

election of Dalip Singh Saund in 1957, whom the respondent called a “fluke” with no interest in the Indian American community.

After setting up the organization as its director, Respondent D performed outreach to other Indian organizations and at the time the “two significant organizations were Asian American Hotel Owners Association (AAHOA) and American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI).” At the time he made contact with them, he found that “both were slightly less good than useless.” The respondent claims that AAHOA has gotten much better in learning how to make political demands. He brought to light issues in discrimination (specifically paying the same amount for goods as white hotel owners) and immigration (specifically how the quota system would not allow them to bring family members over to help run their hotels) that affected the Indian American community. Respondent D chastised these community leaders for choosing “[to take] the photo op” with their Congressmen in return for their donations, instead of making real demands in return for their political contributions. The reasoning for this is that Indian Americans find having lunch or a picture with an elected official symbolizes their personal success, according to Respondents F, G, I, and L. In addition, he noted that AAPI had “issues with the acceptance of medical degrees in this country.” Respondent N, who has represented both organizations as a lobbyist, has observed that these professional associations have led the way as voices for the community and that professional divides helps determine issue agendas. Respondent D also “spent a good deal of time” working with these organizations in an effort to educate and mobilize them. The respondent also found that high-tech associations were on the rise, but their ascension was more recent, and thus, he lacked experience with them. He did not note whether or not the organizations worked together, but did note that he did not find the community cohesive because often times it would be fragmented by profession (often

determined by state). For instance, he stated, “if you came from Gujarat, you were likely to be a businessman.” Respondent G also spoke to this fragmentation noting internal and external stereotypes that Indians from the South are “the intellectuals” like doctors and engineers, those from the North are in “hospitality” like store or hotel owners, and those from the East are often involved in “the arts.”

### Generational Gap

Cultural norms and identity differ between generations, as noted in the previous sections with findings that demonstrate a difference in standards of what constitutes a successful job or a difference in the acceptance or rejection of pan ethnic umbrellas. While this division is not exclusive to this ethnic community, nearly every respondent spoke to this issue.

Respondents A and B noted this difference in terms of attitudes towards and views on the United State. Respondent B observed that the first generation feels like “they are guests in this country” and have the perception that “they have it good, so why rock the boat?,” while the second generation feels as though the United States is their home country, which allows them make demands on the political system. Respondents C, G, J, K, and M have all observed differences in feelings towards India and U.S.-India policy between generations. Respondent J found that the second generation has “lost touch and has no interest in India,” finding that “I have trouble getting my own kids to care.” Respondent G agreed to an extent; he found that the first generation identifies more with India everyday because “they can hold on to their culture with satellite television, newspapers, and internet.” He found the second generation identifies more with America and the second generation immigrant experience (of reconciling with two differing identities and cultures), which is why he believed the second generation is comfortable with the pan ethnic umbrella of “South Asians.” Respondents A and N also agreed with this

notion that the second generation has become increasingly comfortable with identifying themselves as South Asian. In addition, Respondent I shed light on this issue, in terms of identity. In his experience (as well as with Respondent M), the first generation would say “yes, we do have a common identity,” whereas the second generation “doesn’t have the same ties to India, but ties as second generation immigrants.” Respondent H also provided support for this notion that the second generation is “okay with merging all South Asian groups” because they find commonality with others in that region of the world.

Respondent K finds there are “variations of identity. Some consider themselves Indian and others feel very American. Some care a great deal about Indian politics, while others could care less about what is happening in India because they view American as their country and they want to serve it, not India.” Respondent L agreed with this notion finding that during his time on Capitol Hill, he could find no consensus among the Indian lobby on identity or issues. This even included U.S.-India relations, although the respondent observed that there is a large interest in this subject among many members of Congress. Respondent C found that “the second generation still cares about India and its progress and foreign policy. It may not take fire with them, but it has the potential to.” He finds, however, that U.S.-India policy definitely mobilizes the first generation (citing the Mumbai attacks and the U.S.-India nuclear deal).

Respondent F spoke of internal organizational issues between the first and second generations. He has experienced a lack of respect from the second generation towards the first generation’s experience and guidance, which in turn has led to the first generation’s apathy towards assisting them financially or otherwise, as they ascend to political power. Respondent J agreed. However, Respondent E found that the first and second generation needs to learn to work together as well, citing that while he believes the second generation “is more in tune to change in

the policy world and how the process works, in addition to having the charisma and passion in politics, they do not have the financial clout of the first generation. He observed that the first generation merely “portray themselves as connected and as leaders” with their financial clout; Respondents D, E, L, and O noted that they only seek photo opportunities with political leaders to demonstrate this to others. Thus, the community is not effectively using their educational resources because they do not donate for substantive reasons, as they make no demands or do not hold the government accountable in return for their money (similarly to Respondent D’s arguments). Both Respondents E and F believe that melding both generations will help to make the community a powerful influence and lobbying voice. Respondent H agreed with their assertion because he observed that “the rest of the United States does not recognize first and second generation Indians,” but instead views all Indians as having the same identity, experience, and culture, which is why he believes that uniting would be beneficial and help the community gain respect.

#### Cultural Values

The Indian American community has few aspects of common identity and little cohesion, as observed by respondents --- leaders and political figures in the community. One feature of common identity that the respondents generally found, however, was in cultural values within the community. These values included emphasis on the family, education, success, and ambition.

Some respondents (A, F, and H) noted common identity even in the community’s ties to India. Respondent F observed that “we are bound together by events that affect us all,” citing the rise of Indian culture in mainstream American culture. Respondents A, F, and H also found that the second generation has veneration and respect for their heritage, given that they appreciate the risk their parents took to immigrate to American. Respondent F said that in his experience, the

second generation “deeply appreciates the entrepreneurial spirit of their parents and the risks they took in leaving their home country,” not only because of the unknown but also because leaving the family structure is counterintuitive to Indian culture. Respondent E also agreed with this value, which he also termed entrepreneurial spirit. This idea of taking large risks seems connected to the value of success, based on simple economic theory that larger risks reap larger rewards. In addition, education is seen as a link or a means for success. Success to this community seems to mean not only economic affluence, but also a reputation that is well-known for affiliation with prestigious people and institutions. Furthermore, Indians believe in merit, according to Respondents C and E, in that they want to earn their success through their ambition and education.

