The Puzzle of Young Asian Political Participation

A comparative discussion of young Asian political participation in New Zealand and the United States

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Abstract

Prominent theories in political participation literature predict that those with higher levels of income and education are more like to engage in politics. Given the perception of Asian New Zealanders as wealthy and well educated it is puzzling not only to find that this community has low levels of political participation, but that a similar pattern emerges in the United States. It is to this background that this thesis aims to shed light on the political attitudes and participation of young Asian New Zealanders, and reports on results from depth interviews held in Christchurch between December 2007 and early 2008. A small pilot study of six Asian New Zealanders aged between 18-24 years and five of their parents were interviewed regarding their voting habits, their participation in other political activities, and their interest in politics. This thesis identifies six prominent theories of political participation and assesses their ability to explain the political participation of this small sample of young Asian New Zealanders. The results of this study are also compared with research conducted on Asian participation in the United States so as to gain a more in depth perspective of Asian immigrant political participation.

This thesis finds that while the participants in this study relate closely to their ethnic and cultural backgrounds, they often identify New Zealand as 'home' and see their future in New Zealand. The participants also discussed politics and participation in terms commonly associated with a typical youth cohort, rather than what might be expected of a *minority* youth cohort. While the six youth participants in this study did not participate extensively in political activities, the interviewees indicated they are interested in politics and feel that they can influence politics in New Zealand, should they choose to do so.

Furthermore, this research highlights how theories which have been found to be influential in predicting the political engagement of majority groups may not adequately explain the engagement of immigrant communities. While most theories of participation have had their widest application in relation to majority communities, minority groups are faced with a unique set of informational, legal and linguistic barriers. Thus, traditional assumptions about what serves to influence political engagement may not fully explain immigrant political participation.

Chapter 1

Introduction: Why study the political participation of young Asian New Zealanders?

1.1   Introduction

It is surprising that in both New Zealand and the United States research indicates that Asian communities participate less often in politics than the general population (Hero and Tolbert, 2004; Leighley and Vedlitz, 1999; Park, 2006). This is particularly puzzling given that the Asian communities in both countries are often stereotyped as wealthy and well educated, factors which are thought to increase political participation (Lipset, 1960: Verba, Schlozman and Brady, 1995; Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980). This thesis examines the reasons behind the lower participation rates of *young* Asian New Zealanders, and looks at whether being an ethnic minority affects the political attitudes, political efficacy and political participation of young Asian New Zealanders, and whether these attitudes differ between generations by comparing the attitudes of parents and their children.[1] This study also draws on research from the United States in order to present the New Zealand research in an international context.

As I will argue in more depth later, given the rapidly growing Asian population in New Zealand, it is crucial that we gain a greater understanding of the dynamics of political participation in this community in order to better engage the Asian community in the political life of New Zealand. This research aims to examine why and how Asian New Zealanders participate in politics, with a particular focus on the attitudes of young Asian New Zealanders towards political participation.

This chapter seeks to justify the need for specific research on youth Asian political participation, explain the reasoning behind a comparative study with the United States, and define the terms 'Asian' and 'political participation' as used in this thesis. This chapter then provides an overview of the structure of this thesis, and illustrates the way in which this research aims to shed light on an otherwise little studied topic.

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[1] For a definition of 'Asian' in the context of this thesis see section 1.3 Definition of key terms.

1.2   The political participation of Asian New Zealanders

In recent years there has been a growing interest in the role of the Asian community in New Zealand's political culture (Ip, 2001; Ip, 2006; Park, 2006). In particular there have been a number of initiatives, both legislative and academic, aimed at encouraging Asian New Zealanders and other minority groups to vote and engage in New Zealand politics. The 1993 *Electoral Act* was a significant legislative change that made voting more accessible to new New Zealanders by allowing for the provision of interpreters at polling stations (Ip, 2005). Additionally, the 2005 *Minority vs. Power* conference hosted by the New Zealand Electoral Commission was an academic endeavour which aimed to encourage 1.5 generation Asian New Zealanders (Asian-born, New Zealand raised) to enrol to vote (*Minority vs Power*, 2005).

These initiatives come at a time when there are increasing numbers of immigrants to New Zealand from non-European sources, yet there is surprisingly little research on the political experiences of these groups. One exception to this is a major study conducted in 2006 by Shee Jong Park which suggested that political participation and levels of external efficacy in the Asian New Zealand community is considerably lower than that of the general population. In a representative political system where the voice of the public is intended to be the voice of the government, it is concerning that many in the Asian New Zealand community appear to be opting out of political life. Indeed, as Dalton (2002, p.32) puts it, 'Democracy requires an active citizenry because it is through discussion, popular interest, and involvement in politics that societal goals should be defined and carried out. Without public involvement in the process, democracy lacks both its legitimacy and its guiding force.'

Research by Park (2006) highlights a large disparity between the voter turnout rates of Asian New Zealanders and the national average. It is estimated that around only 60% of Asian New Zealanders voted in the 2002 election compared to 77% for the general population (Park, 2006). This 'gap' in participation is even more significant when non-electoral forms of participations are examined. For example, only 13.3% of Asian New Zealanders report signing a petition compared to 74.4% of the general population, and their participation in other activities — working in the community to solve a problem, writing or phoning government officials, a newspaper or a TV station, taking part in a protest or demonstration, making a donation to a political party, and joining a political party — all register under 10%,

significantly lower than the participation levels for the total population (Park, 2006). Furthermore, this same study found that an alarming 87% of respondents felt that Asian New Zealanders are not able to influence government policy-making in New Zealand (Park, 2006, p.162).

While Park's study clearly identified a deficit in the rates of political participation between Asian New Zealanders and the general population, this lower participation rate cannot easily be explained as a result of apathy or a lack of interest in politics. Recent political events indicate that there is a latent demand for greater political engagement within the Asian New Zealand community. These events include a request by the New Zealand Chinese Association for an apology from the government for the poll tax imposed solely on Chinese immigrants between 1881 and 1934 (Fung, n.d.; Te Ara, n.d.).[2] Many Asian New Zealanders also expressed public concern about a controversial article titled 'Asian Angst,' published in the national North and South magazine in 2006. The article portrayed the Asian New Zealand community as a serious criminal element and reported that 'the Asian menace has been steadily creeping up on us' (Coddington, 2006). Three separate complaints were lodged with the Press Council claiming that the article was misleading and discriminatory (Mok, n.d.; Oliver, 2007).[3] Most recently, a protest march was organized by the Asian Anti-Crime Group in July 2008 calling for tougher sentencing after the murders of three Asian New Zealanders (Lewis and Mao, 2008). The protest, held in Auckland, attracted a crowd of up to 15,000 mostly Asian New Zealanders (Eriksen, 2008). These events suggest that Asian New Zealanders are interested in politics and, if a significant concern exists, many Asian New Zealanders appear to want to participate, making it surprising that they do not appear to engage more extensively in elections and other non-traditional political activities.

1.3   Definition of key terms

It now seems pertinent to define two terms crucial to the understanding of this thesis, namely 'Asian' and 'political participation.'

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[2] An apology for the poll tax was made by then Prime Minister Hannah Clark on the 12th February, 2002 ('Chinese Poll Tax Apology,' 2002)

[3] The complainants were the Asia: New Zealand Foundation, Grant Hannis, and Tze Ming Mok . The complaints were upheld, and the Press Council report found that the article was inaccurate and discriminatory, and failed to point out that while crime committed by Asians in New Zealand has increased, the size of the community had also increased (Press Council, 2007).

Asian New Zealanders

The term 'Asian' is a broad term used to categorise people from a wide range of ethnic groups from several east, south-eastern, and central Asian countries. The New Zealand Census applies a wide definition of Asian in its statistics and includes people from the Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, Burma, Laos, Indonesia, Malaysia, China, India, Fijian-Indians, Sri Lanka, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). This thesis will use this broad definition of 'Asian,' however, given the wide range of ethnicities encompassed in this category this study will interview young people from the three most populous Asian ethnicities in New Zealand; Chinese, Indians, and Koreans. The term Asian New Zealander also refers to those born in New Zealand as well as overseas, but who identify as Asian.

As discussed earlier, the three largest Asian ethnicities in New Zealand are Chinese, Indians and Koreans. The 2006 Census recorded 147,570 Chinese, 104,583 Indians, and 30,792 Koreans (Statistics New Zealand, 2007a). Furthermore, over the next 13 years the proportion of New Zealand's residents who identify as Pakeha or European is expected to fall from 79% to 70%, while the proportion of those who identify as Asian New Zealanders is projected to increase to 15% by 2021 (Statistics New Zealand, 2006)

It is also important to note that ethnic groupings are markers of self-identity rather than concrete categories, and that people may identify with more than one ethnicity. While many Asian New Zealanders themselves may dislike the way in which so many vastly different Asian ethnicities, cultural traits and linguistic differences have become aggregated into one pan-ethnic category, Freedman (2000, p.21) argues that 'it also matters how the dominant group defines outsiders.' Park (2006) also takes this view and points out that how the host country views Asians as one group, based on their physical appearance and regardless of their country of origin or ethnicity, effectively institutionalises them into an 'Asian' minority group. Thus, given this categorization by the majority group in New Zealand, I argue that Asian New Zealanders do constitute a feasible group to study.

Political Participation

Verba and Nie (1972; p.2) define political participation as 'those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they take.' While voting is perhaps the most fundamental and most direct

form of political participation in any democratic society, it is not the only way to influence the governing body. It has been argued that while voter turnout has been declining in established Western democracies, people are not disengaging from political life, but merely engaging in different forms of political participation (Norris, 2002). Specifically, Pippa Norris cites a rise in activities such as participating in demonstrations, the signing of petitions and consumer boycotts since the 1970s.

A rise in the participation of non-traditional political activities in democratic countries may suggest that people feel that these participation modes are easier and more effective ways for them to influence politics rather than voting. As such, it is vital that any study of political participation includes not only voter turnout, but also levels of participation in non-traditional political activities, such as signing petitions and participating in demonstrations, in order to gain a more in-depth view of why people choose to participate or not, and what forms of political activity they choose to engage in. Indeed, as a study of a minority group, it may be crucial to take a broad definition of what constitutes political participation because, as Burns, Schlozman and Verba (2001, p.21) so aptly put it in their study of gender differences in political participation, 'we should examine not only differences in degree but also differences in kind.'

1.4 A history of Asian immigration to New Zealand

In order to gain insight into the political engagement of Asian New Zealanders, and young Asian New Zealanders in particular, it is useful to understand the context and development of Asian immigration to New Zealand. New Zealand's first Asian community dates to the 1860s when Chinese miners were invited by the Otago Provincial Government to work in the southern goldfields (McKinnion, 1996). This was followed by the arrival of Indians later in the 19th century. However, the Asian community remained relatively small as the government set out to limit the immigration of non-Europeans. While it was more difficult to restrict the immigration of Indians, who were British subjects, Chinese immigration was tightly restricted through the use of legislative means (McKinnon, 1996). A poll tax was imposed solely on Chinese immigrants between 1881 and 1934, and was not abolished until 1944 (Te Ara, n.d.). However, even after the poll tax legislation was repealed New Zealand's post-war immigration experienced little change and continued to favour European immigrants and

exclude non-Europeans. Indeed, Brawley (1993) described New Zealand's post war immigration policy as a 'White New Zealand Policy' in all but name.

In the past 20 years, however, the ethnic face of New Zealand has changed rapidly. Government privatisation of many state-owned enterprises in the 1980s and the restructuring of the economy created an entrepreneurial and investment void, resulting in the need for educated, skilled and wealthy migrants (Bedford, 2002). Furthermore, there was a growing desire to encourage closer trade relations with Asian countries as New Zealand's traditional market, the United Kingdom, was forging closer bonds with European markets (Kember, 2002). These factors were influential in encouraging the New Zealand government to reverse immigration laws that discriminated against non-European immigrants and instead welcome migrants from Asian countries (Brawley, 1993; Spoonley, 2005). This culminated in the 1987 *Immigration Act*, which was a move towards a merit-based points system where immigrants were granted entry to New Zealand according to their profession, assets, education and age, rather than their race or country of origin (Bellamy, 2008).

This legislative change resulted in a marked shift in migrant source countries. In the year 1986/87 Asian immigrants accounted for only 17% of all immigrants (Spoonley, 2005). In 2005/06, however, 16% of residence applications were from China alone, the largest Asian source country, with India following at 9% (Merwood, 2006).[4] Since the legislative change, the Asian New Zealand community has also grown rapidly in size. The 1986 Census recorded 55,000 Asian New Zealanders. In 1991, only four years after the immigration rules changed, this had risen to 99,000 (McKinnon, 1996). In 2006, 354,552 people, or 9.2% of the population, reported being of Asian ethnicity (Statistics New Zealand, 2007a). The Asian population is now the fastest growing ethnic group in New Zealand, is expected to grow by 145% to 670,000 between 2001 and 2021, and is the third largest ethnic group after Europeans and Maori (Statistics New Zealand, 2007c).

1.5   Why study the political participation of young Asian New Zealanders?

Even though the Asian New Zealand community has experienced rapid growth since the late 1980s, detailed empirical studies on the political participation of Asian New Zealanders are

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[4] However, in the year 2005/06 the largest number of residence applications were from UK citizens at 23%, followed by China (Migration Trends, 2005/06).

few and far between. Furthermore, there is no research on the political attitudes of *young* Asian New Zealanders. This is despite the fact that both international and New Zealand research has shown that immigrants, ethnic minorities and youth populations in particular are less likely to vote and participate in political activities than other sectors of society (Franklin, 2004; Hayward, 2006; Macedo, 2005; Miller, 1996; Vowles, 2004; Vowles and Aimer, 1993). Therefore, young Asian New Zealanders would be expected to be one of the least politically active groups in New Zealand, and, I argue, one of the most important to involve in politics.

Traditionally, younger voters have always had lower turnout rates than older groups, and preliminary evidence in New Zealand also indicates that young Asian New Zealanders are less likely to vote than older Asian New Zealanders (Park, 2006). This finding is made even more significant in light of the fact that voting and participation in other political activities, such as signing a petition or joining a demonstration, are habits that are acquired while young (Catt, 2005; Franklin, 2004). This therefore makes it imperative that we understand how and why young Asian New Zealanders choose to participate in order to ensure that this community feels they can access and participate in New Zealand's political life.

A study focusing on young Asian New Zealanders is further justified given that the Asian New Zealand community is a youthful one (Social Report 2008). In Christchurch, where the participants in this study are based, 28% of the Asian community was aged between 15-24 in 2006 compared to 15.3% of the total population, and 32.4% of Asians were aged between 25-44 compared to 28.6% of all of Christchurch (Ministry of Social Development: Regional and Territorial Indicators, 2008).

Given the youthful nature of the Asian New Zealand population, this study also considers how the migration experiences of young people may differ from that of their parents. If young people come into contact with New Zealand politics in ways that are notably different to their parents this may have implications on what they learn and their perceptions of New Zealand. One way in which the (re)socialisation of immigrants may differ between age cohorts is the primary occupation and related experiences of school aged and working age groups. Migrants who come to New Zealand as children or in their teens enter New Zealand educational institutions and thus interact with a range of New Zealanders, as well as study New Zealand history and society. This contrasts with the experience of adults who will likely

be seeking employment. Entering the workforce can often be a difficult and lengthy process for migrants with many unable to find work suited to their qualifications (Ip and Murphy, 2005). A workplace environment may also differ from a school environment and lead to different social interactions and learning environments for adult and youth immigrants.

Additionally, young migrants that arrive with their family will also likely be sheltered from the bureaucracy involved in migrating to a new country, giving a different perspective to the process, and further differentiating the socialisation experience between children and their parents. These issues raise questions as to whether the socialisation experiences of the young are very different from those of their parents, and if this appears to contribute to differing political attitudes. Thus, the political socialization experiences of young Asian New Zealanders will be compared with those of their parents in an effort to shed light on how these groups view and learn about New Zealand politics, and how this may influence their political participation.

1.6   Asian New Zealanders and Asian Americans: Why a Comparative Perspective?

Given the dearth of research in New Zealand it is useful to compare New Zealand's experiences with young Asian political participation with that of another country in order to provide a greater depth of understanding of the issues facing young immigrants. Therefore, this study employs a comparative research technique known as the Most Different Systems research design (Prezeworski and Teune, 1970. When looking at the reasons behind the same phenomenon (in this case low political participation in the Asian minority community) two case studies are chosen where there are clear differences aside from the phenomenon to be studied. As a result the similarities between the two cases should help to point to potential explanations for low political participation (See Prezeworski and Teune, 1970).

Using this research design this study employs a comparative study with the United States. Interestingly, Asian Americans, like Asian New Zealanders, appear to participate in politics less than the non-Asian community (Hero and Tolbert, 2004; Park, 2006). Research in the United States has shown that Asian Americans turn out to vote at levels lower than Whites, Blacks and Hispanics, although it must also be noted that there is much variation between the ethnicities that make up the aggregate Asian category (Aoki and Nakanishi, 2001; Freedman, 2000; Hero and Tolbert, 2004; Leighley and Vedlitz, 1999; Levinson, 2007; Lien, 1997; Lien,

Collet, Wong, Ramakrishnan, 2001; Junn, 1999; Uhlaner, Cain, Kiewiet, 1989). In the 2004 presidential election the overall turnout of voting age Asian Americans was 45%, compared to 61% of the general population (Levinson, 2007; Holder, 2006). In terms of the youth population, results show that turnout for people aged 18-24 has been declining in the United States since 1972 (Lopez, 2002),[5] and in the 2004 presidential election young Asian Americans in the 18-29 age group had the lowest turnout of all ethnic groups (Lopez and Kirby, 2005). However, preliminary data for the 2008 Presidential election indicates a 4-5% rise in youth turnout compared to the 2004 election, although whether this is a long term trend remains to be seen (Youth Voters in the 2008 Presidential election, 2008).

Furthermore, low levels of political participation in the Asian New Zealand and Asian American communities are surprising given the high income and educational achievements of these groups; factors which are thought to positively influence political participation. In the United States Freedman (2000) has documented how Asian Americans have low levels of political participation and are often underrepresented in politics despite their comparatively high economic status. Further studies have also found that controlling for socioeconomic status does not explain differences in participation between Asian Americans and the dominant white group in the United States (Lien, Conway and Wong, 2004; Uhlaner et al, 1989; Xu, 2005).

While studies of Asian political participation in both New Zealand and the United States indicate low Asian engagement compared to non-Asian communities, the two countries are strikingly different in two regards. Firstly, the Asian population in New Zealand is a significantly larger minority group than the Asian community in the United States. Asian New Zealanders make up 9.2% of the population whereas Asians are only 3.6% of the population in the Unites States (Statistics New Zealand, 2007 (a); U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Therefore, one would perhaps expect Asian New Zealanders to participate at a higher rate as they are a more significant minority and therefore may feel that they can have a greater influence over politics due to their sheer size, as is suggested by critical mass or group size theory (Grey, 2005; Leighley, 2001). As Leighley (2001, p.25) puts it, for a person of a minority group the motivation to participate 'will reflect the *potential* of the minority group

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[5] It is interesting to note that the beginning of the decline in youth voting coincides with the lowering of the voting age to 18 in 1972. According to Franklin (2004), the lowering of the voter age is one reason why voter turnout has been declining in established Western democracies.

to determine the outcome of the election or attain another instrumental end… instead of the individual's rationality of participating in an election contest reflecting the probability of casting the winning vote' (emphasis added).

