

POLITICAL INCORPORATION AND TRANSNATIONALISM:
A STUDY OF SOUTH ASIAN IMMIGRANTS IN THE UNITED STATES

by

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Abstract

This dissertation studies the political incorporation process of South Asian immigrants. The dominant paradigms of immigrant and minority political incorporation have been shaped by the experiences of European immigrants and African Americans at different points of U.S. history. The extensive study of these groups led to the development of two contrasting models of political incorporation: the pluralist model and the minority group model. These two models have greatly influenced the subsequent studies of immigrant and minority political incorporation.

This study questions both models of political incorporation and argues that the centrality accorded to ethnic and/or racial mobilization by these two models fail to explain the political incorporation trajectory of groups such as South Asians. Neither the ethnic mobilization of the kind experienced by European immigrants nor the grassroots mobilization undertaken by African Americans on the basis of a common racial identity explains the political incorporation experiences of South Asian immigrants. This study argues that internal distinctions such as class, religion, and country of origin play significant roles in shaping the political participation and mobilization patterns among South Asians. The new model of political incorporation requires going beyond the frameworks which exclusively emphasize ethnic and /or racial mobilization at the cost of including internal distinctions into the analysis. This dissertation further argues that political incorporation of South Asians relies primarily on a selective elite mobilization which is largely bereft of racial and ethnic identities based mass mobilizations prescribed by both the dominant models.

Finally, the study moves beyond existing models of political incorporation by giving centrality to transnational attachments in analyzing the political incorporation patterns and points to the possible transnational dimensions of citizenship among immigrant communities.

Chapter I

Introduction

The United States is currently undergoing one of the largest waves of immigration in its history. Since the liberalization of immigration policy in 1965, the number of first-generation immigrants living in the United States has more than tripled, from about 10 million in 1970 to about 32 million, more than 11 percent of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau 2001). First generation immigrants now account for more than one in every ten residents in the United States and more than one out of every five residents living in the United States is an immigrant or child of an immigrant (Ramakrishnan 2005). Given a significant increase in the size of foreign born population along with an accompanying rise in the number of second generation immigrants, the issue of immigrant social and political inclusion has become critically important not only for new immigrants but also for the functioning of American democratic institutions.

Political incorporation of minority and immigrant groups has been a longstanding issue of scholarly investigation. There are two major approaches to political incorporation which grew out of studies on different immigrant and minority groups: the pluralist or assimilationist model and the minority group model. Traditionally, the literature on immigrant political inclusion was shaped by the experiences of European white ethnics during the early to mid twentieth century. The assimilation framework in sociology and pluralist incorporation framework in political science emerged out of European ethnic experience. The pluralist framework emphasized the openness of the political system for newcomers. Analyzing the political incorporation trajectory of European white

immigrants, the pluralist model argued that these immigrants were able to enter into the political process through ethnic mobilization. Furthermore, with passage of time and advancement in economic and educational status, European ethnics were able to blend into the mainstream political process (Dahl 1961). The other significant model of political incorporation research, which presents a contrasting view of minority and immigrant political incorporation, has emerged out of political incorporation experiences of African Americans. The minority group political incorporation model, which emerged in the post-civil rights movement period, emphasized the difficulties for and resistance to minority political inclusion. These two contrasting frameworks emerged out of the distinct political incorporation experiences of European white ethnics and African Americans and they represent the dominant frameworks most often used to understand contemporary non-white immigrants as well.

The study of contemporary non-white immigrants is relatively new and scholarly attention to political incorporation of Latino, Asian, and Caribbean immigrants has been fairly recent. This dissertation is a part of the recent research efforts to study political and social incorporation of contemporary non-white immigrants who came to the U.S. after the immigration reform introduced by the Hart-Cellar Act of 1965. The pattern of immigration changed fundamentally after the 1965 immigration reform. European immigrants have given way to immigrants from Latin America, Asia, and the Caribbean. The majority of first generation immigrants in the United States today trace their origins to countries outside of Europe. In 1900, about 86 percent of the foreign born population came from Europe whereas that proportion is a mere 15 percent now. The contrast is evident in the number of immigrants from Asia and Latin America who now constitute 26

percent and 51 percent of first generation immigrant population respectively (Ramakrishnan 2005, 30). The Asian American population has grown from 7 million in 1990 to more than 10 million in 2000 and more than 60 percent of them are immigrants. Similarly, the U.S. Latino population has grown from 22 million in 1990 to more than 35 million in 2000 with 40 percent of them being immigrants (Wong 2006, 4).

As the data discussed above suggest, Asian Americans are the fastest growing immigrant community in the U.S. and the proportion of first generation immigrants is much higher among Asian Americans compared to Latinos. Because of their demographic characteristics- the highest proportion of foreign born or first generation immigrants-Asian Americans are an important group to study the issue of political incorporation. This dissertation studies the political incorporation of one segment of Asian Americans namely the South Asian immigrants, a fast growing immigrant group within the broader racial category of Asian American. Within South Asians, the growth rate of Asian Indians- the largest group among South Asians- between 1990 and 2000 Census was 105.87 percent, the highest among Asian American groups. I focus on South Asian immigrants to study political incorporation because the characteristics of the group pose important challenges to the dominant models of immigrant political incorporation. A large section of South Asian immigrants belong to higher income and educational echelons, hence, presenting an interesting combination of high socioeconomic status and non-white racial status for studying political incorporation. South Asian immigrants are also extremely diverse in terms of their socioeconomic background, religion, and language and they maintain high levels of social, economic and political contact with their country of origin. I argue that the existing models of political incorporation fail to

address adequately the complex interplay of race, class, religion, and transnationalism which shape the political incorporation process of South Asian immigrants.

The central question this dissertation asks is whether South Asian immigrants follow either of the two dominant models of political incorporation and their contrasting predictions about how and to what extent new immigrant groups will become a part of the political process. To answer this broad question, the dissertation analyzes the impact of race, socioeconomic status, transnational attachment, and religion on political incorporation of South Asian immigrants. More specific questions which relate to each of these variables being studied here include: What are the ways in which racial and ethnic identity impacts the political incorporation of South Asian immigrants? How does socioeconomic variation among South Asians impact their political incorporation? In other words, do class distinctions lead to different patterns of political participation among South Asians? How does religion affect political mobilization among South Asian immigrants? This question focuses on the ways in which religious distinctions within the South Asian immigrant community impact political mobilization. Do high levels of transnational attachments lead to lower levels of South Asian political participation in the United States? What are the ways in which transnational attachment influences the political incorporation trajectory of South Asian immigrants? Finally, the dissertation analyzes the ways in which these transnational attachments shape the way in which citizenship is viewed and practiced by South Asian immigrants.

The Concept of Political Incorporation

The concept of political incorporation has emerged from broader research on political participation. More specifically, the concept gained currency from research in

the field of urban politics on immigrant and minority political participation (Browning, Marshall, and Tabb 2003; 1997; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Dahl 1961). There is no widely agreed upon definition of political incorporation and scholars have tended to use the concept loosely. However, scholarship on political incorporation has most often referred to Browning, Marshall and Tabb's definition of the concept. They define political incorporation as "the extent to which group interests are effectively represented in policy making." They elaborate further,

We measure the political incorporation of a group by the extent to which it is represented in a coalition that dominates city policy making on issues of great concern to the group..... Political incorporation as a measure thus refers to a range of possibilities for group presence in city government. At the lowest level, a group is not represented at all At next level there is some representation, but on a council dominated by a coalition that is resistant to minority interests. Finally- the strongest form of incorporation –a group has an equal or leading role in a dominant coalition that is strongly committed to minority interests (Browning, Marshall, and Tabb 2003, 11).

This definition of political incorporation is framed in the context of minority groups' participation in city politics. The concept evolved out of the attempts to understand and analyze African American and Latino participation in city politics. Thus, incorporation in this context is assessed by the level of political representation and influence over policy making in city governance. This framework of political incorporation used by Browning, Marshall, and Tabb does allow for greater operationalization of the concept. Political incorporation of minority groups in this framework can be concretely assessed through measures such as registration, voting, descriptive representation, and policy influence. However, it has been critiqued for emphasizing on elite representation at city council and other policy making levels. Notwithstanding this critique, their conception of political incorporation is useful as it refers to different stages in the process of political

incorporation including group mobilization, protest, electoral participation, representation, and policy influence.

Browning, Marshall, and Tabb were studying political incorporation of minority groups in the post-civil rights movement era when the focus was to go beyond protest politics and analyze the participation of these groups in the electoral arena and their representation in decision making bodies. In contrast, the studies on political incorporation of new immigrants are largely focused on immigrant groups which are comprised of a significant number of new citizens and noncitizens and who are just beginning to participate in the political process where electoral participation and representation may not be their exclusive focus. Scholars studying political incorporation of these new immigrant groups have therefore tried to broaden the concept by making it applicable to different settings, particularly to new immigrant groups who may not necessarily be at the stage of electoral mobilization and group representation through electoral process. For instance, Reuel Rogers, building on earlier conceptions of political incorporation, defines it as “the process through which new groups begin to participate in politics and eventually achieve representation and influence in government” (Rogers 2006, 17). This conception of political incorporation has a broad spectrum of political outcomes ranging from naturalization, registration, voting, and representation to non-electoral forms of political participation such as involvement with civic associations, participation in active forms of mobilization such as protests, and union activities. More importantly, the political incorporation process is seen here as a learning trajectory for new immigrant groups. Explaining this learning trajectory, Rogers writes:

During the incorporation process, newcomers learn the rules of the game: how to identify and define themselves, how to frame their policy interests, where to draw alliances, where to position themselves within the party system, and where their ideological allegiances lie. Incorporation is, in short, a political learning process for new groups to American democracy (Rogers 2006, 18).

This conception of political incorporation moves away from more traditional political incorporation literature that focused on outcome measures such as naturalization, rates of registration and voting, group representation, and policy benefits (Browning, Marshall, and Tabb 2003; 1997; Mollenkopf, Olson, and Ross 2001; Ramakrishnan 2005). The focus of political incorporation literature on outcome measures such as voting and representation has undoubtedly contributed to greater operationalization of the concept. However, the emphasis on outcome measures has resulted in less focus on the process of political incorporation. Political incorporation scholars such as Michael Jones-Correa (1998) and Reuel Rogers (2006) who study new immigrant groups have thus underlined the importance of studying the process of incorporation along with outcomes like naturalization, registration, voting, and formal representation. As noted earlier, Reuel Rogers underlines the importance of considering political incorporation also as a process of learning and socialization through which new immigrant groups adapt to the political routines of the U.S. society. According to this perspective, the process of political incorporation can be analyzed by studying the ways in which groups adjust or negotiate with the norms of the U.S. politics which, in turn, shape their prospects for participation and representation. Michael Jones-Correa's study of political incorporation of Latinos in New York City emphasizes the importance of the process of political incorporation by focusing on the ways in which first generation Latino immigrants express hesitation in becoming naturalized citizens. This hesitation and resulting in-between status contributes

to their marginality in the U.S. political system as they negotiate their place between country of origin and the host country. The focus on the process of political incorporation is especially productive in studying new immigrant groups because they are still at the margins of the political system. In other words, exclusive focus on incorporation outcomes alone fails to understand the dynamic processes through which new immigrant groups become a part of the political process.

It is important to note here that the conception of political incorporation is an evolving one and there is no consensus over the precise ways in which concept is understood and operationalized. Even though the framework and operationalization of the concept of political incorporation suggested by Browning, Marshall, and Tabb remain central to any theorization, recent works by the scholars discussed above have tried to broaden the concept. Reuel Rogers' rendition of the concept emphasizes the learning trajectory of immigrant groups through which they undergo the process of political incorporation. Such conceptions of political incorporation are broader and less easily open to operationalization than the traditional conception deployed by Browning, Marshall, and Tabb and others. This dissertation is fully cognizant of the evolving nature of the concept of political incorporation and has used the concept in a broader sense which not only includes easily measured indicators such as registration, voting, and descriptive representation but also encompasses broader meanings of incorporation. Thus, the study includes the process of acquiring an identity in relation to other groups, sense of belonging and identification with the nation and the political process, forming of organizations and alliances, and development of ideological and policy interests. This

broader conception of political incorporation thus pays equal attention to both the outcome and the process dimension of political incorporation.

Models of Political Incorporation

As noted earlier, an overview of scholarship on political incorporation suggests that there are two dominant models which explain minority and immigrant political incorporation: the pluralist model, which is also termed by some as assimilation model, and the minority group model. These two models which emerged out of different historical experiences suggest contrasting path of political incorporation for immigrant and minority groups and have become the dominant frames to analyze political incorporation of new immigrant groups such as Latinos, Asian Americans, and Caribbean immigrants.

The pluralist model of political incorporation, based on the experiences of European immigrants, holds that the current non-white immigrants will overcome initial prejudice and barriers to political incorporation as their European counterparts did. According to this model, ethnic mobilization will be an important part of the incorporation trajectory. With the achievement of economic stability, contemporary non-white immigrants will achieve full political incorporation in a gradual manner without any radical disruption to the political system. The classic pluralist model therefore suggests that ethnic identity and mobilization decline in significance with the passage of time and upward mobility of the groups and immigrants start displaying mainstream political attitudes and behavior. The political parties and institutions, the model argues, positively facilitate this process of political incorporation (Dahl 1961; Portes and Rumbaut 1996; Alba and Nee 1997).

Precursors of the pluralist model of political incorporation were early discussions on immigrant assimilation and ‘Americanization’ campaigns. The classical model of assimilation was based on the notion that immigrants would gradually adapt to the social, economic, and cultural ethos of the host society and would do away with the cultural baggage transported from the country of emigration (Milton 1964). As immigrants continued on their endeavor of acquiring formal membership in the host society, the logical culmination was a single nation state citizenship, characterized by a unitary political cultural core in the dominant position. Robert Park and Ernest W. Burgess of Chicago School framed the issue of immigrants in the U.S. at the turn of the 20th century as a question of assimilation. Park’s ‘race relations cycle’- with four different stages termed as contact, conflict, accommodation, and assimilation- was the most influential paradigm to analyze immigrant incorporation. The emphasis was not on the study of differences but on the necessity of assimilation. Migrants were viewed as “people who have abandoned the political allegiance of the old country and are gradually acquiring the culture of the new” (Park and Burgess 1969, 734). A political counterpart of this assimilation process was the imagery of the political boss who would receive immigrants when they first got off the ship and recruit them as a part of the city’s political machine (Handlin 1951). The urban political machine was an Americanizing institution for European immigrants- the entry of immigrants was made possible by immigration policy but the machine made them voting citizens (Erie 1988).

Pluralist analysis of minority political incorporation has partly drawn upon this assimilation framework in sociology. Pluralism has been the dominant perspective in political science research on U.S. politics since 1950s and it has also been a significant

trend in analyzing minority political participation. There are several important features of the pluralist perspective which get deployed in analyzing minority political participation. According to this perspective, there are multiple centers of power in society as well as in politics and thus power is widely dispersed among a variety of groups and institutions. The availability of resources to a number of groups and multiple access points to the political system makes it possible for minority groups to enter the system in an incremental manner (Dahl 1982; Lindblom 1980). In his classical work *Who Governs?* Robert Dahl deployed the pluralist framework to explain political incorporation of European immigrants. Dahl argued that new immigrants take their first step towards political incorporation by starting to view themselves as part of a cohesive group. He argued that immigrants from the same country often identify with each other as outsiders or foreigners in the new nation confronted with similar challenges. These shared feelings bring them together and provide the basis for a common ethnic group identity. Incorporation among the European immigrants, Dahl argued, began with the emergence of ethnic politics and the local political parties played an important role in the incorporation process of European ethnics. According to this framework, ethnic group politics was a transitional phase in the incorporation process and as groups achieved upward economic mobility and political integration, their ethnic loyalties gradually melted away. For Dahl, ethnic identity and politics was a transitory phenomenon and European ethnics were able to move gradually beyond ethnic group identity and become a part of the mainstream society and political process.

Dahl's pluralist analysis has been criticized for its failure to explain African Americans' story of political incorporation- which he bracketed as black exceptionalism

in his New Haven study- and for not giving race and skin color due importance in his model. The fact that contemporary immigrants are primarily non European and non-white is not addressed adequately in the pluralist model. This points to the limits of the pluralist framework of political incorporation in understanding the incorporation story of new immigrants. The critics of the pluralist model argue that race is an important part of the contemporary immigrants' experience and these immigrants will not replicate the experience of European immigrants as far as overcoming racial barriers is concerned (Pinderhughes 1987; Hero 1992). In addition, institutional resources such as the supportive role of political parties are not available to new immigrants in the same manner as they were to European immigrants (Wong 2006).

More recent works on political incorporation of non-white immigrants, following the broad assimilation paradigm and pluralist framework of Dahl, have continued to replicate similar conclusions with minor modifications to the pluralist model (Portes and Rumbaut 1996; Skerry 1993; Portes and Stepick 1993; Chavez 1991; Alba and Nee 1997). Following Dahl's pluralist prescription of different stages of political mobilization among European ethnics, Portes and Rumbaut argue that contemporary non-white immigrants- specifically elaborating on the case of Mexican Americans- have also followed the path of ethnic mobilization for greater political incorporation. They argue, "by mobilizing the collective vote and by electing their own to office, immigrant minorities have learned the rules of the democratic game and absorbed its value in the process"(Portes and Rumbaut 1996, 139). They predict the political incorporation of Mexican Americans through a path of ethnic mobilization. Similarly, Min Zhou argues that Asian Americans, similar to European immigrants, incorporate through building solidarity by living in ethnic enclaves

and mobilization on ethnic lines and this path has proven to be effective for Asian Americans incorporation. The only difference between contemporary Asian Americans and earlier European immigrants is that ethnic identity, mobilization, and enclaves are more enduring features than they were for European immigrants (Zhou 2004).

In their work based on the broad principles of the pluralist framework to analyze social and political inclusion of contemporary immigrants, Richard Alba and Victor Nee discuss the distinctions and similarities between European immigrants and contemporary non-white immigrants in their work on social and political inclusion of contemporary immigrants. They point out that racial perception of most disparaged European ethnic groups gradually shifted and Irish and other groups who “initially struggled to put some distance between themselves and African Americans,” were eventually able to overcome the perceived distinctiveness from other whites once they climbed the socioeconomic ladder and moved into mixed neighborhoods (Alba and Nee 1997, 845-46). Alba and Nee see no reason why a large section of contemporary non-white immigrants should not be able to achieve the kind of assimilation which European immigrants achieved earlier. They particularly refer to Asian and light skinned Latinos to make the argument that these new immigrants will broadly follow the same path of assimilation and political incorporation as the European immigrants. Discussing racial barriers to social and political incorporation of new immigrants, they argue that often dark skin color has been suggested as a possible barrier to social and political incorporation; however, it is not the dark skin color per se but the similarity and connections to the African American group which raises the most difficult racist barriers. There is a striking closeness between Dahl’s analysis of white ethnic incorporation where he bracketed African American

experience as exceptional and Alba and Nee's argument that racial barrier to incorporation is more true for groups which appear to be connected to African Americans than for non-whites per se. For both Dahl and Alba and Nee, a large majority of contemporary nonwhite immigrants are destined to adopt the path of political incorporation which European immigrants followed earlier.

The pluralist model views traditional political institutions like political parties as important agents in the political incorporation of immigrants. Dahl argued that party organizations and elected officials courted immigrants as ethnic constituencies and brought them into the political system. Political parties also fielded ethnic candidates for public offices to give the immigrants symbolic recognition and an opportunity at descriptive political representation. The pluralist model paints a charitable picture of political parties and presumes that competitive electoral politics will generally push political parties towards new immigrant groups and parties will play an important role in bringing these groups into the political process (Dahl 1961).

The pluralist model of political incorporation, because of its moorings in classical assimilation literature, largely views transnational ties as negative influence on political and social incorporation of immigrants in the United States. The pluralist model does not engage with the impact of transnational attachments on immigrant political incorporation beyond rejecting them as hindrance to immigrant political participation and incorporation. However, recent scholarship on new immigrant groups suggest that immigrants maintain strong and continued transnational attachments and these attachments are not only confined to family connections but include broader social and political realms as well (Jones-Correa 1998; Rogers 2006; Levitt 2001).

The other dominant model which has been quite influential in the political incorporation literature is broadly termed as the minority group model. In its classical form, this model takes inspiration from the experiences of the civil rights movement and it illustrates the difficulties and resistance faced by African Americans as the paradigmatic case of obstacle to minority political incorporation. Since the majority of contemporary newcomers to the United States are non-whites, scholars following the minority group incorporation paradigm argued and predicted that their path to political incorporation also will be slow, incomplete, and greatly influenced by American racism. These scholars have used the African American experience to develop an alternative model to pluralism in order to understand the relative difficulties and uncertainties of the political incorporation of non-white immigrants (Hero 1992; Browning et al. 1997; Takaki 1989; Kim 2001; Tate 1994; Pinderhughes 1987). Different variants of the minority group model have predicted that these non-white groups will also follow the path adopted by African Americans in their attempt to full political incorporation: grassroots mobilization, demand for resource redistribution and political reform, and heavy reliance on group identity or linked fate (Hero 1992; Browning et al. 1997).

In one of the important studies which supported the framework of minority group model, Diane Pinderhughes analyzed the experience of African Americans in Chicago to argue that African Americans' path to political incorporation is very different from white ethnics such as Italians and Poles. She argued that black political and social incorporation is not amenable to incremental changes and gradual progress suggested by the pluralist model. Analyzing the labor and housing market in Chicago alongside political participation trends, she argued that blacks faced more extensive and enduring barriers in

comparison to Italian and Polish ethnic immigrants in Chicago. Foregrounding race as an analytical tool to understand black political incorporation, she argued:

Because race is a highly evocative American social characteristic that provokes deep political and economic divisions, it is too broad and controversial a matter to be the subject of meaningful trading, or bargaining. It does not, in short, fit a pluralist analytical framework. When political institutions handle racial issues, conventional rules go awry, individuals react irrationally... (Pinderhughes 1987, 261).

The minority group model suggests that prominence of race in African American economic and social life has led to a political orientation among the black community where the primary imperative in politics is to advance the political interest of African Americans as a racial group (Barker 1988; Pinderhughes 1987; Walters 1988). African American political behavior is shaped powerfully by their perception of group interest- often termed as linked fate- and what is perceived as good for the group as a whole continues to play a dominant role in shaping African American partisanship and political choice (Dawson 1994).

Rodney Hero (1992), in his study of Latino political incorporation, has also followed the broad parameters of minority group model. He reinforced many of the insights from the research on African American political incorporation and extended them to Latino immigrants in a compelling manner. Critiquing pluralist model of political incorporation, Hero argues that minority groups are incorporating in a system which can be termed as two-tiered form of pluralism. This form of pluralism allows full incorporation for whites but only marginal inclusion for Latinos, African Americans, and other minority groups. Minorities face unique racial barriers and inequalities that make it

difficult for them to become a part of the political process. Describing the implications of two tiered pluralism for Latinos and other minorities, Hero argues:

... Certain basic equalities and rights apply to all Americans, but because of the distinctive historical experiences and structural features of some groups, and because cultural or racial deficiencies are alleged to exist, equality is largely formal or procedural, not substantive. Significant political and social achievements are the exception, not the rule, for Latinos and other minorities..... Part of what two tiered pluralism means is that there is a marginal inclusion of minorities in most or all facets of the political process (Hero 1992, 190).

The effort on the part of minority groups to wield political influence, Hero argues, is consequently seen as taking the form of redistribution and asking for significant changes as opposed to incremental and regular politics. Hero also distinguishes among different non-white groups by positing a continuum of racial disadvantage for the non-white groups relegated to the second tier of American pluralism. On this continuum, African Americans are on the far end and Latinos in the middle. The two tiered pluralism in case of African Americans has led to the development of parallel institutions of blacks and greater residential segregation leading to enhanced representation in local level politics. Hero argues that Latinos have a tenuous relationship to the U.S. compared to African Americans due to the past history of forced occupation by the United States and their immigrant status. But Hero stops short of specifying the implications of this relationship for Latino political incorporation. Hero's analysis seems to suggest that although all non-white groups are relegated to a second tier of political incorporation, there is a need to look at the differences in experience of different non-white groups to have a better analysis of political incorporation process of minority groups.

The broader assumption of minority group model – continued barriers to political inclusion of minority and immigrant groups- has similarly been echoed by scholars

studying Asian Americans. Claire Kim analyzed the placing of Asian Americans in U.S. racial hierarchy and argued that historically Asian Americans were kept out of civic life through exclusion laws and denial of citizenship rights. Even though Asian Americans were valorized as a model minority vis-à-vis blacks in the post-1965 period, they continued to face civic ostracism as “perpetual foreignness” is imputed to them.

Analyzing the contemporary barriers to Asian American civic incorporation, Kim argues:

Although the bar on naturalization was lifted in 1952, White opinion makers continue to police the boundary between Whites and Asian Americans by imputing permanent foreignness to the latter. They do not overtly deny civic membership to Asian Americans; yet their skepticism about the legitimacy of Asian American participation in public life and their readiness to see Asian American public figures as agents of a foreign power constraint what civic privileges Asian Americans enjoy (Kim 1999, 126).

The long history of Asian American civic ostracism, Kim suggests, is indicative of persistence of barriers to political incorporation of Asian Americans. Kim’s argument about persistence of barriers to civic incorporation for Asian Americans is very different from the pluralist argument which sees these barriers only as transitory.

The broader claims of minority group model have also been supported by scholars analyzing the institutional barriers to minority political incorporation. For instance, analyzing the role of political parties and civic associations in political mobilization of Asian Americans and Latinos in New York and Los Angeles, Janelle Wong argues that political parties, in contrast to their role in political mobilization of European immigrants, have largely been absent from the task of mobilizing and bringing new immigrants to the political process. She attributes this absence of political parties to weak local party structures and changed campaign tactics, strategy of selective mobilization and reliance on existing party coalitions, and prevailing assumptions of political parties about

immigrants. She suggests that it is grassroots civic organizations and labor unions that are trying to fill the place of political parties in bringing new immigrants into the broader political process (Wong 2006, 199). Wong's analysis supports the minority group model's argument of continuing institutional barriers and points towards the existence of parallel grassroots efforts to enhance Latino and Asian American political incorporation.

Traditionally, because of its focus on African American incorporation experience, the minority group model has not placed much emphasis on transnationalism in theorizing the political incorporation of non-white immigrants. However, some recent scholarship on contemporary nonwhite immigrants, which have followed the broad import of minority group model, has started questioning the conventional analysis of immigrant transnational attachments and argued that transnational attachments and transnational political engagement of immigrant groups do not necessarily lead to a lack of civic and political participation in the U.S. (Jones-Correa 1998; Desipio 2003; Guarnizo 1997; Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller 2003; Guarnizo and Portes 1991; Lien et al 2004; Ramakrishnan 2005; Wong 2006). Despite these important scholarly interventions to engage with the importance of transnationalism in the lives of recent non-white immigrants, there is very little theorization on the ways in which transnational attachment of immigrant communities impact their political incorporation experience in the United States.

These two models in their classical forms stand in for two opposite ends of the spectrum of political incorporation of new groups into the political system. Even though these two models of political incorporation are generalizations drawn from the specific experiences of European white ethnics and African Americans, they are heavily used

frameworks to explain and understand the political participation and incorporation processes of recent non-white immigrants such as Latinos, Asian Americans, and Caribbean immigrants. These works fail to recognize that these two dominant frameworks may not be as useful for understanding the political incorporation of contemporary immigrants. This is because the contemporary nonwhite immigrants, who came primarily after the 1965 immigration reform, are very diverse with immigration patterns that are different from the previous waves of immigration. Due to their diverse immigration patterns, these groups seem to follow different trajectories of political and social inclusion in the U.S. Most of these groups do not neatly fit into either of the two models because of their specific immigration histories, racial status, socio-economic profile, and religious background. For instance, scholars working on Caribbean immigrants have pointed out that the pattern of social and political inclusion of Caribbean immigrants is different from native African American population and neither the minority group model nor the pluralist model fully explain their incorporation experience (Waters 1999; Rogers 2006) . Similarly, Asian Americans are incredibly diverse in terms of their immigration history, country of origin, socioeconomic status, and religious affiliations. The trajectory of political incorporation of these groups is shaped by their unique group position in the United States and their continued transnational attachments that requires scholars to go beyond the conventional models of political incorporation.

This dissertation seeks to go beyond the existing models of political incorporation by analyzing the case of South Asian immigrants. The dissertation argues that existing models of political incorporation do not take into account the specificities of a group such

as South Asian immigrants. These immigrants are non-white but they have had a very different immigration pattern which has resulted in a significant section of economically affluent members who maintain very strong transnational connections to their country of origin. Their religious differences from the dominant Judeo-Christian religious landscape of United States also make them different from other immigrant groups. Given the unique position of South Asians as a non-white minority group with a significant population of high income and education, strong transnational attachment, and religious diversity, they make a compelling case for revisiting the existing models of political incorporation.

Political Incorporation and Citizenship

Revisiting the debates on political incorporation also has broader implications for the conception of citizenship and its implications for immigrant communities. These implications are particularly compelling in the case of new immigrant groups such as South Asians. The process of political incorporation begins when immigrants start developing a sense of inclusion and belonging to the U.S. society and politics, long before the actual act of naturalization. The act of naturalization is undoubtedly a significant step toward formally becoming a part of the political process, but scholars of immigrant political incorporation have pointed out that the legal act of acquiring citizenship is just a step in the long process of political and social inclusion of immigrant groups. Hence, the study of immigrant political incorporation needs to go beyond the legal acquisition of citizenship and look at the broader meanings attached to citizenship in terms of inclusion, belonging, and participation to understand the ways in which different meanings of citizenship shape the process of political incorporation. This

becomes even more important in case of immigrant groups because they maintain multiple attachments – both to the country of origin as well as the country of settlement- which traditional conception of citizenship do not take into consideration. Drawing upon Linda Bosniak's conceptualization of four dimensions of citizenship - citizenship as legal status; citizenship as rights; citizenship as political activity; and citizenship as a form of collective identity and sentiment- this dissertation focuses upon citizenship both as political activity and identity in order to go beyond the legal and right based discussion of citizenship (Bosniak 2000).

Theorists ranging from Machiavelli and Rousseau to Michael Walzer and Will Kymlicka have emphasized the importance of participation in political activity and deliberation as critical elements of citizenship. However, political participation and deliberation is traditionally viewed and studied in terms of participation in local institutions and activities within the framework of a nation state. The associational networks of immigrant groups across the nation states and their engagements in transnational networks at different levels are not considered to be a part of political engagement as visualized by civic republican and participatory democratic tradition (Bosniak 2001). The literature on immigrants' social and political lives suggests that participation and deliberation in case of immigrants is not confined only to the boundaries of nation state (Levitt 2001). Hence, the meaning and expression of citizenship for immigrants cannot be understood by only looking at local and national networks, associations, and forms of participation. The transnational networks and participation are bound to be significant parts of immigrant citizenship.

Apart from citizenship as political participation, citizenship as identity or solidarity expresses the sense of belonging and identification with the country. It is broadly identified as the psychological dimension of citizenship, the part which expresses affective ties of identification and the quality of belonging which represents the felt aspect of community membership. The classical rights based notion of citizenship emphasizes common culture and presumes that the expansion of citizenship will include all marginal sections within the ambit of common culture. However, the question of cultural identity assumes importance in case of minority and immigrant groups even when they have the same formal citizenship rights as others. A historical analysis of the universality of citizenship suggests that many groups-- ethnic, racial, and religious minorities, immigrants, women, aboriginal people, gays and lesbians-- feel excluded from the common culture despite having the common rights of citizenship. They feel excluded not only because of their socioeconomic status, but also because of their socio cultural identity (Kymlicka and Norman 1994). Iris Marion Young, one of the most important theorists of cultural pluralism, argued that a universal notion of citizenship that transcends group differences is unjust because it oppresses historically excluded groups (Young 1990). However, even this more inclusive understanding of citizenship propounded by Iris Marion Young does not break away from a nation state bounded vision of citizenship. The cultural pluralist framework of Young continues to posit the nation state as the sole framework to understand cultural differences. Even though the framework provides space for differences in cultural identity and argues for a citizenship theory which affirms these differences, it does not go beyond the boundaries of nation state to incorporate the identity emerging from attachment to the country of origin in case

of immigrant groups. The more inclusive notion of citizenship needs to analyze how transnational ties- affecting both identity and engagement - are an important aspect of citizenship among immigrant communities.

As discussed above, the sense of belonging or identification with the nation and participation in political deliberations and activities are two important aspects of citizenship. The concrete forms of political participation and deliberation are linked to multiplicity of belonging and identification. This dissertation analyzes the belonging and identification dimension of citizenship in light of continuing transnational attachment of South Asian immigrants, with a focus on understanding the ways in which it shapes the process of political incorporation of new immigrant groups.

South Asian Immigrants in the United States

The term South Asian in the U.S. is traditionally understood as inclusive of seven countries namely Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. According to American Community Survey, 2006, there are approximately 2.9 million South Asian immigrants in the United States. Asian Indians are the largest block of South Asian immigrants followed by Pakistani and Bangladeshi immigrants. Asian Indians are also the third largest ethnic group among Asian Americans following Chinese and Filipino Americans. Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi immigrants are also the fastest growing groups in terms of percentages among Asian Americans.

Most South Asians in the U.S. are either immigrants who arrived after the passage of 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act or they are born to parents who came after that period. However, it is important to note here that there is a long history of South Asian migration to the U.S. The early history of immigrants from India can be

traced back to about 1900s when peasants from Punjab province of undivided India started reaching the West Coast looking for work in Washington's lumber mills and California's agricultural fields. The early immigrants from India were undifferentiated and homogenized in the eyes of native population. Even though most of these immigrants were Sikhs and a few were also Muslims, they were all termed as 'Hindoos' (Jensen 1988). The early immigrants from India faced severe discrimination as they were not allowed to naturalize because of the racial prerequisite law which required a person to be white to acquire the U.S. citizenship.¹

South Asian immigrants of different national origin share a commonality rooted in the history and culture of the South Asian region and South Asian identity has emerged in the U.S. over the last few years as an important panethnic category to encompass immigrants from this region of Asia. However, the term South Asian in the U.S. academia as well as popular discourse has often been used interchangeably with Asian Indians (Kurien 2003). The inability of scholars working on South Asian immigrants to address the diversity within the category has been underlined by some scholars working in this field. Writing in the context of locating South Asians in the broader field of Asian American studies, a group of scholars working on South Asian Americans noted that even while talking about South Asian Americans, their concentration exclusively on Indian Americans emanated from the gap in their knowledge about South Asia and South Asian Americans. These scholars acknowledged their inability to even pose the right questions when studying the members of other South Asian nationalities like Pakistanis,

¹ The racial naturalization laws were applied to all non-white immigrants and the issue ultimately reached the Supreme Court in 1923 case of *Bhagat Singh Thind v. U.S.* The court ruled that immigrants from India are not eligible for citizenship because they are not white. Ian-Haney Lopez (1996) has discussed these cases carefully and linked them to the construction of 'Whiteness' in legal discourse

Bangladeshis, and Srilankans (Dave, Dhingra, Maira, et al. 2000). There is not only a lack of inclusion of South Asians of different national origin, but even within Indians the focus has primarily been on Hindus from India while studying South Asian immigrants in the U.S. The Muslims and other religious minorities among South Asian immigrant have been marginal to this scholarship. Given the narrow focus of the existing scholarship on Indian immigrants, the need to focus on the broader South Asian category by bringing immigrants from diverse national origin and religious groups cannot be overstated.

The present phase of South Asian immigration started with the passage of Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 which was instrumental in repealing of the racial restrictions on immigration.² The legislation, which was deeply influenced by the civil rights movement for racial equality, was a part of an effort by the United States to shore up its scientific and military technological capability during the cold war by allowing skilled scientists, doctors, and other professionals from other countries to come to the U.S. (Prashad 2000). There were two major waves of post- 1965 immigration of South Asian to the U.S. The first wave came under the special skills provision of the act which attracted a large number of doctors, engineers, and scientists from India and, to a lesser degree, from Pakistan. These immigrants were highly educated, proficient in English, and mainly from urban background. Among Pakistani immigrants, a significant section came to the U.S. from Britain and the Middle East where they had moved earlier

² The single most important piece of legislation for South Asians seeking to enter the U.S. was passed in 1965. The proposal, initiated by presidents Kennedy and Johnson, led to the reversal of a half century old policy of discrimination against Asian immigrants. The 1965 act led to the abolition of national origin quota and was replaced by quota for areas outside western hemisphere at 170,000 under which a maximum of 20,000 visas may be allocated to the people of a single country in a given year. Also, the special restrictions regarding Asians were removed; the act prohibited the exclusion of any immigrant on the basis of race, sex or nationality. The act also established new criteria for the issuing of visas: familial, financial, and occupational

from Pakistan because of less restrictive immigration policies of those countries. These highly educated immigrants mostly entered into professional and managerial careers in the U.S. The second wave of South Asian immigration took place primarily in 1980s, and it was sponsored under the “family reunification” provision of the 1965 act which brought family relatives of the first wave immigrants (Mazumdar 1989; Prashad 2000). This group of immigrants did not have the same level of educational or professional training as the first wave and they were more likely to settle in the lower rungs of the professional ladder. More recent wave of immigration beginning in the 1990s has also seen a large influx of software professionals from India to meet the demands of the information technology boom in the United States. The Silicon Valley in Northern California has witnessed a number of start-up technology companies in this period by South Asian immigrants (Saxenian 2002). In addition, a steady and progressively increasing number of students from South Asia (India in particular) have been coming to the U. S. for the past several years for higher studies. According to a report published in 2007, students from India have been the largest single group of international students in the United States for the last six consecutive years (International Student Enrollment in U.S. Rebounds, 2007). A significant section of the student population from South Asia eventually settles down in the United States after finishing their education. Even though affluent South Asians tend to define the nature of the community, a steady number of Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi immigrants have been joining the ranks of taxi drivers, restaurant and construction workers, and other sections of the working class population in the last several years. Hence, there is a significant and growing section of working class South Asian immigrants in the United States.

