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Vinod and the Patels: The Puzzle of Indian-American Partisanship

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Vinod and the Patels: The Puzzle of Indian-American Partisanship

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**Abstract:** This project investigates Indian American partisanship. Why, despite several large cleavages like religion and income, do most Indian Americans identify with a single party? Building on a long tradition of studying partisanship, I posit that Indian-Americans share a group consciousness borne out of experiences of racial discrimination. This group consciousness drives Indian-Americans to identify as Democrats. First, I present several theories of party identification and evaluate their explanatory power, both theoretically and when applied to other groups, such as Jewish Americans and Asian-Americans. I then present an original theory of party identification in the Indian-American community. Next, I explore the nature of newspaper coverage on Indian-Americans by conducting a content analysis of *New York Times* and *India Abroad* articles. Finally, I use data from the 2016 CMPS to empirically test my theory. All together, this project provides a new way of considering a well-studied concept applied to an understudied group.
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Chapter I

Introduction

Vinod is, by all accounts, extremely wealthy (Biography in Context 2001). He moved to the United States to attend graduate school, settled down, and founded a company that sold computers in 1982. After Oracle (the computer technology company) acquired his business in 2010, Vinod moved into venture capitalism, where he continues to make healthy profits while living happily with his wife and four children. On the other end of the socioeconomic spectrum, Lata Patel and her husband, Pankaj, run a Budget Inn in Jasper, Georgia (Varadarajan 1999). Their motel is modest. Nestled in a town of fewer than 4,000 residents, the motel represents the Patels’ achievements in the United States - in their own words, their “American Dream.”

Vinod lives in California and the Patels live in Georgia. Vinod has earned enough money to comfortably last through his children’s lives, while the Patels continue to work and earn a livelihood. Despite the multitude of differences that distinguish Vinod and the Patels, surprisingly, they share more than just their Indian heritage. All three identify as Democrats. How could three people with vastly different life trajectories determine that they support the policies and priorities of the same political party? If Vinod and the Patels were white, then their distinct socioeconomic backgrounds might drive them to support opposing political parties. So why do they all identify as Democrats?

The larger question of why Indian-Americans tend to coalesce under the Democratic Party is a puzzling one. Despite the fact that Indians only make up about 1% of the U.S. population, they are, on average, remarkably wealthy and well-educated (López, et al 2017).
However, at the same time, many members of the racial group hold low-wage jobs, earn very little, and have low income levels (Dhingra 2016). In a population characterized by an unequal income and educational distribution, why do the majority of Indians identify as Democrats (Ramakrishnan, et al 2017)?

I began this project by stumbling across Michael Dawson’s 1994 book, *Behind the Mule: Race and Class in African-American Politics*. In the book, Dawson argues that African-Americans conceptualize their individual life chances as inextricably linked to the status of their entire racial group. The author then models a “Black Utility Heuristic” that African-Americans use to determine how they feel about policy issues and which candidates to vote for. According to Dawson, this Black Utility Heuristic drives African-Americans toward the Democratic Party.

More broadly, in political science, researchers have closely tied group consciousness (a broader version of Dawson’s linked fate) to experiences of racial discrimination. Scholars have argued that experiences with discrimination might facilitate this group-based psychological connection (Masuoka 2006; Sanchez 2006; Austin, et al 2012). Additionally, ample research suggests that there is a link between group consciousness and party identification (Mangum 2014; McDaniel 2018; Sanchez 2006; McClain, et al 2009; Masuoka 2006) and racial discrimination and party identification (Masuoka 2006; Mangum 2013; Austin, et al 2012; Stout and Garcia 2015; Sanchez 2006).

The central question of this thesis is why Indian-Americans coalesce in their support for the Democratic Party. This project attempts to contribute to a small body of literature that seeks to describe and understand Indian-American political behavior.

In order to do so, I develop a theory of Indian-American partisanship. In chapter 2, I examine already-existing theories of partisanship and highlight several reasons why they may not
be able to fully describe Indian-American partisanship acquisition. I then outline theories of partisanship acquisition as they relate to two predominantly-Democratic social groups, Jewish people and Asian-Americans. This background builds to an original theory of Indian-American party identification, which I present in the final section of the chapter.

Chapter 3 features a content analysis conducted on newspaper articles from *The New York Times* and *India Abroad* to explore what newspaper coverage about Indian-Americans looks like. I first provide some background on how the media reinforces group consciousness to contextualize the analysis. I then outline the methodology of my content analysis - how I collected the articles, what exactly I looked for as I analyzed them, and how I analyzed them. Next, I analyze the articles themselves. Evaluating newspaper articles from *The New York Times* and *India Abroad*, I find that negative coverage on Indian-Americans in those two populations occurs sufficiently infrequently that the likelihood of newspapers reinforcing Indian-American group consciousness is low. I close by discussing other pathways by which group consciousness could be created.

Chapter 4 considers the antecedents of Indian-Americans’ party identification. Here, I use the 2016 Comparative Multiracial Post-Election Survey (CMPS), which surveys 483 Indian-Americans. I find that while experiences of racial discrimination do not drive Indian-Americans toward the Democratic Party, the perception of group consciousness amongst Indian-Americans does when controlling for the already-existing theories of partisanship that I outline in chapter 2. The fact that group consciousness drives Indian-Americans to support the Democratic party independently of other well-established theories of partisanship suggests that group consciousness acts distinctly from other ways that political scientists had previously conceptualized partisanship acquisition. The empirical analysis tests whether the theory
advanced in chapter 2 is supported. Throughout my chapters of analysis, I maintain a discussion of how already-existing literature on partisanship acquisition and group consciousness explain my results.

The final chapter of this project provides an overview of the ground that this thesis covers. I then explore several potential avenues of future research. In sum, this project sheds light on the political behavior of an understudied, but fast-growing, racial group in the United States.
Chapter II

Theory

Introduction

In this chapter, I present a theory of Indian-American partisanship acquisition. First, I motivate my research by describing how most Indian-Americans identify as Democrats, even though we have ample reason to believe that they might be divided by partisanship. Second, I introduce three theories of party identification that may help us understand why Indian-Americans support the Democratic Party. Then, I use these theories to explore partisanship acquisition for two other predominantly-Democratic communities, Jewish Americans and Asian-Americans. After applying these theories of partisanship to these communities to understand the theories’ practical strengths and limitations, I present a specific theory of Asian-American and then Indian-American partisanship. Finally, I outline several hypotheses to test the theory of Indian-American partisanship.

Motivation

Indian-Americans are a diverse community. Expatriates left every corner of India to emigrate to the United States. They come from all parts of the socioeconomic spectrum; poor, middle class, and wealthy Indians emigrated from the country in pursuit of upward economic mobility. Hindus, Muslims, and members of other religious minorities chose to emigrate, further illustrating that there was no single “type” of person that was prone to move to the United States (Chandrasekhar 1986).
Within the United States, Indian-Americans still exhibit remarkable levels of heterogeneity. Most Indian-Americans live on the East Coast, but there are large population centers both in the Midwest and on the West Coast (Rodriguez-Gitler 2017). As of 2017, 17% of Indian-Americans were between the ages of 5 and 17, 18% were between the ages of 18 and 29, 22% were between the ages of 30 and 39, 14% were between the ages of 40 and 49, and 13% were between the ages of 50 and 64 (Rodriguez-Gitler 2017). This means that the age distribution of Indians is roughly evenly distributed around the middle of the age spectrum, skewing slightly rightward. 32% of Indian-Americans are not in the labor force, while 65% are (Rodriguez-Gitler 2017). Finally, income inequality in the Indian American community is extreme. The highest earning 10% of the group make an average of $133,500 annually, while the poorest 10% make an average of just below $12,500 (Rajan 2018). The average annual income of an Indian-American is $100,000, so the Indian-American income distribution is left-skewed, with most Indian-Americans concentrated on the high end of the group’s socioeconomic spectrum (López, et al 2017).

This diversity in location of origin, religion, socioeconomic status, age, and educational achievement suggest that in politics, Indian-Americans might identify with different parties. However, 68% of Indian-Americans are Democrats and only 16% are Republicans (Ramakrishnan, et al 2017). This high degree of cohesion is puzzling; in a population with so many internal cleavages, why are so many of its members drawn to a single party? Additionally, why is that party the Democratic Party?
Theories of Party Identification

In this section, I outline four popular theories of party identification to help us understand how individuals adopt their partisanship. I begin by evaluating why partisanship is important to study before delving into an overview of each theory while paying special attention to their strengths and weaknesses.

In American politics, research has found that partisanship is an important social categorization because people’s party identification can often determine vote choice (Meier 1975). Similarly, understanding why people choose their partisanship gives researchers insight into their conception of the political and social landscape. For example, if people choose their party affiliation based upon the social groups with which they affiliate, this signals that in politics, individuals primarily conceptualize themselves in terms of those social groups. However, if people choose their party identification based upon how the parties’ policy stances impact their own lives, individuals implicitly conceptualize themselves as free agents acting autonomously.

An individual may find her party identification useful for two reasons. First, the party label facilitates political participation by giving people a heuristic to determine their opinion, which saves many voters the time that they might otherwise need to determine which candidates to support (Abramson 1982; Finkel and Opp 1991). Second, most people are not ideologues; in the absence of party identification, their policy opinions do not align with a clear preference for big or small government (Converse 2000). Party identification, then, lends an individual a coherent set of policy opinions that bolsters their perceived level of political knowledge (Anson 2018). When people have high levels of political knowledge, they are more likely to participate (Valentino, et al 2011).
Given its importance, many scholars have endeavored to study how people develop their party identification. I provide an overview of four theories of partisanship acquisition, moving chronologically from oldest to newest. These theories will provide the framework to evaluate existing theories of Jewish-American and Asian-American party identification before informing my original theory of Indian-American partisanship.

I will begin with Anthony Downs. According to Downs, voters rationally weigh the benefits that they would accrue if a particular candidate were in office against the benefits that they would accrue if the opposing candidate were in office (Downs 1957). Voters then choose the candidate who increases their own well-being the most, either directly (by implementing impactful social programs that increase their quality of life, for example) or indirectly (by diverting resources toward other subpopulations that they support, like the poor) (Downs 1957).

Focusing on American politics, Fiorina (1981) builds upon Downs’s work by positing an explanation for how Americans develop their party identification in the United States. Fiorina begins by claiming that party identification is unstable over time (87). Using data from the 1956-58-60 SRC Panel Study, Fiorina demonstrates that while only 15% of respondents changed their party identification from one party to another, more than 40% of respondents changed their position on a seven-point scale of partisanship. Based upon this claim, Fiorina argues that an individual’s party identification is the result of a carefully-considered comparison of her experiences with the two parties modified by a scalar that takes into account other factors that might influence a person’s party identification, such as her parents’ partisanship (90). Implicit in Fiorina’s model is the notion that voters are capable of objectively weighing their own evaluations, which are assumed to be accurate, because they paid close attention to the parties’ actions during previous elections.
Fiorina’s model also assumes that people do not have strong group attachments that might influence their political decisions. In rationally tallying each party’s performance before each election, people are not shaped by their salient identities, which presumably remain stable over time in determining how they will allocate their vote. Instead, they focus on their own evaluations of the parties. This conceptualization of the acquisition of party identification lends itself to understanding political actors as atomistic.

