

The model minority stereotype in Arizona's anti-immigrant climate: SB 1070 and discordant reactions from Asian Indian migrant organizations

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Abstract This research explores the discordant reactions of local Asian Indian migrant organizations to the passage of Arizona Senate Bill 1070. The objective is to illustrate how migrants from India to Arizona negotiate their identities in the context of this anti-immigrant climate. The research draws insight largely from local records and publications of Asian Indian migrant organizations, including monthly newsletters, board meeting minutes, and other materials found on organizational websites. The analysis chronicles how various Asian Indian migrant organizations shape public discourse about migrant identity, belonging, and citizenship through their reactions to Arizona Senate Bill 1070. The place-based approach provides a way to re-think traditional migration theories and explore the role of racialization in better understanding the consequences of migration from India to the U.S.

Keywords Racial identity · Model minority · Citizenship · Discourse · Asian Indians · Arizona SB1070

Introduction

The current global market-place creates a significant demand for skilled migrants with high levels of human and/or financial capital. The United States is a key destination for these skilled migrants. Yet, in certain places in the United States migrants, whatever their qualifications, are subject to intense negative perceptions and backlash (Wright and Ellis 2000; Lukinbeal and Sharp 2015).

Legislators in response to public concerns about the “migrant problem” have introduced a number of local and state bills (Chavez and Provine 2009; Ebert and Okamoto 2015). This is true especially in places which have seen dramatic increases in their migrant populations in recent years. Arizona is one of those destinations, attracting migrants from many source countries. While most come from Latin America, not all of its newcomers are Latino, and increasingly numbers arrive from Asia (Skop and Menjívar 2001; Skop 2012). For instance, Arizona Senate Bill 1070 (SB 1070) became law in 2010, shortly after this state became a top destination for both authorized and unauthorized immigration (Passel et al. 2014). SB 1070 “deters the unlawful entry and presence of illegal aliens and economic activity by illegal aliens in the U.S”. SB 1070 is colloquially known as the “Papers Please” legislation because it encourages immigration status checks during law enforcement stops. Despite legal challenges over its constitutionality and the rejection of

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three of the four provisions in the original legislation by the Supreme Court in 2012, the key part of the “Papers Please” law is now in the operation stage.

A recent “Debate Club” discussion on *U.S. News and World Report* (2014) makes evident the mixed public reactions to SB 1070. One view is that SB 1070 is a necessary step in curbing the problems associated with undocumented migration. As Senator Russell Pearce, author of Arizona SB 1070 states, “(SB 1070) is not about race, it’s about enforcement of the law” (2014). Others are very concerned that SB 1070 is the broadest and strictest anti-immigration measure in recent U.S. history (*U.S. News and World Report* 2014). Particularly troubling is the potential for racial profiling, and concerns over possible civil rights violations, since the legislation gives police broad power to detain anyone suspected of being in the country illegally, so long as the person is apprehended because of a “lawful” stop, detention, or arrest. As U.S. Representative Raúl Grijalva (*U.S. News and World Report* 2014) argues, the potential for infringement on the civil liberties of Arizona’s residents is tremendous, and has prompted numerous reactions from local, state, national, and international groups.

In the weeks and months before the passage of Arizona Senate Bill 1070, as well as during the 5 years that have since ensued, reactions from local migrant group organizations have been markedly dissimilar. Of course, migrant organizations represent multiple groups with different objectives and agendas, but the overwhelming response in Arizona is that most migrant organizations have stood united against the legislation (see www.altoarizona.com for the most up-to-date list).

Many Asian Indian migrant organizations, however, have provided mixed reactions, with the vast majority *deafeningly silent* on both the passage and implementation of the legislation. This article explores those reactions. In particular, this research chronicles how various Asian Indian migrant organizations shape public discourse about migrant identity, belonging, and citizenship through their reactions to Arizona Senate Bill 1070. The research draws insight largely from local records and publications of Asian Indian migrant organizations, including monthly newsletters, board meeting minutes, and other materials found on organizational websites.

The broader objective is to illustrate how migrants from India to Arizona negotiate their identities in the

context of this anti-immigrant climate. The Southwestern US is a region that has assumed heightened significance not only because of increased immigration, but also because of its introduction of new modes of economic governance and policy experimentation. Thus, this research’s place-based approach provides a way to re-think traditional migration theories and explore the role of racialization in better understanding the consequences of new migration flows.

Asian Indians in Phoenix, Arizona: an overview

The Asian Indian community in metropolitan Phoenix provides an interesting case to explore the question of how a group composed largely of highly skilled migrants navigates an anti-immigrant climate. The Indian-ancestry population in Phoenix has increased from <1200 in 1980 to nearly 35,000 in 2013; the vast majority of whom are also foreign-born. This is the result of shifting immigration policy and the economic restructuring of Phoenix, the United States, and India as a whole. The boom in high-paying, full-time, formal occupations in the high-tech economy has been particularly important in drawing highly skilled Indian migrants to the metro area (Skop 2012; Harvey et al. 2016).

U.S. Census data confirms that Indian migrants living in Phoenix today have considerable human and financial capital, as Table 1 illustrates. This selectivity has also increased over time. Large percentages of Indians in Phoenix (74 %) have a bachelor’s degree or higher. Most participate in the labor force (77 %) and the majority work in highly skilled occupations (63 %). Also worth noting is the percentage of Indians in Phoenix who are proficient in English (71 %). All of these characteristics generally describe a highly skilled migration flow, though as noted by Skop (2012) and discussed more below, a growing segment of the migrant group falls outside of this categorization.

