**A Case Study of Voting Rights Barriers Affecting Native Americans**

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**A Case Study of Voting Rights Barriers Affecting Native Americans[[1]](#footnote-1)**

***Abstract***

This is an exploratory study examining how travel distance in a rural community affects electoral participation. It compares individuals living on the Pine Ridge Reservation in Jackson County, South Dakota to those living off the reservation. While travel distance will be the focus of this study, other socio-demographic variables are considered to determine whether the totality of circumstances makes voting more difficult for individuals living on the Pine Ridge Reservation than for other residents of the county. To place the impact of travel distance on voting within a broader context, we also consider its effect on other aspects of daily life for people living on and off the reservation. We utilize a mixed methods approach that includes analyses of Census Bureau data, qualitative data gathered from interviews, data obtained using Geographic Information System software, and original survey data collected from voting age residents.

**Introduction**

Voting is described by political scientist Norman Ornstein as, “one of the most precious privileges of a free society.”[[2]](#footnote-2) Yet for people living in rural areas, the act of voting often incurs high costs. From traveling to polling places on election day, to procuring the necessary identification for voting purposes – citizens in rural areas face tougher obstacles than those living in urban areas.[[3]](#footnote-3) In this paper, we examine how much higher those costs may be for a marginalized population living in a rural area. We posit that Native Americans living in Jackson County, South Dakota face much steeper costs than their white counterparts. The purpose of this study is to determine the extent to which travel distance, in conjunction with socio-demographic factors, adversely affects the ability of Native Americans in Jackson County[[4]](#footnote-4) to register and vote. While we anticipate that travel distance will have negative impacts on white inhabitants, we expect the adverse effects will be greater for Native Americans.

In *Thornburg v. Gingles* (1986), the Supreme Court recognized that the effects of past discrimination---lower socio-economic status---negatively impact electoral participation. Not only are Native Americans in Jackson County disadvantaged when compared to whites in the county, they are one of the most disadvantaged groups in the entire country. In Jackson County, 96.5% of whites 25 years of age and older had completed high school, but less than 70% of Native Americans had done so.[[5]](#footnote-5) While 11.5% of white individuals in Jackson County reported incomes below the poverty line, more than half of Native Americans reported the same.[[6]](#footnote-6) The unemployment rate for white stands at 1.4% -- for Native Americans that figure is nearly thirty times that rate. Moreover, the per capita income for whites in Jackson County was reported as $23,072, while Native Americans reported an unbelievably low $5,725.[[7]](#footnote-7)

In this research, we focus on voting rights issues affecting Native Americans in Jackson County. The Oglala Sioux live on the Pine Ridge Reservation, most of which is located in Shannon County. However, the eastern part of the reservation is part of Jackson County. The socio-demographic conditions of Oglala Sioux in Jackson County are similar to that of other inhabitants of the reservation, but what makes it unique is that the county has a large white population living just north of the reservation, which allows for direct comparisons to be made.

Election Procedures in Jackson County

South Dakota law allows registered voters to either cast their ballots at a precinct polling location on Election Day or to vote by absentee ballot.[[8]](#footnote-8) The county auditor mails absentee ballots out 45 days prior to Election Day. Absentee ballots, however, can be gotten from the county auditor until 3:00 on Election Day. The ballot may be returned by mail or by hand delivering them to the county auditor’s office in the Kadoka courthouse. The auditor must receive the marked absentee ballots with enough time that such ballots can be delivered to the polling place before the polls close on Election Day.[[9]](#footnote-9)

In-person late voter registration, which ends 15 days prior to Election Day, allows an individual to register in the county auditor’s office. The person can cast an in-person absentee ballot then or choose to mail it or later return it to the auditor’s office. This procedure is the functional equivalent of an early voting system. It is easy for Kadoka residents to register and cast an in-person absentee ballot, but it is much harder for individuals living in outlying regions.

When absentee in-person ballots are turned in on Election Day, the county auditor determines whether there is enough time to get those ballots delivered to polling places. If she cannot get the ballots to the assigned polling places on Election Day, the ballots are not counted. Polling places for Kadoka residents are in the basement of the courthouse, but individuals’ whose polling places are distant from the courthouse in Kadoka are unlikely to use the absentee in-person voting system.

**Voting Rights Litigation in South Dakota**

In South Dakota alone, there have been at least 19 VRA cases challenging election procedures and practices.[[10]](#footnote-10) Most of the earliest cases are “first generation” voting rights abuses, where state and local political jurisdictions tried to deny the franchise to Native Americans, often times using rationales that focused on their status as members of tribal nations with distinct territories. Until forced to change by voting rights litigation in the 1970s and 1980s, South Dakota classified counties with large reservations as “unorganized” counties, which had to contract with neighboring “organized” counties for services. Residents of the “unorganized” counties were prohibited by law from voting and running for office.[[11]](#footnote-11)

First Generation Voting Rights Litigation and Fraud Allegations

The administration of elections is handled at the local level by the county auditor, which is a partisan elected position. County auditors have figured prominently in cases involving “first generation” abuses that were found to be a violation of the VRA. These cases involved local election officials placing limits on the numbers of voting registration cards given to Native Americans and the refusal to accept cards from Native Americans, as well as failing to provide sufficient polling places on reservations.[[12]](#footnote-12)

There also are several instances of election officials charging Native Americans living on the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Reservations with fraudulent voting registration. After a voting registration drive among Native Americans in 1978, the South Dakota Division of Criminal Investigation and the Federal Bureau of Investigation launched investigations, but no charges were filed. Following a 2002 voter registration drive on the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Reservations, county auditors in Bennett and Jackson Counties leveled charges of registration fraud, but the state attorney general found no evidence of widespread fraud.[[13]](#footnote-13)

Second Generation Voting Rights Litigation

More recent cases have involved “second generation” charges that political jurisdictions diluted the voting clout of Native Americans. Examples of this include the mal-apportioning of districts, such that the white districts include far fewer residents than the Native Americans districts, shifting the boundaries of districts so Native Americans are “packed” into districts thereby limiting the number of seats held by members of that community, and finally, de-annexation to entirely remove reservation lands from a political jurisdiction.[[14]](#footnote-14) The most recent type of “second generation” voting rights cases have involved the question of whether Native Americans are denied equal access to registration and early voting options when political jurisdictions allow for late registration and in-person early absentee voting at designated sites (typically county courthouses) that are geographically close to white population centers but far distant from population centers on reservations.[[15]](#footnote-15)

