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AGENDA-SETTING BY MINORITY POLITICAL GROUPS:  
A CASE STUDY OF AMERICAN INDIAN TRIBES

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the  
University of North Texas in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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Denton, Texas

May, 1990

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McCoy, Leila M., Agenda-Setting by Minority Political Groups: A Case Study of American Indian Tribes. Doctor of Philosophy (Political Science), May, 1990, 165 pp., 19 tables, bibliography, 97 titles.

This study tested theoretical propositions concerning agenda-setting by minority political groups in the United States to see if they had the scope to be applicable to American Indian tribes or if there were alternative explanations for how this group places its agenda items on the formal agenda and resolves them. Indian tribes were chosen as the case study because they are of significantly different legal and political status than other minority groups upon which much of the previous research has been done.

The study showed that many of the theoretical propositions regarding agenda-setting by minority groups were explanatory for agenda-setting by Indian tribes. The analyses seemed to demonstrate that Indian tribes use a closed policy subsystem to place tribal agenda items on the formal agenda. The analyses demonstrated that most tribal agenda items resolved by Congress involve no major policy changes but rather incremental changes in existing policies. The analyses also demonstrated that most federal court decisions involving Indian tribes have no broad

impact or significance to all Indian tribes. The analyses showed that both Congress and the federal courts significantly influence the tribal agenda but the relationship between the courts and Congress in agenda-setting in this area of policy are unclear.

Another finding of the study was that tribal leaders have no significant influence in setting the formal agendas of either Congress or the federal courts. However, they do have some success in the resolution of significant tribal agenda items as a result of their unique legal and political status.

This study also contributed to the literature concerning agenda-setting by Indian tribes and tribal politics and study results have many practical implications for tribal leaders.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Defining the issues is the supreme instrument of power and the choice of issues for debate is central to any political system (Schattschneider, 1961). The defining of issues allows political elites to distribute power and influence in society (Walker, 1977). The political arena in which these choices are made, however, is not a field on which all groups play equally. Some political groups have greater access and power with which to shape the national policy agenda (Gusfield, 1981).

Two areas of political science research receiving attention in the 1970s were public voting behavior and government decisionmaking (Cobb and Elder, 1983). By the 1980s, political scientists had collected a substantial amount of data on voting behavior and elite decisionmaking, but very little attention had been paid to the linkage between mass participation and elite decisionmaking (Kingdon, 1984). Agenda-setting provides this vital linkage.

Research on agenda-setting has increased in the 1980s, but much of this research may be theoretically confused and naive (Iyengar, 1988; Cohen, 1983). Much of this research

has concentrated on the relationship between the media and the public or systemic agenda and much less on the relationship between public agendas and elite decisionmaking (Swanson, 1988; Rogers and Dearing, 1988). This lack of attention may, in part, be due to the complexity of this relationship and the difficulty in developing satisfactory measures to test the relationship. There seems to be little specific guidance in the literature on how to measure the formal agenda of political elites.

Given the overwhelming importance of such problems as racism, discrimination, and inequality in the United States, it is important for political scientists to develop perspectives to study these problems in a meaningful context. One such perspective is to focus on agenda-setting by minority political groups and to consider ways in which minority groups articulate grievances and transform them into viable issues that require policymakers to provide ameliorative responses (Cobb and Elder, 1983, p. 13). Analysis of case study materials involving ethnic and racial minorities' influence on the policy agenda would also provide a data base for evaluating theoretical propositions involving agenda-setting by minority groups and the translation of their agenda items to the formal agenda of government institutions.

A minority group that has historically failed to



obtain government policies representing their interests (Gross, 1986) is American Indian tribes. Indian tribes have been described as the most economically and socially deprived minority in the United States (Svensson, 1973). Tribal life is afflicted by high unemployment, poverty, high birth rates, low motivation, alcoholism, mental illness, and hostility toward the federal government and white society (Taylor, 1983). Unemployment among Indians ranges from 56% to 85% (Josephy, 1982; Taylor, 1983). The Kennedy Special Subcommittee on Indian Education characterized the education status of Indians as a national tragedy (Deloria and Lytle, 1983). Indian reservations have been characterized as rural slums, overpopulated and with no possibility of providing residents economic self-sufficiency (Taylor, 1983). It is also possible that Indian tribal members have the lowest health status of any group in the United States (Waldman, 1985).

There are continuing complaints among researchers about the lack of detailed socioeconomic data available from the Bureau of Indian Affairs concerning the status of American Indians. The American Indian Policy Review Commission found this to be true in 1977 and Taylor found this was still the case in 1983. Taylor stated that you cannot obtain such data because it does not exist. He said one gets the impression that the BIA does not consider

collecting and analyzing such data to be "necessary." There was also great difficulty in obtaining socioeconomic data for this study. The BIA had little information nor did the individual tribes. Cindy Darcy, of the Friends Committee on National Legislation (December 19, 1989), stated that Congress and Indian interest groups use the 1980 Census data and that she is unaware of any more current or detailed socioeconomic data involving the tribes. Patricia Zell, of the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs, confirmed this.

When one looks at a list of resources that can be used to place a group's issues on the formal agenda--numbers, status, wealth, effect on economy, and group cohesion--one may logically conclude that American Indian tribes lack the resources to attain successful resolution of their agenda items. Deloria and Lytle (1983) state that tribes are accorded low priority by the federal government when it comes to allocating resources. The tribes are perennially described as a "neglected minority." Deloria and Lytle say the federal government responds to more visible and vocal special interest groups and to more populous racial minorities than it does to Indian tribes.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to test theoretical propositions regarding how minority political groups place items

on the formal agenda and resolve them. It also tests the hypothesized influence of a number of government and non-government actors in the agenda-setting process. Studying minority group agenda-setting tests the limits of the theoretical propositions developed from the literature. It allows one to test various propositions to see if they have the range or breadth to be applicable to all or most minority political interest groups or if there are alternative explanations for how minority political interest groups place their issues on the formal agenda and successfully resolve them. A more thorough and widespread knowledge of how group demands are converted into agenda items may assist minority political groups in attaining formal agenda status for their agenda items.

American Indian tribes were chosen as the case study group precisely because they are of significantly different status from the minority groups (such as Afro-Americans) on which much of the political minority group research has been based. There are anomalies in the literature concerning Indian tribes that make them an excellent choice for study. This .5% of the United States population (1.5 million) annually accounts for over \$1 billion of the federal budget. The tribes have for their exclusive benefit a separate federal bureaucracy as well as specific Indian programs in at least six other major federal

departments. There are at least three congressional committees that either deal exclusively with Indian policy or expend a significant amount of time on it. Additionally, the federal judiciary hears hundreds of cases each year involving Indian tribes.

Indian tribes have retained over 52 million acres of land in the lower 48 states and 44 million acres in Alaska--5% of all land in the United States. Although they are economically deprived, these tribes possess vast lands and stores of valuable natural resources. One of the most critical resources the tribes control is water. Most tribes are located west of the 100th meridian and west of this meridian agriculture must have irrigation to be productive. Agriculture accounts for 90% of all water use in the West. The rapidly growing urban centers of the West are desperate for water, as are all major forms of energy production (all of which are water intensive). Indian tribes have first call on western water as a matter of federal law. This escalating need for a scarce resource puts the tribes on a collision course with many state governments.

The tribes also have great untapped political power. The federal courts have established that Indian tribes do have sovereign powers. Even though tribal sovereignty may have diminished over the 200 years of this nation's

history, it has never been eradicated. However, Congress has broad authority over Indian tribes just as it does over the fifty states. During this decade, the growing assertion of tribal sovereignty has put the tribes in direct conflict with many states. Both the tribes and states are attempting to use Congress and the courts to protect their interests (NARF, 1985). However, Deloria and Lytle (1983) state unequivocally that if a researcher were to attempt to understand the legal and political status of Indians the researcher would not find much information that is helpful.

In conclusion, the purpose of this study is to test theoretical propositions regarding how items are placed on the formal agenda by minority political groups. It will specifically investigate how American Indian tribes place items on the formal agenda. Such a study will test the limits of agenda-setting theoretical propositions to see if they have the range and breadth to be applicable to specific minority groups.

American Indian tribes were chosen as the study group because they are of significantly different status than the minority groups that have been the subject of much of the agenda-setting research. The assertion of tribal sovereignty during the 1980s has resulted in growing conflict with various states and has forced Indian issues to prominence in the United States Congress and United States

Supreme Court. Therefore, research concerning this minority group is particularly applicable at this time.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This review of literature helped identify potential relationships between concepts and researchable hypotheses (Johnson and Joslyn, 1986). It also delineated how this specific research project related to the work of others. This review of literature was used to develop general explanations and theoretical propositions for minority group agenda-setting. It also assisted in developing the definition of terms used in the study (see Appendix A for study definitions). The literature review assisted in developing viable research designs, measurement strategies, and data collection methods. A study of minority group agenda-setting requires a review of literature in two areas: general political agenda-setting and minority group agenda-setting.

#### Political Agenda-Setting

The social and political significance of agenda-setting arises from its structuring of policy choices. Payoffs can be future policies or immediate benefits, for instance social recognition and the validation of values, interests, and beliefs. These payoffs are determined by

the issues that ultimately achieve formal agenda status and by the participants and views represented in the process (Cobb and Elder, 1983, p. 171). Individuals and groups find personal satisfaction and social vindication in official recognition and consideration of their interests and concerns (Nadel, et al., 1976, p. 218). The issue is not over which group's position is right, but which is most credible and politically acceptable. The right to participate in determining what issues the government will address and how issues will be defined is an important stake. However, there is strong evidence that this right is not widely distributed in the United States system (Cobb and Elder, 1983, pp. 173-179).

This brings up the question of just who is the "public." Schattschneider (1960) said it was 60% of the adult population; Cobb and Elder (1972) said it was the 10% of the public who follow and understand political issues. Eyestone states (1978) that it is a much smaller figure and that the public is any group important enough that we feel it should be listened to on some issue(s). There are even different levels within the definition of "public." Eyestone describes a "group public," which includes all those who identify with the group, while Cobb and Elder speak of an "attention group," which encompasses those concerned about a specific issue (Cobb and Elder, 1973, pp. 104-111).



Within the attention group there are "issue entrepreneurs" who facilitate movement of issues onto the formal or official agenda (Salisbury, 1969). These can act both inside and outside government. There are "issue generators" who bring the issue to the attention of the "group public." There are also "issue brokers" who attempt to bring about accommodation between citizen groups and government officials. Brokers are usually those whose resource is institutional access (Eyestone, 1978, pp. 89-93).

An "issue" is a conflict between two or more identifiable groups over procedural or substantive matters relating to the distribution of resources. Issues are created by four means:

- 1) one or more parties who perceive an unfavorable bias in the distribution of resources manufacture an issue;
- 2) persons or groups manufacture an issue for their own gain;
- 3) unanticipated events initiate an issue; and
- 4) persons or groups who have no resources to gain for themselves, but do what they believe to be in the public interest generate an issue (Cobb and Elder, 1983, pp. 82-83).

Kingdon (1984, pp. 18-19) states that issues are generated by crises or prominent events that cause problems to emerge. There may be a gradual accumulation of knowl-

edge among policy specialists who generate policy proposals; or there may be a change in politics (public opinion, election results, change in administration, Congress or committee chairmen) that results in new issues.

Issues are said to be on the public, or systemic, agenda if they are issues to which government officials and other members of the political community are paying serious attention at a given time (Kingdon, 1984, p. 3 and Cobb and Elder, 1983, p. 85). There are as many definitions of an issue as there are groups interested in the issue. The controversy is not over which definition is "right," but which is most credible and politically acceptable at any given time (Gusfield, 1981, p. 9). The goal is to move these issues from the systemic or public agenda to the formal or governmental agenda. The formal agenda is the set of items explicitly up for active and serious consideration by decisionmakers (Cobb and Elder, 1983, p. 86).

Issues that emerge suddenly and seem to have easy solutions will find it easier to get on the formal agenda than issues for which no one has yet found a satisfactory solution (e.g., racially segregated housing). An issue that has been on the formal agenda before tends to create enduring structures (such as governmental agencies and programs), which in turn influence what subsequently happens to the issue. Such routinized responses prejudice the

chances of major policy change and provide an "easy out" for politicians (Eyestone, 1978, pp. 9-11).

Participants in this process of moving issues onto the formal agenda are often involved with all three branches of the federal government and persons inside and outside government. Issues may be transferred from a public agenda to the formal agenda by the mobilization of the public by political elites (Cobb and Elder, 1972, p. 14). Issues can also be placed on the agenda by bureaucrats and political elites (Walker, 1968, p. 890). Issues may also be placed on the agenda by a change in party control of the presidency or Congress (Sinclair, 1971, p. 945).

Kingdon (1984, pp. 23-36) found in his research on agenda-setting that the President had the most influence on agenda-setting in the executive branch, with political appointees in federal departments next in importance. Career civil servants were not nearly as influential as either the President or presidential appointees. Kingdon found that the President dominated agenda-setting, but not the policy alternatives considered or the final outcome.

Any issue a President chooses to emphasize is almost automatically included in Congress' agenda. However, many of the issues emphasized by a President do not originate with the President, but come from the systemic agenda (Light, 1981, p. 11). Cronin (1972) argues that the Presi-

dent's involvement in crises and heavy responsibilities for international and military affairs leaves him ill-equipped to provide leadership on the domestic agenda. The President's role is as a broker for a few party priorities, and he is only one of many important policy entrepreneurs. Research shows that many of the party priorities were initiated by members of Congress, not by the President (Orfield, 1975, p. 52).

Career civil servants, according to Kingdon (1984, pp. 32-33), are not critically important in agenda-setting. Civil servants may have more impact on specific policies developed as part of agenda item resolution than placing the item on the agenda itself. Rourke (1969, p. 12) emphasizes that bureaucracies are never neutral and that they will attempt to mobilize political support for specific policy objectives. Freeman (1958, p. 10) goes even further and states that bureaucracies organize outside pressure groups to which they then appear to be responding.

Congress influences both the agenda and alternatives (Kingdon, 1984, pp. 37-40). Orfield (1975, pp. 49-50) states it has been assumed in the past that Congress is secondary to the President in shaping national policy. Neither Kingdon nor Orfield found this to be true. Orfield states that Congress plays a powerful role in domestic policy, especially in social policy. It is almost

impossible for congressmen to determine what the public really thinks about issues; in fact, the public often holds contradictory views on many issues. Orfield contends that congressmen mainly rely on policy materials from federal agencies and interest groups. Congressional staff members, especially committee staff members, have more impact on policies developed to resolve agenda items rather than on placing items on the agenda itself (Kingdon, 1984; Malbin, 1980; Fox and Hamond, 1977).

The importance of interest groups depends on the policy area. The lower the partisanship and visibility of the issue, the greater the importance of interest groups. Although groups affect both agenda and policies, they do not dominate policies or outcomes. The ability of these groups to influence agenda and policies depends on group resources (numbers, status, wealth, effect on the economy, group cohesion) (Kingdon, 1984, pp. 48-56). Lowi (1967) states that the American system gives a prominent role to interest groups in defining issues in which they have a major stake.

Many policy areas operate within a closed network. There is a policy subsystem composed of a federal agency, relevant congressmen and congressional committees, and organized interest groups. These subsystem participants tend to share what is and what is not a problem and how to

define the problems (Nimmo and Sanders, 1981, p. 408). Over time the insulation of the subsystem can cause a disparity between the systemic agenda and the formal agenda. These subsystems also tend only to make incremental changes in existing policies because they do not want to disrupt existing accommodations among subsystem members (Cobb and Elder, 1983, pp. 184-186).

The media has the potential to focus the public's attention on a given issue (Miller, Goldenberg and Ebring, 1979). Media attention affects legislators' attention (Kingdon, 1981). This does not necessarily mean the media has a significant influence on the formal agenda. The media may not significantly influence the agenda because it covers issues for such a short period of time. This short period is often not long enough to influence the agenda (Downs, 1972). Kingdon goes so far as to contend that the media report what is happening rather than significantly affecting either the systemic or formal agendas.

Kingdon (1984, p. 65) also found that political parties had little effect on the formal agenda or policies. Ladd (1970) found that political parties did play a role in placing issues on the systemic agenda. He said parties help win support by identifying themselves with issues salient to large portions of the population. Inclusion of an issue in a party platform is indicative of some standing

on the systemic agenda.

Kingdon (1984, pp. 69-70) found that public opinion can affect the formal agenda, but that the effect was mostly negative. He also stated that many issues are nearly invisible to the general public. It is also important to remember that the systemic agenda is not the product of a single, unified public, but rather of many different publics with different priorities (Eyestone, 1978, p. 86). Additionally, the systemic agenda is a discussion agenda and not a public commitment to act (Anderson, 1975, p. 59).

Once issues reach the formal agenda, they can be resolved in a number of ways. Resolution of an issue is a positive action by government that is sufficiently satisfying to major sides of the conflict that they do not immediately raise the issue or related issues again (Eyestone, 1978, p. 20). Often issues are not successfully resolved. They can be unsuccessfully resolved by symbolic responses (rhetoric but no resolution), delayed responses (passing the buck to other government agencies or institutions), unexpected responses (bringing in other groups whose views must be considered), or ignored responses.

#### Minority Agenda-Setting

Much of the research on agenda-setting done in the 1980s concentrates on the relationship between the media and public agendas and much less on the relationship

between various public agendas and those of government decisionmakers (Swanson, 1988; Rogers and Dearing, 1988). A literature review showed much less research regarding minority group agenda-setting and almost no literature is available directly related to agenda-setting by American Indian tribes. According to Kingdon (1984) the ability of any group to influence the formal agenda depends on a group's resources, such as number of members, status, wealth, effect on the economy, and group cohesion. If a group has no position of strength in the political system, then it has no bargaining basis (Cobb and Elder, 1983).