In his seminal piece “The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics” (1964), Philip Converse lays the foundation for the second theory of partisanship outlined in this paper. Converse notes that while most Americans have low levels of political knowledge, the variance of the political knowledge distribution is high. This means that while some Americans know next to nothing about politics, some possess lots of information on the subject. Furthermore, when Americans are asked their opinions on policy issues at two times, T₁ and T₂, they tend to give different answers at T₁ and T₂. However, when respondents have a party identification, they respond consistently at both T₁ and T₂. Converse’s work reveals two things about partisanship. First, people use their party affiliation as a heuristic to determine their opinion on policy issues. Second, partisanship predicts how people feel on policy issues because they inherit those policy stances from their party identification.

Building upon these findings, Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes (1960) argue that people are socialized to identify with a party in childhood and that they inherit their partisanship from their immediate surroundings, most notably from their parents. One’s attachment to a party is psychological, rather than rational; people do not continually reassess the parties’ stances on issues to arrive at a party identification. Rather, their partisan attachment endures throughout their lives. In contrast to Fiorina’s theory, Campbell, et al imply that party identification should
be relatively stable across time because after childhood, people’s views tend to crystallize and once they inherit their partisanship, people do not engage in any rational decision-making calculus to shift it (Campbell, et al 1960).

These theories of partisanship may be sufficient for Americans who have access to news sources to increase their political knowledge, as Downs and Fiorina presume, or live within a community from which they can inherit a party identification, as Campbell, et al presume. However, for those who lack these connections, there must be some other explanation for party identification. To this effect, Green, Palmquist, Schickler, and Mason offer a third theory of party identification that could apply to these communities.

Green, Palmquist, and Schickler find that people do not evaluate each party’s stances on policy issues that are important to them and then make a final decision on which party to support based upon those evaluations. Rather, people hold stereotypes of the parties and they associate specific groups, like Evangelical Christians or African-Americans, with each party (Green, et al 2002). People then choose a party to identify with by situating themselves according to how they feel as about the parties’ constituent groups (Green, et al 2002).

This theory holds several implications. First, it means that people do not engage in Downs’s and Fiorina’s rational decision-making calculus to identify with a party. Second, it means that within politics, people conceptualize themselves as group members rather than as individual actors. This, in turn, implies that people also use their salient social identities to dictate how they donate money, protest, and volunteer. Third, it means that people who do not have access to traditional channels of partisanship acquisition can still acquire a party identification. As long as they hold a salient social identity and feelings toward the parties’ salient social groups, they can orient themselves politically. It is possible that, in doing so,
people may support a party with policy stances that do not benefit themselves personally. This is significant because it directly refutes Downs’s theory of utility assessments driving people to always vote in their best interest.

Mason (2018) builds upon Green, Palmquist, and Schickler by reconciling their theory of party identification with social identity theory, which states that people derive self-esteem through their group affiliation. Mason argues that people affiliate themselves with groups that they hold in high esteem. Additionally, people maintain a consistent party affiliation over time because they engage in motivated reasoning - bending the truth so that an individual’s understanding of it fits with their own preconceived notions - to convince themselves that their party should be a high-esteem group, even if it is currently a low-esteem one (13-14). Mason’s most relevant contribution to my thesis is the fact that people affiliate themselves with groups that they consider to be of high esteem. The question that follows, then, is why Indian-Americans consider the Democratic Party in such a light.

Mason’s addition to Green and colleagues creates several new relevant implications. First, it suggests people understand how their social groups are positioned relative to one another because the theory presumes an understanding of high- and low-esteem groups. Second, it means people not only conceptualize politics in terms of how social groups interact, but they understand those groups to be important to their own identities. This is significant because it supports Green, and colleagues’ original assertion that people orient themselves politically according to their most socially salient identity.

While Green, et al and Mason’s theory accounts for the political socialization of immigrants and of other people without the connections to accrue political knowledge or party identification, it has strengths and weaknesses in describing Indian-Americans’ partisanship.
acquisition. One such strength is that it accounts for how members of a group new to the United States acquire their partisanship by suggesting that they orient themselves according to groups that they associate with independently of politics, like, in this case, a racial or ethnic group. Another strength is that the scholars present a group-centric theory, which validates the notion that Indian-Americans’ partisanship acquisition happens at the group level, rather than the individual level. Third, this theory comports with Converse’s findings on response instability. Stereotypes of the parties’ constituencies, the drive to maintain high self-esteem, and people’s party identification are all fairly consistent across time, regardless of how the political climate shifts (Converse 2000; Green, et al 2002).

However, these theories of partisanship do not completely explain Indian-American party identification for a few reasons. First, most Indian-Americans are Democrats, even though there are several social cleavages within the community that could stratify their party identification. Second, Mason’s theory is predicated upon the assumption that social groups understand their own positioning relative to other groups’ partisanship affiliations. Third, Green and colleagues’ theory implies that groups are familiar with each party’s salient constituencies. However, in the case of groups that are either very new to the United States or very insular groups, this understanding may not exist.

Stepping back, we see that the dominant theories of partisanship might not fully describe Indian-Americans’ party identification. According to Downs and Fiorina, because they are wealthy, we might expect Indian-Americans attempting to maximize their wealth. This would drive them to vote for Republicans, who advocate to reduce taxes and limit government interference in the economy (Francia, et al 2005; Rhodes and Schaffner 2017). However, there is little empirical evidence proving this to be the case (Ramakrishnan, et al 2017). On the other
hand, because they are relatively new to the United States, we do not know if Indian-Americans are familiar with each party’s salient constituencies, as Green, et al might expect, or if they derive positive self-esteem from the Democratic Party, as Mason suggests.

Indian-Americans are not the only group that defies conventional wisdom on party identification. Before studying Indian-American partisanship, it would be helpful to examine two other groups that also hold counterintuitive party identifications. This will help determine how much the theories outlined above describe the electorate. I first address Jewish Americans and then Asian-Americans.

*Party Identification in the Jewish Community*

In 2014, 61% of the Jewish population identified as Democratic or leaned Democratic, while 31% of the demographic identified as Republican or leaned Republican (Smith 2015). This is surprising for three reasons. First, Jewish people are phenotypically white, so one might expect them to be stratified politically in a similar way to how the white population is politically stratified (i.e., people of higher socioeconomic status tend to identify as Republican, while people of low socioeconomic status tend to identify as Democrats) (Wormald 2015). Second, like Indian-Americans, the majority of Jewish people identify as Democrats regardless of their socioeconomic status, which isn’t necessarily true of other phenotypically-white subgroups (Wormald 2015). Third, Jewish people are, on average, very wealthy. 44% of Jewish Americans earn more than $100,000 annually (Masci 2016). To reconcile these apparent contradictions within Jewish people's’ political lives, it is important to understand the history of Jewish peoples’ party affiliation in the United States.
Jewish party identification in the twentieth century has shifted in reaction to changes in the country’s social and political environment. Historical survey data show that Jewish people initially aligned themselves with the Republican Party but, in 1928, shifted toward the FDR’s Democratic Party in droves (Gamm 1989). After Roosevelt’s death, Jewish support for the Democratic Party waned, but not considerably so; the group still overwhelmingly supported Democratic candidates over Republican ones (Lubell 1951). From the 1960s to the 1980s, Jewish support for the Democratic Party further decreased, but in 1992, Democratic support started trending upward (Mellman, et al 2012). Herbert F. Weisberg, professor emeritus of political science at The Ohio State University, contends that Pat Buchanan’s 1992 speech on the “culture war” helped to drive Jewish people away from the Republican Party and into the arms of the Democrats (2014).

In the twenty-first century, Jewish people have consistently voted for Democratic candidates. In light of this data, the question of why Jewish people are Democrats still remains. Several theories may explain this choice of identification. First, as Downs might posit, a candidate’s stance on Israel may affect how receptive Jewish people are to that candidate. The Republican Jewish Coalition (RJC) deployed a survey to Jewish people nationwide that asked how important policy issues about Israel were in determining a person’s vote choice. 30% of respondents indicated that candidates’ stances on those issues were very important, 46% said they were somewhat important, and 22% said that they were not important (Weisberg 2014). The respondents who marked candidates’ stances on Israel as very important voted for then-Governor Romney in the 2012 presidential election more frequently than President Obama by an 8% margin (53% for Governor Romney, 45% for President Obama) (Weisberg 2014).¹ Because

¹ While Governor Romney and President Obama both supported strengthening the US’s connection with Israel, Governor Romney made the issue more of priority during the election, going so far as to promise that if he were
Jewish people overwhelmingly identify as Democrats, at first glance, this small margin is surprising. However, we may attribute the size of this margin to the fact that it exists for the subgroup of Jewish Americans who claim to account for the candidates’ policy stances on Israel when determining their vote choice.

These figures are especially notable when considering that this split in Jewish-Americans’ vote choice was structured such that Governor Romney won more than 50% of its votes. As demonstrated above, between 2000 and 2012, Democratic presidential candidates won between 69% and 79% of the Jewish vote. Even though the 2012 election saw a decrease in the percentage of Jewish people that voted for the Democratic candidate, overall, almost 70% of the total group eventually voted for President Obama in the general election. The fact that Governor Romney won a sizeable subgroup of the Jewish population indicates that it may not be the parties’ stances on Israel that draw Jewish people toward the Democratic Party, which supports Fiorina and Downs.

This holds several implications for partisanship acquisition in the Jewish community. First, this theory implies that Jewish people can accurately assess the parties’ policy stances to determine their partisanship. The notion that Jewish people do this comports with Downs and Fiorina while refuting Campbell, et al, Green, et al, and Mason. Furthermore, Converse’s finding that on the scale of levels of conceptualization, most people are group interest, conflicts with this theory of party identification (Converse 1964). Second, because a subset of Jewish people’s vote choice can be predicted by their opinions of the candidates’ stances on Israel, this theory implies that Jewish people may be single-issue voters.

elected, his first international trip would be to Israel (“Republicans Talk Tough on Iran; Vie for Jewish Vote”; Kahl 2012)
However, another survey deployed by J-Street, a liberal advocacy group, found that only 10% of Jewish people list the parties’ policy stances on Israel as an important determination of their vote choice. Of that 10%, 50% eventually voted for Governor Romney and 50% eventually voted for President Obama (Weisberg 2014). This indicates that Israel may be less important of a policy issue to Jewish people than the RJC poll would imply. Furthermore, Weisberg’s theory assumes that people can accurately assess candidates’ policy views on Israel. However, even if Jewish people do care about candidates’ stances on policy issues relating to Israel, their assessments of those stances may be incorrect. Therefore, we cannot draw a causal link between candidates’ stances on Israel and Jewish people’s support for those candidates.