With increased numbers in Phoenix, it is no surprise that a community infrastructure is emerging. An inventory of the Indian associations, services and religious/cultural centers listed in the *Phoenix Yellow Pages*, along with a search on the Internet and in the *India Yellow Pages* indicates that this community is ever-developing. In 2015, there were five principal religious centers, forty-nine organizations, and a

Table 1 Socioeconomic characteristics in Phoenix, 2013

	Phoenix Indian migrant total ^a (%)	Phoenix total ^a (%)	U.S. Indian migrant total ^a (%)	U.S. total ^b (%)
Percent with bachelor's degree or higher	74.2	28.7	73.6	28.8
Percent labor force participation	77.0	63.1	70.3	64.3
Percent highly skilled occupation	62.6	36.2	65.1	36.2
Percent speak English well or very well	71.1	–	71.6	–

^a Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *American Community Survey 2009–2013 5-year estimate*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office

^b Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census *2013 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimate*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office

cultural center in North Phoenix. This compares to just one principal religious center, twenty-five organizations, and a cultural center in North Phoenix in 2000 (Skop 2012).

Clearly, the increasing global economy has created a set of connections and conditions by which migrants from India come to settle in metropolitan Phoenix. Importantly, the overall socioeconomic characteristics of Indians in Phoenix, along with the community infrastructure that has arisen as a result of increased migration from India, are noticeably different from other migrants in the area. As Oberle and (2008) discovered in their comparison of various migrant groups in Phoenix, Asian Indian migrants (and Asian migrants more generally) have higher levels of education, occupational prestige, annual income, and homeownership rates than all other migrant groups. This provides Asian Indian migrants with a wealth of resources, but also masks important variations amongst migrants living in the metropolitan area. Social class and immigration status play key roles in dividing the perceptions and standing of various migrant groups in Phoenix, especially as Asian Indian migrants are generally touted as the “model minority”. This concept assumes a positive connotation, but is inherently a racialized stereotype with potentially deleterious consequences, as discussed below.

Racialization and the model minority stereotype

Both historical and contemporary processes of racialization result in the categorization of immigrants (and ethnic minorities) into racial groups (HoSang et al. 2012). These racial groups become the building blocks of a racial hierarchy, which serves as a system of

stratification. Groups perceived to have the most power and authority are at the top of the racial hierarchy, while the groups perceived to be inferior are at the bottom (Song 2004). In the U.S., there appears to be a fairly widespread view, both among many academics and the wider public, that most white Americans are at the top of the racial hierarchy, most African Americans are at the bottom (with sporadic reference to Native Americans as an equally oppressed group), and groups such as Asian Americans and Latinos mostly fit somewhere in between (Golash-Boza 2015).

While there is considerable agreement about the persistence of white power, privilege, and racism (see Kobayashi and Peake 2000; Inwood and Yarbrough 2009; Ferber and Kimmel 2010), scholars continuously contest the ranking of minorities within the existing racial order (Song 2004; Hardwick and Mansfield 2009; HoSang, LaBennett, and Pulido 2012; Omi and Winant 2014). Indeed, depending on a variety of social, political, and economic forces, many suggest that racial categorizations shift and the result is a rather fluid racial hierarchy in the United States. This fluidity, Omi and Winant (2014) argue, is purposeful because it serves the dominant group in maintaining particular political and social interests and privileges. By using both exclusionary and inclusionary concepts of whiteness, as Lipsitz (1995) argues, “white power secures its dominance by seeming not to be anything in particular”.

The historical experience of migrant groups in the U.S. illustrates how the boundaries of whiteness continually change (Golash-Boza 2015). From the late 1800 s and early 1900 s, various groups (Italians, Irish, Jews, amongst others) immigrated to the U.S. and made claims to whiteness that involved official

and popular discourse, ideological contests, violence, congressional legislation and court cases. The process through which many (though not all) European migrants were granted the status of whiteness was not as straightforward as one might think; nor did it mean that those with origins in Europe all gained access to power and privilege (Ignatiev 1995; Brodtkin 1998; Jacobson 1998). Few of these European migrants thought of themselves in racial terms, though over time it became apparent that it was in their best interest to be on the white side of the divide between whites and blacks (Golash-Boza 2015, 36). In other words, they came to a society to which color was important in determining social position. As a result, many European migrant groups (mostly through the propaganda and political maneuvers of their political leaders and organizations) began looking for ways to insert themselves in the most advantageous positions along the racial hierarchy as a way to secure more power and privilege (Ignatiev 1995).

For Asian Indian migrants, immigration and legislation policy from the late 1800 s and early 1900 s was particularly significant in shaping the racialization process of this group well into the next century. The historical experience of the group demonstrates the power of racialization in forcing Asian Indians into the marginal reaches of society (see Jensen 1988; Leonard 1992; and Rangaswamy 2007). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, federal legislators and judges passed and upheld prohibitive national immigration and naturalization laws (like the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, the 1917 Asiatic Barred Zone, the 1923 *US v. Bhagat Singh Thind* Supreme Court case, and the Immigration Act of 1924). Restrictive state legislation on marriage and landholding (including anti-miscegenation laws and anti-alien land laws) also materialized in this period. Combined, these laws and actions reflected “a deep-rooted attitude toward Asian Indians, stressing white superiority” (Li and Skop 2010, 292). Broad anti-Asian sentiment prompted these discriminatory regulations, along with other prohibitive social practices, and resulted in declining Asian Indian immigration, extreme sex ratio imbalances, limited occupation choices, and forced spatial segregation in isolated communities well into the twentieth century (Li et al. 2016, 223).