In 2012, Oglala Sioux, living on the Shannon County portion of the Pine Ridge Reservation, charged that having to travel up to three hours to do late registration and early voting was a violation of the VRA. The case was settled after the county and Secretary of State agreed to provide funds to establish a satellite late registration and early in-person absentee voting site on the reservation.[[16]](#footnote-16) On May 6, 2013, Tom Poor Bear, an Oglala Sioux resident of Jackson County, asked county commissioners to work with the tribe to establish a similar satellite center on Jackson County part of the reservation.[[17]](#footnote-17) The county commissioners refused, citing the financial cost, even though the county had been pre-approved for funding through the Help America Vote Act.[[18]](#footnote-18)

**Relevant Academic Literature**

The United States has very low voting turnout rates. Along with factors related to interest, motivation, and efficacy, academics have considered the costs associated with voting. Downs posits a voting calculus determined by the difference in benefits from the two parties minus the cost of voting.[[19]](#footnote-19) Travel distance can be an important cost factor. In examining the impact of travel distance, political scientists have made use of the concept of accessibility. When considering the costs of registering and voting, distance alone is an oversimplification. Rather, scholars incorporate the element of impedance. Impedance can imply deleterious effects of traffic congestion, frequency of intersections, or speed limits, as well as road quality and topographical barriers.[[20]](#footnote-20)

Gimpel and Schuknecht, using geographical information system (GIS), discovered that the accessibility of polling locations has significant and independent effect on the decision to vote.[[21]](#footnote-21) In a study of the 2001 Atlanta mayoral election, Haspel and Knotts found that even, “small differences in distance from the polls can have a significant impact on voter turnout.”[[22]](#footnote-22) In a study of Clark County, Nevada, Dyck and Gimpel found that when the cost of traveling to a polling location is high, voting turnout declines.[[23]](#footnote-23) Brady and McNulty examined Los Angeles’s consolidation of precincts in 2003 and found that the location of early-voting places affects whether a person decides to vote early.”[[24]](#footnote-24)

While important, none of the extant research considers the unique conditions affecting Native Americans living on reservations. Not only is their travel distance much greater, most cannot use absentee voting by mail, since they do not get mail delivered to their homes. Given there is a substantial body of academic research showing that racial minorities, people with limited income, and those with lower education levels find it more difficult to register and vote,[[25]](#footnote-25) we examine ways that the effects of travel distance are exacerbated by these additional elements.

**Rationale for Using Case Study Analysis**

The use of case study is an appropriate methodology when the subject matter has not previously been examined. Case study analysis offers the potential for achieving a high degree of conceptual validity, allows one to begin exploring possible causal mechanisms, and has the capacity to address the complexity of the issue at hand.[[26]](#footnote-26) Our aim is to identify the factors affecting Native American voting, not to explain the causal mechanisms underlying them.[[27]](#footnote-27) We hope to initiate a broader academic discussion of how the effects of their unique historical and physical circumstances impact the ability of Native Americans to exercise the right to vote. To a large extent, they are the marginalized of the marginalized. This study has the potential to make a significant contribution to our understanding the reasons why Native Americans continue to lag behind all other groups in their political participation.

**The Choice of Jackson County**

South Dakota has a long and fraught history of conflict between whites and Native Americans, including the 1890 massacre at Wounded Knee, the site of which is on the Pine Ridge Reservation.[[28]](#footnote-28) Pine Ridge also was the site of the 71 day standoff between the American Indian Movement and federal law enforcement officers in 1973. Also as previously noted, the state has the nation’s worst record for voting rights abuses against Native Americans.[[29]](#footnote-29)

Jackson County, which encompasses 1,871 square miles, is located approximately 100 miles east of Rapid City. The county is split by the White River, with the Pine Ridge Reservation occupying the land south of the river. That portion of the county used to be Washabaugh County, but in 1983 it was merged into Jackson County.[[30]](#footnote-30) All county government offices and services, as well as nearly all businesses, are located north of the White River. The population is geographically segregated, with less than 200 Native Americans living off the reservation, and less than 125 whites living on the reservation. As we will show later, this geographic segregation has served as a breeding ground for racial tension that is unfortunately reflected in both Jackson County politics as well as the daily affairs of residents.

While we strongly suspect the state’s long history of opposition to voting rights measures has resulted in not voting becoming a habituated behavior for tribal members, exploring this is beyond the scope of this project.[[31]](#footnote-31) Jackson County also is one of the poorest in the nation. This history of violence, racism and disenfranchisement, and poverty makes Jackson County an appropriate site for exploring the differential impact of travel distance on whites and Native Americans living in a rural community.

**Data Collection and Methodology**

We used Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software to identify population concentrations, and analyze travel times and distances. Census data from both the 2010 census as well as American Community Survey results between 2008 and 2012 was used to develop a basic understanding of socio-demographic differences among Jackson County residents. We also conducted original survey research and interviews among whites and Native Americans. By gathering both qualitative and quantitative data from multiple sources a more complete understanding of the complexity of the issue is possible.

The survey included questions designed to ascertain how travel distance affected people’s ability to engage in daily activities, such as shopping and getting to work or school, and whether it affected their ability to vote.[[32]](#footnote-32) We included questions about how travel distance affected non-voting activities for two reasons. First, it served as a check on the validity of the voting related responses, allowing us to see whether the voting related responses were consistent with other activities that may be impacted by travel distance. Second, it allowed us to consider the possible trade-offs that poor people must make it choosing the bear the costs of traveling to vote. What is the opportunity cost of traveling to Kadoka to register and cast an in-person absentee vote?