A second theory explains that the Democratic Party values the separation between religion and government more than the Republican Party does. The history of Judaism in the United States sheds light onto why Jewish people hold this belief. Before the twentieth century, Jewish people generally accepted that religion and the state may exist hand-in-hand as long as Judaism received as much respect as Christianity (Steinfels 2000). However, when prominent Christians in the United States began a crusade to make the United States explicitly Christian by institutionalizing religious holidays, enshrining religious scripture on government buildings, and appealing to Christian morals and values in campaigns and government administrations, Jewish people instead aligned themselves with secular Americans (Steinfels 2000). Within Green, et al.’s framework, Jewish people consider secular people to be part of the Democratic Party’s base and they see Evangelicals as part of the GOP’s base, so they identify as Democrat.
Party Identification in the Asian-American Community

Turning from ethnicity to race, we examine the case of Asian-Americans to study the relationship between race and partisanship. Unlike Jewish people, Asian-Americans have been consistent in their party identification throughout their time in the United States since the 1960s, when many first arrived in the United States (Kuo, et al 2017). Additionally, Asian-Americans, an umbrella term referring to all of the East, Southeast, and South Asians that moved the United States and their descendents, exhibit similarly surprisingly cohesive party identification. As of 2017, 65% of Asian-Americans either identify as Democrat or lean Democrat, while 27% either identify as Republican or lean Republican (Liu 2018). This is somewhat unexpected because Asian-American is a social construction that arbitrarily groups immigrants and immigrant families together based upon their continent of origin. Additionally, Asian-Americans are very wealthy. The average Asian-American makes $73,060, which, for the reasons described in the section on theories of partisanship, makes it surprising that Asian-Americans are predominantly Democratic (López, et al 2017).

This level of cohesion is also surprising because socioeconomically, Asian-Americans are very diverse. The median annual income for an Indian-American is $100,000, while the median annual income for a Burmese-American is $36,000 (López, et al 2017). These vastly different economic circumstances may lead to different political opinions; we might expect wealthy Asian-American subgroups to identify with the Republican Party (as wealthy whites do) and poor subgroups to affiliate themselves with the Democratic Party (as poor whites do) (Wormald 2015). However, we see that the pan-Asian label holds salience in politics because Asian-Americans tend to identify with one particular party regardless of other demographic characteristics (Liu 2018).
Unlike Jewish people, Asian-Americans are relatively new to the United States. After beginning to settle in the US in the mid-nineteenth century, the Asian population (and the corresponding anti-Asian sentiment that whites felt) rapidly grew until 1924, when the Immigrant Act of 1924 almost completely prevented Asians from immigrating to the United States further (Kitano 1993). As a result of the Immigrant Act of 1924, the Asian-American population quickly became predominantly native-born (Paik, et al 2014). This is relevant because meant that over time, whites’ anti-Asian sentiment came to be based within Asian-Americans’ race, rather than their lack of social assimilation. In contrast, during this same time period, Jewish people started to become racialized as white (Brodkin 2007).

From 1924 to 1965, the US government instituted restrictive quotas on the basis of potential immigrants’ country of origin that limited the number of Asians that could move to the United States annually (Paik, et al 2014). Between these years, Jewish people were given access to government programs, like the GI Bill, that explicitly discriminated against African-Americans (Brodkin 2007). This further racialized them as white. In 1965, the government sharply pivoted on immigration, passing the 1965 Immigration Act that lifted those quotas and allowed an influx of Asian-Americans to move to the United States (Reimers 1983). By then, Jewish people were widely considered to be white (Brodkin 2017). It is important to note that the government facilitated the inclusion of Jewish Americans into the White community through its policies, which illustrates its power to include certain groups within the notion of “American,” and, transitively, to socially, politically, and economically exclude certain groups.

Transitioning from Asian-Americans’ history in the US to their partisanship in the present-day, Kuo, Malhotra, and Mo (2017) posit that Asian-Americans tend to identify as Democrats because members of the community individuals face exclusion from the social in-
group (i.e., whites). Because Asian-Americans perceive the Republican Party to cater to white Americans who tend to perpetuate such exclusion, Asian-Americans are less likely to support the Republican Party (Kuo, et al 2016). This theory insinuates that Asian-Americans are driven toward the Democratic Party not because of any particular affinity that they have for its policies, but because they do not feel warm toward constituent social groups in the Republican Party. This is significant because it comports with the Green, Palmquist, and Schickler finding on the adaptation identification outlined above.

The second implication is that the social exclusion of individual members of a group impacts collective political identity, even across socioeconomic status and country of origin. This is significant because it means that Asian-Americans feel socially excluded regardless of any potentially-mitigating dimensions to their identity that afford them privilege, like being wealthy or speaking English as a first language. This lends further credence to the notion that the label “Asian-American” is a socially and politically salient one, both for the in-group (Whites) and for the out-group (Asian-Americans).

Individuals’ experiences impacting collective identity supports Green and colleagues’ theory of partisanship acquisition by bolstering the notion that individuals frame their political lives using salient social group membership. If party identification operates on the group level, then the group is the politically-relevant unit of analysis, not the individual. Second, if the label “Asian-American” is salient for Asian-Americans, then it is possible that Indians may identify with the Democratic Party because they identify as Asian-American rather than because they identify as Indian-American.

The racialization of Asian-Americans and the incorporation of Jewish people into the White community illustrate the strength of Mason and Green and colleagues’ theory. Race is a
method of human classification commonly understood to be rooted in biology, so people classify
themselves as members of a certain race and find those classifications salient (Feagin 1998). In
contrast, ethnicity is primarily defined by a group’s cultural heritage and language of origin.
Ethnicity is considered a more fluid method of human classification than race for two reasons.
First, people can renounce their culture and stop speaking their language of origin relatively
more easily than they can convince others to shift how they interpret a person’s skin color.
Second, because racial classification most frequently rests upon an assessment of a person’s
phenotype, the notion that race is biological socially entrenches a person’s classification as a
member of a certain race (Appelbaum 2008). This does not happen within the framework of
ethnicity. The fact that Mason and Green, et al describe both people who consider their
membership in a racial group to be most salient and people who consider their membership in an
ethnic group to be most salient is a testament to the strength of Mason and Green and colleagues’
theories.

Party Identification in the Indian-American Community

In this section, I flesh out a theory for Indian-American party identification, referencing
the four broad theories outlined earlier in this chapter as a framework for my analysis. I conclude
with an original theory of Indian-American partisanship and follow that with several hypotheses
regarding such party identification acquisition.

On one hand, we have evidence that Indian-Americans are socially and economically
distinct from other Asian-American subgroups - on average, they earn more money and attain
higher levels of education than any other Asian-American subgroup (López, et al 2017). On the
other, the label “Asian-American” is a socially salient one that may dominate Indian-Americans’ identification with other immigrant families that share their country of origin (Kuo, et al 2017).

Indian-Americans’ split in partisanship is apparent within the Indian-American population as a whole and in the subset of Indian-Americans who hold political office. 68% of Indian-Americans self-identify as Democrats, while 16% self-identify as Republicans (Ramakrishnan, et al 2017). While a similar proportion of Asian-Americans consider themselves to be Democrats (65%), a larger proportion of Asian-Americans consider themselves to be Republicans (27%). These data suggest that most Indian-Americans coalesce into a single partisan identity. The majority of Indian-American politicians are also Democrats, the notable exceptions being Bobby Jindal and Nikki Haley (Tsukerman 2015). However, politicians like Ravi Bhalla, the mayor of Hoboken, New Jersey, and Ro Khanna, a Congressman from California who previously was the Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Department of Commerce, illustrate the broader trend of Indian-Americans identifying as Democrats. This consolidation of a single partisan identity is surprising because, as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the Indian-American community is very diverse.

The Asian-American subgroups that most closely mirror the partisanship divide of the Indian-American population are Korean-Americans and Japanese-Americans (Ramakrishnan, et al 2017). 64% of Korean-Americans identify as Democrats, while 29% identify as Republicans (Ramakrishnan, et al 2017). Of the Japanese-American community, 69% identify as Democrats and 23% identify as Republicans (Ramakrishnan, et al 2017). In conjunction with the statistics on Indian-American party identification, there are two main takeaways from these figures. First, significantly fewer Indian-Americans identify as Republicans than Korean-Americans and Japanese-Americans (Ramakrishnan, et al 2017). This may be a result of whites, the racial
majority, treating Indian-Americans differently from Korean-Americans and Japanese-Americans, which are two populations that are more phenotypically white than Indian-Americans. This differential socialization between the Indian-American and Japanese- and Korean-American communities may result in the two groups socially positioning themselves distinctly. This would ultimately result in fewer Indian-Americans identifying as Republicans than Japanese- and Korean-Americans identifying as such. It is also possible that Koreans’ and Japanese people’s distinct migration histories may impact their differential treatment at the hands of Whites; many more Japanese and Korean people immigrated to the United States than Indians (Jeong and You 2008; Paik, et al 2014). The time Japanese- and Korean-Americans lived in the United States without Indian-Americans present may have allowed Japanese- and Korean-Americans to assimilate more than Indian-Americans have been able to.

Before delving into the origins of Indian-Americans’ party identification, a cursory history of their time in the United States may begin to shed light upon why this might be the case. After the 1965 Immigration Act, Indians immigrated to the United States in droves. In the year the law was passed, 582 Indians settled in the United States. Fourteen years later, in 1979, 19,708 Indians left their home country to find a life in the US (Reimers 1983). This almost 3500% increase was due to the drastic shift in how the law treated immigrants. After World War I, the vast majority Asians were barred from entering the United States due to the Immigration Act of 1924. The 1965 Immigration Act allowed Indians to move to the US much more easily than they could before its passage.

The uptick in the immigration rate saw a diverse group of Indians settling in the country (Chandrasekhar 1986). There was no single predictor that would indicate that an individual would be prone to migrate. The Indians that came to the United States represented every state in
their home country, every major religion in India, and almost the entire socioeconomic spectrum. Settled in their new country, most individuals sent remittances back to their families and frequently sponsored their relatives to join them in the US. In the 1980s, there was a wave of computer engineers and information technology professionals who took advantage of a special type of visa that the US had started issuing to fortify its computer industry. In fact, the vast majority of Indians immigrating to the United States came in groups with at least one person on an H1B (working) visa, meaning that many Indians came to the United States in pursuit of economic mobility. However, because of ingrained sexism within Indian culture, many women became stay-at-home mothers. Similarly, because many elderly people did not speak English, they remained confined to their children’s homes. Women and the elderly subsequently lived detached from most of the rest of society, thus creating a pattern of social exclusion from White America among some subpopulations (Dhingra 2016).

