

THE DESI BLOC?
SOCIALIZATION AND TRANSNATIONALISM IN
SOUTH ASIAN AMERICAN POLITICS

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By

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ABSTRACT

Today in the United States, single-race Asian Indians number 2.8 million, nearly 20 percent of the total U.S. Asian population, and represent the second largest Asian subgroup after Chinese Americans. Yet, despite this population surge, little work has been done to understand the complex motivations, idiosyncrasies, and behavioral patterns of the Indian American, or even more broadly the South Asian American, voting bloc. Using data from the Pilot National Asian American Political Survey (PNAAPS), this analysis attempts to address this gap in the Asian American politics literature. Among its findings are the following: (1) South Asians are more likely to be interested in politics than other Asian Americans; (2) active religious practice was significant and positively related with electoral engagement; (3) years in the United States was significant and positively related with electoral engagement for non-South Asians but not for South Asians; (4) interest in politics was significant and positively related to having voted; and, finally, (5) South Asian women were much more likely to be interested in politics than South Asian men. Although the South Asian American community already participates in politics at relatively high levels, this study has uncovered some important gaps keeping it from full participation. It recommends that South Asian American organizations work to increase South Asian men's interest in politics and to ensure that eligible voters are able to participate without interference. By following these suggestions, the South Asian American community will move one step closer to its maximum electoral potential.

This thesis is dedicated to Michael.
Thank you for everything.

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INTRODUCTION

Between 2000 and 2010, the Asian population grew faster than any other major race group in America. The single race Asian population increased by 43 percent, from 10.2 to 14.7 million, and an additional 2.6 million identified as Asian in combination with at least one other race (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2010). Single-race Asian Indians (Indian Americans) numbered 2.8 million, nearly 20 percent of the total U.S. Asian population, and for the first time Indians surpassed Filipinos as the second largest Asian ethnic group after Chinese Americans. Until recently, the number of South Asians in America had been considerably lower than that of East Asians.

In 2006, 28 percent of these Indian Americans were native-born U.S. citizens, 33 percent were naturalized citizens, and 39 percent were not citizens (Asian American Justice Center, 2009). In high-density South Asian enclaves in California and New York City, Indian American populations grew by 68 and 25 percent, respectively. They also expanded in less typical locations such as in some southern states – Kentucky, Florida, South Carolina, and Tennessee – where the Asian Indian population increased by more than 80 percent (Springer, 2011).

This influx in South Asian, and particularly Indian¹, immigration and naturalization can be traced back to the end of exclusionary immigration policies in 1965. It has been categorized into three waves: the first occurred after 1965 when the United States began recruiting scientists, graduate students, and other professionals to buttress American weapons technology and economic strength during the Cold War (Maira, 2004). Since many of these immigrants were

¹ Since Indians represent the most substantial subgroup in this South Asian population, and are the only subcontinent-specific Asian ethnicity scheduled on the U.S. Census, their numbers are commonly utilized in the analysis of South Asian Americans. This study will do the same while keeping in mind the dangers of generalizing across diverse South Asian communities and subgroups.

professionals, well-educated, and politically non-collectivized, they were paternalistically labeled the Model Minority generation.

The second wave consisted primarily of relatives reuniting with earlier immigrants. These South Asians were often less affluent, educated, and urbanized than the earlier wave individuals (Maira 2004: 220). Nevertheless, this second group would lead the way in organizing against the Model Minority, passive, and apolitical stereotypes through feminist, queer, and laborers' rights activism (Gupta, 2006).

The more recent third wave is associated with the skilled migrants, software engineers, and Silicon Valley entrepreneurs of the 1990s and twenty-first century. Under current immigration policy, most Asian Indian immigrants with green cards received them because of family in the United States. Yet, in 2007, 15 percent of Indian permanent residents had obtained residency status primarily for their labor market value.

Indian Americans have left an indelible mark on United States technology development, entrepreneurialism, and Silicon Valley start-ups, and they boast high socioeconomic statistics for a minority population. Nearly 60 percent of Indian Americans work in top managerial positions, more than 300,000 are employed in the Information Technology (IT) sector, and 15 percent of all Silicon Valley start-ups are owned by Indian Americans (USINPAC, 2011). Similarly, 64 percent of Indian Americans over the age of 25 have a bachelor's degree or higher, more than twice that of the greater population, and in 2005, the median yearly income for an Indian American male was \$61,594 as compared to the wider population's male median of \$41,965 (USINPAC, 2011).

Some scholars and journalists point to these promising socioeconomic statistics and the emerging income gap between South and East Asian American households (\$83,000 versus

\$61,000 in 2007) and deem Indians the “latest and greatest” model minority (Richwine, 2009). Yet the data do not fulfill “model minority” stereotypes that purport Asians are predisposed to achieve educational and economic success in America. Several Asian American subgroups, including Indians, were among “the first immigrant groups to have a large percentage of its members come to the United States *having already achieved* professional status...and significant economic and educational resources” [emphasis mine] (Ecklund & Park, 2005). Such self-selection will necessarily skew the numbers and does not represent inherent ability. By failing to see this reality, people too often overlook the real hardships of Asian Americans and often fail to recognize great achievement disparities within the Asian subgroups.

Clearly, the South Asian American population has the resources, history of religious volunteerism, educational attainment, and, increasingly, the numbers considered essential for driving the community to exert its political voice at the national level. However, transnational relationships and identities offer an additional force behind South Asian political participation and cannot be ignored (Nakanishi, 2004).

South Asians retain a “complex, even tortuous” connection with the homeland (Lal, 2008a). For those South Asian Americans not directly involved in bilateral foreign policy construction or transnational apparati (i.e., through remittances or religious foundations), many still are affected by the dynamic and unpredictable tectonics of regional politics and U.S. policy. Consider, for instance, the victimization and racial profiling of Muslim South Asians and Arab Americans following the attacks of September 11, 2001 (Maira, 2004). Examining these ties to the United States and their homeland is imperative for understanding the Indian American population and its ongoing incorporation into American political institutions.

This study will test whether certain measures of ethnic connection are positively related to South Asian American degrees of political activity. In doing so, it will consider many components of political identity in America. For instance, given their relative employment success, strong sense of community, and educational achievement, it is expected that Asian Indians and other South Asian Americans will not require the same degree of socialization as other immigrants to achieve high rates of political participation. Transnational motivations and homeland experiences with participatory democracy could also explain their lesser need for political socialization. These latter aspects will be particularly useful for analyzing comparisons with immigrant populations of similar median income and educational achievement levels – specifically, East Asian Americans.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the following section this study will (1) define socialization, (2) outline the building blocks of political identity and motivations, and (3) propose the reasons for analyzing political activity along ethnic lines.

Socialization: Several scholars have done a great deal of work on the subject of socialization. The term as it is used here refers to the development of political attitudes through a reinforcing process of exposure to the host's institutions and culture (Wong, 2000; Cornwell, 1960). Wong (2000) outlines the variables most likely to facilitate an immigrant's exposure to the U.S. political system and involvement in U.S. politics. For minorities low political participation is positively associated with foreign-born status and English non-proficiency. Socioeconomic indicators like household income and maternal education are less influential predictors of participation once the analyses account for these socialization variables (Cho, 1999).

Wong and others also found that years in the United States, not age, had the greater influence on immigrants' development of partisanship, or one's self-identified partiality to a political party. Partisanship is itself a significant predictor of political participation among the general population and many immigrant groups (Wong, 2000; Conway, 1991; Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993; Uhlener, 1996; Cornwell 1960). It is a way for individuals to feel connected with American politics and specific politicians. Although partisanship cannot predict voter selection or activity, involvement with a political party or candidate does show at least a preliminary immersion into the greater American political fabric.

**FIGURE 1:
ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION RATES FROM THE THREE MOST RECENT NATIONAL ELECTIONS IN THREE SOUTH ASIAN STATES AND THE UNITED STATES**

<u>GOVERNMENT TYPE</u>		<u>ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION RATE*</u>		
Bangladesh	Parliamentary Democracy	78.9% (2008)	76.5% (2001)	64.6% (1996)
		<i>(Parliamentary Elections)</i>		
India	Parliamentary Democracy	56.5% (2009)	60.6% (2004)	65.5% (1999)
		<i>(Parliamentary Elections)</i>		
Pakistan	Islamic Republic	38.8% (2008)	38.9% (2002)	31.5% (1997)
		<i>(Parliamentary Elections)</i>		
United States	Presidential Democracy	57.5% (2008)	56.7% (2004)	46.6% (2000)
		<i>(Presidential Elections)</i>		
<i>Source: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) Voting Age Population (VAP) turn-out (2011)</i>				
<i>*The voter turnout as defined as the percentage of the voting age population that actually voted</i>				

Since South Asians, and particularly Bangladeshis and Indians, emigrated from a democratic region with high voter turnout (see **Figure 1**) and active grassroots campaigns, it is worth asking: will socialization variables offer less robust predictions of electoral engagement for this population as compared to other minority groups?