#### Political Issues

The values of the community certainly reflect the issues that the community elites interviewed noted as most important to the community. Certain issues were named numerous times as those “significant to the community” or on “the community’s issue agenda.” The most frequently cited issues on the community’s agenda included, U.S.-India policy, immigration, discrimination, regulation (particularly of small business), healthcare, lower taxes, and education.

As previously discussed, U.S.-India policy may be the most prevalent issue and the potential “glue” for the community. Again, as Respondents C, F, G and K noted, the first generation may be more interested in this issue than the second generation because the first generation has closer ties to India. These leaders noted events like the nuclear deal and Mumbai attacks as mobilizers for the community. In addition, Respondent K noted that the India Caucus is the largest caucus on Capitol Hill, which he believed demonstrates the weight and popularity

of having good relations with India. Since India is the country of common descent for the Indian American community, it seems to have potential in serving as an issue to unify the community. Nevertheless, issues in identity and diversity may alter an individual's perception of identifying with India at all.

Every respondent noted immigration as an issue of concern for the community for a number of reasons. The first reason deals with family. This is not, however, exclusively for family reunification, but also to bring family over to help run their businesses, as Respondent D observed. Respondents D and G noted that the backlog is of concern to many Indian Americans, though they do not necessarily make demands for changing the system.

The issue of discrimination seems to be one of which Democratic respondents were more cognizant. Respondents B, D, G, H, and I all noted that this is an issue the community faces. However, as Respondent H observed, "we haven't been victimized enough," for this to be a critical mobilizing issue. Respondent G recalled a conversation he had with NAACP Chairman Julian Bond, where he sought his advice on mobilizing a minority group and wanted his insight as to why the Indian American community does not mobilize well; the respondent recalled that Mr. Bond told him that the black community "had suffered over 200 years of oppression in the United States," in comparison to the Indian American community, which is smaller and much younger.

Meanwhile, some respondents were completely ambivalent to the issue. For instance, Respondent K was taken aback at the mention of this issue, claiming that "no one would dare to discriminate against us because if they do, we'll show them how successful we are." Nevertheless, as Respondents G and I hypothesized, the community should not remain reactive and wait for a crisis of discrimination to unite them, but should organize now. As Respondent G

noted, “this country has a history of internment, and we shouldn’t wait for our internment to galvanize,” citing that “9/11 opened our eyes to this [potential for racism against the community].” Respondent I agreed that there is “a need for a voice before our civil liberties are taken away,” finding that “God-forbid there would ever be a home-grown brown terrorist; our community would not be ready to handle the backlash.”

The next issue, lack of government regulation, stems from the prevalence of small business owners inside the community. In addition, as Respondent C noted, Indians are often wary of government regulation and intrusion because of widespread corruption in the Indian government where it is typical to give bribes to government officials, in order to pass stringent regulations. Respondent G agreed with Respondent C’s assertion, finding that “small business issues are the conservative element of the community. They’re very opposed to government regulation and interference.” Respondents A and G were the only ones to mention healthcare, as an issue of interest to the community, but noted that this was due to its relationship with small business owners. Respondent G found that the high prices of medical insurance makes it difficult for small business owners to cover insurance for their employees, so they prefer to hire within the family so that they do not need to provide coverage. Respondent A also found this issue to be important because the community encompasses many physicians.

In addition, the community also tends to support lower taxes. Respondents A, C, E, F, G and J provided anecdotal evidence of this. Respondent J finds that “fiscal responsibility is important to the community. They tend to be in a higher income bracket, so they support lower taxes.” Respondent E also found that the community is in opposition to the estate or death tax because of a culture for providing for their future in their children and grandchildren, as an

investment. Respondent C also argued that the community “does not want to be penalized for success and hard work,” both of which the community values.

Finally, while many respondents noted education as a value, Respondent G found that it is a public policy issue of interest because “this was the reason why Indians came here. They want better public schools and access to higher education [for their children].”

### Organizations

Through the process of interviewing various respondents, there were several organizations that play a noteworthy role inside the community, which served as a starting point for identifying and locating potential interview respondents. Representatives from organizations that contributed included, Network of South Asian Professionals (NetSAP), Indian American Leadership Initiative (IALI), Indian American Republican Council (IARC), Indian American Center for Political Awareness (IACPA), Indians for McCain, Hindu American Foundation (HAF), Association of American Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI), Asian American Hotel Owners Association (AAHOA), and South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT).

Respondent K, who holds an executive board position in NetSAP, described the organization as non-partisan and a non-profit. NetSAP or NetIP (Indian Professionals) chapters can be found across the United States and Canada, but the D.C. chapter is one of the oldest and the largest. Although the organization is an affiliate chapter of NetIP North America, the organization chose an inclusive charter to all South Asians. The requirements to join are that the individual must be 21 years old, possess an undergraduate degree, and be of South Asian descent. The organization is professional, and not social in nature. Respondent K listed “political awareness, cultural awareness, professional development, and community service,” as the organization’s goals. In terms of political awareness, she noted again that the organization is

non-partisan, but that it holds discussions of political issues called "Chai Chat" with representation from all political parties. This month's discussion is on the issue of H1B visas and the immigration system. Respondent A also recalled attending one of these events about "how to make the community a voting bloc," in which he said the results were inconclusive and he believed that it would not be possible because the community has no issue to galvanize them to do so. Respondent K also stated that many of the 400 plus members are part of political organizations like USINPAC (which she said holds rallies, information sessions, and happy hours) and the South Asian Bar Association.

IALI is a liberal organization that supports Indian-American Democrats and progressives. Respondents H and I are both currently board members who offered insight into the organization. When it was originally founded in 2000, it was a bipartisan organization that provided support for the election (through money) and appointments of Indian Americans and putting forth Indian American candidates. However, in 2005, Respondent H said that "Bobby Jindal forced a crisis in moral conscience." He said that one segment supported Indian Americans (which he said was prevalent among the first generation) and another segment broke away and supported progressives. The Board of Directors decided to promote only Democrats, as they decided that the Democratic Party best supported Indian American interests and ideals. IALI has one Executive Assistant as an employee, but a working board of seven individuals. Currently, it has 3,500 active and progressive individuals in its database.