None of the survey questions asked about potentially sensitive topics, such as racial attitudes, partisanship, and voting preferences. Even though we considered these to be potentially important, we chose not to include them as questions because doing so would make it difficult for us to collect representative samples of respondents from both communities.[[33]](#footnote-33)

While we were not able to survey individuals in every community, we visited every Census Bureau location in the county, as well as others identified by local people. We traveled to Wanblee, Kadoka, Potato Creek, Long Valley, Interior, Cottonwood, Cactus Flats, Belvidere, and Stamford. Individuals were approached at grocery stores, post offices, gas stations, and hardware stores. The 177 respondents, representing roughly 9% of the county’s voting age population, were nearly equally split between the two major racial groups in the county: 85 whites, 83 Native American, 7 mixed white and Native American and 2 who identified as “other.” For most of our analyses we focus on comparisons between those self-identified as white and those self-identified as Native American.

While this method of sampling is susceptible to biases, it was the only feasible means of conducting survey research on the Pine Ridge Reservation, given that most people do not have street addresses, many lack telephones, and a significant section of the population are homeless (i.e., staying for short periods of time with friends and family members because they cannot afford housing). Also all residents must travel to these towns to purchase the necessities of life, and as a result, we were able to obtain a reasonable cross section of county residents.

Additional insights were gained through interviews conducted with county and tribal officials. Also 110 of the survey respondents provided comments that went beyond the prompted questions. This qualitative material is included where appropriate and provides for a much fuller understanding of conditions in Jackson County.

**Geographic Information Systems Findings**

Overview

Jackson County has a total area of 1,871 square miles, with on the average less than five people per square mile. The county’s most substantial interstate is the 90 freeway, which cuts across the northern half of the state connecting several of the off-reservation towns.  Along this freeway, access to basic institutions like service stations is infrequent, but regular and sufficient.  In terms of population, the majority of individuals living off the reservation are concentrated near the county seat of Kadoka (population 654). The other townships in the northern part of the county have populations in the double digits or less and are located along the 90 and to the North.  The town of Interior, which has two restaurants, a convenience store, and a post office, borders both the Pine Ridge reservation and Bad Lands National Park.  All roads leading in and out of Interior are paved and well-traveled.  The towns of Belvidere and Cottonwood are noticeably inhabited, Belvidere being larger and containing a functional post office.  Belvidere is accessibly only from the North by paved road, approximately one mile south of the 90.  From the south, SD 63, which bisects Belvidere, is unpaved.  Cottonwood, boasting a population of just nine, is accessibly by the paved 14 freeway, or by a combination of unpaved and “minimal maintenance” roads.

Road quality on the Pine Ridge reservation is similar to that off the reservation in that there are main roads bisecting the county, and more minor, unpaved roads serving less populous regions. Bureau of Indian Affairs roads 44 and 73 cut across the reservation in Jackson County from East to West and from North to South, respectively.  The most populous town in Jackson County is Wanblee (population 725), which boasts a grocery store, service station, post office, and a relatively large school.  Wanblee is considered by residents and outsiders alike to be the center of the Pine Ridge Reservation in Jackson County.  Long Valley (population 229), where nearly all of the whites on the reservation live, is to the South East of Wanblee and off the 73. Long Valley offers residents a school, convenience store, and post office.  Potato Creek is smaller still, located just off the 44 to the west of Wanblee. Potato Creek is a collection of family homes off several dirt roads with no discernable services.[[34]](#footnote-34)  Hisle, Lost Dog, and Eagle Nest are even less populated and were not personally visited by the GIS team.

Road conditions did not seem to be a problem for our team while driving during the summer. What is of concern is the relative lack of resources and services observed, most notably on the Pine Ridge Reservation. The reality of daily travel on unpaved roads and the effect on gas mileage and vehicle wear is notable, and affects those living on unpaved roads both on and off the reservation. In terms of travel distance, it is relevant to mention road maintenance in winter was reported to be inadequate.  We were told by some interviewees that road maintenance and snow plowing on the reservation was a problem.  A member of the tribal police spoke at length about conflicts between state, county, and tribal government over which is responsible for road development and road maintenance.  According to reports, the road connecting Kyle to Potato Creek was rarely plowed.  This information, paired with the report that Kyle is the hub of the Pine Ridge reservation, raises concerns about travel, especially in the winter.  Traversing a road is made objectively more challenging when weather conditions are poor and roads are not clear.

**Travel Distances**

When examining disparate conditions on and off the Pine Ridge Reservation in Jackson County, the subject of distance traveled to achieve typical household activities is relevant.  Table 1 illustrates the travel distances between towns in and around Jackson County.  Wanblee, Long Valley, Potato Creek, Hisle, and Kyle are all on the Pine Ridge reservation, while the other towns are not.  Kyle, Cedarbutte, Wall, Martin, and Rapid City are included because, although they are outside of Jackson County, some residents regularly shop or receive mail there.  These destinations are of note because analysis of the survey data suggests individuals often choose to select shopping destinations that are not the closest available, implying a higher than anticipated cost of travel in daily life, which may subsequently influence the opportunity cost of voting. Moreover, a number of Oglala Sioux survey respondents told us that they would “never” go to Kadoka even though it was closer than other shopping places.

### Table 1: Travel Distances around Jackson County, in Miles



**Differential Impact of Travel Distances**

While travel distance adversely impacts all people in Jackson County, the negative effects of travel distance are much greater for Native Americans than it is white residents. The most obvious reason is poverty. As we showed earlier with Census data, the average per capita income of Native Americans is approximately one-quarter of that of white residents, and 53% have incomes that fall below the poverty line. While a person with a monthly income of just under $2,000 (the white per capita income) may complain about the price of gasoline, the adverse impact is much greater for the average Native American whose monthly income is less than $500. The average price of gasoline in South Dakota for the period just prior to the 2012 election was $3.865.[[35]](#footnote-35) Given that the average gas tank holds 16 gallons of fuel, the price of a fill-up is then is $62 or roughly 13% of the average monthly income for a Native American.

Cost of Traveling to the County Courthouse

 Travel distance does not only impact people’s ability to carry out daily activities, it also affects one’s ability to participate in the electoral process. To take advantage of in-person registration and early voting, a person must travel to the county courthouse. Two-thirds of off-reservation residents in Jackson County live in the Kadoka Census Bureau subdivision, and according to our GIS satellite mapping, cluster close to the center of town. These people face no measurable travel distance burden in traveling to the county courthouse. There are, however, some people living in the northern part of the county who face travel distance barriers. The nine residents of Cottonwood would need to travel 37 miles to reach Kadoka and the 94 residents of Interior are 31 miles from Kadoka. The difference is that all residents of the Pine Ridge Reservation face significant travel distance barriers in traveling to Kadoka. Wanblee (population 725), which is 28 miles distant from Kadoka, is the closest to county seat, followed by the predominantly white community of Long Valley at 29 miles.[[36]](#footnote-36) Other reservation communities are even further away: Potato Creek is 46 miles and Hisle is 57 miles.