Strength of Ethnicity: Ethnicity compounds the history, beliefs, and social constructions that help one establish a cognitive filter through which to conceptualize the world and self (Ibrahim, Ohnishi, and Sandhu, 1997; Uba, 1994). Johnston (2009) writes that ethnicity refers to both the manner in which individuals define personal identity and the social stratification constructed to mark distinguishable groups based on origins – real or perceived. One important factor of ethnicity, says Lindholm (1993), is that “ethnic identities and ethnicity are both chosen, voluntary and constructed/invented/imagined, and perceived as absolute, given, and fixed.” Clearly, ethnicity is a complex phenomenon. As “fixed” ethnic groups emerged in the public sphere and fought for collective rights, they were transformed into “ethnics”, or binary, political coalitions promoted by selective histories (Kurien, 2003; Roosens, 1989).

The purpose of measuring ethnic strength is to test whether political engagement rates diverge among those strongly identified with their ethnicity and those with a weaker affiliation. Recent analyses have shown that the “linear” assimilation model of political incorporation — often using age or years in the United States variables — and attachment to transnational policy does not necessarily preclude political involvement in the United States (Nakaninishi, 2004; DeSipio, 2003; Guarnizo et al., 2003; Jones-Correa, 1998; Lien et al., 2004; Ramakrishnan, 2005). In fact, as this paper shows in **Figure 1**, South Asians have already been socialized to the role and customs of democracy, so strength of ethnicity could potentially have the opposite effect or even none at all on the level of political involvement.

Still, it is important to remember that levels of identification are determined by the individuals themselves and no one can perfectly predict which level of identification will dominate in determining political engagement. South Asians and South Asian Americans associate widely across communities built upon race, ethnicity and/or nationality, state (i.e., Baluchistan or Sindh, Gujarat or Tamil Nadu), gender, sexuality, class, religion (and within this sect, personal gods), village, caste or *jati*, language, and so forth. All levels have significant, sometimes simultaneous, and blurring social functions.

Individuals within an ethnic distinction also differ in the degree to which they feel this identity impacts their daily life. Some consider themselves South Asian first; this group is likely composed of modern secularists (Kurien, 2003). More likely these individuals identify along lines of nationality, linguistics, religion, sect, or state. Some may be knowledgeable in South Asian history, but will see the contemporary use of the identity as irrelevant; others may identify socially with South Asian communities but have no knowledge of its history (Uba, 1994; Ibrahim, Ohnishi, and Sandhu, 1997).

With the multitude of distinctions, why should this analysis focus on ethnicity or ethno-nationality? In 2000, two-thirds of the Asian American respondents preferred to identify themselves along ethno-origin specific (Indian, Filipino, or Chinese) not pan-racial specific lines like Asian American (Lien, Conway, & Wong, 2004). On September 9, 2011, the California state legislature passed Assembly Bill 1088 that required two state agencies to provide citizens a broader range of Asian American ethnicities on official forms, much like the current U.S. Census. It therefore seems profitable to explore the political behavior of a population based on identities a level or two below that of the pan-racial. This analysis will operationalize strength of ethnicity through the use of ethnic identity variables and will test their relationships with political participation for statistical significance.

(South) Asian American Politics: While this paper cannot delve into the fundamental conceptions of race and ethnicity in American politics, it can briefly discuss racialized stereotypes related to Asian Americans such as the model minority, the yellow threat, and apolitical and effeminate races. These are all central to the social constructions that constitute Asian American identities and political maneuvering. A number of important analyses, including those of Lien et al. (2004) and Wong (2005) have developed conceptualizations of Asian American politics that challenge such stereotypes. For instance, Wong (2005) helped dispel the apolitical minority myth. She showed that telephone calls and mail increased voter turnout among Asian Americans. Wong argued that due to stereotyping, political parties were less willing to spend resources mobilizing an ethnic community that they falsely believed to be inherently apolitical.

This analysis hinges on the assumption that race and ethnicity, and associated factors such as stereotypes, will continue to serve as important factors in affecting not only individuals' identity and ideology, but also public policy.

Asian America and Transnationalism: Nakanishi (2004) wrote that an Asian American model of political engagement that fails to account for transnationalism is incomplete and, indeed, the Asian Indian community remains actively involved in subcontinent affairs. For instance, American-based transnational interest groups were instrumental in pushing for the passage of the U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Deal through Congress in 2006 (Mishra, 2009). Non-governmental organizations (NGO) and individuals have also been funneling money into religious and charitable organizations in India. Of over \$2.3 billion given to NGOs in India from overseas in 2008-2009, \$740 million came from the United States (Bakshi et al., 2011). Additionally, Indian Americans have encouraged the Indian government to become more welcoming to Non-Resident Indians (NRI) owning property in India, thereby ensuring increasing material and people-to-people ties between the two countries (Lal 2008a). Yet, since Asian Americans are not often considered part of the U.S. social or racial "landscape" due to the country's historic xenophobic tendencies, Asian Americans with transnational agendas have to be care not to be defined as threatening, "disloyal"², or the racialized other.

Among the Asian sub-continent's advocacy groups, some mobilize around a South Asian identity while others mobilize around an Indic, or pan-Hindu, identity (Kurien, 2003). The major difference, Kurien suggests, is the emphasis on a secular, multi-religious, and multi-cultural version of India versus a Hindu-centric one, respectively (Kurien). Pertaining to the second affiliation, support for Hindu movements and culture have taken many forms from the affirmation of the Ayodhya riots to sustained charitable donations to religious sites and temples

² Consider the "Donorgate" controversy and the Chinese American community (Chang, 2004)

(Lal, 2008a). Additionally, Kashmir is the foreign policy issue of central concern to South Asian Muslims and non-Muslims alike; both groups suffer internal divisions of opinion though many non-Muslims feel that the United States has coddled Pakistan (Lal 2008a).

Unlike many Asian immigrants, South Asians were not recruited as foreign laborers and were never the colonial subjects of the United States. Most of the original South Asian Americans were well-educated, skilled, and affluent; they formed a very different relationship with American racial politics as compared to Filipino, Chinese, or Japanese immigrants (Shankar, 1998). In the context of Asian American Studies and within the mass identity formation process, South Asian Americans have often been considered, what Shankar et al. (1998) illustrated, as a part of, but apart from, Asian America. Most commonly “Asian American” connotes East or Southeast Asian American.

Even South Asians themselves do not acknowledge similarities with separate ethnics under the pan-continental umbrella. According to the Pilot National Asian American Political Survey (2000-2001), only 10 percent of Americans with origins in either Pakistan or India believed Asian Americans were very similar culturally, 39 percent said somewhat similar, 29 percent said somewhat different, and 21 percent said very different.

Such variations among Asian subgroups underline the reason why, despite the rich studies on Asian Americans voters, there remains a substantial gap in the Asian American literature as it tends to focus on East Asian American politics. Applying this ambiguous identity mechanism to the context of fierce South Asian rivalries and distrust, high rates of “homeland” recidivism, and other resilient ties to the subcontinent is necessary for painting a more comprehensive picture of the influences behind the South Asian electoral psyche (Lien et al., 2004).

South Asian American Political Trends: Surveys consistently show that Americans possess a negligible awareness of South Asian politics. According to a Pew Research Center News IQ Quiz conducted November 11-14, 2010, 41 percent of American survey participants knew that relations between India and Pakistan were generally considered to be unfriendly (the correct response), while 12 percent said relations between the two long-time rivals were friendly, 20 percent said they were neutral, and 27 percent did not know (Pew, 2010).

However, this does not mean that Washington has failed to notice South Asians.³ “Forget the Israel Lobby [AIPAC],” announced the *Washington Post* in 2007, “The Hill's Next Big Player Is Made in India [USINPAC] (Kamdar, 2007).” The highlight U.S.-India Political Action Committee (USINPAC) was a driving force in the passage of the U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Deal of 2006, a distinguishable policy apex in the warming bilateral relationship and a beacon for future engagement.