Yet ambiguity marks the contemporary period in terms of the Asian Indian racialization process. Because of the selectivity of contemporary U.S.

immigration policy, most Asian Indian migrants attain “model minority” status upon arrival. This is a stereotype originally used in the 1960 s to characterize East Asians in the US (Kitano and Sue 1973; Takaki 1998, among others). While it is assumed that the “model minority” stereotype is a positive one, many scholars have identified the problematic nature of the term.

As “model minorities,” Asian Indian migrants are typically depicted as hard-working, technologically competent, and mathematically skilled. They are also represented as more capable of achieving a higher degree of success than other ethnic minorities. This is because upon arrival, many of these migrants quickly assume an economic status comparable to that of the upper middle and middle class in the United States.

Yet defining Asian Indians as a “model minority,” scholars such as Sharma (2010), Thrupkaew (2012) and Dhingra (2015) contend that the dominant group has led this minority to develop “false consciousness”. In other words, many Indians believe that they have attained, as Bonilla-Silva (2004) proclaims, “honorary white” status without realizing they remain alien in the eyes of many whites. As Wang and Wang (2011) contend, the idea serves the majority population and rewards certain behaviors and attitudes while using the group as the standard to which all migrant groups should emulate. By emphasizing the importance of cultural traits and values in their “successful” integration, as Park and Martinez (2014) suggest, the “model minority” stereotype of Asian Indians in effect blames other migrant populations for their own failure.

The assumption that Asian Indians are “model minorities” presupposes that individual migrants experience little to no discrimination in the U.S. In fact, as Thakore (2014, 153) contends, “Asian Indians are subjected to many of the discriminatory experiences of not being White as other migrant groups and ethnic minorities in the US”. Thus, the fact that most Asian Indians are doing very well on most socioeconomic indicators such as labor participation rates, median incomes, and high educational attainment does not preclude the possibility that Asian Indians experience other forms of social exclusion and disadvantage.

Indeed, while socioeconomic data regarding various groups are crucial for assessing a group’s overall experience, Song (2004) argues that measuring

socioeconomic status, in isolation from other criteria, can also obscure the multifaceted experiences of individuals within groups. There is a tendency to extrapolate about other aspects of a group's overall experience on the basis of specific class status indicators. These indicators do not necessarily tell us about subtle and less noticeable forms of social inclusion and exclusion (Song 2004, 865).

For instance, job certification and recognition of skills and/or education remain problematic and are a very common concern amongst migrants from India to the U.S. The few studies done on this topic (see Fernandez 1998; Xiang 2004; and Saxenian 2006) describe how employers refuse to recognize the skills sets conferred by some foreign countries or institutions, limiting the economic opportunities of new arrivals and sometimes leading to what scholars have termed the “glass ceiling effect”. This “glass ceiling” effect speaks to the mixed earnings, undefined career status, lack of promotion, and varied attrition as evidence of the presence of prejudice toward Asian Indian migrant employees.

Nowhere is this more evident than amongst the temporary migrant worker population who come to fill short-term labor needs. H-1B workers, especially, have received varied treatment and many scholars question whether these migrant workers are treated humanely and in accordance with international labor standards. For instance, descriptions of “body-shopping” (the practice whereby information technology companies provide programming services and software personnel onsite at a customer's firm for a discounted fee) signal that exploitation does occur (see Alarcón 1999 and Rudrappa 2004). Additionally, Chacko (2007), Hira (2007) and Davis and Hart (2010) have recently argued that a handful of large IT companies flout the intent of U.S. law by using the H-1B and L-1 visa programs to bring in poorly paid workers, who are then transferred back to India. While a majority of H-1B and L-1 visa holders gain legitimate employment in United States, a number of temporary workers, called “high-tech braceros” by Alarcón (1999) and “techno-braceros” by Rudrappa (2004), are contracted by Indian-owned firms with connections in India to work for U.S. corporations at a reduced rate. Ultimately, as Skop (2012) discovers, many of these temporary migrants experience multiple forms of social exclusion and are unable to participate fully in US society due to their temporary status.

What is clear from the historical and contemporary dynamics of migration from India is that there are indeed complicating factors that mark key points of contradiction and potential areas for concern when it comes to the racialization of this migrant group. All of these factors combine to influence the ambiguous status of Asian Indian migrants within the U.S. racial hierarchy. Thus, while Asian Indians migrants are able to access many of the privileges and possessions afforded only to those at the top of the hierarchy through their status as the “model minority,” another prevailing perception of this group as outside of so-called “American” norms continues simultaneously. Because of their historical experiences, as several scholars (Prashad 2000; Purkayastha 2005; Sharma 2010) argue, Asian Indians continue to be ambivalently situated in contemporary racial hierarchies because of perceived superiority but eternal foreignness. In part this is because phenotypical differences mark Asian Indians as the “forever foreigner” regardless of their immigrant, citizenship, or class status (Thakore 2014; Skop 2013). These dynamics are further intersected by racialized perceptions that use overt markers of skin color, speech, religion, dress, and culture as markers of difference.¹

In the end, the experiences of Asian Indian migrants in everyday life are complicated by the various forms of capital that the migrant possesses, and the extent to which that capital can be used based upon receptivity within other communities (see Chacko 2015; Frazier 2015; Kaplan and Chacko 2015). In other words, although it is undeniably important, socio-economic well-being does not necessarily translate simply and directly into social and political forms of power and prestige.