An Estimate of the Financial Cost for Different Populations

A rough estimate of the financial cost of traveling to the county courthouse to register or vote can be calculated. While it is impossible to know the average gas mileage for the vehicles driven in Jackson County, the Ford F-Series trucks topped of the lists of best-selling new and used vehicles in 2012, so the gas mileage for a Ford F-Series Truck can be used in this exercise.[[37]](#footnote-37) The average gas mileage for new 2012 F-series Ford trucks ranges from 12 to19 miles per gallon.[[38]](#footnote-38) If one picks the middle of that range (15.5 miles per gallon) and uses it in calculating the round trip gasoline costs of traveling from different reservation locations to the county courthouse in Kadoka, the costs range from a low of $14 for people living in Wanblee to a high of $28.46 for those living in Hisle. For middle income Americans, the financial cost of any of these trips to the courthouses might be an annoyance, but for people whose average monthly income is less than $500, the opportunity cost is considerable.[[39]](#footnote-39)

**Postal Services and Absentee Voting by Mail**

Since absentee voting by mail has been posited as a possible alternative form of voting that allows rural residents to avoid the problems of travel distance, we examined postal services in Jackson County.[[40]](#footnote-40) The vast majority of Jackson County residents have post office boxes, because there is very limited residential mail delivery. The annual cost for an 11 inch by 5.5 inch post office box is $86.00.[[41]](#footnote-41) While neither traveling to the post office nor paying the annual fee for a post office box, would be a significant obstacle for most Americans, it is more of a barrier for individuals with limited resources.[[42]](#footnote-42)

There are two post offices off the reservation in Belvidere and Kadoka and two located on the reservation in Long Valley and Wanblee.  The reservation post offices (Wanblee and Long Valley), as well as Belvidere, provide only limited services and hours. Some residents living along BIA 73 have access to rural route service out of Martin in Bennett County, but mail box thefts have made that a less popular option. Residents of Kadoka have a post office with 24-hour access to post office boxes.  The irony is that Kadoka residents, who do not face the travel distance barrier, have the most complete mail service in the county.[[43]](#footnote-43)

Requests for absentee voting require the provision of a photocopy identification documents with a picture or a notarized statement that the person has verified under oath that everything in their application is accurate. This constitutes another barrier, because South Dakota law states that while notaries cannot charge for this service, they can charge if it requires them to travel to notarize the request. While there are many notaries at central locations, such as banks, off the reservation, there are no such facilities on the reservation in Jackson County, which means people on the reservation must either bear travel costs to reach a notary or pay for a notary to travel to their home. The limited access to mail services on the reservation, combined with a variety of additional costs, makes absentee voting by mail an infeasible option.

**Quantitative Data Analysis**

The research team faced several challenges in finding a representative sample of residents willing to be interviewed by outsiders. The research team was comprised on a white female professor and eight graduate students, evenly split between males and females. Only one of the team was identifiably a minority, a Latino male. Support from the leadership of the Oglala Sioux Tribal Nation was extremely important in legitimating this research and gaining survey respondents. While the racial make-up of the team was of a help off the reservation, there were many questions about who we were and what we were doing in their community. Comfort levels, however, increased over time, particularly as we made a point of patronizing local shops.

Simple random sampling was not an option, given we could not obtain lists of voting age residents. To get around this challenge, we sent members of our research teams to canvass the main streets of every town in the county. During July and August 2014, we surveyed voting age residents in Kadoka, Wanblee, Interior, Cottonwood, and at the Oglala Sioux Pow Wow in Pine Ridge, with most coming from the two main population centers of Kadoka and Wanblee. We also surveyed individuals from Belvidere, Interior and Cottonwood, as well as from Potato Creek, Hisle, Long Valley, Eagle Nest, and East Pass Creek on the Pine Ridge Reservation.

Sample Demographics

Our 177 person sample never varies more than 5% from the Census Bureau population parameters for county residents over the age of 18 years. Female respondents are slightly over-represented, with around 54% of respondents compared to 49.5% female in the 2010 US Census. Slightly more than half of the voting age population in the county is white, with most of the rest Native American. The racial breakdown of our sample was quite close with 48% white, 47% Native American, 4% mixed (Native/white), and 1% who identified as other.

A Likert Scale of the Impact of Travel Distance

Respondents were asked a series of questions about how travel distances affected their decision to engage in typical activities: shopping, work/school, getting the mail, and voting. They were to give responses, using a 1-5 Likert scale, with one being not at all and five being a great deal, to questions about how much travel distance affects their decision to engage in each of the four activities. Table 2 shows the results of these questions. What is immediately evident is that travel distance has a much more deleterious effect on the ability of Native American residents to engage in routine daily activities (shopping, getting to work or school, and accessing mail).

**Table 2: Effect of Travel Distance on Typical Activities**

How much do travel distances affect your decision to engage in the following activities?

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Shopping** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **Total** |
| ***Native***  | 21(25.61%) | 4(4.88%) | 8(9.76%) | 11(13.41%) | 38(46.34%) | 82 |
| ***White*** | 40(47.06%) | 9(10.59%) | 14(16.47%) | 9(10.59%) | 13(15.29%) | 85 |
| **Work/School** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ***Native*** | 24(35.29%) | 4(5.88%) | 8(11.76%) | 9(13.25%) | 23(33.82%) | 68 |
| White | 52(75.36%) | 2(2.90%) | 6(8.70%) | 1(1.45%) | 8(11.59%) | 69 |
| **Getting Mail** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ***Native*** | 44(53.66%) | 9(10.98%) | 7(8.53%) | 2(2.44%) | 20(24.39%) | 82 |
| ***White*** | 72(84.70%) | 7(8.24%) | 3(3.53%) | 0 | 3(3.53%) | 85 |
| **Voting** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ***Native*** | 38(48.72%) | 9(11.54%) | 6(7.69%) | 4(5.13%) | 21(26.92%) | 78 |
| ***White*** | 62(80.52%) | 9(11.68%) | 3(3.90%) | 0 | 3(3.90%) | 77 |

Of most significance to this research were the responses to the question about whether travel distance impacted the ability to vote. There were sharply different responses from white and Native American respondents. More than half of Native American respondents said travel distances had some impact on their ability to vote (51.28% selected either 2, 3, 4, or 5 on the Likert scale), while only 19.48% of white respondents felt that way. Even more troubling, roughly 27% of Native American respondents stated that travel distance has a great effect on their decision of whether to vote or not. Among whites, less than 4% gave that response.