USINPAC was also vociferous in demanding investigations into Pakistan following the death of Osama bin Laden in 2011. In addition to USINPAC and the prominent Indian American Leadership Initiative (Democrat) and the Indian American Republican Council, there are a growing number of specialized advocacy groups, campaign consultants, and lobbyists serving the South Asian American community and informing the national policy debate.

South Asian special interests are not alone in attracting national attention to the community's needs and concerns. In October 2010, National Public Radio (NPR) pronounced that after fifty years with just two Indian American Congressmen, South Asian Americans had finally “Discover[ed] Political Clout” (Roy, 2010). Indeed, in 2010, Indian American candidates

³ South Asia will be defined as the large peninsular land mass and archipelagic chains consisting of India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. Note that this does not include Afghanistan. South Asian American immigrants may also be associated with diaspora groups established by the British Empire in the Caribbean and in Trinidad, South Africa and Mauritius (Prashad, 1998).

**FIGURE 2:
UNITED STATES ASIAN POPULATION (2010)**

Population Self-Identified as Asian Alone		Percentage of Total Population
TOTAL	14,674,252	100%
Asian Indian	2,843,391	0.9%
Chinese	3,347,229	1.1%
Filipino	2,555,923	0.8%
Japanese	763,325	0.2%
Korean	1,423,784	0.5%
Vietnamese	1,548,449	0.5%
Other Asian	2,192,151	0.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010

competed in seven Congressional districts and took at least twelve elections at other levels across the country. This was no straightforward accomplishment. South Asian American candidates continue to face a complicated slew of obstacles to electoral triumph. In the same article NPR’s Sandip Roy (2010) identified this complex, albeit predictable, candidate racialization. The South Asian American candidates “have great all-American resumes,” he wrote, “but they still have those funny names.” This “otherness” enforces the public balancing act by which candidates, such as Louisiana Governor Piyush “Bobby” Jindal, the son of Indian immigrants, must convince voters that they “are running to represent Sacramento... not Bangalore” without appearing embarrassed of their heritage (Richwine, 2009; Roy, 2010).

In addition to the increased visibility of advocacy groups and Indian American politicians, the ethnic constituency itself is expanding. Asian Indians (Indian Americans) who self-identified as single-race numbered 2.8 million in 2010 and are the second largest Asian sub-population after Chinese Americans (**Figure 2**). Advocacy organizations like the South Asian American Voting Youth, South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT), Project Impact, and the 42 partners of the National Coalition of South Asian Organizations have fought to

harness the mostly foreign-born community's growing numbers through urban voter registration drives and electoral education campaigns.

Even political parties are recognizing the emerging Asian American electoral base. In September 2011, California's Asian American leaders publicly urged Republicans to court the growing population's vote: "The Asian community, our values are exactly the same as the Republican values," said one Asian American Californian mayor, "We care about the economy, we care about family, we care about limited government, we care about fiscal conservatism" (Siders and Van Oot, 2011).

And yet, despite visible grassroots activity since the 1980s, influential special interests, warming U.S.-India relations (and cooling U.S.-Pakistan relations), and an expanding minority population, Indian Americans continue to occupy a marginal place in American political life (Gupta, 2006; Lal, 2008a; Junn et al., 2008). Certainly underrepresentation of Asian Americans in office reflects underrepresentation in voter numbers (Junn et al., 2008). However, according to the National Coalition of South Asian American organizations (2008), many South Asians continue to encounter roadblocks to political engagement through voter intimidation tactics and harassment (in rare circumstances), insufficient bilingual materials and interpreters at polls, and illegal voter identification requirements. Still the most common reasons South Asians cite for not voting are not being a citizen or registered, as compared to busy working or lack of interest in politics (Lien, 2004).

Until recently, social scientists lacked reliable data on the voting behavior of Asian Americans. In the past decade a number of political surveys have finally included and marked separate South Asians in their Asian American samples. These include: (1) the Pilot National Asian American Political Survey (PNAAPS), 2000-2001, conducted by Lien and the Inter-

FIGURE 3: SOUTH ASIAN AMERICAN POLITICAL TRENDS IN THE 2004 NATIONAL ELECTIONS	
Voter Characteristics	
25%	Of the Asian Americans Polled Were South Asian
88%	Foreign-born
42%	Were Voting in First U.S. Election
36%	Had Been Naturalized Within Past Five Years
90%	Voted for Senator John Kerry (Democrat)
74%	Were Registered Democrats
9%	Were Registered Republicans
Top Issues By South Asian Sub-Populations (1st Priority 2nd, 3rd)	
Indian	Civil Liberties, Hate Crimes, Immigration Backlogs
Bangladeshi	Civil Liberties, Hate Crimes, Immigration Backlogs
Pakistani	Civil Liberties, Legalization, Hate Crimes
Indo-Caribbean	Workers' Rights, Civil Liberties, Legalization
<i>Source: Exit poll data compiled by the Asian American Legal Defense Education Fund (AALDEF) during the 2004 national elections</i>	

university Consortium for Political and Social Research. Lien’s analysis of the multilingual survey’s findings is perhaps one of the most all-encompassing analytical studies available on the politics, partisanship, political activities, and trust-in-government levels of Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, and South Asian Americans. Data from PNAAPS will be used in this analysis.

Second is the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund’s (AALDEF) exit poll of nearly 11,000 Asian Americans following the 2004 national elections. **Figure 3** outlines the following findings of South Asians: 88 percent were foreign born, 42 percent were voting in their first U.S. election (perhaps because 36 percent had been naturalized within the past five years), 74 percent were Democrats as compared to 9 percent who were registered Republicans, and 90 percent voted for the Democratic candidate Senator John Kerry (AALDEF, 2004). Civil liberties and hate crimes were among the most important issues for Indian, Bangladeshi, and Pakistani

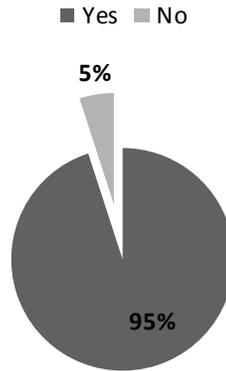
Americans, likely due to the racial profiling and discrimination faced by many Muslims (and non-Muslims) following the September 11 terrorist attacks. Immigration backlogs was another issue of concern.

The third important dataset is the (3) Social Capital Community Survey (SOCCAP), produced in both 2000 and 2006 by the Saguaro Seminar at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. Using data on Chinese, Filipino and other Asians from this survey, Ecklund and Park (2005) showed that while increases in class resources – such as educational attainment and higher income levels – are often positively correlated with civic participation for other groups of Americans, this is not necessarily the case for Asian Americans, thereby dispelling the civic model minority myth. According to the authors, the larger implications of their findings was that researchers should not assume that emerging diverse communities will fit the models of civic participation of other groups (Ecklund et al., 2005).

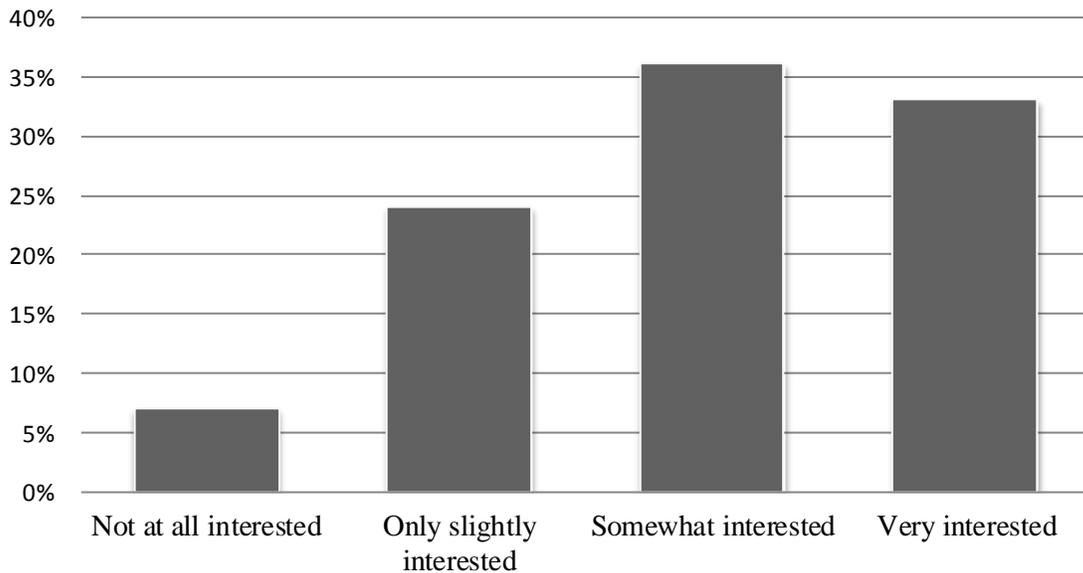
Unfortunately, even when the two different years' SOCCAP surveys are combined, the sample size of South Asians (Indian/Pakistani) is simply too small (58 South Asians) for use in generalizing any national South Asian trends. **Figure 4** outlines some of the insights from the 2000 data on social capital: particularly that most South Asians identify with their ethnic community, 42 percent were citizens, 67 percent of South Asian American citizens were registered to vote, and 73 percent of these individuals voted in the 1996 presidential elections.

