

The First Americans: Native American Voting Behavior Today

Emily Matta

Fairmount College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Abstract: Among the most critically neglected ethnicities when studying political behavior, Native Americans are often lumped into the ‘Other’ category in national surveys and resulting datasets. Composing a rather small but unarguably important demographic, this absence of information has rendered studying Native American political participation notoriously difficult. By utilizing survey data from GSS2012, and identifying ethnicity variables that include Native Americans, I intend to analyze Indian electoral participation in the 2008 presidential election to shed light on how many Native citizens vote and what circumstances may affect how they vote. Do Native Americans vote with the same frequency as white voters? Why not? I hypothesize that Native Americans are less mobilized not only because of education and economic disparities, but because of a lack of trust in the United States federal government. If proven true, initiatives like President Obama’s Gen-I (Generation Indigenous) might improve the relationship between Native Americans and the federal government over time and subsequently increase voter turnout.