Published in final edited form as:

Polit Groups Identities. 2017 ; 5(4): 642–659. doi:10.1080/21565503.2016.1148058.

Civic engagement and political participation among American Indians and Alaska natives in the US†

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Abstract

Within the growing literature seeking to understand civic and political engagement among racial and ethnic minorities, our understanding of political behavior among American Indian and Alaska Native's (AI/AN) remains limited. We use the Current Population Survey Civic Engagement and Voting and Registration supplements (2006-2012) to compare AI/AN voter registration, voting, and overall civic engagement to other racial and ethnic groups and to assess whether factors that predict higher levels of civic engagement vary across these populations. We find a few key socio-economic status indicators that predict civic and political engagement uniquely for AI/ANs, but they are not consistently significant across all years or all types of political participation. We find marital status, age, household size, education, and veteran status to be important in predicting civic engagement for AI/ANs. However, for voting and registration, we find that family income, age, marital status, household size, and residential stability to be important contributors. Although we find AI/ANs are less likely to register and vote compared to non-Hispanic whites, we find that the difference is not statistically significant in congressional years, which may suggest that AI/ANs are engaged in local politics and vote for representatives that will represent their tribal interests in national politics.

Keywords

American Indian; Alaska Native; civic engagement; political engagement; voting and registration; quantitative

Introduction

Political participation is arguably the most studied phenomenon within political science, with a large segment of this vast literature focused on addressing the question of who engages in the U.S. political system and who does not. With an increase in available data to

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make across-group comparisons there has been a rise in the number of studies focused on differences in participation across racial and ethnic groups (see Min, 2014, Leighley and Vedelitz, 1999, Wong, Lien, and Conway, 2005). This work has led to several general conclusions within the literature, including that racial and ethnic minorities tend to vote at lower levels than non-Hispanic whites, with a more significant gap between whites, Latinos and Asians. Although this area of research is relatively deep and continuously growing, our understanding of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) political participation remains relatively limited. Our paper intends to shed some light on this topic by utilizing data from the U.S. Current Population Survey to compare AI/AN voter registration, voting, and overall civic engagement rates to other racial and ethnic groups. Our analysis contributes to the general knowledge of this important yet often overlooked electorate, but, as we discuss in our conclusion, there remains a need for more rich data collection that will allow scholars to address several important questions that are beyond the scope of existing data.

AI/ANs comprise roughly 2 percent of the overall U.S. population according to the 2012 American Community Survey, with approximately half of that population reporting that they were AI/AN and some other race. Given the nature of the Electoral College and overall power of numbers in elections in the U.S., at first glance the relatively small population numbers of this community may lead many to question the relevance of this population to electoral politics. However, it is important to recognize that this population is concentrated in several states where their political voice is more pronounced (Conner 2014, Witmer, Johnson, and Boehmke 2014). Geoff Peterson (1997) notes that while AI/ANs are only 2 percent of the total voting age population, their concentration in states with low population makes them important political actors. For example, Native voters have more direct influence in New Mexico than in any other state. AI/AN voters in New Mexico represent more than 9 percent of eligible voters (over 10 percent of the overall population), and those percentages are growing fast because of the relative youth of this population.¹ This presence has led to political representation in New Mexico where this community is currently represented in both chambers of the state legislature. More specifically, there are two Native legislators out of 42 in the state Senate and three Native legislators out of 70 in the New Mexico House. Similarly, AI/ANs can have a pronounced impact on election outcomes in several other states where they have a meaningful presence and during a competitive election. This includes Arizona, Colorado, Alaska, Montana, and the Dakotas among others.

Furthermore, although the Native American population is relatively small nationally, given the relative youth of the Native American population (with median age of 31 compared to 37 overall), they are projected to grow to over 11 million in 2060, which would be nearly 3 percent of the U.S. population. The need to document and analyze how AI/AN participation levels compare to other groups is crucial to both ameliorate disparities in this community.

We begin our paper with an overview of the research focused on political participation among the AI/AN population in the United States within the wider political participation literature that grounds our research design. We then provide a discussion of our data and

¹<http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2012/11/01/elections-2012-native-americans-have-more-influence-new-mexico-any-other-state-143397>

methods utilized in our analysis, noting the limitations in data availability for this specific population, followed by our results and conclusions.

AI/AN political participation

Although the literature focused on AI/AN political participation is far more limited than that focused on other racial and ethnic populations such as Latinos or Asian Americans, there is an important body of research in this area that we draw from to help inform our analysis. The formative piece on Native political participation is Peterson's (1957) *American Indian Political Participation*. Peterson provides a useful overview of the historical political participation of AI/ANs, illustrating that there have been different socio-political structures governing their societies prior to European arrival in the Americas. Given that individual tribal members held and exercised rights and responsibilities as members of those tribes, AI/AN-U.S. government relations have always been carried out in a government-to-government framework. Consequently, Peterson (1957) suggests in his narrative that many AI/ANs do not follow the traditional individual voting behavior patterns of most Americans or have strong party affiliations. Instead, they vote according to tribal issues, often for the candidate that they perceive may advance the best interest of the tribe.

This has been a general finding that has held across more recent studies. For example, Corn tassel and Witmer (1997) support this contention, noting that tribes can influence the individual votes of their members by endorsing or openly supporting candidates. They look at the 1994 national elections with a focus on tribes in Arizona and Oklahoma. Their survey had a response rate of 32 percent with 19 tribes in total participating in the study (6 of 21 tribal chairpersons responded which constituted approximately 70 percent of the tribal population in the State of Arizona and 13 of 39 tribal chairpersons responded which was over 50 percent of the tribal population in the State of Oklahoma). They found that tribes tend to support those candidates who are more in line with tribal needs and issues rather than lending support based on cultural ties or party affiliation.