**FIGURE 4:
SOUTH ASIAN AMERICANS AND SOCIAL CAPITAL (2000)***

Do people who share your ethnic background give you a sense of community?



How interested are you in politics or national affairs?



Citizen: 42% of Indian Americans in sample
Registered to vote: 30% (67% of Indian American citizens)
Voted (1996): 34% (73% of registered Indian American citizens)

**Keep in mind that this sample was taken prior to the September 11th attacks of 2001. Unfortunately, the South Asian American sample from the 2006 SOCCAP is not large enough for comparison.*

Source: SOCCAP, 2000

The most recent survey is the 2008 (4) Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund’s (AALDEF) National Asian American Survey. Junn et al. (2008) created the NAAS to fill the gap left in earlier pre-election surveys, media polls, and post-election analyses which were often biased toward those educated, well-off, U.S. born, English proficient, and otherwise assimilated Asian Americans. This study found that most South Asian American citizens were registered and voting Democrats; they were most concerned with issues of civil liberties, immigration, and workers’ rights; and as a collective entity, the Asian Indian community was the second Asian American group most likely to vote after Japanese Americans (**Figure 5**).

Although the analyses based on this data offer powerful insights into Asian American political behavior, all of the analyses have focused on East and Southeast Asian Americans due to population numbers, available data, and a more prominent focus on these ethnic groups within Asian America scholarship. This analysis will attempt to fill the holes in pan-ethnic political analyses by extending the study to Indian and Pakistani voters and their engagement in electoral politics.

The next section will proceed with the statistical side of the following hypotheses: **Hypothesis One:** For South Asians, interest in politics (*interest*) is positively associated with strength of ethnicity measurements; and **Hypothesis Two:** For South Asians, having voted in 2000 (*voted2000*) is positively associated with strength of ethnicity measurements.

**FIGURE 5:
INDIAN AMERICAN POLITICAL TRENDS (2008 NATIONAL ELECTIONS)**

<u>Voter Preference</u>		<u>Party Identification</u>		<u>Political Participation In The Past Twelve Months</u>	
McCain-R	13%	Democrat	39%	Discussed politics with family and friends	70%
Obama-D	53%	Indepent	21%	Worked for a candidate, party, or other campaign organization	4%
Other	1%	Republican	7%	Contributed to candidate or party	13%
Undecided	33%	Non-Partisan	33%	Visited internet to discuss a candidate or issue	14%
TOTAL	100%		100%		101%

Source: National Asian American Survey (NAAS): Asian Americans and the 2008 Election

STATISTICAL MODEL

Survey Data: As mentioned previously, the PNAAPS is a multiethnic and multilingual survey meant to gauge political attitude and behavior of Asian Americans on a national scale (Lien, 2001). Lien sampled U.S. households representing each of the six major Asian-American ancestries in 2000-2001: Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, South Asian, and Vietnamese.

Again, South Asians are analyzed here independently of other Asian ethnics since ethnicity ranks among South Asians' top identifiers. Among Indians and Pakistanis in the sample, for instance, 12 percent elected to self-identify as American (only), 26 percent as Asian

FIGURE 6: 2000 SOUTH ASIAN AMERICAN STATISTICS	
<i>Age</i>	
Range	18-95 years old
Mean	36
Standard Deviation	13.2 (n=118)
<i>Sex</i>	
Male	77 (58%)
Female	56 (42%) (n=133)
<i>Income</i>	
Range	\$5,000-80,000
Mean	\$52,243
Standard Deviation	22,874 (n=107)
<i>Education</i>	
Range	0-18 years
Frequency	High School or less (3 individuals) High School Graduate (7 individuals) Some College (22 individuals) College Graduate (58 individuals) Graduate School or More (34 individuals)
Mean	16 years (College Graduate)
Standard Deviation	2.3 (n=124)
<i>Source: PNAAPS (2000-2001)</i>	

American, 5 percent as Asian, 30 percent as Indian/Pakistani American (ethnic American), 18 percent as Indian/Pakistani (ethnic), 7 percent as unsure, and the remaining individuals refused to respond. That means that 48 percent identified primarily as ethnic or ethnic American. Note that while approximately 133 individuals or 12 percent of the sample, identified as Indian or Pakistani, these were the only two South Asian nationalities available for selection.

This analysis will incorporate within the South Asian category all surveyed individuals who had ancestral origins within the subcontinent. In addition to ethnic South Asians there were also twelve ethnic Filipinos with South Asian origins. These individuals were included in the model since they may share comparable social conceptions of politics, democracy, and civic engagement with Indians or Pakistanis.

Figure 6 summarizes the key characteristics of the survey's South Asian American sample. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 95 years with an average age of 36. In terms of gender the sample appears skewed towards men with its 58 to 42 ratio. On average, participants were college graduates and had an annual income of \$55,243.

Methodology: Using the information available on the surveyed South and other Asian Americans, this analysis will test two hypotheses relating measures of political participation to ethnic strength using logit models. This specific statistical method will help to determine the probability that a selected individual voted in the 2000 presidential elections or expressed interest in politics.

The models utilize the strategy for identifying relationships of testing numerous specifications in order to eliminate as much omitted variable bias as possible. This appears to be the most credible and suitable tool for this scenario due to several factors like pooled data unavailability and small sample sizes. For instance, until recently, many national surveys did not

**FIGURE 7:
LINKED FATE TO CO-ETHNICS (OTHER INDIAN OR
PAKISTANIS) IN 2000**

Do you think what happens generally to Indian or Pakistani Americans will affect what happens in your life?

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<i>Yes</i>	76	61
<i>No</i>	48	39
Total	124	100%

Will it affect it a lot, some or not very much?

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<i>A Lot</i>	33	43
<i>Some</i>	34	45
<i>Not Much</i>	5	7
<i>Not Sure</i>	4	5
Total	76	100%

Source: PNAAPS (2000-2001)

reduce identification beyond the racial level (i.e., Asian) to the ethnic (i.e., Indian). Federal surveys and census questions tend to lump Indians and Pakistanis under the Asian or Other Asian umbrella. Such factors limit the utility of alternative strategies such as Regression Discontinuity (RD), Fixed Effects, or Instrumental Variables.⁴ Yet, as demonstrated in **Figure 7** and in earlier sections, ethnicity is an important identifier for South Asians, often a central or primary source of community, and therefore it must be considered when studying voter trends.

This next section will outline the dependent and independent variables in addition to their hypothesized associations. The primary hypothesis assumes that the stronger one associates oneself with being Indian/Pakistani, or the more interested one is in Asian affairs, the stronger

⁴ Research Discontinuity, Fixed Effects, and Instrumental Variable models all refer to alternative identification strategies. Research Discontinuity (RD) is a before-and-after two group design that assigns the treatment to one group based solely on a random cutoff score of a preprogram measure (Trochim, 1994). Fixed Effects (FE) attempts to identify relationships between variables by eliminating any time invariant characteristics that could be biasing the estimate. Instrument Variable (IV) models try to isolate variation in the independent variable(s) of interest that is not correlated with anything in the error term in order to reduce potential variable bias.

one's embedded pride in, command of, and participation in democratic institutions. This might be due to the rich history of particularly active political engagement in the homeland. The hypothesized association between a strong ethnic identity and the willingness to exert political will is predicted to be positive among South Asian American voters.