The immigrants from Bangladesh have a more recent history in the United States. Among Bangladeshi immigrants, there is a very small number which came to the U.S. under the special skills provision of the 1965 immigration act. Immigration from Bangladesh started in significant numbers only after its independence from Pakistan in 1971 as there was very little migration to the U.S. from this part of erstwhile Pakistan before Bangladesh came into existence.³ A significant section of Bangladeshi immigrants belong to working class employed in different service sectors of the economy.

According to American Community Survey (ACS), 2007, there are approximately 3 million people of South Asian descent in the United States and more than 80 percent of them trace their origins to India. According to the ACS data, there are 2.7 million Asian Indians followed by 213 thousand of Pakistani descent and 76 thousand of Bangladeshi descent (Table 1.1). These three South Asian groups are followed by relatively smaller groups from Sri Lanka and Nepal. In addition, a significant population of South Asians traces their origin to various African nations, Canada, Caribbean, Europe, the Middle East, and the Pacific Islands. In 2000 census, the three top places of birth for South Asians from the diaspora were Guyana, the United Kingdom, and Trinidad and Tobago.⁴

³ The history of Bangladeshi immigrants is very different from Indian and Pakistani immigrants in the U.S. People from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and several other countries from across the globe were allowed to apply under a provision which was started as part of an immigration diversity initiative by the U.S. government in 1990 to diversify immigrant inflow. The number of Bangladeshi immigrants increased dramatically in this period as Bangladesh ranked very high in terms of qualifying for diversity visas among the countries which were eligible for diversity quota immigration. The profile of Bangladeshi immigrants is very different from that of Indian and Pakistanis as the majority of Bangladeshi immigrants did not come as professionals and they tended to join blue collar professions and lower rungs of the service industry.

⁴ In nineteenth century when India was a British colony, a large number of Indians were taken to various British colonies to work as indentured labor on plantations. These British colonies included Fiji, Surinam, Guyana, Mauritius, Trinidad, and South Africa among others. A section of South Americans who came to the U.S. from these countries trace their origins to India.

In the last 15-20 years, there has been a very sharp increase in the number of South Asians in the U.S. This sharp increase is evident when figures from the 1990 Census are compared to 2000. Between 1990 and 2000, Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi immigrants increased by 106, 89, and 249 percent respectively (table 1.1). The trend of sharp increase continues as reported in ACS, 2007.

Table 1.1: The Number of South Asian Immigrants in the United States and Their Rate of Growth

	1980	1990	2000	Percentage Increase From 1990 to 2000	ACS 2007
Indian	387,223*	815,447	1,678,765	106%	2,765,815
Pakistani		81,371	153,533	89%	213,800
Bangladeshi		11,838	41,280	249%	76,048
Sri Lankan		10,970	20,145	84%	

Note: Based on Census data and American Community Survey, 2007

* Race Alone. Rest of the figures are race alone or combination.

An overwhelming majority of South Asian immigrants are foreign born and a significant number of them are not citizens of the United States. With the influx of new immigrants from South Asia continuing, the community is a combination of U.S. born and foreign born and includes people who have been here for several years as well as those who are recent arrivals. Data from ACS, 2006 suggests that approximately that 72 percent of Indians, 69 percent of Pakistanis, and 75 percent of Bangladeshis are foreign born. The proportions of naturalized among Indians, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis are 33, 39, and 38 percent respectively (table1.2).

Table 1. 2: Proportion of Foreign Born and Naturalized Citizens among South Asian Immigrants

Race Alone or in Combination	Total population	Foreign Born	Naturalized
Indian	2,662,112	1,905,318 (72)	867,042 (33)
Pakistani	2,11,356	145,719 (69)	81,423 (39)
Bangladeshi	69,687	52,157 (75)	26,423 (38)

Note: Based on American Community Survey, 2006

In terms of demographic location, even though a majority of South Asian immigrants live in major metropolitan areas, the population is generally not densely concentrated. The Los Angeles and New York Metropolitan Statistical Areas are two important concentrations of South Asian immigrants. According to ACS, 2006, the number of Asian Indians in Los Angeles-Long Beach- Santa Ana Metropolitan Area is 127,930. The corresponding figure in New York Metropolitan Statistical Area is 566,418. The New York Metropolitan Area has the highest number of Indian Americans where as Los Angeles Metropolitan Area is fourth after the San Francisco and Chicago Metropolitan Area. These two locations have significant number of Pakistani and Bangladeshi immigrants also, albeit much lower than Indian immigrants. New York Metropolitan Area has highest number of Pakistani and Bangladeshi immigrants (ACS 2006). The Los Angeles area has the second highest number of Bangladeshi immigrants after the New York area. It is important to underline here that South Asian immigrants are quite scattered in these two big geographical units and there are very few cities or counties with large South Asian population concentration. The reason for this pattern of settlement lies primarily in the pattern of South Asian immigration in the U.S. which has

mostly been driven by professional immigrants who generally settled in both urban and suburban areas in a scattered manner. Alluding to this demographic reality, scholars have pointed out to this important difference between South Asian immigrants and other Asian immigrants who are far more concentrated. Despite being scattered demographically, South Asians have developed commercial areas catering specifically to South Asians which have become important sites for constructing and maintaining ethnic identities in cities such as Los Angeles, New York, and Chicago (Shukla 2003).⁵ This demographic characteristic of South Asians- the lack of population density- has important implications for their political incorporation which will also be explored in the remaining chapters.

The educational and economic profiles of South Asian immigrants are important factors that explain why the existing models of political incorporation do not speak to the experiences of this group. The broad macro indicators of income and education among South Asian immigrants suggest that a large section of the community is economically well off with a high level of education. The median household income of Asian Indians is \$ 76,172 which is higher than the median household income of Asian Americans (\$62,738) or whites (\$62,518). Compared to Asian Indians, Pakistani and Bangladeshi Americans tend to demonstrate lower incomes. The median household incomes of Pakistani and Bangladeshi Americans are \$56,745 and \$42,404 respectively. Approximately 67 percent of Indian immigrants have bachelor's degree or more and the figure is higher than Asian Americans (48 percent) or Whites (28). The figures for Pakistani and Bangladeshi Americans are 54 and 52 percent. A significant number of

⁵ Artesia in Cerritos county, Los Angeles and Jackson Heights in Queens, New York are prime examples of commercial centers which serve South Asian communities and they are a critical part of the construction and maintenance of particular ethnic identities.

South Asians are proficient in the English language- the percentage is higher than most other Asian American ethnic groups (ACS 2006). The fluency with the English language because of their British colonial history is a distinctive feature of the South Asian community. The residential settlement pattern among South Asian immigrants suggests that they usually tend to settle in urban areas as well as suburban areas, and a significant number of them live in either mixed neighborhoods or primarily white areas. However, as noted earlier, the later waves of immigration brought working class sections of South Asians to the U.S. under family reunification provision, immigration diversification quota, and other such programs resulting in a significant section of South Asian immigrants who occupy the lower rung of socioeconomic ladder as service workers and small business owners. Despite a large number of professionals and entrepreneurs, South Asian immigrants remain a very diverse group in terms of their professional and socioeconomic background. The tables on education (table1.3), occupation (table1.5), and ability to speak English (table1.4) demonstrate the educational and occupational diversity among South Asian immigrants. The data on occupational distribution show that Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi communities have a significant section which is employed in higher echelons of job ladder (management professionals and related occupations), but they also have people in service, construction, and transportation which represent lower rungs of the occupational ladder(table1.5). The proportion of management professionals and related occupations is higher among Asian Indians (61.3) than Pakistani (40.2) and Bangladeshi (33.9) groups which also show the socioeconomic and occupational difference among different South Asian groups. The diversity within South Asians is also evident in their ability to speak English (table 1.4). In all three South Asian communities

there are significant numbers of people who speak English less than very well. The numbers are higher among Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities in comparison to the Indian community. Thus, the overall data on education, occupation, and ability to speak English demonstrate that there is a high level of diversity among South Asians in the United States in terms of their socioeconomic background.

Table 1.3: Educational Attainment of South Asian Americans (25 Years and Over)

Level of Education	Indian (Percentage)	Pakistani	Bangladeshi
Less than High School	10	12.8	13.8
High School Graduate	11.9	16.1	18
Some College Associate Degree	10.9	16.5	15.8
Bachelor's Degree	31.8	31	30.9
Graduate or Professional Degree	35.5	23.6	21.5

Note: Based on Data from ACS 2006

Table 1.4: Language Spoken at Home and Ability to Speak English

	Indian	Pakistani	Bangladeshi
English Only	23	15.1	9.5
Language Other than English	77	84.9	90.5
Speak English less than very Well	22.1	29.9	45

Note: Based on Data from ACS 2006

Table 1.5: Occupational Distribution among South Asians (16 Years and Over)

Occupations	Indian	Pakistani	Bangladeshi
Management Professional and Related	61.3	40.2	33.9
Service	7.6	9.4	17.5
Sales and Office	21.2	29.1	30.9
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	.2	.1	.0
Construction, Extraction, Maintenance, and Repair	2.3	4.3	4.1
Production, Transportation, and Material Moving	7.5	17	13.6

Note: Based on Data from ACS 2006

The diverse characteristics and immigration history of South Asian immigrants in the United States pose four specific challenges to existing dominant models of political incorporation. These challenges revolve around the ways in which race, socioeconomic status, religion, and transnationalism impact political incorporation of South Asian immigrants. Neither of the models of political incorporation discussed above- the pluralist/assimilationist nor the minority group model- fully take into account an immigrant group which is racially non-white but comprised of a large number of highly educated and economically well off members. The pluralist model draws upon the European immigrants who joined the lower echelons of the economic ladder and gradually worked their way up. The pluralist model holds that economic and educational advances among European immigrants gradually led to their full political incorporation. The barriers they faced because of their ethnic and religious origins (Eastern European, Irish, Jewish) also declined as they climbed the economic ladder and moved to mixed

neighborhoods. However, a significant section of South Asian immigrants do not follow this trajectory because they have entered into the U.S. society as professionals who are economically well off and a large number of them live in mixed neighborhoods from the very beginning. Given this economic and educational profile of South Asian immigrants and their relative proficiency in English, the pluralist model predicts that South Asian immigrants should easily and more quickly become a part of mainstream political process of the U.S. However, the experience of South Asian as well as other Asian immigrant groups with similar socioeconomic profiles does not suggest a quick and easy political incorporation (Lien, Conway, and Wong 2004; Kim 1999). Yet the minority group model also does not provide an analytical framework to explain the political incorporation experience of South Asian immigrants because it does not deal with the experiences of groups which are educationally and economically well off. The unique combination of nonwhite racial status and relative prosperity of a section of South Asian immigrants presents an interesting and challenging case which requires immigration and political incorporation scholars to go beyond these two dominant existing models of political incorporation.

One of the important issues for South Asians is that dark skin color and phenotype have remained a source of differential treatment and discrimination against them. Historically, they were excluded from citizenship on the basis of their racial status and skin color (Haney-Lopez; Jensen, 1980; Prashad 2000; Mazumdar 1989; Kibria 1998). The incidents of hate crimes, racial profiling, and discrimination against South Asian immigrants after the twin towers attack on Sep. 11th 2001 were also a stark reminder of their place in the racial hierarchy and the outsider status attached to them. The attack on

Muslims, Sikhs, and other South Asians shows the vulnerability of an immigrant group which is targeted both because of their racial features-phenotype- and religious beliefs. The pluralist argument that these new immigrants, due to their high socioeconomic profile, will blend in quickly and become a part of the mainstream political process was once again questioned by the spate of post- 9/11 incidents of hate crimes and discrimination.

The particular placing of South Asian immigrants in the U.S. racial hierarchy as nonwhite immigrants and the experiences of racial discrimination undoubtedly put them in close proximity to the other nonwhite minority groups. Based on their nonwhite status and continuing discriminatory treatment of South Asian immigrants, the minority group model would predict that South Asian immigrants will mobilize on the basis of a shared racial and ethnic identity and this mobilization will accelerate given the treatment of South Asian immigrants after September 11th. However, South Asian immigrants do not seem to fit the minority group model especially in terms of grass roots mobilizing based on a shared racial and/or ethnic identity against discrimination and in favor of resource distribution and better representation of the group. Hence, different variants of the minority group model do not help us to understand the political incorporation process of South Asian immigrants who are close to other minority groups in terms of their placing in the racial hierarchy but do not completely share the economic and educational profile of most minority group populations. This dissertation argues that distinctions along the lines of class play an important role in shaping the political and mobilizational response of South Asian immigrants. Besides class, other distinctions such as national origin and religion also shape the political response of South Asian immigrants.

South Asian immigrants, like other immigrant groups in the U.S., maintain a high level of contact with their country of origin. A preliminary analysis of the Pilot National Asian American Political Survey (PNAAPS) data suggests that the group maintains a higher level of connection to home country compared to other Asian immigrant groups who are also known to maintain close connections to their home country. The scholarship on new immigrants and political incorporation suggests that transnational attachments are a significant part of immigrant social and political lives and they play important roles in shaping their broader social and political behavior (DeSipio 2003; Guarnizo, Portes and Haller 2003; Chang 1988; Jones- Correa 1998; Karpathakis 1999; Graham 2001; Rogers 2006). Transnational attachment has traditionally been seen as an impediment to immigrant political participation in the U.S. While the pluralist model of political incorporation looks at transnational attachments as the vestiges of the past, the minority group model of political incorporation has not engaged with the issue of transnational attachments in a significant manner. However, some recent works on the relationship between transnational attachment and political participation in the U.S. have suggested that attachment to home country does not necessarily lead to a lower level of political participation in the U.S. (Jones-Correa 1998; DeSipio 2003; Lien, Conway, and Wong, 2004; Wong 2006). The existing literature has mostly addressed the question of the impact of transnational attachment on political participation in terms of whether or not it depresses immigrant political participation in the U.S. This is an important contribution in terms of seriously engaging with the issue of transnationalism while studying immigrant political behavior but it does not go beyond the limited analysis of the relation between the two.

In this study, I focus on the ways in which transnational attachments shape the political incorporation of immigrant communities as well as create a particular trajectory of political engagement for immigrant groups in American politics. For instance, interest in the politics of home country and active engagement with the political process of home country pursued by immigrant organizations based in the U.S. could also be seen as a way to engage with the political process in the U.S. For immigrant groups, engagement with home country issues might also mean approaching and influencing different power structures in the U.S. to influence political processes back home. In fact, for many immigrant groups mobilization and activism in the U.S. around the issues of the country of origin has been the first brush with the political structure in the U.S. This dissertation explores the link between involvement in the political process of the home and the host country through an analysis of different South Asian immigrant organizations in the U.S., and demonstrates how transnational political engagement could be an important element of the group's political incorporation in the U.S. Building on the analysis of transnational social and political engagement of South Asian immigrants, this dissertation suggests that conventional notions of citizenship based on identification and engagement with a single nation state does not fully represent immigrant political behavior. The dissertation thus explores the import of transnational social and political engagement on the existing debates on citizenship.

The dissertation also argues that active political engagement with home country is pursued only by a small group of immigrants who show the ability and maturity to engage with the political processes of both the U.S. and their country of origin. They make the case for multiple engagements and demonstrate that in a globalized world the

political involvement in multiple sites can only enhance the quality of political participation. However, transnational political engagement tends to be focused on a very limited range of issues which might not help in breaking away from the continued marginalization of the community in the U.S. This remains an issue of concern in immigrant communities. The limited range of issues taken up by the community elites is generally bereft of any grass-roots mobilization which, in turn, has important implications for the political incorporation of the community. This dissertation goes beyond the limited analysis of relationship between political participation in the U.S. and transnational attachment and sheds light on the complex and multiple ways in which transnational attachments continue to shape the political incorporation of South Asian immigrants in the U.S. The political incorporation model of non-white immigrants, the dissertation argues, has to be inclusive of the transnational aspect of immigrants' social and political life and the multiple ways in which political involvements of immigrant communities are shaped by transnational attachments.

South Asian immigrants are also different in terms of their religious beliefs as they constitute the largest minority group coming from non Judeo-Christian religious traditions. South Asian immigrants are incredibly diverse in their religious backgrounds, which include a significant number of Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs along with Christians and Buddhists. The religious differences of South Asian immigrants from the dominant Judeo-Christian tradition of the U.S. work as an additional barrier to their social and political incorporation. The post-9/11 hate crime and targeting of South Asians indicated how the religious difference contributed to their treatment as “foreigners” and “outsiders.” The contemporary political discourse on the “war against terror” has further

resulted in the marginalization of a significant section of Muslim South Asian immigrants. The religious diversity within the South Asian community suggests that non-white immigrants in the U.S. are not homogeneous. Hence, there is a need to expand the existing models of political incorporation of immigrants and minority groups to address the religious differences and their role in the political incorporation of immigrant communities. Thus, the dissertation also analyzes the impact of internal religious diversity within the South Asian community on political mobilization of South Asians.

Methodology

This dissertation uses a multimethod approach- a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods- to analyze South Asian immigrant political incorporation. The dissertation analyzes the first ever multi-city, multi-lingual and multi-ethnic survey of Asians in the United States- the Pilot Study of the National Asian American Survey (PNAAPS) completed in 2001. For this survey, a total of 1,218 adults of Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Japanese, Filipino, and South Asian descent residing in Los Angeles, New York, Honolulu, San Francisco, and Chicago metropolitan areas were randomly selected and interviewed by phone between November 16, 2000 and January 28, 2001. The questions this pilot study aimed to answer included the extent to which Asian immigrants have adapted to the U.S. society and culture, the forms of ethnic and panethnic identity and consciousness that Asian Americans express, the views that Asian Americans hold about the U.S. political system, and the participatory habits, political habits, and partisanship of Asians in the U.S. political system.⁶ The PNAAPS survey also

⁶ The sampling design had a final sample of 308 Chinese, 168 Koreans, 137 Vietnamese, 198 Japanese, 266 Filipino, and 141 South Asians. It is important to emphasize here that sample size is modest for certain subgroups, particularly for Koreans, Vietnamese, and South Asians.

measured ethnic in-group feelings, national and transnational attachments that Asian Americans form, and adaptation and acculturation they exhibit over time in the United States. It examined Asian Americans' transnational attachment to the people and culture of their country of origin through the following indicators: news attention to events in Asia, frequency of contact with people in the country of origin, most recent visits to the country of origin, language used at home and to conduct business transactions. The analysis of the survey data is important in developing a preliminary account of some of the important aspects of South Asian immigrants' political participation and transnational attachments.

Since the survey dealt with only a limited number of respondents and a limited range of questions pertaining political incorporation, this dissertation employs qualitative methods of structured open-ended interviews and participant observation to gain a fuller understanding of the impact of racial barriers, socioeconomic variation, religion, and transnational attachments on the political incorporation process of South Asian immigrants. Sixty in depth interviews were conducted with leaders and community members of Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi descent in the Los Angeles and New York Metropolitan Areas between March 2006 and February 2007. It is important to note here that the representation of Bangladeshi and Pakistani subjects in the sample is higher than their proportion in the population (Table 1.6). This was done to get a sizable number of Bangladeshi and Pakistani subjects in order to give adequate representation to these groups in the data. Approximately half of the interviewees were community activists and leaders associated with different South Asian immigrant organizations and the other half were regular members of the community. Each of these interviews lasted

between forty-five and ninety minutes. Half of the subjects for these interviews were drawn from a list of South Asian organizations which was prepared in consultation with different South Asian organizations and researchers and community activists with expertise in the South Asian community. The other half of the subjects who were regular community members were identified through contacts within the community who led to others in the community in a snowball sampling fashion. However, steps were taken to ensure variation in social networks and socioeconomic profiles following the initial snowball contacts. Different chains of contacts were established to avoid replicating one particular demographic. The leaders/activists as well as regular community members interviewed for this research represented different sections of the community in terms of class, country of origin, religion, gender, political orientation, and the length of stay. The activists interviewed for this dissertation were involved with different kinds of organizations including ethnic or nation of origin based- Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi- as well as Panethnic which represented the broader South Asian category. These organizations were diverse in terms of socioeconomic and professional background of their members and they represented working class South Asians as well as professionals and entrepreneurs. The organizations included those that are primarily focused on issues and activism around the U.S. based local themes and others that are concerned with issues relating to the countries of origin. Most of these interviews were conducted in English except three where either Urdu or Hindi was used. Even though a large number of South Asian immigrants are proficient in English, a small number of interviews conducted in languages other than English might be a possible shortcoming of

this study. The data might be less representative of those South Asian immigrants who are not proficient in English.

The socioeconomic and professional diversity of the interviewees was carefully considered while selecting them for the interviews. Since a significant section of South Asians in the United States belong to the upper economic stratum and come from either the professional or entrepreneurial class, special care was taken to include interviewees from lower income backgrounds and from working class and blue collar professions. The interviewees belong to very diverse professions including entrepreneurs, engineers, software consultant, small business owner, taxi drivers, and low-end service workers. It is important to point here that a significantly larger number of interviewees of Bangladeshi descent were from working class back grounds in comparison to interviewees of Indian and Pakistani descent. This is a reflection of the socioeconomic profile of Bangladeshi community in the United States. However, the socioeconomic and professional diversity among Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi interviewees was also carefully maintained to the extent possible.

As discussed earlier, the activists and community leaders interviewed for this dissertation also belonged to a diverse set of organizations and special care was taken to make sure that organizations catering to different segments of South Asians were represented in the sample. The organizations included in the sample represented all three national origins as well as those representing a broader South Asian identity. A number of organizations included in the sample were geared towards serving poor and working class South Asians along with the undocumented sections of the community. South Asian Network, Desis Rising Up and Moving, New York Taxi Workers Alliance, Council of

People’s Organization, and Coney Island Avenue Project are some important examples of organizations which serve and represent lower income South Asians. The sample also included a significant number of organizations which represented the professional and entrepreneurial sections of Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi community. Organizations such as Council of Pakistani American Affairs, Organization of Pakistani Professionals, Global Organization of People of Indian Origin, and Friends of South Asian American Communities are some examples of formations included in the sample which primarily represent the professional and entrepreneurial sections of South Asian community.

Table 1.6: Interviewees and their Country of Origin

	Community Leaders	Community Members	Total
Indian	10	11	21
Pakistani	11	7	18
Bangladeshi	9	13	21

The other qualitative method used in this dissertation is participant observation. I attended ten community events each in Los Angeles and New York to observe how the questions of political involvement, transnational engagement, discrimination, and identity were approached and discussed by South Asian groups. I also attended two conferences of the Indian diaspora organized by the government of India in New Delhi in January 2006 and in New York City in September 2007. Both these conferences were attended by a large number of Indian Americans and the question of economic, social, and political engagement with India as well as the United States were prominent issues of discussion

It is important to point out here that qualitative methods, in general, are not considered to be useful predictive tools like standardized surveys. However, qualitative methods allow theory building through respondents' own self interpretation and the observation of their everyday practices. Qualitative approach is best suited to study an ethnic and racial group such as South Asians for which there is very little of quantitative data available. The qualitative approach may discover theoretical questions which later may be formalized into hypotheses to be tested by quantitative social science methods. The qualitative method does not assume links between the variables as quantitative research does, it can rather draw responses from actors showing how they link these variables in their minds (Jones-Correa 1998). A combination of quantitative and qualitative method is the best way to study a research question and a group for which there is very little existing data.

This dissertation contributes towards theorizing political incorporation beyond the existing models by analyzing the impact of transnational attachments, racial discrimination, class, and religious distinctions on the incorporation process of South Asian immigrants. This study of South Asian immigrants' political incorporation also contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which transnationalism expands the meaning and practices of citizenship through continuing engagement of the group with the country of settlement as well as the country of origin.

Chapter II analyzes the issue of racialization, and racial discrimination to argue that the experiences of South Asian immigrants fit neither of the two models of political incorporation. It specifically analyzes the post-9/11 period to understand the impact of racial discrimination on the political incorporation process of South Asian immigrants.

The chapter argues that despite continued racialization of the group, there is very limited effort to mobilize against this racialization and discrimination. The chapter also analyzes the role of religion in both the racialization and mobilization of the South Asian community. Chapter III argues that there is very little mobilization among South Asians by political parties and candidates. There is a limited attempt on the part of the South Asians to mobilize at the grassroots level to enter the political process as an ethnic or racial group. Instead, there is a selective political mobilization of South Asian immigrants in the United States which centers on a narrow socioeconomic elite section of the community. Chapter IV analyzes both quantitative and qualitative data to contend that transnational attachments and engagements do not impact the South Asian immigrants' political participation in the U.S. negatively. Furthermore, the chapter explores the impact of transnational engagements on citizenship to argue that a new form of citizenship rooted in transnationalism is emerging among immigrant communities. Chapter V examines the involvement of Indian immigrant groups with the U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Deal, 2006 to note that engagement with the issues of home country often becomes a part of engagement with the political process in the U.S. In other words, engagements with issues of home country are not confined only to the home country but they also become a vehicle for the group to engage with the U.S. political institutions. The chapter further argues that participation by a limited number of elites is promoted by actors on both sides of the transnational political arena – the policies advocated by the Indian state as well as the Indian American groups active in the United States- which promotes a political incorporation trajectory that relies on a narrow section of elite among

the Indian American community. Finally, Chapter VI outlines the broad findings of this dissertation and provides a framework for a new model of political incorporation.

Chapter II

Racial Order and Belonging: South Asians in Pre and Post- 9/11 U.S.

Issues of race and racial discrimination have been an important part of the scholarly work on political incorporation of minority groups and new immigrants. The experiences of both European white ethnics and African Americans suggest that their relative placing in the American racial hierarchy has played a pivotal role in shaping the political incorporation experience of these groups. While both groups faced racial discrimination, the impact of racial distinctions endured in the case of black Americans. In contrast, European ethnics gradually melted into the white population after overcoming initial prejudice and barriers as evident in the cases of Irish and other eastern and southern European immigrants. The persistence of racial barriers for African Americans is thus a strong counter example to European ethnic experience (Pinderhughes 1987). These two contrasting experiences of political incorporation of new groups are further complicated by newer immigrant groups such as Asians, Latinos, and Caribbean who do not easily fit into the dominant models of political incorporation.

The two models of political incorporation lead to contrasting predictions about the impact of racial and ethnic difference on the path of political incorporation followed by new immigrants. As noted earlier, the pluralist model holds that the current nonwhite immigrants will overcome initial prejudice and with achievement of economic stability they will achieve political incorporation in a gradual manner without significant disruption to the political system. The pluralist model argued that minority groups in general will follow the path of European immigrants. This model assumes the openness of the political system as far as incorporating newcomers is concerned and holds that

racial and ethnic difference is not an enduring barrier to political incorporation.

According to this framework, ethnic group politics is a transitional phase in incorporation process and as groups achieve upward economic mobility and political integration, their ethnic loyalties gradually melted away (Dahl 1961; Portes and Rumbaut 1996; Alba and Nee 1997).

In contrast, the minority group model gives centrality to race and argues that the new non-white immigrants will face racial barriers similar to African Americans and their political incorporation experience will also follow the similar path. Since the majority of contemporary newcomers to the American cities are non-whites, this model has argued and predicted that their path to political incorporation also will be slow, incomplete, and greatly influenced by American racism. These scholars have used the African American experience to develop an alternative model to pluralism to understand the relative difficulties and uncertainties of the political incorporation of non-white immigrants (Hero 1998; Browning et al. 1997; Takaki 1989; Kim 1999; Tate 1994). Based on this framework, they predict that these non-white groups will also broadly follow the same path in their attempt to full political incorporation as African Americans, namely heavy reliance on racial group identity or linked fate, grassroots mobilization, demand for resource redistribution and political reform.

This chapter analyzes the issue of race, racialization, and racial discrimination in the case of South Asian immigrants to argue that experience of South Asian immigrants fits neither of the two dominant models of political incorporation. The chapter argues that barriers to social and political inclusion emerging due to race and racial discrimination continue to remain an important part of the group's experience defying the predictions of

pluralist or assimilationist model of political incorporation. However, the minority group model does not explain the experiences of South Asians entirely. This is because the distinctions based on religion, class, and nation of origin play an important role in how different groups within the South Asian community are racialized differently. Thus, there are distinct ways in which race is experienced by groups such as South Asians.

Furthermore, group mobilization based on a common ethno-racial identity or linked fate is far less common than predicted and emphasized by the minority group model.

The chapter analyzes the historical placing of South Asian immigrants in the U.S. racial hierarchy by looking at debates on the census classification of Indian immigrants and their racialization. The chapter argues that the analysis of racial targeting of South Asians in the post-9/11 period is integrally linked to how South Asians were placed in the racial hierarchy historically. The survey data and interviews analyzed in this chapter focus on both the pre and post-September 11th period, although the interviews with the leaders and community members evoked more conversations around the issue of race and racial discrimination after September 11th. The post-9/11 period thus assumed a critical importance in this analysis because the incidents following the attack brought the issue of racial difference to the fore for South Asian immigrants. However, the historical analysis of the placing of South Asians in the U.S. racial hierarchy is important for analyzing the post-9/11 period.

Based on the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, the chapter argues that even though the racialization of South Asian immigrants as outsiders has been continuing for a long time, the post-September 11th incidents have intensified and brought this racialization process to the fore. The chapter supports the arguments made by a number

of Asian American scholars that the status of outsider or foreigner is an important part of racialization and it holds true for South Asian immigrants as well. Furthermore, the chapter goes a step further and argues that internal distinctions within South Asian immigrant community become important while analyzing the impact of racialization and discrimination on their sense of social and political inclusion and belonging. The analysis suggests that since there is no monolithic South Asian identity, the process of racialization has to be understood by taking internal distinctions such as class, religion, gender, caste, and language into consideration. The chapter in particular focuses upon religious and class distinctions as examples of internal distinctions. The chapter concludes by arguing that South Asian immigrants do not follow the traditional minority group model in terms of the patterns of political mobilization predicted by the model precisely because of this internal difference. Post-9/11 racial targeting and hate crimes against South Asian immigrants did not lead to mobilization based on ethno-racial identity. There was rather a fragmented response which was shaped more by religious, class, and nation of origin divide within the community. This pattern of mobilization in response to the post-9/11 environment also points to the routine mobilization patterns for social and political incorporation among South Asian Americans.

South Asians and U.S. Racial Hierarchy

Race is one of the most important categories that the South Asian immigrants confront when they come to the United States. While they have inhabited the categories of class, caste, and ethnic identities in their country of origin, such is not the case with race. The process of acquiring an identity in a new country is a troubling process for an immigrant group and South Asian immigrants have problems dealing with the category of

race (Kibria 1998). South Asian immigrants bring with them the notion of race and racial division passed on through a long western colonial history and more specifically about U.S. society through the mass media and popular culture (Prashad 2000). They are also very quick to adopt some of the dominant stereotypes about different racial groups prevalent in the mainstream culture. However, there are no easily available categorizations for South Asian immigrants in the racial hierarchy. Scholars have pointed out that there is often an attempt by the group to avoid the racial categorization altogether.⁷ As sociologists and political scientists have argued, there is always a tension between identity assigned to a group and the identity that is asserted by them. A process of negotiation goes on between the identity categories immigrants bring with them and those to which they are assigned (Cornell and Hartman 1998). Indeed, The history of racial classification of South Asian immigrants suggests that the group has gone through this process like other immigrant groups and has at various points contested the categories assigned to it (Koshy 1998).

In the U.S., there is a long history of racialization of South Asian immigrants in the U.S. Historically, they were barred from acquiring citizenship because of the racial prerequisite laws. The Supreme Court Judgment in *Bhagat Singh Thind v United States* (1923) pronounced that Indian immigrants did not fulfill the prerequisite of citizenship because they could not be considered white. The Court wrote at length about the prevailing science of race and the relation between white and Caucasian. The Court argued that even though Indian immigrants were considered Caucasian according to the prevailing anthropological knowledge, the common sense understanding of race

⁷ Indian Immigrants have often tried to avoid being categorized as a racial group to circumvent the costs of racial marking and felt more convenient about the ethnic label (Kibria 1998).

suggested that Indian immigrants were not whites and hence not eligible for citizenship (Lopez 1996).⁸

Due to the debates on whiteness, the census classification of South Asian immigrants- Indian immigrants in particular- was in flux for a long period of time. In fact, the history of census classification of Indian immigrants in the U.S. shows the capricious and socially constructed nature of the classification system. Indian immigrants were classified at different points as non-white, Hindu, white and Asian Indian before they became a part of the Asian American and Pacific Islander category in 1980. Ironically enough, they were classified as white in 1970 census, the category which was denied to them when they tried to naturalize in this country by claiming whiteness on the basis of their supposed Caucasian status in the 1920s. The classification of Indian immigrants as white in the 1970 census came in the context of a series of civil rights legislation which codified certain special benefits for minority groups. Indian immigrants were classified as whites to make sure that they were not eligible for benefits set aside for minority groups. It was only after a sustained campaign by Indian immigrant organizations that the group in the 1980 census was classified as Asian Indian as a part of the broader census category of Asian American and Pacific Islander.

⁸ The Plaintiff in the *Thind v. U.S.* (1923) tried to claim citizenship on the basis of Caucasian status because the Court in another judgment argued that a Japanese immigrant could not be granted citizenship because he was not Caucasian.

Table 2.1: History of the Classification of the Asian Indians by the Census Bureau

Census Year	Census classification
1910	Other /Non-white/Hindu
1920	Other / Hindu
1930	Hindu
1940	Hindu
1950	Other /Non-white/Asiatic Indian
1960	Other /Non-white/Hindu
1970	White
1980	Asian Indian
1990	Asian or Pacific Islander/Asian Indian

Note: Census classifications are taken from the categories listed on the census form as responses from the categories listed on the census form for the questions on race or color; these categories are indicated in boldface type. Census classification into sub-categories is drawn from the instructions to the enumerators and the definitions and explanations of terms published in the census (Koshy 1998).

The complex history of census classification of Indian immigrants is ultimately linked to the placing of a group in the racial hierarchy in relation to the other racial groups. Many have observed that given their economic and educational status, South Asian immigrants- specifically referring to Indian immigrants- might be conceptualized as “honorary whites.” This perspective suggests that they do not have much in common with other minority groups (Kibria 1998). Dinesh D’Souza in his book *The End of Racism* argues that the implication of success of South Asians and Asian Americans in the United States is that they do not face racism in this country. However, research suggests that like all immigrant and minority groups, South Asian immigrants are racialized in the U.S. on account of their appearance, skin color, foreign origin, religion,

and language, and culture. Scholars working on South Asian immigrants have always struggled with the complexity of trying to reconcile the non-white status of South Asian immigrants with the relatively high socioeconomic status of a significant section of the group (Koshy 1998; Prashad 2000; Vishweswaran 1997).

A similar complexity of relationship between race, class, and immigration is observed among some other Asian groups as well (Ong 1999). Thus, the discussions on the placing of Asian Americans in the U.S. racial hierarchy provide a useful framework to understand the South Asian case as well. South Asian immigrants not only share a formal census classification with other Asian American groups, but they also share, to a large extent, their diverse socioeconomic profile and immigrant status. The conceptualization of race in the U.S. has been framed for a long time by bipolar racial categories of black and white that still exercise powerful influence on the ways in which Asian Americans are placed on the racial hierarchy as well as racialized in relation to these two poles. Theorizing in relation to bipolar racial categories of black and white, some Asian American scholars have made the argument that Asian Americans are in the middle of the racial hierarchy. Gary Okihiro (1994) has argued that Asian Americans have been rendered an intermediate group in America's bipolar racial scale. Mary Matsuda's (1993) characterization of Asian American as "racial bourgeoisie" also suggests a middle position for the group in comparison to blacks and whites. Kamala Vishweswaran, building on the theory of intermediary placing of Asian Americans, argues that South Asian immigrants occupy a mediating position between black/Latino communities and whites, and in the process achieve a status of model minority which has multiple implications for the understanding of different racial and minority groups and

their relationship to each other and whites. Vishweswaran uses Aiwa Ong's concept of flexible citizenship to underline the continuing flux of South Asian immigrants as far as their racial positioning is concerned (Vishweswaran 1997). Eduardo Bonilla -Silva also refers to the middle status of South Asian in his theory of tri-racial order by classifying Asian Indian and some other Asian American in the category of "honorary whites." According to Bonilla- Silva's scheme, they fall between whites and collective blacks and they use the strategy of racial mobility through whitening of the kind seen in Latin America and the Caribbean (Bonilla- Silva 2004).

Recent theorizing on Asian Americans and U.S. racial order, however, has critiqued the notion of a single hierarchy of race. Claire Kim's theory of racial triangulation of Asian Americans is quite instructive in this regard and it provides a useful framework for understanding the placing of South Asian immigrants too. The racial triangulation theory questions the placing of racial groups on a single hierarchy of status and privilege and argues to look at Asian Americans on at least two axes – superior/inferior and insider/foreigner. Asian Americans are racialized on both these axes in relation to each other. Kim argues that racial triangulation of Asian Americans takes place through two types of simultaneous and linked processes: first, the process of "relative valorization" whereby the dominant group (whites) valorizes subordinate group (Asians Americans) relative to another subordinate group (blacks) on cultural and/or racial grounds in order to dominate both groups, but especially the blacks. Relative valorization is precisely the process which produces the discourse of model minority by claiming that Asian Americans are culturally inclined to strive hard and achieve better economic and social standing as compared to Blacks. Secondly, there is simultaneously

the process of “civic ostracism” whereby whites construct Asian Americans as immutably foreign and inassimilable with whites on cultural and /or racial grounds thereby “ostracize them from body politic and civic membership.” In Kim’s schema, on the axis of foreigner-insider, Asian Americans fall closer to the foreigner side of the axis whereas Blacks and Whites fall closer to the insider dimension of the axis. Kim argues that the most striking feature is the historical persistence of this racial triangulation of Asian Americans since its inception in the 1800s. It has only undergone cosmetic changes in the post-1965 era in “keeping with the contemporary norms of colorblindness” (Kim 1999, 107).

Kim’s theory of racial triangulation is equally applicable to South Asian immigrants. Scholars writing on South Asian immigrants argue that the ascription of model minority status to Indian immigrants shapes their self perception as well as their perception of other minority groups. Vijay Prashad, for instance, points to the importance of class in the construction of South Asian American identity and argues that there is a strong notion among a large section of South Asians that their class status works as an effective barrier against racial discrimination in this society and provides immunity from racialization of the group (Prashad 2000). However, post-9/11 reactions of racial targeting and hate crimes against South Asians and Arab immigrants brought the issue of “foreignness” to the fore which started shaking the notion of immunity from racialization due to class status. Claire Kim’s framework of racial triangulation thus provides a very useful lens to analyze the racial positioning of South Asian immigrants by simultaneously looking at their perceived cultural traits of success and hard work in relation to other minority groups and their perceived outsider status in comparison to these groups.