To further explore the impact of travel distance on voting decisions, we did a regression comparing the Likert Scale responses on the effect of travel distance on the decision to vote among reservation and non-reservation survey respondents. The model in Table 3 had an adjusted R-squared value of 0.2179. This shows that whether or not an individual lives on the reservation accounts for more than a fifth of the variance in their responses to how much travel distance impacted their decision to vote.

**Table 3: Regression of Reservation Residency and Decision to Vote**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| reg distvote res |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| source | SS |  df | MS |  | Number of obs | = 155 |
| model | 75.8769214 | 1 | 75.87692 |  | F (1, 153) | = 43.92 |
| residual | 264.342433 | 153 | 1.727728 |  | R-squared | = 0.223 |
| total | 340.219355 | 154 | 2.209217 |  | Adj R-squared | = 0.2179 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| distvote | coef. | Std. Err. |  t |  p>|t| |  95% Conf. Interval  |
| res | 1.407819 | 0.212437 | 6.63 | 0.00 | 0.9881312 | 1.827507 |
| \_cons | 1.302326 | 0.141739 | 9.19 | 0.00 | 1.022308 | 1.582343 |

Voting Behavior Questions

While insights can be gained from the survey responses about voting, it is important to be aware of the problem of bias. Social psychologists have long been aware of a bias problem in that people over-report socially desirable behaviors and under-report undesirable behaviors.[[44]](#footnote-44) With respect to voting, researchers have found that over-reporting of voting among some groups of non-voters range from 11% to more than 50%.[[45]](#footnote-45) Although scholars have not explored the extent of over-reporting bias among Native Americans, there is research showing it is more pronounced among African American and Hispanic respondents.[[46]](#footnote-46) We felt it was important to keep this in mind when analyzing responses to several additional voting related questions.

When asked whether they were registered to vote, 87.6% said they were registered to vote at the time we conducted the survey. Among whites 89.71% stated they were registered as opposed to 85.5% of the Native American respondents. One white individual stated that he did not know if he was registered and in total 21 stated they were not registered. The latter group was comprised of 8 whites, 12 Native Americans, and 1 man who listed his race as “other.” See Table 4 for voting registration figures.

**Table 4: Voting Registration by Race**

Are you a registered voter?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Frequency | Percent |
| ***Native American*** No | 12 | 14.46 |
|  Yes | 71 | 85.54 |
| ***White***  No | 8 | 9.41 |
|  Yes | 74 | 89.41 |

Only eight of the non-registered individuals (4 white and 4 Native American) said they wanted to be registered. One Native American man indicated that it was not possible for him to register because he was a disenfranchised felon. Table 5 presents the responses to a question about whether it was difficult to register. Most registered survey respondents (92.2%) did not find registering to vote difficult, although 6.5% of whites and 10.3% of Native Americans said that they had found registering to vote difficult.

**Table 5: Difficulty of Registration by Race**

Did you find registering to vote difficult?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Frequency | Percent |
| ***Native American*** No | 61 | 89.71 |
|  Yes | 7 | 10.29 |
| ***White*** No | 72 | 93.51 |
|  Yes | 5 | 6.49 |

See Table 6 for a breakdown of the different ways that survey respondents used to register. There was a big divide between white and Native American respondents with respect to how they had registered. While the vast majority of white respondents registered at the local courthouse, more than half of Native American respondents registered as part of a registration drive, with just over 26% visiting the courthouse to register. This is very much consistent with the earlier findings that Native Americans were reluctant to visit Kadoka, and that they tend to favor registration options that occur on the reservation.

**Table 6: Mode of Registration by Race**

What did you do to register?

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Native Americans*** | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative |
| Register at county courthouse | 18 | 26.47 | 26.47 |
| Register with car registration | 3 | 4.41 | 30.88 |
| Register as part of a drive | 36 | 52.94 | 83.82 |
| Other | 11 | 16.18 | 100.00 |
| Total | 68 | 100.00 |  |
| ***White***  | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative |
| Register at county courthouse | 65 | 85.53 | 85.53 |
| Register with car registration | 3 | 3.95 | 89.48 |
| Register as part of a drive | 3 | 3.95 | 93.43 |
| Other | 5 | 6.57 | 100.00 |
| Total | 76 | 100.00 |  |

We then asked respondents whether they had been registered in 2012, and if so, had they voted in the 2012 election. Only 147 respondents remembered that they had been registered in time for the 2012 election. Of the 77 whites registered in 2102, 70 (90.1%) recalled voting in the election, but only 51 (79.7%) of the 64 Native Americans recalled voting. These results are presented in Table 7.

We are, however, concerned that there may be an over-reporting bias problem with this data. We examined precinct level data from the predominantly white and predominantly Native American voting precincts and found that turnout in the white precincts ranged from 63.8% to 83%, while turnout in the Native American precincts was approximately 20 points lower.[[47]](#footnote-47) The chances that we simply happened to survey high propensity voting whites and Native Americans are unlikely.

**Table 7: Voting in the 2012 Election**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Did you vote in the 2012 election? | Frequency | Percent |
| ***Native American*** No | 13 | 20.31 |
|  Yes | 51 | 79.69 |
| ***White*** No | 7 | 9.09 |
|  Yes | 70 | 90.91 |

The means of voting in 2012 is summarized in Table 8, which clearly shows an unwillingness of Jackson County voters to use absentee voting as an alternative to precinct voting. Among whites in our survey, 10% of the voters used absent voting, whether by mail or delivered to the county auditor, but none of the Native Americans used absentee voting.

**Table 8: Mode of Voting in the 2012 Election**

How did you vote in the 2012 general election?