One of the major underlying themes of this literature is the important acknowledgement that the nature of AI/AN political participation, be it electoral or civic, is influenced by the unique sovereign status of this population in the United States. Benjamin Kahn's (2013) *A Place Called Home: Native Sovereignty Through Statehood and Political Participation*, for example, looks at the cases of the American Indian tribes in the United States and the Maori in New Zealand. Kahn argues that political participation in both locations revolves around sovereignty. While other minority groups often seek inclusion in the legal and socioeconomic framework of the United States through participation in civic affairs, AI/ANs may participate in order to protect and defend their sovereignty rights, including cultural, physical, and legal rights. Given the potential for different motivations for participation across groups, this provides the backdrop for a comparison of participation across racial/ethnic groups.

In terms of electoral participation specifically, Peterson (1952) argues that, similar to other minority groups, historical suppression of AI/AN voting has had an impact on their current voting trends.² The Pueblos in New Mexico, for example, suffered from extremely low voter registration rates in 1952, almost thirty years after all Native Americans were granted

citizenship through the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 (Pub. L. 68-175, 43 Stat. 253). Only nine of the nineteen Pueblos had any registered voters in 1952! Conversely, and similar to other minority populations, AI/AN voting increases when states take the initiative to make voting more accessible by eliminating legal barriers (literacy tests, etc.) and through information and outreach campaigns (Peterson, 1957). Geoff Peterson (1997) adds to this argument, noting that historical violence and conflict with the national government has deeply influenced distrust in the government and affected political participation. Reinforcing the underlying context of intergroup tension, Luna (2000) believes that the socio-economic conditions of AI/ANs (like high poverty rates and low education attainment) is compounded by the alienation from national, state, and local power structures that results from being a widely dispersed population. She points out that historical attempts at exercising electoral rights had been met with hostility and repression against those who actively sought to engage the Native community in electoral politics.

Unfortunately, AI/ANs have experienced historical discrimination and ongoing barriers that influence the political participation and influence of AI/ANs who live on reservations and within states where reservations are located (McCool, Olson, and Robinson, 2007). As one example, South Dakota has along history of disenfranchising AI/ANs from voting and holding public office. South Dakota argued that reservation AI/ANs “do not share the same interest in county government as residents of organized counties” and thus actively restricted AI/AN voting (Sells, 2012). It was not until 1982 that South Dakota officially ended the disfranchisement of AI/ANs from political engagement (Sells, 2012). In fact, a 2009 report by the American Civil Liberty Union (ACLU) titled “Voting Rights in Indian Country” makes a connection between historical discrimination and current political engagement levels by noting that the exclusion of the AI/AN population from many facets of society has hurt their socio-economic standing.³

Although the particular laws are no longer in effect, South Dakota continues to have other discriminatory voting practices and electoral arrangements that deter AI/AN political engagement and participation (Sells, 2012). This includes the U.S. Department of Justice having to intervene just last year in a lawsuit accusing a South Dakota county of disenfranchising Native Americans living on the Pine Ridge Reservation. The lawsuit claimed that there was no satellite location for voting, forcing citizens living on this reservation to travel long distances to vote. Similarly, there is speculation that North Dakota’s new photo-ID law will disproportionately impact Native Americans, as some tribal IDs may not be valid for voting purposes.⁴

An important finding from Luna’s (2000) analysis is the difficulty of mobilizing AI/ANs as a monolithic voting bloc. This is an important finding, as mobilization is one of the key factors driving political participation (Rosenstone and Hansen, 1994), and minority communities have consistently been mobilized at a much lower rate than non-Hispanic whites (Leighley, 2001). This suggests that AI/ANs may have similarities to other racial and

²See Rosenstone and Hansen (1994) for a discussion of how voter suppression negatively impacted the participation rates of African Americans.

³<https://www.aclu.org/files/pdfs/votingrights/indiancountryreport.pdf>

⁴<http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2014/07/11/got-tribal-id-north-dakota-natives-may-not-be-able-use-theirs-vote-155776>

ethnic minorities when it comes to electoral participation and civic engagement. Luna (2000) notes that the historical politics of colonization destroyed the alliances among tribes and bands, leading to isolation and focus on the individual survival of the groups. She writes, “social cohesion among group members is necessary if political mobilization is to occur.”

“There are deep cleavages between [American] Indian peoples in the United States, separating tribe from tribe, urban from rural, and Western-educated from traditional” (Luna, 2000: p. 102), making lack of cohesion a possible source of relatively low participation rates among the American Indian population. Social cohesion is particularly important given the finding that group identity in the forms of group consciousness and linked fate increases political participation for Latinos and African Americans (Dawson, 1994; Sanchez 2006). Internal variation has been found to pose challenges for civic engagement and political participation among other populations as well, including the pan-ethnic Latino population (See Beltran, 2010). This is another example of similarity between the AI/AN community and other racial and ethnic minorities that may yield similar civic engagement rates across these populations.

With limited survey data available for individual level analysis, we do not have substantial work identifying factors that increase or decrease political participation among AI/ANs. Geoff Peterson (1997) used the 1990 and 1992 CPS, focusing on AI/ANs who were surveyed in the states with the highest AI/AN population: Arizona, Florida, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, and South Dakota. In his analysis he examined how social demographic indicators such as race, income, gender, and education effect voting participation in the national elections of 1990 and 1992. These are important factors to test, as scholars have identified socio-economic status (income, education, and age) to be the strongest predictors of who participates in American politics (see Verba, Scholzman and Brady, 1995). In his groundbreaking study, Peterson (1997) found that AI/ANs were 51 percent less likely to vote than non-AI/AN respondents and that socio-economic status factors did not sufficiently explain AI/AN voting patterns. We therefore approach our more nationally focused analysis expecting to see similar patterns. That said, given the more recent nature of our data and the ability to explore both electoral and non-electoral participation, we may see significant differences from Peterson’s more limited study.