IALI's counterpart is the IARC. It was founded in 2001. Respondent E, a board member, states the "primary mission of the organization is to educate Indian Americans on conservative policies and express why they should embrace conservative policies." He also noted that it helps support conservative candidates not only with money, but also to mobilize grassroots activities

for campaigns. Currently, it has 22 people on its National Board of Directors and 14 state chapter affiliates.

IACPA was established in 1993 by Gopal Raju, the founder of *India Abroad*. Respondent D, who helped create and manage the organization, recalled its history. Mr. Raju found that the Indian American community “was not politically involved, did not take advantage of their economic and educational attainment, and when they did take action – they were ineffective.” He continued on saying that “he had a vision” for the community to galvanize politically. Mr. Raju contacted then Congressman from New York, Stephen Solarz, who was then, the only political elite who had interest in and advocated for the community. At the time, Congressman Solarz “was the best informed Member of Congress on South Asian affairs, going as far to push for the creation of a bureau in the State Department.” Congressman Solarz suggested that Mr. Raju set up an organization to teach the community about politics and for members of Congress to learn about Indian American issues. They found that every member had at least 100 Indian Americans in their district and used this as a leverage point with members of Congress to get their attention. Congressman Solarz suggested finding a congressional staffer, who would have political expertise, to start and run the organization. However, at the time, Mr. Raju “found a universe of zero.” There were no Indian American congressional staffers, and there had only been four in the past, who were unwilling to leave their jobs. Former Congressman Solarz then recommended that Respondent D, as an ethnic political expert, run the organization.

IACPA’s objectives, drawn up by Respondent D, included encouraging “members to be aware of U.S.-India relations (particularly with trade, since India became closer to the U.S. post-Cold War) and awareness of Indians within their districts.” He noted that some members like Frank Pallone (NJ-6) had numbers of Indian Americans in the thousands. Finally, the third

objective he state was to find out “what is your [Indian American] community doing?” In order to achieve the organization’s outlined objectives, the center reached out to House members through briefings; many of them, he said, were completely ignorant of India, noting that one Congressman could not find it on a map. He then requested that the members write opinion editorials on issues of interest to the community like trade and foreign relations that were not only published in *India Abroad*, but also sent to every Indian American in their respective districts. By the mid-1990’s, the respondent had hired staff to run an internship program for Indian American students to intern on Capitol Hill, in the White House, and government agencies. The program members met with various Congressmen and Senators like Harry Reid and Hillary Clinton and at one point, even the ambassador to India. The program was highly competitive, and therefore, successful with nearly 200 students having attended by the program’s end in 2006. In the last intern classes, 5 students would be chosen to travel to India for four weeks, and they were hosted by the Prime Minister. The respondent found that this program “made it acceptable for members of Congress to hire Indian Americans on staff,” and he currently believes there are 40 to 50 Indian Americans working on the Hill today.

The program and center dwindled, due to a lack of fundraising and the community’s unwillingness to donate. The majority of programming, Respondent D, said came from Mr. Raju’s personal funds, which he claimed was a source of tension between the two because Respondent D believed that this would not make the organization self-sufficient and disconnected. Following Mr. Raju’s funeral in 2007, Respondent I, a former IACPA intern and employee, met with the alumni network and realized the void that the center’s demise had created. As such, Respondent I and other alumni restarted the program and renamed it the Washington Leadership Program. It has currently just accepted its first class of interns. However,

Respondent I noted it could only afford to take 5, again due to small amounts of money received from extensive fundraising.

Respondent N observed that he and a few other Indian Americans, who were business leaders, recognized the benefits of IACPA, but found that the organization still left a formal leadership void that needed to be filled. As one of the former executive directors of IACPA, this respondent specifically wanted a leadership initiative for Indian youth that connected them Indian leaders of corporations. While he initially wanted to formalize this participation with IACPA, he envisioned this organization having a main goal of leadership, while IACPA was evolving into “a quasi-political advocacy organization”, in addition to maintaining leadership development. A decision was made to form a separate organization “with a focus on leadership through mentorship combined with promoting civic participation instead of political advocacy.” The organization was initially named the Indian American Leadership Center, but was changed to South Asian Americans Leading Together “to reflect how [the] people [involved] viewed themselves.” Nevertheless, SAALT’s advocacy arm emerged after 9/11 because “a major civil rights concern developed for the South Asian community” with the rise of hate crimes. Respondent N regards the two greatest accomplishments of this organization, in his time there, as a documentary on hate crimes that was ready to release in the aftermath of 9/11 and a national service day called the National Gandhi Day of Service (now referred to as the National South Asian Day of Service).

This study also gained some insight into Indians for McCain, meeting with Respondent C, who played a leadership role in this organization. The group’s goal was to educate Indians on John McCain and Sarah Palin, in an effort to garner support and votes. The group provided an analysis of where each of the tickets fell on Indian issues and news of specific interest to this

group like President Obama's memorandum to his campaign with anti-Indian remarks and an opinion editorial by John McCain in the *Indian Express*. Respondent C also serving on John McCain's campaign noted that the campaign included Indian Americans as part of the established "South Asian" coalition. Although no respondent belonged to the group "South Asians for Obama," Respondents G and I participated in the group noting that they had never witnessed the mobilization of so many second generation Indian Americans, which Respondent G believes is due to empathizing with President Obama for being a second generation immigrant, as well. Both respondents also observed that the Democratic Party already had some infrastructure available to them because of Al Gore and John Kerry Campaigns (the latter of which was the first to have formalized South Asian outreach).

Finally, Respondent B, on the Executive Council of HAF, described the activism of this organization. It was established in 2003 and currently has four full-time staff and a core team of volunteers (ranging from 3 to 13 people) who handle the bulk of the work. The Executive Council consists of four people. Although the respondent did not offer the number of members, she said the number grows weekly. The respondent offered a history of the organization, where she started off as a volunteer then co-founder with about five other individuals, who felt the need "to dispel the misportrayal of Hinduism." She discerned that "Hindus were always in a reactionary mode," and that the Indian community differed from the Hindu community because "not all Indians are Hindus and not all Hindus are Indians." In short, Respondent B observed that the Hindu-American community is a separate and distinct group with a different belief system from secular Indian Americans because Hinduism informs culture and beliefs for those who identify with the religion. She thought that the notion of secular Indian Americans is confusing because it alludes to individuals that have no identification with faith at all and believed it

confusing to one's identity both culturally and politically, when individuals are sent messages that faith should not inform decisions, whether they are moral or political decisions.