Research questions, methods, data, and analysis

This brings up the current quandary. The recent passage of SB1070 in 2010 has yet unknown consequences for Asian Indians in Arizona. The legislation, which aims to identify, prosecute, and deport undocumented immigrants, gives the police broad power to

¹ One only needs to recall the the murder of Balbir Singh Sodhi in Mesa, Arizona and the mass shooting of Paramjit Kaur, Suveg Singh, Satwant Singh, Ranjit Singh, Sita Singh, and Prakash Singh in their Gurdwara in Oak Creek, Wisconsin (Kang 2012).

detain anyone suspected of being in the country without authorization. While opponents have been most vocally concerned about the effect of the law on Latino residents of Arizona, this research suggests that it is also possible that Asian Indian migrants and their U.S.-born children may be subject to harassment and discrimination, given the inherent nature of this legislation. Thus, this research explores the reactions of Asian Indian migrant organizations to the “Papers Please” law.

Discourse analysis is the key method in this research because discourse on immigrant-related issues is critically influential in shaping public opinion (Menjívar and Kil 2002). Essentially, discourse is a “speech act” with consequences that are not necessarily spelled out by the words themselves (Wodak, 1996). Interestingly, overtly negative language in politically charged debates can be especially powerful because the meanings of the words are unambiguous. But language that is not openly negative (or even words that are left unspoken) can be just as exclusionary as more explicit negative discourse, primarily because the intended meaning of the words is unclear. Thus, this research explores both the actual words spoken as well as the lack of words used by Asian Indian organizations in discussing the “Papers Please” legislation. This is important because oftentimes “speech acts” can translate into actions that can have both beneficial and detrimental consequences.

Discourse analysis exposes language as a strategy used by individuals to make their verbal claims (Hardwick and Mansfield 2009). This research focuses on the words used by leaders because they are the official “voices” for their organizations. They serve their constituents, i.e. members of Asian Indian migrant organizations, and their language matters. Inspired by the work of Michel Foucault (1972) on discourse, or “talk,” this research focuses on official language as it is used to create, maintain, and reproduce power and privilege.

Drawing largely from local records and the websites of Asian Indian migrant organizations, this research analyzes vocabulary and metaphors utilized in monthly newsletters and board meeting minutes along with press and educational materials. The idea is to chronicle how various organizations shape public discourse about racial identity, belonging, and citizenship through their discordant reactions to Arizona Senate Bill 1070. Through discourse analysis, this

research reviews publically available documents and contends that because organizational officials speak through them to a wide audience, they must selectively choose words that appeal not only to the organization’s membership, but also to broader public. The language employed is designed to emphasize, or (de)legitimize, certain people, perspectives, or actions related to the relationship between Asian Indians and other communities. This close reading reveals details about how intergroup relations and race relations are depicted by Asian Indian organizations. As Thornton and Tajima (2014, 143) contend, “This method provides strategies that allow researchers to examine the main organizing ideas that suggest why given events are important and how they are to be understood”. Thus, through discourse analysis, it is possible to ascertain the specific ways certain issues are given prominence, while others are delegitimized or ignored.

Migrant profiling and Arizona Senate Bill 1070

With regards to the “Papers Please” legislation, the Supreme Court has left in place a core provision—the so-called “show me your papers” clause—that allows police officers to check the immigration status of people in the state at specific times. The law states that if police stop or arrest someone that they also suspect may be an undocumented migrant, they can under the law check that person’s immigration status. The Supreme Court clarified the ruling by stating that police can’t stop an individual just to ask for her/his immigration papers, but a traffic stop, for instance, could be the trigger for an inquiry.

While the focus of most media has been to caution Latino migrants about the necessity to always carry their documents for fear of being held, some national and local magazine articles and blogs have also posted warnings to Asian Indian migrants to carry their hard-to-replace paperwork with them at all times (for example, see forum discussions on Slashdot.org 2010). As Ali Noorani, executive director of the National Immigration Forum Action Fund, told *India-West* in 2014, “The law opens the doors to a lot of racial harassment. If you look or sound like an immigrant, you’re going to be facing discrimination” (Sohrabji 2014).

The media gives some attention to the impact of this legislation on H-1B workers (Thibodeau, 2010;

Thibodeau 2012). Considering that Asian Indian migrants make up the vast majority of those working through the H-1B program, and that Phoenix is one of the top 10 destinations for highly skilled Indian newcomers, especially H-1B visa holders, there is potential that H-1B workers from India could become entangled in the enforcement of this law (Skop 2012). For instance, temporary visa holders could suffer delays and even detention, especially in those law enforcement departments unfamiliar with different migrant categories and various forms of immigration documentation.

