



Political Participation and Allocating Resources: An Example from Two Native Nations and Per Capita Payments

Selena M. Crowley
American Indian Studies, University of California, Los Angeles

Supervised by:
Dr. Randall Akee, Department of Public Policy at UCLA
Dr. Robert Y. Shapiro, Department of Political Science at Columbia University

Purpose of Research Study

The focus of this study is political participation/interest and the allocation of gaming revenues, and answers the question:

Does the rational choice theory extend to the hypothesis that citizens of Native nations in a “communal goods” setting have more of an *incentive* to be involved and interested in political affairs because their resources are tied up in their Native nation, as if their money were held in the same way taxes are?

Further, would this mean that per capita payments contribute to less of an incentive for citizens to be involved and interested in political affairs due to their Native nation’s having less accountability over resources once it reaches the hands of individuals?

Rational Choice Theory & Political Engagement

The Rational Choice Theory proposes that as “rational” actors, individuals weight their options based on maximizing their benefits and minimizing their costs. Accordingly, individuals vote and participate in political activities when they believe the benefits will outweigh the costs.

Rational individuals want their governments to use their resources in an efficient manner. Being participatory in political affairs is a means for having individuals’ opinions heard and holding governments accountable for handling resources. Individuals receiving per capital payments do not have any “rational” incentive to be mindful of their government’s allocation of resources because they already their share of it.

Baseline Characteristics

Educational Attainment	Nation A		Nation B	
	Census	Crowley	Census	Crowley
Less than 9th grade	1%	0	0	3%
High school graduate	26%	27%	24%	52%
Some college, no degree	32%	16%	28%	27%
Associate's degree	11%	24%	12%	11%
Bachelor's degree	16%	24%	4%	7%
Graduate or professional degree	9%	8%	7%	2%
% High school graduate or higher	94%	92%	96%	79%
% Bachelor's degree or higher	25%	32%	11%	9%

Findings/Results

	Interest in Politics (1) Odds Ratio	Interest in Federal Politics (2) Odds Ratio	Vote in Tribal Election (3) Odds Ratio
Native nation	14.64*** (10.62)	7.65*** (5.23)	4.00* (2.70)
Age	1.00 (.019)	.973 (.017)	.963 (.019)
Income	.827 (.083)	.828 (.104)	1.59* (.337)
Education	1.54* (.258)	1.52** (.256)	.882 (.182)
Gender	.845 (.503)	1.16 (.638)	.467 (.281)
Attitude towards congressman	2.28** (.943)	1.73 (.645)	.533 (.246)
Belief congressman share values	.394 (.206)	.470 (.221)	.662 (.355)
Discrimination at workplace	.641 (.224)	.528* (.170)	.451* (.162)
Discrimination at school	.515* (.187)	.661 (.217)	.867 (.303)
Lives on reservation or Indian Country	1.54 (1.03)	2.43 (1.62)	.698 (.509)
Employed by Native Nation	.971 (.278)	.832 (.215)	1.00 (.251)
Know tribal council	1.97 (1.30)	1.68 (1.01)	4.92** (3.23)
Constant	.001*** (.003)	.004** (.010)	4.53 (12.47)
N=	92	92	92
Prob> chi2	0.0000	0.0007	0.0011
Pseudo R2	0.3723	0.2694	0.2879
Log likelihood	-39.90416	-46.19532	-40.258149

*** p < .001 ** p < .010 * p < .050

Variables

Independent:

- **Native Nation**– “Are you an enrolled citizen of a Native Nation? Please name.”
- **Education**– participant finished the sixth grade = a value of 6
- **Age**– participant 78 = a value of 78
- **Income**– personal annual income before taxes

Dependent:

- **Political participation**– “Did you vote in your Native nation’s most recent election?”
- **Political Interest**– “Are you interested in politics?” “Are you interested in federal U.S. politics?”

Methods & Data

- Employment of a regression analysis using logit model.
- Data collected over summer of 2012 from two Native nations of the same indigenous group of peoples separated by approximately 350 miles, both with comparable gaming facilities, baseline socioeconomic statistics, and proximity to state capital.
- Measurements gauged political interest and participation with the three levels of citizenship that contribute to the civil status of many Native Americans in the U.S. through a mixed method of survey questions was fielded with open ended probes and ethnographic work.

Conclusion

The findings support the hypothesis that individuals in Nation A, who do not receive per capita payments, have significantly higher odds of being politically active and interested in politics than individuals in Nation B, who distribute per capita payments to individuals.

For “native vote”, increased levels of income made an individual have significantly higher odds of having voted, while education was not a significant figure like it had been for both categories of political interest. This further supports my hypothesis that “rationally” has a role in tribal politics and the decision of being politically engaged.

The limitations include the narrow scope of political activities and interests measured and the small sample size.