Controlling for years in the United States (*yearsUS*) will help to determine the power of socialization. Socialization analyses have found that years in the United States has a greater impact on the development of partisanship and therefore participation in U.S. politics than socio-economic factors and age (Cho, 1999; Wong, 2000; Conway, 1991; Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993; Lien, 1994; Uhlaner, 1996; Cornwell, 1960). Alternatively, low participation has been shown to be positively associated with foreign-born status and English non-proficiency within minority communities (Wong, 2000).

In order to eliminate bias and account for other common covariates for electoral participation in the United States, controls are added to the model to account for demographic and socio-economic indicators such as age (*age*), income level (*lincome* or *income*), gender (*male*), and educational attainment (*education*). It is predicted that these controls will share a similar relationship with political participation among South Asians as they do for the general population. Namely, income and age should have a positive association with voting rates (Grafstein, 2005; Filer et al., 1993). As predicted by socialization models such as Wong's (2005), age itself should not have a statistically significant effect on voting or partisanship once the model has accounted for years in the United States. Still, age could have a weak, positive effect on participation due to the role age-related increases play in community attachment and political participation (Strate et al., 1989). Dee (2004) has also shown that educational

attainment has large and statistically significant effects on voter participation and the quality of civic knowledge.

Personal experience with discrimination, particularly discrimination based on ethnicity, and direct experience with hate crimes, may be related to political activity, so it is included in the model. The hate crime dummy (*hatecrime*) does not include any post-9/11 data, after which point the United States witnessed a significant spike in hate crimes and discrimination against Arab and South Asian Muslims. Still, including the variable might prove useful in this analysis. For example, one might expect that personal experience with discrimination or hate crimes

**FIGURE 8:
ETHNIC STRENGTH MEASUREMENTS FOR SOUTH ASIANS (2000)**

	<i>YES</i>	<i>NO/UNSURE</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>N</i>
<i>Birth Place</i>				
Parents Born in Asia	77%	23%	100%	n=22
Individual Born in Asia	86%	14%	100%	n=133
<i>Home Life</i>				
Mixed or Non-English Language	79%	21%	100%	n=131
Mostly Asian Neighborhood	7%	93%	100%	n=132
Asian Spouse	100%	0%	100%	n=76
<i>News Source and Content</i>				
Follow Asian News in America	48%	52%	100%	n=132
Follow Asian News	54%	46%	100%	n=132
Consistent Use of Ethnic Media for News	44%	56%	100%	n=128
<i>Religious Life</i>				
Hindu	46%			n=133
Muslim	18%			n=133
Christian	2%			n=133
Attends Religious Services At Least Once A Month	61%	39%	100%	n=133
<i>Other</i>				
Contact with Home Country At Least Once a Month	65%	35%	100%	n=133

Source: PNAAPS (2000-2001)

would discourage civic engagement and force a community to withdraw into itself (Gabbidon & Greene, 2005).

The key independent variables represent the individual's strength of ethnicity: use of foreign language at home (*mixlang*), believe fate is linked to other South Asians (*linked*), regularly attends religious services (*religious*), and follows Asian news (*asianews*).

Figure 8 lists some of the frequency statistics of these and a few additional ethnic strength variables for the South Asian sample. Most of the individuals and their parents were born in Asia. All married respondents had an Asian spouse. Nearly half followed Asian American and Asian news, many utilized ethnic media sources, and about 65 percent maintained regular contact with the home country. Approximately 60 percent were actively involved in religious life and the most represented religions were Hinduism (46 percent) and Islam (18 percent).

Figure 9 highlights the following points about the political participation characteristics of the sample including: 37 percent of all South Asians voted in 2000, about 73 percent were very interested in politics, and most were registered Democrats who voted for presidential candidate Al Gore in 2000.

Models: The (2) models are specified as such:

$$(1) \text{Logit}(\textit{interest}) = \ln\left(\frac{\pi}{1-\pi}\right) = \alpha + \beta_1(\textit{soas}) + \beta_2(\textit{mixlang}) + \beta_3(\textit{linked}) + \beta_4(\textit{yearsUS}) + \beta_5(\textit{religious}) + \beta_6(\textit{ethnicselfid}) + \beta_7(\textit{asianews}) + \beta_8(\log(\textit{income})) + \beta_9(\textit{male}) + \beta_{10}(\textit{education}) + \beta_{11}(\textit{age})$$

$$(2) \text{Logit}(\textit{voted2000}) = \ln\left(\frac{\pi}{1-\pi}\right) = \alpha + \beta_1(\textit{soas}) + \beta_2(\textit{yearsUS}) + \beta_3(\textit{religious}) + \beta_4(\textit{asianews}) + \beta_5(\textit{income}) + \beta_6(\textit{education}) + \beta_7(\textit{age}) + \beta_8(\textit{interest}) + \beta_9(\textit{hatecrime})$$

**FIGURE 9:
SOUTH ASIAN AMERICAN POLITICAL
CHARACTERISTICS (2000)**

<i>Voted in 2000</i>	
Yes	37%
No	63%
Total	100%
<i>Interested in Politics</i>	
Very or Somewhat (Y)	73%
Slightly or Not Interested (N)	28%
Total	101%
<i>Presidential Vote</i>	
Gore=D	49%
Bush=R	31%
Nader=I	2%
Refused	18%
Total	100%
<i>Party Affiliation</i>	
Democrat	43%
Republican	12%
Independent	25%
None or Not Sure	17%
Refused	4%
Total	101%
<i>Source: PNAAPS (2000-2001)</i>	

Exhibit 1 and **Figures 10** and **11** outline the relationships between the dependent variables that measure political interest and participation and the independent variables. **Exhibit 1** provides an overview of all variables of interest, their descriptive statistics and definitions if necessary, and the hypothesized relationship between the independent variables and the political participation variables.

**EXHIBIT 1:
ESTIMATION MODEL VARIABLES**

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Definition or Mean (Standard Deviation)</i>	<i>Hypothesized Relationship</i>	<i>Justification</i>
<i>Dependent Variables (Political Participation)</i>			
Interest in Politics	Dummy*		
Voted in 2000	Dummy**		
<i>Independent Variables (Ethnic Strength)</i>			
South Asian Dummy	Dummy	Strong (+)	Literature
Years in U.S. on Permanent Basis	12.7 (15.1)	Strong (+)	Literature
Mixed or Alternative Home Language	Dummy**	Weak (+)	Literature
Linked Fate to Co-ethnics	Dummy**; Believes fate linked to other South Asians	Weak (+)	Observation (Fig. 7,10)
Attends Religious Services	Dummy	Medium (+)	Literature, Theory
Victim of Hate Crime	Dummy**	Weak (-)	Literature
Identify Primarily as Indian/Pakistani or I/P American	Dummy: Versus American, Asian, or Asian American	Weak (+)	Theory
Follows Asian News	Dummy**	Strong (+)	Theory
<i>Independent Variables (Controls)</i>			
Ethnic Discrimination Dummy	Dummy**	Medium (+)	Theory
Log(Income)	Income \$52,243 (22,874)**	Weak (+)	Literature
Male	1=Male 0 = Female	Weak (-)	Theory
Highest Level of Education	15.7 (2.3)***	Weak (+)	Literature
Age	36.0 (13.2)	Weak (+)	Literature

*Very interested and somewhat interested were coded 1; slightly or not at all interested were coded 0

**Unsure or Refused were coded as missing

***Recoded to ordinal using the midpoint within each of the first six income categories, 80K for all above 80K, and coded as missing any Unsure or Refused

**** Coded as: 0= middle school or less, 10=some high school, 12=high school grad, 14=vocational grad, 16=college grad or some grad school, and 18=grad degree or more

**FIGURE 10:
SOUTH ASIAN AMERICAN CITIZENS WHO
VOTED IN 2000 BY LINKED FATE AND YEARS
IN THE UNITED STATES**

<i>(1) Linked Fate to Co-ethnics</i>			
	Total	Yes	No
Total	61	42	19
Total voted	48	36	12
Men	23	18	5
Women	25	18	7
Total Not Voted	13	6	7
Men	7	4	3
Women	6	2	4
<i>(2) Years in the United States (Permanent Basis)*</i>			
	Total	<=10	>10
Total	48	12	36
Total Voted	36	9	27
Men	20	4	16
Women	16	5	11
Total Not Voted	12	3	9
Men	9	3	6
Women	3	0	3

*Note: $n=49$, $sd=16.4$, $mean=20.4$
Source: PNAAPS, 2000-2001

Figure 10 shows the association between ethnic strength variable *linked* and whether South Asian individuals voted in 2000. The results are presented in total and by gender. Seventy-five percent of South Asians who voted believed their fate was linked to that of other South Asians. Among those that did not vote, there was essentially no difference between those who believed their fate was linked and those who did not.