Secondly, New Zealand and the United States have different government structures as well as different electoral systems, yet both countries still have low Asian participation, indicating that these institutional factors may not be the most significant influences on Asian engagement. In 1996 New Zealand held its first election under the MMP (Mixed Member Proportional) electoral system having previously used FPP (First Past the Post). While the number of Maori, Pacific Island and Asian MPs has increased since the introduction of MMP, Asian New Zealanders have yet to reach parity with their proportion of the population (Maori, Pacific and Asian MPs 1990-2005, n.d.). The impact of the electoral reform on voter turnout has also had a mixed effect on voter turnout, with increased turnout recorded at the inaugural 1996 election and at the 2005 election, while the 1999 and 2002 election recorded lower than average turnout (IDEA, n.d.). Thus, through comparing the experience of Asian New Zealanders with that of Asian Americans, a greater depth of information may be gleaned into what influences the political engagement of young Asian New Zealanders.

1.7   Structure of this thesis

This thesis began by discussing our current knowledge of Asian political participation in New Zealand and identified several gaps and puzzles in our current knowledge of Asian political engagement. The remainder of this thesis now examines the issues surrounding the political participation of young Asian New Zealanders through a comparison with the United States and by reporting on the results of depth interviews with young people and their parents in Christchurch.

Chapter 2 examines several theories of political participation and looks at the evidence surrounding these theories in New Zealand and the United States. Six dominant theories of political participation that are commonly used to explain political participation will be identified and discussed. Specifically, these are the rational choice model, socioeconomic theory, acculturation, socialization, socio-psychological theory, and institutional barriers. This chapter will also identify gaps in the New Zealand research, and set out how this thesis intends to address some of these issues.

Chapter 3 discusses the data collection methods used in this thesis. The methods used by previous studies of Asian political participation in New Zealand and overseas will be examined followed the specific research design used in this study. The research questions that form the focus of this thesis will also be detailed in this chapter.

The results of the pilot interviews will be reported in Chapter 4. A small pilot study of six Asian New Zealanders aged between 18-24 were interviewed regarding their voting habits, if they participate in other political activities, their interest in politics, and how they perceive New Zealand politics. Interviews were also conducted with five of the parents of the youth sample in order to examine theories of political socialization and to gauge how the migration process may have influenced political socialization of immigrants.

Chapter 5 will provide an analysis of the findings. The results of this study will also be compared with research conducted on Asian participation in the United States where Asian migrants are also less politically active than the general population and also have low levels of political efficacy in order to gain a more in depth perspective of Asian immigrant political participation. Finally, Chapter 6 will provide a conclusion to the findings of the results and provide suggestions for public policy strategies to address the deficit in Asian political participation in New Zealand.

1.8   Summary

Given the growing significance of the Asian community in New Zealand, recent quantitative research by Park highlighting low Asian political participation and efficacy, and the relative dearth of research in the New Zealand context, it seems timely to conduct a detailed, qualitative study into what influences the political participation of young Asian New Zealanders. The next chapter will now review several theories prominent in the political participation literature as well as examine the empirical evidence surrounding these models. These theories will provide the basis for discussion in the subsequent chapters as well as provide the framework for the primary research undertaken in this thesis.

Chapter 2

Literature review: Theories of political participation in the context of New Zealand and the United States

2.1   Introduction

Arguments have been made that political participation is influenced by a variety of factors. Income, age, gender and political institutions are just some of the factors thought to influence political participation (Verba and Nie, 1972; Verba, Schlozman and Brady, 1995; Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980). For an immigrant community participation may also be predicated on a variety of other factors such as fluency in the language of the host country, knowledge of the political structure and institutions, discrimination, and immigrant generation (Cho, 1999; Lien, 2004; Lien, Conway and Wong, 2004; Park, 2006).

This chapter identifies six broad theories of political participation. These theories are rational choice, socioeconomic theory, acculturation, institutional factors, political socialization and political efficacy. This chapter also discusses these theories in the context of Asian immigrants' political participation in New Zealand and the United States. This is by no means a comprehensive list of theories of political participation, nor are they mutually exclusive. Rather, each adds further information to the complex picture of why people choose to participate or not, and as such, will provide the theoretical basis of this study.

2.2   Rational choice theory and a cost-benefit analysis of political engagement

The rational model of voter participation uses a cost-benefit analysis to explain voter turnout. According to Downs, 'every rational man decides whether to vote just as he makes all other decisions: if the returns outweigh the costs, he votes; if not, he abstains' (Downs, 1957, p.260). Thus, this theory explains political participation from the perspective of an individual's self interest, rather than on environmental influences such as social and behavioural contexts (Heywood, 1997). In the case of voting, rational choice theory suggests self-interested individuals decide to act based on the costs associated with turning out to the ballot box. These costs include the time taken to enroll to vote, time to inform oneself about

the various parties and pick a candidate, time to turn out to vote, as well as the effort all these processes take. Therefore, this model of participation predicts low voter turnout as individuals conclude that their vote is unlikely to determine the outcome of the election, making the costs of participation outweigh the benefits, and result in an unengaged citizenry (Franklin, 2004).

However, the fact remains that large portions of the voting public in democratic countries worldwide do participate in elections, indicating that voting cannot simply be explained by cost-benefit calculations. Critics such as Fedderson (2004) point out that rational choice theorists have long recognized the 'paradox of the rational voter;' that is, that people may choose to vote despite the often high costs, indicating that people must gain some benefit from turning out to vote. Anthony Downs, whose 1957 work, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* was a key influence in the development of rational choice explanations of political participation, attempted to explain this paradox by identifying another benefit, that is the value of democracy. Downs argues that people are willing to incur the cost of participation in order to protect society against the possible collapse of the democratic system due to low voter turnout (Downs, 1957). Other explanations of the voting paradox include arguments that elite mobilization reduces the costs of voting by providing 'an information subsidy' to citizens (Leighley, 2001 p.7). Another argument is that people vote to potentially increase their own benefits by not letting their least preferred party win. Furthermore, in the case of minorities, the benefits of participation are potentially increased because as the community grows the chances of influencing the outcome also increase, encouraging immigrants to vote (Leighley, 2001).

Rational choice explanations of participation in immigrant communities suggest an immigrant community will bear more costs in engaging in the electoral process than native-born groups as they are less familiar with the processes and systems (Leighley, 2001). A lack of fluency in the dominant language could act as a significant cost prohibitive to political participation (Uhlaner, Cain and Kiewiet, 1989). In immigrant communities a lack of knowledge of the political and electoral system could also increase the costs of gaining information on candidates and parties, as well as finding out how and where to vote.

In the case of immigrants, researchers argue that one significant cost to voting is gaining citizenship, or permanent residency in the case of New Zealand, which is needed to be

eligible to vote (Lien, 2004). In the United States, research has shown that gaining citizenship is a significant cost to voting for immigrant groups; indeed Lien et al (2004), find that the most commonly reported reason for not voting is non-citizenship (Lien, 1997; Lien, Collet, Wong and Ramakrishnan, 2001; Lien, Conway, Wong, 2004). This cost to participation is lowered in New Zealand as permanent residents as well as citizens are eligible to vote, a factor which Park (2006) concludes may help to explain why Asian New Zealanders voter turnout is relatively high compared to that of Asian Americans.[6]

Gaining knowledge of New Zealand politics is another factor that has been highlighted as a prohibitive cost to voting for Asian New Zealanders. For example, Park found that 43.4% of people surveyed stated that they did not vote as they felt that they did not know enough about New Zealand politics, a finding supported by a 2005 study conducted by the Asian: New Zealand Foundation (McGrath et al, 2005; Park 2006). It is interesting to note, however, that questions posed later in Park's survey indicated that Asian New Zealanders do in fact have a good general knowledge of New Zealand politics, perhaps indicating that the Asian community lacks confidence in the political arena more than it lacks knowledge.[7] Similarly, in the United States it appears that Asian Americans feel that they have a good knowledge of the electoral process. Analysis of the Pilot National Asian American Political Survey (PNAAPS) by Lien, Conway and Wong (2004) found that 79% of Asian Americans surveyed reported being either 'very or somewhat familiar with the process' of electing a United States president (Lien, Conway and Wong, 2004, p.12). These studies indicate that a lack of knowledge may not be a significant cost to participation for Asian communities in New Zealand and the United States, although a lack of confidence, as in the New Zealand study, may be more significant than a lack of competency in politics.

Linked to the issue of knowledge is the question of how and where Asian immigrants access political information. A 1995 survey of Asian New Zealanders found that 90% did not think that there was enough information available about either the political system in New Zealand or the political parties (Zhang, 1996). If Asian New Zealanders do not feel they have sufficient access to political information this may act as an additional cost prohibitive to their participation. In the United States, access to information has been linked to elite mobilization,

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[6] See section 2.7 of this chapter for more on how institutions can influence political participation.

[7] Questions in this section included whether or not participants knew who the current Prime Minister was, whether it was compulsory to be enrolled or not, and who the major coalition partners were.

that is the provision of information by political elites on topics such as how to register, and where and how to vote (Leighley, 2001). In a study of Asian Americans in New York and Los Angeles, Wong (2001) finds that the sources of information for immigrant groups has changed over time. Her research indicates that political parties and organizations are no longer reaching out to immigrant groups as they did during the immigration wave during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Instead, community organisations such as religious organisations, ethnic groups, unions, and not-for-profit community groups are now the main agents of political mobilization. Wong concludes that while this allows for the participation of non-citizens, it may inhibit the ability of immigrants to participate more fully as these community organisations often lack resources, which limit their ability to mobilize. Furthermore, the lack of representation in mainstream mobilization agents such as political parties and organisations means that the views of minorities are often not represented in policy formulation and party debate (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, 1995).

In New Zealand and the United States, however, research suggests that these aforementioned additional costs of language, knowledge, and access to information will lower over time for first generation immigrants, and subsequent generations who are born and raised in the political and social environment of the adopted country (Bass and Casper, 2001; Park, 2006; Uhlaner, Cain and Kiewiet, 1989).[8] In New Zealand, Park concluded that it is the 'newness' of the Asian New Zealand community that is inhibiting greater political engagement. Of her sample, 95% of respondents had been in New Zealand for less than 15 years, and as a consequence lack the confidence, knowledge, and time to engage in politics more extensively (Park, 2006). Studies in the United States also find that over time the Asian community is likely to participate in greater numbers (Bass and Casper; Uhlaner et al, 1989). However, Xu (2005) finds that greater length of time in the United States is related to higher registration levels, but not voter turnout.

While the literature reviewed here indicates that Asian communities may be subject to costs not applicable to the dominant group, none of the factors examined here fully account for low rates of participation. In New Zealand and the United States it appears that the Asian communities are fairly knowledgeable about politics in their adopted countries and that participation rates are likely to increase over time. The most significant difference between

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[8] See section 2.4 of this chapter on acculturation for more on this theory

the two countries is the stage at which new immigrants are able to attain voting rights, and the information discussed here indicates that New Zealand's lower barrier to the franchise may help to increase participation levels. Clearly, however, other factors are also influencing the participation of Asian New Zealanders and the following sections examine further explanations of political participation.

2.3   Socioeconomic theory and political participation

Socioeconomic theory is another prominent explanation of political participation. This theory examines influences on participation within a person's environmental context, rather than explaining participation in terms of an individual's self interest, as was addressed above (Heywood, 1997). This theory posits that those with higher levels of education and income are more likely to participate in politics. Studies using this approach have found a significant relationship between high socioeconomic status and high political participation (Verba, Schlozman and Brady, 1995; Lipset, 1960; Verba and Nie, 1972; Vowles and Aimer; 1993; Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980).

It is thought that wealth can positively influence participation as those with a higher income are more able to take time from work to vote and concern themselves with politics, will be more integrated into mainstream society, and have a greater stake and interest in the policy decisions of the government (Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980). The influence of education on participation is considered to be greater than that of income (DeLuca, 1995; Leighley, 1995; Verba, Schlozman and Brady, 1995). It is assumed that those with higher levels of education are better able to understand and therefore take a greater interest in political information and discussion, be better equipped to deal with the sometimes complicated processes of enrolling and then turning out to vote, and have a greater sense of civic duty (Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980, p.18). As Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980) state, 'education increases cognitive skills, which facilitates learning about politics… they are more likely to have a strong sense of citizen duty… (and) schooling imparts experience with a variety of bureaucratic relationships: learning requirements, filling out forms, waiting in lines and meeting deadlines' (p.35-36). Viewed in this light it is the skills gained through greater education that lead to greater participation, not necessarily education in itself. DeLuca (1995) also emphasizes the importance of education in a time when the institutions of mobilization

are declining, making it even more vital that citizens are equipped with the skills needed to understand and participate in politics.

However, despite widespread evidence that socioeconomic status plays an important role in predicting and explaining political participation, many criticisms can be made of the theory. The most obvious criticism is that while levels of education and income have been increasing in postindustrial democracies, rates of participation have in fact been decreasing in these very same states (Piven and Cloward, 2000). Piven and Cloward (1988) also argue that it is unfair to focus on individual level characteristics as this takes the focus off institutions and the way in which the (American) political system is weighted against lower socio-economic groups. Nevertheless, the socioeconomic theory should not be entirely disregarded. It still attempts to explain many of the differences in participation at a single point in time (Bass and Casper, 2001), if not in longitudinal analyses (Piven and Cloward, 2000), and often between minority and majority groups such as Latinos and Blacks (Uhlaner et al, 1989; Verba and Nie, 1972). As such, the socioeconomic theory may still provide us with important insights into the puzzle of Asian political participation.

Socioeconomic theory suggests that Asian New Zealanders should be one of the most politically active groups in the country. Often portrayed as a 'model minority,' popular opinion and media reports frequently represent Asian New Zealanders as wealthy and well educated (Coddington, 2006; Scherer, 2006), yet contrary to the socioeconomic theory, research has indicated that Asian New Zealanders participate considerably less than the national average (Ip, 2005; Park, 2006). In New Zealand, research has shown nationally that those on lower incomes and with less education are less likely to turn out to vote (Hayward, 2006; Ministry of Social Development, 2008). This raises the question of why Asian New Zealanders do not participate more given their high socioeconomic status.

As was discussed in the introduction to this thesis what is particularly striking about this departure from the socioeconomic theory is that it is not just the Asian community in New Zealand that engages in politics at low levels, but that Asian Americans also participate at levels significantly lower than that of Whites, Blacks and Hispanics, despite the fact that Asian Americans are also often considered to be highly educated and wealthier than these other ethnic groups (Cloud, 2009; Freedman, 2000; Uhlaner, Cain and Kiewiet, 1989; Xu, 2005). The high socioeconomic status yet low participation rates of Asian New Zealanders

and Asian Americans are also findings replicated in the Chinese immigrant communities in Indonesia and Malaysia (Freedman, 2000). The Chinese diaspora in these countries have achieved economic success yet is not politically active.

This raises many questions about the applicability of socioeconomic explanations to the case of Asian New Zealanders. Why do Asian New Zealanders and Asian Americans not participate more extensively given their relatively high levels of education and income, as is predicted by the socioeconomic model? And what factors are at work within these migrant communities that are overriding the effect of being in a high socioeconomic group?

Perhaps the first factor to examine is whether Asian New Zealanders are as wealthy as popular opinion portrays them to be. Interestingly, as is illustrated in Table 2.1 below, Asian New Zealanders are in fact the least wealthy ethnic cohort. The 2006 Census found that the median income for Asian New Zealanders was lower than any other ethnic group at $14,500, $10,000 less than the median income. However, Park (2006) cautions that the income recorded for Asian New Zealanders may appear artificially low as it may not take into account income from businesses overseas.

One of the reasons why Asian New Zealanders have the lowest median income level may be due to difficulties in finding employment. Studies in New Zealand have found that Asian immigrants often find it difficult to gain employment in a field similar to the one they were employed in in their home country, and that New Zealand European candidates may have preferential treatment to immigrants (Ho, Lidgard, Bedford and Spoonley, 2005; Immigrant Employment, n.d.; Spoonley, 2006). Ho et al (2005) found that while 74% of recent East Asian immigrants they studied were employed in professional, technical, and administrative positions in their home country, only 14% of them were working in these fields after moving to New Zealand. Unemployment rates for 2007 show that total unemployment was 3.5%, while that for 'other,' which included Asian New Zealanders, was at 5.2% (Statistics New Zealand, 2007).[9] This figure, which represents a conglomeration of several ethnic groups, may however mask the true unemployment rates of the Asian community. Ip and Murphy report that for the post-1987 wave of immigrants unemployment is around 21% for Chinese, between 15 and 18% for Koreans, and between 13 and 17% for Indians indicating that

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[9] 'Other' includes those who reported their ethnicity as New Zealander, Asian, Middle Eastern, Latin American and African.

underemployment and unemployment are serious issues facing Asian New Zealanders (Ip and Murphy, 2005).

Table 2.1   Annual median income by ethnic group

Ethnicity	Median income per person
Other Ethnicity*	$31,200
European	$25,400
Median income	$24,400
Maori	$20,900
Pacific Peoples	$20,500
Middle Eastern, Latin American and African	$16,100
Asian	$14,500

Source: Statistics New Zealand Census 2006, QuickStats about Income, www.stats.govt.nz

*Other ethnicity includes responses from several small ethnic groups and those who selected New Zealander. In the 2006 Census 'New Zealander' made up the largest proportion of the Other Ethnicity Category with 347,973 responses and 1,104 as other 'other' ethnicities.

Thus, the results of the 2006 Census suggest that Asian New Zealanders may not be as wealthy as is generally assumed, and may in fact reinforce the socioeconomic theory rather than detract from it. In contrast, the statistical evidence in Table 2.3 for Asian Americans does in fact confirm the higher economic status of this community. The United States' 2000 Census found that the per capita Asian income was US$21,823, slightly above that of the national median of US$21,587 (US Census Bureau).

While the low income level and low participation rates for Asian New Zealanders may be in line with the socioeconomic model, the levels of education in the Asian New Zealand community provides a stark contrast with what this theory predicts. Education statistics from the New Zealand 2006 Census show that Asian New Zealanders have above average levels of education, as is shown in Table 2.2. Nearly 20% of Asian New Zealanders have a Bachelor degree or level 7 qualification as their highest qualification compared to 10.4% of the total population. Only 11.5% of Asian New Zealanders report holding no qualifications, the smallest proportion for any ethnic group, and compares to 23% of the total population. Similarly, Asian Americans have a higher proportion of people with at least a Bachelor's

degree or higher at 28.6% compared to 15.8% of the total population (US Census Bureau, 2007).