Evidence suggesting the degree to which Indian-Americans have assimilated to mainstream society is contradictory. One common measure of assimilation, whether members of a group speak English proficiently, indicates that Indian-Americans may be relatively well-assimilated because 80% of the group is proficient in English, compared to 70% of Asian-Americans (Rodriguez-Gitler 2017). However, this may be a legacy of Britain’s colonial presence in India; many Indians grow up either speaking English or learning the language in school, so this high level of English proficiency in the Indian-American population does not necessarily indicate assimilation (Raval, et al 2016). Another common measure, intermarriage rates, suggests the opposite. Of all Asian-Americans, Indian-Americans intermarry with members of other races the least frequently (Kalmijn and Van Tubergen 2010). Globally, South Asian-Americans have the lowest intermarriage rates with Whites, with 1.72% of South Asian-
Americans marrying a US-born White spouse. In comparison, 10.75% of East Asian-Americans and 15.71% of Southeast Asian-Americans marry US-born White spouses (Boha Mishra and Massey 2014). Within the South Asian-American community, Indian-Americans are the least likely subgroup to intermarry. 14.3% of Indian-Americans marry people of non-Indian origin, while 23.5% of Pakistani-Americans marry people of non-Pakistani origin (Kalmjin and Van Tubergen 2010). A third metric, the fraction of the population that has lived in the United States for ten years, comports with the intermarriage data: one in three Indian-Americans moved to the United States less than ten years ago (DeSilver 2014). These data indicate that Indian-Americans may be poorly-assimilated.

Moving into politics, existing scholarship sheds very little light on how exactly Indian-Americans inherit their partisanship, or, more broadly, the political behavior of Indian-Americans. The most relevant piece of work, Sangay Mishra’s book Desis Divided, explores how several cleavages within the South Asian population in the United States drive the group apart despite their seemingly-strong co-ethnic ties (2016). He specifically draws from Cristina Beltrán, who studies Latino political cohesion, to outline a framework that implies that the term “South Asian” indiscriminately describes anyone who finds their origins within South Asia, regardless of their length of residence in the United States, country of origin, level of educational attainment, wealth, or any other piece of information that may be used to stratify the group (Mishra 2016). The generality of the term obscures distinctions within the community and, as a result, those distinctions do not manifest politically. Mishra’s own framework posits that an individual’s ethnoracial identity interacts with other identities within the South Asian population, like religion or country of origin, to impact the trajectory of political mobilization for that person’s ethnoracial group (Mishra 2016). However, he does not study partisanship within the
Indian-American community. Mapping onto party identification, though, Mishra’s theory might suggest that Indian-Americans’ partisanship should not be cohesive because the partisan makeup of the Indian-American community should reflect its diversity.

With this context, I develop my own theory for the acquisition of Indian-Americans’ partisanship. I posit that group consciousness forged by discriminatory treatment conditions Indian-Americans to hold consistent evaluations of white Americans (Masuoka and Junn 2013). Furthermore, the combination of Indian-Americans’ relatively high income and their relatively dark phenotype distinguishes them from other Asian-Americans such that “Indian-American” is a more socially salient term than “Asian-American” is (Shroff, et al 2017). Using these evaluations, Indian-Americans act in accordance to Green and colleagues’ theory of partisanship acquisition; they choose a party identification according to how warmly or coldly they feel toward the parties’ constituent groups.

An Indian-American group consciousness arises out of two mutually-reinforcing conditions. First, Indian-Americans believe that Whites discriminate against them. The second condition that reinforces an Indian-American group consciousness is several characteristics that bind Indian-Americans, such as country of origin, religion (and, more specifically, not being Christian), and low intermarriage rates (Kalmijn and Van Tubergen 2010). The combination of these two conditions facilitates an Indian-American group consciousness separate from the Asian-American group consciousness that Kuo, et al demonstrated maps onto party identification.
Chapter III

Content Analysis

The purpose of this chapter is to explore news media coverage of Indian-Americans. Specifically, I am interested in whether featuring stories of racial discrimination may cultivate group consciousness among Indian-Americans that could eventually facilitate Democratic partisanship. The preceding chapter presents a theory for why Indian-Americans coalesce under the Democratic Party. This theory outlines how the news media’s profiles of racial discrimination against Indian-Americans might create group consciousness akin to linked fate among Indian-Americans. This chapter uses content analysis of articles from The New York Times and India Abroad employing natural language processing software to learn more about how the media publicizes Indian-Americans’ experiences of racial discrimination.

Building on the previous chapter’s theory, I begin this chapter by examining previous scholarship examines the relationship between group consciousness and the media. Afterwards, I present the methodology of my content analysis and my results. The data from this content analysis indicate that the media covers instances of anti-Indian-American discrimination infrequently, even when the media source is an ethnic newspaper specifically geared toward the expatriate Indian-American community. This coverage is sufficiently infrequent that it is unlikely that the media actually reinforce an Indian-American group consciousness by amplifying instances of racial discrimination against Indian-Americans. I conclude this chapter by evaluating alternative mechanisms that may facilitate an Indian-American group consciousness.
Background

Research in political science has demonstrated that an individual’s experiences of discrimination drive her to draw closer to her co-ethnics and form group consciousness, which has been defined as the prevailing understanding that a person’s individual life chances are inextricably linked to the status of their entire racial group (Masuoka and Junn 2013; McClain, et al 2009). I suggest that Indian-Americans use this group consciousness to make political decisions, like their party identification, by determining how to orient themselves within the political landscape to maximize their racial group’s overall utility. For this reason, they align themselves with the Democratic Party.

Several scholars demonstrate how the news media can reinforce a racially-based group consciousness. Ostfeld (2017) finds that Spanish-language political advertisements promote a pan-Latino group consciousness and strengthen the perception of Latinos’ collective political power. Kerevel (2011) writes that spanish-language media reinforces a Latino group consciousness by reminding Latinos of their shared Latin American cultural roots. Masuoka (2006) replicates these results within the Latino community and tentatively extends them to the Asian-American community, as well. In sum, the relationship between the news media and a racially-based group consciousness is a strong one, as the renders individuals’ racial identities salient and may drive individuals to band together with their co-ethnics.

Methodology

To conduct this content analysis, I first identified two news sources that I wanted to analyze: The New York Times and India Abroad. I chose The New York Times for two reasons.
First, the publication is well-reputed and enjoys a daily circulation of almost 572,000 (FEC Filing). The fact that so many people read the publication indicates that it could reinforce discrimination that Indian-Americans face by publicizing those acts of discrimination so that Indian-Americans across the country learn about them. The second reason that I chose to study articles from *The New York Times* is that the newspaper publishes an API, which is a tool that researchers can use to quickly download all of the articles that the organization publishes that match search terms that a researcher inputs. My use of the NYT API simplified the data collection process and allowed me to devote more of my time to analysis that I otherwise would have been able to if the API did not exist.

I chose to also analyze *India Abroad* in this content analysis for two reasons. First, it is published in New York City and is run by Indian expatriates, which means that its content is more likely to reflect the views of the expatriate community than if it were run by non-Indians or Indians living in India. Second, *India Abroad* issues more than fifty thousand subscriptions and enjoys a readership of two hundred thousand, which, for an ethnic newspaper, is a tremendous reach (Rangaswamy 2008). The fact that so many people read the newspaper means that people trust its reporting. Additionally, Garrett and Stroud (2014) find that people seek out media sources that echo their pre-existing political beliefs. Therefore, it is safe to assume that the vast majority of Indian-Americans that consume material from *India Abroad* hold political beliefs that are in line with what the newspaper publishes. This is important for my research because it means that I can use the publication as a tool to determine which political attitudes Indian-Americans hold. This shows that Indian expatriates feel as though the articles that *India Abroad* publishes are relevant to their own lives or otherwise resonate with them.
To analyze these sources, I first collected all of the URLs and articles that were relevant to my research. To collect the NYT articles that I would use for my analysis, I used the New York Times API and R, a software primarily used to conduct statistical analyses, to compile a list of all of the digitized New York Times articles that contain the term “Indian-American” that were published after 1978. Asian-Americans only started to coalesce under the Democratic Party in the 1990s, so I made no effort to pull articles that were published in the newspaper before 1978 (Kuo, et al 2017). When testing which search term to use to yield the most accurate list of articles, I tried variations of the term (such as “Indian American” or “Indian”), but I found that every article that mentioned the racial subgroup contained “Indian-American” in that form. I then manually removed any extraneous articles that contained “Indian-American” but were irrelevant to this analysis. Examples of those kinds of articles include profiles of the Cleveland Indians (a professional baseball team) and stories that covered American Indians (also known as Native Americans).

To collect the *India Abroad* articles for my analysis, I created a harvester that combed through the newspaper’s website and copied each URL and article and added it to the same csv file that the R code I had written to collect NYT articles used to deposit the NYT articles’ information. It is important to note that one key assumption that I made was that every article on the website mentioned or otherwise involved Indian-Americans in some way. I made this assumption because *India Abroad* explicitly gears its content toward the Indian-American community, so the newspaper’s publishers have decided that all of the content that the publication profiles is relevant to the Indian-American community. I was able to collect all of the articles that the newspaper published between September of 2017 and March of 2019. I was
unable to access articles that were published before September of 2017 because the newspaper
does not keep an online archive.

After running all of this code, I had one master csv file that listed all of the relevant NYT
and India Abroad articles that I would use for my analysis. It included 679 New York Times
articles and 495 India Abroad articles in total.

I then uploaded a list of article contents to Google’s Natural Language API. Using that
API’s sentiment analysis function, I checked the sentiment of each article and classified it as
positive, neutral, or negative for the purposes of this analysis. Positive articles characterize the
subject of the article in terms that emphasize the subject’s good or desirable qualities or actions.
An example of a positive article from this dataset is a rave review of an Indian restaurant in
Brooklyn run by an immigrant couple and their children. Negative articles characterize their
subjects in unfavorable terms. An example of a negative article from the dataset is an article that
criticizes Ajit Pai, the FCC Chairman, when he spoke out against net neutrality. Neutral articles
contain a balance of positive and negative sentiment, as defined by the article’s characterization
of its main subject. and negative articles referred to Indian-Americans in a negative light. An
example of such an article is one that mentions that Edison, New Jersey has a large Indian-
American population without attaching any value judgements to that assessment. I also compiled
a list of keywords motivated by the theory that I outlined in chapter 2 and wrote Python script to
determine how frequently each word appeared within the subset of articles that mention Indian-
Americans. This keyword bank should give us insight into how frequently these newspapers
report on Anti-Indian discrimination.
Analysis

In this section, I first present my analysis of *New York Times* articles published after 1978 that mention Indian-Americans. After, I present my analysis of the *India Abroad* articles.

The first trend that I looked for was the frequency at which *The New York Times* published articles that mentioned Indian-Americans. Because I pulled every *India Abroad* article that I could find, I could not evaluate this trend since I would instead be evaluating the frequency at which the newspaper publishes articles, which is unrelated to the topic of this thesis. However, I *could* plot the frequency at which *The New York Times* published articles about Indian-Americans. I present that trend in a graph below.