Figure 10 also addresses the socialization term, in other words, total years in the United States on a permanent basis. Of the 54 South Asian citizens who responded to question on “the

length of stay” in the United States, three-fourths had voted. There appeared to be no difference in whether one voted according to length of stay: 75 percent of those who voted had lived in the United States for ten years or longer while the same ratio held true for those who have not voted.

Figure 11 lists statistics on three more ethnic strength measurements and interest in politics, an ordinal measure of political participation. Most Hindus, Muslims, and Christians were very or somewhat interested in politics. Forty-four percent of those active in their religious communities were very interested in politics while only 12 percent were not at all interested.

FIGURE 11: SOUTH ASIANS' INTEREST IN POLITICS BY ETHNIC STRENGTH				
Ethnic Strength Measurement				
<i>(1) Religious Preference</i>				
	Total	Hindu	Muslim	Christian
Total	52	39	9	4
Very Interested	19	12	4	3
Somewhat	20	18	2	0
Slightly	7	4	2	1
Not Interested	6	5	1	0
<i>(2) Active in Religious Community/Life</i>				
	Total	Active	Not Active	
Total	71	66	5	
Very Interested	30	29	1	
Somewhat	23	19	4	
Slightly	10	10	0	
Not Interested	8	8	0	
<i>(3) Follow Asian News</i>				
	Total	Yes	No	
Total	74	39	35	
Very Interested	32	19	13	
Somewhat	23	11	12	
Slightly	10	3	7	
Not Interested	9	6	3	
<i>Source: PNAAPS, 2000-2001</i>				

Furthermore most of those who followed Asian news were very interested in politics (49 percent) or somewhat interested (28 percent).

Potential Problems: One major concern is the small South Asian sample size (145 or less). Undiscriminating analysis of this data could unwittingly transfer generalizations from an unrepresentative sample to the entire population. One way to offset the problem of small samples is to collapse non-essential groups within variables (such as Refused or Unsure). Another concern is that this data is becoming dated, but little can be done on this note until more recent survey results are made public.

POLICY RELEVANCE

Congresswomen and men with sizeable South Asian American populations in their districts are interested in and becoming more well-versed in the needs of this growing ethnic group; so too are the representatives wooed by powerful business lobbies that represent big budget items like defense and technology production. Those who represent districts like the Bay Area in California and Boston, Massachusetts, which are both home to technology start-ups and industry giants alike, possess a substantial interest in skilled migration policy – an issue of critical importance to Asian Indians and these industries. USINPAC (the Indian American lobby) is also considered one of the most politically influential ethnically-charged lobbies, behind the Israeli and Cuban American lobbies, and it is likely it too, with time, will only increase in power and influence.

Civil rights organizations and non-profits, particularly those involved in voting rights laws and redistricting efforts, also have a stake in understanding and engaging this growing population base. A number of such groups are currently working toward full participation of Asian Americans and other underserved minorities in the political process. Many are working to ensure that these minority communities have a political voice. Their efforts toward voter-related issues and election reform policy require comprehensive, accurate, and timely analysis of the existing local demography.

Redistricting and shifting electoral base demographics are also of interest to most politicians and candidates in an ever diversifying national landscape. As made clear by Karen Narasaki, President and Executive Director of the Asian American Justice Center in Washington, D.C., “Asian American communities are growing fastest in states likely to be contentious in next year’s (2012) Presidential election (i.e., Nevada, Arizona, North Carolina, North Dakota,

Georgia, Texas). [The Asian population boom] should be a wake-up call to political parties that Asian Americans are an emerging political force not only in California, New York or Hawaii, but throughout the country” (Asian American Center for Advancing Justice, 2011). While the report refers to all Asian American growth and not just that of the South Asian community, the Census data makes it clear that Indians, Pakistanis, and even Bangladeshis and Sri Lankans, are increasing in population and strength.

ANALYSIS

This next section offers an analysis of the logistic regression results in context of this paper's primary hypotheses. Once again, the association between a strong ethnic identity, operationalized through the ethnic strength variables *linked*, *religious*, *hatecrime*, *ethnicselfid*, and *asianews*, and the willingness or desire to exert political will, captured by one of the two dependent variables *voted2000* and *interest*, is hypothesized to be positive among South Asian Americans.

This study also incorporated a socialization variable (*yearsUS*) into the models in order to better understand if South Asians required less of a socialization period than other ethnic or ethnic American communities, perhaps due to earlier experience with or attachment to high-participation democratic ideals.

With these hypotheses in mind, the regression models were built around the following questions: (1) Are South Asians more likely to vote or be interested in politics than other Asians/Asian Americans?; (2) Do ethnic strength variables play a more substantial role in explaining whether South Asians voted or were interested in politics than years in the United States?; and (3) Does this hold for other Asian Americans as well?

Table 12 outlines the results from the study's two logistic regressions:

Model 1:

$$\text{Logit}(\textit{interest}) = \ln\left(\frac{\pi}{1-\pi}\right) = \alpha + \beta_1(\textit{soas}) + \beta_2(\textit{mixlang}) + \beta_3(\textit{linked}) + \beta_4(\textit{yearsUS}) + \beta_5(\textit{religious}) + \beta_6(\textit{ethnicselfid}) + \beta_7(\textit{asianews}) + \beta_8(\textit{log}(\textit{income})) + \beta_9(\textit{male}) + \beta_{10}(\textit{education}) + \beta_{11}(\textit{age})$$

Model 2:

$$\text{Logit}(\textit{voted2000}) = \ln\left(\frac{\pi}{1-\pi}\right) = \alpha + \beta_1(\textit{soas}) + \beta_2(\textit{yearsUS}) + \beta_3(\textit{religious}) + \beta_4(\textit{asianews}) + \beta_5(\textit{income}) + \beta_6(\textit{education}) + \beta_7(\textit{age}) + \beta_8(\textit{interest}) + \beta_9(\textit{hatecrime})$$

Both regressions⁵ were run three times using different sample populations in order to, first, obtain predictions based on the entire Asian American sample population and second, to

FIGURE 12:
LOGIT ESTIMATES REGARDING ASIAN AMERICANS AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

<i>Dependent Variable</i>	<i>Model 1: Interest</i>			<i>Model 2: Voted2000</i>		
	<i>(a)</i>	<i>(b)</i>	<i>(c)</i>	<i>(a)</i>	<i>(b)</i>	<i>(c)</i>
	<i>All Asian Subgroups</i>	<i>South Asian Only</i>	<i>Non-South Asian Only</i>	<i>All Asian Subgroups</i>	<i>South Asian Only</i>	<i>Non-South Asian Only</i>
South Asian	0.67 [2.10]**			0.48 [1.13]		
Mixed Language	-0.72 [-2.10]**	-2.08 [-1.76]*	-0.68 [-1.80]*			
Linked Fate	0.33 [1.62]	0.84 [1.08]	0.34 [1.58]			
Years in U.S.	-0.01 [-0.67]	-0.01 [-0.53]	0.00 [-0.38]	0.03 [2.22]**	-0.01 [-0.19]	0.03 [2.36]**
Religious	-0.23 [-0.96]	-0.16 [-0.10]	-0.23 [-0.92]	0.77 [2.76]***	4.00 [2.15]**	0.69 [2.41]**
Ethnic Self-identification	-0.09 [-0.39]	0.62 [0.88]	-0.16 [-0.61]			
Follows Asia News	1.30 [6.32]***	0.79 [1.08]	1.34 [6.13]***	0.34 [1.35]	0.25 [0.25]	0.40 [1.50]
log (Income)	-0.25 [-1.68]*	-0.07 [-0.09]	-0.27 [-1.78]*			
Income				0.00 [-0.40]	0.00 [-1.69]*	0.00 [-0.11]
Male	-0.16 [-0.78]	-2.34 [-2.58]***	0.03 [0.13]			
Education	0.07 [2.47]**	0.24 [1.63]*	0.06 [2.06]**	0.06 [1.98]**	0.17 [1.03]	0.06 [1.92]*
Age	0.01 [1.01]	0.03 [1.00]	0.01 [0.69]			
Interest in Politics				0.47 [1.86]*	1.34 [1.11]	0.45 [1.70]*
Victim of Hate Crime				-0.15 [-0.47]	0.57 [0.45]	-0.21 [-0.62]
n=	538	76	462	356	39	317
Pseudo R Squared	0.10	0.24	0.09	0.07	0.21	0.06
Prob > Chi Squared	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.28	0.00