One method used by groups that are relatively weak in material resources to attain their goals is to use the "outside initiative model" for placing issues on the formal agenda (Cobb, Ross, and Ross, 1976). The outside initiative model asserts that agenda items arise in nongovernment groups, are then expanded to reach the public agenda, and finally reach the formal agenda by public opinion putting pressure on decisionmakers. An alternative explanation is that low resource, low status groups often create closed policy subsystems of federal agencies, relevant congressmen, congressional committees, and political interest groups as a method of placing agenda items on the formal agenda (Nimmo and Sanders, 1981). The contention is that low resource, low status groups often have agenda items



that are endemic, that is, the government shares the responsibility for the current state of affairs and that endemic issues are best handled by closed policy subsystems (Eyestone, 1978). These closed policy subsystems usually produce small, incremental changes in government policies so as to assure that the subsystem's accommodations among members is not disturbed (Cobb and Elder, 1983).

These endemic agenda items often are "social issues." A social issue is a condition identified by significant groups within the population as a deviation from a social standard, or a breakdown of some facet of social organization (Eyestone, 1978, p. 69). They do not have the same time scale as many political issues, which tend to be transitory. Often social issues are also not clear-cut. There is often no single satisfactory response to such an issue. Many times the federal government is already involved in social issues. The policy choice is often more or less government involvement. The "government involvement" issue tends to arouse controversy and to bring into conflict groups who oppose government expansion while not being particularly interested in the substantive policy issue itself.

Many social problems in the United States are endemic and are resistant to solution (poverty, ethnic group relations). Endemic issues are those in which government

policy is already implicated; therefore, government shares the responsibility for the current state of affairs. In most endemic issue areas, groups are continuously seeking adjustments to policies and are not seeking new policies or major policy changes. The visibility of endemic issues is low, and the media rarely reports on these issues (Eyestone, 1978).

Endemic issues often receive "oblique responses." Politicians want to keep on good terms with groups, but want to deflect the group from its original demands. This is often done by co-opting group leaders into the policy decision process. There are also "standing responses" in which policymakers give an issue status. They acknowledge the existence of an issue public, accept the legitimacy of its complaints, are sympathetic, promise remedial action and then take just enough action for the issue public to see progress, but not so much that significant progress is ever made (Eyestone, 1978, p. 162). Congress is often unresponsive to redressing social and economic imbalances, because it means helping some while denying others. The level of controversy increases the chance that the policy will be vetoed at some point in Congress. Such issues tend to alienate segments of a congressperson's constituencies and other members of Congress. As a result, it is much easier to make small changes in existing programs or to

increase federal aid, which may pass unnoticed (Orfield, 1975, pp. 262-265).

Because of deliberate cultural separateness and profound differences from the dominant group (Barsh, 1986) Indian agenda items tend to be largely confined to the group itself. Such issues have great difficulty in gaining the attention of political elites (Cobb and Elder, 1983). Cobb and Elder go on to say that the ability of low resource groups to move issues from the systemic to the formal agenda depends on group resources and the ability to mobilize resources. It also depends on the location of the group in the social and economic structure of the dominant society.

Federal Indian policy is not distinguishable from other domestic policies today. A "federal Indian policy" does not exist in the 1980s and has not existed since the termination policy of the 1950s (Deloria, 1985). The present Indian status is that of an identifiable racial minority. Indian issues are now social issues and will be resolved as such (Deloria, 1985); that is, small changes in federal policies will continue to occupy Indians instead of broad national policies.

Little is known about modern American Indians as a political interest group. However, the overall evolution of political organization in tribes is known sufficiently

to suggest some of the problems facing today's American Indians. Most American tribes have had to change over time in order to survive, and that adaptation produced internal conflict about the chosen methods of survival. Therefore, the nature of Indian politics must be viewed as much in terms of the framework established by white attitudes and government as by the internal pressures arising from diverse interests and outlooks of the Indian population (Higham, 1978, pp. 3-7). In the 1980s, this framework was greatly influenced by the actions of the Reagan administration.

In the early 1980s, the Reagan Administration called for massive cuts in federal spending. The cuts in Indian programs and services were 2.5 percent of all the cuts. The entire Indian budget, prior to the cuts, was only .04 percent of the national budget. Indians were experiencing cuts ten times greater than those affecting non-Indians. Thousands of Indians lost their jobs and unemployment among Indians rose from 35% to as high as 85-95% among some tribes. The new issue of the 1980s may be "white backlash." It can be attributed to the occupations and disruptions of militant Indian groups demanding the United States live up to its treaty obligations (such as Wounded Knee II); greater assertions of sovereign rights and powers by tribal governments; and major Indian victories in the

courts regarding land claims and natural resources. There is also resentment of whites, especially in a worsening economy over federal benefits given to Indians. The result has been the formation of anti-tribal organizations on the state level, such as the Interstate Congress for Equal Rights and Responsibilities (ICERR). This backlash is also influencing congressional policymaking (Hodge, 1981, pp. 531-532).

Vast literature exists on the views and actions of the United States government regarding federal-Indian relations, but little information exists on what Native Americans did to shape policy. For nearly 200 years their actions and reactions were ignored, their views on policy never sought, and when expressed their views were usually ignored. The reader needs to be aware of the profound cultural differences between Indian and white people, which significantly affects Indian politics. Barsh (1986) identifies three concepts that he thinks help explain American Indian political institutions: the concepts of infinite creation, individual conscience, and universal kinship.

Infinite Creation: The beginning of the world was an act of love on the part of mysterious powers beyond human understanding. However, creation has been embellished by "tricksters." This notion of both an original (general) creation and an ongoing (special) creation is central to

North American Indian social and political theory. Part of this concept is a belief in human diversity. Each human is a creative act, unique in talents and capabilities, and consequently he or she is indispensable. Time and the universe are infinite. Therefore, the physical world has no "answer." There is no absolute moral certainty and no preordained destiny for humankind. Indigenous North Americans do not believe in final judgment and damnation. Humans exist to enjoy the world, not to be tested by god. The end of riddles would be the death of the soul. Perfect knowledge would be eternal boredom.

Science reflects a civilization's beliefs about human nature and purpose. The industrial nations view society as a herd of individuals who differ only slightly. What is considered relevant is human similarity. Public policy relies on the belief that these selfish creatures will respond similarly to incentives, punishments, and consequences. On the other hand, indigenous North Americans see society as an ecosystem populated with different, but complementary creatures, each unique. Human differences are more significant than similarities; hence statistical analysis is trivial.

Primacy of Conscience: Human beings are morally equal, regardless of differences in abilities or beliefs. No one has a right to judge another. It is wrong to

prevent anyone from doing what one's conscience demands. Compulsion is abhorred. Public order depends on self-discipline and the power of public opinion and ridicule. There is no State on which to thrust the satisfaction of human needs or to blame for hardships. This primacy of individual conscience dictates a form of democracy characterized by its lack of central authority. Any collective action requires the consent of everyone affected, or at least consensus. Public voting is avoided, if possible, to minimize conflicts and wounded pride.

Industrial democracy relies on representation and majority rule. "Majoritarianism" arises from the belief that we are an aggregation of selfish and competitive groups wherein consensus is impossible. From the Indians' perspective this is authoritarian and coercive. The powerlessness of Native American governments is deliberate.

Universal Kinship: The contemporary nation-state is defined geographically, but the tribal system rests on universal kinship. Each individual is defined in relation to every other species. There is also continuity across time. There is no ownership of land, only the right to live in a place with one's relatives, human and non-human. The industrial sociopolitical structures only consider the living. The living may prosper at the expense of the yet to be born. In politics, industrial nations simplify human

relations into the rulers and the ruled. American Indian economies, while concerned with material needs, always place greater emphasis on spiritual resources. They reject materialism.

To American Indians leadership is a burden upon the selfless, an obligation, never a reward for the greedy. To them a leader is not a decisionmaker, but a coordinator, peacemaker, teacher, and example. A leader cannot tell others what to do, but must persuade them. A leader is essentially an advisor, not an executive (Barsh, 1986, pp. 182-193).

There are also at least two other cultural differences that affect Indian politics: the concepts of "greed" and "jealousy." "Greed" is evil, the worst bad thing to the Indians. It is selfishness, avarice, neglect, and disregard of the welfare of others, and it usurps power or authority. Greed is one of the most prevalent charges brought against tribal leaders when efforts are made to oust them. "Jealousy" is another term often used in tribal politics. People are said to be jealous of those who get ahead. Even leaders who do nothing definitely wrong can be victims of efforts to discredit them out of office. That the terms greed and jealousy are used in regard to political leadership suggests a fear of the development of a separate, powerful, permanent ruling class with privileges



beyond the control of the rank and file. Dangerous evidence of greed is seen as becoming too powerful and not respecting Indian tradition. To be successful, Indian leaders must incorporate essential traditional tribal features into tribal government (Lurie, 1986, pp. 47-63). The specific pattern of tribal politics varies from tribe to tribe depending on population, tribal economic resources, and persistence of kin-group-determined leadership structures. Yet, there are similarities. Through much of the 1800s, federal administrators imposed their authority on Indian tribes through the Indians' own designated leaders. As long as the leaders toed the government's line, government authority would reinforce their status and increase their perquisites.

The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 reestablished a structure for tribal government. The result was that most Indian tribes approved tribal constitutions styled after the United States Constitution and went to the polls at one, two, or four year intervals to elect federally sanctioned governing bodies. These tribal councils did not make policy. Rather, they decided among alternatives presented to them by the BIA. The United States Secretary of the Interior's approval was required on any important tribal transactions. The stipends for council office were so low that tribal governance could only be a part-time

job. Most councils were given control over job positions in tribal administrations which they used to reward their supporters.

By 1950, the federal government began to pay some of the land claims filed by the tribes (\$106 million by 1966). These payments provided some power and glory to tribal leaders, but once the money was spent their constituents' needs for steady employment were still there. The claim awards also improved the perquisites of tribal leadership. By the end of the 1960s the structural linkage between tribal politics and tribal economics was even stronger. The anti-poverty programs of the mid-1960s also gave tribal leaders a substantial source of political power.

A basic principle of tribal politics is that tribal leaders must keep getting something for their constituents if they want to remain in office. Getting something usually entails sustaining dependency relationships with federal agencies. Tribal leaders are caught between the federal government's trust protection and the tribe's goal of self-determination. Most of the health, education, resource conservation, and construction programs would be abolished if the trust relationship were terminated. Tribal leaders dare not let this occur. Therefore, they must be publicly aggressive while privately trying to accommodate themselves to the federal authorities. Political

power is wielded in the distribution of these program benefits. To wield political clout tribal leaders must control distribution, no matter what federal regulations say.

Social and political relations in most tribal communities are influenced by kinship. From a leader's perspective, "my people" may not only be loyal supporters, but relatives as well. Political power is typically not only reckoned by control of program benefits, but also by the number of kinsmen a tribal politician can muster on election day. The lines of political conflict are most often drawn between kinship groups. This factionalism imposes a constraint on tribal leaders' power strategies. No matter how many benefits are snared and distributed by tribal leaders and no matter how large the leader's victory in tribal election, there will always be a group opposing the elected leader. Points of contention differ, but one of the most common is a "traditional" versus a "modernized" cultural identification. Traditional factions often spurn the BIA-recognized tribal governments and federal programs as encroachments on the old ways. Tribal leaders face a series of contradictions: They must seek control of tribal programs, but avoid being held accountable when they fail; to seek political power, but avoid violating the consensus ethic; and to challenge federal intervention, but not

jeopardize the flow of federal benefits (Bee, 1982, pp. 29-35).

The predicament of the modern Indian leader is as follows:

1) "particularism" versus "universalism." Member support of the leader is bolstered by allocating federal benefits by particularistic strategies. However, public political decisions must be validated by universalistic rules. There must be a public image of universalistic generosity.

2) tribal rights versus political clout. Washington officials who are charged with responsibility of maintaining some semblance of a trust relationship with tribes actually owe their careers to a consistent avoidance of conflict with powerful non-Indian special interests. As long as resources are plentiful, Washington officials can keep their jobs by granting funds to Indians that do not significantly impact non-Indian special interests. However, in the 1980s in a time of scarce resources, tribal demands for minerals, land, and water are often in direct conflict with state and special interests (Bee, 1979, p. 245).

Current research in agenda-setting might also be reflected in a review of doctoral dissertations since 1980. A computer search of doctoral dissertations resulted in a

list of twenty-three relevant dissertations. Nine of these dealt with the effects of media on agenda-setting, two concerned agenda-setting in foreign countries, two dealt with agenda-setting in nongovernmental institutions, and one was an historical study. Nine of the twenty-three dissertations dealt with agenda-setting in governmental institutions, two concerned agenda-setting in the judicial branch, two concerned agenda-setting in the Congress, one concerned agenda-setting in state governments, one concerned agenda-setting in municipal government, and three concerned agenda-setting in the three branches of the federal government. Of the nine dissertations dealing with agenda-setting in governmental institutions, two dealt with American Indian agenda-setting.

A review of the doctoral dissertations in this subject area shows agenda-setting research is still concentrating on the media's effect on the systemic agenda. The review shows that even those studies that deal with the formal agenda were not comprehensive. They concentrated on only one branch of government or on one specific policy. Many of the dissertations seemed to be policy studies rather than studies of agenda-setting. Many of them also seemed to rely on secondary sources, such as content analysis of participant statements or bills passed in Congress.

The two dissertations on American Indian agenda-

setting (Flannery, 1980 and Gross, 1986) are policy studies rather than agenda-setting studies. Neither study speaks to the issues of which participants are setting the agenda in American Indian policy, nor do they build on past research in agenda-setting. None of the four dissertations reviewed dealing with minority groups seemed to draw any conclusions as to why some minority groups are unsuccessful in moving their issues to the formal agenda or under what circumstances these groups may sometimes successfully resolve issues.

This review of the literature concerning agenda-setting by low resource, low status groups allows one to form a number of propositions (a rewording, in propositional form, of statements found in the literature) concerning agenda setting and agenda resolution. This forming of propositions is a crucial step in building a foundation for empirical examination of these propositions (Ostrom, 1976).

#### Theoretical Propositions

Two types of propositions can be found in the literature on agenda-setting just reviewed: those dealing with agenda-setting, in general, and those dealing with agenda-setting by low resource, low status political interest groups. These propositions can assist in the development of hypotheses for this study.

### General Propositions

- A) Highly visible crises or prominent events cause items to be placed on the formal agenda (Kingdon, 1984).
- B) Diffusion of ideas among policy elites, particularly bureaucrats, causes items to be placed on the formal agenda (Walker, 1969).
- C) A change in party control or in intra-party ideological balance causes items to be placed on the formal agenda (Ginsberg, 1976; Brady, 1982).
- D) Problems brought to the attention of government officials by feedback from the operation of current programs cause items to be placed on the formal agenda (Kingdon, 1984).
- E) Comparison of current conditions with values concerning a more ideal state or comparison of the current conditions of different groups causes items to be placed on the formal agenda (Kingdon, 1984).
- F) Elected officials and political appointees are more successful in placing items on the formal agenda than are career bureaucrats and nongovernmental actors (Kingdon, 1984).
- G) The President has more ability than any other single actor to place items on the formal agenda (Kingdon, 1984).
- H) Congress has more ability than any other group in

resolving agenda items (Kingdon, 1984).

I) The lower the partisanship and visibility of an issue the greater the importance of interest groups in placing items on the formal agenda (Kingdon, 1984).

J) The inclusion of an issue in a party platform is indicative of standing in the systemic or public agenda (Ladd, 1970).

#### Minority Group Propositions

A) Group resources (numbers, status, wealth, effect on the economy, and group cohesion) are necessary to place group issues on the formal agenda (Kingdon, 1984).

B) Groups weak in resources will be more likely to use the outside initiative model (issues arise in nongovernment groups, move to the public or systemic agenda, and only then move on to the formal agenda) for placing issues on the formal agenda (Cobb, Ross, and Ross, 1976).

C) Endemic issues (those for which government shares responsibility for the current state of affairs) have low visibility and are not likely to reach the public or systemic agenda (Eyestone, 1978).

D) Endemic issues are likely to create closed policy subsystems (Nimmo and Sanders, 1981). A closed subsystem is described as a federal agency, relevant congressmen and congressional committees, and organized interest groups.

E) Participants in closed policy subsystems will work



for small incremental changes in government policies so as not to disturb subsystem accommodations (Cobb and Elder, 1983).

F) The policy choice in "social issues" (condition identified by significant groups in the population as a deviation from a social standard) is most often more or less government involvement, regardless of the substantive policy issue (Eyestone, 1978).

G) The success or failure of a group in placing its issues on the formal agenda depends on the location of the group in the social and economic order (Cobb and Elder, 1983).

H) Groups fail to place their issues on the formal agenda because the group is too small or politically unimportant to command attention (Eyestone, 1978).

I) Groups fail to place their issues on the formal agenda because their issues are of minor concern to society at large (Eyestone, 1978).

J) Endemic issues are most likely to receive standing responses (issues given status, but no resolution) (Eyestone, 1978).

Some of these propositions seem inapplicable to American Indian tribes and will not be studied. For example, a review of the Democratic and Republican party platforms for 1984 and 1988 does not show that Indian agenda items were

included; therefore, the propositions regarding the effect of parties on agenda-setting will not be studied. A review of the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature and the Gallup Poll Index (1984-88) shows no highly visible crisis in Indian policy; therefore, the proposition regarding the effect of crises on the agenda will not be tested. The proposition concerning diffusion of ideas among policy elites causing items to be placed on the formal agenda will not be tested because of the difficulty in developing a method to test "diffusion of an idea." The other sixteen propositions are applicable to this specific research topic and will be tested in this study. One can use the propositions applicable to American Indian tribes to develop a number of specific hypotheses to be tested.

### Hypotheses

H<sub>1</sub>: American Indian tribes use the outside initiative model to place agenda items on the formal agenda.

H<sub>1.1</sub>: Agenda items arise in non-government groups.

H<sub>1.2</sub>: Agenda items then move onto the public or systemic agenda.

H<sub>1.3</sub>: Agenda items then move onto the formal agenda through the pressure of public opinion.

H<sub>2</sub>: American Indian tribes use a closed policy subsystem to place agenda items on the formal agenda.

H<sub>2.1</sub>: The Bureau of Indian Affairs is the most important influence in the executive branch in placing agenda items on the formal agenda.