Figure 3.1
As the graph shows, *The New York Times* has steadily published more and more articles that mention Indian-Americans over the last forty years. While there are dips and spiked in the number of articles that mention Indian-Americans, the trend is unequivocally in the positive direction. This supports my first expectation, which is that over time, as the number of Indian-Americans grows, the amount of news coverage on Indian-Americans should also grow.

Next, I evaluate trends in positive, negative, and neutral articles on Indian-Americans that were published in *The New York Times*. According to my theory, I expect the number of negative articles that mention Indian-Americans to increase over time. I hold no expectations for the frequency of neutral and positive articles over time. I present those trends below.

Figure 3.2

Unsurprisingly, most of the articles are neutral. This makes sense because most of the articles that mention Indian-Americans do not focus on the racial group, but rather mention it
off-handedly. For example, several articles profile the demographics of a particular city and mention sizeable Indian-American populations. Another notable feature of this graph is that it shows that there was more positive coverage about Indian-Americans than negative coverage. This may be because *The New York Times* published stories that profiled specific Indian-Americans’ achievements, like Kalpana Chawla and Nikki Haley, more frequently than stories about Indian-Americans in general or about non-famous Indian-Americans who were the target of discrimination or hate crimes.

The final part of my content analysis with *The New York Times* articles on Indian-Americans analyzed the frequency of a list of words that I came up with by considering my theory and recurring themes that popped up in the articles. I present a graph of the frequency of those words below.

The keyword bank includes “bribe,” “stolen,” “theft,” “assault,” “kill,” “murder,” “discriminated,” and “discriminatory” because of their obvious negative connotations. “White” was also a keyword because many articles profiled a white perpetrator that committed a discriminatory action or hate crime against an Indian-American. Finally, I included “Dotbuster” because the Dotbusters were a group that committed hate crimes against Indian-Americans in the 1980s (Anand 2006).
As this graph indicates, all of the keywords that I tested for increased in frequency over time. However, even though the trend is pronounced, the scope of these results renders their impact on an Indian-American group consciousness insignificant. I analyzed 679 New York Times articles, but in comparison to the hundreds of thousands of articles that The New York Times has published since 1978, the newspaper has published so few articles that mention Indian-Americans that their effect on Indian-Americans’ relationships with their co-ethnics must be negligible. This means that if an Indian-American group consciousness exists, some alternative mechanism must facilitate its existence. The results of The New York Times analysis must also either understate the Indian-American group consciousness, since there are a plethora
of alternative mechanisms that could facilitate the group consciousness that this content analysis cannot evaluate.

Another publication, *India Abroad*, explicitly orients itself toward the Indian-American expatriate population. Because of this, I assume that every article that the newspaper publishes is relevant to Indian-Americans. Therefore, I cannot produce a graph that details trends in the newspaper’s coverage on Indian-Americans over time. However, I can create a graph that details the number of positive, negative, and neutral articles. I present it below.

Figure 3.4

As the graph above indicates, there is a spike in negative articles around September of 2018. Because this graph only spans 21 months, I cannot make any claims about long-term trends in *India Abroad*’s coverage. However, this spike’s size is certainly notable, even though
there are not any events that happened in September of 2018 that can explain its existence. To take a more nuanced look at India Abroad’s coverage, I evaluate it in relation to the same keyword bank that I used for The New York Times’s articles. The results of that analysis are below.

Figure 3.5

Interestingly, in the India Abroad articles, only “stolen,” “theft,” “discrimination,” “discriminator,” and “white” appear. Again, because the articles that contain those keywords only represent coverage from May of 2018 to March of 2018, I cannot draw any larger conclusions about this coverage. However, again, it is interesting to note the substantial spike in the number of times “white” is mentioned. That being said, because the entirety of India Abroad
is geared toward Indian-Americans, the word “white” may be used outside of the context of identifying someone who discriminated against an Indian-American.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the results of this content analysis are inconclusive. Because *The New York Times* has published so few articles on Indian-Americans, it is very unlikely that their coverage reinforces an Indian-American group consciousness. Additionally, because I only analyze *India Abroad* articles from a relatively short period of time, I cannot draw any conclusions from trends in that coverage. In the future, to complement this analysis, I would conduct a broader content analysis that examines how other forms of the news media cover Indian-Americans.

While I set out to examine how media coverage on Indian-Americans portrays members of the racial group, I found that the newspapers that I profiled are unlikely to reinforce an Indian-American group consciousness. However, there are several reasons why this might be the case. First, in the case of my analysis of *India Abroad*, I was only able to analyze 21 months’ worth of articles. If I were able to access articles that the newspaper published over a longer period of time, then I might be able to draw a more substantive conclusion on the role of *India Abroad* in facilitating group consciousness. It might also be the case that Indian-Americans turn to other mechanisms of information dissemination, like religious institutions, community events, or informal social networks, for their news. I explain how these alternative mechanisms could function below.

Religious institutions could reinforce an Indian-American group consciousness by grounding Indian-Americans in a community of like-minded Indian-Americans, which increases
the likelihood that Indian-Americans forge bonds with their co-ethnics. Within the black community, McDaniel (2018) describes a similar process in which black churches allow African-Americans to congregate and advocate for a common belief system. These interactions at church build a foundation upon which blacks befriend one another and come to connect their personal life outcomes with their racial group’s status. In another example of religious institutions facilitating group consciousness, Jamal (2005) explains that Muslims who live and pray amongst other Muslims tend to prioritize the Muslim community’s welfare when casting their ballots on voting day. In the case of Indian-Americans, Hindus might come to prioritize their racial identity if the act of attending temple makes their racial identity salient. This might also work for non-Hindu Indian-Americans; if religious institutions emphasize and celebrate their members’ cultural connections to their homeland, gurudwaras, mosques, and temples could maintain the relationship between an individual and her racial identity through reminding the individual of her homeland.

Informal social networks could also facilitate an Indian-American group consciousness. These social networks may be attached to religious groups, like McDaniel (2018), Jamal (2005), and Ocampo, et al (2018) describe, or they can be secular in nature (Sanchez 2008). Informal social networks facilitate group consciousness in a similar manner to how religious spaces would do so. By forging bonds with their co-ethnics, Indian-Americans may come to see the well-being of the entire racial group as intertwined with their own individual well-being.

Indian-American-centric community events could also facilitate an Indian-American group consciousness by introducing Indian-Americans to one another in a setting that emphasizes their shared racial identity. Austin, et al (2012) and Valenzuela and Michelson (2016) find that in the African-American and Latino communities, respectively, community
events that bring together co-ethnics may reinforce those co-ethnics’ bonds with one another and make their racial identities more salient. This drives them to connect their racial groups’ status to their own personal life trajectories.
Chapter IV

Regressions

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the influence of experiences of discrimination on Indian-American partisanship, specifically as it operates through through an Indian-American group consciousness. The preceding chapter provides a content analysis that profiles instances of the New York Times and India Abroad covering anti-Indian discrimination; this chapter utilizes statistical techniques to determine how Indian-Americans’ experiences of discrimination impact their partisanship. I do this by running a series of regressions exploring the relationship between experiences of discrimination and partisanship identification using the 2016 Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey (CMPS). I then test the validity of these results by including controls for already-existing explanations for partisanship acquisition.

I begin this chapter by developing a set of theoretical expectations about the relationship between experiences of discrimination and partisanship identification derived from the theory presented in chapter 2. Additionally, I attempt to explain why the relationship that I outline is mediated by the existence of group consciousness by arguing that experiences of discrimination cause Indian-Americans to draw closer to their co-ethnics. The existence of an Indian-American group consciousness as an independent variable leads to several expectations for my analysis, which I then explain.

The bulk of the analysis in this chapter makes use of national survey data to examine the relationship between Indian-Americans’ experiences of discrimination and Indian-Americans’ partisanship. I conclude this chapter by evaluating my original theory of Indian-American partisanship acquisition in relation to the already-existing theories that I profiled in chapter 2. I
find that while experiences of racial discrimination do not appear to facilitate group consciousness, group consciousness does impact Indian-Americans’ party identification distinctly from the other theories of party identification that I outline in chapter 2.

**Theory**

As I argue in Chapter 2, experiences of discrimination can draw members of a racial minority together. Experiencing racial discrimination makes an individual’s racial identity more salient, so she is more likely to draw close with other individuals who share that aspect of her identity - her race. I argue that this group consciousness may drive Indian-Americans to hold some beliefs on behalf of their racial group, rather than on behalf of themselves individually. Additionally, group consciousness drives Indian-Americans toward the Democratic Party because they want to align themselves in opposition to the social group that they perceive to discriminate against themselves. Indians associate that social group, whites, with the Republican Party.

Although there is already literature that explores the partisanship and Asian Americans generally, I suggest that there is a distinct relationships between Indian-Americans and partisanship. In part, this is because of some of the group’s distinct attributes: they have a relatively high average annual income compared to the average Asian-American, they are relatively dark phenotypically, they attain relatively high levels of education, they have a relatively low intermarriage rate with whites, and the majority of them are non-Christian (López, et al 2017; Kalmijn and Van Tubergen 2010). Together, I argue that these five factors distinguish Indian-Americans from Asian-Americans effectively enough that their partisanship acquisition
process ought to be distinct from the general partisanship acquisition process that other Asian-American subgroups undergo.

I argue that an Indian-American group consciousness arises out of two mutually-reinforcing conditions. First, many Indian-Americans have experienced racial discrimination. The second condition that reinforces an Indian-American group consciousness is that, as aforementioned, there are several characteristics that distinguish Indian-Americans from other Asian-American subgroups, such as country of origin, religion (and, more specifically, not being Christian), and low intermarriage rates (which suggest relatively low levels of assimilation) (Kalmijn and Van Tubergen 2010). These two conditions ought to facilitate an Indian-American group consciousness separate from the Asian-American group consciousness. In turn, I expect Indian-American group consciousness to map onto support for the Democratic party.

**Expectations**

In this section, I lay out my expectations for the empirical analysis. First, I expect to observe a significant relationship between experiences of discrimination and an Indian-American group consciousness because experiences of discrimination have been found to impact group consciousness, which, in turn, may lead Indian-Americans to identify as Democrats (Masuoka and Junn 2013). Second, I expect group consciousness to create a uniform set of standards that Indian-Americans use to evaluate social groups in the United States. Indian-Americans should adopt a party identification that accounts for those evaluations. I expect Indian-Americans to follow Green and colleagues’ theory of partisanship acquisition, whereby individuals assess which social groups they associate with each political party and orient themselves according to that assessment (2002).
To test this theory, I present two sets of analyses. First, I test whether Indian-Americans’ experiences of racial discrimination facilitate group consciousness among the racial group. Second, I test whether perceptions of an Indian-American group consciousness map onto Indian-Americans’ support for the Democratic Party. To separate the impact of group consciousness from other already-existing theories of partisanship acquisition, I build in a set of controls for Green and colleagues’, Downs’s, and Fiorina’s theories. I do not implement a control for Converse’s theory of partisanship acquisition because the 2016 CMPS does not ask respondents about their parents’ party identifications.