Furthermore, she state that many Hindu-Americans have Caribbean roots or European descent, and "HAF seeks to provide a voice for these individuals, as well." The organization, she believed, is "a success in coming together and creating a professional, proactive voice." The organization is a 501(c)3 that does not endorse candidates, but rather serves as a "clearinghouse of information for the community." It provides "educational information and states to look at issues not only from an Indian-American standpoint, but a Hindu-American standpoint. It works to educate leaders and the public on issues that concern Hindus, including religious liberty, the portrayal of Hinduism, hate crimes, and human rights. It typically does not take a stance on political issues like bioethics (stem cell research and the death penalty) or the nuclear deal (issues that concern the Indian community), but rather presents factual information for both sides of the argument. Its greatest successes have been in lobbying for Bhutanese Hindus to gain refugee asylum in the United States, a successful court case against California textbooks that did not accurately "reflect our faith and values and negatively impacted our children," and raising the awareness of Hinduism and religious tolerance through lobbying members of Congress, outreach to the public, and litigation (specifically with two court cases, with one ruling in HAF's favor, in which states planned to display the 10 Commandments on state government) grounds.

The community has numerous organizations that represent various voices and points of views. The sheer number and types of organizations (and their successes) point to political and community activism at larger extents than anticipated. However, this evidence also provides support for the hypothesis in that the community is very fragmented and diverse with little cohesion, but rather several distinct and differing voices and opinions.

**Table 4. History of Indian American Organizations<sup>1</sup>**

<b>Organization Name and Type</b>	<b>Date of establishment</b>
Orissa Society of Americas (Regional) <sup>2</sup>	1979
National Federation of Indian Associations	1980
<b>Association of American Physicians of Indian Origin (Professional)</b>	1989
<b>Asian American Hotel Owners Association (Professional)</b>	1989
<b>Indian American Center for Political Awareness (Indian American)</b>	1993
<b>NetSAP/NetSAP DC (Professional Umbrella)</b>	1995/1997
<b>South Asian Americans Leading Together (Umbrella)</b>	2000
<b>Indian American Leadership Initiative (Party Affiliated)</b>	2000
USINPAC (Indian American)	2002
<b>Indian American Republican Council (Party Affiliated)</b>	2002
<b>Hindu American Foundation (Hindu)</b>	2003

### Leadership

Indian Americans rarely run for office or hold high appointments in the federal government. However, based on elite interviews, it seems that this form of political participation is on the rise within the community. Evidence shows that this may be changing under the Obama administration.

<sup>1</sup> Interviews were conducted with former or current board members of organizations in bold.

<sup>2</sup> Several other regional organizations exist within America that emerged in the late 1970's and early 1980's.

Respondent G noted that the President picked several Indian American individuals on his transition team (noting at least give people) and also in his permanent administration like. On his transition team, he named Nick Rathod as Director of the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, Arti Rai as part of a review on science, technology, space, arts, and humanities, Anjan Mukherjee as a member of the economics and international trade agency review team, Preeta Bansal as the General Counsel and Senior Policy Advisor for the Office of Management and Budget, and Sonal Shah as the co-chair of the Technology, Innovation, and Government Reform panel. He has nominated numerous people to his administration, including Vivek Kundra (federal Chief Information Officer), Rich Verma (Assistant Secretary for Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs at the State Department), and Sanjay Gupta (who withdrew his nomination for Surgeon General).

Respondent D also noted that more people began running for Congress through the 1990s, but for the wrong reasons. They were not interested in affecting politics and policy, but were only interested in fundraising large amounts of money and gaining recognition. However, he explained that he wrote numerous articles in *India Abroad* pleading for the community to run for local and state level offices and “then work your way up to Congress.” He noted that Bobby Jindal and Kumar Barve (Maryland State Delegate) are the “shining lights” of their respective parties. Since the election of D.S. Saund, Bobby Jindal has been the only other Indian American Congressman. Nevertheless, the Congressional Caucus on India is the largest on the Hill, which means that all of those involved are not Indian Americans; Respondent G noted that their main interest is in improving U.S.-India relations.

Respondents G and I observed that on the local and state level Indian American candidates have found more success than on the federal level. Respondent G cited the successes

of Representatives Raj Goyle of Georgia and Jay Goyal of Ohio. Respondent I stated that Representative Goyal, the first Asian American to be elected to the Ohio House of Representatives and currently serving as Majority Whip, is positioning himself to run for Congress in 2010 – similarly to the strategy Respondent D championed.

Nevertheless, while this strategy remains successful for Representative Goyal, political advancement in leadership remains gradual for Indian Americans. Indian Americans in political leadership is remnant of the glass ceiling for women in political leadership positions, where the minority group must essentially work their way up the political ladder rather than have direct access. Furthermore, the Indian American experience in political leadership also resembles women's struggles in political leadership in that Indian Americans do not typically overtly seek these positions, but rather simply fall into the realm of politics haphazardly without intending to pursue it as a career. Respondents G and N observed that many Indian Americans participate in politics or as political leaders, but often do so outside of this ethnic construction; instead, these leaders view themselves as politically active people or politicians, who happen to be Indian. Thus, these attitudes in short, help perpetuate the glass ceiling for Indian Americans in political leadership.

#### Political Contributions

Indian Americans have, however, proved themselves as an efficacious coalition, in the realm of campaign contributions. Dating back twelve years, a survey found that 37.5% of Indians personally participated in a fundraiser. One extraordinary example during the 1996 election was a fundraiser (with President Clinton in attendance) organized by the Indian community in Washington, D.C. that raised \$500,000 for the Democratic Party (Kanjilal 1996). Kurien also provides recent and compelling figures from James Lindsay, the vice president of the Council on

Foreign Relations, that Indian Americans donated approximately \$8 million to federal election campaigns in the three elections before 2004 (2007). Another estimate states that they had donated \$8 million in the 2000 election cycle alone (Cho and Lad 2004). In 2004, another analyst at the Council of Foreign Relations found that the community raised \$5 million for the Democratic Party and \$1.5 million for the Republican Party (Kurien 2007). This latter figure, in particular, is telling in terms of how Indian Americans may behave as a voting bloc, as Cho and Lad also found that Indian Americans favor Democrats to Republican in terms of donations, but that they do not discriminate against Republicans if the candidate is Asian Indian (or Indian American) (2004). Older scholarship also supports the notion that Indian Americans tend to donate more and have a more active role in party politics, particularly within the Democratic Party than the average American (Kanjilal 1996). This may suggest that Indian Americans contribute politically through money because they may lack time due to work, family, or other obligations.