It is believed that most H-1B workers do not routinely carry visa paperwork at all times because they're concerned that the paperwork could be lost (Slashdot.org 2010). It can take months to replace lost documents. Nonetheless, immigration attorneys are advising clients—"especially those in the Arizona corridor of the nation"—to carry proper documentation of their legal status (Thibodeau 2010). This means that foreign workers need to carry not only their visas and passports, but also their I-797 approval forms, and their I-94 arrival-departure records. "It's particularly crucial" to do so in light of the recent Supreme Court ruling (Thibodeau 2012).

In terms of racial profiling, there is little systematic data to support this claim as of yet, aside from some eye-witness accounts in the newspapers and from civil rights organizations. For instance, Manju Kulkarni, executive director of the Los Angeles, California based South Asian Network, told India-West, "Indian Americans who are U.S. citizens feel they should be carrying their passports around. It's already had a detrimental effect on us". (Sohrabji 2014).

Recently, the Arizona Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) unveiled a new campaign and smartphone app focused on compiling public documentation of Sect. 2(B) of Senate Bill 1070, popularly known as the "show me your papers" provision. The campaign, called United Against 1070, uses a smartphone application, online forms, an interactive map and a telephone hotline to catalog and track cases where people believe they are racially profiled by officers from the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office and other law enforcement departments in Arizona (see <http://www.acluaz.org/UnitedAgainst1070>).

Because of the work of the ACLU and other civil rights organizations, as well as the growing number of complaints from the public, in 2013 the Arizona Civil Rights Advisory Board (ACRAB) conducted a survey

and organized public forums to hear more about the impacts of SB 1070. Testimony from the public forums pointed out how SB 1070 has been used as an excuse to racially profile people, and as an intimidation tactic whereby police questioned witnesses and victims of crimes about their immigration status, as well as passengers in vehicles with no reasonable suspicion of any crime being committed. A summary of the survey was also released, but was deemed invalid because of the low response rate from law enforcement agencies (only 34 of the 134 agencies contacted submitted responses). In the survey, however, the vast majority (94 %) of law enforcement officials denied keeping information regarding the immigration status of the person contacted. This figure stands in stark contrast to testimony from the public provided during the same forum.

Despite conflicting testimony, ACRAB did strongly encourage those law enforcement agencies that had yet to respond to the survey to do so immediately. The board also recommended that law enforcement start tracking data and statistics of traffic stops to detect racial profiling. Since ACRAB is a volunteer group of bipartisan members appointed by the governor that can make recommendations to different state agencies, but doesn't create policy, it has limited power to effect change. Nonetheless, it will be interesting to see if law enforcement consents to the board's recommendations, especially because this would allow public analysis of the ethnic and racial characteristics of those held and/or deported.

Discordant reactions of Asian Indian migrant organizations to Arizona Senate Bill 1070

When it comes to the "Papers Please" legislation, it is likely that a person's phenotype, dress, or accent, rather than their visa status, will come into play during everyday encounters with the law. Yet the reactions of multiple Asian Indian organizations in Arizona range from deafening silence to prevarication regarding the legislation. Only one Asian Indian organization has come out against the legislation, despite the potential consequences of this law for this migrant group.

Reaction 1: silence

In research which is supposed to analyze discourse, it is challenging to document "speech acts" of silence.

Nonetheless, the undeniable extent to which most Asian Indian organizations neglect to mention the “Papers Please” legislation on their websites and in their official records is clear. After reviewing all the available documentation from the forty-five organizations that have a local chapter in Phoenix, only ONE has made any kind of statement or reference to SB1070 (for a list of local organizations, see http://www.azindia.com/organization_list.aspx). That means that ninety-eight percent of local Asian Indian associations DO NOT mention the most important piece of immigrant legislation to have been passed in Arizona, and one of the most impactful in US history.

Granted, the vast majority of these are cultural associations with a focus on recreating ties to India (Skop 2012). Few associations have more than 1000 members, and several include less than 200 participants. Most of these organizations are parochial associations that have emerged in the past several years, just as migrant populations from various linguistic-regional and religious subgroups in Phoenix have grown significantly.

Because states in India are generally formed on the basis of language, local cultural associations constitute unique units typically structured around linguistic-regional divides (Skop 2012). The Maharashtra Mandal and Bengali Association, representing the people of Maharashtra and Bengal respectively, are two of the oldest existing parochial associations founded in Phoenix; both were established over 40 years ago. In 1989, the Telugu Association was organized to bring together migrant families who speak the language Telugu, most of whom come from the state of Andhra Pradesh in South India. The Kannada Sangha was also organized in 1989 around members who speak Kannada, another South Indian language common in the state of Karnataka. Other linguistic-regional associations in Phoenix founded several years ago include the Gujarati Cultural Association and Tamil Sangam. More recently, with the nonstop arrival of Asian Indian newcomers, which includes both permanent and temporary residents from a growing number of regions in India, parochial associations representing the people of Kerala, Punjab, and Orissa, among others, have materialized in metropolitan Phoenix.

The objectives of most linguistic-regional and religious migrant associations in Phoenix include organizing and celebrating cultural and religious events, promoting appreciation and understanding of the “home” culture, religion, and traditions, and raising

awareness of the “home” language and heritage. A particular concern amongst many of the organizations is to ensure that the second generation knows their “roots” (Skop 2012, 180). These organizations typically craft ways to bring scattered families together to promote their own version of “Indian-ness” (Skop 2012, 139).