*Notes: All models for the DV Voted in 2000 include only citizens. Log odds coefficients included with z scores in brackets.
***significant at 1%, **significant at 5%, *significant at 10%*

⁵ Diagnostic tests found the following: None of the pairwise correlations among the explanatory variables were in excess of 0.80, therefore, multicollinearity was not a concern for these models (**Figure A.1**). The likelihood ratio chi-square statistic for equations 1(a-c) and 2(a) and (c) was statistically significant at the 95% confidence level showing that the models as a whole fit better than models with no predictor parameters; the likelihood ratio chi-square statistic from 2(b) was not significantly statistic; and link tests found no specification error in any of the six regressions (**Figure A.2**). One significant problem for the 1(b) and 2(b) equations was the low number of observations, 76 and 39, respectively.

compare parameters for each of the two subpopulations, South Asians and non-South Asians. Both (a) models incorporate all Asian American subgroups from the sample in the regression, (b) models include only South Asians, and (c) models include all non-South Asian subgroups including Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Japanese or Filipino. Regressions for the *voted* dependent variable further restrict observations to U.S. citizens since only they can vote.

Interest in Politics: Model 1(a) helps answer the question of whether South Asians are more likely to be interested in politics than other Asian Americans – 538 Asian Americans from the survey were included. Of those participants, 76 were South Asian (model 1(b)) and 462 identified with other Asian subgroups (model 1(c)).

According to the results of model 1(a) (**Table 12**), the log of the odds of an individual being interested in politics is positively and significantly associated with being South Asian ($p < 0.05$). In other words, all else equal, South Asians are more likely to be interested in politics (80 percent predicted probability of *interest*) than non-South Asians (67 percent). **Table 13** illustrates that this difference in predicted probabilities holds regardless of education level: 77 percent for South Asians and 64 percent for non-South Asians with a high school degree, and for individuals with a college degree, 82 and 70 percent, respectively. Therefore the answer to question 1 in this case is a strong affirmative.

As for the ethnic strength variables, the *mixlang* coefficient was significant ($p < 0.05$) and negative, meaning, one who speaks a non-English language or mixed languages at home rather than just English is predicted to have less interest in politics. The only other significant ethnic strength variable was *asianews* which has a strong, positive association with *interest* ($p < 0.01$). This strong, positive correlation for all Asians follows logic – people who follow news closely are also likely to be interested in politics.

**FIGURE 13:
ASIAN AMERICANS AND THEIR PREDICTED
LEVEL OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OR
INTEREST**

Are South Asians more likely to participate in politics than other Asians/Asian Americans?

	Predicted Probabilities	
	Interested in Politics	Voted in 2000*
Actual Sample Total	0.62	0.66
South Asians	0.80	0.75
Other Asians**	0.67	0.65
<i>For individuals with a high school degree:</i>		
South Asians	0.77	0.73
Other Asians	0.64	0.63
<i>For individuals with a college degree:</i>		
South Asians	0.82	0.77
Other Asians	0.70	0.68

**Citizens only*

***Other Asians may refer to the following ethnicity options:
Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Japanese, or Filipino.*

Models 1(b) and (c) help answer the next question foundational to the hypothesis: Do ethnic strength variables play a more substantial role in explaining whether one is interested in politics than *yearsUS* for South Asians in comparison to non-South Asians?

Model 1(b) is the logistic regression for South Asians only. Of the ethnic strength variables, *mixlang* was the only statistically significant one ($p < 0.10$). Surprisingly, religiosity was not statistically significant even though many experts associate religious activity with heightened civic participation (Ecklund. & Park, 2005; Harris, 1994). Further study is

recommended to uncover the differences in religions between South and non-South Asians and why this might matter for political activity.

None of the remaining ethnic strength variables were associated with a greater likelihood of the individual being interested in politics. Those variables include: the belief in linked fate to

FIGURE 14:
PREDICTED PROBABILITIES OF INTEREST AND PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS BY CHARACTERISTIC FOR SOUTH ASIAN AND OTHER ASIAN AMERICANS, HOLDING OTHER VARIABLES AT THEIR MEANS

Characteristic		Predicted Probabilities for South Asians		Predicted Probabilities for Non-South Asians*	
		Interested in Politics	Voted in 2000**	Interested in Politics	Voted in 2000**
		1-90 years		Decreases steadily in predicted probability with increased years in U.S., from 1 year (0.86) to 90 years (0.71)	
Years in the U.S.	1-90 years	Decreases steadily in predicted probability with increased years in U.S., from 1 year (0.86) to 90 years (0.71)	Decreases steadily in predicted probability with increased years in U.S., from 1 year (0.84) to 90 years (0.72)	Decreases steadily in predicted probability with increased years in U.S., from 1 year (0.68) to 90 years (0.59)	Increases steadily in predicted probability with increased years in U.S., from 1 year (0.52) to 90 years (0.95)
Follows Asia News	Yes	0.88	0.84	0.76	0.68
	No	0.77	0.80	0.46	0.59
Mixed Language	Yes	0.78		0.66	
	No	0.97		0.79	
Linked Fate	Yes	0.88		0.70	
	No	0.76		0.62	
Religious	Yes	0.84	0.86	0.66	0.68
	No	0.86	0.10	0.71	0.52
Gender	Male	0.70		0.68	
	Female	0.96		0.67	
Ethnic Self-identification	Yes	0.88		0.66	
	No	0.79		0.70	
Education	None	0.12	0.26	0.48	0.44
	10 years	0.59	0.65	0.62	0.59
	12	0.69	0.72	0.65	0.62
	14	0.79	0.78	0.67	0.65
	16	0.85	0.84	0.70	0.68
	18	0.90	0.88	0.72	0.70
Hate Crime Victim	Yes		0.88		0.61
	No		0.80		0.66

*May refer to the following ethnicity options: Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Japanese, or Filipino.

**Citizens only

other co-ethnics (*linked*), voluntary ethnic self-identification (*ethnicselfid*), and the dummy for whether one follows news from Asia (*asianews*). However, this latter variable was significant for non-South Asians where following the news had a strong positive influence on interest in politics.

For controls, there were two significant independent variables: *education* and *male*. The *education* coefficient was positive, suggesting that increased years of schooling was associated with a greater likelihood of interest in politics, as has been the case with other studies on educational attainment and voter participation (Dee, 2004). The *male* dummy is also significant ($P < 0.01$) and negative, meaning that female South Asians are more likely to be interested in politics (96 percent probability of being interested) holding all other variables fixed. Comparatively, South Asian men have a 70 percent probability of being interested in politics. This gender disparity is typical among American voters in general.

The continuous variable *yearsUS* was not significant. However, although the year-to-year changes were small, there was still a clear and steady decrease in predicted probability of interest in politics, from 1 year (86 percent) to 90 years (71 percent) (**Table 15**).

Finally, South Asian individuals who speak multiple languages have a 78 percent probability of being interested in politics while one without mixed language use had a 97 percent probability of being interested (**Table 14**). The only remaining noteworthy finding was *lincome*, which had a significant negative association with *interest*. That is, those with higher incomes were less interested in politics. While previous analyses and popular opinion have found positive associations between income and voting, this paper's finding fits more with others that have found a non-linear relationship between the two (Filer, et al., 1993).

Voted in 2000: Model 2(a) helps answer the question of whether South Asian citizens are more likely to vote in 2000 than other Asian American citizens – 356 Asian Americans from the survey were included. Of those participants, 39 were South Asian (model 2(b)) and 317 identified with other Asian subgroups (model 2(c)).

According to the regression results, the log of the odds of an individual voting is not statistically significant for being South Asian (**Table 12**). Additionally, the difference in predicted probabilities between South and non-South Asians did not vary much by education level (**Table 13**). For example, among South Asian individuals with a high school degree, there was a 73 percent predicted probability for having voted and 63 percent for non-South Asians, and for individuals with a college degree, 77 percent and 68 percent, respectively.