We also hypothesize that serving in the armed forces may be an important mechanism of political participation for AI/ANs. The Native population has a long-standing tradition of high levels of representation in the armed forces. For example, Peterson (1957) noted that 17,000 Native Americans served in World War I, with 85 percent of those serving in the U.S. armed forces doing so voluntarily. During World War II this number increased to more than 24,000 military personnel. In the more contemporary military, nearly 2 percent of the 1.4 million active duty military are AI/ANs, with overrepresentation in the Navy and Marines (Department of Defense, 2013, Holiday, et al., 2006). Given the propensity for this community to engage in civic affairs through military service, our analysis includes an exploration of whether political participation varies based on military service.

In summary, the literature in this area has suggested that there may be some synergy between factors that influence political participation among AI/ANs and the wider racial and

ethnic minority population, including lower rates of mobilization compared to the non-Hispanic white population. This could lead to similar participation rates for AI/ANs and other racial and ethnic minorities and common predictor variables in our models. However, the nature of sovereign status and high internal variation suggest some important differences may exist when directly comparing the political participation rates of AI/ANs to other major racial and ethnic groups. Rather than motivate our analysis with direct hypotheses, we choose to post these two alternative theoretical expectations that we test in our models. Unfortunately, our analysis will not be able to answer all of the questions raised in this discussion of the literature such as the differential impact of group identity on civic engagement. We will however be able to use the best nationally representative data available to identify if there are significant differences in overall rates of civic engagement and political participation between AI/ANs and other racial and ethnic groups in the United States as well as whether the contributing factors to these outcome variables vary in any important ways across these populations.

Data and Methods

We use the public use Current Population Survey's (CPS) November Civic Engagement and Voting and Registration Supplements to better understand civic engagement and political participation. The Bureau of the Census for the Bureau of Labor Statistics conducts the CPS monthly in approximately 56,000 households. We use two of their supplemental surveys for our analysis (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009a, 2009b, 2010a, 2010b). We use two years (2008 and 2010) of the Civic Engagement supplement. Civic engagement is a broad concept that can be defined by one's level of or involvement in: empowerment and political action; groups and networks; trust and solidarity; information and communication; and social cohesion and inclusion (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009a, 2010a). We use four years of the CPS Voting and Registration supplement to examine voter turnout across both a presidential year (2008 and 2012) and off-year congressional year (2006 and 2010).

Since the Civic Engagement supplement questions have changed slightly between 2008 and 2010 collection years, we use multiple dependent variables to capture civic engagement. These outcomes include: if the respondent contacted a public official, if the respondent boycotted, and the number of the different organizations and groups individuals are involved in. The different organizations and groups in which individuals participate include the American Legion or Lions Club, sports clubs, neighborhood or community organizations such as Parent Teachers Associations (PTA) or neighborhood watch groups, church or religious groups, or any other type of organization.

The Voting and Registration supplement has been collected biennially in the November CPS since 1964, and it does not provide estimates of partisanship, such as what candidate a voter supported or what political party a voter aligned himself or herself with (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009b, 2010b). The Voting and Registration questions were asked of all persons who were both U.S. citizens and 18 years of age or older. The CPS instrument determined who was eligible for the Voting and Registration supplement through the use of check items that referred to basic CPS items, including age and citizenship. We use two dependent variables within the Voting and Registration Supplement to gauge political participation. The

first dependent variable examines whether a respondent voted that election year. The second gauged political interest through a measure that asks respondents if they did not register to vote because they were uninterested in politics. Since theoretically we anticipate that states with concentrations of AI/AN tribal lands or communities will influence voting patterns of AI/ANs, we have created an *Indian state* variable that includes states with the highest AI/AN population: Arizona, Florida, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, and South Dakota.⁵ Although county-based analysis would be ideal, the utilization of AI/AN states has been used by others (Sandefur and McKinnell, 1986), specifically for a study focused on Native American voter turnout (Peterson, 1997). Unfortunately, AI/AN county analysis was unavailable because the public use CPS Voting and Registration only releases counties with populations of 100,000 or more (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010b). Since many tribal lands are located in rural and low density counties (Snipp, 1989), we are unable to use county level controls in our analysis and are limited to state level analysis. For our voting and registration models we do adjust for differences in living in urban or rural areas.

In all of our analyses we control for individual personal and demographic characteristics. The measures include homeownership, age, marital status, veteran status, employment status, race and ethnicity, gender, family income, education, number of individuals in the household, and the number of years the respondent lived in their current home. We also control for whether the respondent was primary interviewee for the household survey.

Analytic Strategy

We use logistic regression and negative binomial regression models to examine the relationship between the host of covariates in our models and our measures of political participation and civic engagement. For our binary dependent variables we use logistic regression to predict 1) whether the respondent is civically or politically engaged, 2) whether a respondent contacted a public office, 3) reported boycotting, 4) reported voting, or 5) reported not registering to vote because of lack of interest in politics. We use negative binomial regression models to specify the number of groups/organizations respondents are engaged in. We use this categorical data analysis method because we are interested in capturing the number of times an individual is civically engaged, which is count data and assumed not to be normally distributed. All statistical analysis were conducted using Stata 12 software and weighted using the appropriate survey weight indicators (StataCorp. 2011).

Results

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for both years of the Civic Engagement supplement and Voting and Registration supplement to help provide some context to our results. Within the Civic Engagement supplement, we see that 11 to 12 percent of our full sample has contacted a public official, and a similar percentage have participated in boycotting activities. Within the Voter and Registration supplement, 72 and 74 percent of our full sample in presidential years (2008 and 2012) voted versus 56 percent in congressional years (2006 and 2010), reflecting a much lower level of turnout in the off-year races. Across both

⁵We also ran models using region controls and compared the results to the Indian state control models. Overall, we found similar findings and felt that the Indian state control models have use more theoretically meaningful results.

years of the Voter and Registration supplement we have similar prevalence of individuals who did not register to vote due to lack of interest (approximately 47 percent) and of respondents who voted by mail (approximately 84 percent). Among more general characteristics of our full sample, approximately 63 to 64 percent of our sample are homeowners. The average household size is 2.9 people. The mean age is approximate 47 years, and approximately 51 percent are female. Approximately 53 percent are married. Ten percent of our sample are veterans. The race and ethnic groups in our sample are 75 percent white, 10 percent Black, 1 percent AI/AN, and 13 percent Hispanic.