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Native Americans*** | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative |
| At local polling place | 50 | 100.00 | 100.00 |
| Absentee by mail |  |  |  |
| Delivered absentee |  |  |  |
| Total | 50 | 100.00 | 100.00 |
| ***Whites*** |  |  |  |
| At local polling place | 63 | 90.00 | 90.00 |
| Absentee by mail | 5 | 7.14 | 97.14 |
| Delivered absentee | 2 | 2.86 | 100.00 |
| Total | 70 | 100.00 | 100.00 |

Finally, we asked the non-voters (n=22) about the factors that influenced their decision. These results are presented in Table 9. The modal responses were dislike of candidates and general disinterest in politics. When divided out by race 25% of whites and 13.6% of Native Americans cited their dislike of the candidates. Possibly the most interesting racial difference involves transportation and family issues, which were mentioned by nearly one-quarter of Native American respondents, but by no whites. Additionally, 12.5% of whites and 22.7% of Native Americans said that while registered they did not vote due to disinterest in the political process. However, it is important to note that the n is incredibly small for this question and even more so when broken down by race, so these percentages represent preliminary, subjective results.

**Table 9: Reasons for Not Voting**

If you did not vote, what factors influenced your decision not to vote?

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Native Americans*** | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative |
| Lack of transportation | 1 | 4.55 | 4.55 |
| Family issues | 4 | 18.18 | 22.73 |
| Forgot | 2 | 9.09 | 31.82 |
| Did not like candidates | 3 | 13.64 | 45.46 |
| Not interested in politics | 5 | 22.73 | 68.19 |
| Couldn’t get time off | 1 | 4.55 | 72.74 |
| Other | 6 | 27.26 | 100.00 |
| Total | 22 | 100.00 |  |
| ***Whites*** | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative |
| Lack of transportation | 0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Family issues | 0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Forgot | 1 | 12.50 | 12.50 |
| Did not like candidates | 2 | 25.00 | 37.50 |
| Not interested in politics | 1 | 12.50 | 50.00 |
| Couldn’t get time off | 1 | 12.50 | 62.50 |
| Other | 3 | 37.50 | 100.00 |
| Total | 8 | 100.00 |  |

**Qualitative Data from Interviews**

At the end of the survey, respondents were asked to share any experience not already addressed. The results of these informal interviews, combined with other anecdotes and more formal interviews with those living in and around Jackson County make up the qualitative results, and are essential to the case study analysis. A total of110 survey respondents volunteered additional comments. This material is divided into discussions of the travel distance and the cost of gasoline, the lack of financial resources, and racial animus. Although we only asked questions about travel distance, the other topics were raised by respondents, often because they shed light on decisions about whether to travel to places.

Gas Prices and Travel Distance

  It is absolutely clear that travel distances make life hard for many Jackson County residents. This is true for both whites and Native Americans, but the latter find it more of a burden. An elderly white woman complained about how hard it was to access doctors and shopping. One Oglala woman stated she must drive between 80-90 miles to her job. A young Oglala woman, living in Potato Creek said she often had to hitchhike 15 miles to get her job. Another Oglala woman traveled 32 miles every day so her children could attend a Head Start Program. She noted that distance “makes everything harder.”

None of the white residents of Kadoka showed any awareness of how much more difficult travel distance may be for residents of the Pine Ridge Reservation. For example, a white minister spoke at length about how being able to order products from Amazon and have them delivered by FedEx was transforming shopping for rural Americans, but he never considered the fact that people without street addresses (i.e., those living on the nearby reservation) could not get this service.

 Nearly all of the people complaining about travel distances also raised the issue of gasoline prices. A total of 28 individuals complained about gas prices in particular. People traveling from Kadoka to shop at major stores in Rapid City must drive 95 miles each way, while those from Wanblee have to travel 102 miles each way. Overall, gas prices remain a major barrier for people. An elderly white woman stated that her fantasy was for, “gas prices to go down” and a white man succinctly stated “gas prices suck.” A young Oglala woman from Potato Creek stated that getting around requires the help of someone who owns a car. She pays someone the cost of gas in order to travel to the market. A middle-aged Oglala woman said the price of gas limits her ability to travel, even to Wanblee for groceries, much less to places with lower food prices. According to an Oglala man, gasoline prices are “a killer.” An elderly Oglala woman explained that having a car is good but that, “it’s hard when you don’t have enough money for gas.”

Poverty and Lack of Resources

    Travel distances and gas prices are an unavoidable aspect of life in rural areas. The survey responses would suggest that it adversely affect everyone, but the impact is greater for those with lower incomes, and those who must travel greater distances for groceries, gas, and mail and they were more likely to be from the Pine Ridge Reservation. A number of Native American interviewees mentioned that they had to rely on others for rides to the market. At the Wanblee Mart, we noticed the same two or three cars being used to drive different people to the grocery store. One of the drivers told us that she made money running an informal taxi service. Survey respondents, however, noted that prices for both food and gas in Wanblee are high and that they would prefer to travel further distances for lower priced items, but could not.

Quite a few Native Americans stated they had no means of support and those with jobs talked about how far they had to travel in order to work low-paying jobs. A couple mentioned that Oglala on the reservation occasionally freeze to death in the winter because they cannot afford the price of heating fuel. While whites in the county complained to us about the cost of travel, none of them mentioned having to hitchhike to work or discussed the possibility of freezing to death in the winter. When a decision must be made between having heat in the winter and making a trip to Kadoka to take advantage of late registration/early voting options at the county courthouse, the choice is obvious.

Perceptions of Racial Animus

 Even though the survey did not include questions that involved race, there were many indications that racial animus is a significant problem. These range from overt statements, such as the white man in Kadoka who proudly stated that he was a “racist,” to more subtle signs, such as the grocery clerk who stated that “Indians don’t like whites” and warned us against traveling on the reservation. Another man asserted that “white culture is best.” One survey taker (a Latino) was confronted by a white man in a pick-up truck. The driver poked his head out of the window and asked the survey taker, “Are you full Indian?” and then made derogatory comments about President Obama and pointed to an American flag decal on his window, while stating, “this is the country we should support.” The implication seemed to be that only whites are truly American.