H<sub>2.2</sub>: Relevant congressmen are the most important influence in the legislative branch in placing agenda items on the formal agenda.

H<sub>2.3</sub>: Congress is more influential in placing items on the agenda than the judicial or executive branches.

H<sub>2.4</sub>: Organized interest groups are significant influences in placing agenda items on the formal agenda.

H<sub>2.5</sub>: Resolution of agenda items in the legislative branch will involve incremental changes resulting from feedback from existing programs and comparison of the socioeconomic status of Indians with non-Indians.

H<sub>3</sub>: The agenda items of American Indian tribes will fail to be placed on the formal agenda.

H<sub>3.1</sub>: Tribal agenda items that do attain formal agenda status are not resolved favorably to Indian tribes.

This review of literature delineates the social and political significance of agenda-setting in that it not only defines the problems to be addressed by government but implies and delimits resolution of these problems. The literature also shows that there are different kinds of issues and different methods of placing issues on the formal agenda. The kinds of issues to be addressed and the different methods of agenda-setting depend, to a great degree, on a group's resources (or the lack of them).

There is also a significant body of literature that specifically addresses how low resource, low status groups in the United States attempt to move issues onto the formal agenda.

This review of the literature also provided material with which to form a number of propositions concerning agenda-setting and resolution. From these propositions, three hypotheses were developed that will test a number of theoretical propositions concerning agenda-setting by racial and ethnic minorities in the United States.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is a plan that shows how the researcher intends to fulfill the goals of the research project and indicates the observations needed to provide answers to the questions raised by the proposed research (Johnson and Joslyn, 1986). A proper design must delineate how the observations will be made and the analytical and statistical procedures to be used. Because the goal of this research project is to test a number of hypotheses, this research design will explain how they will be tested.

An initial decision was made not to use an experimental research design. Political scientists seldom do experimental research because they have insufficient control over people's behavior or the introduction of experimental stimuli (Johnson and Joslyn, 1986). Such a research design would be particularly inapplicable to a study including tribal leaders. Cultural differences and language difficulties would inhibit tribal leaders from participating in such a study. As a result, a number of non-experimental designs were considered.

For the purposes of this study, with due consideration given to practical limitations such as lack of time and

money, a non-experimental case study design was chosen. Observation of one minority political interest group (American Indian tribes) and of a limited number of tribes (fourteen Eastern Oklahoma tribes) may suggest possible general explanations for agenda-setting behavior by all American Indian tribes and give insight into agenda-setting by minority political groups. A case study design would also allow future research to be done by the observation of more cases and might also produce additional hypotheses to be tested. Case studies may be both descriptive and explanatory and may also be used to test critical theories (Yin, 1984).

A major criticism of case study research is that there is a potential for bias (Yin, 1984). Yin contends one can counteract possible bias by using a variety of primary and secondary sources of data. This research project will use both primary and secondary sources to guard against bias.

A purposive or judgmental sample (such as Fenno's study of eighteen incumbent representatives in Home Style) was used in this study, wherein the goal was to study a limited number of political elites. A "snowball sample" was chosen wherein respondents identify other persons who might be included in the sample (Bailey, 1978). Bailey states this type of sampling is useful when one must study a relatively select population, such as that which

constitutes the Indian policy subsystem. Elite interviewing was chosen as the way to collect primary data. An "elite" is someone who in terms of the purposes of the interviewer is given special treatment (Dexter, 1970, p. 5). In elite interviews, the researcher is most interested in the elite's own interpretation of events or issues; therefore, the researcher tries not to significantly constrain the elite's responses. Johnson and Joslyn (1986) state that elite interviews stress the subject rather than the researcher's definitions of a problem. The elite interviews were used to identify and rank tribal agenda items and to rank various hypothesized influences on the tribal agenda. Actual participants in the policy subsystem were chosen to be interviewed rather than sets of experts because of the difficulty of identifying these "experts" and because of the researcher's view that it was possible that experts might not be good representatives or substitutes for actual participants. Kingdon (1984), for instance, reports that his research on agenda-setting did not show that experts were a significant influence on the agenda.

Secondary sources (such as bills considered by Congress, court dockets, and measures of public opinion) were used to identify tribal agenda items actually placed on the formal agenda of the government.

### Development of Interview Schedule

As mentioned earlier, a "snowball sample" was used in this study. A number of obvious participants in the Indian policy subsystem were identified from the literature: the Assistant Secretary of Interior for Indian Affairs, the Chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs, and the Tribal Officer of the Bureau of Indian Affairs for Eastern Oklahoma. The Assistant Secretary and Tribal Officer were interviewed first. From these interviews, fourteen tribal leaders were identified to be interviewed (the Tribal Officer suggested these tribal leaders because of their geographical location, willingness to participate, and because they included a good cross-section of tribes); also a member of the White House staff; some relevant congressmen; and some political interest groups. As each participant was interviewed, the participant identified other groups or individuals. If a respondent did not spontaneously identify other actors in the policy subsystem, the participant was explicitly asked to identify such actors. No other criterion was used to select participants.

Early in the interview process there was persistent overlap of the actors identified. Fifty-one actors were finally identified and fifty interviews were completed. The interview list was completed when the respondents no



longer identified additional actors. This gives support to the contention that this interview group does contain most of the important actors in this specific policy subsystem. A cross-check with literature sources (such as Taylor, 1983 and 1984) showed that the interview list did contain individuals from the major institutions involved in this policy area. The final interview list is contained in Appendix B. Those interviewed fell into six identifiable groups: congressmen and their staffs, relevant congressmen, tribal leaders, Indian interest groups, state and local interest groups, and executive branch respondents.

#### Interview Instrument

Nimmo (1978) identifies two types of questions used to obtain data on agenda-setting: open-ended and closed-ended. Open-ended questions raise a general problem, but do not suggest any structure for the subject's response. Closed-ended questions use detailed questions with alternative responses. Closed-ended questions can be compared more easily across all subjects, but force subjects to think in the researcher's categories rather than their own. There are also "focused interviews" in which the questioner directs the subject's attention to a topic by asking a general question. As the interview proceeds the questioner asks a planned sequence of questions or "probes" to elicit more specific responses. Open-ended questions are consi-

dered to be more appropriate for elite interviews and were used in this study. However, a closed-ended question (using a Likert scale) was included in the interview instrument as a cross-check on the agenda items identified by respondents. In the closed-ended question, agenda items were identified in the American Indian literature and respondents were asked to react to these agenda items.

In developing the interview instrument, the interview instrument used in John Kingdon's study of agenda-setting (1984) was used as the base document. Kingdon's interview instrument was designed to analyze the content of the formal agenda of the United States government and the hypothesized influences on it. It is issue non-specific; therefore, it is equally applicable to any policy area. Kingdon used this interview instrument in 247 interviews over four years. Professor Kingdon, now at the University of Michigan, is considered to be a leading expert in political agenda-setting. His interview instrument was selected as the base instrument because of its proven ability to elicit the information needed for the current study.

A small pre-test of the instrument was used in the initial interview with the Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs and the Tribal Officer, Bureau of Indian Affairs. As a result of these initial inter-

views, changes were made in the wording of the questions to make them clearer and to elicit better responses. Then the re-worded instrument was used in the interview with the White House staff member and with Congressman Synar to see if it elicited the responses needed. It was consequently used in the rest of the interviews. Dr. Kingdon was also contacted (April 10, 1989) and asked what pre-testing he had done on the original interview instrument. He stated he did seven pre-test interviews prior to beginning his study. It was his opinion that unless this study was highly quantitative pre-testing was not critical. He said the fact that the interview instrument is composed of open-ended questions also makes pre-testing less important. See Appendix C for the final interview instrument used in the study.

#### Interview Response Coding

To measure agenda status, when an issue or federal program was mentioned in response to questions one and five, it was coded as follows:

- 1) most important (it is the major focus of attention of members of the policy subsystem);
- 2) more important (it is not as prominent an issue but still takes up attention time and energy); and
- 3) important (issue is thought to be important but does not receive as much attention as issues ranked one or

two).

The interview responses were also used to measure the influence of executive branch officials, the Congress, the courts, interest groups, and tribal leaders on agenda status and resolution. Information in the interviews was analyzed as to whether and how the respondent talked about the relative influence of these participants in regards to both agenda-setting and policymaking. Responses to all nine questions were used to ascertain this information.

The closed-ended question was coded using the following categories: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree.

#### Interview Procedures

Those to be interviewed were first contacted by a letter explaining the research project and how the data collected would be used. They were then asked if they would be willing to participate in the study. They were assured of the confidentiality of their responses, if they agreed to be interviewed. Approximately a week after receipt of the letter, individuals were contacted by phone in order to see if an interview could be scheduled. All interviews were done between January and May, 1989. The interviews were either done in person or on the telephone. The final list of those interviewed fell into six identifiable subgroups: congressmen and congressional staff

members; relevant congressmen (those congressmen serving on congressional committees directly responsible for Indian policies); tribal leaders; representatives of Indian political interest groups; state officials and state political interest groups; and executive branch officials. Each person interviewed was specifically asked each question on the interview instrument and the response was written down at the same time it was given.

#### Secondary Data Sources

For the purpose of this study a measure was needed to judge whether agenda items mentioned by those interviewed actually attained formal agenda status and are resolved. Measures used for this purpose were:

- 1) to measure issues attaining formal agenda status, the number and subject of court cases involving Indian tribes filed in federal courts, 1984-88 (source: Ninth Decennial Digest);
- 2) to measure agenda item resolution, a sample of federal court cases involving Indian tribes decided during the period 1984-88 was selected with the help of the Native American Rights Fund. The Law Librarian of NARF suggested the use of the NARF newsletter. The newsletter discusses the resolution of those cases thought to be significant to Indian tribes and to have broad implications for them;
- 3) to measure issues attaining formal agenda status

and agenda item resolution, the number and subject of bills introduced, reported out of committee, and passed in the 99th and 100th Congresses (1984-88) which involved Indian policy. The sources for this information were lists provided by the Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs and by the Friends Committee on National Legislation; and

4) to measure issues attaining systemic or public agenda status, the number and subject of articles involving Indian issues (1984-88). The sources for this information were the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature (1984-88) and the Gallup Poll Index (1984-88).

The Native American Rights Fund and Friends Committee on National Legislation evaluate each Congress' actions in the Indian policy field, identifying significant legislation and how it was resolved. They also evaluate the actions of the federal court in this area of policy. This information will be used in the analysis of agenda item resolution.

#### Analytical Tools

Descriptive statistics, such as frequency tables, were used to analyze the interview responses (Chapter IV). In the statistical analysis (Chapter V) it was decided that a non-parametric statistical test was most appropriate for the small size of the group studied. A number of statis-

tical tests were investigated (contingency coefficient, Spearman's rho, phi coefficient, and Kendall's tau). Either because of the small sample size and/or the differences in sets of measurements, some statistical tests were not found to be appropriate. The statistical test found to be most appropriate for ranked data and small sample size was the Kendall coefficient of concordance test. For this study, the .05 level of significance was chosen. The Kendall W test is used to determine the association among "k" sets of ranked items. When tied observations occur, the observations are each assigned the average of the ranks they would have been assigned if no ties occurred. The Kendall W determines the degree of overall agreement among these sets of rankings. It is useful in providing a standard method of ordering entities according to consensus when there is no available objective order of the entities (Siegel, 1956). It tests the null hypothesis that there are no common rankings. Kendall's W takes values from zero to one, with "zero" corresponding to no agreement and "one" for identical rankings for all sets. The null hypothesis is rejected if W is greater than the critical value of chi square with a significance level of .05. A high or significant value of W does not mean that the orderings observed are correct. Rather, these are "consensual" orderings. The W is the best estimate of the "true"

rankings provided by the order of the sums of ranks. A high or significant value of  $W$  is interpreted as meaning the observers are applying essentially the same standard in ranking the objects under study. In this study, Kendall  $W$  will be used to test the association among subgroup agendas and those of public opinion and branches of government.

#### Validity and Reliability of Measures

A researcher must look at the quality of the study's measurement in terms of both accuracy and precision. A measure may be inaccurate because it is unreliable (would the measure yield the same results in repeated trials?) or because it is invalid (does it measure what it is supposed to measure?) (Siegel, 1956). In this particular study, Kingdon's basic interview instrument was used precisely because it has been used in a series of agenda-setting studies over a number of years and is thought to be, by many political scientists, both reliable and applicable to any agenda-setting study involving the legislative and executive branches.

As to the validity of the measures, Johnson and Joslyn (1986) state that validity is difficult to demonstrate empirically in political science because it involves measurement of a concept and the actual presence of the concept itself. Information regarding this correspondence is seldom abundant. The authors list four ways to evaluate



the validity of measures:

1) face validity--this may be asserted when the measurement appears to measure the concept it is supposed to measure, that is, is the information collected germane to the concept? Essentially, face validity is a matter of judgment.

2) content validity--the test, usually a logical argument, involves determining the full domain or meaning of a particular concept and then making sure that measures of all portions of the domain are included in the measurement technique. Most political science concepts are so abstract and ill-defined that there is little agreement about any domain, so content validity is rarely used in political science.

3) construct validity--a researcher may specify, on theoretical grounds, that two concepts ought to be related and presumably this construct validity can then be demonstrated.

4) inter-item association--this type of validity measure is the one most often used by political scientists. It relies on the similarities of outcomes of more than one measure of a concept to demonstrate the validity of the entire measurement scheme.

In this study, face validity and inter-item validity were used to evaluate the validity of measurements. The

data collected from the primary source (elite interviews) and secondary sources (e.g., court dockets and congressional bills considered) are germane to the concept of tribal agenda-setting. Therefore, one can assert there is face validity. The reliability of the measures used in the study also assists one in asserting face validity. Elite interviews and the secondary sources used are similar or identical to those used by many other political scientists to study agenda-setting and are accepted measures of agenda-setting in this discipline.

There is also inter-item validity in that both a primary source (elite interviews) and a secondary source (Indian literature) were used to identify the tribal agenda, and no significant differences were found between the agendas from these two sources.

## CHAPTER IV

### OVERVIEW OF THE DATA

This chapter contains a descriptive overview of the data collected in the fifty elite interviews completed in this study. The interview data were used for two purposes: to identify tribal agenda items and to identify significant influences on the tribal agenda. Three different questions were used to help identify tribal agenda items. Question one was open-ended, asking respondents to identify the most important problems facing Indian tribes. Question five asked respondents to identify federal Indian programs receiving attention. The purpose of question five was to see if there were significant differences between policies and programs, therefore giving added insight into specific agenda items. Question nine was closed-ended and was used to compare tribal agenda items identified by respondents in question one with agenda items identified from the Indian literature.

Responses to all interview questions, particularly those involving change in issues and programs and why these issues and programs were receiving attention, were analyzed as to each respondent's perception of the most important influences on the agenda.

### Tribal Agenda Items

The fifty respondents seemed to fall naturally into six subgroups: congressmen and congressional staff, relevant congressmen, tribal leaders, Indian interest groups, state interest groups, and executive branch respondents. However, as a result of snowball sampling, each subgroup had a different number of respondents. In order that each subgroup be weighted equally, subgroup rankings were developed for each agenda item. Five agenda items received more than 20% of the responses to the open-ended question: tribal economic development, Indian health, tribal sovereignty, Indian education, and tribal/federal relations (see tables 1 and 2).

Congressional respondents stated that unemployment among all Indians remains at critically high levels (for example, 30% among Oklahoma Indian tribes). Congressional respondents identified a number of impediments to tribal economic development, such as the hostility of non-Indians, a critical lack of understanding by non-Indians of the legal status of the tribes, and the lack of adequate tribal resources and capital. The congressional respondents also emphasized that there is a direct correlation between the lack of adequate housing, health care, and education, and the lack of tribal economic development.

Tribal leaders pointed out that Indian tribes cannot

Table 1. Perception of Subgroup Respondents as to the Most Important Problems Facing Indian Tribes, Open-Ended Question, N in Parenthesis (Percentages)

Subgroup	Economic Development	Sovereignty	Tribal/ Federal Relations	Education	Health	N
Congress	79 (10)	28 (4)	28 (4)	50 (7)	79 (10)	14
Relevant congressmen	100 (5)	40 (2)	60 (3)	40 (2)	40 (2)	5
Tribal leaders	57 (8)	29 (4)	43 (6)	29 (4)	36 (5)	14
State interest groups	34 (2)	42 (3)	14 (1)	14 (1)	14 (1)	7
Indian interest groups	33 (2)	83 (5)	17 (1)	33 (2)	33 (2)	6
Executive branch	50 (2)	25 (1)	50 (2)	25 (1)	0	4
Percentage of total responses	58 (29)	38 (19)	34 (17)	34 (17)	40 (20)	50

Table 2. Ranking of Indian Agenda Items by Individual Subgroups, Open-Ended Question

Ranking by Congress (n = 14)	Ranking by Relevant Congressmen (n = 5)	Ranking by Tribal Leaders (n = 14)	Ranking by State Groups (n = 7)	Ranking by Indian Groups (n = 6)	Ranking by Executive Branch (n = 4)
1. tribal economic development	1. tribal economic development	1. tribal economic development	1. tribal sovereignty	1. tribal sovereignty	1. tribal economic development
1. Indian health	2. tribal/federal relations	2. tribal/federal relations	2. tribal economic development	2. tribal economic development	1. tribal/federal relations
3. Indian education	3. tribal sovereignty	3. Indian health	3. tribal/federal relations	2. Indian education	3. tribal sovereignty
4. tribal sovereignty	3. Indian education	4. Indian education	3. Indian education	2. Indian health	3. Indian education
4. tribal/federal relations	3. Indian health	4. tribal sovereignty	3. Indian health	5. tribal/federal relations	5. Indian health

be sovereign nations until they are self-sufficient and that the BIA is not of assistance because the agency has no qualified people to provide needed technical assistance to the tribes (for instance, specialists in raising capital and marketing).

State interest groups thought that tribal economic development will not occur until the non-Indian business community sees tribal government stability and credibility. Regardless of who the tribal leader is or how many times the leadership changes, the respondents said the private sector must be assured that its contracts will not be arbitrarily terminated or renegotiated every time tribal government changes.