Civic Engagement Results

We begin our discussion with a comparison of civic engagement rates across race and ethnicity to determine if the AI/AN population participates in these activities to a greater or lesser extent than other communities. In our unweighted descriptive analysis we find that AI/ANs are more civically engaged in boycotting and contacting a public official than Blacks and Hispanics. AI/ANs have similar rates of political participation to Blacks (51 percent versus 54 percent respectively). Compared to non-Hispanic whites in 2008, AI/ANs have similar rates of contacting a public official (11 percent versus 14 percent) and lower rates of boycotting and political participation. However, in 2010 AI/ANs are more involved across all types of civic engagement compared to all other racial and ethnic groups, including whites.

Our results discussion now moves toward analysis of factors that contribute to political participation with results from the civic engagement models that are presented in Tables 2 through 4 highlighting the models focused on AI/ANs. Interestingly, fewer personal and demographic factors predict AI/AN civic engagement than those for other racial and ethnic groups. As reflected in Tables 2 and 3, we find that AI/ANs who are married are more likely to contact a public official (Table 2) and more likely to boycott (Table 3) than AI/ANs who are not married in both 2008 and 2010. In the 2008 model we find that AI/ANs who are older are more likely to contact a public official. Furthermore, we find that as the number of AI/ANs in the household increase, respondents are less likely to contact a public official or boycott. We find that education is positively correlated with boycotting, but education is not statistically significant for our logistic regression predicting contacting a public official. In our non-AI/AN models in Tables 2 and 3, we find that being a homeowner, having a higher income, being older in age, being female, being a veteran, and having higher levels of education to be positively associated with contacting a public official.

In Table 4, we present our findings for our negative binomial regression models that predict the number of groups and/or organizations that the respondent participates in. We again focus our attention on the AI/AN population. We find here that there are a few key socio-demographic factors that are statistically significant in predicting participation in groups and/or organizations. Marital status for AI/ANs continues to predict greater civic engagement (participation in groups and/or organizations), with married respondents reporting greater participation levels in organizational involvement. In our presidential year (2008) we find that AI/ANs who are veterans are more likely to participate in groups and/or organizations than non-veteran AI/ANs, but the statistical significance does not hold in a

congressional year (2010). While specific to 2008, the higher rates of organizational involvement support our hypothesis that military service facilitates greater political participation among AI/ANs. Education also continues to remain relevant, as we find that AI/ANs with higher levels of education are more likely to engage in groups and/or organizations. In the non-AI/AN negative binomial regression models we find that all of the respondent socio-economic characteristics are associated with participating in groups and/or organizations with the exception of employment status in 2008. Therefore, we see that socio-economic characteristics are much stronger predictors of civic engagement for the non-AI/AN population than they are for our target population. This is preliminary evidence supporting the notion that the unique sovereign status of the AI/AN population has led to a different political socialization process for this population than others more typically studied by political scientists.

Voting and Registration Results

We now turn our attention to the voter registration and voting models. In Table 5 we present the results from our logistic regression model predicting voting. In the full model of our presidential years (2008 and 2012) we see slightly different trends in AI/AN voting. In 2008, we see that AI/ANs are significantly (27.9 percent) less likely to vote than non-Hispanic whites when controlling for socio-demographic characteristics ($OR = 0.721, p < .01$). This supports earlier work suggesting AI/ANs are less likely to vote than non-AI/ANs (Peterson, 1997). However, in 2012 there is no statistical difference between AI/ANs and non-Hispanic whites. Interestingly, in our congressional years of 2006 and 2010, when controlling for socio-demographic characteristics, we find that AI/ANs are not statistically different from non-Hispanic whites, *ceteris paribus*. We interpret this finding to suggest that AI/ANs are more engaged in local politics and are engaged in voting behavior that aligns with tribal issues, as suggested in prior research.

In our AI/AN only models we find slight differences in socio-demographic characteristics associated with voting in our presidential years compared to our congressional years. Similar to the civic engagement models, we find the most association between socio-demographic characteristics and voting in our non-AI/AN models. We will first turn our attention to the presidential years. In 2008 having a higher income, being older, being married, being female, having higher education, higher number of years in home, and living in an urban area are associated with an increased likelihood of voting that year among AI/ANs. In 2012, we see fewer socio-demographic characteristics associated with voting; we do see that homeownership, being older, having higher education, and higher number of years in home are associated with an increased likelihood of voting. In our congressional years we have similar trends; higher income, being older, having higher education and higher number of years in home continue to have a statistically significant association with voting. Singular to our congressional years, we find that a larger household is negatively associated with voting; that is, individuals who report more people in the household are less likely to vote. We also see that AI/ANs in urban areas are less likely to vote than AI/ANs in rural areas in our congressional years, but urban AI/ANs are more likely to vote in the presidential years. We interpret this finding to suggest that AI/ANs who are invested into tribal politics are voting in congressional years, and those less engaged in tribal politics are voting in presidential

year.⁶ The literature on voting discrimination in Indian states would suggest differential turnout in voting between Indian states and non-Indian states; notably, we do not find statistical difference between Indian states and non-Indian states in the majority of our AI/AN models.