In this chapter I develop Kim's schema further to argue that the new immigrant groups can be racialized on multiple axes and based on the analysis of interviews with South Asian immigrants I add another axis of racialization which distinguishes South Asians from other Asian Americans, namely the religious difference of South Asian immigrants from the dominant Judeo-Christian religious tradition of the U.S. that is often used to further cast them as outsiders. The predominance of Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs among South Asian immigrants make them distinctive from the Christian majority of the United States. This religious distinction of South Asian immigrants came to the fore acutely in post-9/11 environment when they were racialized and targeted on the basis of religious difference among other things.

Race, Discrimination, and Belonging

The post-9/11 environment of hostility, racial discrimination, and hate crimes against Arabs, Muslims, South Asians, and others who "appeared like terrorists" was not the first time that South Asian immigrants of different countries of origin and religious backgrounds came face to face with racial hostility and discrimination in the United States. Thus, the incidents of hate crimes, racial profiling, and targeting of certain groups were not merely a product of emotions generated by extraordinary nature of incident on September 11th, 2001 but rather a continuation as well as accentuation of racialization of South Asians and other immigrant groups in the United States.

As discussed earlier, the long history of racialization of South Asian immigrants was reflected in the naturalization laws in the early 20th century which prevented them from acquiring citizenship in the U.S. However, the post -1965 phase of South Asian immigration was taking place in a different context where legally stipulated forms of

discrimination were no longer in existence. There is very little macro-level data of the post-1965 period on South Asian immigrants and racial discrimination. However, the limited existing surveys and case studies suggest that racial discrimination has always been an issue of concern despite the fact that it may not have always found clear public articulation. A survey conducted in 1976 among Indian immigrants in Chicago reported that 44 percent of the participants had experienced discrimination in some way. Over half of those who reported discrimination said that these acts of discrimination were related to being passed over for raises and promotions in corporate America in favor of White Americans , and around one third were related to a refusal to rent houses or apartments clearly on the market.(Fisher 1980). Similarly, the analysis of PNAAPS data (the survey was conducted before September 11, 2001) showed that 38 percent of South Asians personally experienced discrimination. The percentage of the overall sample (the total Asian American sample) which reported discrimination is 36 percent. Among those South Asians who reported to have personally faced discrimination, the highest percentage (63) said they felt discriminated while dealing with strangers in public places whereas 54 percent reported discrimination in jobs and promotions and 46 percent that they faced it while dealing with business or retail establishments. These numbers clearly suggest that even though racial discrimination was not an overwhelming concern, it remained an issue of concern for South Asian immigrants in different spheres of life even before September 11, 2001(Lien, Conway, and Wong 2004).

Even though racial classification had been an issue since *Bhagat Singh Thind* days, the question of racial classification and discrimination became a particularly vexing issue after a critical mass of South Asians arrived in the U.S. after the 1965 immigration

reform. A campaign was launched in the late 1970s by a group of Indian immigrants for census reclassification of the group. The debate was whether to press for reclassification of Indian immigrants in the U.S. census from the census category of white to Asian American. This debate was reflective of the community's thinking on the issue of race and discrimination. The Association of Indian Americans (AIA) in its 1975 submission to the Federal Interagency Committee on Education (FICE), the governmental committee dealing with racial and ethnic definitions, argued in favor of reclassification on the basis of racial status of Indian immigrants in the U.S. The group argued:

The language of the Civil Rights Act clearly intends to protect those individuals who might be disadvantaged on the basis of appearance. It is undeniable that Indians are different in appearance; they are equally dark skinned as other non-white individuals and are, therefore, subject to the same prejudices.... Indians are disadvantaged, we believe, for reasons of racial discrimination (Fisher 1980, 129).

AIA further argued that as Indian immigrants became permanent residents and citizens, they were able to bring their family members to this country and that section did not exactly fit the demographic profile of a highly educated professional worker and thus could be discriminated against because of their skin color and appearance. However, there was no unanimity within the community on this issue. For instance, there were opinions expressed in *India Abroad* – one of the first major ethnic newspapers published by the Indian immigrant community in the U.S. - which suggested that the community should not foreground the issue of discrimination and avoid comparisons with other minority groups. The fear about asking for minority status and preferential treatment was that it might lead to a backlash against Indian immigrants (Fisher, 1980). The ambivalence of the Indian immigrant community toward U.S. racial categories and the

anxiety about identifying with a particular one were reflected intensely in this debate. However, the debate also suggested that there was a growing realization in the 1980s among professional sections of the community that racism was a reality in the United States with which the community had to deal with.

The issues of race and racial discrimination among South Asian immigrants have also been coupled with the discourse on model minority in the community. For instance, Vijay Prashad (2000) and Nazli Kibria (1998) have noted that Indian immigrants are not comfortable with racial labels and the model minority discourse provides them with a framework to deal with this stigma of minority identity. Prashad aptly describes how South Asian immigrants very quickly became a part of the model minority discourse vis-à-vis other minority groups-blacks in particular- after their entry into the United States following the 1965 immigration reform. He argues:

The entry of *desis*(South Asians) in large numbers after the passage of the Civil Rights Acts not only brought them into model minority category but also set the terms for *desi*(South Asian) view of Black liberation. It did not take long for the media to add *desis* to the model minority category. Here was a community with phenomenal demographic data: Almost everyone had an advanced degree, and almost all the migrants imbibed bourgeois values of education and a work ethic. There was little recognition in the media that this was an artificial community, that most of those who migrated came through the filters of the INS. This was the cream of the bourgeois South Asian crop, and it was certainly going to make an impact despite its small numbers (p 169).

This particular construction of South Asian immigrants- highly educated professionals with strong work ethic- fed into the myth of model minority at the cost of ignoring the economic, social, and educational diversity within the community. The fact that there is a significant section of working class and poor South Asians - among

Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi immigrants- is completely ignored in this continuing model minority discourse.

Despite the hold of the model minority myth among South Asian immigrants, the issue of racial discrimination and hate crimes became practical concerns for South Asian immigrants in the 1980s as a section of South Asian immigrants started operating small businesses in some parts of the U.S. and a section of working class also emerged within the community. Small clusters of Indian immigrants started living in neighborhoods giving them a distinct Indian neighborhood reputation. Some of the incidents of overt racial hostility came to public notice in this period. One of such series of incidents, which received a lot of media attention, took place in New Jersey. In separate incidents which took place within a short span of time in 1987, an Indian man, Navroze Mody, was beaten to death in Hoboken, New Jersey; another beaten into a coma, and two women assaulted at a bus stand near Jersey City. The local media reported the local white youth saying, "It's white people against Hindus" and "Heights (Jersey Heights) is for whites." There were also other incidents in the area during the same period which involved spitting on Indian women, hurling trash and stones on Indian houses and businesses (Marriot 1987; Mazumdar 2003). The Jersey City incidents in 1987 brought the issue of discrimination and hate crime against Indian immigrants into limelight. These incidents also questioned the myth that all South Asian immigrants were professionals living in suburbs and completely insulated from any kind of racial hostility. However, South Asian immigrants stopped short of embracing this issue fully. Sucheta Mazumdar, analyzing the racial attacks on Indian immigrants in Jersey City, argued that Indian immigrants generally chose to avoid the politics of race in United States and never

worked towards building the coalition of minority groups to counter racial discrimination and hate crime (Mazumdar 2003). The above analysis strengthens the view that South Asian immigrants show strong ambivalence about the issue of race and racial discrimination and even though campaigns on racial classification took place there has been little mobilization and organizing within the community around this issue.

Post-September 11th: South Asians, Racial Targeting, and Outsiders

September 11, 2001 was a watershed moment for South Asian and Arab communities in the United States as far as their perception, acceptance, and treatment in U.S. society were concerned. The issues of race, religious difference, and foreignness came to the forefront immediately after September 11th. An analysis of the impact of Post-September 11th events on South Asian immigrants suggests that race, religion, and foreignness remain a significant part of how South Asian immigrants are perceived and treated in the U.S. My analysis also suggests that the post-September 11th period foregrounded racial, ethnic, and religious identities of South Asian immigrants in a manner which made them targets of suspicion, discrimination, and hate crimes. The spate of racial targeting in the post-9/11 period was a continuation- though in a much more accentuated manner- of the racialization of immigrants groups such as South Asians. The post-September 11th reaction of hostility against South Asians and Arabs may have subsided in the months and years following that incident, but it provides a rich empirical site to understand the issue of race and racialization of South Asian immigrants and how the group itself viewed the issue of racial hostility and discrimination vis-à-vis their social and political incorporation. The interviews conducted with activists and community members from South Asian community very clearly suggested that

conversations around the issue of race, religion, and inclusion invariably evoked references to 9/11 and a large number of respondents talked about discrimination and inclusion in the context of events of hate crime and racial targeting in the post-9/11 period. The analysis of responses by South Asian immigrants to the post-9/11 environment of hostility thus provides an understanding of how South Asian immigrants view the issues of racial discrimination, their continued perception as foreigners, and religious differences. Furthermore, the analysis also provides an answer to the question whether there is a possibility or attempt to mobilize the group on such issues.

The reactions immediately after the September 11th attack were indiscriminate in terms of targeting of people of Arab and South Asian descent of different religious persuasions-Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, Buddhists, and Christians- along with other brown skinned people who looked like “foreigners” and/or “terrorists.” The violence was targeted at these people solely because they shared or perceived to be sharing the nationality, religion, and background of those who were involved in the September 11th attack. The appearance, dress, and perceived religious background became important in targeting groups and individuals. It was in this context that South Asian immigrants became a target of attacks in the immediate aftermath of the September 11th attack.

The racial hate crimes started even before the U.S. government released any information about those involved in the 9/11 attack. Within hours of the attack on the twin towers, a Sikh was being chased down the streets of New York City by a group of young people. He could save his life only with great difficulty. Various media reports pointed out how Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus became the targets of hate crimes following the 9/11 attacks. A Sikh immigrant, Mr. Balbir Singh Sodhi, was shot dead in a parking lot in

Mesa, Arizona. Human Rights Watch reported local Police officials saying that Mr. Sodhi's killer was heard saying in a bar that he would kill the "ragheads" responsible for September 11th attacks (Singh 2002). On October 4, 2001, Mr. Vasudev Patel, a 49 year old Hindu immigrant from India, was shot dead at his convenience store in Mesquite, Texas. His killer, Mark Stroman, later said in a television interview that anger over the September 11th led him to attack any store owner who appeared to be Muslim. Waqar Hassan, a 46 year old Pakistani Muslim immigrant, was also killed at his grocery store near Dallas, Texas on September 15, 2001. Although no money was taken from Hassan, the local police believed that it was a case of robbery. His family, however, believed that it was a hate crime because no money was taken and it happened so soon after September 11th. This case remained unsolved until Mark Stroman- the same person who killed Mr. Vasudev Patel in Mesquite- Texas admitted to killing Mr. Hassan to a fellow prison inmate in 2002(Singh 2002). The dynamics of racialization of South Asian immigrants in the wake of 9/11 on the basis of their appearance, skin color, religion, and nation of origin was unmistakable. They were all lumped together and seen as a possible threat to the United States. South Asian immigrants as well as the other targeted groups were shocked to see the intensity of hostility, and suspicion generated by this incident.

A report prepared by South Asian American Leaders for Tomorrow (SAALT), based on news items which appeared in media organizations serving large communities in the United States, found that there were 645 bias incidents in the time span of just one week-between September 11th and September 17th, 2001. The report noted that these incidents ranged from racial jokes to serious hate crimes like arson, attack, and shooting. The report pointed out:

Perceptions played a major role in determining backlash victims, as evidenced by many cases in which victims included Sikhs, Hispanics, a Greek American and others. South Asians were involved in 81(13 percent) of the reported incidents. Practicing Sikhs, in particular, with their distinct religious traditions were among those who were singled out.⁹

Immigrant Americans from different nations of origin were targeted based on their appearance, skin color, religion, accent, etc. In a comprehensive review of attacks on South Asians and Arabs, the Human Rights Watch noted:

The Sept. 11 hate crime backlash confirmed the fears of Arabs and Muslims in the United States: a major terrorist attack gave rise to a nationwide wave of hate crimes against persons and institutions perceived to be Arabs and Muslim. Unlike previous hate crime waves, however, post-September 11th backlash distinguished itself by its ferocity and extent. The violence included murder , physical assault, arson, vandalism of places of worship, and other property damage , death threats, and public harassment.(Singh 2002, 14)

The surveys conducted after September 11 reported that the South Asian community was greatly affected by this environment of suspicion and hate crimes and they were more likely to report facing discrimination in comparison to other groups. A survey of 1000 California adults by New California Media and USC Annenberg Institute for Justice and Journalism between July and August of 2002 provided evidence of how different communities felt about racial discrimination after September 11.¹⁰ The tables below show how different ethnic groups responded to the following question: Do you think you have been the victim of racial or ethnic discrimination more often, less often, or about the same as before September 11(table 2.2).

⁹ South Asian American Leaders of Tomorrow, American Backlash: Terrorists Bring War Home in more Ways Than One (Washington, DC: SAALT, 2001).

¹⁰ <http://www.ncmonline.com/media/pdf/911survey.pdf>

Table 2.2: Discrimination among Different Ethnic Groups in the Post- 9/11 period.

Ethnic/racial group	More Often(Percentages)
Middle Eastern	58
Asian	16
Hispanic	13
African American	3

Ethnic/racial group	More Often (Percentages)
Pakistani	80
Iranian	60
Arabic	57
Indian	44
Afghan	42

Source: New California Media and USC Annenberg Institute for Justice and Journalism Survey, 2002

The data show that an overwhelming majority of Pakistani immigrants (80 percent) and a significant number of Indian respondents (44 percent) reported that they faced more discrimination after 9/11. A comparison with other minority groups- African Americans, Hispanics, and Asian Americans- shows that Indian, Pakistani, and other Middle Eastern groups felt more targeted and subject of discrimination than the other groups.

Another survey conducted by the New York City Commission on Human Rights between December, 2002 and April, 2003 also provided insight into how the South Asian and Arab communities felt about the post 9/11 environment. The survey, conducted primarily with the help of different community organizations to reach out to the affected communities, included a total of 956 respondents from New York City of which 47 percent were Arab and 39 percent were South Asians. It is important to note here that the survey did not use random sampling method to select the respondents but it was a large scale operation which included a significant number of community organizations to reach out to different sections of South Asian and Arab communities. 69 percent of respondents said that they faced incidents of discrimination or bias-related harassment. 79 percent felt that their lives were negatively affected by 9/11, regardless of whether they believed they had directly experienced any discrimination. They reported having felt more afraid and minimizing their contact with the general public or making their religion and ethnicity less evident. Further analysis of the survey suggested that the most frequent (37 percent) discrimination came in the form of religious and ethnic insults. The bias related incidents ranged from spitting, yelling, and vandalizing to physical attacks. Employment discrimination (26 percent) and public accommodation related discrimination (25 percent) were the other two major categories reported by the respondents.¹¹ These surveys confirm the media reports and accounts which suggest that South Asian immigrants of different religious persuasions and countries of origin were targeted and experienced increased racial discrimination and hate crimes in the post-9/11 period.

¹¹http://www.nyc.gov/html/cchr/pdf/sur_report.pdf

The analysis of interviews conducted with activists, and community members of Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi immigrant communities in the broader Los Angeles and New York metropolitan area provides further insight into the ways in which South Asian immigrants looked at the issues of race, inclusion, belonging, and discrimination- both pre-9/11 and post-9/11 . The interviews not only confirms the accounts of blanket targeting, racial profiling, and hate crime, but also suggests the ways in which South Asian immigrants connect the post -9/11 targeting to their racial status and to the issues of inclusiveness and belonging to the social and political process in the United States. One of the most recurring themes through these interviews is the image of outsider or foreigner being ascribed to South Asians. In the context of post-9/11 U.S., this image of foreigner/outsider is easily perceived as threatening and is collapsed with the image of a “terrorist.”

The trope of foreigner, of course, is an old one in U.S. immigration history and it has been used on both European as well as non European immigrants. European immigrants of late 19th century and early 20th century –particularly Irish, Italian, and Jewish immigrants- also faced this stereotype but unlike Asian immigrants they were able to shed off their “foreigner” stereotype once they moved up the economic ladder. However, the Asian immigrants of 19th century were racialized as outsiders and inassimilable which evolved and persisted as what scholars term as “perpetual foreigner” image of Asian immigrants. Historically, the non-white immigrants have been impacted differently by the foreigner/outsider discourse than white European immigrants and race becomes an important marker in the case of Asian immigrants.

The continuing treatment of certain immigrant groups as outsiders strikes at the very core of the inclusiveness of social and political process as far as new immigrants are concerned. Despite having equal legal and political citizenship rights, the continuing rhetoric of outsider/ foreigner creates deep barriers to political inclusion of immigrant groups. South Asian immigrants, however, realized the actual depth of the outsider perception in the post-9/11 period. A 65 year old woman New Yorker of South Asian origin, who has lived in the U.S. for more than 25 years, referred to her family's experiences after 9/11. She said:

I must say that the community felt frightened in the beginning.... My son did have an unpleasant experience. I mean unpleasant verbal abuse, let me put it that way. He was at Princeton..... He is dark, he looks like a Palestinian actually. Every body thinks he looks like a Palestinian. my son is sort of dark skinned. He and his wife were coming out of a restaurant ... and some white kids, who were obviously very drunk , started abusing him and saying go back to your country , what are you doing here. I think what it did to my son, who came here (U.S.) when he was not even three and who has never seen himself as black..... But he said for the first time, I looked at myself and realized that I was not white. They were seeing me as something different.....¹²

It is obvious here that appearance and color of skin were directly linked to being seen as outsider/ foreigner led to the comment “go back to your country.” The racialization of certain phenotype as foreigner/outsider, irrespective of the length of stay and place of birth, and self identification is unmistakable here.

The backlash after September 11th came as a surprise for South Asians because of the intensity with which they were made to feel outsiders. A 41 year old male Pakistani immigrant based in New York City expressed aptly the deep sense of exclusion which South Asian immigrants were confronted with after 9/11 attacks. He noted:

¹² Interview, New York City, NY,10 February 2007.

When I came in (U.S.) I was like, yes! I belong here. I felt like I am in the right spot and right society. This is the society where I should be. But the 9/11 incident has changed it a little bit. For a couple of years (after 9/11) I really thought I should move back to Pakistan, although I am an American citizen. But life was so miserable, here not so much by the public. Yeah, there was public anger and bashing, but more by the government agencies, the FBI and INS. I live in Brooklyn, in the middle of the community and people were being picked up right and left of me. If you go home and you see a couple of blocks where FBI agents are all looking around, basically for those guys who ran out of their (immigration) status . . . they have done no criminal activity what so ever. All they were guilty of was that their status ran out, which is true for millions and millions of immigrants of different ethnicities. So only one ethnicity was being targeted, which totally made me feel not being welcomed. Not so much by the public but by the government actions. . . . I totally felt like I don't belong here any more. . . . Now things are getting back to normal, but not in the real sense, not like pre-9/11. This is a totally different America we are living in. . . .¹³

One of the repercussions of September 11th was thus a particular construction of certain ethnic and immigrant groups which in popular imagination carried a resemblance to the terrorists and perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks. In the days following 9/11, there were attempts on the part of South Asian immigrants to distance themselves from the image of a threatening outsider or foreigner and they felt forced to make gestures which could show their patriotism and commitment to the United States. There were a number of reports suggesting that minority businesses made sure that the American flag was displayed prominently to stave off possible hate crimes or racial targeting. Talking about the reaction of the South Asian community in New York Metropolitan Area immediately after 9/11, a 30 year old Indian immigrant woman from northern New Jersey, commented:

One of the things I could see was a lot of South Asians putting the American flag on their cars. A lot of shops and businesses, they hung the American flag I saw that more intensely among South Asian people living around me than non

¹³ Interview, New York City, NY, 7 March 2007

South Asians. One of the people I know, who did it, was my brother. He still has a five foot American flag stuck outside his house. He is the only South Asian in his community, everyone else there is white, and he does experience the unease of being out of place. That was his first move. I think a couple of days after September 11th he went out and got the flag and hung it. I think that was an obvious marker of how South Asians in specific and non-white Americans in general might feel the need to articulate their belonging and support.¹⁴

Sentiments expressing the continued perception of South Asian immigrants as outsider/ foreigners were expressed by interviewees from all three countries of origin being studied for this project. A 40 year old woman immigrant from Los Angeles, who came to the U.S. with her parents in the 1970s from India when she was small, expressed the continuing outsider perception in the following words, “I would say for a long time it was not just so much as a person of color, but as a foreigner. And I think my parents even to this day continue to feel that status, more than just being a person of color versus a white person.”¹⁵ The sense of being a foreigner/ outsider is shaped by multiple experiences including by how welcome South Asian immigrants feel in civic and political spaces. Many of the interviewees pointed out the limited acceptability and openness of various civic and political spaces. A 55 year old Indian immigrant woman in Los Angeles spoke about the limited acceptability of South Asian immigrants in civic spaces. She argued:

The nation (United States) may have made a lot of strides, every thing else may have and legally too, but the individual still finds you a different person from a different country and still has not taken you to be one of them because of your color and your race that you come from. How do you break that barrier? No, you can not? It is an individual who has a problem. I do not know if it will ever happen.¹⁶

¹⁴ Interview, Madison, NJ, 11 November 2006

¹⁵ Interview, Los Angeles, CA, 13 May 2006

¹⁶ Interview, Orange County, CA, 16 May 2006

The racialization of South Asian immigrants as outsiders thus has important implications for their civic and political engagement. Many of the interviewees talked about the invisible barrier to inclusion in different civic and political spaces. They are treated as outsiders who can not really fully become a part of civic spaces along with the local people. Even though the prevalence of multicultural ethos encourages organizations and institutions to be inclusive of people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds, the interviewees in this study point that the inclusiveness is only formal and that such inclusiveness stops short of giving them equal space and voice. The woman immigrant from India quoted above goes on to detail the implications of outsider/foreigner perception for civic participation by talking about her personal experience. She noted:

When my son was younger and in school, they would have some meetings where they would say the parents have to come.... You have an opinion, you stand up and say something, and you feel you are being condoned or I would say condescending- oh! that is very good, great. But then you feel you are not a participant. That is how a lot of us have felt, even though you've been very active trying to get into it.... Same thing in the politics also... in the mayoral election in Irvine.... we've been participating in that, and campaigning... You do the things which are required, you send mailers and stuff, you go for a meeting, but when you are there, it is very difficult. ... always felt that anything I said was considered to be great but it was not an opinion to be seriously thought about. I hope you understand what I mean. It is not that they look down on you, but at the same time, it was always, oh good, at least she said something. And some of my friends don't mind that... But for a personality like mine... if this is how it is, then sometimes I would withdraw.¹⁷

The racial difference in terms of skin color and appearance along with language and religion were seen by South Asian immigrants as major markers that cast them as outsiders. The post -9/11 environment only aggravated the racialization of South Asian immigrants and for many of them it was the first time when the meanings and

¹⁷ Interview, Orange County, CA, 16 May 2006.

implications of racial difference were starkly conveyed to them. The racialized differences were expressed by one of the interviewees in terms of the difficulties of acquiring the unmediated American identity. A young Bangladeshi immigrant from Los Angeles said:

I know that I could never be American or American American..... Because color of my skin and my look. My children born in this country, I know that they will speak better language (English), better than me. They will have a better future. This country is a land of opportunities. But they will still have a look... maybe in future somebody will point at them and tell them hey, you are not American, you came from this and that. Because after 9-11, a lot of people face problems just because of their look, regardless of their religion or whatever. They could be Christian or Hindu or Buddhist, but they do have a look like they are Muslim. They think they are all terrorists or something. So my kids will face the same issues, I know that.¹⁸

A 45 year old Pakistani immigrant based in Los Angeles echoed similar sentiment: “Of course..... because of the color of our skin and the way we look and talk, we are still seen as foreigners, even though we may be born here. Still there is this perception that you are not an American. I think there is still some bias against people who are not white in this country.”¹⁹

Thus the racialization of South Asian immigrants has a long history in the United States that started even before the naturalization laws of early 20th century which barred immigrants from South Asia from acquiring U.S. citizenship. The racialization of South Asian immigrants continued even though legal discrimination became a thing of the past after civil rights movement in the 1960s. The post-September 11th events, however, brought to the fore the issue of exclusion, racial discrimination, and targeting which South Asian immigrants as a group faced before but something which they had wanted to

¹⁸ Interview, Los Angeles, CA, 7 July 2006.

¹⁹ Interview, Los Angeles, CA, 23 June 2006.

ignore and wish away. The events following September 11th primed the racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious identities in a stark way which triggered racial hostility. The post-September 11th period thus demonstrates that the racial, cultural, and religious identities of South Asian immigrants have always been used to mark them as outsiders and the social and political inclusion of South Asian immigrants is constantly impacted by the ways in which these identities are used for exclusionary purposes.

The experiences of South Asians thus directly challenge the pluralist/assimilationist model of political incorporation based on the classic presumption that with passage of time and upward economic mobility immigrant groups become a part of the social and political fabric of the U.S. and they no longer remain at disadvantage as compared to the mainstream society. In contrast, the experiences of South Asian immigrants suggest that their racial status remain a major basis of difference and their non-white racial status accentuates the outsider perception. One of the major ways in which pluralist/assimilationist model fails to understand the South Asian immigrants' social and political incorporation process is to account for the persistence of the outsider status despite educational and economic progress. The analysis of survey results and in-depth interviews suggests that South Asian immigrants continue facing exclusion and discrimination despite relatively high educational and economic status of a segment of the community. The exclusionary and discriminatory practices became much more prominent in the post-9/11 period as compared to the times preceding that. The heightened incidents of discrimination and racial targeting in the post-9/11 period suggest how certain contexts aggravate the preexisting stereotypes and perception about minority groups.

The framework of perpetual foreigner and civic exclusion advanced by Asian American scholars and its subsequent reformulation by Claire Kim in her racial triangulation theory does speak to the experience of exclusion of certain minority communities based on their racialization as outsiders which persists for generations. However, the experience of South Asian immigrants suggest that even these minority communities are not monolithic and different sections of the community are impacted differently by the process of racialization, discrimination, and exclusion. Clair Kim's theory of racial triangulation while being useful in acknowledging the persistence of foreigner status of Asian Americans, stops short of taking into account the internal distinctions within the community. The experience of South Asian immigrants thus suggests that internal distinctions add further complexities to this process of racialization, and an analysis of religious and class distinctions within South Asian community demonstrates that monolithic treatment of a minority group does not provide an adequate understanding of the process of racialization and exclusion as well as political mobilization within the community.

Being Muslim and Immigrant is a “Double Whammy”²⁰

Religious difference among the South Asians played an important role in the ways in which they were treated in the post-9/11 U.S. Even though all South Asians were target of suspicion in the days following September 11th, 2001, Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs were impacted differently. A 52 year old Muslim immigrant from India based in New York Metropolitan area talked about the challenges of being a Muslim Immigrant in the post-9/11 U.S. He said:

²⁰ The expression was used by one of the interviewees to describe the status of Muslims in the post-9/11 United States.

...Especially the Muslims are affected very much. I think in the immediate aftermath everybody was painted with a broad brush, whether you were Muslim or not, as long as you are brown. As long as you looked different, you were looked at with suspicion and everything. I have seen Sikhs with posters saying we are not Muslims. It was shocking actually, but I guess I could understand, they were the ones targeted most. So that way everybody tried to distance themselves from Muslims, within the community.... definitely there is a big change. Less tolerance towards Muslims, towards immigrants. So if you are an immigrant Muslim, it is a double whammy. You have to work through two hurdles.²¹

Besides the blanket public targeting of brown skinned South Asians and Arab immigrants after September 11th, the various state and law enforcement agencies started targeting Muslims immigrants from different countries in a very systematic manner.

Vijay Prashad, commenting on the treatment of Muslims in the U.S. after September 11th, writes:

The government began to play the game of six degrees of separation, picking up anyone who knew one of the hijackers or worshipped at the mosque they attended, or whose name appeared in their address book, or whose name came up in interrogation of anyone picked up for these reasons, or again anyone who had been under the government's dragnet as radical Islamists in one form or the other. And then there were those Muslims who became accidental radical Islamists – pilots, students with expired visas, and youth with criminal records (Prashad 2005, 585)

The racial profiling of Muslims was too obvious to be missed in the post-September 11th United States. Shortly after the September 11th attack, FBI and INS conducted sweeps all over the U.S. to detain individuals with possible terrorist connections and most of them were Muslims.

Muslims constitute a significant section of South Asian immigrants. An overwhelming majority of Pakistani and Bangladeshi immigrants are Muslims and there is a significant section of Muslims among immigrants from India. Thus, Muslim immigrants from South Asia constitute a significant section of American Muslim

²¹ Interview, New York City, NY, 7 February 2007

population. There are different estimates of ancestry of Muslim Americans but South Asian Muslims are second highest after African American Muslims in the United States.²² South Asian Muslims also have significant presence in prominent American Muslim organizations (Leonard 2005)

Given the significant presence of Muslims among South Asian immigrants, the profiling and targeting of Muslims in the United States has impacted a significant section of South Asian immigrants. A New York based Muslim South Asian immigrant from Pakistan referred to the specific targeting of Muslims by law enforcement agencies in the post-9/11 period. He argued:

Early on I think it was true for everyone (South Asians), but it looks like the law enforcement agencies have gone through their training and they have been told: this is a Sikh turban and this is a Muslim turban, so be aware. If you get this turban, let them go, but this turban, stop them. So they went through that change of their manual of training and it is now mostly the South Asian Muslim community.²³

The specific targeting of Muslims of both Arab and South Asian descent sent shock waves among these communities all over the United States. American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) gave the harrowing details of indiscriminate arrest, police abuse, lack of legal support, and family separations resulting from large number of deportations.²⁴ The government agencies also accepted indiscriminate nature of arrest and

²² According to one estimate , African Americans are 42 percent of the American Muslim population followed by South Asians(24.4), Arabs(12.4), Africans(6.2), and Iranian(3.6). This estimate is based on *The Muslim Population in the United States: A Brief Statement* by of Fareed H. Nu'man. Another estimate by Ilyas BaYunus and Moin Siddique (1999) puts the number a little differently: African American(30), Arab(33), and South Asian(29). These numbers suggest that South Asian Muslims constitute a large part of the immigrant Muslim population in the United States(Leonard 2005).

²³ Interview, New York City, NY, 3 March 2007

²⁴ *America's disappeared* (2004) ; *World's Apart: How Deporting Immigrants After 9/11 Tore Families Apart and Shattered Communities* (2004).

deportations in that period when ACLU and other civil rights organizations pressed them to disclose the number of people who were arrested in the aftermath of September 11th.

The Office of Inspector General's (OIG) report in 2003 accepted that the arrests were "indiscriminate" and "haphazard" and also that Immigration and Naturalization Services regularly arrested people who had no connection to criminal activity, let alone terrorism.²⁵

The report said:

Even in the hectic aftermath of the September 11 attacks, we believe the FBI should have taken more care to distinguish between aliens who it actually suspected of having a connection to terrorism as opposed to aliens who, while possibly guilty of violating federal immigration law, had no connection to terrorism" (Office of Inspector Genral Report 2003, 70).

A majority of those who were arrested in these large scale sweeps after 9/11 were Muslims and an overwhelming majority of them were South Asian immigrants. A large number of Muslim South Asian immigrants were picked up just because they fitted a certain profile which was constructed primarily on the basis of religion, physical appearance, and country of origin. The FBI agents picked them up on the flimsiest of "tips" provided by public and sometimes even as a result of chance encounter. The OIG report said that many of the arrests were based on tips such as "two Arabs rented a truck and returned it only minutes later" or "a grocery store was being operated by numerous Arab men" (Office of Inspector General Report, 2003).

The government went a step further in targeting Muslim immigrants when it announced the infamous program of Special Registration Drive in August 2002- the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System (NSEERS). As a part of this mandatory

²⁵ The September 11 Detainees: A Review of the Treatment of Aliens Held on Immigration Charges in Connection with the Investigation of the September 11th Attack.

drive, the Justice Department required for all non-immigrant aliens entering from certain designated countries (all of them Muslim majority countries except Korea) to register with local Immigration and Naturalization Services offices. The rule stated that nonimmigrant males 16 years and older from these countries would need to make report to INS upon arrival; 30 days after arrival; upon events such as change of address, employment, or school; and upon departure from the U.S. Between September and December of 2002, nationals or citizens, aged 16 years or older, from 25 countries with predominantly Muslim population were asked to report to their local INS by a given date for interrogation and fingerprinting.²⁶ Special registration was presented as neutral and benign, but it unfolded in a way which led to painful consequences and created an environment of strong fear among the Muslim communities across the U.S. In December 2002, Los Angeles office of INS arrested around 400 people who came voluntarily to comply with the requirements of special registration but were arrested on the grounds of various immigration violations. The presence of a substantial population of undocumented immigrants in the United States is a matter of public knowledge and Muslims immigrants are no exception to that. Most of the people who were arrested on the grounds of visa violations in the process of the special registration drive were in the process of getting their stay legalized through proper immigration channels. The special registration drive thus became a tool for selectively enforcing immigration laws on the Muslim community (Aizenmann and Walsh, 2003). When the process of special registration was completed, 13,000 men out of the total 83,000 who complied with the

²⁶ All the twenty-five countries included in special registration were predominantly Muslim countries from Africa, Middle East, South Asia, and South-East Asia with the exception of North Korea. This program was scrapped subsequently.

special registration were set to be deported. A large number of those who were deported or scheduled to be deported hailed from Pakistan.

One of the communities which saw this entire episode of racial profiling, detention, and deportation played out was Brooklyn's Midwood neighborhood known as little Pakistan in New York City. What happened in Midwood, Brooklyn in the months and years following September 11th 2001 was recounted, written about, and reported to South Asian immigrant communities all over the U.S. Before September 11th 2001, an estimated 100,000-120,000 Pakistanis lived in Brooklyn, concentrated in Midwood and Bryton Beach. Different sources and community activists put the number of those who were deported or left the country voluntarily between 15,000 and 20,000 people (Elliot 2003). It started after the September 11th attack when FBI began indiscriminately searching houses and arresting residents. A large number of those who were arrested were deported to their country of origin. Others simply left for their home country or places such as Canada and Europe when special registration was announced. Many who followed the government directives and went for mandatory registration were arrested on technical grounds of visa violations. According to the Council of People's Organization, a local South Asian community group, more than 30 ethnic businesses were forced to close down either because owners of the businesses were part of the exodus or there was not enough business due to people leaving the community. A local community leader, involved in community mobilizing after September 11th in the area, in an interview for this study recalled:

... INS officials just came and picked up people. If they were looking for Mike Smith, they will pick up Jane Smith and John Smith. What was happening in the community was because after 9-11 there was a fear, the businesses lost their

business like 10 to 15%. Once special registration came into play, they even lost 25 to 40% and were shutting down. We asked the businesses why did this happen? They told us that it was because people left. We calculated that over 20,000 people left just from Brooklyn because of the fear of special registration. We found out that people went back to Pakistan or to Canada or another country, especially to Pakistan. The value of land in certain parts (of Pakistan) went up.²⁷

The profiling and targeting of Muslim immigrants has continued long after the initial hyper vigilance and large scale detention of Muslims all over the United States stopped. A recent report, published by Center for Human Rights and Global Justice at NYU School of law, presented evidence to show how naturalization process itself is discriminatory against certain groups based on their religion, ethnicity, and country of origin. The report argued that immigration policy after September 11th, 2001 has consistently discriminated against “immigrants perceived to be Muslim, Arab, Middle Eastern, or South Asian on the basis of their name, race, religion, ethnicity, or national origin.”²⁸ The expanded security check in the citizenship application process which includes FBI name check- a list which contains, among others, a large number of Muslim names collected on the basis of profiling of Muslims and also through special registration- has made the process daunting for Muslim applicants. This cumbersome process of security clearance by matching the names with existing database creates delays for all groups of immigrants but Muslim immigrants are particularly selected for additional scrutiny and the likelihood of their names matching with the existing names in FBI database is generally high. The report concluded that profiled groups are faced with inordinate delays in the naturalization process as a result of these new policies after

²⁷ Interview, New York City, NY, 12 March 2007.

²⁸ *Americans on Hold: Profiling, Citizenship, and the War on Terror*. 2007. Center for Human Rights and Global Justice, NYU School of Law.

September 11, 2001.

As discussed earlier, South Asian immigrants of all religious and national backgrounds have faced the stereotype of perpetual foreigner and outsider and it became more intense after September 11th, 2001. However, South Asians Muslims and Sikhs are affected much more by this stereotyping than the other South Asian immigrants and the internal distinctions within the community on religious lines is critical to understand the ways in which racialization and exclusion works differentially. Any discussion of political incorporation of South Asian immigrants thus has to account for the role of these religious distinctions in racialization and exclusion of South Asian immigrants.

Religious identity among Muslim and Sikh South Asians has also become a resource for active political engagement in the U.S. political process. One of the significant fallout of post-9/11 targeting of Muslims was an attempt on the part of South Asian Muslim organizations to find ways to intervene in the political process. These interventions started with the explicit goal of protecting Muslims from racial discrimination and hate crimes but they also evolved into a broader attempt to have a Muslim voice in the political process. A Pakistani community leader in Los Angeles identified 9/11 as an important moment that pushed Muslim Americans toward greater engagement. He said:

Yes, I think it (9/11) has been an awakening.. I repeatedly say to the community that the reason we see this discrimination of the Pakistani community is because we kept too quiet, we kept aloof..... many other communities made the same mistake. When they came to America, they did not make sure that one part of their involvement would have to be the political involvement This community did not do their homework prior to 9/11. They are doing that now. A little bit late, but they are doing it now. And they have to do a lot more.²⁹

²⁹ Interview, Los Angeles, CA, 20 March 2006

Anny Bakalian and Mehdi Bozorgmehr in their book *Backlash 9/11- Middle Eastern and Muslim Americans Respond* argue that hate crimes and targeting of Muslim Americans has ironically led to an attempt on the part of Muslim Americans for greater political engagements and that religious identity is an important part of this push towards participation(Bakalian and Bozorgmehr 2009).