Speaking of federal Indian programs (see tables 3 and 4), congressional respondents felt Congress gave lip service to economic development of the tribes while actually funding social service programs. They said any new economic development initiatives are coming from the tribes and not from the federal government. Indian group respondents stated that many public officials say tribal economic development programs are "the answer" to the "Indian problem." These respondents said it may be part of the answer, but that the political/institutional structure of the tribes is also a significant part of the answer.

The second ranked agenda item by subgroups was tribal

Table 3. Perception of Subgroup Respondents as to the Most Important Federal Indian Programs Receiving the Most Attention, N in Parenthesis (Percentages)

Subgroup	Indian Health Programs	Tribal/Federal Relations	Economic Development Programs	Indian Education Programs	Indian Housing Programs	N
Congress	29 (4)	14 (2)	30 (4)	36 (5)	0	14
Relevant congressmen	40 (2)	0	60 (3)	40 (2)	0	5
Tribal leaders	36 (5)	0	0	7 (1)	36 (5)	14
State interest groups	14 (1)	44 (3)	0	0	0	7
Indian interest groups	0	50 (3)	33 (2)	0	0	6
Executive branch	0	50 (2)	50 (2)	0	0	4
Percentage of total responses	22 (12)	20 (10)	22 (12)	16 (8)	10 (5)	50



Table 4. Ranking of Federal Indian Programs by Individual Subgroups

Ranking by Congress (n = 14)	Ranking by Relevant Congressmen (n = 5)	Ranking by Tribal Leaders (n = 14)	Ranking by State Groups (n = 7)	Ranking by Indian Groups (n = 6)	Ranking by Executive Branch (n = 4)
1. Indian education	1. economic development	1. Indian health	1. tribal/federal relations	1. tribal/federal relations	1. economic development
2. economic development	2. Indian education	1. Indian housing	2. Indian health	2. economic development	2. tribal/federal relations
3. Indian health	2. Indian health	3. Indian education	3. economic development	3. Indian health	3. Indian health
4. tribal/federal	4. Indian housing	4. economic development	3. Indian housing	3. Indian education	3. Indian education
5. Indian housing	4. tribal/federal relations	4. tribal/federal relations	3. Indian education	3. Indian housing	3. Indian housing

sovereignty. Political interest groups ranked this item the highest. It was ranked third by all respondents. The majority of respondents said all Indian agenda items are actually subsets of the issue of sovereignty. Many respondents also mentioned that the current controversy regarding tribal sovereignty is between the various states and Indian tribes. They thought this issue would, in the final analysis, have to be resolved by Congress. It is Congress, they said, that has the power to either destroy or protect tribal sovereignty. Congressional respondents stated that the tribes are forced to constantly defend their sovereignty (for example, the power to tax, tribal law enforcement) instead of putting their energies into solving critical tribal problems such as health, education, and economic development.

State respondents spoke of the severe problems caused by having sovereign nations (Indian tribes) within a sovereign nation. They said it is the sovereignty of the states that is really at issue in the current controversy, not tribal sovereignty. State respondents called for more authority to be given to the states by the federal government so that the states may better deal with the tribes.

The third ranked agenda item of the subgroups was tribal/federal relations (see Table 4). State groups and officials and Indian groups gave this item the lowest

ranking. Many of the respondents' comments were critical of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. It was described as paternalistic, treating the tribes like retarded children. Respondents said the proper role of the BIA should be an advisory role, and not as a "keeper" to the tribes. Respondents complained that most of the BIA budget (approximately 70%) goes to BIA administration and not to fund needed Indian programs. Many respondents spoke of the primary function of BIA as "taking care of itself." Many respondents called for major reform of the agency, perhaps making it an independent board or commission with the primary function of overseeing the government's trust responsibilities to Indian tribes.

When asked about federal Indian programs, a number of respondents said no one program was receiving attention but, rather, the administration of these programs by the federal government was receiving attention. Tribal leaders believed that in the last eight years there has been little connection between tribal priorities and programs actually funded. Their contention was the BIA developed these programs with little input from the tribes. State respondents spoke of the BIA's ineffectiveness and its paternalistic attitude toward the tribes as important reasons Indian programs are not successful.

Another agenda item ranked third by the subgroups was

Indian health (see Table 4). Congressmen ranked this agenda item the highest while the executive branch did not list it at all. Essentially, the respondents said the quality of human capital is of critical importance. Improved Indian health status is essential to political and economic development. Health problems are directly related to Indian feelings of powerlessness and to the highly unstable society in which many Indians live. Congressional respondents stated in the last thirty years there had been dramatic improvements in Indian health but that Indian health status is still below national norms. They thought the lack of adequate funding for health programs in the last eight years really hurt Indian progress in this area and will have long-term consequences for Indian tribes. They said the "Gramm-Rudman mentality" exacerbated Indian health problems. In the area of drug abuse programs, these respondents said Congress throws money at the problem instead of solving it. They said Congress talks about but never institutes any new programs; therefore, the tribes are going to have to find solutions themselves.

Indian education was also ranked third by the subgroups (see Table 4). Congressional respondents and the executive branch ranked this issue the highest. Congressional respondents said the education level of American Indians is one of the biggest problems facing American

Indian tribes today. Lack of education makes it difficult for the tribes to be self-governing and economically self-sufficient. The congressmen said there is a lack of community support for education in most tribes and a lack of incentive among many Indians to get an education. The congressmen stated that generations of despair do not motivate Indians to become educated. The fourteen Oklahoma tribal leaders who participated in this study emphasized repeatedly that education and economics are one and the same issue. Without education there will be no economic development in the tribes.

Congressional respondents were concerned that federal Indian education programs are not meeting the educational needs of American Indians. They questioned how tribes could become self-sufficient if many tribal members are illiterate. They said Congress had failed to find out why some Indian education programs succeed while others fail. However, some respondents said that tribal involvement with education, culturally sensitive education programs, and the use of native languages in schools may increase the chance of success.

The interview instrument also contained a closed-ended question that asked the respondents to agree or disagree with the importance of agenda items identified as important in the Indian literature. Tables 5 and 6 show the

Table 5. Subgroup Respondents' Perception of the Most Important Issue Facing American Indians Today, Closed-Ended Question, N in Parenthesis (Percentages)

Subgroup	Indian Unemployment	Indian Health	Indian Housing	Indian Education	Tribal Sovereignty	Tribal/Federal Relations	N
Congress	79 (11)	79 (11)	50 (7)	91 (13)	51 (8)	65 (9)	14
Relevant congressmen	80 (4)	80 (4)	60 (3)	80 (4)	68 (3)	80 (4)	5
Tribal leaders	85 (12)	92 (13)	43 (6)	71 (10)	68 (9)	72 (10)	14
State interest groups	83 (6)	100 (7)	17 (1)	50 (3)	83 (6)	83 (6)	7
Indian interest groups	100 (6)	86 (5)	43 (3)	58 (3)	100 (6)	86 (5)	6
Executive branch	50 (2)	100 (4)	50 (2)	100 (4)	75 (3)	25 (1)	4
Percentage of total responses	82 (41)	88 (44)	44 (22)	76 (38)	70 (35)	70 (35)	50

Table 6. Ranking of the Most Important Issues Facing American Indian Tribes Today by Individual Subgroups, Closed-Ended Question

Ranking by Congress (n = 14)	Ranking by Relevant Congressmen (n = 5)	Ranking by Tribal Leaders (n = 14)	Ranking by State Groups (n = 7)	Ranking by Indian Groups (n = 6)	Ranking by Executive Branch (n = 4)
1. Indian education	1. Indian unemployment	1. Indian health	1. Indian health	1. tribal sovereignty	1. Indian health
2. Indian health	1. Indian health	2. Indian unemployment	2. Indian unemployment	1. Indian unemployment	1. Indian education
2. Indian unemployment	1. Indian education	3. tribal/federal relations	2. tribal sovereignty	3. Indian health	3. tribal sovereignty
4. tribal sovereignty	1. tribal/federal relations	4. Indian education	2. tribal/federal relations	3. tribal/federal relations	3. BIA
5. tribal/federal relations	5. tribal sovereignty	5. tribal sovereignty	5. Indian education	5. Indian education	5. Indian unemployment
6. Indian housing	6. Indian housing	6. BIA	6. BIA	6. BIA	5. Indian housing
7. BIA	7. BIA	7. Indian housing	7. Indian housing	7. Indian housing	7. tribal/federal relations

responses and rankings developed from the closed-ended question. The closed-ended question was used to compare agenda items identified by respondents with those in the literature (inter-item validity).

Respondents were also asked whether there had been any significant change in Indian agenda items or programs in the last four to eight years. The intent of the question was to elicit responses that might better identify both significant agenda items and influences on the agenda during this period. These questions did not identify new or different agenda items but did provide support for the contention that the open-ended question had identified the most important agenda items (see tables 7 and 8). Only 20% of the respondents thought there had been significant changes in agenda items, but 61% thought there had been significant changes in programs.

Eighteen percent of respondents thought there had been significant change seen in the implementation of the Self-Determination Act (PL 638) (Table 7). This issue relates to the agenda item of tribal sovereignty. The majority of responses in this category came from tribal leaders. Although contracting for government services by tribes began under PL 638 in the 1970s, it has become four or five times more common in the 1980s. Thirteen percent of respondents also mentioned changes in the PL 638 program. Indian group



Table 7. Perception of Respondents as to Changes in Agenda Items,  
 N in Parenthesis  
 (Percentages)

Subgroup	Changes in Tribal/Federal Relations	Backlash Against Indians Worse	No Changes in Agenda Items	Total/N
Congress	0	0	100 (14)	100/14
Relevant congressmen	0	0	100 (5)	100/5
Tribal leaders	36 (2)	0	64 (12)	100/14
State interest groups	0	18 (1)	82 (6)	100/7
Indian interest groups	14 (1)	0	86 (5)	100/6
Executive branch	75 (3)	0	25 (1)	100/4
Percentage of total responses	18 (9)	2 (1)	80 (40)	100/50

Table 8. Perception of Respondents as to Changes in Federal Indian Programs  
 N in Parenthesis  
 (Percentages)

Subgroup	Changes in Program Statute	Changes in Program Funding	Program Administration	State Influence on Programs	No Change in Programs	Total/N
Congress	0	21 (3)	29 (4)	0	50 (7)	100/14
Relevant congressmen	0	40 (2)	0	0	60 (3)	100/5
Tribal leaders	21 (3)	21 (3)	15 (2)	0	43 (6)	100/14
State interest groups	17 (1)	0	0	17 (1)	66 (5)	100/7
Indian interest groups	16 (1)	33 (2)	50 (3)	0	0	100/6
Executive branch	50 (2)	50 (2)	0	0	0	100/4
Percentage of total responses	14 (7)	24 (12)	20 (10)	2 (1)	40 (20)	100/50

respondents mentioned that the program began in the 1970s but that the tribes had not really "bought into the idea" until the 1980s. They mentioned that Congress recently amended this law, assuring the tribes more flexibility in the use of federal funds. Executive branch respondents said that when the majority of Indian programs are finally transferred to the tribes under PL 638, area BIA offices may change from primarily administering federal Indian programs to primarily overseeing federal trust responsibilities toward the tribes.

Two percent of the respondents thought backlash against Indians has worsened. State interest groups account for these responses. Respondents believed that the backlash of the "far political right" resulted in cuts in federal funding for Indian programs. The statement was also made that President Reagan made racism more acceptable during his years in office, thus eroding some of the gains Indians made in the last twenty-five years.

Indian group respondents contend that Indian programs were cut and deleted during the Reagan years as a way to balance the budget. They thought there probably was no hidden agenda when it came to Indian policy but that a two-thirds cut in funding of Indian programs in the last eight years was disastrous nevertheless.

A number of state respondents thought there had been

changes at the state level that had an impact on federal Indian programs. State group respondents contend the federal government refuses to deal with Indian problems so the states are forced to deal with them. Court challenges, most of which the tribes win, also force the states to negotiate with the tribes.

Eighty percent of the respondents thought there had been no significant change in Indian agenda items (Table 7) while only 40% thought there had been no change in Indian programs (Table 8). Many respondents thought there had been no change in agenda items because these are long-term problems (such as Indian health and education), which have not changed significantly in twenty to thirty years. Others thought that the Reagan administration had assured no progress was made in solving Indian problems as a result of his economic policies and budget cutting. They also thought Reagan was indifferent to the plight of Indians. Others thought that the BIA was responsible for little progress being made in solving Indian problems. They said the BIA's ineffectiveness and self-preservation tactics assured no progress was made in solving Indian problems.

Respondents were then asked why the specific agenda items and programs they had mentioned were the ones that were important. These questions had the potential to identify new agenda items or to give further insight into

agenda items. These questions also have the potential to identify influences on the tribal agenda. Only two responses to the question concerning why agenda items are receiving attention received a significant number of responses. Thirty-four percent of respondents thought these agenda items address fundamental issues dealing with the survival of Indian tribes. They said that if Indians do not have the basics, such as health and education, they cannot develop economically nor compete in the non-Indian world. Many congressional respondents said Congress must address human needs first. Twenty-two percent of the respondents (none of them tribal leaders) said issues are receiving attention because Indian leaders are setting the agenda. No other reason received over 16% of the responses. Some of the other reasons given for issues receiving attention were that all of these agenda items are subsets of the issue of tribal sovereignty. Others said the federal government decides which agenda items get attention.

The responses to the question concerning why particular programs are currently receiving attention did not solicit any useful information. Fifty percent could not or did not respond to this question. Only one answer received a substantial number of responses. Twenty-two percent said it was tribal leaders who caused these programs to receive

attention. All responses in this category came from congressmen, congressional staff members, and relevant congressmen.

Respondents were also asked to identify future agenda items. The intent of this question was to provide information concerning new agenda items or changes in existing agenda items. Responses to this question might also assist in identifying new areas for research. Six future agenda items were identified but only two were "new" agenda items, state/tribal relations (37%) and the quality of tribal government (12%). The only respondents not identifying state/tribal relations as a future issue were from the executive branch (see Table 9).

Both tribal leaders and Indian group respondents said there will be a general improvement in state/tribal relations in the next three to five years. They thought there would be more and more out-of-court settlements between the states and tribes and more negotiations on water, fishing, child welfare, and taxing. They said the impetus for this may be because many states perceive Indian tribes as being successful in the federal courts and in Congress in getting what they want. The number of jurisdictional conflicts between states and tribes will increase with more and more states testing tribal sovereignty. However, some respondents thought less conflict would result

Table 9. Identification of Future Agenda Items by Subgroup Respondents  
(Percentages)

Subgroup Respondents	State/ Tribal Relations	Tribal Government	Bush Agenda	Tribal Economic Deve- lopment	Tribal Sovereignty	Tribal/ Federal Government Relations	Total/ N
Congress	39	0	32	11	11	7	100/14
Relevant Congressmen	20	40	0	20	20	0	100/5
Tribal leaders	45	10	10	18	10	7	100/14
State interest groups	33	9	0	8	25	25	100/7
Indian interest groups	50	0	7	21	8	14	100/6
Executive branch	0	50	0	25	25	0	100/4
Percentage of total responses	37	12	13	16	14	8	100/50

if the Western Governors Association and the individual states work "government to government" with the tribes.

Some tribal leaders feared that in the next ten years the states may dominate the area of Indian policy as the federal government continues to abdicate its responsibilities. For instance, the tribes feared they might have to follow state laws on gaming if the United States Congress passed legislation putting Indian gaming under state regulation. Indian group respondents see a major change in the 1990s in the definition of federal trust responsibilities. Instead of a direct role in tribal affairs, the federal government would merely protect tribes against encroachment by the states and evaluate and enforce tribal agreements with the states and private industry. Congressional respondents think it possible that the controversy between tribal and state governments will grow, especially in the areas of gaming, water, environmental pollution, and law enforcement. The tribes' growing sophistication and activism will assure more controversy.

State respondents said the states are having increasingly serious problems providing services to Indians. Problems providing services to urban Indians are also growing in severity. Urban Indians have a lot of health and social needs and these are not being addressed by anyone. State groups think Indian case law will continue



to develop, drawing clear jurisdictional lines between states and tribes. However, there is doubt as to whether these clearer lines of jurisdiction will better state/tribal relations or worsen them.

Relevant congressmen (40%) and executive branch respondents (50%) thought the quality of tribal government would be a future agenda item (see Table 9). Congressional respondents believe the tribes must better demonstrate their ability to run economic enterprises and government programs. They must also be more financially accountable. They said most tribal governments have no government system of checks and balances. Most tribes must rely on the ethics and abilities of their individual leaders. For instance, they said the Navajos have no constitution and no formal government and that some of the problems the Navajos currently have with leader corruption may be a result of this. Tribal leaders said the lack of ethics and corruption of tribal officials will continue to grow in importance as an agenda item. Indian group respondents foresee Indian leaders becoming economic and community leaders. However, tribal factionalism remains a serious barrier to Indian political power.

Executive branch respondents want the federal government to assist in building the capacity of the tribes to govern. They mentioned the BIA plans to develop an

action plan for each tribe in which experts will be brought in to train tribal members to administer the government programs for which a tribe contracts with the government (under PL 638).

#### Influences on the Agenda

The researcher examined all responses to the open-ended questions to identify the respondents' perceptions as to who influenced the tribal agenda. Explicit references to influences on the agenda were counted. All respondents made explicit references to agenda influences so there was no need to develop a substitute measure for agenda influence (see Tables 10 and 11).