Both sets of analyses that I present are multivariate regression models that use questions regarding Indian-Americans’ interactions with whites, Indian-Americans’ relationships with their co-ethnics, and Indian-Americans’ media consumption habits.

In sum, the analysis in this chapter evaluates the relationship between Indian-Americans’ experiences of discrimination and Indian-Americans’ partisanship identification. Determining why Indian-Americans tend to identify with the Democratic Party should shed light on the ties to the party that they maintain despite their relatively high average income. Furthermore, between 2000 and 2015, the population grew by almost 210% (López, et al 2017). Studying the political behavior of a racial group that is growing so rapidly is important because it allows political scientists to track how the United States’s demographic changes will impact the larger political landscape.

Data and Measurement

The CMPS is national survey administered every four years online to a random sample of voters and non-voters by a team of scholars based out of UCLA. The 2016 CMPS was
administered between December 2016 and January 2017 and contained 483 respondents of Indian origin. Of those respondents, there are 63 Republicans, 227 Democrats, 165 Independents, and 28 respondents who support third parties. I present a table of descriptive statistics for the sample below.

Figure 4.1: Descriptive Statistics of Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Partisanship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Democrat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-Generation</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduated with a Bachelor's or Higher</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income Above Median for Indian-Americans ($100,000)</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live in a Majority-White Neighborhood</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have Ever Experienced Discrimination (Any Kind)</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have Ever Experienced Racial Discrimination</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believe in an Indian-American Group Consciousness</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In each battery of regressions that I present in this chapter, after the initial bivariate model, I include a set of controls for racial makeup of the respondent’s neighborhood, respondent’s income, whether the respondent is first-generation, the respondent’s gender, and the respondent’s education level. I justify my inclusion of these controls in my models below.

Racially-based residential segregation’s relationship with partisanship is a well-documented phenomenon within political science (Sussell 2013; Boustan 2013; Rocha and Espino 2009; Burch 2014). Most relevantly for this context, Sussell (2013) writes a correlation exists between the partisan makeup of a neighborhood and the fraction of the neighborhood that is white. Whiter neighborhoods are more likely to be predominantly Republican, while more diverse neighborhoods are more likely to be predominantly Democratic.

Income, gender, education level, and status as a first-generation American are all correlated with a person’s partisanship. In general, people with higher incomes are more likely to identify as Republican, while people with lower incomes are more likely to identify as Democrat (Peterson 2016). I also implement a control for gender because women are more likely to identify with the Democratic Party than men are (Blinder and Rolfe 2018; Winter 2010). Additionally, people with higher levels of education are more likely to align with the Democratic Party than people with lower education levels (“Trends in Party Affiliation Among Demographic Groups”). Finally, scholarship indicates that a person’s status as a first-generation American impacts political attitudes, with first-generation Americans more likely to identify with the Democratic Party than their descendants are (Branton 2007; Hajnal and Lee 2007).
Experiences of Discrimination and Group Consciousness

Within the field of political psychology, experiences of discrimination have been well-documented to induce group consciousness broadly (Masuoka and Junn 2007), within the Latino community (Sanchez 2006; Sanchez 2008; Schildkraut 2005; Wallace 2014; Masuoka 2006), within the African-American community (Dawson 1994; Austin, et al 2012), and, most relevantly for this thesis, within the pan-Asian community (Masuoka 2006).

According to my theory, I expect to find that for Indian-Americans, experiences of racial discrimination induce group consciousness. To test this, I examine Indian-Americans’ responses to a question in the CMPS that asks whether respondents had ever experienced racial discrimination and use it as my independent variable. Respondents who had experienced racial discrimination were coded as 1, while respondents who had not experienced racial discrimination were coded as 0. For my dependent variable, I consult Indian-Americans’ responses to a question about how much they feel as though what happens to Indian-Americans generally will impact their own lives. This question should tap into respondents’ perceptions of the existence of group consciousness because I define group consciousness as the belief that an individual’s personal life outcomes are directly tied to her social group’s outcomes. The regression results are below.
While there initially appears to be a weak relationship between the two variables, once the model incorporates a set of demographic controls, the relationship fails to meet traditional standards of statistical significance. This does not comport with my original theory. However, it is possible that general experiences of discrimination within the Indian-American community could facilitate one.

There are 483 Indians in the sample and 167 of them reported experiencing racial discrimination, which means that 316, or 65% of the sample, had not experienced that kind of discrimination. In contrast, every Indian-American respondent reported experiencing some kind of discrimination. Because a minority of Indian-American respondents had experienced racial discrimination that only other Indian-Americans would face, it is possible that racial discrimination is non-racially-based discrimination include gender discrimination and discrimination based upon sexual orientation.

---

2 Examples of non-racially-based discrimination include gender discrimination and discrimination based upon sexual orientation.
discrimination impacts sufficiently few Indian-Americans that it would not be able to induce group consciousness, even though in other racial groups within the United States, experiences of racial discrimination *have* been able to induce one. However, because every Indian-American in the sample had experienced *some* form of discrimination, it may be the case that general experiences of discrimination may drive Indians to band together through making the characteristics that distinguish them from the in-group (whites) salient. To test whether this is the case, I present a second set of regression results below.

Figure 4.3: A Regression of Group Consciousness on General Experiences of Discrimination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination (General)</td>
<td>-0.0518*** (0.0229)</td>
<td>-0.0356 (0.0244)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Neighbors that are White</td>
<td>0.0451 (0.0547)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>0.0132 (0.0522)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-Generation</td>
<td>-0.0284 (0.0347)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.0117 (0.0243)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level</td>
<td>-0.0590 (0.0834)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.546*** (0.0156)</td>
<td>0.546*** (0.0695)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>483</td>
<td>421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-squared</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td>0.017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Even when accounting for the different types of discrimination that an individual may face, once the model incorporates demographic controls, it appears as though there is no significant relationship between experiences of discrimination and group consciousness. There are several reasons why this might be the case. First, it is possible that the experiences of
discrimination that the CMPS respondents reported did not impact how closely Indian-Americans feel with other members of their racial group. This is because other forms of discrimination, like gender discrimination or discrimination based upon being an immigrant, are not unique to the Indian-American population like racial discrimination on the basis of being of Indian origin is.

The fact that every Indian-American in the sample had experienced discrimination is striking, but it may be the case that some instances of discrimination were the result of other aspects of the respondents’ identities. These instances of discrimination would fail to foster a racially-based group consciousness. Alternatively, it could be the case that Indian-Americans did experience racial discrimination, but misclassified it as something else when they were going through the experience. Finally, it could be the case that the CMPS asking Indian-Americans about their experiences of discrimination rendered some experiences that may not have actually been discrimination, but resembled it, salient.

Despite these results, about half (233) of the Indian-Americans surveyed in the CMPS indicate that they believe that what happens to other Indian-Americans will personally impact their own lives. Therefore, even though experiences of racial discrimination do not necessarily facilitate group consciousness among Indian-Americans, it is possible that some other social phenomenon does, and that the group consciousness still exists. Extending further, it may still be the case that an Indian-American group consciousness impacts Indian-Americans’ partisanship. I test this theory below.
Group Consciousness and Party Identification

While there exists some literature that links group consciousness and partisanship amongst racial groups, most literature on the relationship between the two focuses on how group consciousness acts as a heuristic for group members to make their political decisions (Sanchez 2006; Sanchez 2008; McClain, et al 2009; Masuoka 2006; Stokes 2003).

According to my theory, I expect to find that an Indian-American group consciousness drives Indian-Americans to support the Democratic Party. Even though the data from the previous subsection of this chapter indicate that experiences of racial discrimination may not facilitate an Indian-American group consciousness, I expect that an Indian-American group consciousness should still drive Indian-Americans coalesce under a particular party because the group consciousness should give Indian-Americans a uniform set of standards to use to assess different social groups. I expect this to happen because a racially-based group consciousness may arise out of any activity that makes an individual’s racial identity salient (McClain, et al 2009). That means that there are a multitude of mechanisms that may facilitate group consciousness that I do not have the time to assess in this thesis.

To test this theory, I present a multiple ordinary least squares regression of partisanship on group consciousness. I constructed a partisanship variable from two questions in the CMPS. The first question asked respondents to provide their party identification. The second question asked respondents about how strongly they supported the political party that they had identified in the previous question. The scale is coded from 0 to 1, with lower values indicating a stronger preference for the Democratic Party (0) and higher values coded as a stronger preference for the Republican Party (1). To determine group consciousness, I consult responses from a question that asks whether respondents believe that what happens to Indian-Americans generally will
impact the respondents’ lives personally. To keep my measure of group consciousness consistent across all of my regressions, I use the same group consciousness question from my previous regression. Lower values indicate a stronger group consciousness, while higher values indicate a higher group consciousness. I present the results of this analysis below.

Figure 4.4: A Regression of Partisanship on Group Consciousness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group Consciousness</td>
<td>-0.438</td>
<td>-0.171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.536)</td>
<td>(0.685)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Neighbors that are White</td>
<td>-0.0185</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.458)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>-0.585</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.486)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-Generation</td>
<td>0.153</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.432)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-0.446*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.241)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level</td>
<td>-0.989</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.974)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>2.934***</td>
<td>4.110***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.310)</td>
<td>(1.038)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-squared</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.045</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

As the regression output above demonstrates, group consciousness does not appear to impact Indian-Americans’ preference for the Democratic Party. Initially, this is puzzling; why does this relationship not exist for Indian-Americans, even though in my brief review of the
relevant literature above, so many other racial groups use group consciousness to make political decisions, like party identification?

To be sure of my results, as an additional check, I regress Indian-Americans’ assessments of Bill Clinton, a prominent Democratic politician, on perceptions of an Indian-American group consciousness. Respondents’ answers were coded such that lower values correspond to more favorable assessments, while higher values indicate more negative assessments. I maintain the direction in which these answers were coded to remain consistent with the regressions from the previous section, which were also coded in this way. The results are below.

Figure 4.5: A Regression of Assessments of Bill Clinton on Group Consciousness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>Model 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Consciousness</td>
<td>-0.0293</td>
<td>-0.0298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0687)</td>
<td>(0.0705)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Neighbors that are White</td>
<td>0.00223</td>
<td>(0.0493)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>0.00440</td>
<td>(0.0604)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-Generation</td>
<td>0.0194</td>
<td>(0.0335)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-0.00289</td>
<td>(0.0261)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level</td>
<td>-0.0232</td>
<td>(0.0935)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.501***</td>
<td>0.520***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0363)</td>
<td>(0.0846)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-squared</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
As we can see, when we test how an Indian-American group consciousness impacts Indian-Americans’ assessments of Bill Clinton, the results have failed to meet traditional standards of statistical significance.

Having established that racial discrimination has a negligible impact on Indian-American partisanship when operating through a group consciousness, my next question is whether the already-existing theories of partisanship acquisition that I outline in my theory chapter are better able to explain why Indian-Americans coalesce under the Democratic Party. I evaluate the theories advanced by Downs, Fiorina, and Green, et al below. I close this analysis by including those three theories and my own in a single model to determine which theory or theories influence Indian-American partisanship the most.