Table 2.2 Highest qualification for main ethnic groups in New Zealand*

	No qualification	Level 4 certificate	Level 5 or 6 diploma	Bachelor degree and level 7 qualification	Masters	PhD	Overseas secondary school qualification
Total NZ population	23.2%	9.4%	8.8%	10.4%	2%	0.5%	5.6%
European	23%	10.4%	9.3%	10.1%	1.9%	0.6%	4.1%
Maori	35.6%	7.5%	5.4%	4.9%	0.6%	0.1%	0.4%
Pacific Peoples	30.5%	4.8%	4.3%	3.9%	0.5%	0.05%	8.5%
Asian	11.5%	3.7%	7.5%	19.9%	4.7%	0.7%	22.8%
Middle Eastern, Latin American, African	13.1%	5.3%	7.3%	16.8%	3.9%	1.7%	20.5%
Other ethnicity**	18.8%	12.3%	11.7%	11.5%	1.6%	0.4%	1.1%

Source: Statistics New Zealand Census 2006, QuickStats about Education, www.stats.govt.nz

*For people usually resident in New Zealand aged 15 and over
** Other ethnicity includes responses from several small ethnic groups and those who selected New Zealander. In the 2006 Census 'New Zealander' made up the largest proportion of the Other Ethnicity Category with 347,973 responses and 1,104 as other 'other' ethnicities.

Table 2.3   The socioeconomic status of Asian Americans compared to the total population

	Asian	Total population
High school graduate or higher	52.1%	52.05%
Bachelor's degree or higher	28.6%	15.8%
Per capita income	$US21,823	$US21,587

Source: US Census Bureau (n.d.), Census 2000, www.census.gov

Thus, the socioeconomic theory of political participation appears to provide only a partial explanation of low political engagement within the Asian New Zealand community. To further complicate the picture, Park also found that Asian New Zealanders with higher levels of education did not show higher levels of political participation, although she notes that this pattern is similar to that of the general New Zealand population (Vowles, 2004). While education is considered to play the greater role in influencing, or rather increasing the likelihood of political participation, this does not appear to be the case in the Asian New Zealand community. Instead, level of income and employment status may take on greater import in the case of immigrant communities.

Underemployment and unemployment within the Asian community may help us to understand low participation. These factors may serve to depress political participation not only by lowering income levels but also by lowering the self-esteem of immigrants, bringing on a sense of disenchantment with life in New Zealand (Ip and Murphy, 2005).[10] Thus, while the literature suggests that education is the more important socioeconomic variable in studies involving for the most part established majority groups, level of income may take on an added importance when analyzing its influence on the political engagement of immigrant communities, in particular first generation immigrants. Immigrant groups face the challenge of establishing themselves in a new country and primary to this is financial security. Long and hard working hours are often cited as a reason why new immigrants participate less as they seek to establish themselves economically and provide for their families rather than focus on achieving political goals (Xu, 2002). In a study of Latino, Black and Asian Americans Ramakrishnan and Espenshade (2001) found that higher income leads to higher political participation across immigrant generations, apart from the first generation. If a similar pattern is to be found in New Zealand then participation in the Asian community would be expected to be low. In 2001, 78% of the New Zealand Asian community was overseas born, which according to Ramakrishnan and Espenshade may depress Asian voting statistics (Statistics New Zealand, 2006).

Finally, another factor which may help to explain high educational achievement rates among Asian Americans but low political engagement is the impact of racial discrimination.[11] In a

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[10] Uhlaner et al (1989) also found that unemployment depressed the political engagement of Asian Americans.
[11] For more discussion on the influence of discrimination on political participation see section 2.7 Institutional theory of this chapter.

study of 28 Chinese-American university students and seven of their parents, Louie (2004) finds that pursuing tertiary education is seen as a precaution against potential discrimination. The parents revealed that they saw American society as stratified by a racial hierarchy, dominated by White Americans, with education being the key to success in a White-dominated society. Thus, Asians Americans, who see little use in political engagement due to historical and current discrimination, focus instead on educational and economic achievements (Xu, 2005).

In summary, the deviation of Asian New Zealanders from the socioeconomic theory of political participation raises may questions about its applicability to this community. While traditional socioeconomic literature identifies education as the more influential factor in predicting participation, the evidence above suggests that within the Asian New Zealand community income and employment may instead be the more fundamental variable. Furthermore, evidence from the United States suggests that high levels of education may be a misnomer as a predictor of increased participation, and instead demonstrate the influence of discrimination against the Asian community and override the effect of education. Thus, the findings in this chapter suggest that other factors, such as social and cultural experiences may also need to be taken into account and will be examined in the following sections.

2.4   Acculturation processes and political participation

Acculturation theory takes a behavioural approach to understanding political participation. Acculturation is a reciprocal process of interaction between two or more cultures (Teske and Nelson, 1974). Within the context of political participation, Lien (1994) defines acculturation as the 'acquisition of a second culture,' the 'cognitive adaption to the prevailing norms, beliefs, and attitudes...' (p.242). Studies testing the theory of acculturation as an explanation of political participation have used a variety of variables such as period of residence in adopted country, language skills, intermarriage, political knowledge, sense of civic duty, interaction with other ethnic groups, and media consumption as measures of acculturation (Freedman, 2000; Lien, 1994; Park, 2006; Soininen and Back, 1993; Xu, 2005).   This approach predicts that participation should increase the longer a new immigrant has lived in their adopted country as they become more knowledgeable about the host society, fluent in the dominant language, and hold a greater stake in the society (Lien, 1997). Acculturation is often likened to assimilation, however, acculturation differs in that it is a two-way process

where both the dominant culture and the minority culture experience a transformation (Sam, 2006). This difference is important as it puts the onus of integration not just on the minority culture, and highlights the responsibility of the majority culture in providing the necessary support to enable political engagement.

Studies in New Zealand and the United States have found acculturation to be a powerful positive influence on the political participation of immigrant populations (Freedman, 2000; Lien, 1994; Park, 2006). Given these findings it is surprising to note that some of the most acculturated Asian New Zealanders appear to be some of the least politically active. While one might expect New Zealand-born Asians to be more politically active than recent migrants (due to a lowering of costs and the processes of acculturation and socialization) this does not appear to be the case with New Zealand's oldest Asian communities. Research in New Zealand suggests that New Zealand-born Asians appear uninterested and participate in politics at low levels (Ip, 2006). These New Zealand-born Asians are for the most part the descendants of the old Chinese gold miners who came to New Zealand in the late 19th century and have been described as 'culturally assimilated, economically successful and politically passive' (Ip and Murphy, 2005, p.28). In contrast, the post-1987 wave of Asian immigrants who arrived in New Zealand under a rewritten immigration policy that was colour-blind and merit-based are characterized as 'confident…assertive' and 'highly aware of their rights' (Ip, 2006, p.154).

Park (2006), however, arrives at the conclusion that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between acculturation and participation in the New Zealand Asian community, and that as the Asian community becomes more acculturated participation will increase. Park found in the New Zealand context that length of residence is related to propensity to vote, with a turnout rate of 38.7% for those who had lived in New Zealand for less than 5 years, compared to 85.7% of those who have lived in New Zealand for 21-25 years. This finding contrasts with the arguments of Ip discussed above, and as such raises questions about whether differences in attitudes to politics can be identified between first and second generation immigrants in a family context.

A key difference between the pre and post 1987 waves of immigration to New Zealand, which may account for differing levels of political participation, is the level of racism experienced by the pre-1987 group, including institutional racism. Chinese immigrants were

the only immigrant group to be subjected to a poll tax between 1881 and 1934,[12] and between 1908 and 1951 were denied citizenship and its associated rights (Te Ara, n.d.; Spoonley, n.d.). While not overtly discriminating against Asian and non-European immigration, New Zealand's post war immigration policy was little more than an unacknowledged 'white New Zealand policy,' kept hidden from view through the use of confusing immigration policies (Bawley, 1993). Thus, it was not until a major overhaul of immigration laws in the late 1980s that New Zealand began to see its second significant wave of Asian immigration. The post-1987 immigrants were brought in under a colour-blind, merit based immigration policy that favoured migrants with high levels of education, skill levels, and personal wealth (Ip and Murphy, 2005; Spoonley, 2006). This, according to Ip and Murphy, has resulted in two distinct groupings of Asian New Zealanders: a 'politically passive' New Zealand born community and a well educated and vocal group of recent migrants (Ip and Murphy, 2005, p.28).

In the United States Uhlaner et al (1989) found that length of residence was related to increased voter turnout, however, more recent research suggests that length of stay plays a less certain role in influencing the political participation of Asian Americans. Bass and Casper (2001) find that for naturalized Asian Americans longer residence in the United States increases the likelihood of voter turnout, while Xu (2005) found that it was only influential at the registration stage. Cho (1999) and Lien (1997) however, find that while greater length of stay does slightly increase the propensity of Asian Americans to vote, there is great variation between the Asian ethnicities that comprise this panethnic group. For example, Lien (1997) finds that Indians in particular vote more the longer they have been in the United States. Ramakrishnan and Espenshade (2001) have also studied the influence of length of stay and generation on political participation and also find that for Asian Americans a longer period of residence does not increase the probability of voting. When looking at immigration generation they report that while later generations participate more, this appears to level off after the second generation. In addition, their study showed that from the third generation and higher Asian Americans are significantly less likely to vote than Whites, Blacks and Latino American of the same generations (Ramakrishnan and Espenshade, 2001). Thus, as in New Zealand, length of stay in the United States does not consistently appear to increase participation or registration.

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[12] Though not applied after 1934, the poll tax was not abolished until 1944.

When examining the influence of acculturation variables on political participation a key difference appears in the New Zealand and United States research. Language has been found to be a significant acculturative cost that may hinder participation in the United States, however, this does not appear to be the case in the Asian New Zealand community (Bai, 1991; Cho, 1999; Freedman, 2000; Park, 2006; Uhlaner, Cain, Kiewiet, 1989; Xu, 2005). Park's recent study found that only 8.4% of respondents cited 'language difficulties' as a reason for not voting, and that Asian New Zealanders have high levels of English reading and speaking skills with only 3.7% and 2.7% respectively choosing level 0, indicating that they could not read or speak English (Park, 2006).

Another measure of acculturation is density of social interactions and interactions with other ethnic groups. It is theorised that greater interactions with one's own ethnic group as well as other ethnic groups encourages greater political participation in immigrant groups (Jacob, 2006; Soininen and Back, 1993). Soininen and Back (1993) argue that support from already established ethnic minorities provides new migrants with a greater sense of confidence and efficacy to participate in their adopted country. Furthermore, they posit that this sense of confidence aids integration into the majority society, and that greater integration increases the degree to which new immigrants are influenced by political decision-making. In their study of immigrant groups in Sweden they find that, although not statistically significant, those who socialise mostly with Swedes are more likely to vote than those who socialise mostly with people from their own country of origin. In the New Zealand context, Park (2006) reported that Asian New Zealanders who reported interacting with other ethnic groups were more likely to vote and participate in other political activities than those who reported low levels or no interaction. Park found that 83.4% of those who had a lot of interaction with Pakeha voted. This dropped to 48.5% for those who had no interaction with Pakeha.

The comparison of acculturation factors between New Zealand and the United States highlights several interesting points. In New Zealand, it has been shown how English language ability is not a significant factor in influencing political participation, as has been found in the United States, which may help to explain why Asian New Zealanders participate more than Asian Americans. Length of stay and social interactions do not consistently account for voter participation in either country, and leads us to question what factors override the influence of increased exposure to the political system of the adopted country.

Discussion now turns to political efficacy, a behavioural approach to understanding political participation.

2.5   Political efficacy and political participation

Political efficacy seeks to explain participation in terms of people's own attitudes towards politics and politicians. Political efficacy can be defined as a person's feelings about how much they understand politics and the extent to which they can influence politics (Catt, 2005). Political efficacy is seen to have two components, internal and external efficacy. Internal efficacy is one's own feelings of comprehension and influence in the political realm; that is 'beliefs about one's own competence to understand, and to participate effectively in, politics' (Niemi, Craig and Mattei, 1991; p.1407). External efficacy relates to political trust, or more specifically 'beliefs about the responsiveness of governmental authorities and institutions to citizen demands' (Niemi et al, 1991; p. 1408).

Many studies have found that high levels of political efficacy are positively correlated to high levels of political participation, and that low levels of political efficacy provide a powerful explanation for low levels of political participation (Campbell, Gurin and Miller, 1954; Catt, 2005). However, a recent New Zealand study of young voters by Sheerin (2007) examined the usefulness of political efficacy as a predictor of political participation in a youth cohort and found that the differences in levels of both internal and external efficacy between voters and non-voters were less than expected. Sheerin notes that the way in which political efficacy is measured has altered little since its inception over 50 years ago, and argues that as such it does not take into account societal and political changes since then. Therefore, she argues that political efficacy does not accurately reflect peoples' thoughts and perceptions of politics. Furthermore, low levels of political efficacy may also not reflect a perception that government agencies are less responsive to certain groups, but may actually be an accurate portrayal of the reality of some minority groups such as African Americans and Latinos (Kahne and Westheimer, 2006; Woodly, n.d.).

Despite these critiques of political efficacy, which is underpinned by an individual's feeling and perception that they can influence politics, this explanation does provide interesting and insightful ways in which to analyse political participation. There is a large body of evidence that does point to important correlations between levels of efficacy and political participation,

and as such requires further investigation (Almond and Verba, 1963; Campbell, Gurin and Miller, 1954; Hero and Tolbert, 2004).

In the context of Asian minority political participation political efficacy theory presents a somewhat mixed explanation. Research conducted thus far suggests that both Asian New Zealanders and Asian Americans have low levels of external efficacy, although measures of internal efficacy, such as interest in and knowledge about politics, appear to be relatively high in the case of Asian New Zealanders (Hero and Tolbert, 2004; Park, 2006). The reasons behind why these Asian communities may have low external efficacy but high internal efficacy are unclear, and is one issue that is of interest in this research. As has already been suggested it may be that government responsiveness to minority groups is in fact less than exemplary, on the other hand, it may be the perception of these communities that government responds in a less than timely manner.

Interestingly, while Asian New Zealanders report low levels of external efficacy, they appear to have high levels of internal efficacy, especially in terms of level of political interest (Park, 2006). This makes for an interesting case as despite a high level of interest Asian New Zealanders participate in politics at rates significantly lower than that of the general population. For example, studies have indicated that Asian New Zealanders are interested in New Zealand politics and believe that it is important for the Asian community to participate in politics, suggesting that Asian New Zealanders have high levels of internal efficacy. A 1995 poll carried out by the Chinese Express, a weekly newspaper, and a study undertaken by the Asia: New Zealand Foundation, found that the majority of people surveyed considered voting to be 'very important' and that the Chinese community should participate in New Zealand politics (Zhang, 1996; McGrath, Butcher, Pickering and Smith, 2005). Park's 2006 study also found that 44.7% of respondents reported they were either 'very' or 'fairly' interested in New Zealand politics, and a further 44.6% were 'somewhat' interested. However, 56.2% of Asian New Zealanders surveyed agreed with the statement that 'sometimes politics seems so complicated that people like me cannot understand what is going on,' indicating lower levels of internal efficacy (Park, 2006, p163).

Research findings on the external efficacy of Asian New Zealanders are also unclear and often contradictory. Park (2006) found that the Asian community has a high level of trust in New Zealand government officials. 95% of people surveyed by Park felt that they could trust

government officials, and those with higher levels of trust had higher levels of voter turnout than those who did not trust government officials. However, only 13% of respondents believed that they could have some degree of influence over New Zealand government policies (Park, 2006). This is despite that fact that 90% of respondents felt that their vote counted (ibid). It is also interesting to note that the political stability and the democratic nature of New Zealand was the second most popular reason cited by Chinese immigrants in a survey in the mid-1990s as to why they made the decision to immigrate to New Zealand (Friesen and Ip, 1997).

Similarly, research in the United States also indicates that the political efficacy of Asian Americans is low. In a study examining the influence of direct democracy on minority perceptions of government responsiveness, or external efficacy, Hero and Tolbert (2004) found that Asian Americans reported lower efficacy than their White counterparts. Given that efficacy has been found to be predict political participation, these findings may help to explain low participation rates for Asian Americans.

Institutional factors have also been hypothesized to play a significant role in depressing the political efficacy of Asian Americans (Xu, 2005). According to Xu (2005), many Asian Americans are not fluent in English, yet in the majority of states voting ballots are only in English and are unable to accommodate registrations in other languages. The long period of time required to become eligible to vote is also cited by Xu (2005) as a barrier which impacts negatively on the political efficacy of Asian Americans.

In summation, comparing the political efficacy of Asian New Zealanders and Asian Americans raises several interesting points. It appears that both communities have low levels of external efficacy relative to the majority group, yet Asian New Zealanders have high levels of internal efficacy, or interest in politics. Thus, it appears that the political efficacy theory finds some support in its prediction of the participation of Asian New Zealanders, and may be useful in its analysis of Asian American participation. This does, however, raise questions as to why Asian New Zealanders have low feelings of external efficacy, and why this appears to override fairly high levels of internal efficacy.

2.6   Political socialization and political participation

Socialization is the process through which one acquires '*prevailing* norms and modes of behaviour' and is perhaps one of the least researched areas in terms of immigrant political participation (Jennings and Neimi, 1974, p.5, italics in original). Socialization theories of political participation examine how agents of political socialization, such as peers, school, religious institutions and places of work, influence political engagement, or how these agents (re)socialize adult immigrants into the political culture of their new home country. Traditional theories of political socialisation have focused on the role of the family as the primary agent of socialization with information flowing from parents down to their children (Edwards, Saha and Print, 2006; Janoski and Wilson, 1995; Jennings, Stoker and Bowers, 1999), however, more recent studies have shown that children may also influence the political beliefs and behaviour of their parents (McDevitt and Chaffee, 2002).

In the case of immigrant communities the roles and agents of socialization may differ. For example, as children spend extended periods of time away from one or both parents, the influence of peers and schooling may increase.[13] Furthermore, migrants who may have been socialized through different means and into different political and social settings may face a process of resocialization as they familiarize themselves with the politics and political processes of their new country (Cho, 1999). However, while the political socialization process for immigrants is likely to be considerably different to that experienced by a native-born citizen, no research has been conducted in this area in New Zealand. Nevertheless, Cho's (1999) research on the political socialization of immigrant groups in the United States provides many interesting insights into the socialization process which may be relevant to the New Zealand setting.

Cho (1999) notes that the socialization processes will be different between native and foreign born communities due to 'ethnic clustering' which influences the information and social networks of a community (p.1148). This means that traditional socio-economic indicators such as age, income, and education level may not be as effective in influencing voter turnout. Rather, she finds that it is the socialization processes associated with aging and education that increases the likelihood that people engage in politics, rather than just education and the life-

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[13] The 'astronaut' phenomenon is well documented in New Zealand. This is where one parent, usually the father, remains in their home country for work and only comes to New Zealand for visits. See Friesen (2008)

cycle effect itself. As Cho puts it 'socioeconomic status variables merely provide the skills necessary for political activity in a suitable political context. Socialization determines how these skills will be manifested' (p.1140).