Finally, we conducted a logistic regression predicting whether the respondent did not register to vote because of lack of interest in politics, and our results are presented on Table 6. In the full models, we find that the odds ratios for AI/ANs are not statistically different from non-Hispanic whites except for Congressional year 2006. In 2006 AI/ANs are 29.7 percent less likely not to register to vote because of lack of interest in politics than non-Hispanic whites (OR = 0.703, $p < 0.01$), which may also suggest the importance of tribal issues in Congressional voting behavior for AI/ANs. Examining our odds ratios for Blacks and Hispanics in both the presidential and congressional year we find that they are lower odds of not being registered to vote because of lack of interest in politics than non-Hispanic whites. In our stratified AI/AN model we have only a few socio-demographic characteristics associated with not being registered to vote because of lack of interest in politics, which may be due to sample size. Overall, we find that AI/ANs with lower levels of education and being younger are associated with not being registered to vote because of lack of interest in politics.⁷

When we summarize the overall voting analysis results we find that socio-economic indicators (income, age, marital status, gender, education, and residential stability) are important predictors for voting among the AI/AN population, which is consistent with the broader literature on political participation (Peterson, 1997, Verba, Scholzman, and Brady, 1995). For example, in the 2008 registration models we found that individuals with lower levels of education and AI/ANs who are younger were less likely to register to vote which is in line with decades of research in this area on the more general population.

Conclusion

Native voters are an important yet often overlooked electorate in the United States. AI/ANs may participate in political and civic engagement activities to protect and defend sovereignty rights (Kahn, 2013), and this legal and cultural backdrop may encourage AI/AN individuals to play apart in more local events and politics. However, AI/AN populations may have lower political mobilization due to a lack of social cohesion that is a result of diverse tribal affiliations and geographic dispersion (Luna, 2000). Our paper provides a snapshot into understanding civic engagement and political participation among AI/ANs using the Current Population Survey Civic Engagement and Voting and Registration supplements.

The major goal of our project was to compare the levels of political participation and civic engagement more broadly for AI/ANs relative to non-AI/ANs as well as to examine whether

⁶Since AI/ANs in Alaska may experience different political, physical, and linguistic environment than AI/ANs in the contiguous US, we also ran our voting models for only Alaska. Due to small sample sizes, the analysis can only suggest trends for the AI/AN only models. In general for AI/ANs in Alaska, AI/ANs who are female, own a home, have higher income and education are more likely to vote.

⁷We also ran logistic regression predicting whether the respondent did not register to vote because of lack of interest in politics for Alaska, and our sample size was too small to create estimates for AI/ANs or Blacks.

the contributing factors to political participation vary in meaningful ways for the AI/AN population. In short, we found that the AI/AN population was significantly less likely to vote during the 2008 election than the non-AI/AN population but no more or less likely to vote in any other year. This may suggest that AI/ANs are interested in more local politics and voting for representatives that will represent their tribal interests in national politics and emphasizes the value of including both presidential and non-presidential elections in analysis of AI/AN voting trends. We also find some variation in our results dependent on election type. For example, AI/AN veterans are statistically more likely to participate in groups and/or organizations during the presidential election, yet there is no statistical significance during the congressional year. When we look at civic engagement more broadly, we find that AI/ANs are considerably more involved in 2010 than in 2008. More specifically, we find that the AI/AN population is more likely to contact a public official in both 2008 and 2010 than non-Hispanic whites, and AI/ANs are not statistically different from non-Hispanic whites when it comes involvement in groups and/or organizations. Although not consistently statistically significant across all types of civic engagement, we find marital status, age, household size, education, and veteran status to be important in predicting civic engagement.

We find mixed results for our inquiry into whether or not the variables that predict political participation vary significantly for the AI/AN population. We do see that the models focused on socio-demographic factors do a much better job of explaining the political participation rates of non-Native populations, as there are many more statistically significant variables in those models than those stratified specific to the AI/AN population. This may be partially due to the overall lower socio-economic status (lower education and income levels compared to non-Hispanic whites) and higher rates of poverty experienced by many AI/ANs (Huyser, et al., 2010, Huyser, et al., 2014).

That said, we see that many of the socio-economic variables commonly identified in political participation models for the more general population are relevant to the AI/AN population (Min and Savage 2014, Skopek and Garner 2014). For example, being married, having higher education levels, and household size are important predictors of political participation for AI/ANs. This is similar to what we see in the more general population. One consistently important socio-economic status indicator in predicting civic and political engagement was that AI/ANs who resided in larger households were less likely to be engaged. Considering that AI/AN households tend to be larger than non-AI/AN households (Snipp, 1989), it is important for us to broaden our concept of resources within socio-economic attainment to understand what is needed to be both politically and civically active.

While we believe this study helps inform the extant knowledge of AI/AN political participation, our study has a few limitations that we hope our team and others will work to address in the future. Although we are using the Current Population Survey supplements on Civic Engagement and Voting and Registration, and it provides a national sample of AI/ANs, it does not collect information on particular local activities, including engagement in tribal elections. It also does not ask the respondents about tribal affiliation; thus, we are unable to examine engagement in tribal politics or whether there is meaningful variation across tribal communities. This is vital, as knowing whether participation in tribal elections influences civic engagement more broadly is a fascinating question that should be addressed

when data is available to do so. Similarly, expanding the group identity literature to assess how group consciousness among Native Americans influences political engagement would be a major advancement to that body of work. Having a sense of how variation in tribal and clan identity influences civic engagement, and, more minimally, tribal affiliation, would be of interest to a wide group of scholars beyond racial and ethnic politics. Finally, direct analysis of how felony disenfranchisement laws may impact the voting power of the AI/AN population should be conducted in the future. Given that the Native American population has incarceration rates twice that of the white population in the United States, these laws likely have a significant impact on the political engagement of the population.⁸

There is clearly a need for a national survey of AI/ANs that addresses these limitations as well as non socio-economic contributors to participation such as political knowledge and political mobilization. Despite these limitations, we believe our study contributes an important glimpse into understanding civic and political engagement among AI/ANs. It is our hope that this study helps build momentum toward more work in this area, as many of the suggestions for future research would not only inform our knowledge of the Native American community but American democracy more broadly.

