery of message lowers the costs ($C$) variable in the voting equation by lowering the costs of obtaining political information. Message is better communicated through high-intensity voter contact. Robinson

\textsuperscript{47} Keenan, Nancy. Interview. December 17\textsuperscript{th}, 2000. Office of Public Instruction, Helena Montana.
provides the distinction of low intensity and high intensity voter contact methods. Low intensity activities do not allow for the potential voter to give feedback to the messenger while high-intensity contact allows the discussion of issues. Low intensity activities are not individualized or as targeted as high intensity, and are not as persuasive. Low intensity activities are literature drops, visibility at events, and television ads. High intensity contacts are individualized and often involves two-way communication with the targeted citizen. High intensity contacts are more persuasive and include personal contact with the voter. High intensity require more resources, but can be more cost effective as they are more cost effective.

Brager, Specht, and Torczyner focus on the issue discussion with citizens to involve them into the political process. Mondros and Wilson emphasis the importance of discussion of issues and high intensity contact among groups of low political participation rates as a way of motivation and education. Luna claims personalized, low-tech approaches work best with Indian voters. The high-tech approach of mass phone banks and short television spots does not appeal to the decision making process in Indian country, where a high value is placed on through discussion of issues and the ability of political leaders to listen to the people. Indian activist Pat Smith also encouraged personalized contact with voters as the most effective method. Smith mentioned that many Native Americans do not have phones, so activists should focus on community events to find potential voters. LaMere also suggested personal contact by candidates was effective in mobilizing voters, along with radio ads specifically targeting Indian voters, such as ads done in native languages which was not done in the 2000 election cycle.

The tribal coordinator of the MDP relied on high-intensity voter contact to register voters by speaking to high school and college classes and attending pow-wows and tribal council

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48 Smith, Pat. Corespondance. April, 26, 2001
events. The Montana Democratic Party did fund some mailings and phone banks that were less intensive. Major candidates also sponsored mailings directed towards Indian people. The Indian candidates for Montana’s legislature reported that the high-intensity activities were most effective in encouraging voters, although both high and low intensity activities were used. High-intensity activities were used by the MDP to mobilize voters.

3.4: Successful Mobilization Characteristic #4: Strong organizational and data gathering abilities:

Raby insists that voter mobilization activities “can and must be a tightly managed enterprise” to gather information on voters and use it effectively to increase turnout. Kahn agrees, saying “The success of the poor people’s organization in politics will depend in large degree on the extent to which its political functions are well organized. This is particularly true before an election.” The work registering and mobilizing voters should be very systematic, with the obtaining and storage of information about the voter as a primary focus. All information can be used to better target potential voters, as both Shea and Guzzetta explain.

The strong organization ensures the efficient use of resources in mobilization efforts, and ensures that efforts are directed toward the factors that influence turnout. If mobilization efforts are directed towards factors that cannot be changed, or towards a voter who already regularly votes, mobilization efforts will not be effective in increasing turnout. The high degree of information in mobilization efforts allows activists to know the opinions and voting status of each individual voter, and know which of the factors should be targeted for that voter. For example, a voter who feels disconnected due to a lack of effective policy will not be influenced

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49 LaMere, Darrell. Correspondence. April 25, 2001
50 Martin, Brad. Interview. December 17, 2001
51 Nancy Keenan Campaign “Indian Vote Piece” Campaign 2000
by an invitation to attend a rally, but would be a good target for a visit with a candidate or party official. Other voters may be encouraged more by the rally, encouraging their social benefits from voting. Mobilization efforts with a high degree of information and organization will be effective in mobilizing voters.

To determine the degree of organization in the MDP mobilization efforts, activists and local party chairs were asked the question “How organized was the GOTV effort in your county\textsuperscript{54} on a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being the most organized?”. Over 90% responded with a score of 5, meaning the MDP efforts were perceived as highly organized. If all reservations GOTV efforts were highly organized, organization is not a factor in the difference in turnout between reservations. However, it is possible that activists do not have knowledge of other mobilization efforts to determine whether or not the GOTV effort was organized. Further study is necessary to determine whether or not the mobilization efforts of the MDP were highly organized.

3.5: Successful Mobilization Characteristic #5: Community Involvement and Empowerment:

The final characteristic of successful organizing is the involvement of community members to empower them with political knowledge and better identify with the concerns of potential voters within the community. This helps to improve the effects of low socioeconomic status and cultural status by developing the skills necessary for political participation, thus decreasing the costs of voting, variable C in the voting equation. Involving the local community also improves feelings of disconnection with the political process, improving the perception of benefits (P(B) in the voting equation). Social benefits are also gained, as local members can have fun and feel part of a effective group when included in the efforts.