The Influence of the Federal Courts: The federal courts were mentioned as the single most important influence on the agenda, with Congress and relevant congressmen ranking the courts the highest. Congressional respondents said that the courts have been the historical protector of Indian rights. The United States Supreme Court has helped shape the federal laws defining Indian rights and sovereignty, but the United States Constitution gives Congress plenary authority over the tribes. According to respondents, the plenary authority of Congress over Indians has only been overturned by the courts four or five times since 1832. Congressional respondents stated the courts do set the agenda but only

Table 10. Author's Analysis of Subgroup Respondents' Hypothesized Influences on the Agenda, N in Parenthesis (Percentages)

Subgroup Respondents	Congress men	Relevant Congressmen	Executive Branch	President	Political Appointees	BIA	Federal Judiciary	Tribal Leaders	Interest Groups	Total
Congress (14)	19	17	0	0	0	6	25	22	11	100
Relevant congressmen (5)	23	15	0	0	0	0	31	23	8	100
Tribal leaders (14)	23	16	0	0	6	6	16	7	26	100
State interest groups (7)	20	30	5	0	0	0	30	10	5	100
Indian interest groups (6)	8	27	27	4	0	0	23	8	3	100
Executive branch (4)	7	29	29	0	21	0	7	0	7	100
Percentage of total responses (50)	19	16	3	1	4	5	25	14	13	100

Table 11. Ranking of Influences on the Indian Agenda by Subgroups and All Respondents

Ranking by Congress (n = 14)	Ranking by Relevant Congressmen (n = 5)	Ranking by Tribal Leaders (n = 14)	Ranking by State Interest Groups (n = 7)	Ranking by Indian Interest Groups (n = 6)	Ranking by Executive Branch (n = 4)	Combined Subgroup Ranking*
1. federal courts	1. federal courts	1. interest groups	1. relevant congressmen	1. relevant congressmen	1. relevant congressmen	1. federal courts
2. tribal leaders	2. Congress	2. Congress	1. federal courts	1. executive branch	2. executive branch	2. relevant congressmen
3. Congress	2. tribal leaders	3. relevant congressmen	3. Congress	3. courts	3. political appointees	3. Congress
4. relevant congressmen	4. relevant congressmen	3. federal courts	4. tribal leaders	4. Congress	4. Congress	4. tribal leaders
5. interest groups	5. interest groups	5. tribal leaders	5. interest groups	4. tribal leaders	4. federal courts	5. interest groups

Table 11 (continued).

Ranking by Congress (n = 14)	Ranking by Relevant Congressmen (n = 5)	Ranking by Tribal Leaders (n = 14)	Ranking by State Interest Groups (n = 7)	Ranking by Indian Interest Groups (n = 6)	Ranking by Executive Branch (n = 4)	Combined Subgroup Ranking*
6. BIA	6. BIA	6. political appointees	5. executive branch	6. president	4. interest groups	5. executive branch
7. president	6. political appointees	6. BIA	7. president	7. interest groups	7. president	7. BIA
7. executive branch	6. president	7. political appointees	7. political appointees	8. political appointees	7. BIA	7. president
7. political appointees	6. executive branch	7. executive branch	7. BIA	8. BIA	7. tribal leaders	9. political appointees

NOTE: The combined subgroup ranking is the sum of subgroup rankings. The influence with the lowest summed rank is number one, and so on.

when the executive and legislative branches fail to act.

Tribal leader respondents said the United States Supreme Court decisions involving Indian policies are very narrow (specific to one tribe) and have little general applicability. Also, they said Indian tribes do not usually "win" cases because the tribes are most often defendants, not plaintiffs.

Tribal leaders and Indian political interest group respondents said that the majority of court cases involving the tribes deal with the issue of tribal sovereignty. However, they contend that the general issue of tribal sovereignty will be resolved by Congress and not by the courts. They contend that only Congress has the constitutional power to destroy sovereignty. They make a further point that even if the tribes do win in court, Congress will often react to the court's decision. For example, the courts' decisions in favor of Indian gaming led to Congress passing legislation authorizing a National Indian Gaming Commission. Congress reacted to the demands of the states, which had lost to the tribes in a number of federal court cases involving Indian gaming. Congress' reaction, therefore, was a defeat for the tribes. According to tribal respondents, there has been a shift in the 1980s in tribal agenda-setting away from the courts to Congress. One of their contentions is that the United States Supreme Court

is becoming more conservative (as a result of Reagan appointees) and this may result in fewer judicial decisions in favor of the tribes. This would then force the tribes to rely more on Congress to resolve Indian policy issues. According to tribal leaders, the United States Congress has always found it easier to deal with non-controversial issues, like social services for Indians, leaving the controversial issues to the courts.

Respondents representing state organizations believe the courts tend to make piecemeal decisions affecting one or a few tribes and do not set general Indian policies. However, state respondents thought that the courts do influence Congress. They said these court decisions get Congress' attention and sometimes force Congress to take action. They also said that when the courts do force Congress to act its actions are not always in favor of the tribes. The state respondents also said Congress tends to refuse to deal with controversial Indian policy issues. These respondents said that congressmen think it is political suicide to be "anti-Indian"; therefore, they avoid controversial issues, which might force them to vote against the tribes. Instead, Congress likes to let the courts handle the tough issues.

It is clear that the majority of study respondents think the federal courts are the single most important

influence on the agenda. However, in order to fully analyze the influence of the courts on this area of policy, the type and number of Indian related cases filed and acted upon from 1984-88 was studied. Court records show 496 tribal related cases were considered during this period.

Table 12 shows a breakdown of those cases by subject. The source of these data were federal court dockets from 1984-88. All cases involving Indian tribes were counted. Such a breakdown of cases, however, does not speak to the significance of these 496 cases nor whether these cases were decided in favor of Indian tribes or against them. As a method of identifying "significant" cases, the Native American Rights Fund (NARF), identified by respondents as the premier legal group for Indian tribes, was contacted and asked how best to identify significant tribal cases. The director of NARF suggested the use of the NARF Legal Review as a method of identifying cases NARF thought were significant during this time period. The NARF Legal Review reviews those cases NARF considers to be significant for American Indian tribes. NARF identified seventy-nine cases during the period 1984-88, which it considered to be significant to all Indian tribes.

Table 13 breaks down these cases by subject. Of the seventy-nine cases NARF judged to be significant (16% of the total cases involving Indian tribes), fifty-one cases



Table 12. Subject of Federal Court Cases Involving Indian Agenda Items, 1984-88

Subject of Cases	Percentage
1. Tribal/federal government relations (agenda items involving the federal government's trust responsibilities)	4
2. Economic development of tribes	3
3. Indian civil rights	8
4. State/tribal jurisdiction	10
5. Tribal government	23
6. Tribal sovereignty	
a. Tribal identity	6
b. Sovereignty, in general	13
c. Tribal water rights	13
d. Natural resources	4
e. Tribal lands	14
f. Indian reservations	2
Total	100

Table 13. Federal Court Cases Identified by Native American Rights Fund  
As Significant to Indian Tribes, 1984-88

Subject of Cases	Percentage
1. Tribal/federal government relations	5
2. Indian civil rights	11
3. Economic development	1
4. Tribal sovereignty	
a. Tribal water rights	23
b. Tribal lands	23
c. Tribal taxing	8
d. Tribal jurisdiction	13
e. Legal status of tribes	7
f. Natural resources	9
Total	100

were decided in favor of Indian tribes (65% success rate with "significant" cases). These data seem to confirm the perceptions of many respondents; that is, most court cases involving Indian tribes (only 16% according to NARF) do not have widespread application although the cases may be quite significant to the specific tribes involved.

According to experts in Indian law (Wilkinson, 1985) the United States Supreme Court has been very active in the field of Indian law during the last thirty years. Since 1959, the Court has rendered seventy-five opinions in this field, more than in the fields of securities or antitrust law. However, to put this information into perspective, it would be helpful to be able to compare the success rate of Indian tribes in the federal courts with other minority political groups (for example, hispanics and afro-americans). Unfortunately, both a literature search and inquiries to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Urban League, the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Education Fund, the Mexican-American Chamber of Commerce, and the Law Librarian at Southern Methodist University identified no sources for such data.

A review of the United States Supreme Court cases from 1984-88 identified five cases involving afro-americans, two cases involving hispanics, and seven cases involving racial minorities in general. During this same time period, the

Court heard fifteen cases involving Indian tribes. Afro-americans had an 80% success rate (decisions made in their favor); hispanics a 50% success rate; and Indian tribes a 38% success rate. While such a comparison makes interesting reading, it is very likely that it is meaningless. Firstly, there is no way to judge whether the afro-american and hispanic cases were significant to these groups without further research. Secondly, one cannot compare the relationship of the tribes with the federal courts and the relationship of other minority political groups with the federal courts. Deana Waters, Law Librarian of the Native American Rights Fund (December 19, 1989) confirmed this assertion. She said that every area of tribal life is dictated by federal law while this is not the case for any other minority groups. Indian tribes are a "political group," not just an ethnic group, because of their sovereignty. She said that cases involving Indian tribes are more political in nature and that the types and number of cases are very different from those involving other minority groups. Ms. Waters' opinion was that, overall, Indian tribes have a bad rate of resolution (as little as 25%), and that the present trend may be toward even less successful resolution of cases.

The Supreme Court decisions of the 1980s indicate the Court may be doing away with many of the principles that

protected the rights of Indian tribes during the last two centuries (Indian Law Resource Center, 1982). There is a trend toward upholding state powers at the expense of Indian governments and enhancing the "almost limitless" power of the federal government over Indians (Indian Law Resource Center, 1982). The new status of Indian tribal governments seems to be that of a "federal municipality" with only those powers the federal government deigns to hand out (1982, p. 74). This is called the "hand-out" theory of Indian sovereignty, that is, Indian sovereignty exists only by the grace of Congress. Other authorities in the area of Indian law express concern about the direction the federal courts are taking in Indian law in the 1980s (Berkey, 1982). For example, the United States Supreme Court, in the 1980s, has repeatedly affirmed the power of Congress to eradicate the sovereignty of Indian tribes.

Berkey (p. 77) cites six opinions that show the "precarious nature of Indian sovereignty":

1) "Indian tribes are proscribed from exercising . . . those powers of autonomous states that are expressly terminated by Congress" (Oliphant v. Suquamish Indian Tribe, 435 U.S. 191, 208, 1978).

2) "Congress has plenary authority to limit, modify or eliminate powers of local self-government" (Santa Clara Pueblo v. Martinez, 436 U.S. 49, 56, 1978).

3) "Indian sovereignty exists only at the sufferance of Congress and is subject to complete defeasance" (United States v. Wheeler, 435 U.S. 313, 323, 1978).

4) "[T]he power to tax . . . is a fundamental attribute of sovereignty which the tribes retain unless divested of it by federal law" (Washington v. Confederated Tribes of the Colville Indian Reservation, 447 U.S. 134, 152, 1980).

5) "Indian tribes have lost many attributes of sovereignty through specific . . . statutes . . . " (Montana v. The United States, 450 U.S. 544, 1981).

6) " . . . the tribes' authority to tax nonmembers is subject to constraints not imposed on other governmental entities: the federal government can take away this power" (Merrion v. Jicarilla Apache Tribe, 450 U.S. 544, 1981).

Berkey contends sovereignty that can be abolished at the will of another government is largely meaningless. In the last four years the Court has said that

1) Indian governments retain only those powers not expressly taken away by Congress;

2) Indian tribes are "quasi-sovereign," subordinate to the sovereignty of the United States;

3) Indian governments are implicitly divested of any powers which conflict with the interests of the United States;

4) Indian governments have only those powers necessary to protect tribal self-government or control internal relations.

The Influence of Congress: Congress and relevant congressmen were ranked the second and third most important influences on the tribal agenda. Congressional respondents contend that the United States Constitution gives Congress plenary authority over Indian tribes and that the federal courts have historically upheld Congress' authority. These respondents further contend that the courts and Congress are equally influential in setting the tribal agenda. Congress and the courts share power in this area of policy. Congressional respondents said that few congressmen actively participate in this policy area, and that most congressmen are uninformed on tribal issues. They report that the attitudes of many congressmen seem to be that there is no prestige attached to this policy area. A few congressmen may become involved temporarily when their constituencies are interested in a specific Indian issue, but only a very few congressmen actively and continuously participate in this policy area (such as Representative Yates, Representative Udall, and Senator Inouye). The congressional respondents stated that they found it important to note that most of the relevant congressmen in this policy area have no Indian constituencies themselves.

Rather, the respondents think this is a relatively rare area of policy where they participate because of moral commitment.

Tribal leaders stated that Congress is the biggest influence on the agenda because the issue of tribal sovereignty can only be resolved by Congress, not by the courts. They contend that all Indian agenda items actually involve the issue of tribal sovereignty. They thought that of the two chambers, the Senate has the most influence on Indian policies, especially the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs. The Senate Select Committee, according to these respondents, actually sets the tribal agenda and the tribes simply react to it.

State respondents thought that if the present United States Supreme Court continues to fail to develop clear jurisdictional lines between the states and the tribes, the states will go to Congress and demand it constrain tribal sovereignty, especially in the areas of tribal taxing and law enforcement.

Executive branch respondents thought it was interesting that the congressmen most interested in Indian policy are not from "Indian Country." They said it was congressmen like Representative Yates, Senator Cohen, and Senator Inouye who have kept Indian interests alive. They thought Senator Inouye and Representative Yates are the most



influential congressmen, but that these two tend to tinker with individual programs rather than developing overall Indian policies.

In order to fully analyze the influence of the Congress on this area of policy, one must look at the type and number of bills introduced and acted upon by the 99th and 100th Congresses (1984-88). In the 99th and 100th Congresses (1984-88), 302 bills were introduced in the area of Indian policy (see Table 14 for a breakdown of these bills by subject and status). Of the 302 bills introduced, 110 bills received a hearing and of the 110 bills receiving a hearing, sixty-eight passed. Twenty-three percent of all bills introduced in the area of Indian policy passed Congress. This is a very good resolution rate compared to that of Congress overall. Only 5% of all bills introduced in the 99th and 100th Congresses passed (Statistical Abstracts, 1989). Cindy Darcy, of the Friends Committee on National Legislation (December 19, 1989) said that Indian tribes probably do have a reasonably good rate of resolution in Congress, although many of the Indian bills have little widespread significance. She said eighty bills involving Indian tribes were introduced during this last congressional session and of these five passed (6% resolution rate). These bills were similar to court cases decided in this same time period in that a large majority

Table 14. The subject of Legislation Involving Indian Agenda Items Considered by the 99th and 100th Congresses (Percentage)

Status of Bills	40	12	12	8	8	7	4	3	3	2	1
	Sovereignty Issues	Indian Education	Economic development	Federal Trust Re-sponsibility	Tribal Government	Indian Health	Civil Rights	Indian Housing	Private Bills	Art	Transportation
Introduced, no action	40	12	12	8	8	7	4	3	3	2	1
Introduced, hearings held	45	7	10	7	13	8	3	4	0	2	1
Passed by Congress	49	13	7	5	10	7	0	6	0	2	1

of the bills dealt with individual tribes and had no broad or significant policy implications for all Indian tribes.

The Native American Rights Fund, evaluating the 99th Congress (1984-86), stated that the 99th Congress enacted no major Indian legislation and showed no significant changes in federal Indian policy. NARF identified two bills that it thought were important to all tribes and both of these were defeated. These "failures" were seen as victories for Indian tribes, who opposed both of them: 1) Amendments to the 1971 Alaska Native Claims Act, which would have had Alaska Natives give up their sovereignty in order to bail them out of financial hardships; and 2) the California/Nevada Water Compact, which would have divided water between the two states without participation of the federal government or Indian tribes (both of whom have claims to this water). NARF identified one other important piece of legislation in this Congress, which was supported by Indian tribes and was signed into law. This was the Omnibus Drug Act, the goal of which was to fight alcohol and drug abuse among Indians. NARF stated that with the exception of these three bills all other legislation that passed was only significant to specific tribes. In NARF's opinion, the actions of the 99th Congress had few broad policy implications to Indian tribes.

The Friends Committee on National Legislation (Indian

Report, Sp. 1988) evaluated the 100th Congress (1987-88) and concluded that the first session of this Congress passed only a handful of bills involving Indian agenda items. Most of these bills related to specific tribes and had no broad policy implications. The Friends Committee identified five pieces of legislation, considered in the second session of the 100th Congress, which had broad policy implications for all Indian tribes (three passed, two failed):

1) American Indian Finance Development Corporation Act. This act created a government chartered institution to provide economic development assistance to tribes in the forms of loans and loan guarantees. The bill passed Congress, but President Reagan vetoed it. He said it would create an expensive, unnecessary, redundant bureaucracy and would duplicate existing programs. Senator Inouye immediately reintroduced the bill in the 101st Congress.

2) Indian Child Welfare Act Amendments. The 1978 act established standards for the removal of Indian children from their families for placement with adoptive or foster families. It affirmed the role of the tribe as the primary authority over Indian children. The amendments would define "family" according to tribal custom (kinship groups); broaden the number of children covered; and reaffirm tribal jurisdiction. This bill failed to pass and

was reintroduced in the 101st Congress.

3) Indian Health Care Amendments of 1988. It took six years to get this legislation, which reauthorized Indian health care services, through the United States Congress. The Reagan administration had vetoed the bill previously and threatened to do so again, but finally signed it. The purpose of the bill is to raise the health status of American Indians to parity with that of the general United States population.

4) Indian Gaming Regulatory Act. This act provides regulations for the management of gaming enterprises on Indian lands. The bill sets up a National Indian Gaming Commission. It passed Congress and was signed into law. Generally, the tribes opposed gaming regulation, but they compromised to head off a battle with the states, which they thought they might not win.

5) Amendments to the Indian Self-Determination Act. PL 638 essentially allowed the tribes more flexibility in contracting for government services and reduced required paperwork. The amendments provided for more direct funding to tribes and less involvement of BIA area offices. This bill passed and was signed into law.

Seven bills out of the 302 bills involving Indians that were introduced were considered significant (2%) by these two Indian interest groups. Of the sixty-eight bills

passed, only five bills were judged by these groups to be significant (7%). A review of bills introduced and passed in these two Congresses that involved other minority groups (afro-americans and hispanics) showed similar characteristics to much of the Indian legislation in that many of the bills were of little significance ("Dennis Chavez Day," "National Historically Black Colleges Week"). Only nine bills passed in these two Congresses directly involved afro-americans while seven involved hispanics. Twelve more bills were passed that involved civil rights and/or services to the poor, which might logically be of interest to these two minority groups (44% of afro-americans live below the poverty level and 38% of hispanics live below the poverty level). Just as in the earlier discussion of the federal courts, one can see that Indian tribes are of a significantly different status in Congress than are other minority groups. No other group has a federal agency whose only mission is to develop and implement Indian programs (the BIA) and no other group has a congressional committee that handles only its agenda items (the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs). Because of their unique legal status (the federal trust responsibility) it is probable that Indian tribes will continue to have more bills introduced in Congress than will other minority groups and that more of their bills will pass.