Class Distinctions and Racialization among South Asians

The analysis of interviews with South Asian community members and activists suggests that class distinctions also shape the ways in which racialization impacts the process of marginalization and exclusion among different segments of the South Asian immigrant community. Even though the entire South Asian community was racialized and targeted as foreigners/outsideers after September 11, 2001, class played an important role in how racialization impacted different sections of the community. This differential impact was well reflected in a report published by the Human Rights Watch. The report pointed out that the section of South Asians and Arab immigrants in the U.S. who were owners of small businesses or clustered in jobs like taxi driving, running convenience stores, gas stations, and motels became easy targets of most of the hate crimes as the nature of their jobs made them particularly vulnerable to such attacks and racial slurs (Singh 2002). The media and human rights group reports brought out the racial targeting cases of South Asians working at gas stations, 7/11 stores, and similar work situation. Furthermore, a large number of South Asian immigrants who were detained as a result of FBI and INS sweeps across the U.S. in the wake of 9/11 attacks and those affected by subsequent special registration drive were working class immigrants and a significant number of them were also undocumented. They were the ones who bore the brunt of

special registration drive and the tightening of immigration rules. A number of community leaders and activists familiar with working class South Asians pointed out that a number of families decided to leave United States because they feared that their immigration status adjustment may not come through because of the tightening of immigration process and special scrutiny for certain group of immigrants.

Talking about the impact of 9/11 on South Asian immigrants, a community leader pointed out the class dimension and said:

Clearly there has been an impact...everything has changed in our lives, especially for the working class- in the sense that immigration procedures have tightened. For the middle class (Professionals), it has not made that much of difference. I think if you are on H1B (professional work visa) or F1 (student visa) and green card track, you are fine. I think the US understands that labor market very well. The significant impact has been on the working class if you take a narrow domain like immigration. Large segments of immigrant population, even in the city like New York, get naturalized over a period of time. The difference between them, the working class South Asians who are not naturalized, and middle class(Professionals) South Asians is that the working class entry into the naturalization process has become much more limited their naturalization is based on political asylum cases and thing like that and not clearly guided labor market structure like professionals. The immigration and naturalization process for working classes have fallen apart. The level of scrutiny has just gone up...³⁰

There are other ways as well in which immigration system is more punishing and discriminatory towards working class South Asians. Since working class South Asians are more likely to go through different immigration status adjustments, they are more likely to be further target of suspicion. A community leader pointed out how a tighter immigration and antiterrorist monitoring impacts the professional and working class South Asians differently. He said:

Let's put it simply this way. Five out of ten of the poorer working class people, let's say simply, if you are going to JFK airport and zap your green card, let's say you even have a green card. It brings up your whole immigration record. There is

³⁰ Interview, New York City, NY, 6 November 2006.

a very very high chance that a large number of working class folks have gone through all sorts of immigration status adjustments. So the immigration officer in this particular frame, this moment, is going to look at them more. So, they get hit more.³¹

When talking about discrimination and treatment as outsider, a number of interviewees spoke about class becoming critical in understanding how racialization impacts different sections of the South Asian community. A South Asian woman, while speaking about discrimination, said:

No, in my personal circle I do not hear that, I have not faced discrimination; my friends have not faced discriminations. In the social setting I am fitting into, I do not face any discrimination at all.....I would say I am part of the middle class. I work in what you would consider a white collar job, not manufacturing. I am in the middle class, an immigrant in the middle class and I have not faced any discrimination.³²

A Pakistani immigrant, responding to the question whether South Asian immigrants face discrimination because of their appearance and skin color, said,

It is more to do with economics than anything else. When we came here (U.S.)... my husband was quite wealthy and we lived on Park Avenue and my kids went to private school. And we were immediately integrated here, there was no problem. But I do see families that are living out in Queens and have a more humble way of life and it is not easy for them..... If you have money you cross the boundary quite easily but if you don't it is quite harder.³³

Many other interviewees talked about the ways in which socioeconomic status provide resources and confidence to negotiate racial barriers.

The distinctions based on religion, class, and nation of origin are important divides which shape the impact of continuing racialization of South Asian immigrants.

³¹ Interview, New York City, NY, 6 November 2006.

³² Interview, New York City, NY, 14 October 2006.

³³ Interview, New York City, NY, 16 October 2006.

More importantly, these distinctions shape the response of the community in terms of political mobilization or lack of it.

Political Mobilization against Racialization and Marginalization

The preceding section has argued that there has been a continuing racialization of South Asian immigrants based on their skin color, appearance, language, and immigration history. The post-9/11 period has brought the process of racialization and marginalization to the fore and the responses of South Asian immigrants have shown that the process of racialization is mediated by other identities such as religion, class, and nation of origin. The minority group political incorporation model predicts that nonwhite immigrants who face racialization and marginalization in U.S. shall engage in grassroots mobilization based on a common group identity or perception of linked fate to raise issues which impact the community to gain political influence and incorporation. However, the response of South Asian immigrants in the post-9/11 period suggests that there is very little mobilization based on a racial or panethnic identity against hate crimes and racial targeting of South Asian immigrants. The political and mobilizational responses of South Asian immigrants in the post-9/11 period were shaped much more by religious, class, and nation of origin based distinctions. Post 9/11 targeting of South Asians was a moment when the entire community felt the gaze of suspicion and that was a political moment when community could have involved in grassroots mobilizing against racial profiling and targeting. However, this study illustrates and argues that religious, national, and class distinctions within the community trumped a common panethnic identity and linked fate. For instance, there was an attempt among a section of Indian immigrant to foreground Hindu religious identity as distinct from Muslims to

make sure that they were not confused with Muslims and hence not associated with terrorists. Asked about the possibility of united campaign against racial targeting of the type which followed September 11th, a seasoned New York based first generation community leader from Indian immigrant community, said:

Hindus must be supporting Sikhs on that sort of campaign but I don't see any way that Pakistanis, Indians, and Bangladeshi can meet. The religion is a big divide- it really is. It is not only a feeling, but it is there in practical life also Even in India, I think, Hindus don't trust Muslims, whether they (Muslims) would for India or for Pakistan. This is really a problem, though it should not be, but it is and that can be reflected here also. Religion is a big factor.³⁴

This statement points to possible fault lines within the South Asian community. The mobilization against racial targeting and environment of hate did not lead to a wider South Asian mobilization. Most of the mobilization and sustained campaign against racial targeting of South Asian immigrants has been done by Muslim organizations comprising of South Asian and non South Asian Muslims and Sikh organizations alongside other civil rights organizations.³⁵ However, there has been only sporadic mobilization on the basis of broader panethnic South Asian identity. The nation of origin based identity – Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi- and religious distinctions took precedence over a panethnic identity.

A grassroots mobilization within South Asian community based on a common panethnic identity and linked fate is further compromised by class differentiation within South Asian community. The class distinction put limit on the possibility of grassroots

³⁴ Interview, Long Island, NY, 13 November 2006.

³⁵ The Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) is one the leading civil rights organizations active among American Muslims on issues of racial profiling and hate crimes against Muslims. Sikh Coalition and Sikh American Legal and Educational Fund(SALDEF) are some of the leading Sikh civil rights organization.

mobilizing of the entire community on the basis of a common identity. There is a greater class division within the South Asian community which is often ignored when we look the community as a whole. Even a cursory look at organizational landscape of South Asian organizations suggests that there are a large number of professional organizations and associations along class lines. Some of the examples are American Association of Physicians of Indian Origins (AAPI) - one of the strongest associations of Indian immigrants with approximately 42 thousand memberships. The Indus Entrepreneurs (TIE) –an association of primarily Indian American Entrepreneurs founded in 1992 after the Internet boom, and Association of Pakistani Professionals. On the other side, there are working class organizations and those working among poorer South Asians- New York Taxi Workers Alliance, The newly formed Taxi Workers Association in Los Angeles, Desis Rising and Moving(DRUM), and South Asian Youth Association(SAYA) serving working class south Asians in Jackson Heights, New York. This study argues that such wide class variation within the South Asian community drastically reduces the possibility of grassroots mobilizing based on a common panethnic identity and linked fate. The mobilization against racial targeting in post-9/11 period thus reflected the class distinctions within the community where affluent sections of the community continued to feel that they were insulated from any kind of racial discrimination due to their economic status.

It is important here to point out the existence of parallel trend of organizing, albeit small, based on a broader South Asian identity. A number of organizations both in Los Angeles and New York area organized after 9/11 using panethnic South Asian identity but these organizations have only limited influence within South Asian communities. For

instance, the South Asian Network (SAN) in the Los Angeles area worked with a few Muslim and Sikh organizations and together played an important role in responding to post-9/11 hate crimes and the general atmosphere of fear among South Asian immigrants in the area. Similarly, South Asian organizations such as Desis Rising and Moving (DRUM), Coney Island Avenue Project, New York Taxi Workers Alliance, Council of People's Organization (COPO), South Asian Youth Association (SAYA), and many small advocacy and service organizations in New York City actively mobilized against racial targeting of South Asians, special registration, and deportations. These organizations intervened both in individual cases as well as at the level of community in mobilizing South Asians against hate crime to stop law enforcement agencies from targeting particular communities. Similarly, organizations such as South Asian American Leaders of Tomorrow (SAALT) actively intervened on this issue in Washington, D.C. and coordinated with other civil rights and ethnic organizations at the national level to highlight the cases of racial targeting of South Asian and Arab immigrants both by public and law enforcement agencies. However, these still remained a more marginal attempt at mobilizing South Asians against post-9/11 phase of racial targeting and hate crimes.

Conclusion

The continuing racialization and marginalization of South Asian immigrants as outsiders has significant implications for their political incorporation. The discourse of outsider has assumed even more importance in the post-9/11 period and has got linked to the discourse on “war against terror” which has impacted Muslims and Sikhs more than Hindus within South Asian community. The post-9/11 treatment of South Asian immigrants has also demonstrated that religious identity is a central part of the

racialization process. The two existing models of political incorporation –the pluralist and minority group models- do not adequately address the implications of this continuing racialization of South Asians as outsiders for their political incorporation. The pluralist model considers racialization as only temporary and predicts that non-white immigrants should be able to overcome racial barriers with passage of time and economic and educational mobility. The analysis of survey data and interviews with South Asian immigrants, however, suggests that perception of outsider or foreigner is one of the primary ways in which the group is racialized and the process has intensified after September 11, 2001. The analysis also suggests that continuing discrimination and exclusion based on racialization as outsider is deeply connected to religious and cultural identity, language, and phenotype-skin color and appearance.

The racial triangulation theory does help to understand the racialization of South Asian immigrants by pointing to the triangulation of the group where South Asian immigrants are seen as model minority but at the same time seen as perpetual foreigners. However, this process of racialization as outsider and its implication for political incorporation can not be fully grasped without looking at the internal distinctions within the group. Neither the racial triangulation theory nor the existing models of political incorporation addressed the issue of internal distinctions within the group. This chapter argued that religious difference played an important role in racialization and exclusion of South Asian immigrants where Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim South Asian immigrants have been impacted differently. Similarly, the class distinctions within South Asian community are also evident in the ways in which post-9/11 targeting affected certain classes of immigrants more than others.

According to the minority group model of political incorporation, the continuing racialization of South Asian immigrants should lead to grassroots mobilization based on common group identity. However, the analysis of post-9/11 period suggest that South Asian immigrants did not engage in grassroots mobilizing based on a group identity and feeling of linked fate. The distinctions within the South Asian immigrant community based on religion, nation of origin, and class are important factors which shape the political response of the community and they point to the possibility that the group may not enter the political process based on a group mobilization rooted in linked fate or common group identity.

Chapter III

New Immigrants: Limits and Boundaries of Political Engagement

South Asian immigrants have a substantial representation in lucrative professions such as medicine, engineering, finance, business, computer, and software, yet the political participation and representation of the group remains limited and sporadic. Like other non-white immigrant groups, South Asians are marginal to the political process. Traditional theories of political participation have often emphasized the importance of socioeconomic status and education in influencing the level of political participation, but the case of South Asian immigrants suggest that these factors do not explain their lower level of political participation. Another explanation often put forward to explain the lower level of political participation among new immigrant groups is their high level of involvement with the home country. However, as I discussed in chapter four and five, the engagement with home country politics does not necessarily negatively impact the political participation of the group in the United States. Even though political interest and engagement with home country shape the political attitudes and behavior of South Asian immigrants, it does not fully explain the marginal political participation of the group in the U.S. politics. This chapter focuses on the implications of the two dominant models of political incorporation for understanding the political participation of South Asians.

Robert Dahl in his seminal work *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City* emphasized the openness of the political system for newcomers. In his analysis of political power in New Haven, Connecticut, Dahl argued that European immigrants were able to gain political power through the mobilization of ethnic votes

because they had high numbers and political parties and candidates were interested in including these immigrants in the political process. Dahl saw the emergence of political power of immigrants as supportive of his pluralist theory of power which argued that the political system was open for all groups to compete and gain power. Dahl's pluralist theory painted a picture of the political process which was very egalitarian and open for new groups.

In contrast, the minority group model of political incorporation emphasizes the structural barriers to political incorporation of immigrant and minority groups. As discussed earlier, the political mobilization of African Americans is the classic case of political mobilization which was an organized response to racial barriers that prevented black Americans from participating and achieving representation in the political process. The minority group model predicts that contemporary nonwhite immigrants groups, which face racial and other institutional barriers to their social and political inclusion like black Americans, will also engage in grassroots mobilization to achieve complete social and political inclusion (Hero 1998; Browning et al. 1997; Takaki 1989; Kim 1999; Tate 1994). A mobilization pattern similar to African Americans is thus expected among minority group such as Latinos and Asian Americans.

This chapter challenges these models to argue that political incorporation of South Asian immigrants does not follow either of the predictions discussed above. The chapter demonstrates that there is very little ethnic mobilization by political parties to incorporate the group into the political process as predicted by the pluralist model. Neither is there any grassroots mobilizing in the face of racial targeting and participatory barriers as predicted by the minority group model. Instead, there is a selective political

mobilization of South Asian immigrants in the United States which centers on a narrow socioeconomic elite section of the community. Political parties, candidates, and community groups contribute to this selective elite mobilization that leaves the larger sections of the South Asian community out of the process of political incorporation.

Based on sixty interviews with South Asian community members and activists, participant observation of a number of South Asian organizations in Los Angeles and New York area, and analysis of other relevant data, this chapter identifies three trends of political engagement and mobilization which require going beyond the dominant models to understand the political incorporation patterns of South Asian immigrants. First, there is a strong presence of groups and networks among South Asian immigrants that engage in lobbying activities primarily related to home countries. The primacy of lobbying among South Asian immigrants from different countries of origin promotes a particular kind of political mobilization and engagement which generally does not rely on grassroots mobilization or greater engagement of the community at large. Second, campaign contributions are a significant part of the involvement of South Asian immigrants in the political process. There is a strong opinion among a section of South Asians that the community can gain political influence by using its financial strength. This strategy of gaining political power through the use of financial strength of the community suggests a path of political incorporation which requires going beyond the existing models of political incorporation. Third, as far as political representation is concerned, a small but growing trend of South Asian candidates contesting and winning from predominantly white electoral districts suggests a model of political incorporation which does not rely primarily on ethnic mobilization. This chapter will elaborate on these

three distinct trends and discuss their implications for the political incorporation of South Asian immigrants.

Political Parties, Participation, and Representation: Ethnic Mobilization or Post-Racial Politics³⁶

The pluralist model of political incorporation has traditionally argued that new immigrant groups engage in ethnic mobilization and enter into the political process as a group.

Political parties are considered to be important instrument in this mobilization and they facilitate the group's participation and representation in the political process. In contrast, the minority group model underlines the barriers to political participation and representation of new immigrant groups and predicts grassroots mobilization on the basis of linked fate or common racial-ethnic identity to have greater participation and representation into the political process. Both models predict ethno-racial mobilization even though they differ sharply on the final outcome. Existing political mobilization patterns among South Asian immigrants show a more complex trajectory of mobilization which requires revisiting the dominant models discussed above. The analysis of South Asian political participation and mobilization patterns suggests that broader political and institutional context, which includes the general level of political participation in the U.S. and changed role of political parties in mobilizing new voters, shape the political incorporation trajectory of the group. The analysis also suggests that distinctions such as

³⁶ The term post-racial has been used widely in recent times to broadly convey the phenomena of going beyond race. Paul Gilroy was the first to characterize the current moment as post-racial in his book *Against Race: Imaging Political Culture Beyond Color Line*. Gilroy's use of the term referred to post racial humanism and the need to go beyond race. Others have used the term to communicate a particular understanding of race politics which claims to go beyond race. Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1994) refer to the politics of colorblindness as a conservative reaction to affirmative action and race based organizing. The Post-racial has been termed by some scholars as an extension of colorblind politics and a neo-liberal response to the progressive politics of racial equality.

class, religion, and nation of origin also shape the political incorporation path of South Asian immigrants.

Scholars studying political incorporation of new immigrant groups have pointed out how broader political and institutional context shape the political incorporation patterns of new immigrants (Skerry 1993; Rogers 2006). Peter Skerry made the argument that institutional and political context created by the civil rights movement shaped the political mobilizational strategy of immigrant groups such as Mexicans; consequently the Mexicans followed a race based mobilization strategy which was a product of the particular political and institutional context created by the civil rights movement. The broader import of the focus on institutional and political contexts is to underline the ways in which the changing role of political parties has fundamentally affected immigrant political mobilization and participation. Past waves of immigrants-the European immigrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century- were incorporated in the political process in a political and institutional context where political parties, candidates and other groups- especially the urban political machines- were at the forefront of mobilizing these immigrants. Immigrant groups were an important part of the expansion of political parties in major urban areas and there were systematic efforts by political parties to mobilize new immigrant groups (Cornwell 1960; Dahl 1961). The political recruitment of immigrants had thus become the centerpiece of American political parties in the early twentieth century. The scholars of that period have argued that politicians made it easy for immigrants to naturalize, encouraged groups of immigrants to register to vote, mobilized them to become a part of the local party structure, and generally helped them to deal with the challenges of poverty. It was quite common among political parties

and local leaders to offer jobs and patronage to immigrants for their loyalty in the voting booth (Dahl 1961; Andersen 1979). A historical overview of political parties also suggests that the golden age of political parties coincided with the height of European immigration to the United States.

One of the most important developments in the last few decades has been a decline in the role of political parties at the local grassroots level. Scholars of political parties have argued that a general decline in local party strength was, to a certain extent, a product of the progressive era reform (Skocpol 1999; Wattenberg 1994). This trend continued through the 1960s and 70s when immigrants from Asia and Latin America started reaching the United States in large numbers. The rise of candidate centered campaigns and the professionalization of electoral campaigns reduced the central role of political parties and their networks in the political process. Political parties started relying on sophisticated phone and direct mailing techniques which selectively targeted groups that were likely to support a particular candidate and issue (Conway 2001; Wattenberg 2001). The use of party activists to reach out to people at the neighborhood level has declined drastically. The progressive increase of the electorate who identified themselves as independent is also reflective of the declining influence of political parties.

Notwithstanding the upward movement in voting percentages in the recent election, the overall long term trend of decline in voting over the years is indicative of the apathy of the general population towards the political parties as well as the political process.³⁷

³⁷ The voting percentages in presidential elections have seen a progressive decline except a modest upswing in the last two presidential elections- 2004 and 2008. The voting percentages have gone down from sixty percent and above in 1960s to less than 55 percent from 1980s onwards. In 2000 presidential election, the voting percentage was 51.3 and it has gone up to 55 percent and above in 2004 and 2008(<http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0781453.html>).

Scholars studying historical evolution of political parties argue that party organizations no longer dominate the electoral process (Cigler and Loomis 1986; Conway 2001; Wattenberg 1998). This is a very different institutional and political context compared to the early twentieth century when European immigrants were being actively courted and mobilized by political parties.

Given the institutional and political context discussed above, the difference in political participation rates among different racial groups and immigrant generations is to some extent expected. The data clearly point to the lower levels of political participation among Asian American and Latino immigrants. For instance, Karthick Ramakrishnan's analysis, comparing levels of political participation among immigrant groups in California during the 2002 election cycle, looked at political participation indicators such as voting, signing petitions, attending local meetings, writing to elected officials etc. The data suggest that the rate of those who voted regularly was significantly lower among Latino and Asian immigrants than white immigrants. The difference persisted in three generations for which the data were reported with the gap closing in the third generation. The gap was most glaring when it came to voting, with participation gap being less on non voting measures of participation. The multivariate analysis of the data suggests that differences in participation persist even after controlling for factors such as age, education, income, gender, and home ownership. Some of these variables reduce the gap but they do not fully account for the gap (Ramakrishnan 2005, 140-60). If we specifically look at Asian American political participation, studies using Census Bureau and other survey data find that voting-age Asian Americans register and vote at rates lower than their counterparts in all other major racial and ethnic groups (Uhlener, Cain, and Kiewiet

1989; Nakanishi 1991; Lien 2001; Cho 1999; Junn 1999). Since there is very little survey data on South Asians as a group, the rate of political participation among Asian Americans provides a good sense of the participation rate of South Asian immigrants in comparison to other racial groups.

The PNAAPS data does provide a comparative look at participation rates among different Asian American ethnic groups. If we look at registration and voting, the analysis of PNAAPS data suggests that South Asians have lower levels of registration and voting compared to other Asian groups. Thirty-nine percent of South Asians registered to vote in comparison to 75, 62, and 49 percent of Japanese, Filipino, and Chinese respectively. The rate of voting is also a little lower among South Asians compared to other Asian American groups. However, South Asians are high on participation beyond voting (which includes signing a petition, calling a public official, participating, etc.) with 57 percent of South Asian participating as compared to 55, 50, and 39 percent of Japanese, Filipino, and Koreans respectively. The pattern of voting, however, completely flips when the analysis is limited only to immigrant voters. 73 percent of South Asian immigrants voted in 2000 in comparison to 47, 40, and 39 percent among Filipino, Vietnamese, and Chinese immigrants (See table 3.1). When eligibility for registration and voting is taken into account (the analysis is confined to citizens only), South Asians are closer to other Asian American groups in terms of registering. However, once registered, South Asians turn out to vote at a higher than some of the other Asian American groups (Table 3.2).

Table 3.1: Percentage Distribution of Political Participation by Ethnic Groups

	Total Registered	Total Voted in 2000	Total Participation Beyond Voting	Immigrants Registered	Immigrants Voted In 2000	Immigrants Participation Beyond Voting
Chinese	49%	41%	35%	46%	39%	35%
Japanese	75	63	55	24	20	21
Korean	48	34	39	46	33	38
Vietnamese	43	39	33	44	40	34
Filipino	62	47	50	59	47	47
South Asian	39	36	57	34	73	54

Note: Distribution does not take into account eligibility requirements for registration or voting. Table based on Lien, Conway, and Wong 2004

Table 3.2: Percentage Distribution of Political Participation by Ethnic Groups among Those Eligible for Registration and Voting

	Registered to Vote (Among Citizens)	Voted in 2000 (Among Registered)	Participation in Activity Beyond Voting
Chinese	78	84	35
Japanese	88	83	55
Korean	87	71	39
Filipino	79	76	50
Vietnamese	65	92	33
South Asian	78	93	57

Note: Table based on Lien, Conway, and Wong 2004

As noted earlier, the current scholarship on immigrant political mobilization unequivocally suggests that there is a persistent gap in mobilization of racial minorities by established political parties (Jones-Correa, 1998; Ramakrishnan 2005; Wong 2006). The pluralist vision of immigrant political incorporation, which presumes an important role for political parties and elected officials in new immigrant groups' political incorporation, therefore has been critiqued on this account. In contrast to the European

wave of immigrants when parties were central to political mobilization, the contemporary Latino and Asian immigrant groups have seen community organizations of different kinds- social service organizations, labor organizations, ethnic organizations, and religious associations- playing a more important role in bringing immigrants into the political process. These organizations work towards broader political involvement of immigrant groups rather than focusing exclusively on registration and voting (Wong 2006). However, the activities and mobilizations of immigrant community organizations are mostly focused on the lower socioeconomic stratum and they can not match political parties and their allied organizations in mobilizing and bringing new groups to the political process. A related aspect of this continued trend of non mobilization of immigrant communities by political parties is that even when political parties and candidates are forced to go to new groups due to the competitive dynamics of electoral process, they are very selective in mobilizing only certain segments of the immigrant population. The extent of immigrant mobilization by political parties is limited to registered voters and, in the case of presidential elections, those located in battleground states (Wong 2006). The immigrant groups such as South Asians, which are numerically not big and are not densely concentrated, have almost negligible influence on electoral outcomes and, as a result, they are even more overlooked and marginalized by political parties and candidates.

South Asian immigrants' political incorporation in the U.S. is faced with this broader institutional, political, and demographic context. Referring to this restrictive political and institutional context, a New York based South Asian community leader said:

I would argue that the U.S. presents for anybody, including the white Americans, one of the most restrictive political spaces for engagement. Just look at what is happening across the U.S. In what ways are Americans actually involved with politics? Leave alone immigrants and all that, but in what ways are fully nationalized fifth or eighth or tenth generation Americans involved with politics. It is a fairly depoliticized community as a whole. As a nation and a community, this is a community that is tremendously depoliticized. So, with that as a context now let's ask the question what chances does an immigrant stand in terms of really getting engaged in American politics. It is a very difficult task ---- in this kind of context one really needs to ask is the immigrants' distance from political involvement here is really surprising.³⁸

The broad trend of secular decline in voting-with a few recent exceptions- and other forms of political participation over the years alongside the declining role of political parties in mobilizing citizens collectively do not create an environment conducive for political engagement of new immigrants. The experience of South Asian immigrants confirms the findings of other scholars that political parties are generally reluctant in mobilizing new immigrants even though they are supposed to mobilize all segments of the citizenry irrespective of race, class, gender, sexuality, and immigration history. In my interviews for this study, a number of South Asian community leaders pointed out that while political parties- both Democratic and Republican- do not reach out to new immigrants, they are open if people from the community wanted to reach out to them. Commenting on the approach of political parties to South Asian immigrants, a community activist based in New York City said:

I don't think they (political parties) are going around and asking for us to participate, because the system is well established and they don't see any reason to bring anybody new into the fold. If you are involved in politics in our country (India), you know we go around and try to get everybody...Here they do not have to do that because there are only two parties. Secondly, in any election not even 35 percent of the people participate. The rest of the people either do not care or they do not have the time to care. So political participation itself is relatively low

³⁸ Interview, New York City, NY, 10 February 2007

and that is why parties are not that much active. ...they are not actively pushing people to join them. There is no push. I have never seen that push to make members, no. That is why they are not coming to look for Indians or Pakistanis. They are not looking because they have a system in place...³⁹

When asked about the experience of South Asians who approach political parties to get involved, he said:

I don't think it is a bad experience..... I live in a place called Westchester County; it is not a city, it's a suburb. There are not that many minorities there. Because I have political ambitions or whatever you can call it and I was in a political party before (in India), so I wanted to join some party here. So I talked with the Democrats and they were happy to take me into their party and they started inviting me. I think if you go there and say that I wanted to get involved, they would be very happy to take you in.⁴⁰

The experience of South Asian immigrants suggests that political parties in general are reluctant to mobilize and bring new groups into the political process. In fact, the political parties do not see the need for bringing new groups into the political process as long as their voting blocks and coalitions are intact. Recent works on Latino and Caribbean immigrants in New York City also point to this trend (Jones-Correa 1998; Rogers 2006). The onus is on the group and the individuals from the group to initiate the process of political engagement and approach the political parties if they want any kind of political recognition and representation. However, direct participation in the electoral system requires mobilization of voters and this mobilization starts with registration campaigns among new voters coming from the immigrant community. As discussed earlier, the rate of voter registration and voting among South Asian immigrants has been relatively low and there has not been any sustained attempt on the part of political parties and other institutions to bring new voters to the political process. A south Asian

³⁹ Interview, New York City, NY, 3 March 2007

⁴⁰ Interview, New York City, NY, 3 March 2007

community leader of Bangladeshi descent, who unsuccessfully contested the state Assembly election from Queens, New York, talked about the unsupportive role of political parties in mobilizing South Asian voters:

Political parties are afraid, they don't want to see people (new immigrants) registered. I am a commissioner, one of the commissioners in New York City for the voter assistance commission. Even in the budget, we don't get enough money from the system ... the people in the system don't want to see more people getting registered, because then somebody new will come and beat them. And again, I can talk about New York City, because the majority of people in the neighborhood now are colored people, immigrants. If they will become registered, the power equation will be changed, so they don't want it. They say yes, we have to do this but when practicality comes, they don't give any money, they are not encouraging you.⁴¹

Scholars working on immigrant political participation of Latino, Asian, and Caribbean immigrants have described similar reactions suggesting that there is very little mobilization among immigrant groups by political parties and candidates (Jones-Correa 1998; Rogers 2006; Wong 2006; Ramakrishnan 2005). Latino and Asian immigrants, depending on their location and concentration, may occasionally be targeted by political parties. As argued earlier, the literature suggests that these groups are only on the radar of political parties and candidates in the so called battleground states because of the competitive nature of the contests and demographic concentration. However, South Asian immigrants are even more marginalized because of their demographic reality- there are no major population concentrations of South Asian immigrants. Many of the interviewees spoke about the double marginalization of the community because of being minority alongside the fact that they are not in big enough numbers in particular areas to affect the electoral process in any significant manner. A South Asian community leader

⁴¹ Interview, New York City, NY, 12 March 2007

of Indian descent from New York City, talking about the community's involvement in local politics, said:

Getting involved in local school district politics and city council politics, I think, is a matter of building concentration and density. This politics works only if you build density..... South Asian community is dispersed unlike Mexican immigrants --- or Chinese community which is significantly concentrated in certain locations ...those densities are not available to South Asian immigrants, therefore, the process is much slower.⁴²

The lack of density creates both internal constraints in terms of developing a critical mass to intervene effectively in the political process as well as external constraints in terms of the ability to attract political parties and candidates to engage with the group at a sustained level. Many South Asian community leaders feel that political parties are not interested in them because the community does not have numbers to deliver. A South Asian community leader, explaining the reluctance of political parties to engage with the community, said:

I don't think political parties are making enough attempts to bring the community into the political process- absolutely not. May be because they don't feel we have numbers --like Hispanics or African Americans. Yes, if any of us has a real ambition then, yes, they will probably say, alright, let's involve him. But on their own, I don't see anybody approach our people to join politics.⁴³

There have been sporadic attempts by South Asian candidates in the New York Area to enter into the electoral process.⁴⁴ Los Angeles has also seen some attempts by

⁴² Interview, New York City, NY, 6 November 2006.

⁴³ Interview, Los Angeles, CA, 7 July 2006

⁴⁴ Morshed Alam, a first generation immigrant of Bangladeshi descent, contested election for New York state assembly from Queens County (25th District) in 2006. Zahid Ali Syed, a first generation Pakistani immigrant, contested for state assembly from Long Island (17th District), New York in 2006. Both the candidates lost but they were notable in terms of attempts at mainstream political representation by South Asian candidates in New York Metropolitan Area.

South Asian candidates to enter into the electoral fray at different levels.⁴⁵ However, most of the South Asian community leaders feel that the community does not have demographic concentration to command any significant influence over the electoral process and political candidates. Overall, there is a strong opinion within the community that they are marginal to the political process and they have not been able to graduate from achieving economic stability to creating a space in the political process.

Given the lack of density and relative lack of mobilization by political parties, the mobilization of South Asian immigrants for political participation such as voter registration, voting, etc. has been minimal and their attempts at descriptive political representation has also been very slow. However, the analysis of interviews and other available data on South Asian political representation does suggest that there are growing examples of South Asians contesting and succeeding from areas and electoral districts which are primarily white majority with a small minority and a negligible South Asian presence. A number of interviewees, speaking about South Asian Americans contesting for political offices across the U.S., cited Bobby Jindal, the current governor of Louisiana, as an example of the success of South Asians in the political realm. An analysis of Indian American candidates who ran for state and federal offices suggests that the majority of Indian American candidates ran from areas which did not have a significant South Asian or Asian American population (table 3.3). The table gives the racial composition of the electoral districts from where Indian American candidates either ran or won. Most of these electoral districts are overwhelmingly white and Asian Americans are only a small part of the population. The states from where these

⁴⁵ Peter Mathews has unsuccessfully contested the primary from 37th congressional districts, Long Beach, California in 2008. He also contested assembly election earlier from the area.

candidates contested and succeeded included Georgia, Ohio, Iowa, Louisiana, Maryland, and New Jersey. Commenting on this trend among South Asians to run from places where the South Asian population is very low, a community leader from New York said:

Now we have a young man from Louisiana (Bobby Jindal) and we have four or five assemblymen from different states- New Jersey, Maryland, Minnesota, Wisconsin, etc.....we have won elections from areas where there are very few Indians. They (South Asians/Indian Americans) could do it because they are educated people. Take an example of Louisiana- there are not too many Indians there, there is no support for Indians there. Similarly, the assemblyman from New Jersey is not from a constituency with a high number of Indians. If he can win from a non-Indian community to state assembly, the people who really work hard and have the same goal to get what they want, I think they can get it.⁴⁶

There is an implicit belief reflected in this statement that if a candidate of South Asian descent is talented enough, s/he has equal chance to win from a primarily white district. This belief is supported by claims that South Asians are highly educated, hard working, and have done very well economically, and on the basis of their education and talent they can succeed in elections. A Pakistani American mayor of a primarily white majority New Jersey town argued on similar lines, when he explained his victory by recalling how his contribution to solving the problems of local schools was an important consideration for people who voted for him. He said:

I felt somehow that people resonated with my ideas and they were more interested in that. They were seeing that I was interested in the best quality education, that my own educational background with a Ph.D. degree was a plus for them. That they heard from someone who was an educator, because I was also teaching. I would teach economics and other courses at Rutgers or other universities. And now I've been teaching for seven years at the University of Phoenix online. So recognizing my professional background, I believe, was more important for people.⁴⁷

The view that South Asians can succeed in politics because of their education, economic

⁴⁶ Interview, New York City, NY, 7 February 2007.

⁴⁷ Interview, Northern New Jersey, NJ, 10 February 2007.

status, and ability to provide solution to problems facing the community comes with the belief the race and color are no longer barriers for the political representation of minority groups. There are a number of examples which suggest that South Asian aspirants for public offices have been able to win from primarily white areas without any significant ethnic mobilization. Analyzing the election of Mr. Harvinder Singh, the new Indian American mayor of a prosperous New York town Long Island Village which is 95 percent white, *The New York Times* wrote, "... He is a part of what political analysts see as new pattern: while minority candidates are usually propelled into office from densely populated enclaves of their own ethnic groups, a small but recently growing numbers of Indian American officeholders has been getting elected in communities across the nation where they are the tiniest of minorities"(Vitello 2007). According to *The New York Times*, a high level of education, ability to speak English, and cross over appeal are some of the characteristics of this group which put them into a position to succeed in the electoral competition.

This experience of South Asian Americans in the electoral arena is also shared by other Asian American groups. The current scholarship on Asian Americans and their political representation points out that most Asian American candidates outside the state of Hawaii follow a strategy of mainstream or crossover appeal which is in complete contrast to other minority groups such as African Americans or Latinos. There are examples of cross over candidates among African Americans and Latinos but that has not been the dominant trend among these two communities. Elected representatives from Asian American communities in the mainland United States have emerged from districts which have much less than 50 percent of the Asian American population. In fact, of the

Table 3.3: Indian Americans who Contested for State and Federal Level Offices and Racial Composition of their Districts.

Name	Electoral District	Racial Demographic (Percentages)
Tony Patel (D) (State House Rep.)	47 District Georgia State House	79(W), 20 (B), 14(AS)
Harmeet K Dhillan (R) (State Assembly)	13 th District ,San Francisco, CA	56(W), 10(B), 21(AS)
Ashwan Madia(D) (Congress)	3 rd District, Minnesota	89 (W), 4(B), 4(AS)
Raj Goyale * (D) (State Representative)	87 th House District, Kansas	75 (W), 11(B), 7 (AS)
Paul Chadha (D) (State Assembly)	26 th District, Illinois	26(W), 67(B), 4(AS)
Jonathan Bedi (D) (State Senate)	5 th District, Illinois	24(W), 65(B), 3 (AS)
Subodh Chandra (D) (State Attorney)	Ohio	85(W), 12(B), 1(AS)
Raj Peter Bhakta (R) (Congress)	Pennsylvania 13 th district	87(W), 6 (B), 4 (AS)
Shyam Reddy (D) (Secretary of State)	Georgia	65(W), 29(B) 2(AS)
Jay Goyal * (D) (State House of Rep.)	73 rd District, Ohio	87 (W), 10 (B), 4 (AS)
Jay Rao (R) (Secretary of State)	North Carolina	72 (W), 22 (B), 1.4 (AS)
Supriya Christopher (D) (State House of Delegates)	District 84, Virginia	68 (W), 20 (B), 7 (AS)
Swati Dandekar * (D) (State Representative)	House District 36 IOWA	97(W), 0.5 (B), 0.5(AS)
Bobby Jindal * (R) (Governor)	Louisiana	64(W), 33(B), 1.2(AS)
Upendra Chivukala *(D) (State Assembly)	District 17, New Jersey	56 (W), 20 (B), 14 (AS)
Kumar Barve * (D) (House of Delegates)	District 17, Maryland	62(W), 12(B), 14 (AS)
* Indicates successful contestants		

Note: Based on USINPAC data and 2000 Census; W= White; B= Black; AS= Asian

50 mainland congressional districts with the largest Asian Pacific American Population, only two were represented by an Asian Pacific American in 105th Congress. A majority of state and federal level Asian Pacific American elected officials on the U.S. mainland represented non-Asian districts (Lai, Tam Cho, etal. 2001). This trend is in complete contrast to the research on African American and Latino elected officials where representatives from both these groups are elected from districts with substantial number of African American and Latino electorate. Among African American federal elected representatives in 1982, 14 out of 17 representatives came from districts where African Americans were 40 percent or more of the population. Among Latino elected officials in 1982, seven of the ten Latino Congressional representatives were elected from districts with 50 percent or more of Latino population (Espiritu 1992; Moore and Pachon 1985). In contrast, the current trajectory of Asian American representation relies heavily on mainstream or crossover appeal where the ability of Asian American candidates to appeal to different racial groups is highlighted (Rodriguez 1998). Asian American scholars have identified this trend of political representation rightly but they stopped short of spelling out its implications for political incorporation of Asian Americans as a group.