\textsuperscript{54} County was replaced with reservation in the case of Indian activists. County was used for county chairs.
Shaw explains that involving the local community in the mobilization efforts means that local opinion leaders must be contacted. The MDP tribal coordinator did meet with tribal leaders early in the campaign to coordinate efforts with them. These opinion leaders can facilitate or hamper mobilization efforts. The opinion leaders within the Indian community are usually tribal council members and elders of the tribe, who can be resistant to organization efforts by outside interests. Shea also mentions that leaders from local organizations must also be contacted, and networks formed with them, something that Bettencourt (1996) also believes.

The involvement of local community members is important as it builds the political knowledge and skills necessary for political action to continue the efforts at the local level after the organizing force is gone (Kahn, Raby, Bettencourt). Brady, Verba, and Scholzman have found that political skills necessary for political participation are not as common among those with low socioeconomic status as they are among those with higher socioeconomic status. As a low socioeconomic group, and as a group which has low political participation levels, many Native Americans may have lower levels of political knowledge to actively participation in politics. Development of these skills would benefit the Indian population in the future.

Gathered information from interviews with local activists does suggest that there were variances in the amount of local involvement among reservations. Subjects were asked “Please indicate, on a scale of 1 to 5, how involved the members of your local party were in the GOTV efforts, with 1 meaning very few people were involved and 5 meaning many people were involved”. Responses from activists on the Fort Peck Indian reservation were 4, while responses from Flathead were 2, and Northern Cheyenne were very low at one. Increased turnout of registered voters on the Fort Peck reservation was slightly greater than the increases of turnout on the Flathead and Northern Cheyenne reservations (9.1% > 8.2%, 8.6%), suggesting that

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varying levels of local involvement is related to varying levels of turnout on Montana’s reservations. Many of the activists expressed concern about the activism of the local parties, criticizing the Montana Democratic Party on their lack of grassroots support at the county level56. Further information about the level of local involvement and its impact on the mobilization efforts of the party awaits further study.

**Summary of Characteristics of Mobilization Efforts:**

Information gathered from activists suggests that the MDP mobilization efforts were effective in reaching two of the five characteristics of successful organizing. The MDP communicated an emotionally charged message to potential voters by high-intensity, low-tech, person-to-person voter contact techniques. However, further research is needed to determine whether the mobilization efforts were adequately funded or if funding varied between reservations, if local individuals were involved, and the level of organization on each reservation. This information is necessary to determine whether the MDP followed successful mobilization strategies to increase the Indian vote in the 2000 election cycle. Whether or not the MDP followed successful mobilization strategies will make a difference in the upcoming test of whether or not mobilization efforts by the MDP were effective in increasing Native American voter turnout. The level which the mobilization efforts achieved the characteristics of successful mobilizing may explain the results of the tests in section four.

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56 Similar criticism has been made by the author regarding the grassroots support provided by the MDP in an Wagner, unpublished manuscript, Jan. 15, 2001
Measuring the Relationship between Voter Turnout and Mobilization

This section tests the relationship between voter turnout and the MDP’s mobilization efforts to determine whether or not the mobilization efforts were effective in increasing Native American voter turnout. The independent variable is the mobilization efforts and the dependant variable is voter turnout. Each of these variables will be examined and measured before testing. The expected relationship is that mobilization efforts did increase the voter turnout, as previous studies suggest that mobilization is effective in increasing turnout.

4.1 Mobilization Variable:

4.1.1 Literature on Mobilization:
Research has indicated that the mobilization efforts of the MDP increase voter turnout on Indian reservations. Rosenstone and Hansen find that mobilization is a critical factor in the voting decision, finding that 54% of the voter decline from 1960-1980 resulted from decreased mobilization efforts at the local level. Winders (1999) finds party mobilization a necessity for low class participation, as the socioeconomic barriers faced require mobilization to overcome.

Some claim voter mobilization and get-out-the-vote efforts are the most critical activity of political campaigns, finding “the success of Election Day depends on getting out the vote on Election Day”.