The Influence of Tribal Leaders: Fourteen percent of the respondents identified tribal leaders as important influences on the tribal agenda (see Table 10). State group respondents thought that one of the tribes' biggest problems in setting the tribal agenda is that tribal leaders tend to react to Indian policies developed by others rather than initiating or formulating policies of their own. State respondents recommended the tribes form inter-tribal interest groups to help develop and lobby for a tribal agenda.

Executive branch respondents said the federal government sets the tribal agenda, instead of tribal leaders, because the tribes speak with 300 different voices. They said this factionalism defeats the tribes politically. Congressional respondents spoke of the trend toward creating inter-tribal or regional-tribal councils. However, they thought the councils were, at this point in time, ineffective because the councils seem unable to agree on policy positions. As a result of this factionalism, Congress has great difficulty in getting the inter-tribal groups to testify. Other congressional respondents said Congress tends to listen to tribal leaders when line items in appropriation bills are being considered but not to listen when developing general Indian policies.

The tribal leaders, themselves, said they merely react

to the agenda set by Congress. They thought they would only be able to influence the agenda when tribal leaders began to work together. The trend in the last couple of years, they said, was to form temporary coalitions to work on specific issues but to refuse to work together on a continuing basis. Many tribal leaders discussed the continuing problem of factionalism within and among tribes. One respondent said afro-americans have an advantage Indians do not in that afro-americans have no tribal affiliation. An Indian is not just an "Indian" but rather a Chickasaw or a Kiowa, and this encourages factionalism. Other tribal leaders emphasized that the tribes are not organized politically; consequently, they cannot deliver the vote. If a tribe cannot deliver the vote it cannot influence Congress.

Executive branch respondents thought Indian political interest groups were controlled by professional staff members, and not by tribal leaders. They said these organizations do not seem to want tribal leaders to play an important role in their organizations. A number of state respondents specifically criticized the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI). They said the director was very difficult to work with and that the NCAI had very little influence in "Indian Country." They said the NCAI staff seems to spend most of its time seeking grants for



consulting work for themselves. On the other hand, many respondents praised the Native American Rights Fund (NARF) saying that NARF was one of the most effective and professional groups representing Indian tribes.

Congressional respondents spoke of the "Balkanization" of Indian interest groups. That is, there are no general tribal interest groups, but rather a number of very specialized groups (education, minerals, health). These respondents also said the NCAI was the most ineffective Indian interest group. One respondent said the NCAI always seemed to be working on something like an Indian museum instead of economic development of the tribes.

The Influence of State and Local Groups: Interest groups were ranked the fifth most important influence on the tribal agenda (see Table 10). The non-Indian political interest groups that participated in this study all represented state and local government groups (such as the Western Governors Association). Other non-Indian groups were sometimes mentioned by respondents but were never referred to as having a significant impact on Indian policy. The executive branch respondents stated there were "two or three cells of folks out there" (for instance, in the States of Washington and Michigan) who oppose Indian interests but that these groups have little, if any, influence in Congress. Congressional respondents stated

that special interests and the states with special economic interests are beginning to bring more pressure on Congress regarding Indian policy matters. However, they said the trend is still increased lobbying on Indian issues by state and local government groups and not by anti-Indian groups or economic interests.

Respondents said that interest groups that could be described as "anti-Indian" are issue specific and/or region specific. They are usually temporary coalitions that form around particular issues. For instance, mining and timber interests opposed Indian religious freedom proposals because these proposals might cut off access to minerals and timber on certain federal lands. Congressional respondents said most of these anti-Indian groups react rather than influence the tribal agenda and have little credibility in Washington.

Influence of the Executive Branch: The executive branch, as a whole, was ranked by respondents as the fifth most important influence on the agenda while the BIA, president, and political appointees were ranked the ninth most important influences. Tribal leaders and Indian interest group respondents thought that in the last twenty years the role of the federal government in Indian affairs had changed. They said the government had gradually taken on more of a regulatory role and less of a service role

toward the tribes. Because many BIA jobs are closely tied to social service programs, respondents thought many BIA staff opposed this change in role. Tribal leaders thought the BIA, as it is now constituted, had outlived its usefulness.

According to tribal leaders, Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs Ross Swimmer had a significant impact on the Indian policy agenda during his time in office. However, they noted that his tactics tended to intimidate the BIA bureaucracy. As a result, BIA staff seemed to do everything they could to defeat his goals and programs.

Some respondents contended that President Reagan was anti-Indian. His long-range goal, they said, was to terminate tribes by reducing Indian program funding and getting rid of programs that benefited the tribes. Other respondents said his actions were budget driven and that, in fact, Reagan had no Indian agenda. Most respondents thought there was great potential for a president to influence Indian policy, but that this potential was never realized by President Reagan.

State group respondents said the BIA is not respected by the states. They described the BIA as ineffectual and paternalistic toward the tribes. A number of respondents said the actions of the BIA had come under fire the last

two years and that increasing controversy surrounds the agency. State respondents said President Reagan's attitude toward Indians could be described as "studied indifference." A sign of this, they said, was that the president consistently refused to meet with state and local governments during his eight years in office to talk about the growing controversy between the states and tribes.

Congressional respondents thought the executive branch during the Reagan years had no Indian policy. They said that if a president is to have influence in this policy field he must put Indian policy on his agenda early in his administration. They said President Nixon was the last president to have put Indian policy on his presidential agenda and to take any significant action in this policy field.

It is very difficult to find a measure, such as court dockets or congressional legislative agendas, by which to judge the agenda of the executive branch. The political science literature mentions using political party platforms and presidential State of the Union messages as measures of an executive branch agenda. Reviewing the party platforms of the Republican and Democratic parties in 1984 and 1988 showed no mention of Indian tribes in either party's platforms. President Reagan's State of the Union messages during this same time period show no mention of Indian

tribes.

It may be impossible to ascertain President Reagan's intentions toward Indian tribes during his time in office. However, one can look at the results of his policies and judge that they had an adverse effect on Indian tribes and federal Indian programs. Federal Indian programs were cut by \$500 million in 1982 alone (2.5% of all cuts in the federal budget). This means Indian tribes experienced budget cuts ten times greater than non-Indians (Josephy, 1982). The tribes were also severely affected by the elimination or reduction in funding for the EDA, Community Services Administration, Legal Services Corporation, Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), Medicaid, food stamps, AFDC, and Head Start. As a result, Indian unemployment rose from an average of 35% to 85% by 1982 (Josephy, 1982).

Influence of Public Opinion: No respondent thought public opinion had an influence on the tribal agenda. The Indian literature also did not mention public opinion as influencing the tribal agenda. Even though it was not mentioned as an agenda influence, an analysis was done to ascertain whether the media and/or opinion polls might have a potential influence in this policy area. The Gallup Poll Index (1984-88) did not mention Indian tribes or tribal agenda items. The Readers Guide to Periodicals (1984-88)

listed 212 articles dealing with American Indians. Table 15 breaks out these 212 articles by subject.

In conclusion, an analysis of the interview data identified the five most important tribal agenda items: tribal economic development, tribal sovereignty, tribal/federal relations, Indian health, and Indian education. A comparison of the issues identified by study respondents with issues identified in the literature showed no significant differences. This gives support to the contention that this study has identified the primary tribal agenda items.

The majority of respondents saw no significant changes in these agenda items over the last four to eight years. The two major reasons given for the lack of change was that the problems are endemic and, therefore, hard to solve; and, that the Reagan administration's budget policies and lack of interest in Indian policies assured no progress was made toward solving tribal problems.

Respondents identified six future agenda items, two of which are agenda items not mentioned in the Indian literature. State/tribal relations are growing in importance as an agenda item primarily as a result of the tribes asserting their sovereignty. A related future agenda item is the quality of tribal government. If tribes are to successfully assert their sovereignty, tribal government

Table 15. Subject of Readers Guide to Periodicals Articles  
Dealing with American Indian Tribes, 1984-88

Subject of Articles	Percentage
1. Indian education	4
2. Indian health	2
3. Tribal economic development	11
4. Tribal government	11
5. Tribal sovereignty	26
6. Indian civil rights	7
7. Indian art and culture	29
8. Indian children	1
9. Indian housing	2
10. Indian utilities	1
11. Indian wars	2
12. Indian women	3
13. Indian voting	1
Total	100

must be able to govern effectively and deal effectively with the non-Indian society.

Respondents identified the single most important influence on the tribal agenda as the federal courts. The second most influential actor was the United States Congress. The executive branch was not thought to have a significant influence on the Indian agenda, nor was public opinion thought to be a significant influence. Tribal leaders and political interest groups were thought to have much more influence on the agenda than the executive branch or individual actors in this branch of government.

The analyses of data in this chapter identified the tribal agenda and significant influences on it. Using these analyses as a base, the following chapter will test the relationships posited in the three hypotheses.



## CHAPTER V

### STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The analysis of the interview data, included in Chapter IV, forms a context in which to place the statistical analysis and provides supporting evidence that can be used to test the hypotheses. Both of these chapters, taken together, allow a number of conclusions to be drawn concerning the three hypotheses to be tested.

Two major challenges arose in carrying out the statistical analysis for this study. There is the general problem of statistical analysis of open-ended interview responses. Compounding this problem is that of interviewing a small number of political elites ( $n = 50$ ). The second challenge was to put the data from the primary source (interview data) and the secondary sources (federal court dockets, bills considered by Congress, and public opinion as measured by the Reader's Guide to Periodicals) in a common format that would allow statistical testing. As mentioned in the chapter on research design, a non-parametric test was found to be most appropriate for the small size of this sample. After trying a number of non-parametric tests (contingency coefficient, Spearman's rho, phi coefficient, and Kendall's tau) Kendall's W was chosen

as the most appropriate test. Essentially it allows testing with a small "N" and it allows one to measure the association among sets of rankings of agenda items. Even though the most appropriate test may have been chosen, it was a continuing challenge to attempt to put the agenda items generated by interview data, congressional decisions, court decisions, and public opinion into a common format that could then be tested. One concern was that the response coding used by the different primary and secondary sources was not comparable and could not be made to be comparable. For instance, interview respondents ranked items most important, more important, and important, while bills considered by Congress could have been ranked introduced, hearings held, and bills passed. Even if these two sets of coding were judged to be comparable, the data for the federal courts and public opinion could not be coded in a similar manner. Therefore, the decision was made to rank agenda items by number of times mentioned as important by respondents, number of bills considered by Congress, number of court cases introduced, and number of references in the Reader's Guide to Periodicals to American Indian tribes.

Another concern was that the subgroups, as a result of using the snowball sampling technique, contained different numbers of respondents. In order to weigh each subgroup equally, agenda items were ranked by subgroups instead of

percentage of subgroup responses or percentages of all responses.

An additional concern was that the agendas of the primary and secondary sources had somewhat different items and different numbers of agenda items. The Kendall W test cannot be used with missing data, so developing a common agenda item list that included missing data was not an option. The problem was how to handle "outliers," that is, agenda items that were unique to one source. There were essentially seven common agenda items all ranked within the top ten positions for every source. The best solution was to rank the seven common agenda items plus an agenda item identified as "other." This technique allowed a common agenda ranking to be developed for all sources, allowed the Kendall W test to be used, and did not significantly distort the agenda of any one source.

Rankings were used instead of original data (developed from number of interview responses, number of bills by subject, number of court cases by subject, and number of news stories by subject involving Indian tribes) so that each source would have equal weight. Table 16 shows the rankings of agenda items by all sources for which associations will be tested. The item ranked number one is the highest ranking agenda item and eight the lowest.

Three hypotheses were tested using the data for

Table 16. Agenda Item Rankings by Primary and Secondary Sources

	Eco- nomic Devel- op- ment	Indian Health	Indian Educa- tion	Tribal Sover- eighty	Tri- bal/ Fed- eral Rela- tions	State/ Tri- bal Rela- tions	Tri- bal Gov- ern- ment	Other Agenda Item
Congressmen (subgroup)	1.5	1.5	3.0	4.5	4.5	6.0	7.5	7.5
Relevant congressmen (subgroup)	1.0	2.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	7.0	3.0	3.0
Tribal leaders (subgroup)	1.0	2.0	3.0	4.5	4.5	6.0	6.0	6.0
State interest groups (subgroup)	2.0	3.0	3.0	1.5	3.0	1.5	7.0	7.0
Indian interest groups (subgroup)	2.0	2.0	2.0	1.0	5.0	6.0	7.0	8.0
Executive branch (subgroup)	1.5	1.5	3.0	3.0	6.0	3.0	8.0	7.0
Federal courts (1984-88)	6.0	7.0	7.0	1.0	5.0	3.0	2.0	4.0
Public opinion (1984-88)	3.5	6.0	5.0	2.0	7.0	7.0	3.5	1.0
United States Congress (99th and 100th)	4.0	5.0	3.0	1.0	6.0	8.0	2.0	7.0

NOTES: An eight-point scale is used, with one the highest ranking agenda item and eight the lowest. Rankings developed by number of interview responses, bills by topic, court cases by topic, and news stories by topic involving American Indian tribes. The "other"

analysis just described. They were:

H<sub>1</sub>: American Indian tribes use the outside initiative model to place agenda items on the formal agenda.

H<sub>2</sub>: American Indian tribes use a closed policy subsystem to place agenda items on the formal agenda.

H<sub>3</sub>: The agenda items of American Indian tribes will fail to be placed on the formal agenda.

The descriptive data analyzed in Chapter IV applicable to each hypothesis were also used to support the statistical analysis.

#### Hypothesis One

H<sub>1</sub>: American Indian tribes use the outside initiative model to place agenda items on the formal agenda.

H<sub>1.1</sub>: Agenda items arise in non-government groups.

H<sub>1.2</sub>: Agenda items then move onto the public or systemic agenda.

H<sub>1.3</sub>: Agenda items then move onto the formal agenda through the pressure of public opinion.

If sub-hypotheses H<sub>1.1</sub> and H<sub>1.2</sub> are not to be rejected, there should be a significant association between the agendas of nongovernment groups (in this study tribal leaders, Indian interest groups, and state interest groups) and the public--or systemic--agenda (number of mentions of items involving Indian tribes in the Reader's Guide to Periodicals). Table 17 shows the agenda item rankings to

Table 17. Agenda Item Ranking by Nongovernment Groups, Public Opinion, Federal Courts, and United States Congress

	Eco- nomic Devel- op- ment	Indian Health	Indian Educa- tion	Tribal Sover- eignty	Tri- bal/ Fed- eral Rela- tions	State/ Tri- bal Rela- tions	Tri- bal Gov- ern- ment	Other Agenda Item
Tribal leaders	1.0	2.0	3.0	4.5	4.5	6.0	6.0	6.0
State interest groups	2.0	3.0	3.0	1.5	3.0	1.5	7.0	7.0
Indian interest groups	2.0	2.0	2.0	1.0	5.0	6.0	7.0	8.0
Public opinion	3.5	6.0	5.0	2.0	7.0	7.0	3.5	1.0
Federal courts	6.0	7.0	7.0	1.0	5.0	3.0	2.0	4.0
United States Congress	4.0	5.0	3.0	1.0	6.0	8.0	2.0	7.0

NOTES: Eight-point scale, with one the highest ranking agenda item and eight the lowest. The "other" category contains agenda items not common to the other primary and secondary sources.

Agendas

	W	Chi square	Signifi- cance
1. tribal leaders, state & Indian interest groups, public opinion	.4020	11.2570	.1278
2. public opinion, U.S. Congress	.7169	10.0361	.1865
3. public opinion, federal courts	.6758	9.4606	.2213
4. tribal leaders, state & Indian interest groups, Congress	.5654	15.8318	.0267
5. tribal leaders, state & Indian interest groups, federal courts	.3602	10.0844	.1838

be analyzed in the testing of hypothesis one. Using the Kendall W test, the association between the nongovernment groups and public opinion were analyzed. A comparison of agenda item ranking of tribal leaders, state interest groups, Indian interest groups, and public opinion shows no significant relationship among the agendas of these groups (see test results reported at bottom of Table 17).

If sub-hypothesis  $H_{1.3}$  is not to be rejected, there should be a significant association between the agendas of public opinion and the United States Congress, of public opinion and the federal courts, and between the agenda of nongovernment groups and the agendas of the courts and Congress. The test results reported at the bottom of table seventeen show no significant relationship between the public agenda and that of either the federal courts or the United States Congress. There is also no significant relationship between the agenda of the nongovernmental groups and the public agenda (see test results reported at bottom of Table 17). When the agenda of the nongovernmental groups is compared to the agenda of the federal courts no significant relationship is found (see test results reported at bottom of Table 17). Finally, only a moderately significant association was found between the agendas of nongovernmental groups and that of the United States Congress.

The statistical analysis rejects hypothesis one. There is neither a significant relationship between the agendas of nongovernmental groups and public opinion nor between the agenda of public opinion and that of the United States Congress and the federal courts. This rejection is supported by the statistical analysis demonstrating no significant relationship between the agendas of the nongovernmental groups and that of the federal courts and only a moderately significant association between the agendas of nongovernmental groups and that of Congress.

Further support for rejection of hypothesis one is provided by the analysis of the interview data. Public opinion was not mentioned by any respondent as having a significant influence on the tribal agenda. Nor did respondents perceive that nongovernment groups were as influential as other actors in this area of policy (for example, the federal courts and the United States Congress).

If Indian tribes are not using the outside initiative model to place items on the formal agenda, then one must look at alternative explanations for agenda-setting by Indian tribes. One alternative explanation is that American Indian tribes place items on the formal agenda through a closed policy subsystem.



## Hypothesis Two

H<sub>2</sub>: American Indian tribes use a closed policy subsystem to place agenda items on the formal agenda.