Others expressed more mixed feelings. An elderly white woman, who had been a rancher on the reservation, said that she missed that life, now that she was living in Kadoka. She also stated that it was really important to be nice to “all of God’s people,” but then went on to describe how when two Indians had come on to her ranch, she had “pulled a shotgun on them, and they never bothered her again.”

Several tribal leaders described incidents of racial bias they had experienced in Kadoka and other towns located near the reservation. A man said he had been called “Prairie Nigger” by whites. A tribal police officer told us that police in off-reservation towns, including Kadoka, racially profile drivers of cars with reservation license plate numbers. One woman from Wanblee described Kadoka as a “racist” city where people look down on Indians “as if we are less than them.” Several other Native Americans told us that they had never experienced racial animus in Kadoka. On the other hand, when asked about how often they go to the county seat in Kadoka, thirteen of those surveyed in Wanblee stated they would never go to Kadoka and 40% of the Native American respondents said they had not been there within the past month.

One elderly Oglala described finding it difficult to register to vote in Kadoka. When asked why, he just said it was “an attitude thing.” Another woman interviewed in Wanblee stated that she would like to registered, but said that going to Kadoka to register would be a problem.

**Concluding Thoughts**

While the focus of this research has been on the effect of travel distance on the ability of Native Americans in Jackson County to exercise the franchise, one cannot ignore the connections between travel distance and other factors. The long history of voting rights abuses in South Dakota, including efforts within Jackson County to limit voting registration among Native Americans, provide a backdrop to the current research. That history is still very relevant to the people of Jackson County, and can be seen in terms of the unwillingness of significant numbers of Native Americans to utilize forms of voting that require their interacting with officials in the county seat of Kadoka. Although none of our survey questions asked about race, residents of the county, both white and Native American, recounted numerous incidents of racial animus. We also observed some of the same, particularly while doing survey research in Kadoka.

Our GIS based research showed why voting procedures, such as absentee voting by mail, that have been used to mitigate travel distance barriers in other locations are not viable alternatives for this population. The qualitative and quantitative data that we gathered while interacting with members of each community provide additional insights. More Native Americans than whites expressed an unwillingness to register, in some cases due to their dislike of traveling to Kadoka. We also found that a lower percentage of the Native American registered voters recalled voting in the 2012 election. Also when asked to rate the impact of travel distance on their ability to vote, more than a quarter of the Native American respondents indicated that travel distance had “quite a lot” of effect on their ability to vote, but only 3.9% of the white respondents said the same.

While we recognize the preliminary nature of this research, we also believe the evidence strongly suggests that Native Americans in Jackson County face substantial barriers that make it more difficult for them to participate in elections than is the true for whites in the county.