**Table 5. Politically Active Ethnic PACs – Contributions to PACs from Individual Donors<sup>3</sup>**

	Indian-American	Cuban	Armenian	Jewish
Number of PACs	3	4	5	9
Aggregate Contributions to PACs from individual donors	1,033,285.00	1,984,836.00	562,569.00	1,773,320.00
Average Contributions to PACs from individual donors	129,160.62	198,483.60	40,183.35	73,888.333
Range of Contributions from individual donors	393,852.00	709,881.00	126,200.00	248,315.00
Interquartile Range of	283,971.00	547,944.00	82,499.00	143,362.50

Contributions from individual donors				
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<b>Table 6. Politically Active Ethnic PACs – Contributions to Federal Candidates</b>				
	<b>Indian-American</b>	<b>Cuban</b>	<b>Armenian</b>	<b>Jewish</b>
<b>Aggregate Contributions to federal candidates</b>	329,849.00	1,611,071.00	301,381.00	1,605,292.00
<b>Average PAC Contributions to federal candidates</b>	41,231.13	161,107.10	21,527.21	66,887.17
<b>Range of PAC Contributions to federal candidates</b>	122,499.00	752,500.00	105,797.00	283,000.00
<b>Interquartile range of PAC Contributions to federal candidates</b>	90,675.00	211,500.00	30,750.00	140,850.00

<b>Table 7. Percentage Breakdown of India PAC Contributions by Party Affiliation</b>	
<b>Party</b>	<b>Percentage of Total Indian PAC Contributions to Federal Candidates by Party</b>
Democrats	52.509%
Republicans	47.491%

**Table 8. Percentage Breakdown of Indian PAC Contributions by Congressional Houses and Party Affiliation**

Party	Percentage of Total Indian PAC Contributions to Federal Candidates by Party in Each House
House Democrats	44.187%
House Republicans	35.486%
Senate Democrats	8.322%
Senate Republicans	12.005%

The Indian American community does not appear to mobilize or coalesce around Indian American PACs. The community also does not appear well organized in terms contributing to PACs, contributing to federal candidates, or in forming active PACs. However, the Indian American PACs do not appear to less efficacious than other ethnic community PACs; rather, the data seems to demonstrate a general lack of cohesion among ethnic communities in PAC activity. Thus, while the data may seem to provide support for the hypothesis, this general trend among ethnic PACs greatly qualifies this support, as PAC activity may not yet serve as an effective indicator of ethnic political participation.

Of all four communities examined, the Indian American community has the least number of PACs. Although Indian Americans have created half the number of PACs that the Jewish community has created, the numbers of ethnic PACs across the board are low. Therefore, this number does not necessarily serve as a good indicator of activism in comparison with other ethnic communities, but rather demonstrates a general lack of activism and cohesion in PAC activity.

In terms of numbers however, the Indian American community had the second highest aggregate and average contributions from individual donors to PACs. This finding does not remain consistent with the hypothesis. Despite a Northern Virginian community leader's anecdotal evidence describing a Democratic strategy session in which the Party discussed the Indian American community becoming a threat to the Democratic Party's fundraising and also a monetary benefactor to the Republican Party, similarly to how the Jewish community's financial prowess serves the Democratic Party, the community contributed in large amounts to the PACs in comparison to the Armenian community and also in comparison the Jewish community, in terms of average contributions per election cycle. However, the Indian American PACs did not contribute effectively to federal candidates. Thus, while the community may have organized more than the Armenian and Jewish communities, and could have possibly rivaled the widely successful Cuban community in terms of individual contributions to PACs, Indian American PACs were not necessarily effective in donating to federal candidates. Indian American PACs only offered roughly 20% and 50% of the monetary contributions to federal candidates as Cuban American and Jewish PACs. As such, this may infer a lack of Indian American influence over politicians that affect governance.

The data also showed the wide dispersion of contributions both from individuals to the PAC and from the PAC to federal candidates, not only for the Indian American community, but also for all of the other ethnic communities' PACs. For instance, two PACs, the American Association of Indian Physicians and the India US PAC (formed in Pennsylvania) filed with the FEC, but never took any action. Other PACs like the India US PAC (in New Jersey) took individual contributions in 2002 and 2004, but did not contribute to federal candidates and subsequently disbanded with no activity in the last two election cycles. On the other hand, the

Indian American Republican PAC only formed recently within the last two election cycles. The latter trends of PACs disbanding in some recent election cycles, while others only recently formed, was also seen within the other categories of ethnic PACs. In short, ethnic PACs, including the Indian American community's PACs are sporadic at best in their activity. Taken into consideration with the relatively few ethnic PACs within each community, this may demonstrate that ethnic communities have yet to utilize PACs as a means of political participation.

### **Analysis of Concurrent Data**

This study has examined numerous aspects of Indian American political participation using various quantitative and qualitative data. First, in terms of current levels of political participation, Indian Americans possess low rates of voter turnout and an ineffective mechanism for advocacy and lobbying, with the exception of critical mobilizing events that increase group consciousness. In terms of voter turnout and behavior, each ethnic group is statistically significantly different. This lends support to the notion that Indian Americans are different from other groups that cannot be explained solely through existing theories of mobilization; instead, new or different theoretical approaches like the role of generational adaptation or polarization politics. In addition, as numerous respondents pointed out, including Respondents F, G, and K, noted that the small numbers of the community and its wide dispersion make it difficult for them to turn out in large numbers that sway elections or form a significant voting bloc.

Although the community is active in community organization, these organizations are not effective, due to internal conflict within the organizations and the community as a whole. However, Indian Americans do participate at high rates in giving political contributions, though they have not learned how to exercise the benefits of political that comes with money. As Respondent A stated, "money talks," in terms of political influence, but as a community, political contributions may not necessarily serve as a mechanism for cohesion, until the community finds a common cause or issue worth donating in large amounts to, in an effort to serve as a voice for that cause or issue. However, this is not to say that on an individual level the Indian American community may wield a great deal of political influence. For instance, this same leader noted his first political activity was a political contribution to a candidate. Both Respondents A and B observed that the Indian American community has common values of family, education, and

success. This may lead to political contributions; that is, as the Northern Virginian community leader noted, heads of households will donate to a candidate for political access in an effort to ensure success, whether it is in advocating for less business regulations to run a small business or more business visas for family members.