The small but significant trend among South Asian Americans to seek political offices from primarily white majority areas is indicative of new ways of political incorporation by the minority groups. This emerging pattern of political representation among South Asian immigrants is a complete break from both the pluralist model which presumes ethnic mobilization for political representation and the minority group model where political representation is preceded by grassroots mobilization based on linked fate to overcome racial barriers. This trend of political representation requires new ways of

understanding the political incorporation process of South Asians and Asian Americans. The trend represents relative increase in descriptive representation of South Asian Americans but it is very limited in terms of influencing the larger political incorporation of South Asian immigrants. Since these South Asian candidates are not relying on co-ethnics for votes, there is very little attempt to bring the South Asian immigrants into the political process. The increased representation is not necessarily linked to push for greater naturalization, voter registration, and voting among South Asian immigrants. The nature of ethnic mobilization in such cases is at the most limited to mobilization of campaign contributions from co-ethnics. However, this kind of ethnic mobilization for campaign funds is limited to a small section of the group which results in an extremely narrow ethnic mobilization. Thus, unlike the pattern of ethnic mobilization suggested by the pluralist model or linked fate grassroots mobilization suggested by the minority group model of political incorporation, this trend does not trigger processes which may lead to greater and wider political participation of South Asian immigrants. Moreover, a closer look at the electoral strategy of many of these candidates suggests that these campaigns draw heavily upon the rhetoric of post-racial politics of the U.S. society where race and color are not considered that important. The implication of this trend of representation, which is based on very limited racial and ethnic mobilization, is significant for political incorporation of South Asian and Asian American immigrants. It challenges the conventional understanding that greater descriptive representation in itself is a product of greater ethnic participation and that it will necessarily lead to a greater incorporation of the group.

Ethnic Organization, Political Participation, and Lobbying

There are a significant number of organizations active among South Asian immigrants both in the broader Los Angeles and New York Metropolitan area. These two areas have witnessed a large scale settlement of South Asians since the current phase of South Asian immigration that started after the 1965 immigration reform. The organizational landscape of the South Asian community is full of small ethnic organizations which cater to specific ethnic identities. These ethno-cultural organizations range from those based on regional identities such as Tamil, Telugu, Gujarati, Punjabi, and Sindhi to more broader nationalistic identities such as Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi. The primary purpose of the ethno-cultural organizations has been to create a space for people from similar linguistic and cultural background to share, celebrate, and maintain their common identities in the United States. These organizations also serve the purpose of creating a social network among immigrants coming from same linguistic and cultural backgrounds. These networks serve important functions ranging from professional and business connection to social spaces for arranging marriages.⁴⁸ Even though these organizations do not explicitly pursue the goal of advancing the political participation of the community, it is common for them to invite political leaders to their annual programs from both the United States as well as from their country of origin. It is also important to note the persistence of caste identity among Indian immigrants in the

⁴⁸Telugu Association of North America (TANA) is an example of ethno-cultural organizations. TANA, an association of immigrants who have connections to Andhra Pradesh in India, organizes yearly conferences where high profile speakers and performers both from India and United States are invited. The 2007 annual conference was organized in Washington, D.C. where the main speaker was the former President Bill Clinton. The event also had a number of cultural and political figures from Andhra Pradesh. TANA is constituted of a number of state and area level Telugu associations active all over the United States. Similar organization of Gujaratis, Bengalis, Marathis, Oriyas and others are active in the United States.

United States. Even though broader ethno-cultural and linguistic identities are more prominent in South Asian communities and most of the organizations are formed on the basis of these identities, caste remains an important social category for Indian immigrants. The importance of caste in the social life of immigrants is particularly reflected in the existence of caste based organizations among Indian immigrants in the United States. Indian immigrants have traditionally belonged to the “upper castes” and only in recent years immigrants from oppressed castes and erstwhile untouchable and backward castes have started registering a presence in the United States. Organizations of oppressed castes working towards the elimination of caste oppression in India are also being formed as a result of the increased presence of oppressed castes in the United States.

Another set of organizations that play an important role in civic and associational life of South Asian communities are those which primarily represent South Asian communities in different professions. They play an important role in developing a network among South Asian immigrants from specific professional fields. The American Association of Physicians of Indian origin (AAPI) is one of the most well known professional organizations among Indian immigrants. Association of Physicians of Pakistani Descent of North America (APPNA) is the Pakistani counterpart which represents physicians of Pakistani origin in the United States and Canada.⁴⁹ The 1980s and 90s saw the formation and growth of more professional organizations among Indian,

⁴⁹ American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI) was founded in 1984 “in the midst of challenges that physicians of Indian origin have faced due to cultural barriers and bias against international medical graduates”(www.aapiusa.org). The organization represents 41,235 physicians and 12,000 medical students, residents and fellows of Indian origin in the U.S. Association of Physicians of Pakistani Descent of North America (APPNA) was founded in 1977 and represent a large number of physicians of Pakistani origin. APPNA has recently also taken up the issue of profiling of Muslim doctors and hurdles faced by them in getting visa and green card, etc (www.appna.org).

Pakistani, and Bangladeshi communities in the United States. Asian American Hotel Owners Association (AAHOA), an organization of hotel and motel owners of Indian descent, the Indus Entrepreneurs (TIE), a group of Indian American entrepreneurs, The Association of Pakistani Professionals (AOPP), American Association of Bangladeshi Engineers and Architect (AABEA) are some of the newer organizations which represent professionals from different South Asian communities. Most of these professional ethnic organizations are constructed around national identities. However, the recent development in the sphere of ethnic professional organizations is an attempt to build organizations on the basis of a broader South Asian identity rather than a nation of origin based identity. South Asian Bar Association (SABA) and South Asian Journalists Associations (SAJA) are prime examples of such organizations. Again, these organizations do not explicitly work to encourage political participation among their membership but they do lobby or support political campaigns related to their country of origin as well as issues pertaining their co-ethnics and co-professionals in the United States

Besides these professional organizations with their limited goal of representing co-ethnic professionals, there are associations which are organized on the lines of national identity. Organizations such as National Federation of Indian Americans (NFIA), Indian American Forum for Political Education (IAFPE), Associations of Indians in America (AIA), Association of Pakistani Professionals, National Council of Pakistani Americans (NCPA), Pakistani American Public Affairs committee (PAKPAC), and Federation of Bangladeshi Associations in North America (FOBANA), United States Indian Political Action Committee (USINPAC) are important examples. Most of these

organizations engage in transnational politics by maintaining a strong and continual contact with political parties, leaders, and government officials in their respective countries of origin and also lobby with the U.S. Congress and policy making bodies on issues relating to their home countries. These organizations reflect, to a certain extent, the nationalistic ideology of their respective home countries which also creates a basis for distance and distrust among South Asian organization from different nations of origin, a theme which I discuss further in chapter five.⁵⁰

The organizational landscape of the South Asian community suggests that most organizations are conceived and developed under the framework of either a narrow ethno-cultural and linguistic identity such as Tamil, Telugu, Gujarati, Punjabi, and Sindhi or nation of origin based organizations such as Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi, and Srilankan. The panethnic organizations based on a broader South Asian identity are relatively recent and constitute a smaller part of the organizational landscape among South Asian immigrants. The professional organizations have also developed on nationalistic lines for the most part. Most of these organizations are not directly addressing the questions of South Asian political participation and representation. However, these organizations contribute to the broader associational life and civic engagement of South Asian community. The interviews with leaders and community members in both Los Angeles area and New York Metropolitan Area suggest that a large part of South Asian community's engagement is confined to ethnic organizations which

⁵⁰ There is a long history of conflict and military rivalry between India and Pakistan which influences the approach of Indian and Pakistani immigrant organizations in the U.S. Bangladesh and Pakistan also have had a very complex history which has been largely defined by Bangladesh's struggle to gain independence from Pakistan. Bangladeshi and Pakistani immigrant organizations in the U.S. reflect this troubled history between the two countries.

give a limited primacy to political participation and representation of the community in the U.S. political process.

One of the most important forms of political engagement undertaken by the ethnic South Asian organizations is lobbying around the issues concerning the home country (Kurien 2007b). Historically, Indian and Pakistani American groups have lobbied with the U.S. Congress to influence the American foreign policy towards their home countries. This form of political engagement has been one of the salient forms of political engagement on the part of South Asian organizations in the United States. Lobbying has been one of the important forms through which South Asian groups have been engaged with the political institutions of the United States. However, the significant use of this form of political involvement on the part of South Asian organizations suggests a selective mobilization and limited political engagement which centers on elite and wealthy sections of the community.

Some of the most active and powerful organizations among both Indian and Pakistani immigrant communities are based in Washington, D.C. and they actively engage in lobbying to support their respective countries of origin. As discussed earlier, USINPAC is one of the most important groups representing the Indian immigrant community in Washington, D.C. It routinely organizes fundraisers on a bipartisan basis for candidates contesting for congressional and other offices, and aims to wield influence with policy makers. For instance, USINPAC played a major role in lobbying for the passage of India-U.S. Civil Nuclear Deal in 2007 which shall be discussed at greater length in Chapter five on transnationalism and political participation. The Pakistani

Affairs Public Action Committee (PAKPAC) represents Pakistani Americans and is organized on similar lines as USINPAC. PAKPAC defines itself as:

a nationwide, membership based, non-profit lobbying organization.... PAKPAC's mission includes advancement and strengthening of U.S.-Pakistan relations. It is organized to be a unified voice on issues and concerns common to the Pakistani American community. PAKPAC's focus includes an active environment to foster greater political and civic engagement amongst the Pakistani Americans.⁵¹

PAKPAC also primarily lobbies with the U.S. Congress and administration on issues relating to Pakistan.

The dominance of lobbying activities among different South Asian groups has been a longstanding feature of their political engagement in the United States. Political engagement such as lobbying is largely an activity which involves the selective elites of the community. It does not lead to engagements or participation of the wider sections of the community and, hence, does not encourage the processes which lead to increased level of political participation among the broader South Asian community.

Political Power through Economic Strength

As argued earlier, there is a lack of mobilization by political parties and candidates among immigrant communities. For the most part, the political parties are content with their existing voting coalitions and do not encourage new voters to enter into the political process. However, this lack of mobilization simultaneously co-exists with selective targeting of certain sections of the South Asian community for one kind of political participation, namely campaign contributions. The literature on immigrant political incorporation has not really looked at marginalization coupled with simultaneous selective mobilization of an immigrant group. A significant number of community

⁵¹ www.pakpac.net/

members as well as leaders interviewed for this study brought up the issue of selective targeting of South Asian community by political parties and candidates for campaign contributions. Given the economic profile of the community, South Asians of certain socioeconomic profiles are generally approached by political parties and candidates to make political contributions.

Journalistic reports in ethnic as well as mainstream newspapers have often noted that there has been a significant trend of organizing political fundraising events within the South Asian community. The stereotypical stories of influential and wealthy first generation South Asian immigrants getting photographed with political leaders and candidates by making hefty political contribution or organizing fundraisers are abound within the South Asian community. The extent of involvement of Indian Americans in political fundraising was reflected in a recent spat between the presidential campaigns of Senators Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama over fundraisers organized by Indian Americans for Hillary Clinton where she jokingly made a remark alluding to her closeness to the Indian American community: “I can certainly run for the Senate seat in Punjab (India) and win easily.”⁵² The Obama campaign in a memo titled ‘Hillary Clinton (D-Punjab)’s Personal Financial and Political Ties to India’ criticized Clinton for fundraising from the Indian American community on the grounds that she co-chairs the Senate’s India Caucus and has favored outsourcing of jobs to India in return for the large scale campaign contribution by Indian Americans.⁵³ The Obama campaign had to

⁵² www.rediff.com/news/2007/jun/15clinton.htm

⁵³ This line of criticism of Hillary Clinton campaign by Obama campaign was reminiscent of the controversy over campaign contribution by Asian Americans to the Bill Clinton presidential campaign in 1996. The controversy was centered around the presumption that contribution by Asian Americans

ultimately withdraw the memo because it had collapsed the distinction between Indian Americans and India as a nation and by implication suggested that Clinton was bound to represent the Interest of India since she was taking contribution from Indian Americans.⁵⁴

The South Asian community, particularly the Indian American community, has come to think of campaign contributions as an important way of developing political influence for the community. A significant number of interviewees pointed to this emerging trend within the South Asian community and argued how this could be a possible way to counter the lack of political influence resulting from a relatively small number of South Asians combined with a lack of population concentration. Some community leaders look at the fund raising ability of Indian American community as a way to quickly gain leverage for the community in the political system. There is a widely shared view within the South Asian community that the way to political empowerment of the community lies in exploiting the financial leverage of the community and that the financial strength of the community should move quickly from asserting cultural and religious identity to developing political clout. According to this view, the political parties and candidates may not care for community's votes but they will certainly care about its ability to contribute. An Indian American community leader from Los Angeles area puts the relationship between political incorporation and fundraising within the South Asian community in the following words:

... Our strength is the finances, the funds we can raise for them, more so than the votes that we can deliver them.... I would say so far, our majority strength lies in our ability to raise funds for them. The Indians are professionally, business wise,

represents the interest of Asian capital in the Pacific Rim and that tainted offshore Asian money is coming through Asian Americans to buy political influence in the U.S.

⁵⁴www.newser.com/story/3248/obama-sorry-for-hillary-memo.html

everywhere; but in the political process, we are not so much in the process from grassroots section working upwards. Most of our strength comes from raising funds for the political people..... we are not there at the stage where we can demand power from our voting rights, our voting power. Even though we try to throw in a number there; that number is still very small for a political person to depend mainly on us. We are too spread apart, so at the local level we cannot play any role at all in terms of votes... Money wise, yes, we do, because for whatever reason, Indians do donate for political parties. And with that strength, you can sit with them and talk to them... is that the way to go? No, I don't think that should be the only way to go, but it always helps.⁵⁵

A similar trend can be seen in Pakistani American community as well. Both Los Angeles and New York area Pakistani immigrant community leaders report that their votes are not as much a target of mobilization as their money is. A Pakistani American woman activist from Los Angeles, speaking of the trend of fundraising in Pakistani community, said:

Money is more important and that is what they (political parties and candidates) are targeting- they are not going out for the vote. I have not seen anyone going out to try to get more votes from our community. Again, Pakistanis are dispersed. You are not going to see them in one area. South Asians maybe more so, but again, politically when they (Political candidates) come in, I see more emphasis on fundraising.⁵⁶

This view is in sharp contrast to other minority groups such as African Americans and Latinos and also differs from the historical experience of European ethnics.

Wandy Cho and Suneet Lad in their analysis of political behavior of Asian Indians argue that there has been a steep increase in the volume of contribution to federal campaign, PACs, or party organizations by Asian Indians. Analyzing the contribution figures from 1980 to 2000, they show that contribution by Asian Indians has burgeoned from almost negligible to approximately 8 million in a single election cycle. The number

⁵⁵ Interview, Los Angeles, CA, 5 July 2006

⁵⁶ Interview, Los Angeles, CA, 23 June 2006.

of contributors also rose from a few hundred to approximately 8000 separate contributions (Cho and Lad 2004). A rising trend of campaign contributions suggests that the community is giving importance to this form of political engagement and possibly sees this as a way to gain political leverage.

Analysis of campaign contribution trends in the 2008 presidential primary elections gives further insight into the level of involvement of South Asian immigrants in fundraising efforts for both Democratic and Republican presidential candidates. An analysis by an ethnic Journal titled *Little India* focuses upon what is known in political fundraising or journalistic parlance as “bundlers” (Mehra 2008). As federal law caps individual election contributions to a candidate in an election cycle to \$2300, the bundlers become critical to the candidates for raising bigger amounts.⁵⁷ These bundlers typically package and bundle donations from friends, family, business, and professional associates by organizing private and public fundraising events. This kind of contribution constitutes a significant part of the funds raised by candidates in any election. An analysis done by *Little India* of 2,493 bundlers reported by the public interest watchdog group *Public Citizen* during presidential primaries of 2008 revealed that there were 21 Indian Americans in that list along with a few Pakistani American bundlers. Almost half of these Indian American bundlers raised money for Senator Hillary Clinton, the rest of them were divided between Senator Obama, Senator Edwards, Gov. Mitt Romney, and Senator McCain. Similar patterns of fundraising at the state and congressional level elections have been reported by ethnic newspapers. Apart from prominent business people and professionals from the South Asian community who organize fundraisers on a regular

⁵⁷ The federal rule stipulates a \$ 2300 limit for an individual to candidates of all federal offices. Each primary, runoff, and general election counts as a separate election.

basis, organizations such as U.S.-India Political Action Committee (USINPAC) and Pakistani American (PACPAK) also play an important role as far as political fundraising is concerned. USINPAC and PACPAK have both contributed large amounts to Congressional candidates on a bipartisan basis.

Indian Americans and, to a lesser extent, Pakistani Americans are playing an important role as far as political fundraising is concerned. Given the overall number of South Asian Americans in the United States and the level of political participation and representation of the community, their share in fundraising activities seems to be quite high. Most of these fundraisers organized by South Asians primarily rely upon members of the community to contribute. The prevalence of this form of political engagement, which primarily relies upon the wealthy sections of the community, suggests that there is a wide gap between the share of the South Asian community's contribution to fundraising and their involvement with other forms of political participation.

As discussed earlier, there is a very strong discourse within the South Asian community- Indian Americans in particular- of gaining political voice through the economic clout of the community and this discourse is largely rooted in the belief that Indian Americans as a community are economically powerful. It is relevant to note here that this discourse of political influence through economic clout is also linked to the discourse among South Asians which views the American Jewish community as a model to achieve political empowerment in the U.S. The influence of the Jewish lobby in the United States is often cited by Indian Americans as a model for achieving political influence through the use their economic clout. A Los Angeles based community leader of Indian descent argued for the need to make campaign contribution a central plank of

Indian American political engagement in the United States. He exhorted the community to follow the Jewish model and move from making contributions for building temples to political contribution for developing political influence:

The Indian community was not used to giving political contribution in India. Only some very high level people gave any political contribution in India. They (Indian Americans) still think that giving to political party or candidate is useless or that contributing to temple is better. If the Indian community has a fund raising event for a congressman, we have to pull them to come and attend the function. Look at the people who have mastered the art of political involvement, the Jewish community. And look at their control. The Indian community with their financial strength could do better. However, there is a difference. Whereas the Jewish community has already built their temple, the Indian community is contributing heavily to build their temples. The next generation or third generation when the temples are built, maybe the importance will be the political contribution to control their agenda.⁵⁸

The mainstream media has also noted the Indian American groups' fascination with the Jewish lobby. Mira Kamdar, writing in an op-ed in *The Washington Times*, argued that the recent debates following the publication of highly controversial book on Israeli lobby may have generated some questions about the undue influence of Israeli Lobby in U.S. politics but for a large section of Indian Americans this lobby is highly inspiring.⁵⁹ She wrote further:

With growing numbers, clout and self-confidence, the Indian American community is turning its admiration for the Israel lobby and its respect for high achieving Jewish Americans into powerful new force of its own following consciously in AIPAC's (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) footsteps, the India Lobby is getting results in Washington- and having a profound impact on U.S. policy..." (Kamdar 2007).

The success of the Jewish community in establishing itself as a community with a strong voice and influence on the American foreign policy vis-à-vis Israel has struck a

⁵⁸ Interview, Los Angeles, CA, 22 June 2006.

⁵⁹ *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (2006) by Mearsheimer, John and Stephen Walt

chord with some of the Indian American organizations. The parallels between the two communities are also seen in their high socioeconomic profile which can be used to develop political clout. Commenting on this perceived similarity between the two groups, a report in *The New York Times* noted, “Indians often say they see a version of themselves and what they hope to be the experience of Jews in American politics: a small minority that has succeeded in combating prejudice and building political clout” (Banerjee 2007).

The Indian American community members and activists interviewed for this research often referred to the Jewish experience and how that should be a model for Indian immigrants. This reference was more common among Indian American interviewees than Pakistani and Bangladeshi Americans. The discourse of Hindu/India and Jewish/Israel alliance against the threats of Islamic terrorism has also strengthened the admiration for the Jewish lobby (Prashad 2005; Kurien 2007b). An Indian American community activist based in Los Angeles exhorted the community to follow the Jewish model but feared that Indian American community may not be able to follow the Jewish model:

Look at the people who have mastered the art of political involvement- the Jewish community – and look at their control. The Indian community with their financial strength could do better..... That may never happen because for the Jewish people, Israel is going to be a continuous source of attraction. But India, that is not a source of attraction..(for) second generation Indians, no way. That is why I have come to a point where I have been stressing this to organizations, to the government of India, to Ministers in India- spend money on internship of young people... thousands of young people should be traveling to India, even if the money needs to be invested... once they stay there for two three months, they will always be a part of India.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Interview, Los Angeles, CA, 23 June 2006.

The centrality of India and the need for continuing attachment to India figure prominently in this discourse. Obviously, there is a clear realization that there are significant differences between the relationship of the Jewish community to Israel – which has come to acquire a pivotal role in shaping Jewish identity- and the Indian American community to India.

It is important to point out here that the invocation of the Jewish community and Jewish American experience of political incorporation is done in a very selective manner by some of the Indian community organizations in their quest for political power. This selective invocation completely ignores the early history of grassroots mobilizing and multiracial alliance built by the Jewish American groups against racial and religious discrimination and the role played by the community in building up different progressive alliances and movements in different American cities (Sonenshein 1993; Glazer and Moynihan 1970). What gets invoked is the centrality of Israel in contemporary Jewish mobilization and how the community's political clout rests upon the economic strength of the community.

The importance of fundraising and contribution to political campaigns among South Asian immigrants suggests a dominance of a particular kind of political engagement which does not rely upon the mobilization and engagement of the broader community. The dominance of this mode of political engagement suggests a path of political incorporation which relies primarily on the affluent and the elite of the community. Both the pluralist and the minority group models of political incorporation therefore fail to account for this mode of political engagement which relies on selective mobilization on the part of the group.

Towards a Politics of Social Justice

Parallel to the above discussed three dominant trends of political engagement which rely upon selective mobilization, there are a number of service and advocacy organizations of South Asians that are geared towards promoting grassroots civic and political engagements among South Asian immigrants. These organizations- mostly 501(C) (3) or non profit – are primarily focused on working class, underprivileged, and undocumented sections of the South Asian community and they provide different kinds of services to the community as well as engage in advocacy on their behalf. Both Los Angeles and New York have a number of such organizations which are active among the South Asian communities. South Asian Network (SAN), South Asian Public Health Association (SAPHA), SATRANG, and South Asian American Voting Youth (SAAVY) in Los Angeles area are some examples of organizations dedicated to service and advocacy. The number of such organizations in the New York Metropolitan Area is much more than in Los Angeles. Some of the important New York based South Asian organizations in this category are New York Taxi Workers Alliance, AWAAZ, ANDOLAN, Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM), SAKHI, and MANAVI.

South Asian Network (SAN), Los Angeles, founded in 1990, has been working on issues including health awareness, domestic violence, immigration related services, workers' rights, discrimination, and racial targeting of South Asians in both the pre and post-9/11 period. SAN is particularly focused on low income sections of South Asian immigrants, a significant number of which are either undocumented or facing immigration related issues. As a part of its outreach efforts among low income South Asian immigrants, SAN has been working among Bangladeshi immigrants in the

Koreatown neighborhood of Los Angeles on issues relating to housing, health, domestic violence, immigration, and race relations. According to SAN, the number of Bangladeshi residents in Koreatown is estimated to be 10,000 to 15,000 but the community has remained largely invisible and the issues faced by them remain unaddressed because of the lack of organizations and agencies which understand and respond to their needs. SAN has joined with other Asian American organizations and a larger coalition of immigrant organizations to build resources and networks to provide services and mobilize underserved sections of South Asians on important issues facing them. The organization is also a part of a broader coalition of organizations working for comprehensive immigration reforms.⁶¹

In New York City, there are number of organizations active among working class and underserved South Asian communities and they reach out to common South Asians on issues such as housing, health, racial discrimination, domestic violence, and immigration. Desis Rising Up and Moving(DRUM), based in Queens, New York, identifies itself as an organization “founded in 2000 to build power of South Asian low wage immigrant workers, families fighting deportation, and youth in New York City.”⁶² DRUM has worked among South Asian immigrants to stop deportation, educate and mobilize South Asian youth in Queens against unfair immigration policies and for better educational facilities for the immigrant youth. The targeting and detention of South Asians in the wake of September 11, 2001 attack was opposed by DRUM in alliance with other New York based South Asian organizations such as Chayya, Coney Island Avenue

⁶¹ www.southasiannetwork.org

⁶² www.drumnation.org

Project, Andolan, Council of People's Organizations, and New York Taxi Workers alliance along with other human rights organizations. These organizations highlighted the indiscriminate nature of detentions and deportations and worked toward providing legal help to individuals and families affected by the crackdown. The New York Taxi Workers Alliance (NYTWA), which was formed in 1998 and represents the interests of Taxi workers in New York City, is one of the important organizations of South Asian immigrants since a large number of Taxi drivers in the city are South Asian immigrants. NYTWA is one of the first organizations which started labor organizing among South Asians immigrants. These organizations have initiated processes which are aimed at civic and political empowerment of the underprivileged sections of the South Asian immigrants.

The organizations discussed in this section represent a trend of civic and political engagement among South Asian immigrants that is different from the modes of political mobilization discussed earlier in the chapter. Their primary focus is on working class, underprivileged, undocumented, and marginalized sections within South Asian community and these organizations can be broadly categorized under the rubric of organizations working towards social justice. It is also important to note that the primary arena of their activities is non electoral and they attempt to mobilize the community for political and civic participation which go beyond the electoral arena. Even though these organizations are relatively new and confined to large metropolitan centers, their attempts to influence the political process is reflected in a recent initiative by a number of South Asian organizations all over the United States to form a national coordination body to build a close coalition to advance their work. In June 2008, 32 South Asian organizations

from 12 regions of the United States came together in New York City to announce the formation of National Coalition of South Asian Organizations (NCSAO). The coalition is a result of attempts by many of these organizations over the last several years to develop a comprehensive agenda and coordination among South Asian organizations working in different regions of the United States. The important issues identified by the coalition include equal and full participation in civic and political process for all, enforcement of civil rights and civil liberties for all, gender equality within the South Asian community, immigrant rights and reform, rights for gays and lesbians, and empowerment of South Asian youth.⁶³

The organizations active among South Asians under the broad framework of social justice represent a trend different from the dominant forms of political mobilization among South Asian immigrants which relies mostly on elite mobilization of a narrow section of the community constituted exclusively of the economically better off. The politics of lobbying, strategy of building political influence through campaign contributions, and representation and electoral trend of contesting election from white majority area using mainstream and cross over appeal do not involve bringing rank and file South Asian immigrants into civic and political process. The other kind of political engagement- based on a framework of social justice politics- is an attempt to bring a broader South Asian immigrant community into the civic and political space but it is not the dominant trend in the community. Both these trends are not yet fully evolved and separated but they do point toward the broad trajectories of political incorporation which are evolving among South Asian immigrants.

⁶³ <http://www.saalt.org/pages/Meet-the-National-Coalition.html>

Conclusion

The analysis of political incorporation experience of South Asian immigrants suggests that the political incorporation of the group is taking place in an institutional context that is characterized by a decline of political parties. There is very little attempt by political parties and other institutions to bring contemporary non-white immigrants into the political process. South Asians as a group are marginalized in the political process as a result of lack of this institutional attempts at incorporation combined with what many interviewees described as a lack of significant South Asian population concentration. However, this lack of mobilization and inclusion of the broader South Asian community in the political process simultaneously co-exists with selective targeting and mobilization of narrow segments within the community which results in a particular trajectory of incorporation relying on elite mobilization.

The minority group model predicts that nonwhite immigrants who face discrimination and barriers are likely to engage in grassroots mobilizing based on their racial and ethnic identity. However, the analysis of interviews and other data suggests that there are three major trends of political engagement among South Asian immigrants- the focus on lobbying, prominence of campaign fundraising as a strategy for gaining political power, and descriptive representation from white majority districts. The analysis suggests that there is very little grassroots mobilizing within the South Asian community. Political mobilization is only limited to certain forms of engagement which do not require the mobilization and engagement of the broader community. All three trends identified in this analysis end up reinforcing selective mobilization within the South Asian community which preclude large sections of the community from getting drawn into the political

processes. This strategy of political mobilization is in complete contrast to what the minority group model predicts for nonwhite immigrants to achieve full political incorporation. Hence, the political incorporation of the group is not following either the pluralist model- where immigrants are mobilized on the basis of their ethnic identity by political parties which help bring them into the political process- or the minority group model where grassroots mobilization against discrimination and racial barrier on the basis of shared racial identity is the path to political incorporation. In the case of South Asian immigrants, the political incorporation process is bereft of any large scale community grassroots mobilization. Instead, it mainly focuses on a narrow section of the community which is able to make campaign contribution and engage with groups involved in lobbying activities. Political parties and candidates also tend to focus on the section within the community which is wealthy enough to make political contributions or engage in mobilization to raise more political contribution from the community.

A strong discourse of achieving political power through economic strength of the community speaks to this trend of political engagement. This discourse contributes to a particular kind of political mobilizing within the community which relies completely upon the money power of the community and does not engage in any kind of grassroots mobilizing for political incorporation of the community. The trend of descriptive representation of South Asian immigrants from primarily white areas also contributes to the nonmobilization of South Asians for political incorporation at the grassroots level. This chapter suggests that we need to go beyond the existing models of political incorporation- the pluralist and minority group model- which do not fully explain the process of simultaneous marginalization and selective incorporation which South Asian

community is undergoing.

Finally, the chapter also argues that there is an emerging trend of political engagement within the South Asian community which relies upon marginalized sections within the community and works under the broad rubric of social justice politics. This parallel trend of political engagement is different in terms of its constituency and reach. These groups are taking political issues to the marginalized sections of the community and trying to bring new voices into the political process. The social justice oriented politics still remains a small trend in terms of its reach and impact, but it has shown the potential of forging alliances with other groups to advance progressive politics.

Chapter IV

Transnational Attachments and Political Participation in the United States: An Analysis of Quantitative and Qualitative Data

September 25, 2006, New York City. Outside a hotel in Manhattan, hundreds of Pakistani immigrants were assembled in two separate groups on the eve of Pakistani President's visit to New York City to attend the U.N. general assembly meet. The two groups were there to express their views about the prevailing conditions in Pakistan, particularly about the legitimacy of military rule being led by President Pervaiz Musharraf. Those opposed to the military rule and President Pervaiz Musharraf's regime were being led by Asian- American Network against Abuse of Human Rights (ANAA), a non-profit U.S. based group of Pakistani immigrants for restoration of Human Rights in Pakistan. The group held a meeting earlier that day to discuss the ways to highlight human rights violations in Pakistan through lobbying and activism in the United States. Pakistani immigrant activists from all across the U.S. had traveled to join the meeting and protest against the military regime in Pakistan. The counter protest to express support for the current regime was also attended by a significant number of Pakistani immigrants⁶⁴.

.....

May, 3, 2006, Washington, D.C. Around 200 Indian Americans from all across the U.S. attended a White House briefing led by Karl Rove on the importance of the U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Deal for both U.S. and India. The group traveled to Washington, D.C. to meet the members of Congress from their respective areas to lobby for the passage of U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Deal. The effort was a part of the lobbying campaign launched by various organizations of Indian immigrants to push for the passage of U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Deal through the U.S. Congress.⁶⁵

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The above examples highlight the extent to which transnational attachments and transnational political engagement are part of South Asian immigrants' social and political life in the United States. The political incorporation of South Asian immigrants in the United States cannot be completely explained without looking at the transnational dimension of their civic and political engagement. Both the quantitative and qualitative

⁶⁴ Based on participant observation of the day long activity on the part of various Pakistani American groups in New York city on 25 September, 2006.

⁶⁵ <http://in.rediff.com/cms/print.jsp?docpath=//news/2006/may/12nddeal3.htm>

data analyzed in this chapter suggest that transnational attachments are a major part of the social and political lives of South Asian immigrant community in the U.S. These attachments encompass different arenas which include familial, social, cultural, religious, and the political. The chapter challenges the dominant notion about the negative impact of transnational attachments on political participation of South Asian immigrants in the U.S. In contrast, it argues that transnational attachments and engagements need not be seen as adversely impacting South Asian immigrants' political participation in the U.S. The chapter suggests that South Asian immigrants find it easier to engage with groups constituted by their co-ethnics who also take interest in the politics of home country. The inability of mainstream U.S. political institutions to engage with such ethnic groups contributes to South Asian immigrants' lack of engagement in the U.S. political process. The chapter further argues that transnational engagements with the issues concerning country of origin are not only about country of origin but such engagements also provide avenues to engage with U.S. political institutions. The chapter concludes by analyzing the implications of increased transnational social and political engagement on the conception of citizenship- as viewed and practiced by South Asian immigrants.

Historically, immigrant communities in the United States have maintained strong connections with their country of origin (Guarnizo and Smith 1998; Foner 2000; Jacobson 1995). The literature on European immigration to the United States analyzed the level of attachment these immigrants maintained by pointing to the volume of return migration. A very high number of immigrants returned to their country of origin in the first half of the twentieth century. This historical work suggested that many European immigrants were quite ambivalent about the United States. They viewed their stay in the

U.S. as temporary and maintained ties to their family and friends in the country of origin through letters and remittances (Jacobson 1995). The classical pluralist model of political incorporation, however, did not pay much attention to these connections and networks; it only emphasized the desire of the immigrants to assimilate into the American mainstream. The pluralist model, which drew heavily on assimilationist approaches to immigration, viewed the continuing attachment and linkages to home country as factors which slowed the immigrant incorporation into the U.S. social and political mainstream. Building on the pluralist view of political incorporation, Alejandro Portes and Ruben Rumbaut argued that even though many European immigrants did not return to their countries of origin, they remained uninterested in the American political process because they remained focused on the idea of returning (Portes and Rumbaut 1996). This view of immigrant political incorporation has continued to see a zero sum relationship between attachments to home country and political participation in the U.S.

The conventional wisdom, drawing upon the assimilationist and pluralist approach to immigrant incorporation, contends that immigrants' deeper attachment to their country of origin acts as a barrier to their civic and political incorporation in the United States. This framework is based on the assumption that engagement with the issues and polity of the country of origin is a reflection of disinterest and apathy toward American politics (Huntington 1997, 2004; Schlesinger 1992; Glazer 1983). The pluralist model further argues that attachment to home country is a lingering effect of past attachments that slowly disappears as immigrants become incorporated into social and political life of the United States.

The minority group model of political incorporation, because of its focus on African American experiences, has also not placed much emphasis on transnationalism to understand the political incorporation of non-white immigrants. However, recent scholarship, following the broad import of the minority group model that non-white immigrants face racial barriers leading to slower political incorporation, have started questioning the zero sum relationship between transnational engagement and political participation in the U.S. These scholars argue that transnational attachments of immigrants do not necessarily lead to decreased participation in U.S. politics (Jones-Correa 1998; DeSipio 2003; Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller 2003; Lien et al 2004; Ramakrishnan 2005; Wong 2006).

Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller (2003), in a seminal survey based study on the transnational political activities of Colombians, Dominicans, and Salvadorans, argue that transnational political action, regularly undertaken by a small minority, is socially bounded across national borders and occurs in quite specific territorial jurisdiction but also appears to reproduce preexisting power symmetries. They found that greater transnational political participation is positively associated with a range of indicators such as expectations to return home, more education, male, married, and length of stay in the U.S. The transnational political activities surveyed included membership in the home country political party, donating money to the home country political party, and participation in home country political campaigns and rallies. Their results indicate that transnational political activities, contrary to expectations, are not the domain of marginalized or poorly educated immigrants. Length of residence in the United States or acquisition of citizenship does not necessarily reduce interest or involvement in the home

country. In fact, increases in the length of stay may actually increase transnational political participation. Their research points out that there is no inherent contradiction between “assimilation” and transnationalism because it is the better established and more secure immigrants who engage in transnational activities (Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller 2003). The exclusivist views of the supposed trajectory of assimilation are contradicted by other findings which argue that immigrants most involved in transnational activities are better educated, longer residents of the host societies, and more likely to be involved in the politics of the host society (Smith 1998; Landolt 2001). Louis DeSipio (2003), analyzing survey data of Latino immigrants from three different countries, reports that transnational political engagement is a phenomenon confined to a small minority of the immigrant population but he does not find a relation between the political engagement in the home country and engagement in the U.S. These findings question the conventional wisdom about the relationship between transnational engagements and political participation in the U.S. and assert that the two are not necessarily negatively related. This literature makes an important contribution to the ongoing debate on immigrant political incorporation in terms of questioning the prevailing assumption about the relationship between transnational engagements and political participation in the U.S. However, the literature largely does not go beyond questioning this prevailing assumption. It does not look into the different ways in which transnational attachments and engagements shape and become a part of the political participation of immigrants in the U.S.

Some recent works on transnationalism and immigrant political incorporation do attempt to go beyond a rather simplistic debate of whether strong transnational

attachment depresses immigrant political participation in the U.S. Analyzing this relationship through a study of Caribbean immigrants in New York City, Reuel Rogers points towards a more complex patterns of relationship between home country ties and political participation in the U.S. Rogers, based on his interview with Caribbean immigrants in New York City, argues that immigrants whose home country engagements consisted primarily of personal and social ties “tended to have postponed naturalization for many years and did not participate in American politics much after they finally became citizens” (Rogers 2006, 163). However, he found a different pattern among those immigrants whose home country ties also involved civic activity targeted at their home countries. The immigrants who were civically engaged with their home countries also tended to participate in the politics of the United States. This finding echoes the broad results of other studies which found that civic engagement with home country related issues contributes to participation in U.S. civic and political arena (Wong, Lien, and Conway 2005; DeSipio 2006; Karpathakis 1999; Graham 1997). The study by Rogers, thus, suggests that transnational attachments of immigrant communities work differently for different segments of the immigrant population as far as civic and political participation in the United States is concerned.