1. The authors want to acknowledge the support provided by the Lear Foundation, which made it possible to conduct field research in Jackson County. We also want to thank the Oglala Sioux Tribal Research Review Board and the leadership of the Oglala Sioux for their assistance. Without the support of these entities, we would not have been able to complete this study. We also want to thank the other members of our research team (Peter Abcarian, Carlin Crisanti, Ashley Shew, and Andrea Walters.) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ornstein, Norman. 2004. ‘Early Voting Necessary, but Toxic in Large Doses.’ *The Economist*, September. The Economist. http://www.economist.com/node/3219156. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Kimball, David C., and Brady Baybeck. 2013. ‘Are All Jurisdictions Equal? Size Disparity in Election Administration’. *Election Law Journal* 12 (2). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Nearly all of the inhabitants of the northern half of Jackson County are white, but the southern half is comprised to the eastern portion of the Pine Ridge Reservation, home of the Oglala Sioux. This geographical division makes Jackson County a particularly good choice for making comparisons between the ability of whites and Native Americans to access voting in a rural setting. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. United States. Census Bureau. “DP02 - Selected Social Characteristics: Jackson County Totals” *American Community Survey 2010*. Washington: US Census Bureau, 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. United States. Census Bureau. “DP02 - Selected Economic Characteristics: Jackson County Totals” *American Community Survey 2012*. Washington: US Census Bureau, 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Until the latter part of the twentieth century, South Dakota law included several provisions that made it substantially more difficult for Native Americans to register than for whites. Registration had to be done in the county auditor’s office, located in the county seat. Residents of the “unorganized counties,” however, had to travel to another county to register. Not only did this impose travel distance barriers, it also meant that people living on reservations had to travel to county seats in communities that were overwhelmingly white. State law, however, required that tax assessors automatically register property owners as voters, whenever they were conducting assessments. Since most reservation lands are not taxed by the state, very few Native Americans were automatically registered in this manner, but large numbers of whites were registered without going to the county auditor’s office. In fact, state law specifically prohibited county auditors from appointing Native Americans as deputy auditors in order to register tribal members on reservations. McDonald, Laughlin, Janine Pease, and Richard Guest. 2007. “Voting Rights in South Dakota: 1982-2006.” *Review of Law and Social Justice* 17 (1): 195- 247. See pages 202-203. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. This information about absentee voting procedures in Jackson County was posted on the county courthouse’s door. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Schroedel, Jean Reith and Ryan Hart. Forthcoming 2015. “Voting Dilution and Suppression in Indian Country.” *Studies in American Political Development*. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. See *Little Thunder v. South Dakota* (1975); *U.S. v. South Dakota* (1980). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. *American Horse v. Kundert* (1984); *Fiddler v. Sieker* (1986); *Black Bull v. Dupree School District* (1986); *Wedell v. Wagner Community School District* (2002). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. See McDonald, Laughlin. 2010. *American Indians and the Fight for Equal Voting Rights*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press for an overview of these incidents. Of particular relevance to this study is the fact that the Jackson County auditor, who charged fraud in 2002 is still serving in that office. See Mostert, Mary. November 11, 2002. “Should We Take Voter Fraud as Seriously as Business Fraud?” *Conservative Truth Organization*. http://www.conservativetruth.org/archives/marymostert/112-11-02.shtml. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. *U.S. v. Day County Enemy Swim District (1999);* *Kirkie v. v. Buffalo County* (2003); *Bone Shirt v. Hazeltine* (2006); *Blackmoon v. Charles Mix County* (2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. The recent *Wandering Medicine v. McCulloch* (2014) case, involving the Crow, Northern Cheyenne, Gros Ventre and Assinboine in Montana, led to an agreement that all counties with reservations in Montana would provide satellite late registration and early voting centers on reservations. Many Minnesota counties also have entered into agreements to establish similar satellite centers on reservations. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. *Brooks v. Gant* (2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Tom Poor Bear, letter of May 6, 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Woodard, Stephanie. June 25, 2014. “Oglala VP: ‘Our Civil Rights Are Being Violated.’” *Indian Country Today Media Network*. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Gimple, James G. and Jason E. Schuknect. 2003. “Political Participation and the Accessibility of the Ballot Box.” *Political Geography* 22: 471-488, 476. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Ibid, 471. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Haspel, Moshe, and H. Gibbs Knotts. 2005. “Location, Location, Location: Precinct Placement and the Costs of Voting.” *The Journal of Politics* 76(2): 560-573. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Dyck, Joshua J., and James G. Gimpel. 2005. “Distance, Turnout, and the Convenience of Voting.” *Social Science Quarterly* 86(3): 531-548. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Brady, Henry E., and John E. McNulty. 2011. “Turning Out to Vote: The Costs of Finding and Getting to the Polling Place.” *American Political Science Review* 105(1): 115-134. See also McNulty, John E., Conor M. Dowling, and Margaret H. Ariotti. 2009. “Driving Saints to Sin: How Increasing the Difficulty of Voting for Even the Most Motivated Voters.” *Political Analysis* 17(9): 435-455. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Timpone, Richard J. 1998. “Structure, Behavior, and Voter Turnout in the United States.” *American Political Science Review* 92(10: 145-158; Williams, Linda Faye. 2004. “The Issue of Our Time: Economic Inequality and Political Power in America.” *Perspective on Politics* 2(4): 683-689. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. George, Alexander L. and Andrew Bennett. 2005. *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Boston: MIT Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. There has been very little research examining voting behavior of Native Americans. The lack of data is a major reason for this omission. The large national public opinion surveys fail to include a sufficient number of Native American respondents for statistical analyses. The one study, using Census Bureau data from Arizona, Florida, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma and South Dakota found that socio-demographic factors, such as education and income, had the expected effects, but there also was a significant negative impact associated with being Native American. Peterson, Geoffrey. 1997. “Native American Turnout in the 1990 and 1992 Elections.” *American Indian Quarterly* 21(2): 321-331. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. McCool, Daniel, Susan M. Olson, and Jennifer L. Robinson. 2007. *Native Vote*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. See Schroedel, Jean and Ryan Hart, 2015. “Vote Dilution and Suppression in Indian Country.” *Studies in American Political Development* 29: 1-28. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. The incorporation of Washabaugh County into Jackson County occurred shortly after South Dakota had lost voting rights cases involving the “unorganized” counties (Todd, Shannon and Washabaugh). [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Researchers have found there is a contagion effect, such that when social networks encourage registration and voting, there are increases in those activities, and it is plausible to posit that the reverse is the case. See, for example, Vonnahme, Greg. 2012. “Registration Deadlines and Turnout in Context.” *Political Behavior* 34: 765-779. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Copies of the survey may be obtained by contacting the principal author. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. This study was approved by the Claremont Graduate University’s Institutional Review Board and by the Oglala Sioux Tribal Research Review Board. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Residents of Potato Creek told us that a playground recently had been constructed so their children had a place to play outside when the weather was good. They expressed the hope that an indoor gym might be built at some future time so children could play sports during the winter. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Tech Talk KSFY. October 2012. “AAA: 2012 Average Gas Prices on Track to Set Record High.”http://www.ksfy.com/story/19707188/aaa-2012-average-gas-prices-on-track-to-set-record-high. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Long Valley is the only part of the reservation in Jackson County that has a majority white population. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Holt, Brady. 2013. “America’s Most Popular Cars: The 30 Best-Selling Vehicles of 2012.” *Examiner*. January 3. <http://www.examiner.com/article/america-s-most-popular-cars-the-top-30-best-selling-vehicles-of-2012>. Accessed 2/24/2014. Griffin, Keith. 2013. “Camry, F Series Top List of 2012 Best Selling Used Cars.” <http://usedcars.about.com/od/research/a/Camry-F-Series-Top-List-Of-2012-Best-Selling-Used-Cars>. Accessed 2/24/2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. United States Department of Energy. 2012. “Fuel Economy of 2012 Ford F150 Pickup.” [www.fueleconomy.gov](http://www.fueleconomy.gov). Accessed 2/24/2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Opportunity cost is a concept derived from microeconomic theory. When resources are limited, opportunity cost is the value of what is given up by making a different choice. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Dyck and Gimpel, 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. https://poboxes.usps.com/poboxonline/search/landingPageValidation.do. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Completely separate from the unique issues that make voting by mail more problematic for Jackson County residents, there is a growing body of research showing there is a significant problem of lost votes in these systems. In comparison to in-person voting, rather on election day or at designated in-person early voting sites, “the pipeline that moves mail ballots between voters and election officials is very leaky.” Stewart, Charles III. 2010. “Losing Votes by Mail.” *Journal of Legislation and Public Policy* 13: 573-602. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Even though Jackson County is one of the most rural counties in South Dakota, it has a very low rate of absentee voters, 8% in 2012 rather than over 30% average rate for the state as a whole. This data comes from the previously cited Secretary of State’s web site. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Cahalan, Donald. 1968. “Correlates of Respondent Accuracy in the Denver Validity Study” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 32: 607-621; Loftus, Elizabeth F. 1975. “Leading Questions and Eye Witness Reports.” *Cognitive Psychology* 7:560-572. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Silver, Brian D., Barbara A. Anerson, and Paul R. Abramson. 1986. “Who Overreports Voting?” *American Political Science Review* 80: 613-624; Bernstein, Robert, Anita Chadha, and Robert Montjoy. 2001. “Overreporting Voting: Why it Happens and Why it Matters.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 65: 22-44. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Cassell, Carol A. 2003. “Overreporting and Electoral Participation Research.” *American Politics Research* 31(1): 81-92. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Precinct level turnout data can be obtained from the Secretary of State’s official website. http://electionresults.sdgov/VoterTurnout.aspx?eid=5. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)