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Table 1

Summary Statistics of Study Sample

Civic Engagement Supplement						
Variable	Presidential Year (2008)			Congressional Year (2010)		
	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Political Participation All Categories	67,823	0.67	0.96	74,464	0.6	0.92
Civic Engagement: Contacted Public Official	68,042	0.12	0.33	74,714	0.12	0.32
Civic Engagement: Boycott	68,005	0.12	0.33	74,580	0.11	0.32
Homeowner	150,799	0.64	0.48	152,162	0.63	0.48
Income ¹	110,237	10.89	3.95	134,179	10.63	4.07
Number in Household	150,799	2.97	1.88	152,162	2.99	1.89
Age	100,008	46.95	17.52	101,750	47.27	17.63
Marital Status	105,869	0.54	0.5	107,494	0.53	0.5
Female	132,812	0.51	0.5	134,179	0.51	0.5
Veteran	101,534	0.1	0.3	103,259	0.1	0.3
Education ²	105,869	9.95	2.81	107,494	10.01	2.8
Unemployed	105,416	0.04	0.19	107,082	0.05	0.23
Black	123,666	0.1	0.31	124,714	0.11	0.31
AI/AN	123,666	0.01	0.1	124,714	0.01	0.1
White	123,666	0.75	0.43	124,714	0.74	0.44
Hispanic	123,666	0.13	0.34	124,714	0.14	0.35

Voting and Registration Supplement						
Variable	Congressional Year (2006)			Presidential Year (2008)		
	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Voted	83,929	0.56	0.50	80,667	0.74	0.44
Not Registered	16,370	0.47	0.50	12,021	0.45	0.5
Voted by mail	47,055	0.87	0.34	59,775	0.84	0.37
				44,625	0.83	0.38
				59,364	0.82	0.38

Voting and Registration Supplement

Variable	Congressional Year (2006)			Presidential Year (2008)			Congressional Year (2010)			Presidential Year (2012)		
	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Homeowner	153,255	0.67	0.47	150,799	0.64	0.48	152,162	0.63	0.48	151,598	0.62	0.49
Income	113,693	10.71	3.96	110,237	10.89	3.95	134,179	10.63	4.07	133,427	10.81	4.08
Number in Household	153,255	2.97	1.82	150,799	2.97	1.88	152,162	2.99	1.89	151,598	2.97	1.89
Age	102,110	46.62	17.37	100,008	46.95	17.52	101,750	47.27	17.63	102,011	47.68	17.78
Marital Status	108,394	0.54	0.50	105,869	0.54	0.5	107,494	0.53	0.5	107,315	0.53	0.50
Female	136,046	0.51	0.50	132,812	0.51	0.5	134,179	0.51	0.5	133,427	0.51	0.50
Veteran	103,710	0.11	0.31	101,534	0.1	0.3	103,259	0.1	0.3	103,328	0.09	0.29
Education	108,394	9.84	2.85	105,869	9.95	2.81	107,494	10.01	2.8	107,315	10.14	2.79
Unemployed	107,924	0.03	0.16	105,416	0.04	0.19	107,082	0.05	0.23	106,871	0.04	0.20
Black	126,950	0.10	0.30	123,666	0.1	0.31	124,714	0.11	0.31	123,614	0.11	0.31
AI/AN	126,950	0.01	0.10	123,666	0.01	0.1	124,714	0.01	0.1	123,614	0.01	0.10
White	126,950	0.76	0.43	123,666	0.75	0.43	124,714	0.74	0.44	123,614	0.74	0.44
Hispanic	126,950	0.13	0.34	123,666	0.13	0.34	124,714	0.14	0.35	123,614	0.14	0.35
Years in Home	91,858	4.97	1.40	83,035	5.1	1.34	80,684	5.13	1.34	83,288	5.15	1.33
Interviewer-Self	94,013	0.57	0.49	83,835	0.6	0.49	81,950	0.6	0.49	85,673	0.57	0.49
Urban	153,255	0.77	0.42	150,799	0.77	0.42	152,162	0.77	0.42	151,598	0.78	0.41

¹ Income (1=Less than \$5k, 2=\$5k-\$7,499, 3=\$7,500-\$9,999, 4=\$10,000-\$12,499, 5=\$12,500-\$14,999, 6=\$15,000-\$19,999 7=\$20,000-\$24,999 8=\$25,000-\$29,999 9=\$30,000-\$34,999 10=\$35,000-\$39,999 11=\$40,000-\$49,999 12=\$50,000-\$59,999 13=\$60,000-\$74,999 14=\$75,000-\$99,999 15=\$100,000-\$149,999 16=\$150,000 or more)

² Education (1=Less than 1st Grade, 2=1st, 2nd, 3rd, or 4th grade, 3=5th or 6th grade, 4=7th or 8th grade, 5=9th grade, 6= 10th grade, 7=11th grade, 8=12th grade-no diploma, 9=HS Grade or Equivalent, 10=Some College, 11=Associates Degree-Vocational, 12=Associates Degree-Academic, 13=Bachelor's Degree, 14=Master's Degree, 15=Professional Degree, 16=Doctorate Degree)

Logistic Regression Predicting Whether Respondent Contacted a Public Official, using CPS - Civic Engagement Supplement

Table 2

Variables	Presidential Year (2008)				Congressional Year (2010)			
	Full Model		Non-AI/AN Model		Full Model		Non-AI/AN Model	
	OR		OR		OR		OR	
Homeowner	1.22***		1.56	1.29***	1.37***		1.01	1.47***
Income	1.03***		1.1	1.03***	1.03***		1.01	1.03***
Number in HH	0.94***		0.82	0.92***	0.93***		0.78*	0.91***
Age	1.01***		1.03**	1.01***	1.02***		1.01	1.02***
Marital Status	1.18***		2.29*	1.2***	1.21***		1.75*	1.23***
Female	0.98		1.57	0.98	0.89***		0.97	0.9***
Veteran	1.14**		1.03	1.15***	1.12**		0.72	1.14***
Education	1.25***		1.09	1.26***	1.26***		1.13	1.27***
Unemployed	1.14		0.84	1.13	1.3***		0.63	1.27***
Black	0.61***				0.64***			
AI/AN	1.09				1.31			
Hispanic	0.53***				0.5***			
Observations	135,128		1,101	110,942	146,267		1,131	122,335