The data shows that the Indian American community tends to favor slightly Democratic candidates over Republican candidates. The overall trend remains consistent with prior research that has shown a preference for the Democratic Party among Indian Americans. However, when the data was broken down between House and Senate candidates, the community seemed to prefer Senate Republicans, which does not remain consistent with prior literature. The close margin between both parties in political contributions remains consistent with interviews of community leaders that described the community as having no overwhelming preference for one party over another, but rather a normal distribution between both parties.

The noted marginal preference for Democratic candidates in political contributions, with the exception of Senate Republican candidates, may seem aberrant given overwhelming preferences in voter turnout for Democrats, but the small amount of data collected may have contributed to this anomaly. First, the data may be skewed in that one of the two Indian American PACs (the Indian American Republican Council) contributed to federal candidates contributed solely to Republican candidates. Thus, Indian Americans may have a greater preference for Democratic candidates than this data may demonstrate. It may also contribute to the preference towards Senate Republican candidates. In addition, higher socioeconomic statuses are often associated with an affiliation to the Republican Party; political contributions may then tend to come from those with a higher socioeconomic status and thus, a greater

likelihood of Republican affiliation. Again, this factor may overstate Republican support from the Indian American community.

Empirical evidence shows relative cohesion among the Indian American community in supporting Indian American candidates across party lines. Respondent G noted that Indian Americans support success and not the unknown, which makes them wary of political contributions. He cited a conversation with Maryland Delegate Kumar Barve in which Mr. Barve told him that his own ethnic community was his toughest audience, in that Mr. Barve had the most difficult time in convincing them that although he was Indian American, he was still a viable candidate. Likewise, Respondent M observed that Ashwin Madia in Minnesota fell subject to the same problem, during his campaign for Congress. Respondent D, former director of the Indian American Center for Political Awareness, also agreed with this notion that Indian Americans generally have difficulties understanding the purpose and utility in political contributions as a form of political expression or community development. For instance, he noted that the *India Abroad* editor who founded and backed the Indian American Center for Political Awareness, Gopal Raju, financed internship stipends and the organization itself because despite large and intense fundraising efforts, the community would not lend its support.

However, the majority of the evidence shows a departure from these two cases. Respondent G noted that the both parties have attempted to tap into the community for its financial resources. He noted that the Democratic Party began to do so in the early 1990's and formed an Indo-American council as a fundraising initiative and steering committee to garner political contributions from the huge donor network, in addition to increasing voter contact. Respondent C supported this notion, noting that South Asians and Indian-American fundraisers

among the Asian-American coalition were “disproportionately higher than other groups --- upwards towards 50%” of fundraising money.

The community tends to give in large amounts to candidates who are friendly towards India. Respondent C, founder of Indian Americans for McCain, provided a copy of an internal campaign memo from the Obama campaign, during the primary season, which pointed to the willingness of the Indian American community’s historical support of President Bill Clinton and also his wife, then Presidential candidate, Senator Hilary Clinton. Opening with the line “The Clintons have reaped significant financial rewards from their relationship with the Indian community, both in their personal finances and Hillary’s campaign fundraising,” the memo goes on to describe the extraordinary fundraising efforts within the community to contribute to her campaign. The memo noted that in April 2007, *Mangalorean*, an internet news source, reported that Indian Americans for Hillary 2008 (IAFH) had already raised \$1 million, and that in June of 2007, the *New York Times* reported that ‘two Indo-American receptions have a total of \$450,000 in commitments.’ USINPAC also contributes to both sides of the aisle when it comes to members of Congress who have large Indian constituencies and are actively involved in Indian American politics like Frank Pallone, a Democrat whose district includes Edison, New Jersey, a heavily populated Indian American community, and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, a Republican from Florida.

Indian Americans are also willing to cross party lines to support candidates of their own ethnicity. As Respondent G noted, Indian Americans are aware of their ethnicity and minority status, which informs their party affiliation; it may also affect their support of candidates that share the same ethnicity. An Indian American candidate from Northern Virginia utilized his own social network within the community to raise money, and many individuals in the community

crossed party lines. While Respondent B spoke of great criticism of Ashwin Madia from Indian Americans in the Republican Party, one in five of his donors came from the Indian American community. Also, the incoming President of the Indian American Republican Council found that Indian Americans crossed party lines to support Bobby Jindal, often viewed as ultraconservative. Finally, USINPAC openly supports candidates based on Indian ethnicity; it provided monetary support to both Bobby Jindal and Raj Peter Bhakta in their 2006 Congressional races, as well as Democrat Ashwin Madia in 2008.

In the future, as ethnic communities continue to develop or coalesce, perhaps around critical events, they may choose to take advantage of the power of influence from giving political contributions. For instance, Respondent B leader found that in a time of crisis when her organization shouldered a \$124,000 legal bill surrounding a case against a state's use of text books that inaccurately portrayed Hinduism at a time when the organization had approximately half this amount in their bank account, the community coalesced and financed the legal case because of the nature and sensitivity of the case. Thus, when the community found a common grievance and mutually blamed the system (the state government), it mobilized in support of this issue. In any event, the Indian American community remains on the rise in terms of individual contributions to candidates; however, in order for the community to collectivize its money, anecdotal evidence supports that without an issue that sheds light on a mutual interest (like experiencing a prevalent injustice that increases group consciousness) within the community, the community will not cohere. Aside from ethnic PACs, the community appears active in making political contributions on an individual level, given anecdotal evidence of contributing largely to candidates. The community seems moderately cohesive in providing support for candidates that they empathize with candidates based on shared Indian heritage and on support for the Indian

American constituency like Congressman Frank Pallone or pro U.S.-Indian Relations like Hillary Clinton. Thus, as more Indian American candidates run for office and non-Indian American candidates recognize an opportunity in taking on issues related to the specific community or India, the community should likely continue its efficacy in political contributions with a vast potential for future growth. Further survey research should be completed on a national scale with larger sample sizes to discover if Indian Americans are politically active in other ways and if they participate in other types of political groups that are not based upon solely ethnic constructions.