While mobilization efforts undertaken by both political parties and independent organizations can be effective in increasing voter turnout, Eldersveld and Walton found that the mobilization efforts of a political party are more effective, with about 80% of the targeted voters responding favorably. However, mobilization efforts by political parties may result in negative

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58 Robinson Jackson
reactions at the individual level. The Democratic party efforts may not have created many negative reactions, judging from the strong preference of Democratic candidates by reservation voters. Aldrich gives possibly explanations why mobilization efforts increase voter turnout; because the efforts have a large impact on the marginal decisions of voting and increase feelings of efficacy and knowledge of political issues among voters. Mobilization lowers the costs of becoming informed and increases the benefits of voting. Jackson examined what types of voters are most influenced by mobilization efforts, and found that those with higher educational status and lower income groups were the most affected. As Native Americans are of a lower income group than the rest of Montana’s citizens, they are a good population to target for mobilization efforts. Based on the literature on the positive effects of mobilization on voter turnout, the expected result of the Montana Democratic Party’s mobilization efforts is increased voter turnout. A description of the mobilization efforts of the party is described in the next section.

4.1.2 Mobilization efforts and background:
During the 2000 elections, the Montana Democratic Party organized on all seven Indian reservations in an attempt to increase the voter turnout of Montana’s Indian tribes. The party has made extensive efforts to encourage the participation of Native Americans in the Democratic Party. Although the Indians were represented on the advisory committee of the party, the party did not formally include Native Americans into the party until after the Indians demonstrated their voting power during Pat Williams’s 1992 U.S. Congressional campaign. The party attempted to add a Democratic voice to the efforts to increase the Indian vote. In 1996, the Montana Indian Democrats Council was formed and added to the affiliate organizations of the MDP with the MIDC president gaining a seat on the Executive Board of the party. The Montana Indian Democrats Council (MIDC) was active in the 1996 election, heavily involved with the campaign of Bill Yellowtail, a Native American Congressional candidate. The MIDC was not as
active in 1998 because of lack of funding. In preparation for the 2000 campaign, the MIDC pushed for the hiring of a staff member dedicated to mobilizing Indian voters\textsuperscript{61} who would travel throughout Montana’s Indian reservations representing the MDP. The position of Tribal coordinator was formed, and after the 2000 primary, the position was filled by Darrell LaMere\textsuperscript{62}. LaMere’s activities during the campaign cycle included attending pow-wows and fairs, attending tribal council events, planning rallies and political activities on Indian reservations, conducting registration drives, and assisting in the GOTV activities on the Indian reservations. The 2000 campaign was the first campaign in which a major party actively sought to include Indians into the party campaign structure and increase Indian voter turnout by hiring a staff member\textsuperscript{63}.

4.1.3 Measurement of Mobilization Efforts:

The independent variable of mobilization efforts is measured by the presence of the MDP Tribal Coordinator on each Indian reservation during the 2000 campaign cycle. The Tribal Coordinator’s presence on a reservation was determined from interviews with the MDP Tribal Coordinator and local party activists. The MDP Tribal Coordinator was asked to rank the reservations in order of the emphasis placed on each reservation, while local activists were asked to answer the question “on a scale of 1 to five, how much contact did you have with Darrell LaMere, the MDP Tribal Coordinator”. The responses of the local activists were in accord with the Tribal Coordinator, and also confirmed by the Tribal Coordinator’s supervisor at the state headquarters of the MDP. The reservations are given a score of 1 to 7, ranking them in order of the emphasis placed on the reservation by the MDP in their mobilization efforts. The ranking of each reservation is shown in Table 10.

\textsuperscript{60} Native Action, a non-partisan non-profit organization, had been mobilizing voters since 1986.
\textsuperscript{61} Martin, Brad. Interview, December 17, 2001. Montana Democrats Headquarters. Helena, MT.
\textsuperscript{62} LaMere, Darrell. Correspondence. April 19, 2001
4.2 Dependant Variable Voter Turnout.

The information on the voter turnout of Indian voters will be taken from a study by Joe Lamson, which was presented at the Indian Vote 2000 meeting in January 2001. Inaccuracies in the data result from the inclusion of non-Indian voters in the totals for Indian precincts, and the absence of urban Indians from the data totals. Lamson’s data is compiled from data from precincts on Montana’s Indian reservations. Lamson’s data has not been adjusted to the 2000 census numbers, but has been adjusted for changes in registration law in the last five years. It should also be noted that a major snowstorm lowered voter turnout on reservations located in Eastern Montana. Reservations affected were the Fort Peck, Crow, and Northern Cheyenne reservations.