*** p<0.01,

** p<0.05,

* p<0.1

Table 3
Logistic Regression Predicting whether Respondent Boycotted, using CPS - Civic Engagement Supplement

Variables	Presidential Year (2008)			Congressional Year (2010)		
	AI/AN Model	Non-AI/AN Model	OR	AI/AN Model	Non-AI/AN Model	OR
Homeowner	2.61 [*]	1.13 ^{***}	0.41 ^{**}	1.07 [*]	1.05 ^{***}	1.07 [*]
Income	0.94	1.07 ^{***}	1.04	1.04	1.05 ^{***}	1.05 ^{***}
Number in HH	0.62 ^{**}	0.91 ^{***}	0.9	0.9	0.88 ^{***}	0.88 ^{***}
Age	0.97	1 ^{**}	0.99	1 ^{***}	1 ^{***}	1 ^{***}
Marital Status	2.13	1.05	2.04 [*]	1.17 ^{***}	1.12 ^{***}	1.17 ^{***}
Female	1.05	1.14 ^{***}	1.55	1.12 ^{***}	1.15 ^{***}	1.12 ^{***}
Veteran	0.53	1.06	2.83	1.12 ^{***}	1.27 ^{***}	1.15 ^{***}
Education	1.5 ^{***}	1.25 ^{***}	1.71	1.27 ^{***}	1.27 ^{***}	1.27 ^{***}
Unemployed	2.19	1.14	1.71	1.27 ^{***}	1.27 ^{***}	1.27 ^{***}
Observations	1,099	110,907	1,134	122,197	122,197	122,197

p<0.01,

**
p<0.05,

*
p<0.1

Table 4

Negative Binomial Regression – Predicting Groups/Organizations that Respondent Participates, using CPS - Civic Engagement Supplement.

Variables	Presidential Year (2008)			Congressional Year (2010)		
	Full Model	AI/AN Model	Non-AI/AN Model	Full Model	AI/AN Model	Non-AI/AN Model
Homeowner	1.21 ***	0.86	1.24 ***	1.23 ***	1.02	1.26 ***
Income	1.02 ***	1.05	1.02 ***	1.03 ***	0.98	1.03 ***
Number in HH	1.1 ***	1.11	1.09 ***	1.08 ***	0.97	1.07 ***
Age	1 ***	1	1 ***	1.01 ***	1.01	1.01 ***
Marital Status	1.21 ***	1.94 ***	1.21 ***	1.25 ***	2.1 ***	1.24 ***
Female	1.18 ***	1.27	1.19 ***	1.17 ***	0.81	1.18 ***
Veteran	1.1 ***	1.68 *	1.11 ***	1.17 ***	0.96	1.18 ***
Education	1.16 ***	1.04	1.17 ***	1.16 ***	1.16 ***	1.17 ***
Unemployed	1.06	0.8	1.06 ***	1.07 ***	0.76	1.06 ***
Black	0.95 *			1.01 ***		
AI/AN	0.92			0.89 ***		
Hispanic	0.72 ***			0.71 ***		
Constant	0.04 ***	0.1 ***	0.04 ***	0.03 ***	0.08 ***	0.03 ***
Observations	134,967	1,098	110,784	146,025	1,134	122,090

*** p<0.01,

** p<0.05,

* p<0.1

Table 5
Logistic Regression – Predicting Voting, using CPS – November Voting and Registration Supplement.