These findings have important implications for how Asians in New Zealand may be socialized by the environment around them. Ethnic clustering can be found in Auckland, where two-thirds of all Asian immigrants settle and several suburbs are particularly popular with Asian communities, although there is evidence that many are now moving away from these enclaves, effectively widening the channels of socialization (Friesen, 2008). In Christchurch, where this research is based, Asian communities tend to cluster in central and north-west Christchurch (Christchurch City Council, 2007).

The life-cycle or cohort effect is another aspect of socialization that is thought to influence political participation. This theory proposes that experiences such as leaving school, residential stability, home ownership, full time employment, and marriage are steps into 'adulthood' and increase participation. It is theorized that prior to these experiences people are highly mobile and preoccupied by other things such as education or finding a partner and therefore have no time for political concerns (Highton and Wolfinger, 2001). However, a study by Highton and Wolfinger (2001) found that a young person with the six aforementioned 'adult' characteristics were only 5.6% more likely to vote than a person who has none of them, only making slight gains into the 37% turnout gap between 18-24 year olds and those aged over 60.

In the case of young Asian New Zealanders these findings raise several interesting points which this thesis aims to examine. How and where do young Asian New Zealanders learn about New Zealand politics? How do families influence socialization in immigrant situations? Do both children and adults report agents of socialization different to those of majority group members, such as ethnic community groups, and is there any evidence of a life-cycle effect?

2.7   Institutional theory and political participation

The final explanation of political participation to be addressed here is institutional theory. While the previous theories have examined individual-level factors as influences on political participation, this theory looks for answers in the political structures that moderate political

participation (Piven and Cloward, 2000). Institutions have the power to effectively set the rules of the game and as such play a key role in making political participation accessible. Studies examining the influence of institutions examine the way in which factors, such as the political structure, electoral system, access to the franchise, and the closeness of elections influence political participation (Freedman, 2000; Park, 2006; Piven and Cloward, 2000).

It has already been established that both Asian New Zealanders and Asian Americans have rates of political participation lower than the average rates for their respective countries. With proportional representation and a parliamentary system in New Zealand, and a first-past-the-post presidential system in the United States, it appears that these different electoral and governmental institutions may not be the most significant factors in depressing Asian political participation. There is, however, evidence to suggest that factors such as the opening hours of places of registration, the length of time before election registration ends, and the requirement to register itself can depress enrolment and voter turnout rates (Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980; Ramakrishnan and Espenshade, 2001). Furthermore, for immigrants institutional factors may take on added importance as they face a three step process to become eligible for the franchise. In order to vote immigrants must first achieve citizenship, then enrol to vote, and finally turn out to vote, greatly adding to the cost of electoral participation (Lien, Collet, Wong and Ramakrishnan, 2001).

Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980) also find that restrictive registration laws in the United States act as a deterrent to registering, especially for those with less education. If we are to apply this finding to the case of Asian Americans in particular it would be expected that this community would have high levels of registration given their aforementioned high levels of education. However, research in the United States consistently finds that Asian Americans are less likely to register to vote than Whites. Although, once registration has been controlled for, Asian Americans turnout to vote at rates similar to those of White Americans (Bai, 1991; Erie and Brackman, 1993; Lien, Collet, Wong, Ramakrishnan, 2001; Ramakrishnan and Espenshade, 2001; Uhlaner, Cain and Kiewiet, 1989). Indeed, Xu (2005) finds that after controlling for registration, Asian Americans are slightly more likely to vote than White Americans, the racial group with the highest turnout. This indicates that the registration process may be a significant barrier to voter turnout for Asian Americans. In New Zealand however, registration or enrolling to vote is compulsory. Furthermore, permanent residents as well as citizens are eligible for the franchise in New Zealand, further lowering the barrier to

political participation. Indeed, Park (2006) describes New Zealand's political structure as 'favourable,' although not perfect, and may encourage Asian New Zealanders to participate (p.201).

There is a large body of evidence in the United States and New Zealand indicating that institutional racism in the form of limited employment rights, restrictive immigration laws, and prohibition to naturalization have had a significant impact in depressing Asian immigrant political participation (Bai, 1991; Ip, 2006; Lai, Cho, Kim and Takeda, 2001; Uhlaner, Cain and Kiewiet, 1989; Xu, 2005). According to Xu (2002), discrimination has led to Asian Americans withdrawing from the mainstream community and turning to their own cultural enclaves, becoming increasingly isolated and marginalized from political institutions. Dissuaded from electoral participation, Asian Americans instead turn to non-electoral engagement in areas such as labour, cultural and feminist politics (Lai, Cho, Kim and Takeda, 2001). Further to this Bai (1991) writes that the conception of Asian Americans as a politically silent model minority is a barrier preventing many from entering political office, and that the perception of Asian Americans as high educational achievers and financially successful masks their low participation rates and need for protection from discriminatory legislation.

While Asian Americans have faced legal barriers to their political participation so have African Americans. However, despite this discrimination African American participation has now reached parity with that of White Americans, which, according to Espenshade and Ramakrishnan (2001), is due to the civil rights movement which acted to mobilize the Black community as well as increase their sense of political efficacy. Such a movement has not occurred within the Asian American community which Espenshade and Ramakrishnan (2001) conclude may be a contributing factor to their low participation rates as there is not yet a clear sense of group consciousness.

Beyond the legislative barriers mentioned above, Park (2006) also notes that institutional factors include less formalised factors such as societal values. She gives the example of how acceptance of cultural diversity within the dominant society can influence the government of the host country to encourage immigrant groups to participate in politics and the wider society, often through the use of legislation.

Thus, it appears that institutional barriers in the form of electoral laws pose a significant barrier to participation in the United States, while in New Zealand it has been tentatively suggested that this may be less of a problem, although it remains to be seen if participants in this study do encounter any difficulties with the legislative process. It does appear however, that the marginalization of Asian immigrants through both (historical) legal and populist discrimination may have dissuaded these minority communities from political participation. Chinese in both New Zealand and the United States have faced legal challenges to their political participation such as the denial of citizenship as well as less overt racism in the form of employment discrimination. As such, the participants in this study will be asked about their experiences with enrolling to vote, as well any encounters with discrimination, and how this has influenced their participation.

2.8   Research questions

This literature review has raised many questions about the way in which Asian New Zealanders participate in politics in comparison with their American counterparts, and the attitudes and participation of young Asian New Zealanders in particular. The broad research questions that form the basis of the primary research of this thesis are as follows:

1) How do young Asian New Zealanders participate in politics and how does this compare to young Asian Americans?
2) Is there a difference in the levels of internal and external political efficacy between those who participate and those who do not?
3) Can we identify relationships or influences between the political participation of a young adult Asian New Zealanders and their socioeconomic status?
4) Can young Asian New Zealanders and their parents identify or report socialization experiences that influence their decision to vote or participate in non-traditional political activities?
5) Can we identify relationships or influences between the political participation of a young adult Asian New Zealander and that of their family?
6) Can we identify relationships or influences between the political participation of a young adult Asian New Zealanders and their acculturation experiences?
7) Do young Asian New Zealanders perceive institutional factors to be hindering their participation?

2.9   Summary

To conclude, this chapter has discussed six theories of political participation which aim to shed light on why people choose to participate in politics. These explanations are complex and examine the way in which individual-level factors such as level of education and English ability as well as the political structures around us influence political participation. These theories provide the theoretical basis for the following research and have prompted several research questions for analysis.

As this literature review has noted, these theories of political participation have, for the most part, focused on understanding the political participation of majority groups, and as has been shown in this literature review, may not accurately explain the participation pattern of immigrant groups. This research is interested understanding the participation experiences of Asian New Zealanders in greater depth and whether members of this community identify different factors as being important to them or affecting them in ways that differ to the majority population. Given the deviation of Asian New Zealanders from the socioeconomic theory this thesis is interested in exploring whether these six theories of political participation work differently in immigrant Asian communities due to a different set of linguistic, social, informational and economic incentives. For example, while the socioeconomic model finds that education is a consistent predictor of participation, this does not appear to be the case in Asian New Zealand communities. If, as is suggested here, the traditional assumptions of these theories do not explain Asian immigrant participation, the implications for participation theories are significant. In a time where immigration and emigration are increasingly common, it is important that democratic countries have a good understanding of what immigrant groups require in order to participate effectively in politics.

The rest of this thesis examines the extent to which a small group of young Asian New Zealanders and their parents participate in politics, and the influences they report on their participation. The next chapter, 'Research methods and data,' will now outline how this thesis intends to undertake this research.

Chapter 3

Research methods and data

3.1   Introduction

Thus far, this thesis has examined the theoretical explanations of political participation and looked at how these theories have been applied to, and help to explain, Asian immigrant political participation in New Zealand and the United States. It has been highlighted how the Asian New Zealand community participates in politics at levels significantly lower than that of the general population, however, the reasons behind this disparity remain unclear. Furthermore, no research has been conducted specifically on the political participation of young Asian New Zealanders. The remainder of this thesis examines the reasons behind the disparity in Asian and non-Asian youth' political participation in New Zealand through the use of qualitative research methods. This chapter reviews the methods used in previous studies to understand how and why young people and their parents participate in politics, and methods used to compare the participation of Asian minorities to the non-Asian population. This chapter will also present the data collection methods used in this pilot study.

First, this chapter reviews previous studies on the political participation of the Asian community in New Zealand and in the United States. Second, the data collection methods used in this thesis will be outlined. The third section will address the benefits of a qualitative research approach as opposed to a quantitative inquiry in the context of this study, and in particular the technique of depth interviews. Finally, this chapter will address issues of validity in qualitative research.

3.2   How has Asian political participation in New Zealand and the United States been studied?

In New Zealand there have been some significant studies investigating the political attitudes and participation of the general public. The New Zealand Electoral Study (NZES) is New Zealand's most prominent and extensive study into electoral habits and attitudes (NZES, n.d.). The NZES is a quantitative study which has been conducted during every election since 1990,

and has resulted in numerous publications, including most recently *Voters' Veto* on the 2002 election (Vowles, Aimer, Banducci, Karp and Miller, 2004). Few studies, however, focus specifically on ethnic minorities, although there is a growing body of literature on the Maori party, and Maori political attitudes and engagement (Bargh, 2007; Dalton, forthcoming; Sharples, 2007; Smith, 2006; Sullivan, 2006).

Studies on youth participation in both New Zealand and the United States have noted that participation is lower in this cohort than in older groups (Franklin, 2004; Hayward, 2006; Holder, 2004; Macedo, 2005; Park, 2006; Vowles, 2006). Findings from the United Kingdom suggest that low turnout in the youth cohort is not due to a lack of interest or democratic commitment, but a sense of alienation and cynicism towards politicians and politics (Henn and Weinstein, 2006). Similarly, other studies suggest that young people are not politically apathetic, but that the modes and agencies of political participation most commonly engaged in by young people are non-traditional forms of political engagement such as boycotts, demonstrations and petitions, rather than the more widely reported activities of voting and political party membership (Norris, 2004).

Several in-depth qualitative studies on Asian immigrant political participation have been undertaken in the United States and highlight low levels of Asian participation (Ramakrishnan and Espenshade, 2001; Lien, Conway and Wong, 2004; Uhlaner et al, 1989). Studies that have focused on the participation of young ethnic minorities have also employed qualitative techniques, and like the adult cohort, find lower levels of engagement in the youth Asian community when compared to young Black and White Americans (Lopez, 2002; Lopez and Kirby, 2005). When looking to examine this participation gap, researchers have approached the topic from a variety of methodological angles. Davila and Mora (2007) use National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) data to investigate the civic engagement of high school students and whether gender and ethnic/racial group is related to participation. The effect of mobilization on voter turnout has also been studied through the use of telephone and mail drives, and has shown to positively influence participation (Wong, 2004). Kelly (2004) employed qualitative techniques in her study of youth participation using grounded

theory to examine how young minorities describe their own civic experiences and factors such as their commitment to engagement, its effectiveness, and their motivations.[14]

While there is a growing body of research in New Zealand on youth participation and attitudes towards politics and participation, these studies have not focused specifically on immigrant groups (Hayward, Donald, Sheerin and Tai Rakena, 2006; Sheerin, 2007, Tan, 2007). Park's (2006) quantitative study of the political participation of Korean and Chinese New Zealanders does, however, indicate that younger people were less likely to vote than older people. However, the quantitative nature of this study means that the reasons why young Asian New Zealanders participate less were not able to be fully investigated.

As noted in Chapter 2, an important yet seemingly understudied area of immigrant political participation is the political socialization of these communities. While some research has looked at the political socialization of immigrants in terms of how individuals learn about politics (Cho, 1999), there are no studies which examine the political socialization of immigrants in a cross-generational manner. A study by Joseph Massey (1977) used 1000 survey questionnaires as well as 40 interviews in an intergenerational study of how the political identity and perceptions of young people brought up under Japan's newly democratic regime compare to those of their parents, socialised under a very different political system, and their subsequent resocialisation. This leads us to consider the impact of migration and the subsequent resocialization of young Asian New Zealanders and that of their parents in their new home country. Thus, based on the methodology of Joseph Massey (1977), this study will also interview the parents of the young Asian New Zealanders in order to examine the way in which political socialization processes have worked within three migrant families. Furthermore, given the limitations of a fixed-choice questionnaire, as in the case of Massey's study, this pilot study uses depth interviews in order to gain greater insights into the political participation of young Asian New Zealanders.

3.3   Data collection methods/research design

This research uses the qualitative technique of depth interviews. Interviews were semi-structured in order to cover the overall topics but also allowed for 'spontaneous' interactions

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[14] Grounded theory involves the formulation of theories based on patterns and commonalities in data (Babbie, 2005)

and responses. To examine the political attitudes and participation of young Asian New Zealanders and their parents a total of 11 interviews were held in late 2007 and early 2008. Six interviews were conducted with a youth cohort aged between 18 and 24 years. Interviews were also conducted with three of the parents of the youth sample in order to test theories of political socialization and to gauge how the migration process has influenced political socialization within family units. Interviews lasted approximately one hour and were audio recorded and then typed into written transcripts.

Table 3.1 below introduces the youth and parent interviewees and gives their ethnic group. Given that the term 'Asian' is a general pan-ethnic term which encompasses many different Asian ethnicities, two participants were selected from Chinese, Korean and Indian communities. These groups were selected as they are currently the three largest Asian ethnicities in New Zealand. Selecting from three different Asian ethnicities allows us to broadly examine whether there are significant differences between the ethnicities in their attitudes, perceptions and barriers to participation. Data collected in the New Zealand context as a result of this pilot study will be compared to what is known about the political participation of young Asian Americans.

Table 3.1   Youth and parent interviews by ethnicity

	Chinese		Korean		Indian	
Youth cohort	Anthony	Donna	Samuel	Isabelle	Anita	Malvika
Parent cohort		Barry and Rachel	Hannah			Versha and Tulika

The interview participants were Christchurch-based and were found through snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is an effective method of recruiting participants when members of a small community are being sought, as was the case in this study (Babbie, 2005). Thus, the participants in this study were recruited by asking peers, co-workers and family members if they knew of people who may fit my requirements and be willing to share their experiences with me.

Participants were selected using what Maxwell (2005) calls 'purposeful selection.' That is, selecting particular people that fulfil a particular criteria; that have a specific knowledge and can therefore provide you with particular information. Thus, while the results of this study are not generalisable to the wider youth Asian community in New Zealand, this study aims to provide valuable insights into how this community views and participates in New Zealand politics.

The interviews undertaken as a part of this research were also granted approval by the Human Ethics Committee of the University of Canterbury. Participants were fully informed and were provided with information and consent forms.[15] Participants were also advised that they could withdraw at any time as well as revise any comments made in their interview at a later date. Names were changed to preserve anonymity.

3.4   The need for qualitative research

Given our lack of knowledge on the political habits and attitudes of young Asian New Zealanders, this thesis uses qualitative research methods in order to enhance our understanding of how and why young Asian New Zealanders participate in politics. Qualitative research methods are especially useful in studies where little is known about a topic and where insight is sought rather than generalisations (Davidson and Tollich, 2003).

Qualitative methods were chosen for this particular investigation as only quantitative studies have been undertaken in New Zealand thus far. While quantitative studies may point out various deficiencies or otherwise in political participation, it is often difficult to elucidate from these results *why* Asian New Zealanders may be participating less, meaning a qualitative study can add valuable insights.

Given the deficit of research into Asian political participation in New Zealand it seems prudent at this juncture to take a more detailed look at what influences this community to participate in politics. Traditional theories of political participation have not commonly been applied to immigrant communities, meaning that factors found to influence the participation of established New Zealanders may not be relevant or important in influencing the

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[15] See Appendices 1 and 2 for the information and consent forms respectively.

participation of minority groups. Thus, a qualitative study is more applicable in a situation where we wish to gain a high level of detail. Furthermore, qualitative research gives participants the opportunity to express their thoughts and opinions in their own words, adding a richness and depth to the data that surveys are unable to capture.

3.5   Research validity

Key to any research project is ensuring that the results are an accurate portrayal of the empirical evidence and that the research is 'well grounded' (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003, p.270). While there are many tools available to help researchers achieve validity in their research, Maxwell remarks that research validity 'is a goal rather than a product,' and that the validity of findings is not guaranteed even by following a set list of measures (Maxwell, 2005, p.105). There are, however, a series of measures that can be undertaken in order to ensure that one's findings are credible and reliable, several of which have been undertaken in this research project and now will be discussed.

Carlson and Hyde (2003, p.283) contend that as internal validity increases, external validity often decreases, and vice versa. Given the qualitative nature of this project, and the small sample studied, the findings of this study are unable to be generalised to the general population, thus greatly reducing the possibility of external validity. The aim of this study, however, is not to be able to generalise to the entire youth Asian population in New Zealand, but rather to elucidate ideas about how and why this cohort participates in politics, and to relate these findings to established participation theories rather than the wider population. As such, the participants in this study have not been chosen to be representative of young Asian New Zealanders, but to provide information as to what some in this community are thinking.

Thus, while external validity is not the primary function of this research, it is important that measures are taken to guarantee that internal validity is achieved through ensuring that results are an accurate depiction of what the interviewees reported. One such measure used in this study is that of collecting 'rich data' (Maxwell, 2005). This requires the transcription of interviews rather than just notes of what the interviewer felt to be significant and helps to manage observer bias by producing a verbatim account of what interviewees say. Interviewees were also given the opportunity to read and alter (or confirm) their transcript after the audio recording had been typed up.

Comparing data from studies in both New Zealand and the United States is another way in which we can ensure the research is valid. A single site study lacks the ability to examine the similarities and differences between studies, and as such, provides little in the way of detailed explanation as to why certain results may have occurred, why similarities exist, and what may account for different results. The use of comparative cases helps this study to gain a greater understanding as to how participation theories account for political engagement in Asian immigrant communities.