4.2.1 Registration-

Lamson found a 10% voter registration increase from the 1998 elections to the 2000 elections among reservation voters. This is greater than the state-wide registration increase of 9%. In June 2000, 22,553 voters were registered in reservation precincts. From June until October, extensive registration drives increased the number of registered reservation voters to 24,768, an increase of 2215 voters. Broken down by reservation, the Northern Cheyenne reservation had the greatest increase in registration at 13% or an increase of 354 voters. The smallest increase was on the Crow reservation, with a 9% increase or 237 voters. The following Table 8 shows the registration increase for each reservation:

63 Smith, Pat. Correspondence, April 25, 2001
Table 8  
Registration Increase by Reservation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reservation</th>
<th>1998 Registered Voters</th>
<th>2000 Registered Voters</th>
<th>Registration increase</th>
<th>% Registration Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blackfeet</td>
<td>4,668</td>
<td>5,183</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crow</td>
<td>4,213</td>
<td>4,450</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flathead</td>
<td>3,167</td>
<td>3,526</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Belknap</td>
<td>2,153</td>
<td>2,367</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Peck</td>
<td>4,388</td>
<td>4,793</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Cheyenne</td>
<td>2,651</td>
<td>3,005</td>
<td>354</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocky Boy</td>
<td>1,313</td>
<td>1,444</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Reservation</strong></td>
<td><strong>22,553</strong></td>
<td><strong>24,768</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,215</strong></td>
<td><strong>10%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>State Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>639,241</strong></td>
<td><strong>698,260</strong></td>
<td><strong>59,019</strong></td>
<td><strong>9%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Lamson, Joe “2000 Montana Indian Reservation Voting Analysis” Census Bureau 2000

*Some reservation, and the State of Montana, have over 100% of the voters registered. This is due to voters remaining on the registration lists as inactive voters for eight years after the last election in which they voted. Any deaths or voters who have moved from the precinct would result in an over count of registered voters.

4.2.2 Voter Turnout-

Montana’s reservations increased their turnout in the 2000 elections by 29% from 1998. The reservation turnout still trails behind the overall state turnout by 11%, which has narrowed the gap between reservation and non-reservation turnout, which was 14% in the 1998 elections. Reservation turnout was 49% compared to the state-wide turnout of 60%. These turnout numbers are based on the number of voters, not on the voting age population. The greatest increase in voters came from the Fort Peck reservation with 2,385 voters, an increase of 598 voters over 1998. The largest percentage increase in voter turnout came from the Northern Cheyenne reservation with an increase of 48% from turnout in 1998. The Flathead reservation had the highest turnout with 58%.
The following table 9 shows the voter turnout for Montana’s reservations and the state-wide turnout. I have also included a category beyond Lamson’s research of non-reservation turnout, which removes the reservation data from the state-wide turnout.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blackfeet</td>
<td>2276</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>471</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crow</td>
<td>2490</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>474</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flathead</td>
<td>2030</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>464</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Belknap</td>
<td>1287</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Peck</td>
<td>2385</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>598</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Cheyenne</td>
<td>1094</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocky Boy</td>
<td>676</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Reservation</td>
<td>12,238</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>2729</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total State</td>
<td>417,916</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>79,183</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Reservation</td>
<td>405,678</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>76,454</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Montana Secretary of State Election Bureau. Lamson, Joe “2000 Montana Indian Reservation Voting Analysis”

During the 2000 election cycle, Montana’s Native Americans showed an increase in registration of 9%, with a voter turnout increase of 29% compared to the state increase of 23%. Indian voters also gained three more representatives in the state legislature, bringing the total to six.

4.2.3 Measurement of Voter Turnout:

The dependent variable, voter turnout, is measured in four ways. The first measurement, voting age population turnout (VAT), is the best indicator of turnout throughout the reservation. However, because Montana’s registration laws limit voter registration to 45 days before the
election, the last 45 days of election mobilization efforts are targeted specifically at the registered voters. Therefore, the voter turnout of registered voters (RVT) is the second measurement of voter turnout, and perhaps a better indicator of the effectiveness of mobilization than VAT. As some reservations may have had higher levels of turnout before the 2000 election cycle, the increases in both VAT and RVT are included as third and fourth methods of measurement of voter turnout. The increase is found by the difference between the voter turnout in 1998 and 2000, not as a rate of growth. The fourth measurement of the increase in registered voter turnout (RVT) is seen as the best measurement of the effectiveness of the mobilization efforts, as mobilization efforts are targeted at registered voters and it shows only the increase of the 2000 election cycle. However, all measurements are included as the goal of mobilization efforts is to increase turnout among all Native Americans, not just registered Native Americans. In order to use Spearman’s rho (Rs), a correlation measurement designed for small samples with rankings, the voter turnout is ranked with the highest voter turnout receiving the one ranking and the lowest a seven ranking. The end result is four measurements of voter turnout: rank of voting age turnout, rank of registered voter turnout, rank of increase in voting age turnout, and rank of increase in registered voter turnout. These measurements are displayed in Table 10 below with the voter turnout percentages and increases with the rankings:

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64 Increase in VAT is measured by VAT 00- VAT 98= Increase in VAT, not (VAT 00 -VAT 98)/ VAT 98= increase in VAT, so if VAT 98= 50% and VAT 00= 75%, increase in VAT is 75%-50%=25%, not (75%-50%)/50%= 50%
Table 10 Reservations Ranked by Mobilization Efforts with Voter Turnout Measurements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mobilization Ranking</th>
<th>Reservation</th>
<th>VAT/ Rank</th>
<th>Registered Turnout/ Rank</th>
<th>Increase in VAT Turnout</th>
<th>Increase Registered Turnout/ Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Crow</td>
<td>58%/2</td>
<td>56%/2</td>
<td>11.1%/3</td>
<td>8.1%/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Northern Cheyenne</td>
<td>43%/4</td>
<td>36%/7</td>
<td>13.9%/2</td>
<td>8.6%/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Flathead</td>
<td>11%/7</td>
<td>58%/1</td>
<td>2.6%/7</td>
<td>8.2%/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Blackfeet</td>
<td>36%/5</td>
<td>44%/6</td>
<td>7.2%/5</td>
<td>5.2%/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Fort Belknap</td>
<td>74%/1</td>
<td>54%/3</td>
<td>15.1%/1</td>
<td>7%/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Fort Peck</td>
<td>36%/5</td>
<td>50%/4</td>
<td>9%/4</td>
<td>9.1%/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Rocky Boy</td>
<td>46%/3</td>
<td>47%/5</td>
<td>6.5%/6</td>
<td>2.8%/7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reservation with the highest voting age population turnout, Fort Belknap, also had the greatest gains from 1998 in voter turnout, and was fifth in the mobilization on the reservation. Flathead had the highest voter turnout of registered voters with the 3rd greatest amount of efforts by the MDP. The greatest increase in registered voter turnout only ranked 6th in attention received by the MDP. Graphical representations of mobilization intensity relationship with each of the four measures of turnout and their rankings are available in Appendix B and suggest a weak relationship with high levels of variability.

4.3 Test of hypothesis:

The hypothesis will be tested by using the Spearman’s Rho (Rs), designed to find the degree of relationship between ranked data\(^6\). These relationships are expected to be positive, as the one ranking was given to the reservation with the highest turnout (or increase in turnout) and to the reservation with the greatest intensity of mobilization efforts. The Spearman’s R is computed for each of the four measurements of voter turnout, and presented in Table 11:
Table 11  Spearman’s Rho (Rs) for Mobilization Efforts and Voter Turnout Rankings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rankings for 2000 RVT</th>
<th>Rankings for 2000 RVT Increase</th>
<th>Rankings for 2000 VAP Turnout</th>
<th>Rankings for 2000 VAP Turnout Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results show a weak relationship between mobilization efforts and voter turnout. The relationship between mobilization and increase in registered voter turnout is the strongest (.32), which is unsurprising considering that all of the mobilization efforts of 45 days before the election were targeted at registered voters. However, this relationship is not statistically significant. To be statistically significant at the .05 level, Spearman’s R would have to be greater than .714. Therefore, we cannot reject the null hypothesis that mobilization efforts and voter turnout are not related.

Chapter Five: Conclusion:

The surprising result of the Spearman’s Rho test indicates that the mobilization efforts of the Montana Democratic Party did not increase the voter turnout on Montana’s Indian reservations. This result has important implications for the Montana Democratic Party and its campaign plan in the next election cycle. There are a number of possible explanations for the lack of relationship between the MDP mobilization efforts and voter turnout some inherent in this research, and some criticisms of the MDP efforts.

One explanation is the inaccuracies in the voting information. The voter turnout percentages were gathered from aggregate data from precincts on Indian reservations. These precincts contain non-Indian voters as well. Additional research that provided individual level data is suggested, as it would eliminate these problems. This research may be difficult to execute, as such research is usually conducted using telephone interviews, and many Native American households do not have telephone service. If this research was attempted in Montana, the large number of Indians living off the reservation should also be included.