**Downs**

According to Downs, voters rationally weigh the benefits that they would accrue if a particular candidate were in office against the benefits that they would accrue if the opposing candidate were in office (Downs 1957). Voters then choose the candidate who increases their own well-being the most, either directly (by implementing impactful social programs that increase their quality of life, for example) or indirectly (by diverting resources toward other subpopulations that they support, like public education for children) (Downs 1957). Extending Downs’s theory, because Indian-Americans are, on average, very wealthy, they should favor the Republican Party because its platform advocates for lower rates of wealth redistribution, so people would have to pay a smaller percentage of their income in taxes. In other words, their ideology manifests in a preference for a political party.
To test this hypothesis, I regress partisanship on income, ideology, and a set of demographic controls. Income is coded intuitively, with higher incomes corresponding to a higher value in the regression. For ideology, the most liberal respondents are coded with the lowest values, while the most conservative respondents are coded with the highest values. Respondents were asked to self-report their ideologies. The results are below.

Figure 4.6: A Test of Downs’s Theory of Partisanship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>Model 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>-0.791</td>
<td>-0.481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.549)</td>
<td>(0.488)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>2.272***</td>
<td>2.311***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.821)</td>
<td>(0.824)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-Generation</td>
<td>0.0669</td>
<td>0.0026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.392)</td>
<td>(0.326)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-0.527**</td>
<td>-0.247**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.297)</td>
<td>(0.247)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level</td>
<td>-1.397</td>
<td>-1.051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.051)</td>
<td>(1.048)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>2.014***</td>
<td>3.188***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.518)</td>
<td>(1.048)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-squared</td>
<td>0.051</td>
<td>0.092</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

As we can see from the regression results above, while income does not appear to impact partisanship, the coefficient for ideology meets traditional standards of statistical significance. This may lend some credence to the notion that Indian-Americans’ political opinions drive their support for a particular party. While this explanation of partisanship is compelling, however, it
still leaves much to be desired because Downs’s theory does not explicitly mention partisanship, but rather a “standing decision” about the party that people support. That standing decision can shift when people decide that the opposing party’s policy proposals would substantially increase their utility. Fiorina extends Downs’s theory to include partisanship adoption. Therefore, to evaluate Fiorina’s theory of partisanship acquisition, I construct a separate model.

**Fiorina**

Fiorina (1981) builds upon Downs’s work by positing an explanation for how Americans develop their party identification in the United States. Fiorina begins by claiming that party identification is unstable over time (87). Using data from the 1956-58-60 SRC Panel Study, Fiorina demonstrates that while only 15% of respondents changed their party identification from one party to another, more than 40% of respondents changed their position on a seven-point scale of partisanship. Based upon this claim, Fiorina argues that an individual’s party identification is the result of a carefully-considered comparison of her experiences with the two parties modified by a scalar that takes into account other factors that might influence a person’s party identification, such as her parents’ partisanship (90). Within the context of Indian-American partisanship, Fiorina might advance the hypothesis that one could predict Indian-Americans’ party identification by asking them how they feel about a salient issue, such as immigration.

To test Fiorina’s theory, I pull Indian-Americans’ responses to a question on whether immigration has had a negative impact on the economy in the respondents’ states. Affirmative answers to the question were coded as lower values, while negative answers to the question were coded as higher values. The responses to the question were the independent variable, with the
dependent variable as the partisanship scale that was used in the other models presented in this chapter. The results are below.

Figure 4.7: A Test of Fiorina’s Theory of Partisanship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>Model 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does immigration have a negative impact?</td>
<td>-0.236**</td>
<td>-0.243***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0913)</td>
<td>(0.0903)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>-0.0950</td>
<td>(0.0769)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-Generation</td>
<td>0.0147</td>
<td>(0.0644)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-0.0837**</td>
<td>(0.0392)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level</td>
<td>-0.119</td>
<td>(0.149)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.476***</td>
<td>0.667***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0740)</td>
<td>(0.156)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-squared</td>
<td>0.032</td>
<td>0.078</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

These regression results indicate that there is a strong relationship between opinions on salient issues and party identification. Respondents who were more likely to view the impact that immigrants have on the economy in a negative light were more likely to support the GOP. Downs’s and Fiorina’s theories are not mutually exclusive; both predicate their theories upon the assumption that voters are able to rationally weigh their choices in an election to determine which candidate would increase their own well-being the most. However, for those who lack the social contextualization and connections necessary to evaluate candidates, there must be some other way to acquire partisanship. Green, Palmquist, and Schickler provide an alternative (2002).
Green, Palmquist, and Schickler (2002)

Unlike Fiorina, Green, Palmquist, and Schickler find that people do not evaluate each party’s stances on policy issues that are important to them and then make a final decision on which party to support based upon those evaluations. Rather, people hold stereotypes of the parties and they associate specific groups, like Evangelical Christians or African-Americans, with each party (Green, et al 2002). People then choose a party to identify with by situating themselves according to how they feel as about the parties’ constituent groups (Green, et al 2002). In this context, Green and colleagues would argue that Indian-Americans assess the social groups in the United States, associate them with the different political parties, and then orient themselves accordingly.

To test this theory, I use Indian-Americans’ assessments of the frequency of anti-black discrimination as a proxy for feelings of warmth toward the black community. Because my theory is built upon the notion that experiences of discrimination link individuals together in a positive way, this proxy is consistent because recognizing shared experiences of discrimination should drive Indians to feel more warmly toward African-Americans (Craig and Richeson 2012). Lower values indicate that the respondent perceived a lot of anti-black discrimination, while higher values indicate the opposite. The dependent variable is the partisanship scale used in previous analyses. The results are below.
Figure 4.8: A Test of Green, et al’s Theory of Partisanship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>(1) Model 1</th>
<th>(2) Model 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of Ant-Black Discrimination</td>
<td>0.266*** (0.0937)</td>
<td>0.281** (0.111)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>-0.0262 (0.0863)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-Generation</td>
<td>0.0375 (0.0765)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-0.0595 (0.0447)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-0.195 (0.186)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.168*** (0.0516)</td>
<td>0.357* (0.191)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-squared</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>0.080</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

These results support Green and colleagues’ theory of partisanship acquisition. However, it is important to note that this proxy is not perfect. Without a feelings thermometer, which the 2016 CMPS does not include, I would not be able to test Green, et al’s theory with data that indicate Indian-Americans’ feelings of warmth and coolness toward African-Americans. However, these results are promising because they suggest a process available to individuals without access to social networks that is built up over the course of living in the United States for a significant period of time.

**Final Model**

When considered in independently of one another, all three explanations of partisanship acquisition presented in this section appear to impact Indian-Americans’ partisanship acquisition. As a final step, I compile the three theories, plus my own theory, into a single model to distill the
magnitude of each theory’s impact on partisanship acquisition. This should give us a better sense of how exactly partisanship acquisition happens outside of the vacuum of theory. I present my results below.

Figure 4.9: A Test of All Theories of Partisanship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>(1) Model 1</th>
<th>(2) Model 2</th>
<th>(3) Model 3</th>
<th>(4) Model 4</th>
<th>(5) Model 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group Consciousness</td>
<td>-0.0404</td>
<td>-0.0323</td>
<td>-0.146*</td>
<td>-0.172**</td>
<td>-0.171**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0783)</td>
<td>(0.0844)</td>
<td>(0.0831)</td>
<td>(0.0788)</td>
<td>(0.0786)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>-0.135</td>
<td>-0.0963</td>
<td>-0.0808</td>
<td>-0.0469</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0902)</td>
<td>(0.101)</td>
<td>(0.0946)</td>
<td>(0.0861)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>0.379***</td>
<td>0.418***</td>
<td>0.397***</td>
<td>0.401***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.137)</td>
<td>(0.136)</td>
<td>(0.125)</td>
<td>(0.127)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Black Discrimination</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.216**</td>
<td>0.206*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.105)</td>
<td>(0.116)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration - negative impact?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.270***</td>
<td>-0.245***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0945)</td>
<td>(0.0879)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-Generation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.0612</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0425)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.165</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.184)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.329***</td>
<td>0.211**</td>
<td>0.0802</td>
<td>0.299**</td>
<td>0.422***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0380)</td>
<td>(0.0900)</td>
<td>(0.113)</td>
<td>(0.148)</td>
<td>(0.212)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-squared</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.052</td>
<td>0.110</td>
<td>0.153</td>
<td>0.175</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Interestingly, these results indicate that when accounting for alternative explanations for party identification, the existence of group consciousness does impact Indian-Americans’ partisanship. Perhaps counterintuitively, this effect only emerges once the model incorporates controls for Downs’s, Fiorina’s, and Green, et al’s explanations for party identification. This may be because the inclusion of those theories in the model reduce the amount of extraneous variation in the dependent variable, partisanship, that group consciousness cannot explain. Put otherwise, while Green, et al and Fiorina’s theories account for part of the reason that Indian-Americans coalesce in their support for the Democratic Party, they do not explain all of the reasons why
Indian-Americans do so. Group consciousness is one additional, previously-unexplained reason that explains Indian-Americans’ preference for the Democratic Party.

Downs’s explanation of partisanship, which suggests that Indian-Americans should rationally align with the party that allows them to maximize their incomes, does not appear to explain Indian-Americans’ partisanship (1957). As the premise of this thesis indicates, this may be because Indian-Americans’ partisanship is not intuitive economically; Indian-Americans align with the Democratic Party despite their relatively high incomes. Therefore, it makes sense that this regression output does not find support for Downs’s model. If the model did support Downs’s theory, we should see a significant coefficient for income.

This model indicates significant, but relatively lukewarm, support for Green and colleagues’ theory of partisanship. Green, et al (2002) suggest that individuals assess the social groups that they feel constitute each party and then orient themselves according to how warmly they feel toward those social groups. The low level of significance that we observe may arise because the proxy that I used to approximate Indian-Americans’ feelings of warmth toward African-Americans was imperfect. Because the CMPS did not directly ask its respondents to assess how they felt about other racial groups using feelings thermometers, I had to rely upon a question that asked Indian-Americans about how frequently they thought that blacks were discriminated against. Therefore, it could be the case that if I had data from a feelings thermometer to work with, this coefficient might meet a higher standard of significance.

However, it may also be the case that the fact that Indian-Americans are relatively new to the United States might curb the explanatory power of Green, et al’s theory. The scholars’ theory hinges on the assumption that people can assess the groups that constitute each political party; if Indian-Americans are not sufficiently assimilated, they may not be able to do so. Indian-
Americans’ low intermarriage rates with whites may already indicate that they have relatively low assimilation rates (Kalmijn and Van Tubergen 2010). Additionally, the fact that most Indian-Americans’ families arrived in the US after 1965 suggests that Indian-Americans may not be as socially assimilated as other minorities with longer histories in the US are. Finally, scholarship indicates that even though second-generation Indian-Americans have experienced more social assimilation than first-generation Indian-Americans have, second-generation Indian-Americans (many of whom are just becoming old enough to vote) have still not experienced complete social and political assimilation (Misra 2009).