Rarely do these linguistic-regional and religious associations engage in local politics. In fact, many of the organizations have by-laws that specifically state that there will be no expression of views about local politics. For instance, the Gujarati Cultural Association of Arizona (GCA), in its bylaws states “In the interest of maintaining the unity and strength of entire local community served by GCA, the GCA shall not get involved in, and shall not express any views (through resolution or any other similar means) on regional and/or communal problems, or matters of religions in India that could be controversial in nature” (<http://www.gcaaz.org/GCABYLAWS>).

Yet the very next sentence of the GCA bylaws asserts: “However, GCA may actively participate and/or express views on humanitarian matters, or matters relative to humane treatment” (<http://www.gcaaz.org/GCABYLAWS>). Thus, there is room within the organization to address political matters of interest to the group. But GCA makes no mention in any publicly available document to SB 1070, before or after the passage of the legislation.

Another organization, the India Association of Phoenix, differs from the regional-linguistic and religious associations located in Phoenix. Indeed, the India Association of Phoenix was the first umbrella organization to be created in Phoenix and its stated purpose is to work towards the larger goal of bringing together the various interests within the community to organize “Indians” as an ethnic minority both locally and nationally. Its constitution outlines ten specific aims and objectives, as exhibited in Box 1. The document speaks to the apparent willingness of this association to participate in the contemporary politics of reactive identity formation. These itemized “speech acts” produce a visible, strong, broad-based, and politically active Indian voice. And yet, there was silence when it came to reactions to SB 1070.

Reaction 2: prevarication

The reactions of the more parochial linguistic-regional and religious association and the India Association of

Box 1 The constitution of the India Association of Phoenix (*Source: <http://www.phoenixindiaassociation.com/constitution>*)

Article II: aims and objectives

- To encourage ‘Indians’ to fully participate in the American society
- To encourage other non-profit ‘Sister Organizations’ to flower and prosper
- To encourage ‘Sister Organizations’ to communicate with each other and with the ASSOCIATION in marching hand in hand to achieve the common objectives
- To provide a national voice to ‘Indians’ by cooperating with other organizations with similar objectives
- To provide a forum for exchange of ideas, issues, and common concerns to the ‘Indians’
- To ensure and protect the rights of ‘Indians’
- To assist in the orientation and adaptation of ‘Indians’ to the American environment and bring about a better understanding of America and other Americans
- To formulate guidelines for improving the collective image of ‘Indians’
- To assure due recognition for the contributions of ‘Indians’
- To help establish and promote a community center in the Phoenix metropolis

Phoenix can be contrasted with another umbrella organization, the Indo-American Cultural and Religious Foundation. Like the India Association of Phoenix, this organization was designed to promote pan-Indian unity and encourage social and political engagement with the local non-Indian community. Since its founding in 1987, the organization has sponsored hundreds of inclusive cultural and religious events in its 11,000 square-foot meeting hall and more recently in its newly built temple, the Bharatiya Ekta Mandir of Arizona. The organization has also provided an essential forum for exchange of ideas, issues, and common concerns within the Indian community.

Leaders of the Indo-American Cultural and Religious Foundation proudly claim to be “the” voice representing several issues important to the entire Indian migrant community, including immigration rights, youth participation, and political incorporation (Skop 2012, 196). As one flyer maintains: “The Indo American Foundation is proud to be of service and meeting the needs of our community” (Skop 2012, 95). Leaders have attempted to fashion an inclusive definition of what it means to be Asian Indian through diverse performances and symbolic displays, while at the same time, attempting to (re) create a more cohesive sense of “Indian-ness”.

This organization built the only cultural center in the area, and recently completed construction on Phoenix’s largest Hindu Temple. The Indo-American Foundation is also host to an annual India Festival. The festival began with a few hundred participants,

but now brings together thousands of Asian Indian migrants and families living in Arizona, as well as non-Asian Indian members of the community.

With regards to the Indo-American Cultural and Religious Foundation’s reaction to SB 1070, very telling is the fact that in 2010, this organization invited Arizona Governor Jan Brewer as a VIP and guest speaker at their annual India Festival and celebration just weeks before the passage of the “Paper’s Please” legislation. Figure 1 is a copy of the flyer posted all around town. Though no official statement was released, it was clear that the intent of inviting Governor Brewer was done in an effort to demonstrate the organization’s unity with the state on this issue. In introducing the Governor to the audience of 5,000, mostly Asian Indian attendees, the president of the Indo-American Cultural and Religious Foundation showcased the history of the Indo-American community in Arizona, described prominent Indo-Americans and their contributions, and detailed major accomplishments of Indo-Americans to the larger Arizona community. He also praised the governor for her excellent work for the betterment of Arizona. In a response letter, Governor Brewer stated “Indian immigrants have made profound contributions to the arts, education, science, medicine, and business in Arizona and it is fitting that we rejoice with the Indian people”.

Though no mention of SB1070 is made by the organization, the effect of the exchange speaks loudly to the efforts of the Indo-American Cultural and



Page 2

DO NOT MISS! MORE THAN 6000 ATTENDEES EXPECTED



INDO-AMERICAN FOUNDATION OF ARIZONA

Working together with sister organizations
PROUDLY PRESENTS

INDIA FESTIVAL 2010

Saturday, February 20, 2010 – 11:00 A.M. to 6:45 P.M.
2809 W. Maryland Avenue, Phoenix, AZ 85017





Bring your family & friends for all day Fun, Food & Entertainment!