Another explanation for the lack of relationship between mobilization efforts and voter turnout is the measurement of mobilization efforts. The intensity of mobilization efforts was measured in this research by ranking the presence of the tribal coordinator on the reservation. Alternative methods of measuring mobilization may result in a different outcome of our significance test. Suggestions for alternative methods of measuring mobilization would be to test the presence of the characteristics of successful mobilization as described in Chapter Three. This would test the quality of mobilization efforts, not the intensity.

Both of the above explanations are problems in this research that may have resulted in an inaccurate relationship between mobilization efforts and voter turnout. However, it is possible
that this relationship is accurate, and problems with the mobilization efforts themselves reduced their effectiveness. One of these problems may be that they did not demonstrate the characteristics of successful mobilization that were described in Chapter 3. Further research on the extent the MDP mobilization efforts met these characteristics is suggested. A second possible problem with the MDP mobilization efforts is the amount of time spent organizing. It is possible that the mobilization efforts did not have an effect on turnout in the 2000 elections, but will in the future. The short time frame of this research does not consider that possibility. In this case, the continued study of Native American voter turnout is necessary.

The observed patterns of Native American voter turnout described in Chapter Two suggested many factors other than mobilization that may be involved in the voting decision of Native Americans. These factors require further study to determine their impact. These factors are reviewed below:

1. Further research on the effect of tribal membership on voter preference and voter turnout is recommended. The strong preference for Democratic candidates may be due to individual voters identifying with the Democratic party, or due to tribal endorsement. If tribal endorsement is the reason, endorsements of Republicans should switch the voter preference of Native Americans. The effects of tribal membership on the voting decision remain unexplored.

2. The disconnectedness of Native American voters was suggested by a number of activists as the reason for low voter turnout in state elections. Although measuring disconnectedness can be difficult, further research should be done to determine the impact of disconnectedness and possible reasons for it.
3. The Socioeconomic effects of Native Americans seems to be a factor in their low turnout in state elections, but not a factor in turnout in tribal elections. This may be because the knowledge of issues on the local level is greater, overcoming some of the effects of socioeconomic status. The exploration of socioeconomic status influence on the voting behavior of Native Americans could reveal interesting relationships that would develop our understanding of socioeconomic influence on the voting decision of the greater community.

4. The impact of the costs to voting, such as registration costs, jury duty, and the availability of absentee ballots on the voting decision should be explored further. Research determining the use of absentee ballot of Native Americans and non-Native Americans may reveal that the increased availability of absentee ballots is the reason that Native American participation has increased between 1998 and 2000.

5. The effects of political campaigning on the Native American voting decision also needs to be explored. It is possible that Native American culture creates individuals that are more influenced by the political environment than other Montanans. It would also be interesting to find out why representation by Indian legislators does not result in increased turnout.

All of these factors should be explored to develop a full understanding of the Native American voting decision. This understanding will increase the effectiveness of mobilization efforts, as activists will be able to target specific factors influencing the voting decision.

In conclusion, the results of the research are incomplete. The results of the test for the effectiveness of the MDP mobilization efforts in increasing turnout are statistically insignificant, and suggest that the MDP’s mobilization efforts did not increase the voter turnout of Native Americans. The quality of the mobilization efforts requires further study before concluding
whether or not the MDP's mobilization efforts met the characteristics of a successful mobilization effort. Further study is also necessary for the factors involved in the voting decision of Native Americans, although this paper presents many factors that appear to be influential. The research on Native American voter turnout, the factors involved in the voting decision, and the effects of mobilization awaits further study.
Appendix B: Graphical Presentations of Relationship Between Mobilization Efforts and Voter Turnout

A fairly smooth negative slope is expected for the graphical representations of mobilization efforts, as the highest mobilization level is one, and is expected to correspond with the highest level of turnout. The following four graphs are of 2000 registered voter turnout (1), 2000 voting age population turnout (2), 2000 registered voter turnout increase (3), and 2000 voting age population turnout increase (4).

Graph 1

2000 Registered Voter Turnout

Graph 2

2000 Voting Age Population Turnout
The graphs show a slight negative slant, but are highly variable. The next set of graphs show the ranking of mobilization efforts with the ranking of registered voter turnout (5), rank of voting age population turnout (6), rank of registered voter turnout increase (7), and rank of voting age population increase (8). These graphs should all show a positive relationship, as the highest voter turnout (or increase), represented by the rank one, should be associated with the highest level of mobilization efforts, ranked one.
When using rankings, the relationship appears stronger, although still very variable.
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