Interestingly, the model that incorporates a control for Green, et al’s theory is the first model to exhibit a significant coefficient for group consciousness. This may be the case because Green and colleagues’ theory is predicated upon an individual being able to recognize and classify distinct social groups, which is also a necessary skill for recognizing the existence of Indian-American group consciousness. Indian-Americans need to be able to categorize themselves as a distinct racial group and recognize the similarities that bind them together for group consciousness to form within the racial group. By recognizing anti-Black discrimination, Indian-Americans exercise those skills in classifying Blacks as members of a distinct racial group and outlining an experience (discrimination) that many Blacks face. Therefore, it makes conceptual sense that the inclusion of a control for Green and colleagues’ theory should tease out a significant coefficient for group consciousness.

These regression results most strongly support Fiorina’s theory of partisanship acquisition, which states that an individual’s opinions on salient issues drive her party identification (1981). To test this theory, I consulted answer to a question on whether immigration has a negative impact on the economy. According to this theory, people who believe
that immigration is detrimental to economic growth should align with the Republican Party, while people who believe that immigration does not adversely impact the economy should be Democrats. The regression output clearly indicates that Indian-Americans’ opinions on immigration strongly predict their partisanship. Every Indian-American has family members who were immigrants and many Indian-Americans came to the United States in pursuit of upward economic mobility (Chandrasekhar 1986), so the Indian-American CMPS respondents’ opinions align with their personal experiences.

It could be the case that support for Fiorina’s theory would be less strong if I tested a question that fewer Indian-Americans had personal experiences with, like climate change. Due to time limitations on this thesis, I am unable to test whether Fiorina’s theory loses explanatory power when I test another salient issue. However, future scholarship should subject my findings to additional robustness checks to determine the validity of the relationship that I uncover above.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter was to evaluate the relationship between Indian-Americans’ experiences of discrimination and their party identification. I determine that the impact of experiences of discrimination on Indian-Americans’ partisanship as it operates through through group consciousness is inconclusive. However, group consciousness appears to have a distinct impact on Indian-Americans’ partisanship, which emerges once I control for already-existing explanations for partisanship acquisition. In addition to group consciousness, I find support for Green and colleagues’ and Fiorina’s theories of party identification. Future scholarship should subject these findings to additional robustness checks to verify their validity.
The fact that group consciousness influences Indian-Americans’ partisanship holds several primary implications for Indian-Americans’ political behavior. First, it demonstrates that for many group members, the Indian-American racial identity is politically salient. Second, it implies that Indian-Americans perceive a connection between their own lives and the well-being of their racial group that may map onto other contexts within politics. Finally, Indian-Americans’ group consciousness may color their political relationships with other Asian subgroups and, more broadly, other social groups.
Chapter V

Conclusion

If we only tried turning to already-existing theories for partisanship acquisition, scholars would not be able to explain why Vinod and the Patels support the Democratic Party. Their distinct socioeconomic statuses and education levels should stratify their party identification - while we might expect the Patels to align with the Democratic Party, Vinod appears more like what we might expect a Republican to look like. So why does he align himself with the Patels politically?

In this project, I argue that Vinod and the Patels coalesce under the Democratic Party in part because they share group consciousness, they hold similar ideologies, and they assess the social groups that make up the Democratic and Republican Parties in a similar manner. In chapter 2, I provide an overview of literature on partisanship acquisition and explain why each theory cannot explain Indian-Americans’ political behavior. I evaluate explanations for Jewish-American and Asian-American partisanship to see why members of those two groups coalesce under the Democratic Party despite experiencing socioeconomic stratification similar to that of Indian-Americans. Then, I advance an original theory of Indian-American partisanship, which posits that experiences of racial discrimination should facilitate group consciousness among Indian-Americans, which should, in turn, drive Indian-Americans toward the Democratic Party.

To explore examples of news coverage about Indian-Americans, I conduct a content analysis using articles from The New York Times and India Abroad in chapter 3 of this thesis. While I find that the news does cover instances of racial discrimination against Indian-
Americans, it also frequently highlights Indian-Americans’ achievements. Furthermore, *The New York Times* writes about Indian-Americans and *India Abroad* covers instances of discrimination extremely infrequently, so there is a low likelihood of those newspapers making Indian-Americans’ racial identities more salient by reminding Indian-Americans of discrimination that they had experienced. I conclude this chapter by evaluating other ways that Indian-Americans’ experiences of racial discrimination might manifest into group consciousness, such as informal social networks or religious institutions.

There are several other mechanisms that could facilitate an Indian-American group consciousness. For example, while *The New York Times* covers Indian-American affairs infrequently, other news outlets might cover the subject more. Furthermore, we do not know if the majority Indian-Americans use newspapers, or even traditional news media outlets (such as cable news or radio news programs), as their primary source of information. It could be the case that alternative mechanisms of information dissemination, like social media (Quenette and Velasquez 2018), community events (Masuoka 2006), and advocacy organizations, (Jones-Correa, et al 2018) facilitate group consciousness.

In Chapter 4, I employ survey data to empirically assess whether experiences of racial discrimination facilitate group consciousness and whether that group consciousness, in turn, impacts Indian-Americans’ likelihood of identifying with the Democratic Party. This chapter demonstrates that while instances of racial discrimination do not appear to impact group consciousness, roughly half of the Indian-Americans surveyed perceive that group consciousness still exists, so group consciousness may still impact Indian-Americans’ partisanship, even if that group consciousness is not necessarily conducted by experiences of racial discrimination, at least as measured by the CMPS survey item. Additionally, group consciousness does appear to drive
Indian-Americans toward the Democratic Party even when controlling for other explanations of partisanship acquisition. The final part of this chapter evaluates how these three theories might work in tandem to explain Indian-Americans’ support for the Democratic Party.

Looking ahead, one potential avenue for related research would be to assess how different intermediate steps may reinforce the salience of Indian-American group consciousness. For example, Jamal (2005) finds that for Muslim-Americans, the mosque is a vehicle for civic engagement. Furthermore, Muslims who live close to other Muslims and engage with their religion along with the Muslim community that they live in are more likely to vote and, when they vote, are more likely to vote for Democratic candidates (Ocampo, et al 2018). Previous scholarship demonstrates that religious institutions and other forms of religious infrastructure can serve to ground a recent immigrant in an already-existing social group (Min and Jang 2015). It is possible that for Indian-Americans, temples and the social networks that are attached to temples may drive individuals to bond with their co-ethnics, which would result in group consciousness.

Another pathway for Indian-Americans’ partisanship is through informal social networks, which connect co-ethnics and encourage the formation of a larger group consciousness within the racial group. These social networks may be attached to religious groups, like Ocampo, et al (2018) demonstrate, or they can be secular (Sanchez 2008). These social groups would facilitate group consciousness in a similar manner to how religious infrastructure would do so; by creating bonds between co-ethnics, Indian-Americans may come to value the well-being of the entire racial group over their own individual well-being.

Jumping off of this research, scholars could also study whether a similar phenomenon unites the Indian diaspora in other contexts. There are Indian immigrants around the world. How do they form political attachments in their host countries? For example, do Indian-Canadians
coalesce under the Liberal Party in the same way that Indian-Americans coalesce under the Democratic Party in the United States? Indian-Canadians’ migration trajectories are distinct from many Indian-Americans’ migration trajectories, partly because Canada and India were once a part of the British Commonwealth at the same time (Bhatt and Iyer 2015). This means that historically, immigrating from India to Canada has been easier than immigrating from India to the United States (Bhatt and Iyer 2015). If Indian-Americans’ migration trajectories and settlement patterns in the US shape their political behavior, then it could be the case that Indian-Canadians’ migration trajectories similarly impact how they interact with politics. Additionally, because Indian-Canadians’ migration trajectories tend to be distinct from Indian-Americans’, Indian-Canadians’ political behavior might also be distinct from Indian-Americans’.

In another context where the ethnic majority is non-white, do Indians in South Africa coalesce under the African National Congress, whose platform centers around racially-unifying the country after the end of Apartheid (de Jager and Steenekamp 2016)? Indians have a long history in South Africa, with the first inhabitants of the subcontinent initially setting foot in South Africa as indentured laborers in 1653 (Seedat-Khan and Johnson 2018). During Apartheid, Whites instrumentalized Indians to act as a buffer between Blacks and Whites, both economically and residentially (Vahed and Desai 2010). The social forces that acted upon Indians in South Africa are distinct from those that Indian-Americans and Indian-Canadians have ever faced. How do they manifest in Indian-South Africans’ preference for a political party?

A third potential avenue for future research explores the connection between Indian-Americans and participating in elections. Survey data empirically establishes that 68% of Indian-Americans identify with the Democratic Party, but there is relatively little research that explains other aspects of Indian-Americans’ political participation (Ramakrishnan 2017). At the current
moment, declared and potential presidential candidates are gearing up to campaign for the 2020 election. With each election cycle, Asian-Americans coalesce more and more under the Democratic Party (Kuo, et al 2017). Will Indian-Americans continue to follow this broader trend? Additionally, Senator Kamala Harris, a candidate in the race, has a South Indian mother. Will a shared heritage draw Indians to vote for her?

Another plausible research question about the connection between Indian-Americans and elections is whether Republican Indian-Americans vote more frequently than Democratic Indian-Americans. Because an individual’s partisanship is the most accurate predictor of her vote choice, many campaigns run get out the vote efforts that target specific constituencies that already align with the campaign (Bartels 2000; García Bedolla and Michelson 2012). Scholarship frequently classifies racial minorities as solid constituents of the Democratic Party (Kuziemko and Washington 2018; Ostfeld 2018; Craig, et al 2018). If that is the case, then does it make sense for Democrats to target Indian-Americans, knowing that Indian-Americans are already inclined to be Democrats?

Finally, future scholarship should attempt to disentangle Indian-American and Asian-American partisanship. While that specific question is outside the scope of this thesis, Kuo, et al (2017) argue that the different Asian-American subgroups use the same decision-making process to align themselves with the Democratic Party. However, this research indicates that there may be an Indian-American-specific group consciousness that also partly explains Indian-Americans’ partisanship. How do distinct Indian-American and Asian-American partisanship acquisition mechanisms interact within the Indian-American community?

In sum, this thesis sets out to solve the puzzle of why Indian-Americans coalesce under the Democratic Party even though internal cleavages stratify the racial group. Because of their
relatively high average socioeconomic status and education level, we might expect Indian-Americans to support the Republican Party. However, this project finds that due to a shared group consciousness, preference for a large/small government, and a similar assessment of the social groups that constitute the two parties, Indian-Americans tend to identify as Democrats. The dearth of scholarship about Indian-American political behavior underscores a gap in academic literature. However, by studying Indian-Americans further, future scholars can gain insight into an under-studied, but quickly-growing racial group in the United States.
Works Cited