Another validity check used in this study is that of replicability and transparency (King, Keohane and Verba, 1994). In order to create a methodology that is replicable, data collection methods and the process of analysis are designed to be as transparent as possible. This is achieved by reporting the methodological processes used, and through the use of quotes, both of which help to ensure that the conclusions reached are valid

Finally, one common criticism of social research is that it was conducted by 'outsiders' who have little or no understanding of the inner working of an ethnic community (Spoonley, 2003). As a member of the New Zealand Asian community, of a similar age to the youth cohort, as well as raised in the Christchurch area, it is hoped that my position as a relative 'insider' in the community will ensure participants feel comfortable and thus encourage greater discussion.

3.6   Summary

By building on the quantitative work of Park this thesis will take a qualitative approach to the issue of the political participation of young Asian New Zealanders. A qualitative study will allow for a greater depth of information to be gathered, as participants will be able to express their thoughts in their own words rather than select from a predetermined group of answers that may not fully convey their views. While this chapter has set out and provided justification for the methodologies used, the following chapter reports on the findings of this pilot study.

Chapter 4

Results

4.1   Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the six youth interviews and five parent interviews held in late 2007 and 2008. All interviews, apart from two of the parent interviews in which both parents participated, were held on a one-on-one basis. All participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire and were asked questions from a list of predetermined discussion prompts in an interview that lasted no longer than one hour.[16]

Results reported in this chapter will be presented in eight sections, the first providing some essential background information to the participants including age, ethnicity and their current work or study status. The subsequent seven sections will each address one of the research questions already identified in Chapter 2. To review, the research questions are as follows:

1) How do young Asian New Zealanders participate in politics and how does this compare to young Asian Americans?
2) Is there a difference in the levels of internal and external political efficacy between those who participate and those who do not?
3) Can we identify relationships or influences between the political participation of a young adult Asian New Zealanders and their socioeconomic status?
4) Can young Asian New Zealanders and their parents identify or report socialization experiences that influence their decision to vote or participate in non-traditional political activities?
5) Can we identify relationships or influences between the political participation of a young adult Asian New Zealander and that of their family?
6) Can we identify relationships or influences between the political participation of a young adult Asian New Zealanders and their acculturation experiences?

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[16] Copies of the questionnaires and discussion prompts for both the youth and parent interviews can be found in appendices 3, 4, 5, and 6.

7) Do young Asian New Zealanders perceive institutional factors to be hindering their participation?

4.2   Background to the participants

This pilot study reports on interviews with eleven Asian New Zealanders. Six were aged between 18 and 24 and make up the youth cohort that is the focus of this research. The remaining five interviews are the parents of three of the youth sample, one from each ethnic community represented in this study, see Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1   Youth and parent interviews by ethnicity

	Chinese		Korean		Indian	
Youth cohort	Anthony	Donna	Samuel	Isabelle	Anita	Malvika
Parent cohort		Barry and Rachel	Hannah			Versha and Tulika

The ethnicity, age and gender of the youth cohort are summed up in Table 4.2 below, while Table 4.3 provides the same information for the parent interviews. Participants were found using snowball referral throughout my own peer and work network, as has already been described in Chapter 3.

Table 4.2   Ethnicity, age and gender profiles of the youth cohort

	Anthony	Donna	Samuel	Isabelle	Anita	Malvika
Ethnicity	Chinese	Chinese	Korean	Korean	Indian	Indian
Identifies as	Asian New Zealander	Chinese New Zealander	Korean New Zealander	Korean New Zealander	Indian New Zealander	Indian New Zealander
Country of Origin	Malaysia	New Zealand	Korea	Korea	Fiji	Fiji
Gender	Male	Female	Male	Female	Female	Female
Age	22	19	22	23	23	24

Table 4.3   Ethnicity, age and gender profiles of the parent interviews

	Barry (father of Donna)	**Rachel (mother of Donna)**	**Hannah (mother of Samuel)**	**Versha (father of Malvika)**	**Tulika (mother of Malvika)**
Ethnicity	Chinese	Chinese	Korean	Indian	Indian
Identifies as	Chinese New Zealander	Chinese New Zealander	Korean New Zealander	Indian New Zealander	Indian New Zealander
Country of Origin	New Zealand	New Zealand	Korea	India	India
Gender	Male	Female	Female	Male	Female
Age	51-55	51-55	46-50	56-60	56-60

Before providing the results of the interviews let us now take a look at all of the participants and their backgrounds in order to add greater depth and context to the interview results.

Anthony, a 22 year old Malaysian-Chinese, moved to New Zealand in 2002 with his siblings and his mother, while his father divides his time between New Zealand and Malaysia. Anthony is a university student with a background in politics and is currently working towards his Masters degree. At the time of the interview (late 2007) Anthony had permanent residency, though early in 2008 he gained New Zealand citizenship.

Donna, a New Zealand born Chinese, was the only participant born in New Zealand. A third generation Chinese New Zealander, Donna was born and raised in Christchurch, although she recently moved to Dunedin to attend university, and is now a second year student at Otago University. I also interviewed Donna's mother and father, Rachel and Barry, in a separate meeting. Rachel was born in Dunedin and Barry in Wellington. Their parents, Donna's grandparents, arrived from south China in New Zealand as teenagers in the 1940s. Rachel and Barry are self-employed and have been running their own business in the medical profession for many years now.

Samuel was born in Korea and came to New Zealand with his parents. Samuel, an only child, came to New Zealand in 1990 and since then has lived in Christchurch. Currently in tertiary education, he had just started his Masters studies. Since moving to New Zealand Samuel has visited Korea every 2-3 years. Samuel is also describes himself as a New Zealander 'legally' but not in a 'prideful' way. I also interviewed Samuel's mother, Hannah. Korean-born Hannah is self-employed and has run several small businesses since arriving in New Zealand.

Isabelle was also born in Korea and came to New Zealand in 1995 with her parents for a 'better lifestyle' and a better education. She has completed her university studies and is now in full-time employment for a government department, making her one of two participants in this study that are in full-time employment. Isabelle has not been back to Korea since she came to New Zealand but is planning a trip back sometime this year.

Anita, another youth interviewee, was born in Fiji and came to New Zealand seven years ago with her family. Anita already had some extended family in New Zealand before she moved to New Zealand. She is currently completing the final year of her law degree and when completed will take up a job at a prestigious New Zealand law firm.

Malvika, the other Indian youth participant, was also born in Fiji and came to New Zealand in 1988 when she was four years old. Fiji has a large Indian population, most of whom are descendents of plantation workers brought to the nation by the British. However, the circumstances under which Malvika's family arrived in Fiji are quite different. Malvika's parents were born in southern India and moved to Fiji for Malvika's father's job. Malvika has completed a tertiary qualification from the New Zealand School of Tourism and Travel and is now in full time employment as a temp. Malvika has no family in Fiji and has not been back since she left, although she has been to India on several occasions because of familial ties. I also interviewed Malvika's parents. Versha and Tulika lived in Fiji for six years before the family moved to New Zealand. They came to New Zealand when Versha was transferred here for his job. Versha and his wife Tulika are both very active in community organizations and each has even established a community group over ten years ago, both of which are still running today. Until recently Tulika has also worked as a volunteer at the local library for over ten years.

4.3 How do young Asian New Zealanders participate in politics? Self-reported incidences of political participation

Research question 1 asked: *How do young Asian New Zealanders participate in politics and how does this compare to young Asian Americans*? Both the youth cohort and the five parent interviewees were asked whether they had voted in the most recent general election held in 2005, if they had voted in the local body election held in October 2007, and whether they have participated in any non-electoral political activities. Participants were then asked what motivated them to participate or not in these activities. Participants were also asked about their involvement in political and non-political community based organizations. Firstly, this section will look at the overall reported participation rates of this sample, then electoral, non-electoral and community group engagement will be addressed separately.

Table 4.4   Self-reported instances of political participation within the youth cohort

	Anthony	**Donna**	**Samuel**	**Isabelle**	**Anita**	**Malvika**
Voted in 2005 general election	Yes	n.a.	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Voted in 2007 local election	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
Participation in other political activities	•Petitions		•Contacted City Council •Song	•Petitions		
Engagement in community groups	•Sport club		•Cultural group •Sport club	•Sport group	•University club •Cultural group	•Cultural groups •Sports groups •Choir

Table 4.5   Self-reported instances of political participation within the parent cohort

	Barry	**Rachel**	**Hannah**	**Versha**	**Tulika**
Voted in 2005 general election	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Voted in 2007 local election	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Participation in other political activities	•No	•Petitions	•No	•Petitions	•Petitions •Member of a political party
Engagement in community groups	•Sports groups •Chinese Association	•Sports groups •Chinese Association		•Cultural groups	•Cultural groups

Consistent with previous studies on Asian political participation and youth political participation, overall reported levels of political engagement in the youth sample were low, particularly with regards to non-electoral activities. While four out of six of the youth cohort reported voting in the 2005 general election, only two voted in the local election, and none reported any extensive participation in non-electoral activities beyond the signing of a few petitions, as can be seen in Table 4.4. The parents reported higher levels of political participation than their children. All parents reported voting in the 2005 General Election, and only Hannah reported not voting in the local body election. Three of the five parents also reported engaging in non-electoral activities, including one who was a member of a political party.

Of the youth cohort, Donna had the lowest levels of engagement and had participated in no political activities electoral or otherwise, while Isabelle reported the highest levels of participation and had voted in both elections and participated in non-electoral activities. Engagement in community groups was also limited to non-political organizations and

involves for the most part belonging to sport or cultural groups. Malvika was by far the most engaged in community groups, although none of them were political. While a member of several organizations she also was a very active participant in most of them. She plays sport several times a week, belongs to a choir, of which she is an assistant director, and also takes part in the cultural groups. Furthermore, the cultural groups which she belongs to were established by her parents several years ago.

Of the adult cohort, Versha, Tulika and Rachel were the most highly engaged. All voted in the general and local elections, as well as reported engagement in non-electoral activities and belonging to community groups. The least engaged parent was Hannah, Samuel's mother. She reported voting in the general election, but did not vote in the 2007 local body election, engage in any non-electoral activities, or report membership in any community groups. This section will now take a more in depth look at the reasons participants gave for engaging (or not) in these various political activities.

The decision to vote

In the 2005 general election only two youth participants did not report voting in the 2005 general election, while all in the parent cohort reported voting in the general election and all but one in the local election.

Of the participants who did not vote in the 2005 general election one, Donna, was ineligible due to her age. The only other participant not to vote was Samuel. Samuel remarked that he didn't vote because:

> Samuel: I know the process, but I know where to go, I'm just too lazy, yeah

Later in the interview Samuel reflected that his lack of political participation was due to a lack of a sufficient stake in society, suggesting that a lack of significant tangible societal goods such as home ownership and a fulltime job dissuade him from participating. This indicates that he feels, for the most part, that government legislation does not currently have a great influence on his own day-to-day life.

> Samuel: Yeah, yeah, after I've actually gotten a stable income, after career then I can care about taxes, because I don't pay any income tax, I get paid but not much, I don't earn enough to be caught up in the progress of the tax system, I mean too young I guess

This sentiment is similar to the thoughts expressed by Anthony. When asked why he did not vote in the 2007 local election Anthony replied that not only was he 'preoccupied' by other things, indicating that a lack of time to follow and participate in politics prevents further participation, but also that:

> Jess: So there's nothing really that could persuade you to participate in local body elections?
>
> Anthony: Um no, unless it affects me directly. Like say rates or anything.
>
> Jess: So if you were a home owner then?
>
> Anthony: Then I would be interested. I've no stake, you know, as of now

The idea that politics needs to be directly relevant to citizens in the form of a tangible 'stake,' such as in the form of taxation, rates and home ownership, is also reinforced by comments made by two of the parents who are representative of a cohort that is in possession of these 'societal goods'. Barry remarked that:

> Barry: We pay our taxes and we'd like to know where it's all going, and that's really important. To have vote, it's great. Not everybody has a chance to vote so we shouldn't take it for granted really

Malvika's mother, Tulika, also reiterated a similar idea of taxation as a significant stake and a resulting desire to see the government spend revenues wisely:

> Tulika: As a tax payer we want to know where our money goes

The other youth participant, Donna, reported that she did not vote in the 2005 general election as she was ineligible due to her age. Although she was eligible to vote in the 2007 local electionshe was unsure as to what electorate she was eligible to vote in and therefore did not vote.

> Donna: Um, I think I wasn't enrolled in time
>
> Jess: OK
>
> Donna: And then I was trying to get it and I was a bit confused which electorate I was enrolled in because I was living in Dunedin [although she comes from Christchurch], but I was here and I was like mmm… I don't know.

In terms of those who did report voting in the general election Isabelle expressed that a shift in her thinking regarding the value of voting in elections resulted in her decision to vote in the 2005 election. She had not voted in the 2002 general election, the first election she was eligible to vote in.

> Isabelle: No I must have [been eligible to vote in the 2002 general election], yeah I was, but I didn't vote, I didn't bother. Because back then I had no idea what I was doing, I was a kid. And then the last election I thought oh I should vote, and make my vote count.

Another participant indicated that voting for her was carried out due to a sense of democratic duty. In the local election Anita stated that that while she did vote it was not an 'informed' vote. By this she meant that she did not take the time or have the interest to pursue information on the campaign but none of the less still felt compelled to vote.

> Anita: Yeah I did vote. … but it was more running through the pamphlet and after 5 minutes just saying ok that person sort of looks ok, but it wasn't like an informed one with I agree with this guy

The idea that Anita's decision to vote is influenced by a sense of democratic duty is further reinforced by another comment she makes:

> Anita: I guess it seems quite good to vote in a democratic place, I mean I like to be given the choice to vote

While Malvika voted in the 2005 general election she did not vote in the recent 2007 local election. When asked why she voted in 2005 Malvika cites a specific party policy – interest free student loans – as piquing her interest and motivating her to vote.

> Jess: Why, did you decide to vote?
>
> Malvika: Um, I think that was around about when the student loans, interest free, when that came around I think. So, and of course I was a student then, so it was like yes! So, yeah, and there was quite a lot of stuff around, information at that time as well I think. I think mainly because I was flatting and people would just (unclear) sit down and talk about it and stuff, as you do with mates, so I think yeah, just sort of decided to… I intend to vote every time

Another factor which appeared to influence peoples' decision to vote is a perception that politics in New Zealand is fairly benign, particularly at the local level, and as such there is little need to participate in politics as people are satisfied with the status quo, a feeling which was expressed by Anthony.

Jess: And what about in the local body election held recently, did you take part in those?

Anthony: No!

Jess: No? So what were your motivations behind…

Anthony: …not participating?

Jess: Yeah

Anthony: I just think it's not important

Jess: Not important, yeah.

Anthony: A waste of time

Jess: Yeah, so you feel like it doesn't…?

Anthony: Matter at all yeah. Because we're such a small country so it feels like a, just one of, I guess it's excessive, you know. We've got so many elections. I mean the election cycle is you know short as it is and then you've got some more local body what have yous.

Although not one of the youth cohort at the focus of this thesis, Samuel's mother, Hannah, expressed a similar feeling about the benign nature of New Zealand politics. She talked about the isolation of New Zealand and the lack of threats from other states which make New Zealand politics less interesting and less important to her. This perception made it less of an imperative for her to participate.

Hannah: It is such a small population here I don't keep many attention what's going on in New Zealand with politicians and political. So in Korea we have a big, huge population, so it's quite interesting. But it's like peaceful country here, I think it's not very exciting in politics, that's my opinion. That's why I'm not very interested

And:

Hannah: And also the social environment is not that important I think. Like Korea, we have North and South and relationship with Japan and America and USA, and then because the, (unclear) the Korean, the location, the country, our country is located surrounding big country. [But] you are small country. We have a long history, so around the country they always have a chance to invade our country. So [the] last five or six years we have many small wars and big wars in Korea, that's why I am interested. But here, nothing much, it's quite isolated, other side of the world. So I feel that politics is not that important, more interesting is how to keep clean and how to keep peaceful this country, is more important than, because in Korea we have to keep our country from other countries

While a wide range of factors have been shown to influence the electoral participation of the participants in this sample there does appear to be one underlying theme to many of the responses, that is indications of a disconnect between acts of government and how this influences the day-to-day life of its citizenship. For example, Anthony and Samuel both feel

that their lack of a stake in society means political decisions are not as relevant to them. Perceiving New Zealand politics as fairly benign also appears to be dissuading Hannah and Anthony from greater political engagement. The responses from both the youth and parent cohort indicates that politics may need to be made more relevant to the wider population in order to increase both interest and engagement in politics.

Non-electoral political participation

Levels of self-reported participation in non-electoral activities was particularly low in both the youth and parent cohorts, which is similar to findings in previous studies of Asian political participation in New Zealand and the United States. As can be seen in Table 4.4 above, while Anthony, Samuel and Isabelle did engage in some non-electoral activities the most common activity was signing petitions. Such engagement however, is considered to be a low impact activity as it requires little forward planning on the part of the signee and little knowledge about the content of the petition.

Of the youth cohort, Anita, Donna, and Malvika indicated that they did not engage in any non-traditional political activities as there was nothing they felt passionate enough about to take a stand on. This fact again reinforces the idea of being satisfied with the status quo. Anita stated that she had not participated in any non-electoral activities as there was nothing of particular concern to her and therefore had no need to speak up.

> Anita: I guess if there was something I was really passionate about then I would go and do something, but there hasn't been anything or it hasn't come to my attention so that's why I haven't had the inclination to go and do that I guess

Similarly, when discussing his non-electoral participation Anthony said that:

> Jess: But what about political participation apart from voting, do you…
>
> Anthony: Sign petitions
>
> Jess: You sign petitions?
>
> Anthony: Yeah
>
> Jess: Yip
>
> Anthony: Ah yeah, that's about it. I don't do protests.
>
> Jess: You don't so protests. Why not?

Anthony: I don't know… I guess I haven't encountered any causes that I deem worthy of my…

Isabelle was also skeptical of the extent to which participating in a protest could bring about a change, and said she preferred the 'confidential' and un-confrontational nature of the ballot box.

Isabelle: I actually, like, I can understand why people go and protest, but for me I don't see the point of it. Like, why waste your time. In a way, if it makes a difference yeah that's good, but, I don't think… It's hard to explain, like I would never do it… I think it just looks horrible, like protesting. Yeah. Hard to say really. I mean have there been many cases where people protesting has made changes? Have there been?

Apart from signing petitions, the only other engagement in non-traditional activities was reported by Samuel. Samuel discussed singing a Korean song at karaoke a few days before the interview that had a political message. This highlighted his awareness of political events in his country of birth. Samuel also reported that his family had contacted the Christchurch City Council, the only participant who mentioned actively contacting a governing body. While the matter taken up with the Council was non-political this is an important incident to take note of as it illustrates that this family knows and understands the function of the City Council. It is possible, though there is no evidence of it here, that many migrants to New Zealand are unfamiliar with the governing system to the extent that they do not know who they can contact when they have problems.

It is also interesting to note that no participants in either the youth or the parent cohort mentioned participating in consumer boycotts. This form of engagement has been gaining popularity in recent years, particularly with young people, with the growth of the fair trade, organic, and human and labour rights movements (Norris, 2002). In a follow up conversation with Samuel he seemed confused as to what exactly a consumer boycott was. However, after explanation he remarked that he did boycott several local restaurants as they put monosodium glutamate (MSG) in their meals, but not mention any more politically orientated consumer boycotts. When asked specifically about consumer boycotts Malvika responded that she boycotted McDonalds for dietary reasons. When asked specifically about consumer boycotts Anthony also replied that he did not participate in any boycotting activities and in fact does not believe in them.