Of the independent variables, four were significant: the *yearsUS* predictor was positively associated with the probability of an individual having voted ($p < 0.05$). This is the typical finding with socialization analyses. Additionally, the *religious*, *education*, and *interest* variables were also positively associated with having voted ($p < 0.01$, $p < 0.05$, and $p < 0.10$) (**Table 12**). It is noteworthy that while *religious* was significant for *voted2000* it was not significant for *interest*. Studies have found that religion fosters civic participation, it is used as a resource for political mobilization, and it provides immigrants with the opportunities for leadership and membership that find an outlet in politics (Ecklund. & Park, 2005; Harris, 1994). It is possible that community mobilization in support of a political party or candidate more favorable to the church or other religious institution's likings may be associated with an increase in voter participation without actually making the individual more interested in politics in general.

Models 2(b) and (c) will further help to answer the next question behind our hypothesis: Do ethnic strength variables play a more influential role in determining whether one voted in 2000 than *yearsUS* for South Asians in comparison to non-South Asians?

For South Asians, being religious was more important than time in the United States. For non-South Asians, both were important in predicting likelihood of voting. The probability of a South Asian individual having voted was positively associated with whether that individual is religious. Although the *yearsUS* continuous variable was not significant, there was a steady, though small, year-to-year decrease in predicted probability of having voted, from 1 year (84 percent predicted probability of having voted) to 90 years (72 percent) (**Table 14**).

In contrast, non-South Asians experienced a steady increase in predicted probability of having voted with increased years. This finding seems more in line with most socialization analyses which predict a strong, positive relationship between the two. The lack of significance between years in the United States and likelihood of voting among South Asians could be due to their small sample size; there is just not enough variation to determine a relationship.

Other significant variables in these models (b,c) included *income* for South Asians and *interest* for non-South Asians. The income predictor is close to zero, though slightly negative, meaning that all else equal, as income increases, a South Asian individual had a lesser probability of having voted. This *income* finding is unusual but not unheard of since voter turnout has been found not just to have a positive correlation with income but also to fall before rising again as individuals move up the income distribution (Filer, et al., 1993). All else equal, religious individuals, and non-South Asians interested in politics were more likely to vote than their counterparts.

Conclusions: Are South Asians more likely to be interested in politics or have voted than other Asians/Asian Americans? Yes and maybe. The results suggest that South Asians are indeed more likely to be interested in politics than non-South Asians. The results on voting are inconclusive. More work needs to be done comparing each individual Asian subgroup to the South Asian subgroup.

Do ethnic strength variables play a more influential role in determining whether a South Asian was interested in politics or voted than *yearsUS* and does this differ from the results for other Asian Americans? The results led to more questions than answers. *YearsUS* was not significant in any of the *interest* regressions. This might be expected since an interest in politics might have little to no relationship with one's years in the United States since politics is universal. As for the *voted2000* regressions, the *yearsUS* variable is significant and weakly positive for non-South Asians. The *religious* variable is also significant and strongly positive. While these results are potentially interesting, it is clear that much more data must be collected on South Asian Americans and work done on this topic before any definitive conclusions can be drawn.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Today in the United States, single-race Asian Indians (Indian Americans) number 2.8 million, nearly 20 percent of the Asian population, and represent the second largest Asian ethnic group after Chinese Americans. South Asians no longer just live in ethnic enclaves of major U.S. cities; they have traveled and settled throughout the United States, affecting the demographics of countless communities and political jurisdictions. Furthermore, they are very interested in politics and have a high probability of voting, at least in presidential elections.

This paper recommends that South Asian American advocate organizations follow a two-pronged approach in order to ensure that South Asians move closer towards full participation in U.S. elections. First they must close the gap in interest in politics in order to ensure participation in politics. This is particularly important since, as the logit results showed, a positive relationship exists between interest in politics and voting. Voter organizations must look to the missing demographic and find a way to encourage its engagement.

In this case, voter efforts should focus first on South Asian men as they have exhibited less interest in politics. These organizations should consider framing their approach to men by looking at other parameters that share a positive relationship with interest in politics. For instance, these organizations can promote more international national news outlets geared specifically to men or find more long-term ways to increase their educational achievement and electoral awareness.

Second, these groups must ensure that those eligible and interested in voting are not deterred from doing so. The most significant impediment to South Asian Americans' fulfilling of their electoral responsibility has been not being a citizen or registered, as compared to lack of interest (Lien, 2004). Dissecting the citizenship issue would take up another full analysis and is

beyond the scope of this paper. However, registration and voter-day issues must be addressed and overcome in order to enable and encourage full participation of this ethnic community already socialized to functioning democracies.

For Asian American advocates and Get Out The Vote (GOTV) organizations, such efforts to increase registration and voter follow-through must include:

- (1) Fighting unconstitutional voter ID laws that are now popping up in states across the nation. These laws disproportionately affect minorities and may hinder full electoral participation on voting day;
- (2) Ensuring that jurisdictions covered by Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 receive the proper language assistance at the polls. In order to qualify for Section 203 bilingual voting assistance, a community must meet both requirements: (1) More than 5 percent of the voting-age citizens belong to a single language minority community and are limited English proficient (LEP) *or* more than 10,000 voting-age citizens belong to a single language minority community and are LEP; *and* (2) the illiteracy rate of the citizens in that language minority community is higher than the national illiteracy rate. In 2011, four jurisdictions were required to provide voting assistance in a South Asian language including: Los Angeles County, California (Asian Indian); Cook County, Illinois (Asian Indian); Hamtramck City, Michigan (Bangladeshi); and Queens County, New York (Asian Indian) (Asian American Center for Advancing Justice, 2012).
- (3) Promoting full utilization of religious community leaders to encourage voting and other forms of civic engagement;

(4) Advocating on behalf of South Asian American communities when it comes time to redraw districts based on population changes.

South Asian American voters comprise a growing and influential voting bloc that needs to be acknowledged by politicians, protected from unfair voting laws and gerrymandering, and wooed by both major parties. Within the greater community, South Asians must also be supported and encouraged to run for office and their advocate organizations – like SAALT and USINPAC – must continue to be well-organized and actively political.

APPENDIX

FIGURE A.1:
PAIRWISE CORRELATIONS BETWEEN INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

	Mix Lang	Linked Fate	Years in U.S.	Relig.	I/P (Amer)	Asian News	South Asian Dummy	Hate Crime Victim	Log (Income)	Male	Educ	Interest in Politics	Age
Mix Language	1.00												
Linked Fate	0.12	1.00											
Years in U.S.	0.00	0.02	1.00										
Religious	0.22*	0.16	0.10	1.00									
I/P (Amer)	0.28*	-0.02	-0.08	0.02	1.00								
Asian News	0.08	0.26*	0.13	0.08	0.15	1.00							
South Asian Dummy	0.43	0.01	-0.04	0.13*	-0.08*	-0.02	1.00						
Hate Crime Victim	-0.08*	0.09*	0.06	0.04	-0.07*	0.01	0.03	1.00					
Log (Income)	-0.16*	0.06	0.12*	0.13*	-0.12*	-0.04	0.11*	0.06	1.00				
Male	0.03	0.06	0.01	0.00	0.05	-0.02	0.06	0.00	0.06	1.00			
Educ	-0.05	-0.07	0.06	-0.01	0.16	0.17*	0.16*	0.08	0.48*	-0.01	1.00		
Interest in Politics	-0.02	0.12*	0.02	0.03	-0.05	0.30*	0.07*	0.09*	0.02	0.03	0.17*	1.00	
Age	-0.11	-0.09	0.16	0.06	-0.14	0.10	-0.17*	-0.06	0.02	0.05	0.09	0.08*	1.00

*Significant at 5% level

Analysis: There are no pairwise correlations among the explanatory variables in excess of 0.80.

Figure A.2:

Link Test Diagnostics

<i>Dependent Variable</i>	<i>Interest (a)</i>	<i>(b)</i>	<i>(c)</i>	<i>Voted 2000 (a)</i>	<i>(b)</i>	<i>(c)</i>
_hatsq	0.05	-0.50	0.05	0.15	-0.23	0.31
P > z	0.77*	0.71*	0.80*	0.50*	0.35*	0.21*
n	538	76	462	356	39	317

*Insignificant \hat{q} means the link function is correctly specified, in other words no specification error

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