Transnationalism and South Asians

Even though the scholars of European immigration to the United States have discussed and analyzed the existence of transnational attachment for a long time, the nature of contemporary transnational attachment has changed drastically. One of the most important factors which has transformed the nature and intensity of transnational relations between immigrant communities and their home countries is rapid changes in

communication technology. The interviews conducted with South Asian immigrants in Los Angeles and the New York Metropolitan Area provide important insights into the changing nature and intensity of transnational connections among immigrant communities. Most of the interviewees spoke about the rapid transformation in the nature of transnational connections in the last 10-15 years due to the increased availability of cheaper and faster modes of communication. For instance, the cost of making telephone calls to South Asian countries, like other parts of the world, has gone down drastically and has transformed the ways in which immigrants maintain contact with family and friends in their home countries. A Bangladeshi immigrant in Queens, New York, expressed the increased ease of communication in the following way:

...With a five dollar phone card you can buy for one dollar now and you can talk for an hour or so. The last few times it was more than two hours. Nobody can talk more than two hours every week... Now you have a regular contact with friends and family back home.⁶⁶

Similarly, the Internet has become a powerful means of communication across the globe and has deeply impacted the ways in which South Asian immigrants- with a large section of middle class which can afford and use this mode of communication comfortably- maintain connections with home countries. The Internet is not only used for personal communication but it also provides instant access to newspapers from South Asia. Many civic and politically inclined community members are also a part of different Internet based list-serves that focus on social and political discussions concerning different issues in their countries of origin. Talking about the ways of keeping in touch with her country of origin, a Bangladeshi immigrant from Los Angeles said:

⁶⁶ Interview, New York City, NY, 12 December 2006.

I talk regularly with my family and sometimes with my friends and ex-colleagues. We use a lot of phone cards. And everyday I go to Bangladesh newspapers on the Internet; that is my habit, I have to do that. I have Bangladeshi television channels at my home. So we do not feel that actually we are very far from there, we see every day the news and everything. So we are very much up on what is going on.⁶⁷

The easy availability of ethnic television channels which relay political, social, and cultural programs focused on countries of origin round the clock has brought the home countries closer for South Asian immigrants, making transnational connections much more intense than ever before. A significant number of interviewees spoke about the ways in which these television channels have intensified the level of connection with their home countries. Respondents from all three South Asian communities- Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi- talked about the availability of 24 hour television programming focused on home countries and the ways in which that has transformed the nature of connection with home countries. Another important indicator which reflects the level and intensity of transnational connection is the growing level of remittances reaching the home countries. Recent data show that the flow of money in the form of remittances has grown alongside an increasing trend of economic investment in home country. According to a World Bank Report, India is the top recipient of remittances in the world in terms of absolute value and the Indian immigrants in North America are the largest contributor to the flow of money through remittances (Chisti 2007).⁶⁸ Bangladesh

⁶⁷ Interview, Los Angeles, CA, 6 June 2006

⁶⁸ The World Bank estimate for 2005 put India in the lead at \$ 23.5 billion with China and Mexico close behind at \$ 22.4 billion and \$ 21.7 billion, respectively. The contribution of Indian migrants settled in North America to the total remittance is highest with approximately 44 percent coming from North America followed by 24 percent from the Gulf countries.

and Pakistan have also shown similar growth in their remittances in recent years.⁶⁹ The evidence suggests that the nature of transnational attachment among contemporary immigrant groups has changed drastically compared to earlier waves of immigrants. The recent literature on transnational linkages of different immigrant groups also confirms the changing and intensifying nature of these linkages (Rogers 2006; Jones Correa 1998; Portes and Rumbaut 1996; Basch et al. 1994).

An overwhelming number of interviewees for this study spoke about the deep interest of the South Asian communities in the politics of their home countries. The interviews suggest that immigrants from all three South Asian communities- Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi- follow closely the broad political developments in their countries of origin. The medium used to follow political news in home countries range from community newspapers published in the United States, the Internet, South Asian television channels to phone conversations with family and friends in the country of origin. Reflecting on the extent of political connection to home country, an Indian community leader in Los Angeles said:

I think Indian community is still connected. We are recent immigrants.... and the local newspapers and the Internet and all the TV channels kept us tuned into what is happening in India. I still see a vast majority of people who still want to know what is going to happen to BJP and what are the prospects of Congress.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ In the first seven months of the fiscal year (July 2007–January 2008), Pakistan received \$3.26 billion in remittance inflows, a 22.4 percent increase from the same period last year. Inflows in January stand at \$557 million, a 42 percent jump year-on-year. The largest remittance inflows come from the United States, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries. (<http://migrantremittances.typepad.com/blog/2008/03/remittances-to.html>)

In Bangladesh, remittances hit a record \$5.98 billion in the 2006/07 financial year that ended in June, 24.52 percent higher than the previous fiscal year. The remittances from United States were the second largest contributor to the total amount reaching Bangladesh. (<http://in.reuters.com/article/asiaCompanyAndMarkets/idINDHA19219820080101>)

⁷⁰ Interview. Los Angeles, CA, 3 April 2006.

Bangladeshi and Pakistani community members also reported a similar kind of political connection with the home country. They reported that there is a high level of interest in the political and social developments in the country of origin. A young Bangladeshi immigrant from Queens, New York, speaking about the level of interest in the home country politics, said:

I think for people of Bangladesh, politics is an integral part of their life. Not every one is in politics, but everyone has some knowledge. Of course, after coming here, the scenario changes because it is a hard life here. Still, I can tell from their activities, they take active interest in Bangladeshi politics. They want to know the daily chatter, or on weekends when they meet the conversations are around politics. It is a significant topic.⁷¹

It is important to note here that the high levels of transnational attachments in terms of maintaining contacts and following political developments in the home country do not translate to high levels of participation in transnational political activities. The issue of active political engagement with the country of origin is a complex one. Both the quantitative and the qualitative analysis suggest that active transnational political participation is confined to a relatively small segment of the immigrant community. The qualitative data does suggest that there is a high level of interest in the politics of home country but most of the interviewees observed that the section which actively gets involved with the politics of home country is rather small. The views expressed in the interviews about the low level of active participation as opposed to high level of interest in following the news regarding the politics of home country also confirms the broad trend indicated by the quantitative PNAAPS data and several other studies. In most quantitative studies, examples of involvement with home country politics included participation in organization and activities related to the home country politics, and active

⁷¹ Interview, New York City, NY, 5 February 2007.

connections with political groups in the home country. However, many of the interviewees made a distinction between engagement with politics in terms of partisan politics expressed in the form of associating with political groups in the home country and/or their affiliates in U.S., and engagements with issues relating to development and various social causes in the country of origin. In other words, there is a wider level of engagement in the South Asian immigrant community with the issues related to the country of origin which are not explicitly political in terms of party politics. The distinction is important for this analysis because transnational political engagement measured in most surveys by participation in a narrow set of activities related to party politics fails to capture a broader range of transnational activities which fall under the broad rubric of charity, civic, and political engagement. The qualitative data suggest that the level of transnational political engagement is much wider if this broader rubric of political and civic engagement is used. One of the ways in which this broader rubric of transnational political and civic engagement can be understood is by analyzing the nature and activities of organizations which engage in transnational political activities among South Asian immigrants.

Based on a range of participant observations in Los Angeles and New York City and interviews with South Asian community members and activists, I propose that there are three kinds of organizations which either directly or indirectly get involved in transnational politics. First, there are lobbying organizations that are active on the U.S. foreign policy issues relating to the home country. One of the most prominent examples of this kind is USINPAC which claims to represent the interest of Indian immigrant community on the Capitol Hill and gets heavily involved in lobbying on issues related to

India. One of the major planks of USINPAC has been to represent the interest of India in the United States. This commitment of USINPAC has been reflected in its important role in lobbying with the Congress in 2006 for the passage of the U.S. - India Civil Nuclear Deal. On similar lines, Pakistani American Public Affairs Committee (PAKPAC) claims to represent Pakistani Americans and lobbies with Congress on certain issues related to Pakistan. Bangladeshi immigrants have also been involved in attempts to create a group which can speak on behalf of Bangladeshi Americans in Washington, D.C. and can also support and lobby for Bangladesh on important issues.

The second category of South Asian groups engaged in transnational politics comprises of those who are connected to political parties and groups in their countries of origin. For instance, among Indian immigrants in the U.S. there are groups which support two of the major political parties of India- the Indian national Congress Party (INC) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The U.S. based Indian National Overseas Congress (INOC) and Overseas Friend of BJP (OFBJP) support the Congress party and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in India, respectively. They work toward mobilizing support for these political parties among Indian immigrants in the U.S. In the last 10-15 years, BJP and its affiliates such as Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS)- the groups that espouse a political ideology aimed at transforming India from a secular state to a theocratic Hindu state and engage in virulent anti-Muslim politics as well- have been able to establish organizations and associations in different parts of the United States to mobilize resources and support in favor of their political program and ideology. The active presence of these organizations in the Indian immigrant community is indicative of one kind of transnational political engagement of the community.

Besides involvement with these direct party related formations, there are other ways in which political engagement with India is manifested in the community. Most of the ethno-cultural organizations such as Gujarati associations, Telugu associations, and Tamil associations in the U.S. invite political leaders from their respective provinces in India for yearly conferences and maintain strong relationships with these political parties and leaders. The political engagements and connections at provincial levels is an increasingly important part of transnational engagement of immigrant organizations. The Indian ethnic newspapers published in the U.S. are filled with news about political leaders from India visiting Indian immigrant communities in different parts of the U.S. Pakistani and Bangladeshi immigrant communities also have similar kinds of political formations. In the case of the Pakistani community, a significant number of interviewees observed that due to a long history of military rule, political parties are not that strong in Pakistan and that gets reflected in a relatively weak presence of Pakistani political parties and their affiliates in the U.S. However, Pakistani political parties such as Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Pakistani Muslim League (N), and Pakistani Muslim League (Q) do have their U.S. based formations active in the community. The Pakistani community has also been deeply divided on the question of military rule and has a number of campaigns, rallies, and political meetings in the U.S. either in favor or against a former military general who retained both the presidency and his military office until very recently. Bangladeshi immigrants are relatively new to the United States and an overwhelming number of them are very new to this country. There is a very distinct pattern of transnational political involvement among Bangladeshi immigrants which is reflective of an intense engagement of the community with the political process in Bangladesh. The

intensity of engagement is reflected in the presence of major Bangladeshi political parties- Awami League, Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), and Jamaite Islam- in all the major U.S. cities where Bangladeshi immigrants are settled. There are city and state branches of these formations and the intense political rivalry and factionalism of Bangladeshi politics is played out in the U.S. as well.

The third category of organizations which are involved in transnational politics is different from the earlier two because these organizations engage in transnational activities that do not concern with formal political process in a strict sense. There are a number of organizations active in all three South Asian communities which focus on developmental work in their respective countries of origin. Interviews with leaders as well as community members from all three communities suggest that a large majority of South Asian immigrants do not engage with the political process in their home countries in terms of joining groups and participating in activities related to political parties. However, a significant number of them do get involved in developmental or charity work aimed at specific projects and areas in their country of origin. Among Indian immigrants, the presence of organizations such as ASHA, Association for India's Development (AID), and India Development and Relief Fund (IDRF) along with many smaller initiatives is indicative of the engagement of the immigrant community in the social and developmental process.⁷² Among Pakistani and Bangladeshi immigrants also there are similar organizations which focus on developmental work. Organizations such as

⁷² Asha for education is a secular organization dedicated to change in India by focusing on the basic education with the goal of providing education to underprivileged children. It has 45 chapters in the U.S. which work towards mobilizing resources for around 385 projects across India. Asha has developed a network of volunteers and donors in different U.S. cities for its projects in India. (<http://www.ashanet.org/>) Association for India's Development (AID) is a volunteer organization promoting sustainable, equitable, and just development in India. AID has several chapters in different U.S. cities where volunteers meet to discuss, fundraise, and support different AID projects in India.

Development in Literacy (DIL) and Human Development Foundation (HDF) carry out similar work among Pakistani community. Organizations working on similar lines among Bangladeshi immigrants influence and enhance transnational engagement of these communities.⁷³ These developmental organizations are nonpolitical in terms of their professed distance from different political parties and groups and their focus on economic development and social issues. Their engagement is largely construed as non political but a closer look at these organizations suggests that these organizations are involved in a broad array of philanthropic, charity, civic, and political work in their countries of origin. Moreover, there is no strict separation between political and non political engagement. The example of India Development and Relief Fund (IDRF) is illustrative of this point. The work of resource mobilization by IDRF among Indian immigrants in the U.S for developmental projects in India became highly controversial when a watchdog group of South Asian immigrants – Campaign to Stop Funding Hate (CSFH) - came out with a report concluding that IDRF was funneling all its money to charity organizations that are linked to the Hindu right wing groups such as RSS, BJP, and VHP which believe in virulent anti Muslim and anti Christian ideology. The transnational work of IDRF was criticized by CSFH and other such groups for contributing to the politics of hate and communal violence in India.

The presence of a significant number of organizations which actively engage with political, social, and developmental issues in the country of origin suggests that it is a significant part of the South Asian community if a broader view of transnational

⁷³ Development and literacy (DIL) is a U.S. based non profit launched in 1997 by Pakistani Americans by a desire to improve the dismal state of education in the underdeveloped areas of Pakistan. DIL currently operates and manages around 150 schools across Pakistan (<http://www.dil.org>).

political involvement is taken. The qualitative method allows for a broader view of transnational political engagement and the analysis suggests a larger presence of transnational political engagement as compared to the quantitative data. The wide range of South Asian organizations involved in different kinds of transnational activities are indicative of the deep engagement of the South Asian immigrants with political process of their countries of origin. Given the importance of transnational engagement among South Asian Americans, their political incorporation in the U.S. can not be disconnected from transnational engagement.

Transnational Attachments and Political Participation in the U.S.: Evidence from the Quantitative Analysis

The relationship between immigrant transnational attachments and political participation in the U.S. has been one of the most contentious issues among social scientists studying immigrant political behavior. This section analyzes the relationship between transnational attachment and political participation in the U.S. using a data set on Asian Americans which includes South Asian immigrants. The analysis is based on data generated by the Pilot Study of the National Asian American Survey (PNAAPS) completed in 2001. A total of 1,218 adults of Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Japanese, Filipino, and South Asian (Indians and Pakistanis) descent residing in Los Angeles, New York, Honolulu, San Francisco, and Chicago metropolitan areas were randomly selected for this survey and interviewed by phone between November 16, 2000 and January 28, 2001. The questions this pilot study aimed to answer included the extent to which Asian immigrants have adapted to the U.S. society and culture, the forms of ethnic and panethnic identity and consciousness that Asian Americans express, the views that Asian

Americans hold about the U.S. political system, and the participatory habits, political habits, and partisanship of Asians in the U.S. political system.⁷⁴ The survey also measured ethnic in-group feelings, national and transnational attachments that Asian Americans form and pattern of adaptation and acculturation they exhibit over time in the United States. The survey measured attachment to the country of origin through the following indicators: attention to news regarding events in Asia, frequency of contact with people in the country of origin, participation in the activities related to the politics of the home country, most recent visits to the country of origin, language used at home and to conduct business transactions. The political participation and adaptation to the U.S. political system is measured by the rate of U.S. citizenship, voting turnout, level of political interest, and participation in activities beyond voting (Lien, Conway, and Wong 2004).

This quantitative analysis is based on a relatively small subsample of PNAAPS data to look at the relationship between transnational attachments and political participation in the U.S. among South Asian immigrants. Since the South Asian subsample is relatively small (141) in the PNAAPS survey, it is important to underline here that the generalizability of the results is limited. However, given the fact that there is very little systematic study of South Asian immigrants and there is no other existing survey data on this group, this analysis provides a preliminary understanding of South Asian immigrants' political participation in the U.S. in relation to their transnational

⁷⁴ The sampling design had a final sample of 308 Chinese, 168 Koreans, 137 Vietnamese, 198 Japanese, 266 Filipino, and 141 South Asians. It is important to underline here that sample size is modest for certain subgroups, particularly for Koreans, Vietnamese, and South Asians.

attachment. Moreover, the quantitative analysis is complemented by the qualitative study based on in-depth interviews with South Asian community members and activists.

To analyze the data on South Asian immigrants in comparison to other Asian Americans, a dummy variable was created by dividing the sample into two categories- South Asians and the other Asians. Similarly, dummy variables were created for each of the indicators of transnational attachment and political participation in the U.S. The three different measures of transnational attachment used for this analysis were frequency of contact- either by phone, mail, or in person- with people in respondents' country of origin; attention to news in the country of origin; and participation in political activities related to the country of origin. The U.S. political participation measures used for this analysis were the rate of voting among registered voters, participation beyond voting, interest in politics, familiarity with the presidential election, membership in ethnic organizations, citizenship, and willingness to acquire citizenship.

To understand the broad patterns of transnational attachments and political participation among South Asians in the U.S., a range of bivariate analyses were completed. The results of the bivariate analyses reveal the differences between the South Asian and the rest of the Asian sample on different measures of transnational attachments and political participation in the U.S. If we look at the transnational attachment in terms of frequency of contact to the country of origin, the analysis shows that South Asian immigrants have a remarkably high level of transnational attachment in comparison to other Asian groups.⁷⁵ The data analysis suggests that 76 percent of South Asian

⁷⁵ The dummy variables created for the transnational attachment category of 'frequency of contact to the country of origin' include : those who maintained high level of contact- once a week or more, 2 or 3 times a month, or at least a month- and those who maintained low level of contact-once a year or less.

respondents maintain high levels of contact in comparison to 59 percent of the rest of the Asian respondents. The difference is significant at .01 level of significance. The data suggest that South Asians are significantly more likely to maintain close contacts with their country of origin than other Asian Americans (table 4.1). The analysis of qualitative data discussed earlier also confirms that South Asian immigrants maintain high levels of contact with the country of origin.

The second measure of transnational attachment used in this analysis is attention to news stories in the country of origin. South Asian respondents who followed the news very closely are slightly lower in comparison to rest of the Asian respondents. 57 percent of the South Asian respondents paid very close attention to news in the country of origin in comparison to 63 percent of the rest of the Asian respondents. This difference, however, is statistically not significant. Hence, South Asians are almost equally attentive to the news in their country of origin as compared to the rest of Asian Americans. The overall number suggests that the proportion of South Asian respondents paying close attention to news in the country of origin is high (table 4.1). The qualitative data based on interviews also suggest a high level of attention to the news related to home country. Moreover, the interviews suggest a widespread use of the Internet, phone, and ethnic TV channels focused on coverage of South Asia to keep in touch through news and other cultural productions.

The third measure of transnational attachment used in this analysis is participation in activities concerning the politics of the home country. The overall pattern of response to this question suggests that there is a very low level of participation in political activities dealing with the country of origin. Only 6 percent of the respondents in the

whole sample indicated that they participated in any political activity regarding the country of origin. The South Asian subsample also shows the same proportion of respondents indicating participation in political activities related to home countries. The literature on transnational political participation also suggests that participation in the political activities related to the home country is low among immigrants and only a very small group of immigrants are involved in political activities of the country of origin (DiSepio 2003; Guarnizo, Portes and Haller 2003). Similarly, the quantitative analysis demonstrates a gap between the high level of contact and attention to news in home country and the low level of active political engagement with the issues of the home country. The qualitative analysis and participant observation, however, suggest that South Asian immigrants participate in a range of activities related to the home country, which pertain to different social and developmental aspects that are not explicitly political, but are a part of a broader political and civic engagement with the country of origin. The qualitative data also show a rich array of organizations that are involved with different issues relating to the home countries. Based on the earlier discussion of these organizations and their activities relating to home country, it can be argued that political and civic engagement- defined broadly- with the country of origin is deeper and more extensive among South Asians than suggested by the quantitative data. However, it should be noted that the gap between active transnational political participation and other forms of transnational attachments is confirmed by qualitative data also.

The next part of the bivariate analysis compares South Asians to the other Asian American groups on different indicators of political participation within the U.S. The analysis suggests that South Asian immigrants are high to moderate on different indices

of political participation. Almost 90 percent of the registered South Asian voters cast their ballot in the presidential election of 2000 in comparison to 82 percent of the rest of the Asian American registered voters in the sample. However, the difference is statistically not significant. On the measure of participation beyond voting (signing a petition, calling a public official, participating in a protest etc.), there is a distinct difference between the participation rates of South Asians and the rest of the Asian American population. Fifty-five percent of South Asians engage in one or the other form of nonvoting participation in comparison to 38 percent of the rest of the Asian population. The difference between the two groups is statistically significant at .01 level of significance, and the level of participation of South Asians in terms of absolute number also is also fairly high (table 4.2).

Another indicator of political participation used for this analysis is the extent of interest in politics and in the affairs of the government in general. A higher number of South Asian respondents (72 percent) take interest in politics as compared to rest of the Asian sample (61) and the difference between the two groups is statistically significant. Similarly, on the question of knowledge about presidential election, a remarkably high percentage of South Asians (92 percent) show high familiarity with the electoral process for presidential election in comparison to the rest of Asian sample (72 percent). The difference is statistically significant, affirming a relatively high level of political interest and participation on the part of South Asians. South Asians (25 percent) are more likely to become a member of ethnic organizations- another index of political participation- in comparison to the rest of the Asian groups (11 percent). Again this is a statistically

significant difference indicating a higher participation on the part of South Asians although the absolute numbers are not very high (table 4.2).

The other important indicators of political participation used for this analysis are related to citizenship. There are two measures used in this analysis which relate to citizenship: expectation to become a citizen in the near future, and the rate of naturalization. The results suggest that there is no difference between the South Asian subsample (74 percent) and rest of the Asian American sample (72 percent) on the expectation to become citizen in the near future. Both groups are high on the expectation to acquire citizenship which is the first important step to be able to participate in the U.S. politics. Citizenship is generally considered to be the prerequisite to become a full member of the polity. The two groups, however, differ on the rate of naturalization. The data on citizenship shows that a lower number of South Asians (44 percent) are citizens in comparison to the rest of the Asian groups (62 percent). The difference is statistically significant at .01 level of significance. This result is contrary to the general pattern of high rate of political participation of South Asian immigrants on the rest of the indicators of participation (table 4.2).

The bivariate analysis suggests that South Asian immigrants show high to moderate level of transnational attachment and also exhibit relatively high to moderate levels of political participation in the U.S. The only exception to high levels of transnational attachment is participation in the political activities related to the home country. This analysis suggests that South Asian immigrants display both strong transnational attachment as well relatively high levels of political participation with the

sole exception of naturalization where they lag behind the naturalization rate among other Asian immigrants.

To further analyze the relationship between political participation in the U.S. and transnational attachment among South Asian immigrants, a multivariate regression analysis was also conducted. Although the cross-tabulations presented above highlight important trends, they do not allow to control the influence of factors such as education, income, length of stay, and other variables. Two separate analyses were completed to understand the relationship between political participation in the U.S. and transnational attachments among South Asian immigrants. The first examines political participation beyond voting among South Asian immigrants. The second examines naturalization among South Asian immigrants. The naturalization analysis includes only those immigrants who have lived in the U.S. for five years or more.⁷⁶ The first dependent variable is political participation beyond voting and the second dependent variable is citizenship or naturalization. The independent variables of interest are South Asian, transnational attachments, and discrimination; other variables including age, income, education, length of stay in U. S., and citizenship (in the analysis of participation beyond voting) served as controls.

South Asians are more likely to participate in political activities other than voting compared to other Asians in the sample even after controlling for standard demographic variables such as income and education. The multivariate regression analysis shows that the relationship between South Asians and political participation is statistically significant at the .10 level (Table 4.3). In other words, South Asians are more likely to

⁷⁶ The five year cut off point is due the provision of five years of permanent stay in the U.S. to be eligible for naturalization.

participate in political activities beyond voting than the other Asian Americans. However, it is important to point out that the positive relationship between the two variables is not very strong given the level of significance (.10). Given the higher median income and higher level of education among South Asian immigrants, an argument can be made that South Asians' higher level of political participation rates is primarily due to their higher income and education. But, the multivariate analysis suggests that South Asians participate at higher rates than other Asians even while controlling for education and income.

The other variable which is of interest in this context is transnational attachment. Two measures of transnational attachment are included in the analysis: first, frequency of contact with the country of origin and second, and attention to the news in the country of origin. The regression analysis shows that among all Asians, those who maintain high levels of transnational attachments to their countries of origin are also likely to be high on political participation beyond voting in the U.S. The relationship is statistically significant and it clearly goes against the common understanding that continuing attachment to the country of origin is detrimental to political participation in the U.S. The interaction effect of South Asian and transnational attachment is positive (.242) but not statistically significant (Model II, table 4.3). If we closely look at these relationships, it is very clear that being transnational does not limit South Asian political participation in the U.S. However, the interaction effect between South Asian and transnational attachment is negatively related (-1.074) to acquisition of citizenship and the relationship is statistically significant. South Asians who are more transnational are less likely to naturalize than those who are less transnational (table 4.4).

The multivariate analysis suggests that South Asians participate in U.S. politics (measured by participation beyond voting) at a higher level than other Asian immigrants even after controlling for other variables. It also suggests that a high level of transnational attachment among South Asians does not negatively influence their participation beyond voting. However, the analysis does suggest that for South Asians the relationship between transnational attachment and naturalization is negative, and South Asians who are high on the measures of transnational attachment are less likely to naturalize. This lag in naturalization among new immigrants has been discussed by immigration scholars working on Latino and Caribbean immigrants. Michael Jones-Correa in his work on New York City Latino immigrants argued that Latino immigrants generally postponed their decision to naturalize because in their minds naturalization in the United States was a major step towards severing their ties and possibilities of going back to their home countries. He termed this mind set as politics of “in-between” where immigrants do not want to commit to one place at the expense of the other. Reuel Rogers also argued in his work on Caribbean immigrants in New York City that a number of them took longer to naturalize because of their persistent belief that they might decide to return to their home country. However, both these authors also point out that postponement of naturalization does not necessarily mean complete non engagement with civic and political processes in the U.S. Even though they are not fully a part of the formal political process because they have not acquired citizenship, they do get engaged through the various civic and political associations. Similarly, South Asian immigrants show a higher level of civic and political engagement than other Asian Americans. The data suggest that their high level of transnational attachment does not lead to lesser political participation in the U.S. The lag

in naturalization, hence, is not indicative of a complete lack of civic and political engagement. Rather, it suggests attachment to both the countries and in some senses resistance to perceived breaking off from the country of origin.

Transnational Attachment and Political Participation in the U.S.: Evidence from the Qualitative Data

The interviews conducted with South Asian community members as well as leaders and activists similarly question the presumption that there is a negative relationship between political participation in the U.S. and various forms of attachments and engagements to the country of origin. With multiculturalism becoming a part of the larger social and political discourse, different ethnic identities, cultural practices, and transnational attachment of immigrant communities are more acceptable than they were during the European phase of immigration. The Americanization campaign aimed at European immigrants in the early 20th century, with assimilation being the reigning credo, was much less tolerant of ethnic and linguistic identities and transnational attachments. The new environment created by multiculturalism has provided more space for the assertion of ethnic identities and acceptance for transnational attachments and engagements. The opinions of South Asian community members and leaders reflect this increased acceptance of transnational engagement in the U.S. A significant number of interviewees, when asked about the acceptance of their transnational attachments by the U.S. society, responded that it was acceptable to engage with the country of origin and that they felt comfortable with their dual engagement. This general view about acceptability of transnational engagement, however, was calibrated by the post-9/11 environment when the needle of suspicion was on South Asian and Arab immigrants,

particularly Muslims, leading to increased scrutiny of their transnational connections and ethnic and cultural practices.

A majority of interviewees spoke about the need to be involved with both the country of origin and the United States and how both these involvements come naturally to South Asian immigrants. Talking about political participation in the U.S. and connection to the country of origin, a Bangladeshi community activist based in Los Angeles said:

In my opinion Bangladeshi immigrants should not sever connection from their country of origin. The reason being that keeping in touch with the country of origin doesn't stop any one from getting involved in this society- both in politics and everything else..... most of the countries in the third world have a very huge percentage of their revenue coming in from their expatriate workers and many of them have their family back home and they send money back home and Bangladesh is no different....immigrants from country such as Israel are very-very active in the politics of Israel. They vote in Israeli election, people from our part of the world at least do not vote, they may take interest in the politics of home country. I think people who connect most actively with the country of origin are people from Israel. They vote, lobby, fight for it, and I have not heard any body criticizing that.....⁷⁷

The statement draws upon the history of different immigrant groups in the United States, specifically the Israeli immigrants, to make the argument that there is nothing wrong with keeping strong links to Bangladesh and that does not necessarily effect their political engagement here. When asked whether Bangladeshi immigrants participate adequately in the political process here, the community leader responded that there is not much participation because Bangladeshis are the most recent immigrants and a majority of them are still in the process of settling down. The reason for lack of participation, he argued, was not however because the community is strongly attached to the home country.

⁷⁷ Interview, Los Angeles, CA, 17 April 2006

A second generation community leader of Indian descent in Los Angeles, commenting on political participation in the U.S. and attachments to home country, said:

I do agree that when you make a new country your home, you should play an active role in the political process here..... but that does not mean that you check out your identity, your background, your heritage. I believe you can do both and there is no conflict between the two whatsoever. You can play an active role in your adopted country as well as play a role in your country of origin..... Just because we come from certain country that does not mean we should deny our heritage and wherever we came from There are people of diverse background in this country and they celebrate their cultural heritage.... The American tradition is that no one has to forego one's identity.⁷⁸

Clearly, there is a connection being made here among attachment to the home country, political participation in the U.S., and ethnic and racial identity. Attachment to home country is being seen as part of the group's racial and ethnic identity. It is important for South Asian immigrants' identity, particularly when they are seen in this country as "different." The statement underscores the need for immigrants to get involved with local politics but does not necessarily see attachment to home country as an impediment to involvement here.

As discussed earlier, the qualitative data also confirm the quantitative findings that engagement with the politics of home country is not a mass phenomena and it is confined to a small group. Interviews with South Asian community members and leaders suggest that there is no large scale mass political engagement with the country of origin. There is only a small part of the community that actively engages with the politics of the country of origin. However, the active involvement of this small section is accompanied with a great deal of mass interest in homeland politics which indicates that the South

⁷⁸ Interview, Los Angeles, CA, 20 June 2006

Asian community is concerned about politics and related developments in their countries of origin. A Pakistani community leader from Los Angeles pointed out:

A very small number of people here (in Los Angeles area) get involved in the politics of Pakistan but community in general is at the top of what's going on in Pakistan..... there is not a lot of participation but the interest is there to have a healthy political cycle in Pakistan it is my advice to all the people coming from our part of the world that they must be aware of and be a part of the political process here.....But it is also an unwritten responsibility for all immigrants to do something for their country of birth.... It is a part of human responsibility.... Whatever you achieved in this country because of your abilities, a small part of that success belongs to your country of origin, birth.⁷⁹

Similar sentiments were echoed by a woman immigrant from India who has lived in the U.S. for the last 30 years. She argued:

I would say that when you come to this country and become a citizen of this country, you have to belong to this country and participate in the political process but at the same time it does not mean that you can forget from where you came, because everything is global....there is no question of my country is this and the other is that It is a question of accepting the fact that you belong to both the countries and you have responsibility to both countries....⁸⁰

The South Asian community members and activists often cautioned against noninvolvement in the U.S. politics and they reiterated the need for more involvement in local politics. A Pakistani community member said:

If someone tells me that remove Pakistan part from yourself, I can't do that. But if someone says get involved here (in the U.S.) then I would agree with that person. I totally disagree with people who consider this country as money milking machine and do not get involved in anything locally..... To me a politically aware person should be involved on both sides..... I vote here, pay attention to politics and decide issues based on current events. This does not stop me from getting involved or paying attention to the politics in Pakistan.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Interview, Los Angeles, CA, 13 June 2006

⁸⁰ Interview, Costa Mesa, CA 14 July 2006

⁸¹ Interview, Irvine, CA, 7 June 2006

Thus, the qualitative data indicate that South Asian immigrants think that attachment to the country of origin can coexist with political participation in the U.S. The interviews also suggest that South Asians do not think about the two in a way where engagement with home country comes at the cost of engagement with the U.S. political process. The argument that immigrants have to sever ties with their country of origin to become a part of the U.S. political system is questioned by the data which support a more complementary relationship. Thus both the quantitative analysis and the qualitative analysis point to the reality that South Asian immigrants in the U.S. have a high level of attachment to their home country and that does not come at the cost of political involvement here. The quantitative data as well as the interviews with community members and leaders also suggest that there is a low level of direct participation in the political activity related to the country of origin, although the interest and attention to politics is high.

To understand the issue of transnational attachment and political participation in the U.S. further, it is important to note here that many community members and activists did express concern about lack of participation by South Asians in the U.S. politics. Many of the interviewees felt that the community is more oriented towards homeland politics than local or national U.S. politics. However, it would be incorrect to argue that interest and orientation towards homeland issues and politics is the reason why South Asian immigrants participate at a lower level in U.S. politics. As argued in the previous chapters, there are multiple reasons for lack of participation by the South Asian community in U.S. politics including an overall institutional and political context of general low political participation, racial barriers, lack of mobilization of South Asian

Americans by the political parties, outsider status, and the preoccupation of immigrants to work towards economic stability as first generation immigrants. The analysis of interviews suggests that South Asian immigrants who are oriented towards political and civic engagement find it easier to get involved with South Asian ethnic organizations. These ethnic organizations, in most cases, have strong relationships with the issues relating to the country of origin.

A Bangladeshi immigrant in New York City, talking about participation in U.S. politics, said, “[There is less participation] here because may be they don’t know English or they can’t follow the political process of this country, perhaps, they don’t understand it.... I see too much Bangladeshi Politics here and very little of American politics.”⁸² The majority of immigrants are apathetic to the political process but those who get engaged have to deal with institutions and organizations central to the U.S. political process and they do not find it welcoming and inviting. Another Bangladeshi immigrant in New York City, talking about the inclination of the community to get engaged with organizations oriented towards home country, said:

They are not confident. They do not feel comfortable associating themselves with mainstream America. I think it is because of their personal upbringing ...they may think that it may not be easy for them to find a comfortable position or place in mainstream American politics.... It is much easier for them to take interest in Desi (South Asian) politics. Because for them, the mainstream American politics is a completely new arena. And they are afraid they may not be recognized or, I mean, may not be able to make any impression -very hard for them. Whereas in Desi (South Asian) politics, many of them were already involved in politics before coming to U.S. So, when they come here, it is easier for them to carry on with their political mission with Bangladeshi politics rather than taking interest or joining mainstream American politics.⁸³

⁸² Interview , New York City, NY , 6 February 2007.

⁸³ Interview, New York City, NY, 12 March 2007.

Even though this statement was made in reference to Bangladeshi community, similar opinions were expressed about Indian and Pakistani immigrant communities as far as engagement with mainstream U.S. politics was concerned.

It seems easier and more natural for South Asian immigrants to engage with ethnic organizations as compared to mainstream American political organizations and institutions. Given the proclivity of South Asian ethnic organization to have a strong link to home country, the immigrant community also finds it harder to engage and become a part of the mainstream U.S. political organizations and institutions. Here, a comparison with early 20th century European immigrants and its analysis by the pluralist model is quite instructive. The pluralist model argued that European immigrants were first mobilized on ethnic lines and political parties and other political institutions courted these ethnic organizations that played an important role in political incorporation of European ethnics. The experience of South Asian immigrants, however, suggests that ethnic organizations are not being approached by contemporary political parties and they are much more isolated from the mainstream U.S. political process than the ethnic organizations of European immigrants. The pluralist model would have us believe that ethnic organizations are the vehicle through which new immigrants gain entry into the U.S. political process but the experience of South Asian immigrants and their ethnic organizations suggest that they face relative isolation from mainstream political groups and institutions. The other side of this relative isolation and nonengagement is their ability and ease to connect and engage with home country political groups and institutions. The connections of South Asian immigrants to groups and institutions of home countries have intensified in recent years with changes in the approach of home

countries as well as the United States towards maintaining dual political and legal attachment.

Citizenship and Transnationalism: Towards Transnational Citizenship

The engagements of South Asian immigrants in different social and political transnational activities have profound implications for the conception and practice of citizenship as far as immigrant communities are concerned. South Asian immigrants in the United States engage in various acts which are reflective of the transnational dimension of citizenship. These include newly acquired dual citizenship like provisions, political engagement with the U.S. as well as countries of origin, and an identity which is more transnational in terms of affiliation and engagement with both countries.

The reality of immigrants' connection to more than one nation state has an important bearing on the way immigrant communities view and practice citizenship. Political and legal theorists have questioned the classical liberal notion of citizenship which presumes that citizenship can be visualized and enacted only within the confines of a nation state (Bosniak 2000; Faist 2000; Soyasal 1994). Drawing upon the experiences of immigrant communities across the globe, these authors have advanced different variants of claims regarding denationalization or post nationalization of citizenship. Linda Bosniak argues that citizenship- conceptualized as a legal status, as a system of rights, as a form of political activity, and as a form of identity and solidarity- exceed the bounds of nation to a certain extent and she underlines the need for theorizing citizenship in a way which is inclusive of these dimensions of citizenship beyond nation state (Bosniak 2000, 452). Thomas Faist argues that increasing acceptability of some form of dual state membership or dual citizenship puts a question mark on the conventional

notions of citizenship. Dual citizenship can be being a citizen in two states where “less fully fledged forms could mean being a citizen in one state and a settled immigrant with a sort of denizenship in another. At a minimum it tolerates immigrants close ties with the country of emigration” (Faist 2000, 209). The transnational dimension of citizenship finds its expressions in both the legal, political, as well as the identity and solidarity aspect of citizenship.