Similar to the youth cohort, the parent cohort did not participate extensively in non-electoral politics. Rachel, Versha and Tulika all reported signing petitions. When questioned as to whether they felt that voting was the only way they could influence politics Versha strongly agreed with the statement and expanded further on his answer by saying that:

> Versha: We are a minority. So they think oh it's only, they're not (unclear) you know so why should we bother about the Asians. Let us do something for the Island people because they've got a big community, so they do something for them

> Jess: So you have a distinct feel that the Asian community as a whole is slightly sidelined, because it's less prominent than Pacific communities

> Versha: It's not only the Asian community, it's any community which is a minority

> Tulika: The smaller communities

> Versha: The smaller communities will just be taken for granted

In this sample, the most influential factors on the non-electoral engagement of both parents and their children appears to be a feeling that non-electoral activities are less effective than voting. Furthermore, Anthony and Anita of the youth sample also indicated that a sense of satisfaction, or at least a sense that there is nothing significantly amiss, is influencing them to participate less in non-electoral activities.

Participation in community groups

All the participants in this sample reported low levels of engagement in community groups and only one parent, Tulika, reported engagement in a group with a political orientation, which was membership to a political party. Robert Putnam (2000) highlights the relevance of belonging to community groups, even if they are not overtly political, in helping to raise the social capital of a community. Therefore, although this sample group may not be participating at great rates in community groups, involvement in local groups is a sign of community involvement and potentially broader social and community participation which, Putnam (2000) argues, builds social trust and may foster greater political participation.

The most common community group mentioned in the youth sample was sports groups with four of the six involved, followed by cultural groups with three of the six reporting membership. Malvika was by far the most engaged in community organizations, although none of them had a political orientation. She is a member of several sports teams and plays

several nights a week. She is also the assistant director of a choir which meets once a week and is a member of two Indian cultural groups that were established by her parents.

Anita was also fairly active in community groups, however, when asked if membership was active in these organizations the answer was no for the cultural group.

> Jess: Do you belong to any community groups? Like be it sports groups or cultural group, religious groups or political groups
>
> Anita: I'm in the Indian Students Association at the university, and LAWSOC (Law Society)
>
> Jess: Are you active members, an active participant?
>
> Anita: Oh yeah, probably more for LAWSOC, I am an active participant. Not so much with the Indian Students association actually.

The extent to which the other participants were actively engaged in the groups they reported membership in was unclear, although it was implied that some were more active than others. Interestingly no participants mentioned religious groups even though this was given as an example of a community organization and is a common community organization.

In the parent cohort participation in community groups was mainly in sports and cultural groups. Barry and Rachel both participated in sports groups and are also members of the Chinese Association, although neither are active members of the cultural group. Versha and Tulika are the most active of the parent cohort in community organisations. They are both highly involved in several cultural organisations, two of which they founded themselves in the mid-nineties. Although the groups established by Versha and Tulika are cultural groups intended to bring together the Indian community in Christchurch, they also discussed them as ways of interacting with the community. For example, they mentioned that politicians had approached these groups and given talks which allowed the Indian community to talk with and question political figures. Furthermore, Tulika is also a member of a political party, the only participant to report membership to a political party.

4.4   Political participation and political efficacy

Research question 2 asked: *Is there a difference in the levels of internal and external political efficacy between those who participate and those who do not?* As was discussed in Chapter 2, studies in New Zealand and overseas have found a relationship between high political

efficacy and propensity to vote. While this study finds that those with high political efficacy are for the most part more likely to vote, high political efficacy is not a consistent predictor of political participation as can be seen in Table 4.6 and Table 4.7 below. This section will focus mostly on voting and only to a limited extent participation in non-traditional political activities since participation in this area was not found to be extensive in this sample.

Participants were requested to indicate to what extent they agreed or disagreed with four standard questions used to test political internal and external efficacy in the questionnaire.[17] Participants were then asked to elaborate on their answers in the interview in order to add greater depth to their answers. The questions and participants responses to these questions are summarized in Table 4.6 for measures of internal efficacy and Table 4.7 for external efficacy. Firstly, the responses to the two questions addressing internal efficacy will be reported, followed by the results for the two external efficacy questions.

Internal efficacy
a) Interest in politics

Ten of the eleven participants in this sample (with the exception of Donna) expressed at least a moderate level of interest in politics. Donna cites her lack of understanding as a factor that undermines her interest in politics:

> Donna: Probably because I don't really understand most of it, most of the time, yeah, and then don't understand like the, like the procedures, what they go through to, what they should do

Anita cited her law degree as a factor that has raised her interest in politics, highlighting the socializing influence of education.

> Jess: Are you interested in politics?
>
> Anita: I'd say well, after doing public law. I mean I do keep up with the news and what's happening in politics. And I guess just because I'm doing a law degree you see things a bit differently, the news and what's happening with the bills and everything, so yeah I guess do take an interest

---

[17] See appendices 3 and 5 for the youth and parent questionnaires

Isabelle highlighted the way in which young adults become more politically conscious as they move out of the 'transition' period of tertiary studies and part time work and establish themselves in fulltime, often career orientated jobs, a process which may allow them to perceive politics as more 'relevant'.

> Isabelle: I am becoming more interested than I was before. Like especially if you are in school, and if you don't study this area you just don't really care. But yeah, now that I work for the government as well, I am becoming more interested, and I should be because I live here. It's getting better.

Internal efficacy
b) Is politics complicated?

This aspect of efficacy was operationalised by asking participants to indicate to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the following question: *Sometimes politics seems and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on.*

Four of the six of the youth participants felt that politics was not too complicated. Only Malvika and Donna moderately agreed with the statement that 'sometimes politics seems and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on.' For example, Malvika felt that politics was rather complicated and reported that this lessened her desire to participate in politics.

> Malvika: I don't think I understand half the time. [Because] sometimes I think it's a bit complicated, I don't know maybe it's just me. I mean, I guess that's why I took political science, to try and understand it a wee bit more. It kind of helped. But I just think sometimes it is a wee bit complicated as to you know they say one thing, and then the next week it seems like they're talking about the same thing but they say the complete opposite. It's like, well, what are you saying? Things like that, or just yeah, some things just seem a bit complicated. But I mean if I really wanted to understand it then I know some people that know more about it than I do that I can go and talk to or ask questions and things like that.

Anthony has a background in political science and reported he felt he has a good understanding of political matters, although he did not vote in the local election. As well as raising her knowledge, and therefore interest in politics, Anita also cites her university studies in law as demystifying the political process and making politics seem less complicated.

Samuel expressed that he felt he had a good grasp of the structure and functions of government, but that he does not keep up with current events.

Isabelle felt that politics is not too complicated in New Zealand due to a greater level of transparency in political matters than in many other countries

> Isabelle: Because New Zealand is really good in a way, I think they are more honest than say Asian for example. There is a lot of corruption and manipulation going in larger countries I guess because you are dealing with lots of people. Here, it's very limited and they try not to, I think. They've been really good. So they just tell you, they just tell the country what they are planning on doing. So when you watch the news, you don't see any lies, you're just seeing what they say. Rather than… because I've seen a lot of dodgy stuff with Asia

The responses to the two questions aimed at gauging the internal efficacy of participants indicate that Donna, the youngest and only New Zealand born participant in the youth cohort, reported the lowest internal efficacy. She was not interested in politics and also felt that politics is complicated. In line with expectations of political efficacy theory Donna also participates in politics the least. She did not vote in the election she was eligible to vote in and she has not participated in any non-electoral political activities, nor does she engage with community organisations. Donna was the least politically knowledgeable, confident, and interested interviewee which is interesting to note as she was the only New Zealand born participant. This then raises the question of whether there is something inherent in the migration process itself which makes migrants more aware and perhaps more willing to participate in New Zealand politics, an issue which will be discussed in further detail in section 4.6 of this chapter, which addresses political socialization.

In contrast, Samuel also records high levels of internal efficacy but did not participate in any of the elections and only a few low intensity non-traditional activities, a finding which contradicts what political efficacy theory predicts. It is also interesting to note that Donna, Samuel, and Malvika felt that they had access to information, particularly from the internet, should they feel the need for more information on a political matter.

Table 4.6   Measures of internal efficacy for the youth Asian New Zealand cohort

	Anthony	Donna	Samuel	Isabelle	Anita	Malvika
Interest in politics	•Interested	•Not interested	•Moderately interested	•Moderately interested	•Interested	•Moderately interested
Politics complicated	•Strongly disagree	•Moderately agree	• Strongly disagree	•Slightly disagree	•Moderately disagree	•Moderately agree
Voted 2005/2007	Y/N	N.A./N	N/N	Y/Y	Y/Y	Y/N

External efficacy

a) Politicians don't care

External efficacy was operationalised by asking participants to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the following question: *I don't think politicians care much about what people like me think*.

The responses of the youth participants in this study were fairly cynical when it came to measures of external efficacy with many feeling that either politicians don't care or that they have no say in the way the government runs things. What was most surprising was that Donna, who recorded the lowest internal efficacy, has the highest measure of external efficacy. She reported feeling that politicians do care and that she can influence how the government runs things. Furthermore, Isabelle, who voted in both the elections in question, has the lowest external efficacy and feels that politicians don't care and that she has no say.

Donna disagreed with the statement 'I don't think politicians care much about what people like me think' and when asked to elaborate on why this was she replied:

Donna: [Because] that's what they're basically there for… that's what their like whole job's about

Thus, to Donna, it is the job of politicians to care about what the electorate thinks and act in its best interests. Isabelle and Anita also took a similar view to Donna, that politicians are

job-focused, however, they saw it in a negative rather than positive light. Isabelle takes a cynical view of politicians and sees them as career driven rather than focused on doing what is best for the nation.

> Isabelle: Well for starters, politicians right, well their main goal is to win and to be able to run the country. So they care what we say, but they care more about… they only listen to, they only do something about things that will give them votes. That's how I feel. So at the end of the day that's their job, and if you see that as doing a business then you want to make a profit. So for them to make a profit they have to gain our vote, and for them to do that is to make the changes that's going to gain them popularity. That's how I feel

Anita shares a similar view to Isabelle, that politicians are just doing a job and their job is to win votes. Therefore, they work to retain their seat in Parliament, rather than work for the betterment of the nation.

> Anita: Yeah, it's just, it's cynical, but if it would help them to get the vote then they would sort of show that they care or whatever to get the vote, but in the end, I mean it's just a means to an end basically
>
> Jess: A means to an end?
>
> Anita: Yeah, just getting as many votes as they can

In response to this question Malvika expressed that it depended on 'which me' they're talking about. This suggests that she sees politicians as targeting specific audiences, potentially as a way to maximize their share of the vote.

> Malvika: I think sometimes it depends which me I'm talking about. Me being the young New Zealander or me as being the student or me as being the um, like Asian population. It depends which one I'm talking about I guess.

External efficacy
b) No say in government

To the statement '*people like me don't have any say about what the government does*' Isabelle felt that she had no say about what the government does, which is interesting because despite this feeling she voted in both the most recent local and general election. Isabelle also expressed that she feels she has no say in what the government does since the power to influence comes in groups.

> Isabelle: I have no say about what the government does. Unless I was part of a group that was quite powerful and could have an impact on New Zealand politics. But I'm not, and I don't intend on joining any of those groups

Anita only slightly disagreed with this statement, but like Isabelle articulated that the power to influence the government is greater in groups. Anita felt that she could have a say in what the government does although this power to influence is not manifested through individual actions but through group actions:

> Anita: I guess we do have a say, I mean because we're all a part of the UCSA and (unclear) we do get a say in that way, and I guess, I'm just thinking about when I graduate that I'll be a part of the New Zealand Law Society and they have influence

Anthony slightly agreed with the statement when completing the questionnaire. Anthony expressed that political influence came not only with professional status, but also with wealth, and that at this stage in his life he does not have either and therefore cannot exert great influence over how the government chooses to act. When questioned as to what he meant by this he responded that:

> Anthony: I guess [because] of my age. I'm too young to sort of influence anything. I just feel that I'm not in a position of power to influence anything… like I don't even have a job. I'm not some professional lawyer, or a lecturer. So, I'd say not as much as I'd like to have and not as much as say maybe (name of a senior lecturer where he attends university)
>
> Jess: OK, so political influence comes with advancement in whatever professional area?
>
> Anthony: Yes, yes. And wealth.

Malvika reported feeling that she can have a limited say.

> Malvika: I will go and vote, so I am having my say. But I'm not participating in demonstrations or protests or petitions or anything like that either. So I'm not really that into it to say look, I'm right here look at me listen to me now. But, I'm not saying I'm not going to say anything at all. Because I am voting, so by voting I am saying, well, this is what I am saying.

Donna feels that she can have a say, although has not chosen to do so thus far.

> Jess: So you think, that you and other people can have a say about what happens in government.
>
> Donna: Yeah (said hesitantly), kind of
>
> J: Kind of?

D: Yeah. Like I dunno, I can go to like protests or something, or write letters or something like that

Although she has low internal efficacy Donna seems to have relatively high external efficacy, as evidenced by her disagreement with both external efficacy questions, although this does not appear to be sufficient to encourage her to participate. She seems to indicate that she is satisfied with and trusts the New Zealand political system and feels that should she wish to participate there are avenues for her beyond the polling booth to express her opinion. Despite this, it seems she does not yet have the interest or confidence to participate in politics as is evidenced by her responses to the internal efficacy questions discussed earlier.

Samuel reported that he can have a say in how the government runs things, although he seems skeptical as to the extent to which he can actually influence things.

Samuel: I have a say, I'm not saying that it's going to be effective but I have a say

The findings of the external efficacy questions are summarised in table 4.7 below. Overall, external efficacy appears to be less important in encouraging people to vote. Many in this sample appear to have a fairly cynical view of government and politicians, however they do still participate to a limited extent.

Table 4.7   Measures of external efficacy for the youth Asian New Zealand cohort

	Anthony	Donna	Samuel	Isabelle	Anita	Malvika
Politicians don't care	•Moderately disagree	•Moderately disagree	•Strongly agree	•Moderately agree	•Moderately agree	•Neutral
No say	•Neutral	•Slightly disagree	•Moderately disagree	•Moderately agree	•Slightly disagree	•Neutral
Voted 2005/2007	Y/N	N.A./N	N/N	Y/Y	Y/Y	Y/N

4.5   Socioeconomic status and political participation of young Asian New Zealanders

Research question 3 asks: *How significant are socioeconomic factors in encouraging or limiting political participation?* In this study participants were asked questions regarding their occupation, income and education levels, the results of which can be seen in Table 4.8 below. As discussed in Chapter 2, factors such as level of income and education have been

found to have a significant influence on participation rates; this study however finds no indications of such a relationship in this sample. However, the cohort at the focus of this thesis is at a transitional stage of life, which may go some way to explain why level of income and education do not show a relationship to political participation.

Table 4.8   **The socioeconomic profile of the youth cohort and political participation**

	Anthony	**Donna**	**Samuel**	**Isabelle**	**Anita**	**Malvika**
Occupation	Student	Student	Student	Government worker	Student	Admin support
Income	<$10,000	<$10,000	$50,000+	$30,000-$40,000	$10,000-$20,000	$10,000-$20,000
Highest educational qualification	BA(Hons)	NCEA Level 3	BA(Hons)	BA	University Entrance	Diploma
Voted 2005/2007	Y/N	N.A./N	N/N	Y/Y	Y/Y	Y/N
Non-electoral participation	Petitions		Contacted City Council	Petitions		

The six youth participants in this study have all either completed or are in tertiary education, and as such this study represents a highly educated cohort. Two participants are in postgraduate studies, two in undergraduate degrees, and the remaining two have completed their tertiary studies and are now in full time employment. Given the high educational level of this sample one would expect this cohort to participate in politics at a fairly high level given the findings of other studies, which have established a relationship between the level of education and political participation. However, despite high levels of education, this sample does not participate extensively in politics and there is no clear correlation between those who voted in the 2005 or 2007 elections and their educational qualifications. Indeed, two of the highest qualified participants have participated the least. Samuel, who has completed an undergraduate qualification and has recently started his Masters degree, did not vote in either of the elections and does not participate extensively in any other political activities. Anthony is also just embarking on postgraduate study and only voted in the 2005 general election. Two of the participants with the lowest educational qualifications are Anita and Donna, who

are both still completing their undergraduate degrees at university. In line with the socioeconomic theory, Donna has the lowest rates of self-reported participation, although Anita was one of the most highly politically active participants in this study. However, it should be noted that Anita is in the final year of her law degree and will begin a new job at a prominent law firm at the end of her university studies.

The relationship between income and political participation is generally considered to be less instrumental in predicting political participation than education, although a higher income is still thought to have a positive relationship with political engagement. Overall, the participants studied here have fairly low levels of income, which may explain the low rate of participation in some cases. Additionally, it should also be noted that that Samuel, with the highest reported income, did not vote in either of the most recent general and local elections. Of those with the lowest reported income, that is Anthony and Donna with under $10,000 each, participation was low with Donna not voting in the one election she has been eligible for and Anthony only voting in the 2005 general election.

Thus, both levels of education and income do not appear to be consistent predictors of participation in the youth sample. This is similar to findings in other studies both in New Zealand and the United States on Asian minority communities and their political engagement. However, it is interesting to note that income is perceived to have some effect on political participation as it has been raised by several participants as a factor that does influence their decision to vote. For instance, both Anthony and Samuel discussed issues such as rates and taxation by central government, or rather their lack of experience with either of these issues due to their low income level. They report this lack of experience as lessening their desire to get involved in politics, which may indicate that income is perhaps an important factor in encouraging young people to vote and will encourage them to participate more when they are established in careers later in life.

4.6   Political socialization and political participation

This section reports on the findings for research questions 4 and 5 which look at the influence of political socialization on political participation. Question 4 asked: *What socialization experiences were identified by the young Asian New Zealanders as influencing their political participation?* Question 5 looked at: *How does the political socialization of young Asian New*

Zealanders compare to that of their parents? With reference to question 4, education, peers, and the migration experience itself were all identified by the youth and parent participants as factors that have influenced the way they perceive and participate in New Zealand politics. Question 5 found that the family interviews in this study found some linkages between the participation rates of parents and children. This section will now discuss these two questions in greater detail, firstly by presenting the results of question 4 followed by question 5.

What, if any, socialization experiences were identified as influencing their political participation?

Beyond the influence of parents in the socialization process several other factors were identified by the youth and adult participants as having some bearing on their decision to participate in politics. The process of migration, education and peers were highlighted by some of the participants as factors that influence their political beliefs, perspectives, and potentially their participation. Of particular interest in this sample was how the experience of migration, and how the resulting (often difficult) interactions with government departments may have increased the political awareness of some participants.