Next, findings based on voting turnout and behavior, community organization, and political contributions have provided mixed support for the hypothesis that Indian Americans have difficulties in finding aspects of commonality to allow the community to cohere politically. In addition, the findings have provided insight into these general research questions: is there a reason for political cohesion within the Indian American community, and what is the feasibility and viability of forming a unified group or voice to represent the community and its interests?

In terms of voting behavior and party affiliation, the Indian American community is relatively cohesive in its support of Democratic candidates based on both quantitative and qualitative data. However, the Republican Party has an opportunity to reach out to this group for votes because of the community's relatively conservative ideological preferences. Democratic respondents interviewed noted that the Indian American and South Asian communities overwhelmingly supported Democratic candidates in the 2008 election; while the communities have had long standing relations with the Clintons, as Respondent D observed, the community largely supported Barack Obama in the general election mobilizing the second generation to great extents, according to Respondent G. Respondents G and I observed that the Democratic

Party has reached out to the Indian American and South Asian communities, beginning with Bill Clinton and Al Gore and establishing a coalition in John Kerry's 2004 campaign, whereas the Republican Party is just beginning to establish outreach to the South Asian community.

Several respondents observed however, that the Indian American community tends to affiliate with the Democratic Party utilizing the heuristic of ethnicity to identify with candidates sympathetic to minorities, which historically has tended to be Democrats. Thus, while respondents C, F, G, H, I, J, and K noted that ideologically, the community is both fiscally and socially conservative and possesses socioeconomic indicators that would align with Republican affiliation (high educational attainment and income bracket), ethnicity and parties and candidates, who are sympathetic toward ethnic groups and minorities will get the community's vote.

In addition, the Democratic Party contacted 8.8% of the sample size of Indian Americans in the ANES data file, which is higher than all other respondents. The only group that the Party contacted more frequently was Jews at 18.9%. However, the Republican Party still reached out to Indian Americans at 5.3%, which was higher than Jews, but less than Cubans, Armenians, and all other respondents. Statistical significance with a p value of .005 shows a relationship exists between both variables.

Cohesion based on party affiliation, however, is less clear in terms of political contributions. This may be due to several reasons. First, political contributions typically favor the Republican Party because it attracts higher socioeconomic demographics. Secondly, the relatively few Indian Americans PACs greatly qualifies an ability to form generalizations, particularly given that one of the three active PACs in the last four election cycles donates exclusively to the Republican Party.

However, given data from USINPAC and the efficacy of IALI, it seems that the Democratic Party is just as effective in putting forth Indian American candidates and candidates sympathetic to the community's issues. Support for candidates, however, that is Indian American, regardless of affiliation, is also telling regarding the community's cohesion. While IALI decided to focus exclusively on Democratic candidates after the rise of Bobby Jindal, and its counterpart, IARC, is also active, the community as a whole, tends to support the advancement of Indian Americans in politics with the requirement that the individual has a record of success; thus, while the community would like to support the advancement of its own candidates, the greatest obstacle Indian American candidates face is proving to the community that other Americans are willing to support a brown candidate. The community's organization efforts, however, provide a great deal of support for the hypothesis. Numerous levels of segmentation, some which are extremely divisive in nature like region and profession, make it seem nearly impossible for the community to unite because it has wide and varied interests.

Evidence showing that the community demonstrates differences in opinion by generation, religion, region, and profession has led to varied concerns, interests, and issues politically. Nevertheless, the community remains cohesive in terms of cultural values, which could serve as a common point. It seems unlikely that the cultural values of this community (family, education, and success) would lead to a critical mobilizing event of interest to the community since issues like the gay marriage debate or vouchers for charter schools have yet to spark their interest. Currently, the community possesses no issue or network of issues that unifies it or allows the community to heighten its group consciousness as members of the Indian American community. Nevertheless, Indian Americans have some potential issues of common interest. Similarly to African Americans or Japanese Americans, discrimination may potentially unite the community,

but only in the event of an uptick following a severe critical mobilizing event. U.S.-India relations may serve as an issue of interest for all Indian Americans, similarly to the Jewish lobby with U.S.-Israel relations, if the first and second generation can make amends and find common ground. However, both issues seem unlikely as a unifier given that the Indian American community, as noted by numerous respondents, is mainstream and well integrated into American society and also that the second generation has less of an interest in India relations because many identify as simply South Asian or only American and not as Indian to a significant extent.

According to ANES data, Indian Americans found 'there were no issues' that served as the most important national problem at a 21.1%, which is significantly higher compared to any other ethnic group, including all other respondents. In this survey, Indian Americans found Economics and Business and Public Order both important national problems at 19.3%, followed by social welfare at 14.0%. These results were all found to be statistically significantly different from Cubans, Armenians, and Jews with a p value of .009.

At present, the Indian American community lacks the necessary age, education, and infrastructure to achieve a single unified voice or coalition. The community, as a whole, is quite young, given that the majority of immigrants came after immigration reforms in 1965. First generation immigrants typically worked to ensure success before organizing to make political demands, which is not necessarily unique to the Indian immigrant group. Since the Indian American community has two generations, it is logical that the community has only just started its involvement in politics, as it has established itself with enough money and leisure time for survival in America. Furthermore, the size of the community makes it difficult for it to wield influence through votes, outside of state elections, where concentrations of Indian Americans may be able to sway an election.

Finally, Indian Americans may have issues in trust and efficacy that contribute to their lack of political involvement. This may be due to the first generation's experiences with democracy and the prevalence of corruption, according to Respondents C and G. For instance, on a five point scale (from zero to five, five being the greatest amount of trust) to measure political cynicism and distrust developed by the Michigan Survey Research Center in 1964. Indian Americans had the highest percentage of those respondents that fell in the zero category in comparison to Cubans, Armenians, and Jews at 38.6%. However, this number is lower than in comparison to all respondents at 42.6%. When comparing the percentages of individuals that ranked between zero to two (the lower end of the scale for trust), Indian Americans had the highest percentages overall at 82.5%, followed by Jews at 81.8%, Armenians at 77.8%, all respondents at 77%, and Cubans at 66%. Test results are statistically significantly different between Indian Americans, Cubans, Armenians, and Jews with a p value of .022. Nevertheless, not all questions were asked in each year, which may limit the validity of the statistical findings presented in this section.