Scholars writing about transnational citizenship point out that dual citizenship have become much more acceptable in recent times and that a number of nations have come to recognize some form of dual citizenship. The emergence of dual citizenship like provision is dependent on the asymmetric relationship between countries of emigration and immigration which gives more power to the latter in determining dual citizenship policies. If the country of immigration allows dual citizenship, the emigration state also follows suit. In recent years many countries of emigration have introduced dual citizenship like provisions catering to its expatriate population (Faist 2000). The earlier U.S. policy had been to forfeit citizenship of a newly naturalized citizen if he or she voted or held public office in another nation-state. The laws have not changed since then but U.S. does not check on the dual state membership and there is an unstated acceptance of different variations of dual citizenship rights.

As discussed earlier in the chapter, South Asian immigrants in the United States have always shown strong inclinations to maintain enduring connections despite the geographical distance from their countries of origin. In recent years, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh have come up with provisions which recognize some form of dual citizenship rights, albeit very limited in comparison to many Latin American and European countries

which have gone to the extent of giving voting rights to their expatriates. The South Asian countries have taken only small steps in that direction. Dual citizenship in the context of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh is broadly limited to giving the right to travel without visa, indefinite stay, and the right of owning property. In the case of India, this provision is termed as Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) which provides lifelong visa with multiple entries and limited rights to a person of Indian origin to buy and sell property. In case of Pakistan, it has been termed as Pakistani Origin Card (POC) which can be acquired by a foreign citizen of Pakistani origin. The Pakistani Origin Card guarantees rights such as the permanent right of entry and property transactions. In Bangladesh, a similar provision known as dual nationality exists. In all the three cases, there are minor differences in terms of rights inherent in these provisions but the common element is the attempt on the part of these states to create special rights for expatriates who are citizens of other countries. These newly formalized rights for South Asian immigrants in their countries of origin provide increased possibilities to create and maintain dual identity, engagement, and rights for the community.

Interviewees of Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi descent spoke overwhelmingly in favor of varying degrees of dual citizenship rights which are being offered by these countries. The rationale for support to increased legal rights in countries of origin range from convenience of traveling, and less restriction on owning and managing property to ease in maintaining concrete linkages, and continuation of emotional bond with the country of origin. An Indian community activist from Los Angeles, reacting to the new initiatives from India to grant special card to its expatriates, said:

I think we have almost all the rights in India, really now, as American citizens. The dual citizenship kind of formalizes that. It doesn't give anybody the working rights, if someone is looking for that. I think people are always excited because they want to have that connection with India. To be able to have a dual citizenship, I think, it is psychologically very good for us. There are a lot of people who would like that. Because I think one of the conflicts they went through when accepting their US citizenship was to give up the Indian part of themselves, so this kind of helps them to satisfy that need of wanting to be a part of India.⁸⁴

Even while welcoming the new provisions, Indian immigrants pointed out that these were not radically new provisions and they always existed or there were ways to get things done even without formal rights. The important difference is that now the government of India is formalizing and expressing its intent to attract the diasporic population to connect with India. The new initiative has certainly enthused people who travel back frequently and also those who have property and business interest back in India. A successful Indian American Entrepreneur from Los Angeles, praising the move on the part of the government of India, said:

It is a great thing to have. The only potential problem is when these two countries get into conflict with each other. That is the only problem... Canada has dual citizenship, Switzerland, Israel, so many countries allow dual citizenship. And I have never heard anyone say that is a problem. Not once, zero. I haven't had extensive discussions, but there is nothing wrong with it. For someone like me, owning property, traveling, I mean it is a pain To open a business in India because I was an American citizen. There were all kinds of bullshit I had to go through. It would be less of that. Frankly, I would like to see only one citizenship, citizenship of this globe, one day.⁸⁵

If there are realist and pragmatic reasons to welcome the expanded formalized legal rights in the countries of origin for expatriates, there are others who value the opportunity to maintain and formalize their connections through these provisions. A

⁸⁴ Interview, Los Angeles, CA, 20 June 2006.

⁸⁵ Interview, Los Angeles, CA. 13 July 2006

Bangladeshi immigrant based in Queens, New York, expressed the value of dual citizenship in terms of maintaining his identity. He said:

It is very important, especially for me. I am living in the US, I am happy with my family, but I cannot totally forget my past. Especially my parents are from there, I was born over there. So... I will try to keep in touch with my birthplace, my country where I was born. I never want to forget my country. I am not yet a citizen (of U.S.), but I am going to get that very soon. But I feel if I get citizenship, I like to keep my own identity. This is very important to me. I don't want to forget my past,... I want to keep my identity. So because of that I want dual citizenship....⁸⁶

There are other voices too in the South Asian community who point out that the dual citizenship like provisions are important and beneficial only for those who have business and property interests. Even though they support the notion of dual citizenship, they see very little usefulness for working class and poor South Asian immigrants. A Pakistani community activist from Los Angeles explained his observation on this issue, "... I know, I have seen that interest (in dual citizenship), the conversation is always about property. ... It is more about property."⁸⁷ Another Pakistani immigrant based in Los Angeles confirmed this view. He said:

The main reason was because a lot of us have property back home, and that was making it very hard. If you are not a (Pakistani) national, it does cause problems. That is a main reason why many people didn't get citizenship (U.S.), because they had property (in Pakistan). So that was one reason. Otherwise, I think people are more keen to have an American passport because it is much easier to travel. Now they have that national identity card (Pakistani Origin Card) which you can get, that covers the property issues.⁸⁸

The section of South Asian immigrants which is most mobile and has property and business interests in both the United States and their countries of origin is the greatest

⁸⁶ Interview, New York City, NY, 17 March 2007

⁸⁷ Interview, Los Angeles, CA, 18 June 2006

⁸⁸ Interview, Los Angeles, CA, 3 July 2006

beneficiary of these provisions. Even as the activists and immigrant rights advocates welcome the expanded transnational rights of immigrant communities, there are possible concerns also being raised by some. A taxi drivers' union organizer, talking in the context of South Asian Taxi workers in New York City, puts those concerns in the following words:

. . .that will entrench them more back home and make my job even more difficult to get them involved in what is going on a daily basis to the taxi industry (in NYC); because now they are more entrenched back home. Some people will be more happy about it, but personally I don't like it. I want them to be more involved here... they can have their home country, they are always free to send money back home... Oh, definitely, it will help them but again, there is an issue here also..... So, there are good and bad in that.⁸⁹

Despite the caution about expanded transnational lives of South Asian immigrants stated above and the complexity of transnationalism for the political engagement in the U.S., the increased ease of traveling and other legal rights in the country of origin is welcomed by most sections of the immigrant community. These avenues of increasing formal attachments through some form of dual citizenship point toward the expanded transnational lives of South Asian immigrants and concepts such as citizenship do not remain unaffected by this process. South Asian immigrant community in the United States has shown the possibilities of creating an expanded notion of citizenship by maintaining dual attachment and identity, by engaging in political acts, and by exercising the expanded legal rights in both the countries. Thus, the emerging form of transnational citizenship brings new challenges for conceptualizing the process of immigrant political incorporation.

⁸⁹ Interview, New York City, NY, 6 November 2006.

Conclusion

In the chapter, both quantitative and qualitative data suggest that transnational attachments are a major part of the social and political lives of the South Asian immigrant community in the U.S. These attachments encompass different arenas which include familial, social, cultural, religious, and political. Both pluralist model and minority group model of political incorporation fail to give due importance to transnational attachments in analyzing the political incorporation of immigrant groups. The pluralist model, as discussed earlier, looks at transnational attachments and transnational political engagements as impediments to political participation of immigrants in the U.S. and sees a zero sum relationship between political participation in the U.S. and political engagement with the country of origin. The minority group model has also not adequately theorized the role of transnational attachments in political incorporation of immigrant communities. More recent works following the broad paradigm of the minority group model have questioned the assertions of the pluralist/ assimilationist paradigm that there is a zero sum relationship between political participation in the U.S. and transnational engagements. However, these works also see transnational attachments and U.S. political participation as distinctly different realms and fail to investigate and theorize the linkages and dynamic influence of one on the other. This chapter has argued, based on both quantitative and qualitative data, that transnational attachments and engagements do not adversely impact South Asian immigrants' political participation in the U.S. The quantitative data, however, do suggest that higher levels of transnational attachment lead to lower levels of naturalization among South Asian immigrants. This result suggests that strong transnational attachments are indicative of strong linkages to both places which

results in delayed naturalization in many cases. However, as noted in this and other studies, delayed naturalization is not necessarily indicative of lack of engagement with the U.S. but rather it is indicative of postponement of naturalization due to a persistent dual attachment.

The chapter further argues, based on the qualitative data, that South Asian immigrants recognize the lower level of participation of the group in the U.S. political process but do not necessarily see this as resulting from extensive transnational engagement of the community. Furthermore, South Asian immigrants find it easier to engage with groups constituted by other co-ethnics who generally also take interest in the politics of the home country. The inability of mainstream U.S. political institutions to engage with such groups contributes to their lack of engagement in the U.S. political process. The interviews also suggest that transnational engagements with the issues concerning the country of origin are not only about country of origin. Such engagements also provide avenues to engage with U.S. political institutions and they shape the ways in which immigrant communities engage with the political process in the U.S.- an issue analyzed at greater length in the next chapter. Increasing phenomenon of transnational attachment has important implications for the concept of citizenship. Finally, emerging forms of dual citizenship like rights along with transnational political engagement and a broader transnational identity point to the possibilities of the emergence of transnational citizenship.

Table 4.1: Attachment to the Country of Origin

	High Level of Contact with home Country	Following news Closely in the Country of Origin	Participation in Political Activity of the Country of Origin
South Asian	76*	57	6
Non South Asian	59	63	6

$p \leq .01$

Table 4.2: Political Participation in the U.S.

	Voting among registd.	Particip. (non voting)	Interest in politics	Familiarity with Presidential election	Belonging to ethnic org.	Citiz.	Exp. to become citiz. (among non citizen.)
South Asian	90	55*	72*	92*	25*	44	74
Non South Asian	82	38	61	73	11	62*	72

$p \leq .01$

Table 4.3: Explaining Political Participation in the U.S.
(Political Activities other than Voting)

	Model I <i>Beta Coeff.</i> (<i>standard error</i>)	Model II <i>Beta Coeff.</i> (<i>standard error</i>)
South Asian	.819* (.241)	.496 (.524)
Age	.004 (.006)	.004 (.006)
Family Income	.147* (.052)	.145* (.052)
Educational Attainment ⁹⁰	.097 (.061)	.097 (.061)
Citizenship	.455* (.187)	.463 (.187)
Political Interest	.402* (.088)	.402* (.088)
Years in the U.S.	.017 (.011)	.017 (.011)
Participation in Transnational Activities	.334* (.117)	.306* (.123)
Interaction effect between South Asian and Transnational participation		.242 (.350)
N	768	768
Percentage predicted Correctly	67.6	67.4

P ≤ .10

⁹⁰ Missing values for this variable were replaced by mean educational attainment.

Table 4.4: Explaining Citizenship
 (with interaction of South Asian and transnational attachments)

Independent Variable	Beta Coefficient (Standard Error)
South Asian	1.20 (.782)
Age	.009 (.007)
Family Income	.024 (.068)
Educational attainment	.035 (.079)
Political Interest	-.091 (.109)
Years in the US	.127* (.018)
Transnational Attachment	-.146 (.151)
Interaction of South Asian and Transnational	-1.074* (.510)
N	577
Percentage predicted Correctly	76.3

P≤.10

Table 4.5: Explaining Political Participation in the U.S.
(Political Activities other than Voting)

Independent Variable	Beta Coefficient (Standard error)
South Asian	.381 (.410)
Age	.010 (.007)
Family income	.199* (.061)
Educational attainment	.154* (.070)
Citizenship	.451* (.217)
Political interest	.528* (.098)
Years in the U.S.	.005 (.013)
Having Faced Discrimination	.085 (.201)
Interaction of South Asian and discrimination	1.35* (.683)
N	587
Percentage Predicted Correctly	57.1

P ≤ .10

Table 4.6: Explaining Citizenship
(With Interaction of South Asian and Discrimination)

Independent Variable	Beta Coefficient (Standard error)
South Asian	-.614 (.426)
Age	.006 (.007)
Family Income	.005 (.067)
Educational attainment	.030 (.705)
Political interest	-.122 (.105)
Years in the US	.133* (.018)
Effect of having faced Discrimination	-.248 (.226)
Interaction of South Asian and Discrimination	.886 (.649)
N	587
Percentage Predicted Correctly	75.0

P≤.10

Chapter V

The Possibilities and Limits of Transnational Political Engagement

“This (the U.S. - India Civil Nuclear Deal) is a defining moment for the 2 million Americans of Indian descent. We have been a model community in the U.S., yet we are still not accepted or respected in rural or middle America. With one stroke of the pen we can change all that.”

Ramesh V. Kapur
Chairman, Indo-American Leadership Council

“Officials in Washington and New Delhi have called the agreement (the U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Deal) historic, a centerpiece of American-Indian relations. But to many Indian-Americans, the plan is something more personal: a confirmation of India’s emergence as a global power. And they see the increasingly contentious battle in Congress as a unique opportunity to demonstrate their budding political influence in their adopted homeland.”

New York Times, June 5, 2006

South Asian immigrants in the United States maintain strong attachment with their countries of origin. As discussed in the previous chapter, the transnational attachments of South Asian immigrants range from familial, cultural and religious to economic and political. The quickening pace of communication and ease of traveling have contributed immensely to increased transnational connections of South Asian immigrants living in the United States. As such, transnationalism has become a very important part of immigrant social and political life. Conventional wisdom, drawing upon the assimilationist and pluralist approach to immigrant incorporation, contends that immigrants’ deeper attachment to their country of origin acts as a barrier to political and civic incorporation in the U.S. and that engagement with the political issues of the country of origin is a reflection of disinterest and apathy towards U. S. politics (Huntington 2004; Schlesinger 1992; Glazer 1983).

This chapter is focused on political transnationalism and builds upon the argument that there is no zero sum relationship between social and political engagement with home country and political participation in U.S. The chapter specifically analyzes the ways in which engagement with the issues of home country often becomes a part of engagement with the political process in the U.S. In other words, engagements with issues of home country are not confined only to home country but they also become a vehicle for the group to engage with the U.S. political institutions. This chapter analyzes the involvement of Indian immigrant groups with the U.S.-India civil nuclear deal to illustrate the above arguments. Similar examples of lobbying to support the cause of home country can be found among Pakistani and Bangladeshi immigrants as well, but the case of Indian immigrants is being used here to illustrate the broader point.

Analyzing the lobbying efforts of the Indian American groups in favor of the recent U.S. - India Civil Nuclear Deal (2006), this chapter questions the assimilationist and pluralist framework and argues that what appears to be exclusively a country of origin concern - where representing the interest of India lies at the heart of the Indian American lobbying campaign- is actually mediated by the need for recognition and acceptance of the community in U.S. society and polity. Such transnational involvement with the issues concerning India is constantly shaped by the group's desire to secure a place in domestic U.S. politics. However, the process of creating a space in American politics through lobbying on a foreign policy issue is also laced with nationalism originating from the Indian state's attempts to woo the diasporic community. This nationalist platform adopted by Indian American groups is instrumental in shaping a very limited agenda to be pursued by the Indian American community in the United States. The chapter concludes

by looking at the limits of transnational political engagement in terms of who gets involved and which issues dominate the agenda of the Indian American community. The chapter argues that participation by a limited number of elites is promoted by actors on both sides of the transnational political arena – the policies promoted by the Indian state as well as the Indian American groups active in the United States. It is important to note here that such engagements through lobbying on the issues of home country has only limited interface with the U.S. political institutions and they have a limited influence on the political incorporation of the community. Since only a small section of the community is engaged in the process of lobbying and the process does not involve mobilization of the rank and file members, the larger section of the community is mostly left out of this process of political incorporation.

This new framework on transnational political engagement builds upon recent scholarship on immigrant social and political behavior that adopts a transnational approach to understand the engagement of immigrants with the home country and the host country in an integrated manner (Baubock 2003). This scholarship challenges the assimilationist/pluralist approach which looks at attachments to the home and host countries as zero sum, where engagement with one comes at the cost of engagement with the other. Within political science, a number of scholars have argued that attachment or involvement with the country of origin does not necessarily indicate a lack of engagement with the political process in the United States (Jones-Correa 1998; DeSipio 2003; Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller 2003; Lien et al 2004; Ramakrishnan 2005; Wong 2006). This dissertation goes beyond this assertion and argues that immigrant political

engagement with the country of origin also shapes the ways in which the group participates in U.S. politics.

Political transnationalism is a part of the broader transnational practices which immigrant communities engage with while living outside their country of origin. Since transnationalism is a broad conceptual category incorporating different kinds of cross-border activities, immigration scholars and theorists have been trying to develop the concept of political transnationalism in ways which can make the concept analytically useful and, to a certain extent, distinct from other forms of transnational practices (Vertovec 1999; Portes et al. 1999; Smith 2003; Baubock 2003).

Considering the ambiguity in different uses of the concept of transnationalism, Eva Ostergaard-Nielsen distinguishes among narrow and broad transnational political practices and core and expanded transnationalism. From this perspective, 'broad' and 'narrow' transnational practices are the opposite end of the continuum of different practices. A more institutionalized transnational political practice with involvement of migrants will be closer to the narrower side of the continuum (Ostergaard-Nielsen 2003). Hence, 'narrow' stands for actual membership in parties, organizations, or hometown associations while 'broad' refers to the occasional participation in meetings or events. Similarly, the concept of 'core' transnationalism defines activities that are regular, patterned, and an integral part of individual's life, whereas 'expanded' transnationalism represents more occasional practices (Levitt 2001). This work uses a broader notion of transnational political engagement which corresponds to a broad and expanded conception of transnational engagement.

Political transnationalism is generally seen as engagement of immigrant groups with the politics of their country of origin. Several studies have investigated the ways in which the political learning of immigrants in western democratic countries- their adopted countries- helped them with their engagement with the politics of the country of origin.⁹¹ This line of inquiry has been based on the assumption that exposure to the democratic political process in the U.S. motivates immigrants to work towards greater democratization of their home societies (Goldring 1996; Smith and Guarnizo 1998; Basch et.al 1994; Smith 1994; Graham 1997). Rainer Baubock critiques this narrow understanding and argues that political transnationalism affects both the country of origin as well the receiving country. He argues that political transnationalism is not only about involvement with the country of origin from outside the borders but also about the impact of immigrants' across the border ties on the institution and political practices of the host country (Baubock 2003). The scholarship on political transnationalism has not given enough analytical attention to the ways in which transnational ties of immigrant groups impact the political practices of the host country. Building upon this critique of the literature on transnational political engagement, this chapter is focused on the ways in which engagement with home country influences the patterns of immigrant political participation in U.S.

Scholarship on transnationalism has rightly critiqued the earlier trend of work which looked at transnational connections and engagements as impediments to incorporation of immigrants in U.S. social and political process. Transnationalism has

⁹¹ This understanding is based on a benevolent presumption of the supposed one way traffic of influence where political learning in western countries contribute to the political transformation of the underdeveloped countries.

been celebrated by these scholars as an alternative framework to understand social and political lives of immigrant groups where transnational political attachments are not seen in opposition to political participation locally (Smith and Guarnizo 1998; Schiller, Nina, et.al 1992; Smith 1994; Graham 2001). However, a critical analysis of transnational practices also needs to look at the ways in which transnational political engagements reinforce selective and elite political mobilization within immigrant communities. Further, in some cases transnational political practices tend to replicate the nationalist political paradigm emanating from countries of origin.

One of the most important debates over the nature of transnational political engagement can be found in the field of international relations. The relevant literature in that field examines the influence of ethnic lobbies on the foreign policy making process. This scholarship can be broadly divided into two contrasting opinions on the issue. Some scholars argue that globalization and multiculturalism have legitimized the role of ethnic lobbies in the foreign policy-making process, leading to increased balkanization of the policy making process. Scholars in this tradition argue that ethnic lobbies focus on a narrow policy agenda that tends to promote the interest of people and entities outside the United States. Notwithstanding the differences among this group of scholars, they all point towards the problems of excessive involvement of ethnic lobbies in the foreign policy making process (Huntington 1997; Schlesinger 1992; Smith 2000). This approach is highly critical of immigrant groups' attempt to espouse the concerns related to their home country in the U.S. political process. The other set of scholars argue that ethnic lobbying groups will further democratize the decision making process and bring new groups to the process and spread American values to the other part of the world (Clough

1994; Shain 1999). This approach draws upon scholarly works using the transnational perspective which considers political activism on the issues of home country as a legitimate form of political engagement and highlights the radical and transformative character of transnational engagement (Basch et. al. 1994; Levitt 2001). The latter approach rightly highlights the transformative characteristics of transnational politics in bringing new groups into the process, but, as I illustrate in the context of the U.S.- India nuclear deal, it fails to recognize the limits of transnational engagement in terms of both ideology and mass participation.

This chapter is based on the analysis of government documents, media reports, and organizational documents both from India and the United States. The chapter also draws upon participant observation of a yearly conference on the Indian diaspora organized by the government of India and the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) at New Delhi in January 2007 and of a conference of similar nature in New York City in September 2007. These sources are supplemented with an analysis of interviews conducted with the South Asian community members and activists in Los Angeles and the New York Metropolitan Area.⁹²

It is important to underline the changing educational and economic profile as well as diversity within the Indian immigrant community to understand fully the nature of political mobilization and agendas pursued by Indian American groups. Even though a significant number of economically successful professionals and entrepreneurs have generally defined the community's socioeconomic profile, Indian immigrants remain

⁹² These interviews include immigrant community members and activists from Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi origin. The analysis of this chapter, however, is based only on interviews of immigrants of Indian origin.

highly diverse in terms of socioeconomic status. There are a significant number of poor and struggling people who generally do not become a part of the discussion about the community. About 9.7 percent of the Indian American population is below the poverty line (the U.S. national average is 13.1) and among the elderly- 65 years and above- 11.4 percent are below the poverty line (the U.S. national average is 9.4). Another less discussed fact about the Indian immigrant community is the presence of a significant number of undocumented immigrants. The estimates of undocumented immigrants from India vary from 270,000 (Department of Homeland Security 2007) to 400,000 (Passel 2005). According to the Department of Homeland Security, Indian immigrants rank sixth among undocumented immigrants from different countries of origin. Starting with 1980s, a steady number of Indian immigrants have also been joining the ranks of taxi drivers, restaurant and construction workers, and other sections of the working class population.

Thus, the diversity within the Indian immigrant population could not be more dramatic with successful professionals and entrepreneurs alongside undocumented immigrants and those facing economic hardship. The issue of internal diversity within the community becomes highly important for this analysis to understand the limited agenda and mobilization as far as the broader Indian American community is concerned. It becomes even more important because the mainstream social and political analyses of the Indian American community - both in the U.S. and India- tends to center only on the prosperous professional and entrepreneurial section of the community.

Long Distance Nationalism and Elite Mobilization

In this era of transnationalism and globalization, home country nationalism among the immigrant communities has been an issue of intense debate. Benedict

Anderson, for example, termed diasporic nationalism as 'long distance nationalism' and argued that the diaspora's engagement with the country of origin is not anchored in their location in the nation. Hence, it is a 'responsibility-less' engagement. Anderson further argued that this long distance engagement is accompanied by nonengagement with the polity and society of places where these immigrants are situated (Anderson 1992).

However, scholars using a transnational perspective to analyze immigrant social and political lives take a more positive view of long distance engagement and they do not necessarily see a complete lack of engagement on the part of immigrant communities in their place of residence. This chapter argues that long distance engagement with the issues of country of origin is not completely devoid of engagement with the political process in the host country. Hence, the real issue of analysis is not exclusive long distance engagement at the cost of engagement in the host country but the kind of political involvement that take place on both sides of transnational process, the kind of issues that are taken up, and the sections of the immigrant community which are mobilized in the process.

In the post independence period, the Indian government's policy toward the diaspora was characterized by many scholars as that of indifference and disengagement (Lall 2001; Gupta 1992; Kerkhoff 2003). The migration of highly educated Indians to the United States and the other developed western nations was seen for a long time as 'brain-drain' after the exodus of highly educated professional started in 1960s and 70s. The discourse of 'brain- drain' - educated and professionally capable citizens leaving India for greener pastures in developed industrial countries in the west - acquired immense importance in that period.

However, from the 1980s onwards, the large scale transformation of the Indian economy based on neoliberal principals of liberalization and opening up of the economy for foreign investment accelerated the process of active engagement with the Indian diaspora. Among other things, this phase of economic restructuring in India is characterized by an increasing emphasis on foreign capital investment in India. The Indian diaspora is seen as important for both remittances and capital investment in the Indian economy (Kapur 2003). The economic profile of Indian immigrants settled in different advanced industrial countries- the United States in particular- makes them the likely future investors in the Indian economy. For both these reasons-remittances and investment-the diasporic community has come to acquire a greater importance for the Indian State. Besides the economic motivation behind the changing approach towards the diaspora, the increasing importance of diasporic population is also linked to its role in representing India's interest in U.S. and other important international forums.

The change in approach towards the diaspora was reflected in the appointment of a High Level Committee (HLC) in 2000 to recommend a comprehensive policy towards the diaspora. This was the first time that the government of India seriously undertook the task of formulating a policy framework about its diasporic population. The focus of the report was on entrepreneurs and professionals of Indian origin living in the advanced industrial western countries, particularly the United States (Chaturvedi 2005). Discussing the Indian American community, the report argued:

A section of financially powerful and politically well connected Indo-Americans have emerged during the last decade. They have effectively mobilized on issues ranging from the nuclear tests in 1998 to Kargil, playing a crucial role in generating a favorable climate of opinion in (U.S.) Congress and defeating anti-India legislation there, and lobbied effectively on other issues of concern to the

Indian community. ... For the first time India has a constituency in the United States with real influence and status. The Indian community in United States constitutes an invaluable asset in strengthening India's relationship with the world's only superpower. Their receptiveness to India concerns will depend greatly on the quality of their interaction with the country of origin and their sensitivity to their concerns displayed in India (The Indian Diaspora 2002, XX-XX).

The focus on a financially successful and politically connected section of Indian immigrants is unmistakable. The report was very emphatic about the importance of this section and projected them as the ideal Indian immigrants who were to be courted to support India in its economic and political endeavors. The Indian government has envisaged multiple roles for the expatriate community in the U. S. and it is important to note here that the need for political intervention to represent India's cause is a key aspect of this role. The report called upon Indian immigrants in the U. S. to work as India's ambassadors and to promote India's interests by using their economic and political clout.

The HLC report recommended many plans and policies to the Government of India to facilitate greater connection with the diasporic community. An independent Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs at the central government level was created to deal with the issues related to diaspora. A yearly conference for the members of the Indian diaspora was initiated by the Government of India and 9th January was marked as Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (Overseas Indian Day) as a symbolic gesture to celebrate the contributions of overseas Indians to India.⁹³ The change of policy regarding dual

⁹³ Starting from 2003, the government of India in collaboration with the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) has been organizing yearly conference on this day in India for which thousands of people of Indian diaspora from all over the world travel to India. Over the last few years, this conference has acquired a great prominence in the discussions on Indian diaspora and it has become an important platform where the diasporic population interacts with the representatives of the government and business leaders. Reflecting the overarching theme, these conferences have become more and more a platform where investments in different sectors of growing Indian economy is the most discussed issue and different states within India also compete with each other to attract NRIs and PIOs to invest.

citizenship also followed these initiatives and the Citizenship Act of 1955- which stipulated that an Indian forfeits Indian citizenship when he or she acquires the citizenship of a foreign country- was changed and the government of India created a new category called Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI).⁹⁴ Various policy initiatives to attract diaspora members to investment in India were also announced.

The political parties in India have also shown greater enthusiasm in recent years in courting the diasporic population. Most Indian political parties have used the rhetoric of nationalism while engaging with the diaspora, but there are significant differences in their approach too. The Congress- the major party which is leading the coalition currently in power- has generally emphasized the economic aspects of the diaspora's relationship to India using strong nationalist rhetoric to mobilize economic investment and to support nation building. The party has also occasionally egged on Indian American groups to deploy anti-Pakistan rhetoric in the context of representing the strategic interest of India in the U.S. and in international forums. In contrast, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) - the right wing Hindu nationalist party which is currently the main opposition party- has made serious attempts to mobilize Hindus among the expatriate community in support of their ideology of a Hindu Nation.

Hindu nationalism- an ideology committed to establishing India as a Hindu nation and known for its virulent anti-Muslim stance - has been systematically propagated among overseas Indians and there have been organized attempts in the U. S. to mobilize funds and other resources for this cause. The proponents of Hindu Nationalism in the U. S. have tried to tap into the need of Hindu Indian immigrants for a

⁹⁴ *Compendium on Policies, Incentives and Investment Opportunities for Overseas Indians* .2007. Published by Overseas Indian Affairs.

cultural-religious identity in a society defined primarily by racial identity (Rajagopal 2000). Thus, the Hindu nationalist movement has asserted itself as representative of Hindus in the space provided by U.S. multiculturalism (Kurien 2007a). South Asian scholars have termed this form of U.S. based political Hinduism as ‘Yankee Hindutva’ (Mathew and Prashad 2000). Although the theme of nationalism is a common one across all the parties for attracting diasporic communities to the country of origin, it is a particular kind of narrow religion-based, anti-Muslim nationalism that has been a part of the BJP’s diasporic discourse and the party has been very aggressive about mobilizing the diasporic community in support of its larger political project.⁹⁵

The political impetus emerging from India for the diaspora carries strong nationalist ideology and tends to focus primarily on a narrow section of entrepreneurs and financially successful immigrants. The Pravasi Bhartiya conference (The Indian Diaspora Conference), 2007 held in New Delhi was reflective of this approach where most of the deliberations were on investment opportunities in India. In fact, the emphasis on investment and financially successful section of the diaspora has been there in all the yearly diaspora conferences organized by the government of India and Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) since 2003. The importance of Indian diaspora in promoting India’s economic and strategic interest was reflected in spotlight on Indian Americans in 2007 conference for successfully lobbying with the U.S. Congress in favor of the U.S.-India nuclear deal.

⁹⁵ Hindu right wing groups have been very active among Indian diasporic community and they have been particularly successful in establishing a network of organizations in U.S. They have also been mobilizing funds from the Indian immigrant community in the United States to support their organizational work in India. The reports published by a watchdog group called The Campaign to Stop Funding Hate(CFSH) has chronicled the efforts of Hindutva groups to mobilize funds in the U.S. in the name of funding charity and developmental projects in India and how these funds are used to promote sectarian anti-Muslim and anti-Christian politics in India. Report available online at www.stopfundinghate.org/

The two fold aim of the Indian government to attract economic investment and have a diaspora which can represent India's interest has led to a framework where economically successful immigrants become what I term as the 'model immigrants' and they come to occupy the center of diasporic policy. This selective elite mobilization approach is reflected in the various policy initiatives regarding opportunities for economic investments undertaken by the Indian government on diaspora. This mobilization strategy is also reflected in the political lobbying by Indian immigrants in the United States on the recent U.S.-India civil nuclear deal.

Transnationalism and Engagement with U.S. Politics: The U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Deal

The U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Deal, signed as an agreement between the United States and India on March 2, 2006, is aimed at carving out an exception for India from the U.S. laws limiting nuclear technology trade with countries that have refused to sign the 1970 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). The changing foreign policy imperatives of U.S. after Cold War and its geopolitical consideration in Asia have brought India and U.S. closer. The U.S. - India Civil Nuclear Deal was, thus, an indicator of the Bush administration's willingness to go beyond the established U.S. policy to achieve its foreign policy objectives (Michael and Ferguson 2006).⁹⁶

⁹⁶ There has been a vocal opposition to the U S- India civil nuclear deal in India. The opposition in India can be broadly divided into two kinds. The first kind is from the main opposition party BJP who argues that India is compromising its nuclear program by accepting the U S terms and conditions. The second kind of opposition is from the left perspective which has different strands. Notwithstanding the differences, there is a strong consensus within the left that by aligning with the United States, India is abandoning its independent foreign policy and starting to toe the U S hegemonic policies. There is also a strong anti nuclear lobby within the left which does not want India to pursue nuclear ambitions-both civil and military-with or without U S support. The present coalition government led by Congress -which is being supported by the left parties from outside- is currently facing a major battle on the question of nuclear deal as left parties have vowed to withdraw their support to the government if the deal moves forward(Bidwai 2007).

The India-U.S. civil nuclear deal is in essence a formal approval of India's status as a nuclear power. After its explosion of the first atomic bomb in 1974, India was considered to be following its nuclear ambitions outside the framework developed by the western nuclear powers led by the United States. India never signed the nuclear nonproliferation treaty and continued its nuclear program without the U.S. approval and it remained a source of contention between the two countries. The Bush administration, breaking away from the established U.S. foreign policy paradigm guiding nuclear policy towards India, announced a negotiated framework for nuclear cooperation with India on July 18, 2005 followed by an agreement on March 2, 2006. On the U.S. side, the deal promised to help India become a partner with the United States in the realm of nuclear energy. This cooperation involved an agreement with India which shall establish a legal framework for nuclear commerce.

The role of Indian American groups arose in the context of the U.S. Congressional approval of the deal which was required to change the existing U.S. laws that banned civil nuclear trade with India. The approval of the Congress became very critical for moving this deal forward as there was a high possibility that the deal would be buried in the Congressional debate given the strength of the non-proliferation lobby in the Congress. A sizable number of Democrats in the Congress along with a section of Republicans were very suspicious of this move by the Bush administration and they saw the deal as equivalent to rewarding a state which had defied the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty all along. It was the resistance and uncertainty at the level of Congress which made lobbying with its members a critical prerequisite for the success of the deal. The Indian American organizations, enthusiastic supporters of the nuclear deal

and of the new turn around in the Indo-U.S. relationship, took upon themselves to mobilize the community and its political resources to lobby with the Congress for the passage of the bill approving the nuclear deal.

The involvement of immigrant communities in U.S. foreign policy making is not new and it can often become controversial (Watanbe 1999). The Cuban, Greek, and Jewish immigrant groups have also been involved with a similar process because of their deep linkages to the country of origin and the possible impact of foreign policy on the immigrant community. The involvement with foreign policy issues has always been seen through the prism of national loyalty and has often been termed as a sign of immigrant groups' loyalty to their country of origin. The treatment of Japanese Americans during internment was based on such an assumption and that experience discouraged many groups from getting involved in the foreign policy arena. Paul Y. Watanbe argues that Asian Americans have sometimes been perceived as tools-knowingly or unknowingly- of foreign entities and there is a strong view that suggests that Asian immigrant groups should stay away from foreign policy activism. However, for groups like Cubans and Jews, where foreign policy activism is considered natural and often supported by the U.S. government for different historical and political reasons, questions of loyalty seldom arise (Watanbe 1999). The differences in reactions to transnational engagement of different immigrant groups suggest that it is shaped by the differences in racial and ethnic origin of the group as well as the broader geopolitical considerations of the United States.

The transnational politics involving foreign policy activism on the part of an immigrant group has also been seen as a sign of disinterest in domestic politics. However, a closer look at some of the foreign policy campaigns by immigrant groups suggests that

they are also about acquiring a place and recognition in the domestic politics. The issue of foreign policy relating to home country becomes a convenient rallying point for immigrant groups to get involved with the U.S. political process and institutions. Anna Karpathakis' (1999) work on Greek immigrants in New York City argued on similar lines that concern with home country's issue led to engagements with the U.S. political process.

Indian immigrants are inclined to maintaining engagement with both the United States and India and questions of loyalty do not easily arise in terms of one over the other. Interviews conducted with South Asian community members and activists in New York Metropolitan area and broader Los Angeles area suggest that the community does not see the political engagement with the home country and the host country as a zero sum game. Both engagements can exist simultaneously and it is only natural for an immigrant community to have multiple engagements which concerns both the home country and the host country.

An Indian American community member in Los Angeles, talking about dual attachment, said:

...When you come to this country and become a citizen of this country, yes, you do have to belong to this country and you have to participate and give yourself also to this country. But at the same time, you can not forget where you came from. Every thing is global..... It is a question of being able to accept the fact that yes, you belong to both countries and have responsibilities to both.... I personally I feel that if you can make a difference in both the countries, you should do it because it is not a question of one country against the other country.⁹⁷

An overwhelming majority of the interviewees reacted negatively to the idea of making a choice between the two countries. Even though they live in the United States,

⁹⁷ Interview, Los Angeles, CA ,14 July 2006.

they maintain a strong connection with the country of origin and a section of the community is engaged with the political process of India. For the community at large, this connection and interest does not translate into active engagement but a significant number of interviewees said that they know of groups and people who do get involved in issues related to India. Since first generation immigrants have strong connections to home country, they are inclined towards keeping abreast of the news and engaged with the politics in home country but there is also evidence of getting engaged with the political process here. An Indian community activist in Los Angeles, when asked about the problems of maintaining dual connections, said:

... I do agree that when you make a new country your home, you should play an active role in it. But that does not mean that you check out your background or identity or heritage. I believe you can do both. There is no conflict in being actively involved in your adoptive country, as well as playing a role in your homeland.... I think what you will find in our community, in the first generation, traditionally, people cared more about the politics of homeland country and not their adopted country. But I think that is definitely changing as people become more established here and have more time to settle in. But on the whole, I do not see a conflict in caring about two countries at the same time.⁹⁸

The Indian American organizations reflect this duality of engagement in their political practices and activism even while appearing to keep the home country concern at the center of their political engagement. The organizations of Indian immigrants with links and influence in Washington, D.C. have periodically tried to intervene in the past on foreign policy issues with moderate to low level of influence on the policy outcomes. One of the most significant campaigns by the Indian American groups in this context was the intervention on the issue of proposed sale of Airborne Early Warning Surveillance Systems (AWACKS) planes in 1987. The success of Indian American groups' campaign

⁹⁸ Interview, Los Angeles, CA, 10 June 2006.

can be measured by the fact that they were called before the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee to testify on the issue.

Jagat Motwani, an Indian American community activist, testified to the Senate subcommittee on behalf of NFIA in 1987 to argue against sale of AWACKS planes,

I should add that a bomb in Pakistani hands is a source of concern, not only to India, but to other friendly countries around the world, including Israel, since it has been developed as an Islamic bomb. The events of the past 39 years attest to the fact that Pakistan has used U.S. supplied military equipment against no other country except India, although the aid was given for use as defense against communist invasion. Once Pakistan has these sophisticated military weapons, it may not hesitate to use them against India (Motwani 2003, 282-83).