H<sub>2.1</sub>: The Bureau of Indian Affairs is the most important influence in the executive branch in placing agenda items on the formal agenda.

H<sub>2.2</sub>: Relevant congressmen are the most important influence in the legislative branch in placing agenda items on the formal agenda.

H<sub>2.3</sub>: Congress is more influential in placing items on the agenda than are the judicial or executive branches.

H<sub>2.4</sub>: Organized interest groups are significant influences in placing agenda items on the formal agenda.

H<sub>2.5</sub>: Resolution of agenda items in the legislative branch will involve incremental changes resulting from feedback from existing programs and comparison of the socioeconomic status of Indians and non-Indians.

If this hypothesis is not to be rejected, there should be a significant relationship between the agendas of the executive branch, relevant congressmen, tribal leaders, Indian interest groups, state interest groups, and the agenda of Congress. See Table 18 for the ranking of agenda items by these groups and the results of the statistical analysis. The statistical test shows a significant relationship between the agendas of the closed policy subsystem and that of the United States Congress.

Table 18. Agenda Item Ranking by Nongovernment Groups, Relevant Congressmen, and Executive Branch Respondents

	Eco- nomic Devel- op- ment	Indian Health	Indian Educa- tion	Indian Tribal Sover- eignty	Tri- bal/ Fed- eral Rela- tions	State/ Tri- bal Rela- tions	Tri- bal Gov- ern- ment	Other Agenda Item
Relevant congressmen	1.0	2.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	7.0	3.0	3.0
Tribal leaders	1.0	2.0	3.0	4.5	4.5	6.0	6.0	6.0
State interest groups	2.0	3.0	3.0	1.5	3.0	1.5	7.0	7.0
Indian interest groups	2.0	2.0	2.0	1.0	5.0	6.0	7.0	8.0
Executive branch	1.5	1.5	3.0	3.0	6.0	3.0	8.0	7.0
United States Congress	4.0	5.0	3.0	1.0	6.0	8.0	2.0	7.0

NOTES: Eight-point scale, with one the highest ranking agenda item and eight the lowest. The "other" category contains agenda items not common to the other primary and secondary sources.

Agenda	W	Chi Square	Significance
Closed policy subsystem, U.S. Congress	.5370	22.5538	.0020

The descriptive analysis of the interview data can be used to support or reject the sub-hypotheses H<sub>2.1</sub> through H<sub>2.4</sub> regarding the perceived influence of the different actors that make up the closed policy subsystem. The Bureau of Indian Affairs is perceived as the single most important agenda influence in the executive branch, although the executive branch as a whole was perceived to have more influence than the BIA alone. Relevant congressmen are perceived by respondents as the most influential actors in the legislative branch. However, Congress is not perceived as more influential in tribal agenda-setting than any other branch of government. The federal courts are perceived as the most influential branch in this area of policy with Congress second in importance. Study respondents did not perceive interest groups or tribal leaders to be significant influences in agenda-setting in this area of policy.

If sub-hypothesis H<sub>2.5</sub> is not to be rejected, resolution of agenda items by Congress, in this area of policy, should involve small incremental changes in existing federal Indian programs. A review of the bills passed in this policy area by the 99th and 100th Congresses show that approximately 48% of the bills involved incremental changes in existing federal Indian programs. Another 46% of the bills were applicable only to specific Indian

tribes and did not have broad application to all Indian tribes. Analysis of these data tends to support the contention that resolution of agenda items by Congress in this area of policy involves incremental changes resulting from feedback from existing federal programs and comparison of the socioeconomic status of Indians with non-Indians.

The statistical and descriptive analyses do not reject hypothesis two. The analyses do not prove definitively, however, that it is the closed policy subsystem setting the tribal agenda. There are anomalies, such as the role of the federal court in setting the tribal agenda. However, the closed-policy subsystem explanation is a better fit than is the outside initiative model tested in hypothesis one. The agenda-setting literature also discusses the resources a political interest group must have to place its items on the formal agenda. The literature concerning American Indian tribes shows that Indian tribes do not have adequate resources (such as members, wealth, and status) to place their items on the formal agenda. This leads to the third hypothesis to be tested.

### Hypothesis Three

H<sub>3</sub>: The agenda items of American Indian tribes will fail to be placed on the formal agenda.

H<sub>3.1</sub>: Tribal agenda items that do attain formal agenda status are not resolved favorably to Indian tribes.

If hypothesis three is not to be rejected, there should be no significant relationship between the agendas of tribal leaders and Indian interest groups and the agenda of the United States Congress and the agenda of the federal courts. See Table 19 for a ranking of agenda items by these groups and results of the tests of the hypothesized relationships. The tests show a significant relationship between the tribal agenda and that of Congress but no significant relationship between the tribal agenda and that of the courts.

My perception of the responses of those interviewed is that the respondents believed that tribal agenda items would fail to be placed on the formal agenda of government. I perceived that the majority of respondents also assumed that the tribal agenda would be more strongly related to the agenda of the courts rather than that of Congress, although this is counter to the evidence found in this study.

If sub-hypothesis  $H_{3.1}$  is not to be rejected, tribal agenda items should not be resolved favorably to Indian tribes. A subjective analysis of bills passed by Congress and federal court cases decided that relate to Indian tribes was done by the author. If one looks at all bills introduced and all court cases filed in the area of Indian policy the resolution of agenda items in favor of Indian tribes is very small (for example, an overall success rate

Table 19. Agenda Item Ranking by Tribal Leaders, Indian Interest Groups, Congress, and the Courts

	Eco- nomic Devel- op- ment	Indian Health	Indian Educa- tion	Indian Tribal Sover- eignty	Tri- bal/ Fedral Rela- tions	State/ Tri- bal Rela- tions	Tri- bal Gov- ern- ment	Other Agenda Item
Tribal leaders	1.0	2.0	3.0	4.5	4.5	6.0	6.0	6.0
Indian interest groups	2.0	2.0	2.0	1.0	5.0	6.0	7.0	8.0
United States Congress	4.0	5.0	3.0	1.0	6.0	8.0	2.0	7.0
Federal courts	6.0	7.0	7.0	1.0	5.0	3.0	2.0	4.0
Agendas				W		Chi Square		Significance
1. tribal leaders, Indian interest groups, federal courts				.2920		6.1322		.5244
2. tribal leaders, Indian interest groups, U.S. Congress				.6872		14.4321		.0440

in Congress of 23%). However, if one looks at specific bills passed in Congress and judicial decisions rendered that Indian tribes judge to be significant to all Indian tribes then the resolution of issues in favor of Indian tribes is very good. Indian tribes had a 62% success rate in Congress and a 65% success rate in the federal courts with cases and bills judged to be significant to Indian tribes by such groups as NARF (see Chapter IV).

The statistical and descriptive analyses present contradictory evidence concerning hypothesis three in that the tribal agenda is not strongly related to the agenda of the federal courts, but there is a moderately significant relationship to the agenda of Congress. Tribal agenda items, in general, are not resolved favorably to Indian tribes. However, if one looks at bills and cases the Indian tribes identify as significant, the rate of favorable resolution is very good. These contradictions may be explained by referring back to the information in Chapter IV. Indian tribes usually do not set the agenda; rather, they react to agenda items set by others. In the federal courts, most often tribes are the defendants, not the plaintiffs. Because the analysis does not clearly support hypothesis three, it must be rejected.

Because the analysis of the data used to test the three hypotheses demonstrated various anomalies, alterna-

tive explanations for agenda-setting in this area of policy-making should be investigated.

#### Alternative Explanations

One of the anomalies in this research is the perceived role of the federal courts. Most tribal leaders and Indian interest group respondents perceived that Indian tribes are much more successful in agenda-setting in court than they are in Congress. The statistical analysis shows no significant relationship between the agendas of these two groups and the courts ( $W = .2920$ , chi square = 6.1322, significance = .5244). However, there is a moderately significant relationship between the tribal agenda and that of Congress ( $W = .6872$ , chi square = 14.4321, significance = .0440). It may be that tribal leaders and Indian groups are confusing court decisions rendered in favor of Indian tribes with agenda-setting. In most court cases, Indian tribes are defendants and not plaintiffs. They are not setting the court's agenda; rather, they are defending themselves from suits brought by others. The analysis also shows that most court cases involving Indian tribes have no broad-based application; rather, they are of specific applicability to one tribe.

The majority of study respondents listed the federal courts as the most influential actor in this policy area. However, a comparison of the agenda of all six subgroups of



respondents with the courts showed a very weak relationship between the respondents' agendas and that of the courts ( $W = .3138$ ,  $\chi^2 = 19.7675$ ,  $\text{significance} = .0061$ ). Many respondents posited that it might be the decisions of the federal courts that were setting the tribal agenda of Congress. However, the statistical analysis shows no significant relationship between the agendas of Congress and the federal courts ( $W = .6078$ ,  $\chi^2 = 8.5090$ ,  $\text{significance} = .2899$ ). Because the analysis showed no significant relationship between the agendas of Congress and public opinion ( $W = .7169$ ,  $\chi^2 = 10.0361$ ,  $\text{significance} = .1865$ ), it might be worthwhile to see if public opinion and the courts exhibited any relationship. The statistical analysis shows no significant relationship between the agendas of public opinion and the courts ( $W = .6758$ ,  $\chi^2 = 9.4606$ ,  $\text{significance} = .2213$ ).

In conclusion, the analyses have shown that tribal leaders and other nongovernment groups do not use the outside initiative model to place agenda items on the formal agenda. From the analysis it seems that most tribal agenda items are placed on the formal agenda through a closed policy subsystem. It also seems reasonable to conclude that Indian tribes do have a limited amount of success in placing agenda items on the formal agenda of Congress. However, it is likely that the tribes are more

successful in agenda item resolution in both the courts and Congress than they are in agenda-setting.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The general purpose of this study was to test theoretical propositions regarding how items are placed on the formal agenda and resolved by minority political groups. A specific purpose of the study was to test whether these theoretical propositions had the range or breadth to be applicable to American Indian tribes that have a unique legal and political relationship with the United States government. An additional purpose of the study was to add to the agenda-setting literature as to how a specific minority group, Indian tribes, places its items on the formal agenda and resolves them.

#### Theoretical and Methodological Implications

A contribution of the study to the field is that it demonstrated that some of the theoretical propositions regarding minority group agenda-setting may be explanatory for American Indian tribes, regardless of their unique political and legal status. However, new theoretical propositions may need to be developed for agenda-setting by very low resource groups.

The hypothesis of Cobb, Ross, and Ross (1976), that

low resource minority groups use an outside initiative model to place items on the formal agenda, was rejected in this study. The Cobb, Ross, and Ross argument that low resource groups may use an outside initiative model does not explain how a "low resource" group would be able to mobilize public opinion. Would not the very lack of group resources restrict the ability of these minority groups to mobilize public opinion, especially very low resource groups such as Indian tribes? Cobb, Ross, and Ross also do not deal with the issue of whether racial and ethnic low resource groups might have difficulty in mobilizing the opinion of the dominant or majority group in society (public opinion). Just as the level of resources may impact agenda-setting it seems that the composition of the group and its relationships with other groups in society would also impact agenda-setting.

Nimmo and Sanders (1981) hypothesized that low resource groups use a closed policy subsystem to place items on the formal agenda. This study's findings seem to confirm that tribal agenda items are placed on the formal agenda through a closed policy subsystem. Nimmo and Sanders also contend that, over time, the insulation of such subsystems causes disparity between the public and formal agendas. This study's findings confirm the author's contention in that the tribal agenda is neither signifi-

cantly influenced by nor does it influence public opinion. Eyestone (1978) reported that the visibility of endemic issues, such as tribal agenda items, is low and the media rarely reports on these agenda items. This study also seems to confirm Eyestone's view that the media does not give in-depth coverage to tribal issues.

Cobb and Elder (1983) argue that closed policy subsystems tend to make incremental changes in existing policies so as not to disrupt the accommodations of subsystem members. This study supports this argument in that most Indian policy does involve incremental changes in existing federal Indian programs and policies.

Although the analysis of the descriptive and statistical data in this study seems to confirm some of the theoretical propositions regarding agenda-setting through a closed policy subsystem, the study findings do not suggest that it is Indian tribes that are actively using a closed policy subsystem for agenda-setting purposes. The study findings also do not lead one to conclude that Indian tribes have a significant influence on the formal agenda. It is possible that the theoretical proposition of agenda-setting through a closed policy subsystem is not fully explanatory for extremely low resource groups such as the tribes. One could even conclude that the concept of political agenda-setting is inappropriate for very low

resource groups that do not participate proactively in agenda-setting but rather react to the proposals of others.

Both the Cobb and Elder and Nimmo and Sanders propositions seem to imply that it is political interest groups that play a lead role in closed policy subsystem agenda-setting. However, this study's findings do not demonstrate that tribal leaders, Indian interest groups, or any other political interest group are significant influences in the subsystem. This conclusion raises the question of whether it is the unique legal and political status of the tribes that make these propositions less appropriate for the tribes. One might conclude that without the legal and political status of the tribes such a low resource group would never have been able to form such a closed policy subsystem. If one accepts this conclusion one can then understand why the tribes may be insignificant actors in the subsystem.

Cobb and Elder (1983) and Eyestone (1978) argue that groups using a closed policy subsystem for the purpose of agenda-setting do not propose major policy changes but rather call for incremental changes in existing policies. Eyestone further contends that groups (such as Indian tribes) whose issues are endemic (issues in which the federal government shares responsibility for the current state of affairs) tend to seek adjustments in existing

policies rather than pushing for major changes. The analyses of tribal legislation considered by the 99th and 100th Congresses provide support for the contention that most of the tribal related bills considered and passed involve incremental changes in existing federal Indian programs. They are often the result of problems brought to the attention of Congress as feedback from the operation of current federal Indian programs and/or a comparison of the socioeconomic status of Indians with non-Indians (Kingdon, 1984). In fact, congressional respondents in this study spoke of listening to, and being influenced by, tribal leaders when considering line items in appropriations bills (incremental changes), but not being significantly influenced by tribal leaders when considering major policy changes. One can then conclude that this study's findings tend to support the Cobb and Elder and Eyestone propositions concerning the type of policymaking produced by a closed policy subsystem. However, the study findings also raise a question as to whether incremental changes in policies dealing with endemic issues is "agenda-setting" at all. If most tribal agenda items have been on the formal agenda for decades, is the closed policy subsystem setting the agenda or is it fine-tuning existing policies?

Kingdon (1984) asserts there are actors (such as congressional staff) who have little influence in setting

the agenda but play very influential roles in policymaking. This study suggests that Indian tribes may, like congressional staff members, have more influence in policymaking than in agenda-setting.

Orfield (1975) and Eyestone (1978) contend that low resource group agenda items are often not successfully resolved (successful resolution is defined as an action which is sufficiently satisfying to major players so that the issue is not immediately raised again). Rather, there are a number of other responses by policymakers that are often used to respond to the demands of low resource groups. This study confirms that tribal agenda items often receive these alternative responses. For instance, many respondents spoke of Congress refusing to deal with controversial tribal issues (such as sovereignty) and, instead, letting the federal courts deal with them (Eyestone's "delayed response"). Eyestone also spoke of "standing responses," wherein policymakers give an issue status but take only enough action for the group to see progress. Analysis of the over 300 tribal bills considered by the 99th and 100th Congresses seems to support the assertion that some congressmen are indulging in "standing responses." They introduce the bill but do not pursue its passage. Orfield asserts that Congress is often unresponsive to the demands of low resource groups because making



major policy changes might force the congressmen to deny other important constituent groups. Orfield contends, therefore, that it is easier for Congress to make small, incremental changes or to increase federal aid, both of which may go unnoticed by important constituent groups. This study's analysis of tribal legislation considered by the 99th and 100th Congresses seems to support Orfield's contention.

As to the theoretical propositions concerning influences on the formal agenda, the interview data seem to support Kingdon's (1984) and Orfield's (1975) views that it is Congress, and not the President, who has the most influence in shaping the domestic agenda related to Indian tribes. However, neither Orfield nor Kingdon speak to the role of the third branch of government, the federal courts, in setting the domestic agenda. The relationship between the courts and Congress in the area of Indian policy is unclear. Deloria and Lytle (1983) contend that Indian policy issues are so closely related to the judicial process that it is difficult to divorce the two areas. They assert that changes in political perceptions affect every aspect of Indian life and political institutions, including the federal courts. This study's findings seem to support Deloria and Lytle's contentions in that the actions of the federal courts and Congress are interrelated

and that both branches of government significantly influence the tribal agenda.

The agenda-setting literature speaks of the inability of low resource groups to place their agenda items on the formal agenda (Cobb and Elder, 1983; Kingdon, 1984) and Gross (1986) identifies American Indian tribes as a low resource group that has historically failed to obtain government policies in their best interests. This study's findings seem to support these propositions. However, these propositions do not explain why a low resource group like the tribes would be unsuccessful in agenda-setting while experiencing some success in the resolution of items placed on the formal agenda by other actors. It is likely that this success in agenda item resolution is, at least in part, a result of the tribes' unique legal and political status. Deloria (1985) disagrees, arguing that Indian tribes have forsaken their unique status for that of a "needy minority." He states that Indian issues are now social issues and are resolved as such. Further research is needed to compare the agenda-setting and resolution by Indian tribes with that of other low resource groups to see whether the legal and political status of the tribes makes a significant difference in agenda-setting and resolution.

It is also possible that tribal leaders are acting logically in working for policies that benefit their spe-

cific tribes and that have little widespread significance for all tribes. This study's findings seem to confirm that the majority of court cases and congressional legislation are tribe specific. Lurie (1986) contends that the basic principle of tribal politics is for tribal leaders to get something for their people if they want to remain in office. Getting something for the people, according to Lurie, usually entails sustaining the relationship of the tribe with various federal agencies. In this respect, the findings of this study may demonstrate that tribal leaders may be more successful in agenda-setting for their specific tribe than they are in agenda-setting for all Indian tribes.