The six 18-24 year olds in this study have all had at least their tertiary education in New Zealand, and for most at least a few years of their secondary school education. From the interviews conducted for the purpose of this research it appears that for the youth cohort education in itself has been an important socializing experience in terms of providing students with a range of experiences. Isabelle talked about when she first arrived in New Zealand and was attending high school she was not fluent in English which discouraged her from participating in some activities that she now wishes she had taken part in.

> Jess: In high school did you participate in any political activities? Just the petitions you mentioned before?
>
> Isabelle: (shakes her head). But I kind of regret, things like um justice and peace, that's political right?
>
> Jess: Yip
>
> Isabelle: Like, I would have liked to join it. But back then, I was, I found like debating and history and political type stuff, I found those subjects very difficult.
>
> Jess: OK
>
> Isabelle: I think it was just the English. Back then. Cos a lot of jargon that I didn't understand, so I think that's why I didn't join them. But I wanted to.

Beyond the learning of a new language educational institutions are also potentially a place where students learn about and form ideas regarding their political beliefs. Anita very clearly illustrated the influence of education on her political beliefs:

> Anita: … I go more for those as they, just because I do economics as well (at university), they're more sort of more market orientated as well as opposed to the left wing which interfere more in the market, which as economists we don't…
>
> Jess: You're not a big fan of…
>
> Anita: Yeah. So I've had that idea but then through my university studies as well I've thought OK yeah this is the better

Anita's comment clearly highlights the importance of education in the formation of political orientations and shows how she identified education as influential in the acquisition of political knowledge and orientation.

As will be discussed later in section 4.7 of this chapter, length of time in New Zealand appeared to have little correlation to political participation of those interviewed in this study. Those who had spent more time in New Zealand did not report greater participation than those who had not been in New Zealand for as long a period of time. This was particularly striking in light of the fact that the least politically engaged and interested youth participant was also the only New Zealand born participant. While these results can only be indicative given the small sample size, it does raise questions as to whether the migration process itself is influential in the process of political socialization. The engagement with so many different government agencies that migrants to New Zealand experience may have a politicizing effect and may help to explain the difference in participation, efficacy, and confidence in discussing political matters between New Zealand-born Donna and the other more politically confident and aware foreign-born participants. Hannah, Samuel's mother, illustrated this idea by highlighting her frustration with the immigration department:

> Hannah: …OK for example I'm quite interested in immigration. Every time, for example, every time when I go to immigration offices there's a long queue. Now it's not very busy, but sometimes busy. We have to (unclear), we have to queue from 5 or 4 o'clock in the morning. Also the visa expensive. OK like a student visa, $200, visitor visa with work permit $400, but service is shit I think. They don't give just free, we pay
>
> Jess: So you're paying for a service but they're not really providing the service?
>
> Hannah: Yeah, yeah. Like in Christchurch offices, just 2 receptionists there
>
> Jess: For people queuing for hours?

Hannah: Always queuing. So every time I feel why! That's not fair. We paying tax, also, OK work permit if someone holds work visa here you pay tax, and then when you are applying some papers, also we pay. The service is shit. They have to know that. That's why I'm interested in what's going on

Earlier in the interview when asked what policies were of interest to her, Hannah replied that immigration was of particular interest as it has a great influence on what she does.

Hannah: The immigration part I'm most interested in, because it's related with us, because I follow the immigration law, it's interesting. Not any other parts, not really for me

Thus, it appears that Hannah's interest in politics has been raised by her experiences with the immigration department and by her being a new migrant to New Zealand. Versha and Tulika also expressed an interest in immigration, also perhaps as a result of their being immigrants to New Zealand as well.

How does the political participation of young Asian New Zealanders compare to that of their parents?

Families, in particular parents or guardians, are considered to be one of the greatest, if not the greatest influence on the socialization of their children. As such the influence of the family is considered to be vital in the formation of the political development and awareness of children. Thus, this study not only involved the interviewing of six young Asian New Zealanders, but also the interviewing of three parents of the youth cohort in order to examine whether similarities exist between the different generations of the same family. While some participatory similarities were found in family units, the evidence for comparable participation patterns in families is not conclusive. Table 4.9 shows the participation rates for the three youth interviews and their parent(s).

Table 4.9   The political participation rates of young Asian New Zealanders and their parents

Youth cohort:	Donna		Samuel		Malvika	
Voted 2005/2007	n.a./N		N/N		Y/N	
Other political activities	No		Yes		No	
Community groups	No		Yes		Yes	
Parents:	Barry	Rachel	Hannah		Versha	Tulika
Voted 2005/2007	Y/Y	Y/Y	Y/N		Y/Y	Y/Y
Other political activities	No	Yes	No		Yes	Yes
Community groups	Yes	Yes	No		Yes	Yes

The least politically engaged youth participant was Donna, however, her parents reported higher levels of participation. They reported voting in both of the local and general elections, as well as engagement in community groups, and signing petitions in the case of Rachel. However, Donna reported no such engagement. Thus in the case of this particular family high levels of political engagement in older generations has not necessarily engendered high political participation in subsequent generations. This point is made even more evident when one delves further into their family history. During the course of the interview it was revealed that Rachel's father had been a councilor in his local city council in New Zealand. This is a very unusual position for a person of Chinese extraction to hold today, but even more so 40 years ago. However, this high level of political interest and engagement has not carried on to his daughter, Rachel, who is not extensively involved in politics beyond voting and signing petitions, or indeed his grand-daughter, Donna.

The generational view of participation between Samuel and his mother Hannah is more similar than that of Donna's family discussed above. They both have fairly low levels of political engagement, though they both participate in different areas. Hannah voted in the 2005 election, but did not report taking part in any other activities, while Samuel did not vote in either of the elections questioned about, he did take part in a few low intensity non-electoral activities. Thus, while Hannah is slightly more politically engaged than her son, neither family member is highly politically active.

In the case of Malvika and her parents Versha and Tulika, there are few similarities between their levels of participation. Versha and Tulika are the most active participants in this study and reported a wide range of political activities including voting, signing petitions, active involvement in community groups, as well as fundraising for several international disasters including the 2004 tsunami in Asia. Malvika, however, when compared to her peers was not one of the most active participants. While she did report voting in the 2005 election, and is a very active member of a range of community groups, she did not vote in the local election, or participate in any non-electoral activities. Thus, the highly engaged nature of Versha and Tulika does not appear to have influenced the electoral engagement of their daughter. Malvika's engagement in community groups is however, similar to that of her parents. Versha and Tulika established and are involved in several community groups, and Malvika is the most engaged of the youth cohort in terms of community groups.

Despite there being only some evidence in this sample that the political participation of parents has influenced that of their children, several participants did make it clear that parents had been influential in the formation of their political ideologies, although the extent to which they continue to share similar beliefs varies. Anita felt that her father had been influential in the formation of her political views and that they were still similar in their views:

> Anita: I guess I was more influenced by my Dad, like, he'd always vote for National, and I suppose that translated through to me as well, and then because, they're right wing right?

Malvika also felt that her parents were very influential in the formation of her political views, however, as their interests have diverged the views of her parents have become less influential:

Malvika: … and it's always been like when I was little I would listen to whatever my parents say of course, but now it's sort of like well, I want to do what's best for me, for my age group, rather than what my parents say or something like that, because they're obviously my greatest influence. So my parents like National I think, or they did the last time I was living at home which was a while ago, but um I tended to go for Labour because of the student loan stuff

Participants were also asked who they thought they discussed politics with the most. Friends were the most common choice, although Isabelle reported that she discussed politics with her family the most, and Donna thought that she discussed politics equally with her friends and family. Friends were also the most common reply when asked where they would turn to for political information. Half replied friends and/or sources such as the internet or books, and only two replied that they would ask a family member. This indicates that friendship groups are likely to be more influential than the family in the receiving and processing of political information, news, and views in the case of this small sample.

4.7   Acculturation and the political participation of young Asian New Zealanders

This section reports on findings to research question 6: C*an we identify relationships or influences between the political participation of young Asian New Zealanders and their acculturation experiences?* To examine the theory of acculturation participants were asked about how long they have lived in New Zealand, their English language abilities, social interactions, and whether they intended to stay in New Zealand in the future. It was interesting to find that length of time in New Zealand was not indicative of higher rates of participation, and that contrary to many studies on minority political participation, the youth sample did not highlight language as a significant difficulty in participating in politics. A summary of these results can be found in Table 4.10. This section will now examine these three factors in greater detail, and look at how they have influenced the participants of this study.

Table 4.10   Measures of acculturation and political participation for the youth cohort

	Anthony	Donna	Samuel	Isabelle	Anita	Malvika
Years in New Zealand	6	New Zealand born	18	13	7	20
English as second language	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Voted '05/'07	Y/N	n.a./N	N/N	Y/Y	Y/Y	Y/N
Other political activities	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No

The more time a migrant has spent in the new country allows for a person to gain greater knowledge about the political, cultural, social, and linguistic traits of the state, and as such, may have a better understanding and therefore be better equipped to participate in politics. However, in the case of this sample, length of time in New Zealand is not indicative of a greater propensity to vote or participate in any other political activities.

Donna was the only New Zealand born participant and has not voted or participated in any non-traditional political activities. Donna, the youngest interviewee at 19, answered, 'I don't know' to many of the questions. As discussed earlier under political socialization, this perhaps indicates that the migration process itself engenders political awareness. Malvika, who has lived in New Zealand for the greatest period of time did vote in the 2005 general election, but not the more recent local body election. Furthermore, Samuel, who has lived in New Zealand for 18 years, did not vote in either of the elections questioned about, although he did report some participation in non-traditional forms of political participation. Isabelle has lived in New Zealand for 13 years, which is in the mid-range of time spent in New Zealand for this study, and has the highest level of self-reported political participation. Anita has been in New Zealand for seven years, which is the shortest period of time apart from Anthony, and voted in both the 2005 and 2007 elections.

A very common barrier for new migrants in many facets of life, including political life, is language. The youth cohort sampled here however, did not identify language as a significant barrier for them now, although it was highlighted as an issue for older people and in some cases themselves when they first arrived in New Zealand. Isabelle, who could not speak any English when she first arrived in New Zealand, noted that her language ability held her back in high school when she was relatively new to New Zealand and not yet fluent in English. She speculated that it may continue to be an issue for people who are not confident in their English language ability:

> Isabelle: Like, I would have liked to join it [political activities and other groups in high school]. But back then, I was, I found like debating and history and political type stuff, I found those subjects very difficult.
>
> Jess: OK
>
> Isabelle: I think it was just the English. Back then. Cos a lot of jargon that I didn't understand, so I think that's why I didn't join them. But I wanted to.
>
> Jess: Do you think that's common for a lot of people? That it's just because they don't, they feel they don't quite, for migrants where English is their second language,
>
> Isabelle: They don't fully understand, and they can't express what they are thinking
>
> Jess: And so you think that holds them back from fully participating?
>
> Isabelle: Mmm, I think it does

However, while language may not be an issue for any of the six in the youth cohort, competency in English was clearly highlighted by a parent, Hannah, as a factor that depressed her interest in New Zealand politics. She indicated that when she first moved to New Zealand her interest in politics was limited due to her lack of English:

> Hannah: When I was in Korea I was very very interested in political and also politicians, but when I moved here, when I watched the news I can't understand, my interest is less and less and less. Then, probably a couple of years ago, I getting, I wanted to know what's going on around me.

When acculturation is operationalized by level of English the entire youth cohort in this study spoke English to a very high level of competency. This is due in part to the fact that all interviews were conducted in English, thus limiting participants to those who were confident enough in their English language abilities to discuss their political participation. Therefore, other studies that interview participants who are less confident in their linguistic abilities in

the dominant language of their adopted country may find different results. As a result, the notion that language ability is a significant barrier to participation for young Asian New Zealanders is one that cannot be eliminated by this research. However, none of the participants in this study thought that foreign language materials were necessary. One participant, Isabelle, even went so far as to state that it is the responsibility of immigrants to become competent in the language of their new country.

> Jess: Um, and do you think your Mum in particular I suppose, your Dad as well, and maybe even you, do you feel like you need more um Korean language information?
>
> Isabelle: Not really. I think if you, well this is how I feel. If you migrate to a different country and the language they speak is different from your mother tongue, then it's your responsibility to learn and, and just accept the fact that this is different and you've got to be willing to um change, make changes. So my Mum, I told her to um study English. So at the moment she's doing English studying by correspondence,

Social interactions were also identified in the literature review as a factor that may influence political engagement. In this sample all of the youth participants reported mixing with people from a range of ethnicities, although Anita, Donna, Malvika and Anthony though that they mostly mixed with New Zealand Europeans. Isabelle reported that the people she mixed with had changed through high school and university as she came into contact with different people. Samuel reported that there can be something of a balancing act in interactions with different cultures, but that he is fairly adept at adjusting to the situation.

> Jess: Do you mix mostly with, broadly speaking, Asian New Zealanders, Pakeha New Zealanders, Korean New Zealanders?
>
> Samuel: I have no preference for race,
>
> Jess: It's a mixture of all of them?
>
> Samuel: Yeah. But there are certain difficulties with other races. Korean's easy with certain things, but some other people are not as easy because of the language barrier, that cultural barrier. But when I'm with Kiwis I act Kiwi. I'm a chameleon, I adapt to the situation and the people.

Most of the participants in both the youth and parent cohorts also refer to New Zealand as 'home', and see their futures in New Zealand, rather than returning to their countries of birth. This indicates that these participants feel a certain amount of attachment to New Zealand and therefore have a vested interest in the future of New Zealand. This could potentially encourage the youth cohort in particular to participate more extensively in New Zealand politics.

It also seems vital at this juncture to discuss the issue of discrimination, and the way it may have influenced participants in their political participation. As has been discussed in Chapter 2, discrimination has been identified as a factor that has been found to inhibit the participation of Asian New Zealanders, in particular the descendents of the Chinese who came here to mine for gold. Therefore, participants in this study were specifically asked whether they had experienced racial discrimination in New Zealand and if this had in any way influenced their political participation. While most reported low levels of racial discrimination, in particular verbal abuse, no participants felt that this had in any way influenced their decision to participate or not in New Zealand politics.

4.8   Institutional factors and the political participation of young Asian New Zealanders

The final research question asked: *Do young Asian New Zealanders perceive institutional factors to be hindering their participation?* In terms of institutional barriers, participants were questioned about the role of the registration process as a potential barrier to their participation. This question was raised as research from the United States highlighted that registering to vote was a significant barrier to voting for many ethnic minorities. However, unlike in the United States electoral registration was not found to be a significant barrier for those interviewed in this study.

Only one participant encountered problems with the registration system that hindered their ability to participate. When enrolling to vote, Donna, was a university student living in a different city to her family home, and as a result was unsure which electorate she was eligible to vote in and this issue prevented her from voting in the 2007 local body election.

However, rather than highlighting any problems with the registration process in New Zealand what was firmly conveyed was the efficiency and the ease of registration. Anthony remarked that:

> Anthony: No, everything was done for me. They just sent me a letter telling me to do this. So yeah, in that sense that's pretty good

Isabelle even remarked that the organization behind the registration process, the Electoral Commission is 'very encouraging' in getting people out to vote. Thus, rather than posing any significant barrier to the participation of New Zealanders this sample illustrates that it is in fact helping to get people onto the electoral roll simply and quickly.

4.9   Summary

This qualitative pilot study reinforces the findings of Park, that Asian New Zealanders, and in this case young Asian New Zealanders, do not participate extensively in politics. Levels of participation however, are not alarmingly low as most appeared to be interested in New Zealand politics, voted in one or both of the elections questioned about, and even participated in a few non-traditional activities. Most participants, with the exception of Donna, conveyed a good knowledge of New Zealand politics and appeared to feel confident that they knew how to participate should they choose to do so. This youth sample appears to follow in line with the life-cycle theory of political participation. Without a significant stake in society in the form of a house, a mortgage, and a career many participants seem to find it difficult to understand how government can and does influence their everyday lives. With both central and local government appearing as remote or irrelevant to this cohort, there is little incentive to participate in politics.

Reported levels of political efficacy were not found to be a consistent predictor of political participation in this study. Most expressed at least a moderate interest in politics, although there was some cynicism expressed about the extent to which it was felt that politicians cared about the citizenry and whether the government listened to the general public. However, it was striking to find that the least politically active and informed participant (Donna) was also the only New Zealand born participant. The experience of being born, raised, and socialized in New Zealand has not yet provided her with the confidence to participate. Donna's experience raises questions about how other experiences, such as the experience of migration itself, has the potential to politicize new residents and citizens in New Zealand. In this sample, Hannah reported that her interactions with government agencies influenced her perceptions and expectations of government agencies, and raised her interest in the operations of the New Zealand government. This is despite the fact that she also reported that she found New Zealand politics boring compared to Korean politics, in part due to a lack of geopolitical tensions similar to those in Asia. The experience of migration therefore should be considered

as a potentially politically socializing experience for new migrants and as such is an area worthy of greater research. The next chapter will conclude this thesis by examining how the results of this study compare to other studies conducted in both New Zealand and the United States, as well as examine the methodological and theoretical implications of this research.

Chapter 5

Conclusions: a comparison of the research findings with New Zealand and the United States

5.1   Introduction

This thesis began by highlighting research which indicated that Asian New Zealanders and Asian Americans participate less in politics than the national averages, yet the reasons for this disparity were unclear. This thesis will now conclude by looking at how the findings of this study compare to previous studies of Asian political participation in both New Zealand and the United States. In particular, this section will focus on the results of Park's recent study of Asian New Zealanders in order to provide a more in depth assessment of the New Zealand experience. Furthermore, the methodology used in this pilot study will also be assessed for its strengths and weaknesses.

5.2   How do the findings of this study relate to previous findings in New Zealand and the United States?

Overall, the youth participants in this study engaged in politics at fairly low levels, although it must be reiterated that given the qualitative nature of this study it is not possible to make generalizations based on this research. Four of the six youth participants voted in the 2005 General Election, only two voted in the 2007 local body election, and only three reported engagement in non-electoral activities. These findings reflect the results of previous studies that report low levels of Asian (and youth Asian) political participation in New Zealand and the United States (Levinson, 2007; Lien, 1997; Lopez, 2002; Park, 2006). Surprisingly, the youth participants in this study also engaged in few non-electoral activities, and none mentioned participating in consumer boycotts, activities which Norris (2002) cites as having grown in popularity in the past 30 years. Importantly, all of the participants in this study reported interest in New Zealand politics, replicating findings made by Park (2006) in her wider quantitative study. This is an important finding which indicates that there is one less barrier to the effective encouragement of Asian New Zealanders political participation.

Young Asian New Zealanders interviewed in this study have indicated that they are interested in politics, but have chosen not to engage.