The nationalist rhetoric employed by Indian Americans was not only about parochial Indian nationalism, it was simultaneously accompanied by a growing desire and anxiety about creating a space within the U.S. political system for the Indian American community. Thomas Abraham, President of NFIA, remarked about the 1987 Indian American testimony at the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee hearing, “it is a historic moment for the Indian American community since we have been invited for the first time by the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee to present our views. It is recognition of our growing community in U.S.”(Motwani 2003, 284). Even though this campaign was limited to a specific foreign policy issue in Washington, D.C., the recognition by the Congress of Indian Americans as a legitimate voice on this issue was seen as a sign of the growing strength of the community in U.S. politics.

The Indo-U.S. civil nuclear deal came approximately twenty years after the 1987 AWACKS planes campaign conducted by the Indian American organizations. The Indian immigrant community has grown much bigger since and its desire to get a place in the political realm is even more pronounced. The high level of sophisticated lobbying by the

Indian American organizations with the U. S. Congress and foreign policy making establishment on the U.S.-India civil nuclear deal reflects the dual interests which Indian American community has maintained - the interest in issues related to India as well as the urge to create a political space for the Indian American community in U.S. politics- and over the years they have been able to build linkages between these two interests.

There were several Indian American groups that played an active role in lobbying for the passage of the bill endorsing the U.S. - India nuclear deal. The issue galvanized the Indian American organizations as never before and it brought groups with both the Democratic as well as Republican leanings on the same platform. The U.S.-India Political Action Committee (USINPAC), the Indian American Security leadership council (IASLC), U.S. India Friendship Council, U.S. India Business Council, and various other smaller groups and individuals of Indian American origin worked together on this issue. At the end of April 2006, just before the Congress was reconvened to start considering the Henry Hyde Act dealing with the nuclear deal, around 200 Indo-American community leaders from across the U. S. came to Washington D.C. to lobby their Senate and House members for approval of the deal (Jones 2006).⁹⁹ The Indian American leaders also had a strategy meeting with White House senior staffers led by Karl Rove, the Deputy Chief of Staff to President George W. Bush. The Indian American groups active on this issue were turning out to be important allies for the Bush administration which was struggling to get the bill passed.

⁹⁹ Henry J. Hyde U S –India Peaceful Atomic Energy Cooperation Act (2006) details the provisions of the U S - India Civil Nuclear Deal.

The importance of this issue for unifying disparate Indian American groups is reflected in the comment made by an Indian American entrepreneur and activist to The Washington Times:

Our diaspora was always much more divided, but now we have the nuclear deal to unite us..... I have been contacting my congressmen here in California, and I know many of my friends and colleagues are doing the same. This whole fight has brought out of the woodwork Indian-Americans who were never involved in politics at all (Sands 2006).

The issue became a rallying point for different Indian American groups and it provided an opportunity for these groups to engage with U.S. political institutions on a specific issue.

The issue of the nuclear deal also galvanized the well established membership based Indian American organizations such as American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI) and the Asian American Hotel Owners Association (AAHOA). AAPI, representing around 41,000 doctors and 10,000 medical students of Indian origin and AAHOA, representing about 8,300 members owning more than 20,000 small hotels and motels, contributed to the campaign and lobbied with the members of Congress from different areas. To express their support for the nuclear deal, these two organizations jointly held a luncheon in Washington, D.C., which was addressed by the Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice.¹⁰⁰

The lobbying campaign on the Indo-U.S. nuclear deal was important for the Indian American groups not only because they wanted to support India's interest on this issue but also because it was seen by Indian American groups as a test of their strength

¹⁰⁰ Indian American Physicians and Hoteliers Lobby for n-deal', Online at <http://www.indiaenews.com/america/20060710/14274.htm> (last accessed August 4, 2007).

and maturity as far as their political influence in U.S. was concerned. *The Washington Times*, in a write-up on this issue, reflected this sentiment among Indian American groups. The write-up argued:

The political clout of one of the country's wealthiest and best-educated minorities is being put to the test as the Bush administration faces a tough fight in the Congress to pass a major civil nuclear power agreement with India, one the administration officials say could cement ties with an emerging world power and redraw the strategic map of Asia (Sands 2006).

The Indian American groups active on the issue saw this as an opportunity to demonstrate their political influence and acumen through lobbying with the Congress and other policy makers in Washington. "This is the chance to show that the community has matured and can translate that into political effectiveness," said Sanjay Puri, chairman, USINPAC (McIntire 2006).

Even though the activism and lobbying on the issue of the nuclear deal was framed in terms of representing the interest of India, the organizations who were involved in this campaign saw this as an issue through which they could reach out to members of the Congress and the administration. If viewed through the lens of the traditional notions of political participation, this kind of political engagement on foreign policy issues could be dismissed as something not concerning the U. S. political process but rather a reflection of disinterest in U.S. politics. However, as indicated earlier, a closer analysis of political engagement of Indian American organizations through lobbying for the India-U. S. nuclear deal suggested that the campaign dealt with the U.S. domestic political institutions and it was not just instrumental in achieving a limited end concerning the home country, but a part of the broader ongoing attempt to gain acceptance and recognition in the U. S. political process. The traditional models of political

incorporation- both pluralist and minority group model- do not acknowledge this path of political engagement as a possible way of participating in American politics. The case of Indian immigrants and their lobbying on the nuclear deal suggests that even though lobbying and mobilization around the issues of home country is not the most important mode of immigrant political participation in U.S., it does play an important role in initiating and shaping the political engagement of the group.

Transnational Politics and Elite Mobilization

Even though the lobbying by Indian American groups on issues concerning home country is a significant step towards involvement with the domestic U.S. political process, the political engagement through lobbying has serious limitations in terms of orienting and mobilizing the broader Indian American community for domestic and transnational political participation. Despite the apparent diversity of the groups involved in the lobbying process, the effort of the Indian American community was spearheaded mostly by organizations which represented the professional and entrepreneurial sections of the community. The emphasis on fundraising capacity of the community to muster support from the members of Congress was indicative of the participation being limited to the rich and professionally successful sections of the community. A case in point is the USINPAC, an Indian American organization which has been organizing fundraisers for both Democratic and Republican politicians to mobilize bipartisan support for issues important to Indian American community. By emphasizing the fund raising ability of the Indian American community, the USINPAC has been developing a particular way of creating political influence which puts reliance on a narrow section of the community which can make financial contributions to political parties and candidates. USINPAC

utilized the strengths and influence emerging out of this strategy to effectively mobilize support for the nuclear deal among lawmakers in Washington, D.C. This strategy of creating political influence for the Indian American community is largely bereft of any attempt at wider mobilization of the Indian American community to become a part of the process of political empowerment of the community.

There was no effort or need felt by these groups to reach out to the wider community on this issue and the mobilization was limited to a very small section of the immigrant community which could play a role in the lobbying campaign. It is this small elite section of the community that has engaged with the political institutions of the U.S.. This mode of political participation through lobbying on foreign policy issues has a very limited impact on the larger Indian immigrant community in terms of bringing them into the domestic political process. Lobbying by Indian American groups also did not reflect the debates which took place in India over the desirability of the nuclear deal. There is an ongoing intense debate in India over this issue in which there are powerful voices which are arguing that the nuclear deal is equal to surrendering the sovereignty and independent foreign policy of India to the U. S. There are others who consider India's entry into the group of legitimate nuclear power state as a negative development for regional peace and security. However, the Indian American groups followed the position adopted by the Indian government and only mobilized around the more nationalist and militaristic position put forward by the Government of India.

To better understand the limited and elite nature of political mobilization through lobbying, this moment of political activism on the issue of U.S.-India nuclear deal could be compared with another important moment which affected the Indian immigrant

community significantly- the racial hate crimes and discrimination against South Asian immigrants in the wake of the September 11, 2001 attack on the World Trade Center. Most of the organizations active on the issue of the nuclear deal were largely absent or muted in their response to the aftermath of September 11th on South Asian immigrants. However, a different set of South Asian organizations were very active on the issue of hate crimes and racial discrimination following 9/11. For instance, the South Asian Network (SAN) in the Los Angeles area worked with a few Muslim and Sikh organizations and together played an important role in responding to post-9/11 hate crimes and the general atmosphere of fear among South Asian immigrants in the area. Similarly, South Asian organizations such as Desis Rising and Moving (DRUM), Coney Island Avenue Project, Council of People's Organization (COPO), South Asian Youth Association (SAYA), and many small advocacy and service organizations in New York City were active on this issue. These organizations intervened both in individual cases as well as at the community level for mobilizing South Asians against hate crime to stop law enforcement agencies from targeting particular communities. Organizations such as South Asian American Leaders of Tomorrow (SAALT) actively intervened on this issue in Washington, D.C. and coordinated with other civil rights and ethnic organizations at the national level to highlight the cases of racial targeting both by public as well as the law enforcement agencies.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ These observations are based on interviews conducted in New York Metropolitan Area and Los Angeles with South Asian community members and activists between April 2006 and February 2007. The participant observation in community programs and activities in both Los Angeles and New York City also provided information about South Asian organizations and their role in post-9/11 period.

Looking at the nature of organizations involved in these two campaigns- against post-9/11 racial targeting and the U.S.-India nuclear deal- it is very clear that organizations active on the nuclear deal did not step forward on the question of racial discrimination and hate crime. The elite nature of these organizations is reflected in their decision to avoid issues of racial discrimination and hate crime which arguably affects a wider swath of the Indian Americans and the South Asian American community. There seemed to be a clear disjuncture between the organizations which were active on the issue of the nuclear deal and those which got involved with issues of racial discrimination and hate crime. The fact that the organizations active on the issue of the nuclear deal were not active on an issue which affected different sections of the community reinforces the argument that these organizations were limited in their agenda and forms of political engagement they pursued. The nationalist ideology emanating from India has a powerful influence on these organizations. In contrast, the organizations which were active on the issue of racial discrimination and targeting of the community did not get involved with the nuclear deal campaign because most of these organizations work on a panethnic platform which includes immigrants from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and other South Asian countries. The nuclear deal was an issue which clearly represented the national interest of India as framed by the government of India. The South Asian organizations could not support a deal which enhanced India's military status vis-a-vis other South Asian countries in a subcontinent which has a history of hostility and conflict among different nations.

Conclusion

An analysis of the lobbying campaign by Indian American groups on the issue of U. S.-India civil nuclear deal provides important insights into the possibilities and limits of transnational politics. This analysis has demonstrated that engagement with the issues concerning home country such as the U.S.-India nuclear deal encourages involvement with the political processes and institutions of the United States. The lobbying campaign in favor of the deal worked as a rallying issue for the Indian American community to enhance its political effectiveness and influence as a minority group in the U. S. Undoubtedly, the support for the nuclear deal is rooted in a strong home country nationalist ideology and may appear to be exclusively focused on the home country concerns. However, through the campaign on the nuclear deal the Indian American organizations are not only representing the interest of India but also coming to terms with the issue of their recognition and acceptance in the U. S. political process. The entire campaign is also framed in terms of the contribution of the Indo-American community to American society and how this deal may enhance their status in American society. The lobbying campaign can possibly be critiqued as a reflection of the community's distance from the issues concerning local or domestic politics. This critique, however, will be a very narrow reading of the lobbying campaign based on an understanding of immigrant political participation and incorporation which gives primacy to traditional forms of political participation and ignores the forms of political engagement related to the issues of the country of origin. The traditional models of immigrant political incorporation completely disregard this mode of political engagement pursued by immigrant communities. The traditional models also fail to take into account the ideological and

political influences emanating from cross border ties which influence the agenda and kind of mobilization pursued by immigrant groups in the U.S. This chapter emphasizes the importance of transnational ties and their influences in shaping the political participation of immigrant communities in the U.S.

This chapter has also used a critical lens to underline the possible limits of transnational political engagement and the ways in which it might limit or lead to a narrow political incorporation of immigrant communities. The analysis of the nuclear lobbying campaign has shown that there are limitations and problems with this kind of transnational political engagement, namely the elite nature of mobilization where only certain forms of participation such as lobbying takes primacy over other kinds of possible political engagement which may involve reaching out to the wider Indian American community. Furthermore, lobbying by Indian American groups involved only a limited section of the immigrant community – the well educated professional and entrepreneur class which is financially successful. This was reflected in the political strategy used by Indian American groups to mobilize the members of Congress on the issue of the nuclear deal by projecting the group's fundraising capability as the primary strength of the community. Transnational political engagement of this nature does not reach to the common Indian immigrants in the U. S. and, hence, does not contribute to the political incorporation of the broader community. The disjuncture between the response to post-9/11 cases of racial discrimination and hate crimes and lobbying on the nuclear deal is illustrative of this point. The elite mobilization pursued by Indian American groups is in conjunction with the elite oriented diasporic politics emanating from India. The elite nature of diasporic politics emanating from India is reflected in the Indian state's narrow

view of the Indian immigrant population in which only successful entrepreneurs and professionals are accorded importance and this section of the immigrant community is considered critical for promoting India's interest in the United States. The ideological congruity between the Indian state and these Indian American organizations is also unmistakable in the ways in which Indian American groups involved in lobbying adopted the Indian state's ideological positions and policy priorities and shut out other critical and oppositional perspectives and policy alternatives present in India.

The two dominant models of political incorporation fail to include this important aspect of immigrant political engagement. The unmistakable influence of transnational connections on the ways of immigrant engagement with U.S. politics and the nature of mobilization suggests that transnationalism is a part of political incorporation trajectory of immigrant groups. The analysis also suggests that our study of transnational engagement and immigrant political participation should not stop at answering the question whether there is a zero sum relationship between the transnational political and social engagement and political participation in U.S. The more important question, as the analysis suggests, is to understand the ways in which transnational connections influence the ideology, agenda, and political mobilization patterns among immigrant groups.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Political incorporation of new immigrant groups has been studied extensively by scholars studying immigrant and minority politics. The existing paradigms of immigrant political incorporation have been shaped by prominent political incorporation experiences in the history of American society, notable among them are the incorporation of European immigrants in the early to the mid 20th century and African Americans in the mid to late 20th century. The extensive study of these groups has led to the development of two contrasting models of political incorporation which influenced the subsequent studies of immigrant and minority political incorporation. These two models have also shaped the study of post-1965 phase of immigration that witnessed the formation of new immigrant groups- which were either smaller in numbers or nonexistent before this period- such as Asian Americans, Latinos, Caribbean, and Arab Americans.

Immigrant groups such as Asian Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi are largely a product of this new phase of immigration. These groups have varied socioeconomic profiles and different immigration histories and their participation into the U.S. political process seem to follow trajectories different from those proposed by the dominant models of political incorporation. This dissertation argues that the political incorporation patterns of South Asian immigrants – Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi- suggest that their experiences need to be theorized differently from the existing models of political incorporation. In fact, their experiences suggest that key elements are missing from the existing models of political incorporation. However, it is important to note that this dissertation does not suggest going beyond the existing models of political incorporation

to only account for the special case of South Asians. In other words, the need to move beyond the existing models is not to propose South Asian exceptionalism but to move towards a model of political incorporation which gives centrality to internal distinctions within ethnic and racial groups. Thus, this move toward a new model of political incorporation is required to understand not only South Asians but other Asian American groups and many others such as Caribbean, Arab and Cuban immigrants that display wide socioeconomic diversity. The foregrounding of internal group distinctions while studying political incorporation also draws upon the intersectionality approach in Political Theory and Feminist Theory which emphasize the interaction of different social identities to produce a particular experience.

The two dominant models of political incorporation- the pluralist model and minority group model- proposed either ethnic mobilization and/ or race based mobilization on the basis of linked fate as possible paths of political incorporation for new immigrant groups. The two models have contrasting predictions even though they seemingly suggest a group based mobilization based on ethnic and/or racial identity. The pluralist model suggests that ethnic mobilization is a transitory phase because the ethnic groups become a part of the mainstream political process with the advancement in their educational and economic status. In contrast, the minority group model suggests that ethnic and racial status of the group is an enduring barrier to their political incorporation and continued grassroots mobilizing based on racial and ethnic identity is a possible path to overcome that barrier.

This dissertation questions both models of political incorporation and argues that the centrality accorded to ethnic and/or racial mobilization by these two models fail to

explain the political incorporation trajectory of South Asian immigrants. Neither the ethnic mobilization of the kind experienced by European immigrants nor the grassroots mobilization undertaken by African Americans explain the political incorporation experiences of South Asian immigrants. This dissertation argues that internal distinctions based on class, religion, and country of origin play significant roles in shaping the political participation and mobilization patterns among South Asian immigrants. This requires moving beyond the framework of political incorporation models that emphasize ethnic and /or racial mobilization exclusively at the cost of including internal distinctions into the analysis. This dissertation argues that political incorporation of South Asians relies largely on a selective elite mobilization which is largely bereft of any kind of mass mobilization based on racial and ethnic identity. This mode of selective elite mobilization is different from both pluralist as well as minority group models which suggest wider grass roots mobilization of the community based on a common racial and ethnic identity. The dissertation further argues that class distinctions within the South Asian community strongly shape the selective elite mobilization which starts defining the political incorporation trajectory of the group. The study locates the existence of selective elite mobilization also in the arena of transnational political engagement. In addition, the dissertation moves beyond existing models of political incorporation by linking domestic political incorporation of the group to the transnational social and political processes. It gives centrality to the transnational attachments in analyzing the political incorporation patterns of South Asian immigrants and points to the possible transnational dimensions of citizenship among immigrant communities.

The analysis of political participation and mobilization patterns suggests that there is a limited mobilization of South Asians on the basis of a common ethnic identity. The limited ethnic mobilization is particularly reflected in the muted response of the community in the post-911 period as well as in their attempts at electoral representation which do not rely heavily on ethnic mobilization. The data show that socioeconomic differences within the South Asian community are most pronounced with a significant section of the group having high educational and income profile. South Asians tend not to concentrate primarily in ethnic neighborhoods and settle in different kinds of urban and suburban neighborhoods. The religious and country of origin based distinctions are also important in terms of complicating the possibilities of group mobilization based on a broad panethnic identity. The study thus argues that the socioeconomic, religious, linguistic, and country of origin based distinctions along with a lack of population concentration due to the group demographic characteristics are some of the important factors which explain why South Asian immigrants have not followed the traditional path of ethnic and /or racial mobilization.

This study has used post- 9/11 incidents of racial targeting and hate crimes to analyze the continued racialization of South Asian immigrants and to explore whether that led to a significant level of ethnic/racial mobilization. The dissertation argues that there is a continued racialization of South Asian as a group despite their widely varied educational and economic status. The pluralist model would have us believe that racial prejudice and discrimination are temporary phenomena which gradually disappear with economic and educational advancements and that they have minimal impact on the political incorporation process. The case of South Asian immigrants, however, refutes

this argument. The continued racialization of South Asians as outsiders has significant implications for their political incorporation. The dissertation argues that the discourse of an outsider has assumed even more importance in the post-9/11 period and has become linked to the discourse on “war on terror.” The analysis of interviews with South Asian immigrants suggests that being seen as outsider or foreigner is one of the primary ways in which the group is racialized and the process has intensified after September 11, 2001. The analysis also suggests that continuing discrimination and exclusion based on racialization as outsider is deeply connected to their phenotype-skin color and appearance. The dissertation further argues that racialization and exclusion of South Asian immigrants are mediated by religious difference and Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim South Asian immigrants have been impacted differently by this process. Similarly, the class distinctions within the South Asian community are also evident in the ways in which post-9/11 targeting affected certain classes of immigrants more than others.

According to the minority group model of political incorporation, the continuing racialization of South Asian immigrants should lead to grassroots mobilization based on common ethnic or racial identity. However, the analysis of the post-9/11 period suggests that South Asian immigrants did not engage in grassroots mobilizing, based on a common group identity and linked fate, to oppose racial profiling and discrimination. The distinctions within the South Asian immigrant community based on religion, nation of origin, and class are important factors which shaped the political response of the community and point to the possibility that the group may not enter the political process based on a group mobilization rooted in linked fate or common group identity.

The analysis of political incorporation of South Asian immigrants suggests that political incorporation of the group is taking place in an institutional context characterized by decline of political parties resulting in very little attempt by political parties and other institutions to bring contemporary nonwhite immigrants into the political process. South Asians as a group are marginalized in the political process as a result of a lack of institutional attempts at incorporation combined with what many interviewees described as lack of significant South Asian population concentration. However, this lack of mobilization and inclusion of the broader South Asian community in the political process simultaneously co-exists with selective mobilization of smaller segments within the community which results in a particular trajectory of incorporation relying on elite mobilization. This trajectory of selective mobilization among South Asian immigrants is evident in both local as well as transnational political processes. The selective and narrow mobilization of the elite sections of the community suggests that the political incorporation trajectory of South Asians is very different from traditional models which emphasize racial and/or ethnic mobilization as a part of the political incorporation of minority and immigrant groups.

The analysis of interviews and other data suggest that there are three major trends of political engagement based on selective mobilization of South Asian immigrants- the focus on lobbying, prominence of campaign fundraising as strategy for gaining political power, and descriptive representation from white majority districts. The preeminence of these forms of political engagement suggests that the political mobilization among South Asian immigrants is only limited to certain forms of engagement which do not require the mobilization and engagement of the broader community. All three trends

identified in this analysis end up reinforcing selective mobilization within the South Asian community which preclude large section of the community from getting involved into the political processes. The political incorporation trajectory of the group, the analysis suggests, does not follow the pluralist model where immigrants are mobilized on the basis of their ethnic identity with help from political parties to bring them into the political process. Neither does it follow the minority group model where grassroots mobilization on the basis of shared racial and /or ethnic identity against discrimination and racial barrier is the possible path to political incorporation. Selective mobilization leading to limited participation of a small segment of the group defines the political incorporation trajectory of South Asian immigrants. The descriptive representation attempts on the part of South Asian immigrants also reflect a limited ethnic and/or racial mobilization strategy where South Asian candidates primarily follow a strategy of electoral success which does not rely on ethnic mobilization.

The dissertation also challenges the existing models by arguing that political incorporation of the group can not be explained without taking transnationalism into account. Even though there has been an acceptance of the importance of transnationalism for studying immigrant populations, there have been very limited efforts to include transnationalism into political incorporation studies. The dissertation argues that transnational attachments are an important part of the social and political lives of South Asian immigrants in the United States. The dissertation argues, based on both quantitative and qualitative data, that transnational attachments and engagements do not adversely impact South Asian immigrants' political participation in the U.S. The quantitative data, however, do suggest that higher levels of transnational attachment

lead to lower levels of naturalization among South Asian immigrants. This result suggests that strong transnational attachment is indicative of strong linkages to both the places which results in delayed naturalization in many cases.

The dissertation further argues that transnational engagements with the issues concerning country of origin are not only about country of origin. Such involvements also provide avenues to engage with U.S. political institutions and they shape the ways in which immigrant communities engage with the political process in U.S. The dissertation argues that increasing transnational attachment also has important implications for the meaning and practice of citizenship among immigrant communities. The emerging forms of dual citizenship like rights, continued transnational political engagement, and a broader transnational identity among South Asian immigrants point to the possibilities of immigrant citizenship which is more transnational in its conception and practice. The implications of transnational dimensions of immigrant citizenship for political incorporation of the group are expressed in the influences of both the country of origin and the country of settlement in shaping the political participation patterns of immigrant groups. The existing models of political incorporation do not consider the transnational influences, particularly the influence emanating from country of origin, in shaping the political orientation and participation practices of the group. This dissertation argues that political incorporation of immigrant groups can not be studied without including transnational dimension of immigrant political engagement.

Through the analysis of lobbying by Indian American groups in favor of the U.S. – India Civil Nuclear Deal, the dissertation argues that engagement with the issues concerning home country such as the nuclear deal encourages involvement with the

political processes and institutions of the United States. The lobbying campaign in favor of the deal worked as a unifying and rallying issue for the Indian American community to enhance its political effectiveness and influence as a minority group in the U. S. The traditional models of immigrant political incorporation completely disregard this mode of political engagement pursued by immigrant communities. The traditional models also fail to take into account the ideological and political influences emanating from cross border ties which shape the agenda and kind of mobilization pursued by immigrant groups in the U.S. The analysis of lobbying campaign suggests that this form of transnational engagement in the case of Indian immigrants became a part of the existing selective mobilization trajectory. The dissertation argues that transnational political engagement could lead to selective elite mobilization, as happened in the case of the nuclear deal, where only certain forms of participation such as lobbying takes primacy over other kinds of possible political engagement which may involve reaching out to the wider Indian American community.

Furthermore, lobbying by Indian American groups involved only a limited section of the immigrant community – the well educated professional and entrepreneur class which is financially successful. The selective and elite mobilization pursued by Indian American groups is in conjunction with the elite oriented diasporic politics emanating from India. The ideological congruity between the Indian state and Indian American organizations is also unmistakable in the ways in which Indian American groups adopted the Indian state's ideological positions and policy priorities and shut out other critical and oppositional perspectives and policy alternatives present in India. The trajectory of selective elite mobilization is clearly evident in the case of lobbying over the nuclear

deal. The analysis suggests how transnational political engagement contributes to a particular trajectory of political incorporation among immigrant groups.

This dissertation makes a significant contribution to the existing literature on immigrant political incorporation and transnationalism. The existing literature has looked at political incorporation of minority and immigrant groups primarily through the lens of ethnic and racial mobilization or lack of it. Both the pluralist model and the minority group model emphasize the importance of ethnic and racial mobilization for political incorporation of minority and immigrant groups. This study proposes a model of immigrant political incorporation which takes the internal group distinctions into consideration and which gives centrality to transnational political engagement in understanding the political incorporation process. This model argues that immigrant groups such as South Asians with high socioeconomic, religious, linguistic, and country of origin based diversity do not follow the simple trajectory of ethnic and/or racial mobilization. The existing models of political incorporation may be able to explain the political incorporation experience of certain groups but they fail to account for the specificities of immigrant groups such as South Asians. In addition, the experiences of these groups may force us to reconsider the applicability of the models in the contemporary period. The model proposed by this dissertation highlights the importance of distinctions such as class, religion, and country of origin and the ways in which these distinctions tend to shape the political incorporation process of the group. The patterns of selective mobilization and involvement of a relatively narrow section of the South Asian community in the political process suggests that the future of political incorporation of groups such as South Asians is not going to be based on a large scale ethnic or racial

mobilization. This model, however, does not argue that ethnic and/or racial identities such as Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi American or panethnic category of South Asian do not have relevance for political participation and mobilization but argues that cleavages like class, religion, and country of origin are important determinants of the political incorporation trajectories of these groups. The proposed model makes an important contribution by foregrounding the internal distinctions within the group as important factors for studying the process of political incorporation.

The proposed model also makes an important break from existing models of political incorporation by arguing that transnational political engagement should not be seen as a process separate from the political incorporation of the group in the United States. The study clearly points to the transnational dimension of political incorporation and argues that engagements with the home country are not necessarily at the cost of engagements with the political process in the United States. Moreover, the analysis of Indian immigrants suggests that transnational political engagement also contributes to the selective and limited mobilization pattern among South Asian immigrants. The cleavages of class, religion, and nationalism are further reinforced through transnational engagements with their nation of origin. The proposed model of political incorporation thus considers the continued transnational engagement as an important element of the emerging transnational citizenship practices among immigrant communities.

The findings of this dissertation speak directly to the concept of citizenship, particularly to the ways in which new immigrant communities expand the meanings and practices of citizenship. The possibilities of constant attachment and engagement with society and politics of more than one nation state questions the traditional conception of

citizenship rooted in a single nation state and politics. The transnational attachment and engagement of immigrant groups such as South Asians suggest a broader conception of citizenship which is inclusive of transnational engagements. The dissertation also suggests that domestic political incorporation of immigrant groups has to be inclusive of transnational dimension of citizenship.

The dissertation also speaks to the critical issue of race and ethnicity and their centrality in the political incorporation of immigrant groups. The dissertation argues that race remains an important part of the social and political lives of South Asians in the United States. The continuing perception of South Asians as “outsiders” and “foreigners” remains an integral part of the racialization of South Asian immigrants. However, the political mobilization of South Asians do not follow the traditional models where racial and/or ethnic identity plays a central role in the mobilization of minority group who negotiate with the political process on the basis of the strength of their racial and ethnic mobilization. The experience of South Asian immigrants suggest that racial and ethnic identity is strongly mediated by class, religion, and other internal distinctions and political incorporation of the group is shaped by the complex interactions of these identities. The political incorporation trajectory of South Asians based on a selective elite mobilization demonstrates how class distinctions within the community produces a particular kind of ethnic mobilization which is very different from those subscribed by either pluralist or minority group model. This dissertation makes an important contribution in terms of providing a new framework- a framework which emphasizes the interplay of internal distinctions such as class, and religion with racial and ethnic

identity- for analyzing the centrality of racial and ethnic mobilization among immigrant groups.

Future research should further explore the issue of internal distinction within racial and ethnic groups and the ways in which these distinctions shape their political incorporation trajectory. The existing literature on minority and immigrant political incorporation has not explored this line of enquiry fully. The internal distinctions within minority groups have been explored in works such as Cathy Cohen's *Boundaries of Blackness*(1999) in the context of group identity and marginalization within the community but her framework has not been used in political incorporation studies. Immigrant and minority groups like Asian Americans, Caribbean, and Latinos are well suited for further analysis of internal distinctions based on socioeconomic status, religion, culture, gender, and sexual orientation.

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Appendix

Questionnaire for Community Leaders/Activists

Introductory questions

How long have been in the U.S.? How did you get involved with this organization?

One more follow up question if needed

Questions Pertaining the Country of Origin

Do you think South Asian immigrants maintain strong connection with their country of origin?

Follow up

If yes, tell me some of the ways in which they maintain contact with the country of origin?

Follow up

Do you think they maintain political contacts also. Do they get involved in politics of the home country

If yes, what are the ways in which people get involved with the politics of home country? Can you talk about some examples.

Why do think it is important for immigrants to maintain regular contact with the country of origin?

Follow up

Some people argue that once immigrants settle in the U.S., they should not be involved with the politics of their country of origin and try to be more involved with U.S. politics. Do you think it is alright to be politically involved in the country of origin while living here?

If yes, why? If not, why not?

Some people think that immigrants should gradually start reducing contact with their country of origin as the time passes and they should gradually assimilate into the American society and political process. Do you think it is important to reduce the contact/interaction with the country of origin to become a part of this society?

Identity

Do you feel a sense of belonging to this country? What kind of attachments come to your mind when you think of belonging to the U.S.?

Do you feel a sense of belonging to your (or your Parents') country of origin. What kind of attachments come to your mind when you think of India/Pak/Bangla.

Follow up

How do you deal with these two different attachments?

Do you feel close to other South Asian immigrants (the question to Indian immigrants: Do you feel close to other South Asian immigrants like Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, etc).

Do you think there is an acceptability of South Asian identity among immigrants from India, Pakistan Bangladesh or they still identify only as Indian, Pakistanis , and Bangladeshis?

How much is religion an issue in shaping the relations among immigrants from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Do you think other people of South Asian origin face discrimination?

Follow Up

What kind of discrimination do they face? Can you talk about an example?

Have you experienced discrimination based on race, skin color, or language? Do you think South Asian immigrants face racial discrimination in their every day life.

Do South Asian immigrants feel a sense of closeness or solidarity with other minority ethnic/racial groups like Latinos, Asian Americans, African Americans. How do they view other racial groups.

Political and Civic Engagement in the U.S.

Do you think South Asian immigrants feel to be a part of the political process here in the U.S. and do they participate adequately in the political process?

Follow up

What about nonelectoral political participation like becoming a member of a civic organization, neighborhood organization, and faith based organization, ethnic

organizations, PTA, etc. Do you think South Asian immigrants participate in these activities?

Do political parties or candidates running for public office try to mobilize South Asian immigrants to vote, to donate money, or to become a part of the political process?

Follow up

If Yes, in what ways? Can you talk about some examples?

If not, why do you think it is so?

What are some of the barriers to political involvement of South Asian Immigrants in this country?

Do you think South Asian immigrants participate in the political process through their ethnic organizations?

Follow Up

If yes, what kind of activities do they get involved in through these immigrant organizations.

What are the most important issues affecting South Asian immigrants in Los Angeles or the U.S. in general?

How important do you think it is for South Asian immigrants to naturalize (to acquire American Citizenship) in order to become part of the U.S. society?

Follow up

Does naturalization by South Asian immigrants lead to more political participation on the part of immigrants?

Do you think that involvement with the politics of country of origin influences the ability and inclination to engage with and participate in the U.S. politics?

Follow up

Tell me about some examples the ways in which this relationship works.

What role, if any, do immigrant organizations play in encouraging or facilitating political participation?

Are you involved in or aware of any formal efforts to encourage political participation among South Asian immigrants? Which organizations are involved in this effort in the U.S.?

Follow up

Do you think South Asian immigrants are more oriented towards activities related to the country of origin?

What kinds of activities does this organization get involved with?

Follow up

What kind of issues/activities related to India/Pakistan/Bangladesh do immigrant organizations like yours get involved with?

Follow up

This question is about dual citizenship. India/Pakistan/Bangladesh has come up with dual citizenship rights for people of Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi origin settled abroad. Do you think this is beneficial for immigrants, or you think immigrants should choose citizenship of one country only?

About the Organization

What kind of resources or help do you get from other organizations in the U.S. that you most frequently interact with as part of organizational activity?

Follow up

What kind of resources or help do you get from other organizations outside the U.S. that you most frequently interact with as part of organizational activity?

Questionnaire for Community Members

Introductory Question

How long have you been in the U.S.

How long have you lived in this City

Questions pertaining the Country of Origin

Do you maintain contact with India/Pakistan Bangladesh?

Some people think that immigrants start losing contacts with their country of origin as the time passes and that is how they gradually assimilate into the American society and political process. Do you think it is important to maintain contact with the country of origin? Why or why not?

Do you keep yourself equally aware of politics in India/Pakistan/Bangladesh and in the U.S.?

Follow up

Do you think your attention to political events in India/Pakistan/Bangladesh keep you away from paying full attention to the political events in the U.S.?

Do you get involved with politics back home?

If yes, Follow up.

Do you think that involvement with the politics of country of origin influences the ability and inclination to engage with and participate in the U.S. politics?

If yes, in what ways? If not, why not?

Some people feel that immigrants can play an important role in economic advancement and political change in their country of origin. Others feel that it is very difficult for immigrants to make an impact on their country of origin and it keeps them away from getting involved in the U.S. politics. Do you think that you can influence the social, economic, or political life of India/Pakistan/Bangladesh and it is desirable to do so?

Follow up

Can you talk about the ways through which the social, economic, or political life in India /Pakistan/ Bangladesh can be influenced by immigrants living in the U.S.?

Follow up

Tell me about some examples the ways in which this relationship works.

Identity

Do you feel a sense of belonging to this country? What kind of attachments come to your mind when you think of belonging to the U.S.?

Do you feel a sense of belonging to your (or your Parents') country of origin. What kind of attachments come to your mind when you think of India/Pak/Bangla.

Follow up

When you think of yourself as an American, does it contradict with your identity as being Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi? How do you reconcile the two?

Follow up

Do you think you can belong to both?

Do you feel close to other South Asian immigrants (the question to Indian immigrants:

Do you feel close to other South Asian immigrants like Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, etc).

Do you think there is an acceptability of South Asian identity among immigrants from India, Pakistan Bangladesh or they still identify only as Indian, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis?

How much is religion an issue in shaping the relations among immigrants from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh in the U.S.

Do you think people of South Asian origin face discrimination in everyday life.?

Follow Up

What kind of discrimination do they face? Can you talk about an example?

Have you or any of your friend of South Asian origin experienced discrimination based on race, skin color, or language?

Do South Asian immigrants feel a sense of closeness or solidarity with other minority ethnic/racial groups like Latinos and African Americans.

Do you think they feel a sense of closeness to other Asian Americans?

Political and Civic Engagement in the U.S.

Do you feel to be a part of the political process here in the U.S. and do you think you participate adequately in the political process?

Follow up

Why or why not?

What about nonelectoral political participation like becoming a member of a civic organization, neighborhood organization, and faith based organization, ethnic organizations, PTA, etc. Do you participate in these activities?

Do political parties, other organizations or candidates running for public office try to mobilize South Asian immigrants to vote, to donate money, or to become a part of the political process?

Follow up

If Yes, in what ways? Can you talk about some examples?

If not, why do you think it is so?

Do you feel to be a part of the U.S. political system or you feel marginal to it?

Through what acts and activities do you feel to be a part of the U.S. political system? Is it through voting, participation civic activities, being active in PTAs, Participating in neighborhood organizations, or through participation in an ethnic organization?

What are some of the barriers to political involvement of South Asian immigrants(or Indian/Pakistani/ Bangladeshi) in this country?

Do you think the ethnic organizations (Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi immigrant organization) encourage political participation in the U.S. ?

Follow Up

If yes, what kind of activities do they get involved in through these immigrant organizations.

What are the most important issues affecting South Asian immigrants in Los Angeles or the U.S. in general?

How important do you think it is for a South Asian immigrant to naturalize (to acquire American Citizenship) in order to become part of the U.S. society?

Follow up

Does naturalization by South Asian immigrants lead to more political participation on the part of immigrants?

Follow up

This question is about dual citizenship. India/Pakistan/Bangladesh has come up with dual citizenship rights for people of Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi origin settled abroad. Do you think this is beneficial for immigrants, or you think immigrants should choose citizenship of one country only?

What are the most important issues affecting South Asian immigrants in Los Angeles and the U.S.?

Do you think immigrants have a voice/representation in local politics?

Follow up

What about South Asian immigrants? Do you think they have a voice or representation in local or national politics adequately?

Follow up

Does your exposure of the political process and political institutions in the country of origin helps or hinders the ways in which you relate to the political system in the U.S.?

There are many people who keep themselves involved in the politics of India/Pakistan/Bangladesh even after moving to the U.S.? Do you think it is alright to be politically involved in the country of origin while living here?

Follow up

Some people argue that too much involvement with the country of origin stops an immigrant from getting involved in the political process of the U.S. Do you think that involvement with the politics of country of origin negatively influences the ability and inclination to engage with and participate in the U.S. politics?