Bee (1982) speaks of the many contradictions tribal leaders face. Bee states that the leader must seek control of tribal programs while avoiding ever being held accountable for the failure of federal programs; must seek political power while somehow avoiding violating the consensus ethic of Indian tribes; and must constantly challenge federal intervention and control of the tribe while making sure the flow of federal funds is not jeopardized. Bee's assertions may be why respondents in this study were extremely critical of the BIA but were not willing to abolish it; why many spoke of tribal self-determination but were afraid to do away with the trust responsibilities of the

federal government; and why respondents ranked agenda items concerning tribal sovereignty and economic self-sufficiency so high while much of their lobbying efforts went into keeping and increasing federal social benefits.

The study also has methodological implications for agenda-setting research. The literature emphasized the difficulties in defining or measuring a group agenda, a public agenda, or the agendas of government institutions. However, political science is unlikely to develop tools by which to study agenda-setting if research in the field continues to concentrate (as it has in the past) on specific agenda items (rather than on a group's overall agenda) and to concentrate on descriptive studies that make no attempt to statistically analyze hypothetical agenda-setting relationships. This research did attempt to study group agenda-setting and to analyze hypothesized agenda-setting relationships. However, the study has three weaknesses which could be corrected in further research. The research design for this study weighted different actors in this policy area equally which could have possibly skewed the results of the statistical analysis. It is possible that policy studies of specific pieces of legislation or court cases could be used to better define the relative weight of the various actors in this policy area. Such policy studies might also allow the researcher

to study the relative influence of the type of issues (endemic) on agenda-setting and the type of group (very low resource). The research might also be strengthened if a comparative study was done of incremental versus major policy changes and low resource groups versus higher resource groups. Additionally, this study does not differentiate between the agenda of specific tribes and that of all tribes.

This research was limited in that it was a case study that made no attempt to include the views of all of the more than 250 tribal leaders in the United States. Respondents who participated in this study strongly believe that Indian tribes--regardless of region, reservations or off reservations, large or small, rich or poor--have essentially the same agenda. Further research might attempt to include a national cross-section of tribes and to investigate whether there are any significant agenda differences among them.

Finally, this study does not adequately deal with the role of the courts in tribal agenda-setting. The interview data suggests the federal courts play an important role in this area of policy and that court decisions may influence Congress to act. However, the problem that arises is how to study this relationship and how to measure it. There is very little guidance in the political science literature on

how such a study might be done and what methods might be most appropriate.

#### Practical Implications

This research contributes to the literature concerning agenda-setting by American Indian tribes and tribal politics. The interview data demonstrated that even though social issues such as health care, housing, and education were often mentioned by respondents as important agenda items, they were rarely discussed in any depth. Respondents seemed to think social issues were important, but they rarely discussed or emphasized them as they did issues such as tribal sovereignty, economic development, and state/tribal relations.

Respondents emphasized that Indian health, education, and basic shelter were problems that had to be solved concurrently with tribal economic and political development. The word "survival" was often used by respondents. They did not speak of cultural survival but the physical survival of the Indian people. They believed that without the basics of life tribal economic and political development would not continue to progress. Many respondents also spoke to the interrelatedness of economic development and tribal government. They believe that unless the tribes develop politically the goal of tribal economic development is in jeopardy.

Two agenda items receiving attention by respondents that were not seen as significant in the Indian policy literature were the issues of state/tribal relations and tribal government. Analysis of the interview data shows that the arena of Indian policy may be shifting from Washington, D.C. to the states and the focus of this field of policy from tribal/federal government relations to state/tribal relations. Part of the reason for this change in arena and focus may be improvement in the quality of tribal government. Today, tribes often deal "government to government" on both the state and national levels. It is probably this increased exercise of tribal sovereignty that drives the issues of state/tribal government and tribal government to prominence. Respondents reported that the refusal of Congress to deal with many tribal sovereignty issues in the last decade is helping shift the arena to the states.

Even though there is consensus among respondents that the quality of tribal government has improved, they still report significant differences in the quality of leadership among tribes and report that there continue to be serious impediments to the political development of tribes. Among the fourteen tribal leaders who participated in this study, the impression was that there were significant differences among them as to education level, experience, sophistica-

tion, and the ability to deal with non-Indian government and community leaders. From their comments, it seemed that some tribal leaders have limited horizons. They think in the short term of "quick fixes" instead of developing innovative, long-term solutions to tribal problems.

Respondents stated that the perennial issue of inter- and intra-tribal factionalism continues to impede tribal leaders in setting a political agenda. No respondent was optimistic that tribes would begin to work together toward common goals even though all respondents thought it was crucial for them to do so. They reported that tribal leaders continue to react to crises rather than acting proactively with Congress and the courts. This is ad hoc agenda-setting at best.

Respondents also agreed that a continuing impediment to Indian tribes placing their items on the formal decision agenda is their lack of power in electoral politics on the local, state, and national levels. Indian tribes just cannot or do not deliver the votes.

From their comments, it seemed that many tribal leaders were unaware that the arena and relationships of Indian policy may have changed. Many leaders may still think the Bureau of Indian Affairs is the only agency they need to deal with in the federal government when, in fact, they need to develop direct working relationships with many



different government agencies that affect their tribes. Many tribal leaders may still attempt to influence a very few congressional committees, for instance the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs, instead of attempting to broaden their influence to other congressional committees and congressmen. Even more serious is that many tribal leaders may think they can afford to ignore public opinion, state governments, and the United States Congress because the federal courts and a few relevant congressmen will protect them. This may no longer be the case. The perception of tribal leaders that the tribes are much more successful in the courts than they are in Congress may also be a dangerous misconception. The statistical analysis demonstrated that it was Congress, not the courts, where Indian tribes had the most success in agenda-setting and the favorable agenda item resolution rate was similar in both the courts and Congress.

In conclusion, this study contributed to the political science literature in that it demonstrated that some of the theoretical propositions regarding agenda-setting by minority political groups are sufficiently broad in scope to be applicable to Indian tribes, but that new theoretical propositions for very low resource groups may need to be developed. It also contributed to the literature regarding Indian tribal politics--an area that has received little

attention in the discipline in the past. It also furthered research in this area by attempting to develop methodology by which to measure group agendas and identified a number of limitations and barriers to this type of research. Finally, this study resulted in the identification of a number of other areas in need of research and raised a number of important questions regarding both minority group agenda-setting and American Indian politics.

**APPENDIX A**  
**DEFINITIONS**

Agenda-Building--process through which the policy agendas of political elites are influenced by a variety of factors (Rogers and Dearing, 1988, p. 556).

Agenda--list of issues and events viewed at a point in time as ranked in a hierarchy of importance (Rogers and Dearing, 1988, p. 565).

Systemic Agenda--of all issues commonly perceived by members of the political community as meriting public attention and as involving matters within the legitimate jurisdiction of governmental authority (Cobb and Elder, 1983, p. 85).

Governmental or Formal Agenda--set of items explicitly up for active and serious consideration of decisionmakers (Cobb and Elder, 1983, p. 86). A list of subjects or problems to which governmental officials are paying serious attention at a given point in time (Kingdon, 1984, p. 3).

Pseudo-Agenda--any form of registering or acknowledging a demand without explicitly concerning its merit (Cobb and Elder, 1983, p. 86).

Public--any group important enough that it should be listened to, at least on some issues (Eyestone, 1978, p. 4).

Attentive Public--the public which is mobilized and issue-minded, rather than "popular" or "mass opinion" (Nimmo, 1978, p. 405).

Government--for the purposes of this study, the three branches (executive, legislative, and judicial) of the United States government.

Issue--issues arise when a public with a problem seeks or demands governmental action and there is public disagreement over the best solution to the problem (Eyestone, 1974, p. 3). An issue is a conflict between two or more identifiable groups over procedural or substantive matters relating to the distribution of resources (Cobb and Elder, 1971, p. 82).

Social Issue--a condition identified by significant groups within the population as a deviation from a social standard or a breakdown of some important facet of social organization (Eyestone, 1978, p. 69).

Endemic Issue--those in which government policy is already implicated and government, therefore, shares responsibility for the current state of affairs (Eyestone, 1978, p. 157).

Issue Resolution--a positive action by government that is sufficiently satisfying to major sides of the conflict that they do not immediately raise the issue or a related issue again (Eyestone, 1978, p. 20).

American Indians--can be defined both culturally and racially. The concept of race was unknown among Indians prior to contact with Europeans. Indian people identify

themselves in terms of kinship and tribal affiliations. The idea of a racially defined group characterized by cultural similarity growing out of physical commonality is alien to Indians. However, in order to qualify for government services, it is necessary for individuals and groups to establish racial identity. The United States government arbitrarily defines one-fourth degree Indian blood the minimum acceptable to establish racial identity. However, there is provision that those who can establish tribal membership (enrollment on the official roll of tribal members) can receive services even if there is not one-fourth degree of Indian blood. In 1934 when tribes were given the power to establish their own membership criteria, most adhered to the criteria of the United States government.

Racial descent is not a sufficient criterion of "Indian-ness." Culture is also a criterion. Aboriginal Indian conceptions of identity tend to revolve around cultural factors such as common language or dialect, similar customs and religious beliefs, kinship patterns, and adherence to shared decisionmaking strategies. The Indian tendency to emphasize culture over racial identity is continued in the modern era through a provision in the Indian Reorganization Act for processes of adoption of those who might not meet racial criteria, but are

recognized by the tribe on other cultural grounds. The present preoccupation of American society with race as a definitive criterion of group identity has resulted in a shift in Indian emphasis from a primary concern for cultural identity to a balance of cultural and racial factors (Svensson, 1973, pp. 3-7). For the purpose of this study, "American Indians" will refer to the Eastern Oklahoma Indian Tribes.

**APPENDIX B**  
**FINAL INTERVIEW LIST**



1. U.S. Senator David L. Boren (D), Oklahoma  
453 RSOB  
Washington, D.C. 20510 202-224-4721
2. U.S. Senator Don Nickles (R), Oklahoma  
713 HSOB  
Washington, D.C. 20510 202-224-5754
3. U.S. Representative Michael Synar (D), Oklahoma 2nd  
District  
2441 RHOB  
Washington, D.C. 20510 202-225-2701
4. U.S. Senator Daniel K. Inoye (D), Hawaii  
Chairman, Select Committee on Indian Affairs  
838 HSOB  
Washington, D.C. 20510 202-224-2251
5. U.S. Senator William S. Cohen (R), Maine  
322 HSOB  
Washington, D.C. 20510 202-224-2523
6. U.S. Senator Dennis DeConcini (D), Arizona  
328 HSOB  
Washington, D.C. 20510 202-224-4521
7. U.S. Representative Ben Nighthorse Campbell (D),  
Colorado  
1724 LHOB  
Washington, D.C. 20515 202-225-4761
8. U.S. Representative Morris K. Udall (D), Arizona  
235 CHOB  
Washington, D.C. 20515 202-225-4065
9. U.S. Representative Sidney R. Yates (D), Illinois  
Chairman, Interior Subcommittee  
House Appropriations Committee  
H218 Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515 202-225-2771
10. Jack Trope  
Staff Attorney, Association of American Indian  
Affairs  
95 Madison Avenue  
New York, NY 10016-7877 212-689-8720

11. La Donna Harris  
President and Executive Director, Americans for  
Indian Opportunity  
3508 Garfield Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20007 202-338-8809
12. Senator John McCain  
Select Committee on Indian Affairs  
838 HSOB  
Washington, D.C. 20510 202-224-2251
13. Eric Eberhard  
Staff, Senator John McCain  
Select Committee on Indian Affairs  
838 HSOB  
Washington, D.C. 20510 202-224-2251
14. Rick Keister  
National Association of Counties  
440 First Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20001 202-393-6226
15. Rita Thaemert  
National Conference of State Legislatures  
1050 17th Street, Suite 2100  
Denver, Colorado 80265 303-623-7800
16. Patricia Zell  
Chief Counsel, Select Committee on Indian Affairs  
838 HSOB  
Washington, D.C. 20510 202-224-2251
17. Betty Ann Grady  
Staff, Senator David L. Boren  
453 RSOB  
Washington, D.C. 20510 202-224-4721
18. Kathie Johnson  
Staff, Interior Subcommittee of House Appropriations  
Committee  
B308 Rayburn HOB  
Washington, D.C. 20515 202-225-2771
19. Frank Dusheneaux  
Staff, Indian Affairs Subcommittee  
House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee  
House Annex One, Room 522  
New Jersey and C Streets, S.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20515 202-225-4065

20. Perry Cain  
Staff, Senator Don Nickles  
713 HSOB  
Washington, D.C. 20510      202-224-5754
21. Charlie Turgeon  
Staff, Senator William Cohen  
322 HSOB  
Washington, D.C. 20510      202-224-2523
22. June Tracy  
Staff, Senator Dennis DeConcini  
328 HSOB  
Washington, D.C. 20510      202-224-4521
23. Kimberly Craven  
Staff, Representative Ben Nighthorse Campbell  
1724 LHOB  
Washington, D.C. 20515      202-225-4761
24. Ross Swimmer  
Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs  
U.S. Department of Interior  
18th and C Streets, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20240      202-343-7163
25. Pat Keyes  
Field Operations Representative  
U.S. Department of Interior, Room 4151  
18th and C Streets, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20240      202-343-4576
26. Christina Bach  
Special Assistant to the President for  
Intergovernmental Affairs  
117 Old Executive Office Building  
17th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500      202-456-7150
27. Wilma Mankiller  
Principal Chief, Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma  
P.O. Box 948  
Tahlequah, Oklahoma 74465-0948      918-456-0671
28. Bill Anoatubby  
Governor, Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma  
P.O. Box 1548  
Ada, Oklahoma 74820      405-436-2603

29. Hollis E. Roberts  
Chief, Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma  
P.O. Drawer 1210  
Durant, Oklahoma 74701      405-924-8280 ext 200
30. Claude A. Cox  
Principal Chief, Creek Nation of Oklahoma  
P.O. Box 580  
Okmulgee, Oklahoma 74447      918-756-8700
31. Edwin Tanyan  
Principal Chief, Seminole Nation of Oklahoma  
P.O. Box 1498  
Wewoka, Oklahoma 74884      405-257-6287
32. George E. Tallchief  
Principal Chief, Osage Tribe of Indians in Oklahoma  
P.O. Box 14  
Fairfax, Oklahoma 74637      918-738-4107
33. George J. Captain  
Chief, Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma  
Rt. 5, Box 138C  
Miami, Oklahoma 74355      918-666-2435
34. Judy Davis  
Chief, Miami Tribe of Oklahoma  
547 West A  
Picher, Oklahoma 74370      918-673-2825
35. Bill G. Follis  
Chief, Modoc Tribe of Oklahoma  
Rt. 3, Box 9  
Miami, Oklahoma 74354      918-542-1190
36. Lewis H. Barlow  
Chief, Ottawa Tribe of Oklahoma  
P.O. Box 110  
Miami, Oklahoma 74355      918-542-1536
37. Louis E. Myers  
Chief, Peoria Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma  
P.O. Box 1527  
Miami, Oklahoma 74355      918-542-9400
38. Harry Gilmore  
Chairman, Quapaw Tribe of Indians in Oklahoma  
P.O. Box 801  
Miami, Oklahoma 74355      918-542-1853

39. James H. Allen  
Chief, Seneca-Cayuga Tribe of Oklahoma  
412 H Street, N.W.  
Miami, Oklahoma 74354 918-542-5178
40. Leaford Bearskin  
Chief, Wyandotte Tribe of Oklahoma  
Box 424  
Wyandotte, Oklahoma 74370 918-678-2297
41. Gary Rogers  
Tribal Operations Officer  
Muskogee Area Office  
U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs  
Federal Building  
Muskogee, Oklahoma 74401 918-687-2313
42. Susan Harjo  
Director, National Congress of American Indians  
804 D Street, N.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20002 202-546-9404
43. David Lester  
Executive Director, Council of Energy Resource Tribes  
(22 tribes)  
1580 Logan Street, Suite 400  
Denver, Colorado 80203 303-832-6600
44. John E. Echohawk  
Director, Native American Rights Fund  
1506 Broadway  
Boulder, Colorado 80302 303-447-8760
45. Christin Dillon  
Western Governors Association  
South Tower, Suite 1705  
600 17th Street  
Denver, CO 80202 303-623-9378
46. Rev. Msgr. Paul Lenz  
Executive Director, Bureau of Catholic Indian  
Missions  
2021 H Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20002 202-331-8542
47. Cindy Darcy (Quaker)  
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APPENDIX C  
INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT

1. What are the most important problems facing Indian tribes today?

2. Are these problems listed in order of importance?

3. Have you seen much change in the last four to eight years of the Reagan administration in the problems facing Indian tribes? If so, why have these changes taken place?

4. Why do you think these particular problems are the most important ones?

5. Now let's shift from problems to government programs for Indian tribes. Which programs are requiring the most attention at this time?

6. Has there been much change in government Indian programs during the last four to eight years of the Reagan administration? If yes, why did that change take place?

7. Why are these particular programs the ones that are getting the most attention?

8. If you were to look into the future--three to five years from now, what problems or proposals for government programs do you think will be facing Indian tribes?

9. Now, I would like to read you a number of statements. Please rank your response to each of the following statements: strongly agree (1), agree (2), uncertain (3), disagree (4), or strongly disagree (5).

[The following list of issues has been developed from the



literature (see Appendix A).]

a. Indian unemployment is the most important policy issue facing American Indians today (Josephy, 1971, Burnette, 1971).

b. The need to improve Indian health levels is the most important issue facing American Indians today (Burnette, 1971, NTCA, 1983).

c. The provision of adequate and sanitary housing to Indians is the most important issue facing American Indians today (NTCA, 1983).

d. The need to improve the level of Indian education and lower illiteracy rates is the most important issue facing American Indians today (Josephy, 1971, Burnette, 1971).

e. Tribal sovereignty is the most important issue facing American Indians today (Schusky, 1980).

f. The requirement for the United States government to carry out its federal trust responsibilities is one of the most important issues facing American Indians today (NTCA, 1983).

g. The efficiency of and necessity for the Bureau of Indian Affairs is one of the most important issues facing American Indians today (NTCA, 1983).

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