VARIABLES	Congressional Year (2006)				Presidential Year (2008)				Congressional Year (2010)				Presidential Year (2012)			
	Full Model	AI Model	Non AI Model	OR	Full Model	AI Model	Non AI Model	OR	Full Model	AI Model	Non AI Model	OR	Full Model	AI Model	Non AI Model	OR
	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR
Homeowner	1.373 ***	1.475 ***	1.345 ***	1.191 ***	0.734	1.127 ***	1.265 ***	1.136	1.265 ***	1.136	1.210 ***	1.342 ***	1.762 **	1.762 **	1.229 ***	1.229 ***
Income	1.056 ***	1.067 **	1.052 ***	1.072 ***	1.093	1.059 ***	1.050 ***	1.102 ***	1.050 ***	1.102 ***	1.044 ***	1.056 ***	0.976	0.976	1.047 ***	1.047 ***
Number in HH	0.944 ***	0.876 **	0.946 ***	0.935 ***	0.944	0.946 ***	0.958 ***	0.793 ***	0.958 ***	0.793 ***	0.964 ***	0.951 ***	1.022	1.022	0.957 ***	0.957 ***
Age	1.031 ***	1.041 ***	1.031 ***	1.017 ***	1.027 **	1.017 ***	1.031 ***	1.026 ***	1.031 ***	1.026 ***	1.031 ***	1.022 ***	1.026 ***	1.026 ***	1.021 ***	1.021 ***
Marital Status	1.345 ***	1.292	1.318 ***	1.415 ***	2.085 ***	1.335 ***	1.483 ***	1.257	1.483 ***	1.257	1.434 ***	1.397 ***	1.374	1.374	1.313 ***	1.313 ***
Female	1.074 ***	1.081	1.079 ***	1.342 ***	1.817 **	1.343 ***	1.039 **	0.892	1.039 **	0.892	1.047 **	1.255 ***	1.110	1.110	1.261 ***	1.261 ***
Veteran	1.152 ***	0.961	1.166 ***	1.152 ***	1.301	1.162 ***	1.090 **	1.108	1.090 **	1.108	1.099 ***	1.162 ***	0.891	0.891	1.169 ***	1.169 ***
Education	1.257 ***	1.134 **	1.258 ***	1.322 ***	1.137 **	1.322 ***	1.250 ***	1.131 **	1.250 ***	1.131 **	1.249 ***	1.318 ***	1.272 ***	1.272 ***	1.311 ***	1.311 ***
Unemployed	0.866 **	1.008	0.891 *	0.890 **	0.800	0.942	0.978	0.755	0.978	0.755	0.999	0.902 **	0.696	0.696	0.968	0.968
Black	1.454 ***			2.624 ***			1.820 ***		1.820 ***			2.800 ***				
AI/AN	0.901			0.721 ***			1.153		1.153			0.942				
Hispanic	0.847 ***			0.889 **			0.906		0.906			0.965				
Years in Home	1.264 ***	1.319 ***	1.264 ***	1.189 ***	1.392 ***	1.189 ***	1.260 ***	1.263 ***	1.260 ***	1.263 ***	1.261 ***	1.191 ***	1.440 ***	1.440 ***	1.196 ***	1.196 ***
Interviewer-Self	1.166 ***	1.074	1.166 ***	1.233 ***	1.234	1.234 ***	1.108 ***	0.934	1.108 ***	0.934	1.112 ***	1.169 ***	1.032	1.032	1.167 ***	1.167 ***
Urban	0.918 ***	0.611 *	0.932 **	1.215 ***	1.607 *	1.259 ***	1.005	0.649 *	1.005	0.649 *	1.036	1.028	1.375	1.375	1.086 ***	1.086 ***
Indian State	0.954 ***	1.357	0.925 **	1.011	1.411	0.954 **	1.078 **	1.237	1.078 **	1.237	1.046	1.046	0.852	0.852	1.002	1.002
Constant	0.004 ***	0.005 ***	0.004 ***	0.009 ***	0.005 ***	0.012 ***	0.004 ***	0.024 ***	0.004 ***	0.024 ***	0.004 ***	0.008 ***	0.005 ***	0.005 ***	0.010 ***	0.010 ***
Observations	85,244	705	67,307	82,427	579	63,832	92,130	664	92,130	664	73,452	96,069	773	773	77,101	77,101

p<0.01,

**
p<0.05,

*
p<0.1

Logistic Regression – Predicting Not Registering to Vote Because Not Interested In Politics, using CPS – November Voting and Registration Supplement.

Table 6

VARIABLES	Congressional Year (2006)				Congressional Year (2008)				Congressional Year (2010)				Presidential Year (2012)			
	Full Model	AI Model	Non AI Model	OR	Full Model	AI Model	Non AI Model	OR	Full Model	AI Model	Non AI Model	OR	Full Model	AI Model	Non AI Model	OR
Homeowner	0.935	1.368	0.969	1.162**	1.162**	1.026	1.191**	0.925	1.097	0.966	0.924	0.983	0.924	0.966	0.924	0.983
Income	0.992	0.932	0.998	0.983**	0.983**	1.066	0.990	0.988**	1.092	0.990*	1.000	1.007	1.000	0.972	1.000	1.007
Number in HH	0.992	0.801**	0.977	0.946***	0.946***	1.115	0.931***	0.952***	0.860	0.941***	1.028*	1.011	0.995***	0.927	0.927	1.011
Age	0.992***	0.982	0.992***	0.995***	0.995***	0.980	0.996**	0.990***	0.982	0.990***	0.995***	0.997**	0.995***	0.950***	0.950***	0.997**
Marital Status	1.133***	1.295	1.141***	1.210***	1.210***	1.210	1.207***	1.213***	1.398	1.224***	1.178***	1.176***	1.178***	1.373	1.373	1.176***
Female	0.977	1.212	0.982	1.027	1.027	0.969	1.033	0.990	0.633	0.991	0.948	0.959	0.948	0.665	0.665	0.959
Veteran	0.979	5.869**	0.975	1.194*	1.194*	1.527	1.213**	0.973	3.746	0.977	1.044	1.057	0.977	1.044	1.044	1.057
Education	0.943***	0.985	0.948***	0.986	0.986	0.777*	0.993	0.957***	1.021	0.962***	0.988	0.996	0.988	0.955	0.955	0.996
Unemployed	1.215**	0.992	1.191*	1.356***	1.356***	0.874	1.365***	1.123	1.385	1.106	1.080	1.063	1.080	3.455	3.455	1.063
Black	0.687***			0.676***	0.676***			0.644***			0.575***		0.575***			
AI/AN	0.703*			1.255	1.255			0.892			1.127		1.127			
Hispanic	0.689***			0.704***	0.704***			0.730***			0.615***		0.615***			
Years in Home	1.200***	1.118	1.200***	1.107***	1.107***	1.242	1.103***	1.231***	1.420**	1.225***	1.148***	1.139***	1.148***	1.577***	1.577***	1.139***
Interviewer-Self	1.077*	0.714	1.073	0.912*	0.912*	0.357**	0.916*	1.061	2.015	1.047	1.048	1.040	1.048	1.129	1.129	1.040
Urban	0.878***	0.663	0.823***	0.678***	0.678***	0.468	0.652***	0.836***	0.689	0.793***	0.798***	0.731***	0.798***	1.324	1.324	0.731***
Indian State	1.218***	1.383	1.181**	1.087	1.087	1.197	1.047	1.095	3.190***	1.052	0.841**	0.843**	0.841**	0.178***	0.178***	0.843**
Constant	1.188	3.113	1.034	1.200	1.200	9.115	1.013	1.359**	0.152	1.212	0.779	0.632	0.779	5.040	5.040	0.632
Observations	30,560	181	13,147	27,744	27,744	142	9,586	32,057	188	13,855	29,975	11,604	29,975	176	176	11,604

p<0.01,

**
p<0.05,

*
p<0.1