FREE ADMISSION





Festival Activities

- Food Booths by various non-profit organizations
- Delicious food from various states of India
- Jewelry, Clothing and other Shopping
- Cultural Program All day
- Fun and Games for Kids
- Non-Profit Organization Information

MORE THAN 4000 ATTENDEES EXPECTED. ARRIVE & PARK EARLY

Please Contact for :

Commercial Booths & Tables

Kulbhushan Chibber-480 250-0779
Neha Mallik- 623 451-9041 Subhash Thakur- 480 797-0625

Non-Profit org. Food Booths

Achut Kumar-480 628-3101

Cultural Programs & Non Profit Tables

Festival 2010 Chair: Kalpana Bhat - 480 998 9325

For Information Contact:

Kalpans Bhat	480 998 9325
Jagdish Sagar	480-768-1533
Guram Shah	602-993-3625
Mahesh Shah	480-922-8384
Vasu Aheri	480-227-8411



Arizona Governor Jan Brewer will be our Chief Guest at Festival.

Festival 2010 Highlights:

Commercial Booths

- Exciting shopping!! An array of vendors selling costume jewelry, clothing, artifacts & pictures, and much more including insurance agents, realtors and investment advisors

Non-Profit Booths

- Over 15 non-profit organizations participating in the event. Visit their booths to learn more about who they are, and what services they provide.

Food Booths

- Taste the exotic tastes of India! Savory items include mouth watering chaat (phel puri, paani puri, samosa chaat sev puri), to crisp masala dosas, scrumptious bhature dhole, parathas, dahi vadas, hot pakoras, bhajias to delicious Indian pizzas and delicious sweets - hot jalebis, gulab jamuns, ras malai, gajar halwa, faluda, matka kufli and much more!!!

Children's Activities

- Participate in games, arts and crafts and other fun activities

Cultural Program

- continuous cultural program on stage - Featuring music performances and a variety of dances- classical (Bharatanatyam, Odissi, Kuchipudi and Kathak), Folk dances from- Nepal, Punjab, Rajasthan and Karnataka. Contemporary dances and the ever popular Bollywood numbers!

Great family fun for all!!

DONATE GENEROUSLY

- Become a Life Member
- Upgrade membership
- Become a Trustee
- Sponsor Pupa
- Sponsor Mahaprasad

Please contact board of Directors to support. Donations are needed to our for our extra expenses of \$20000 per month.

Fig. 1 Flyer for annual India Festival, 2010 featuring Governor Jan Brewer

Religious Foundation to herald a particularly exceptional portrait of the Asian Indian immigrant community and lobby on its behalf. That portrait depends on a middle-class, Hindu, heterosexual conception of “Indian-ness” (Skop 2012, 178). Few attempts are made to address the needs of lower-middle and lower-class migrants, nor are efforts made to include other community members with potentially varying viewpoints (including Muslim Indians, second-generation Asian Indian Americans, or temporary H-1B migrants). This makes sense given that this pan-ethnic organization really isn’t particularly inclusive, but rather geared towards middle-class, educated, documented migrants who adhere to both Hinduism and the “model minority” stereotype (Skop 2012).

Reaction 3: opposition

While the Indo-American Cultural and Religious Foundation used its position within the Asian Indian community to prevaricate around SB 1070, Arizona South Asians for Safe Families (ASAFSF) became the sole local organization to openly contest the legislation, both before and after its passage. Founded in 2006, the mission of the organization is to raise awareness of the issue of domestic violence in the South Asian community and provide culturally appropriate support services. The organization is activist-oriented, and is responding boldly to domestic violence within a social justice framework. In this way, the organization is at odds with the broader Asian Indian community, because it seeks to dismantle this ethnic group’s labeling as an otherwise peaceful and prosperous “model minority”.

In various documents, ASAFSF articulates a well-founded concern that SB 1070 would make domestic violence victims even more afraid to come forward to law enforcement than was already the case before the legislation passed. As a result, ASAFSF joined a coalition of labor, day laborer, human services and social justice organizations, as well as individual named plaintiffs who would be subject to harassment or arrest under the law, to file a lawsuit against SB 1070 in 2010. The ACLU—sponsored lawsuit named Friendly House, Service Employees International Union (SEIU), SEIU Local 5, United Food and Commercial Workers International (UFCW), Arizona South Asians for Safe Families (ASAFSF), Southside Presbyterian Church, Arizona Hispanic Chamber of

Commerce, Asian Chamber of Commerce of Arizona, Border Action Network, Tonatierra Community Development Institute, Muslim American Society, Japanese American Citizens League, Valle del Sol, Inc., and Coalición De Derechos Humanos as the plaintiffs in the case.

The lawsuit included three charges: (1) SB 1070 unlawfully interferes with federal power and authority over immigration matters in violation of the Supremacy Clause of the U.S. Constitution; (2) SB 1070 invites racial profiling against people of color by law enforcement in violation of the equal protection guarantee and prohibition on unreasonable seizures under the Fourteenth and Fourth Amendments; and (3) SB 1070 infringes on the free speech rights of day laborers and other temporary workers in Arizona (ACLU 2010).