### Conclusion

As the community has increasingly become involved in politics, it is essential that the community learns about the political process and how to make demands, particularly in return for their monetary contributions; if they fail to do so, politicians will continue to take advantage of their wealth knowing that they will not be asked for any favors in return. In short, the community needs to be able to organize its votes and withhold money to back up its monetary contributions with substantive political demands. As the community ages, more issues may surface that will force the community to cohere in less of an ad hoc fashion. In order to form a cohesive community that does not disband after a critical mobilizing event, an issue needs to

surface or the community needs to find a common issue to continually rally around and form an infrastructure to maintain itself. Currently, the community lacks a stable meeting place and personnel and communication network for a political Indian American association or organization where individuals can meet, communicate, and begin to find a common platform. However, without a consistent issue, political education, and organized infrastructure, the community cannot have a cohesive and organized voice. Nevertheless, achieving a unified and organized Indian American community may only be a matter of time. As the community continues to develop in size and political maturity, it may learn to match its financial clout with more votes and other forms of political participation within the American political system. In the future, continuous political concerns or issues may emerge or the community may discover issues that serve as a basis for cohesion. Current theories of political participation and mobilization only offer a limited examination of Indian Americans. Therefore, further research should examine how other theories, perhaps in an era of party polarization, where each party takes much more distinct policy stances to differentiate themselves (Hershey 2009), affects Indian American political participation and mobilization.

## APPENDIX A: ELITE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

**Would you mind if I tape-recorded the interview? I just wish to do this in order to make sure that I not make any mistakes. Again, I promise you confidentiality in that your name will not be associated with any comments that you make.**

**First, I would like to learn about you.**

1. [ORGANIZATIONAL LEADER]

**Please give tell me a bit about your organization?**

*ASK FOR MATERIALS IF AVAILABLE*

*– How did you come to head this organization? [Did you start it or were you recruited?]*

*– What do you see as your primary mission?*

*– When was it formed?*

*– Do you have members?*

*– How large is your staff?*

*– What kind of activities were you engaged in during the 2008 elections?*

*– What do you regard as your top accomplishment?*

[ELECTED OFFICIAL OR CANDIDATE]

**Could you please tell me how you got started in electoral politics?**

*ASK FOR CAMPAIGN MATERIALS IF AVAILABLE*

- *How has being Indian American affected your political career?*
- *Can you tell me how much support you have received from the Indian American community?*
- *Are you involved in Indian American organizations?*
- *Could you give me some examples?*
- *How about Indian American groups within the [DEMOCRATIC/REPUBLICAN] party?*
- *How would you describe your political base? Within your district? Within your party?*

**Now I'd like to ask you some questions about the Indian American community based on your experiences.**

**2. What kinds of political issues do Indian Americans care most about?**

- *Why?*
- *Would you describe these as liberal or conservative issues?*

**3. How would you describe the values of the community? \**

- *Well, for example, political and cultural values*  
  
*.....cultural such as family ties, attitudes towards education as a way to get ahead?*  
  
*.....political such as trusting government and deference to authority?*

**4. Do Indian Americans have a common identity?**

- *How does this group identify itself?*
- *Some people speak about diaspora or ties back home – is this important?*
- *What common characteristics do they share that bring these individuals together?*
- *How cohesive are Indian Americans?*

5. **One point that has been raised is the role of key events in the mobilization of groups.**

**Some people point to issues like discrimination or immigration issues – how do you think these have affected Indian Americans?**

- *What about citizenship before the Luce-Celler Act and racial profiling after 9/11)?*
- *What about proposed immigration reforms?*
- *Are there other key events in Indian American history that you think are significant?*
- *If you were to pick a single mobilizing event, what would that be?*

6. **Do you find that Indian Americans tend to be more often, Democrats, Republicans or Independents?**

- *Why do you think that is?*
- *How cohesive are Indian Americans?*

7. **Does the community typically rally around Indian American candidates regardless of political party?**

- *What about candidates like Bobby Jindal or Amit Singh?*

8. **What is your sense of political participation? What kinds of political activity do Indian Americans engage in?**

*– Some research suggests that Indian Americans vote less on average than other groups  
– do you agree?*

*– What kinds of things mobilize Indian Americans – key events or targeted voter outreach methods, such as direct mail, phone calls, or canvassing?*

9. **Some political observers have described Indian Americans as “donor machines,” and not “voter machines.” Have you heard this before? Do you agree?**

*– Why is that?*

*– Do you think this is an effective strategy for Indian Americans to have national impact?*

*– What factors motivate Indian Americans to donate?*

10. **In terms of advocacy and lobbying, does the Indian American community typically mobilize as a single coalition or does it work in conjunction with others?**

*– If they mobilize in conjunction with others, what groups are those?*

*– What characteristics do they share in terms of identity with these other groups?*

*– How does your organization (or campaign) work with other groups?*

11. **Some research suggests that a schism exists in the Indian American community between secular Indian Americans and Hindus. Have you observed this?**

*– If so, can you give me some examples?*

– *Why do you think this is?*

– *Can this be resolved or ameliorated?*

12. **What other groups or leaders would you recommend I speak with?**

– *Can I use your name when I ask for an interview?*

13. **Is there anything else you would like to add or points you think I should examine in my research?**

14. **If I have any further questions, may I follow-up with a phone call or email?**

- *Ask for mailing address to send a thank you letter.*

**Appendix B: Interview Respondents**

<b>Respondent Designation</b>	<b>Respondent Title</b>	<b>Date interviewed</b>
Respondent A	Northern Virginian Republican Leader and Candidate	3/2/2009
Respondent B	Hindu American Community Leader	3/5/2009
Respondent C	Republican Community Leader	3/11/2009
Respondent D	Democratic Community and Political Education Leader	3/11/2009
Respondent E	Republican Community and Organization Leader	3/12/2009
Respondent F	Republican Community Leader	3/12/2009
Respondent G	Obama Transition Team Member	3/14/2009
Respondent H	Democratic Community Leader	3/18/2009
Respondent I	Democratic Community Leader	3/18/2009
Respondent J	South Asian Professional Organization Leader	3/19/2009
Respondent K	Republican Community Leader and Fundraiser	3/19/2009
Respondent L	U.S.-India Relations Expert	3/20/2009
Respondent M	Democratic Lobbyist	4/3/2009
Respondent N	South Asian Community Leader	4/12/2009



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