While the lawsuit is currently under appeal, ASAFSF uses its website and Facebook platforms to provide further information about the impacts of SB 1070 and domestic violence more generally for Arizona’s South Asian community. Under its “Resources” link, the organization focuses on some of the most precarious members of the migrant community, H-1B workers and their H-4 visa spouses. “If you are the H1 or H4 Visa holder and have started your Green Card application process, please understand that being in a domestic violence victim situation and seeking help will not jeopardize your immigration status or your job”.

ASAFSF is an outlier amongst local Asian Indian organizations because of its outspoken social justice mission. It would seem unlikely, then, that ASAFSF would participate in events sponsored by the Indo-American Cultural and Religious Foundation, given that organization’s reaction to SB 1070. Additionally, several local Asian Indian critics have complained that the Indo-American Cultural and Religious Foundation seeks to maintain the ‘model minority’ myth and only supports a middle-class, Hindu, heterosexual conception of “Indian-ness” (Skop 2012, 197). Yet, for the past few years, ASAFSF has sponsored a table during the Indo-American Cultural and Religious Foundation’s annual festival. During the day’s events, ASAFSF volunteers hand out flyers and provide information about domestic violence to interested participants. Perhaps this is the Indo-American Cultural and Religious Foundation’s attempt to reconcile their actions in 2010 with the stated mission of the

organization, which according to their constitution, amongst other aims, seeks to:

Foster friendship and trust among persons of Indian descent, Indian immigrants, and the local community (see <http://iacrfaz.org/constitution-by-laws/>).

Conclusion

The Arizona context is an interesting space to explore how racial identities are currently being defined, negotiated, and positioned. This research finds that discordant reactions to the passage of Arizona State Bill 1070 are specifically linked to varying conceptions of racial identity, with most Asian Indian organizations hanging onto their “model minority” status with the hopes that they will, at the very least, remain invisible as the story of SB 1070 unfolds.

Despite this desire for invisibility, there are very real consequences for Asian Indian migrants, as they attempt a new landscape full of snags and snares. In using the “model minority” stereotype to their own advantage, this research argues that Asian Indian organizations are playing racial politics. Indeed, the ideology of reactive identity (where pressure groups form out of political necessity) is at work (Skop and Li 2011), much as it was for European migrants in the early twentieth century (Ignatiev 1995). Indo-American Cultural and Religious Foundation leaders indicate that they are aware of the need to be organized and to articulate their interests in a collective voice. As opposed to those organizations that chose to say nothing, and who are likely operating more ambivalently, the voice that the Indo-American Cultural and Religious Foundation has elected to exploit is purposeful and reflects the population most likely represented and served by that organization.

In other words, this organization is reacting to anti-immigrant legislation in a way that highlights how “they” (hard-working, pro-American, citizens) are different from “them” (lazy, anti-American, illegal criminals). This conception is perhaps best represented by the individual reaction of a member of the community, who has lived in Phoenix, Ariz., for 15 years. She told an *India-West* reporter in 2014 that she had no issue with going to jail if she were ever to be stopped without proper documentation. She said,

“The state is trying to take care of us; it’s for our own best welfare” (Sohrabji 2014).

The state is clearly central to the institutionalization and enforcement of racial categories and the processes of racial formation. Indeed, the state, and its political leaders, play key roles in the adjudication of conflicts and competing claims among racialized minority groups. By touting the accomplishments of Asian Indians in Phoenix, Governor Brewer is essentially reinforcing the differences between those migrants that are welcome and those that are not.

Another explanation for silence or prevarication could be that Asian Indian migrant organizations do see themselves as distinctly separate from other migrants who they know very little about. Thus there may be little room for empathy. But the reality is that when Asian Indian migrant organizations choose silence, they are essentially enabling those in power to refute the legitimate claims and grievances of other migrants and ethnic minorities (Song 2004, 863).

This is in sharp contrast to ASAFSF, which finds empowerment through collective organizing. In seeking out and uniting with other “brown folk” (Prashad 2000) and the organizations that represent them, ASAFSF finds the similarities and linkages of race-based struggles for equity and justice. They take race seriously, and recognize that the “model minority” stereotype is dangerous and full of pitfalls. The organization also acknowledges that a pluralistic understanding of racism and racial oppression is key to counteracting the most egregious misuses of laws like SB 1070.

In the end, the vast majority of local linguistic-regional and religious organizations, as well as the India Association of Phoenix and Indo-American Cultural and Religious Foundation utilize what Ong (1996, 737) calls “ideological whitening” to negotiate the modalities of citizen making. This is not a new strategy. Asian Indian migrants are doing the same thing today what previous generations of migrants did in order to negotiate complicated and shifting racial hierarchies in the US. Indeed, the strategies used are an interesting juxtaposition to the early European migrant populations who sought ways to insert themselves in the most advantageous positions along the racial hierarchy. In the contemporary case, in order to pave the path away from Brownness and towards Whiteness, Asian Indian organizations in Phoenix are utilizing the polarizing, yet pervasive, “model

minority” stereotype. But whether that means they are afforded access to more privilege and power remains to be seen, and only time will tell how the racialization process plays out. After all, the new vernacular for SB 1070 has been coined “guilty of driving while brown”.

Compliance with ethics standards

Conflict of interest Emily Skop declares that she has no conflict of interest. She also followed all procedures in accordance with the ethical standards of the responsible committee on human experimentation (institutional and national) and with the Helsinki Declaration of 1975, as revised in 2008. Informed consent was obtained from all participants included in the study.

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