This thesis began with the observation that contrary to the predictions of the socioeconomic theory, Asian New Zealanders and Asian Americans participate in politics at low levels despite (assumed) high levels of wealth and education. However, Asian New Zealanders were found to be the least wealthy ethnic group in New Zealand, although their low levels of participation still present something of a puzzle given their above average levels of education. The low participation rates of Asian Americans adds to this puzzle as the findings presented in Chapter 2 indicate that Asian Americans are wealthy and well educated. In the case of the participants in this study, it is not clear whether the political participation of the six youth participants was influenced by their socioeconomic level. Education, which is considered to be the more important socioeconomic factor, did not appear to be a significant factor in influencing their political engagement as all the participants had completed or were completing some form of tertiary education, yet participation rates are low. Indicators of wealth however, may provide a partial explanation for their low levels of participation. While those with higher levels of income did not report participating more than those on lower incomes, a lack of an economic 'stake' was identified by two of the youth participants as discouraging them from participating in politics. Specifically, taxation, property rates, and home ownership were identified as economic factors that are currently irrelevant to them. However, they report that later in life when they are in full-time employment and homeowners themselves these economic factors are likely to encourage them to participate more widely in politics. To further bolster this argument, two of the parents interviewed also reinforced the notion of an economic stake in society as influencing and encouraging them to participate in politics.

Thus, it appears that the socioeconomic theory provides only a partial explanation of youth participation in New Zealand. There are several reasons why this explanation may not fully account for low youth Asian participation rates in New Zealand. Firstly, the life-cycle effect discussed in Chapter 2 may be overriding the influence of economic variables. There is evidence to support this idea as two of the youth sample reported a lack of an economic stake as discouraging them from participating further. Secondly, as discussed earlier in Chapter 2, the case of young Asian New Zealanders may deviate from what is traditionally predicted given the different economic and educational needs of immigrant groups. For example, while

education is considered to be the more important factor in predicting political engagement (DeLuca, 1995; Leighley, 1995), in the case of an immigrant group income may in fact have greater influence. Xu (2002) reports that new immigrants often work long hours and are concerned with establishing themselves economically, meaning political concerns are not a priority. If Xu's assumptions are correct then the way in which the socioeconomic theory is applied to immigrant minorities needs to be reconsidered. The evidence from this small sample of young Asian New Zealanders also suggests that education may not play as dominant role as expected. This again may be due factors associated with the life-cycle effect. The youth participants interviewed in this study may be too busy finding a partner and establishing careers to be occupied with politics.

If we now turn to compare acculturative factors such as language, social interactions, and length of stay, further differences and similarities are revealed between the two countries. This study supports earlier findings made by Park that language is not a barrier to participation in politics for Asian New Zealanders, although it should be noted that all interviews in this study were conducted in English.[18] This finding is particularly notable as studies in the United States have shown that a poor linguistic ability has been found to have a significant negative effect on the political participation of Asian Americans (Cho, 1999; Freedman, 2000; Xu, 2005). The reasons why Asian New Zealanders do not find language a barrier to their participation are unclear. New Zealand's relatively strict immigration laws may mean that less immigrants come to New Zealand with little or no English, and New Zealand's attempt to target educated professionals may also help to raise the English ability of Asian immigrants to New Zealand. Furthermore, there may be sufficient information available to Asian immigrants in the language of their choice in order to be informed about New Zealand politics as none of the participants in this study thought there was a need for more foreign language publications, minimizing the impact of English as a second language. Several participants in this study also emphasized the importance of learning English and Isabelle was even contemplating insisting her mother take English classes. In the case of the youth cohort, it appears that schooling in the dominant language and effectively 'growing up' in New Zealand has had the effect of instructing those that either were not fluent or did not know any English into the English language, as well as helping them to integrate into New Zealand society.

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[18] This methodological issue will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter

A low level of interaction with other ethnic groups was another factor identified by Park's study as depressing Asian New Zealanders political participation. Participants in this study were asked whether they tended to mix with Asian New Zealanders, Pakeha New Zealanders, Maori New Zealanders or another ethnic group. All participants responded that they mixed with a variety of these groups, and in the case of four of the six participants, mixed more with Pakeha New Zealanders than Asian New Zealanders. Given that the participants in this study all attended at least a few years at high school in New Zealand it is likely that they were interacting with and formed close friendships with people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. This highlights the important role educational institutions such as high school and university have played in the acculturation process of these young Asian New Zealanders. This process of socialization through interactions with the dominant group is in fact similar to an observation by Park (2006), although given the older age range of her study this takes place in a different setting. Park (2006) finds that those in full time employment have higher rates of participation than those who are self-employed. Park (2006) attributes this to the development of social contacts in the workforce, which would have a similar effect to that experienced by the younger participants in this study during high school and university.

In terms of length of time spent in New Zealand, Park (2006) found that 95% of those who responded to her survey were recent immigrants, that is they have been here for less than 15 years, and that this was a factor that depressed their political engagement. This was not the case for this small youth cohort, three of whom have been in New Zealand for less than 15 years. Only one participant was born in New Zealand, Chinese New Zealander Donna, who was also the least politically active. Furthermore, of those born overseas, no relationship was established between those who had spent a greater period of time in New Zealand and their political participation. Rather, this study highlights the relative ease with which the participants in this sample appear to have developed and adopted a New Zealand identity and an interest in politics. As a result, this may encourage a greater interest in the well being of New Zealand's political environment, and will hopefully bode well for the future participation of this sample and other young Asian New Zealanders.

An insufficient knowledge of New Zealand politics was also not highlighted as a problem hindering the participation of this cohort, although it was clearly identified as a barrier in

Park's study and in studies in the United States (Jacob, 2006). One reason why a lack of knowledge may not have been reported as hindering the participation of this sample may be due to an oversampling of tertiary students. However, when a lack of knowledge was identified as a potential issue some participants elaborated further by saying that they felt there was information out there should they want to seek it out. Most also felt that if they did not have sufficient access to information, they felt that they would easily be able to source more from the internet. It was also interesting to note that none of the participants felt that more foreign language materials were necessary; that there was already sufficient materials out there or that immigrants should make the effort to learn the dominant language of their new country. Again, this finding contrasts with that of the United States, where a lack of English skills has been identified as a barrier for many Asian Americans, suggesting that foreign language materials would be in demand.

Of particular note was the way in which the process of migration itself appeared to function as a socializing experience in the sample interviewed here. It was noted in the literature review in Chapter 2 that the process of political socialization experienced by migrants may differ between native and foreign born populations due to 'ethnic clustering' and political re-socialization for adult migrants (Cho, 1999, p.1148). While traditional agents of socialization such as education and peers were identified by the youth cohort as influential in their political socialization, Helen, from the parent cohort, identified her interactions with the immigration department as raising her interest in New Zealand politics. Furthermore, given that the only New Zealand born participant was considerably less politically active than the overseas born participants raises important questions about how migrants learn about New Zealand politics, and whether the process of migration does act as an agent of socialization. Findings by Park (2006) also suggest that the socialization processes of Asian New Zealanders need further investigation. As mentioned above, she found that people in full-time employment had higher levels of participation than those who owned their own businesses, and that the reason for the disparity may be due to greater social networks in a full-time position.

In the United States, one of the most significant barriers to the participation of Asian Americans is registering to vote (Bai, 1991; Lien, Collet, Wong, Ramakrishnan, 2001; Xu, 2005). In the case of this sample, only Donna identified a problem with the enrolment process. Donna moved city to attend university and was unsure of which electorate she was eligible to enroll in. This is potentially a significant issue as many university students who are

living in a city they did not grow up in may be unsure as to which electorate they are eligible to vote in. Thus, it may be necessary for those signing up university students to the electoral roll to reiterate the Electoral Commission's policy on which electorate they are eligible to vote in.

While there is little evidence of racial discrimination depressing the political participation of those interviewed in this study, discrimination has been shown to have a negative effect on Asian American political participation and the descendents of the early goldminers in New Zealand (Bai, 1991; Ip and Murphy, 2005; Lai, Cho, Kim and Takeda, 2001, Xu, 2002). Most of the participants in this study reported experiencing racial discrimination or abuse (for the most part racial taunts on the street). However, none reported this as dissuading (or persuading) them from participating in politics. This factor, along with indications that the youth participants see New Zealand as home and the potential influence of a life-cycle effect, appear to present this cohort as a 'typical' youth cohort. That is, they did not discuss their political habits and attitudes in terms that one might expect of a disenfranchised and isolated ethnic minority. This last point is interesting in that it indicates that this sample does not feel isolated or excluded from New Zealand politics, and many commented that they feel they can influence New Zealand politics, if they chose to do so.

This study has also found indications that many of the theories commonly applied to political participation may not fully account for the participation of immigrant Asian minorities due to a different set of cost-benefit calculations and requirements. Most theories of political participation have had their widest application in relation to majority communities. Minority groups however, are faced with a unique set of informational, linguistic, and legal needs. The research highlights the differing majority/minority group needs most clearly with the socioeconomic explanation, which has already been discussed earlier in this chapter. The same however, is also likely to apply to socialization explanations (also addressed above) and institutional explanations. In order to understand the participation habits of Asian New Zealanders we need a better understanding of what factors are of primary importance to this community, rather than analyse the situation from a different viewpoint.

5.3   Methodological reflections

This study reported on the findings from eleven questionnaires and in depth interviews with six young Asian New Zealanders and five parents. By using a qualitative methodology in this research a greater depth and breadth of information was gained than would normally be achieved through the use of quantitative methods. This was particularly useful in light of the fact that very little research has been conducted on youth Asian political participation. Furthermore, the addition of five parent interviews added another level of analysis to this study which helped to gain further information on the role of the family in the political socialization of Asian immigrants. Overall, the qualitative methodology was an effective research method that allowed for in-depth questioning and responses, and for a number of issues to be raised that I had not anticipated. For example, Rachel revealed that her father was once employed as a city councilor, a greater depth of information that was valuable and interesting for my study. There were however, drawbacks that will also be discussed in this section.

This research used the qualitative technique of depth interviews along with a brief questionnaire to gather background information. The combination of these two methods proved to be extremely useful. The use of a questionnaire was found to be a time effective way to gain some basic information on age, gender, socioeconomic status, and electoral participation. The use of a questionnaire was also an effective way to pose the standard efficacy questions which use an agree/disagree continuum. This then allowed a semi-structured interview which built on their brief questionnaire responses.

The use of depth interviews allowed the participants' to build on their responses in the oral section of the interview. This is particularly important as on separate occasions it transpired that people had often either misunderstood one or more of the efficacy questions, or expressed an opinion during the interview that was at odds with what they had initially indicated on the questionnaire. The questionnaire/interview format then allowed interviewees to reconsider their point of view. The use of depth interviews also allowed participants to articulate their points of view in their own words rather than simple yes/no answers or choosing from a list of predetermined responses, allowing for a greater depth and accuracy of information.

The drawbacks of this methodology include the potential for interviewer bias, that is the participants providing answers that they feel the interviewer wants or expects to hear, rather

than giving their true opinion or a true account of their activities. However, by conducting interviews on a one-on-one basis, rather than group interviews, it was hoped that participants would feel more comfortable expressing their views with one person as opposed to a group of unfamiliar people. Furthermore, my position as an 'insider' in this cohort (I am of a similar age to the participants and am also from an Asian New Zealand background) was intended to help participants regard me more as a peer than an academic outsider. This was crucial to making the participants feel more comfortable in discussing their feelings about New Zealand politics. Also, recruiting participants from within my own peer and work network meant that for the most part I already knew the participants, helping them to feel more at ease during the interviews. Given the intimate nature of the interviewing process, I feel that my position as a peer and fellow Asian New Zealander did help to make participants feel more at ease, and as such provide me with a true account of their political behaviour.

The use of parent interviews were a useful way to elucidate information about how the parent-child relationship operates in the context of migrant families, and to examine the process of political socialization. As mentioned above, the parent interviews not only allowed this study to examine socialization in family units, but also added a greater depth of information about family history and a greater context to the participation of their children.

Finally, the sampling strategy used here, that is snowball referral, was found to be a fairly effective method of recruiting participants. It was however more difficult to recruit parent interviews than expected. This is likely due to more extensive time pressures on the older participants in this sample as the majority of youth participants in this sample are students and as such are able to be more flexible with their time.

5.4   Conclusion

At nearly 10% of New Zealand's population, the Asian community is New Zealand's third largest ethnic group. Given that the size of this community is predicted to continue its rapid growth in the coming decades, studies which indicate low political engagement in this community are concerning. Previous research indicates that ethnic minorities, immigrants, and young people are some of the least likely people to engage in politics, making it crucial that we seek a greater understanding of the political participation and attitudes of this cohort.

Thus, this study aimed to shed light on the little studied topic of young Asian political participation in New Zealand.

While the qualitative nature of this study means that results are unable to be generalized to the wider youth Asian population, several interesting and important observations were made. Similar to previous studies in New Zealand and the United States, this study finds that the young Asian New Zealanders interviewed in this study have low rates of political participation. No one theory was able to fully account for the participation habits of this sample, although the findings indicate that this sample is interested in politics and discuss politics is terms commonly associated with a typical youth cohort, rather than what be expected of a *minority* youth cohort. This last point is interesting in that it indicates that this sample does not feel isolated or excluded from New Zealand politics.

Overall however, while it is important to take into account cultural factors as influences on participation, the 18-24 year old cohort at the focus of this study seemed to be more influenced by their age and life-cycle stage, rather than their cultural backgrounds. The participants in this study professed to be interested in New Zealand politics and many are already engaged in a variety of political activities. However, several identified a lack of significant societal 'stakes,' such as a career and mortgage, as disincentives to participating in politics. Thus, it would seem that the life-cycle explanation may be a useful description of this sample, and that given time to build up these societal assets, these participants are likely to engage later in life given their current (although not acted on) interest in politics. However, on the other hand, if voting is a habit that is established when young, then perhaps this particular sample will be unlikely to participate later in life, making further research an imperative.

Finally, this study raises questions about the applicability of several theories of participation, an important area for future research. Most theories have had their widest application in relation to majority communities, however, minority groups are faced with a unique set of informational, legal, and linguistic barriers. In particular, this study found that deviations from theories such as the socioeconomic model challenge traditional assumptions as to what factors play the dominant role in influencing political participation. The socialization model also may need to be applied with caution as different agents of socialization may be key in the political socialization of immigrant groups.

As the Asian community continues to grow it becomes imperative that this group feels it is able to and knows how to participate in New Zealand politics. This study has identified several factors important in influencing the participation of young Asian New Zealanders, however, ongoing research is necessary if we wish to delve deeper into the puzzle of young Asian political participation.

Appendix 1 – Information sheet

To whom it may concern,

My name is Jessica Buck and I am a Masters student in the School of Political Science and Communication at the University of Canterbury. My thesis is on the political participation and efficacy of young Asian New Zealanders.

The aim of this research is to gain further insights into what Asian New Zealanders think about voting and taking part in New Zealand politics, how the community participates and learns about politics, and to compare this information with that of Asian Americans. As a participant in this research it is hoped that the information you provide will be able to shed some light on the political participation of the Asian community and help Asian communities have a say in New Zealand politics.

Your participation in this project will involve a one-on-one interview/group based interview at the University of Canterbury in the central library study rooms, or at your home if you prefer. Interviews will take no longer than 1 hour. Interviews will also be tape recorded but not video recorded.

The study is entirely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from the project at any time, including withdrawal of any comments provided. When the research is completed, I am also very happy to come back and talk with you and/or your family about the results of the project. Participants may also request to review the audio transcript and will also be given the opportunity to review the written transcript.

The results of the project may be published in an academic journal and a copy of the completed thesis will be sent to the Electoral Commission, however you can be assured of complete confidentiality. No names will be used - any reports will only record tables of simple comments made by participants. No real names of any person will be used in collecting the data or in any publications.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Ethics Committee.

Thank you for considering taking part in this research project.

If you have any further questions please don't hesitate to contact me.
Email:jkb51@student.canterbury.ac.nz
Phone: 021 207 8397

Or you can contact my supervisor, Dr Bronwyn Hayward, Department of Political Science and Communication, University of Canterbury.
Email: bronwyn.hayward@canterbury.ac.nz
Phone: 021 533 563

Jessica Buck

Appendix 2 – Consent form

I have read and understood the description of the political participation of young Asian New Zealanders project. On this basis, I agree to taking part in a face-to-face interview on my thoughts about voting and political participation in New Zealand. I understand that the results of the project may be published but that no real names will be used.

I understand this interview would take no longer than 60 minutes at a time that suits me and that the researcher can be contacted on:
Email:jkb51@student.canterbury.ac.nz
Phone: 021 207 8397

Or you can contact the research supervisor, Dr Bronwyn Hayward, Department of Political Science and Communication, University of Canterbury.
Email: bronwyn.hayward@canterbury.ac.nz

I understand that I may withdraw from this project at any time, including withdrawal of any information we have provided. I am aware that I am at liberty to discuss any concerns about the project with Jessica Buck or my supervisor Dr Bronwyn Hayward.

Name: …………………………..

Signed: ………………………….

Date: …………………………....

Appendix 3 – Questionnaire for 18 – 24 year olds

1. What is your age? Please circle one.

18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25

2. What is your gender?

   Male ☐

   Female ☐

3. What is your occupation? (Please specify)

4. Which ethnic group do you most identify with?

   Asian New Zealand ☐

   Chinese New Zealand ☐

   Indian New Zealand ☐

   Korean New Zealand ☐

   New Zealander ☐

   Other ☐ Please specify……………………

5. Which income bracket best describes your annual income?

   Less than $10,000 ☐

   $10,000 - $20,000 ☐

   $20,000 - $30,000 ☐

   $30,000 - $40,000 ☐

   $40,000 - $50,000 ☐

   $50,000 + ☐

6. Did you vote in the 2005 General Election? (Please tick one)

Yes ☐ If yes please specify which electorate did you vote in?.. (If you do not know your electorate, at what address had you lived for the last 4 weeks on September 17 2005?...)
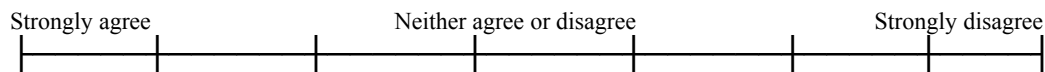
No ☐

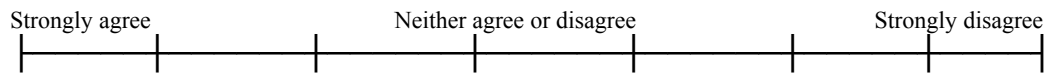7. Did you vote in the recent local body elections?

Yes ☐

No ☐

8. Please read the following statements and indicate on the line to what extent you agree or disagree with them
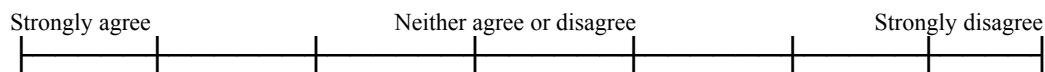
    a. "I don't think politicians care much about what people like me think"
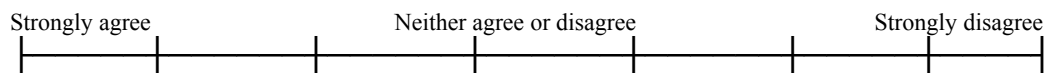
Strongly agree   Neither agree or disagree   Strongly disagree
├─────┼─────┼─────┼─────┼─────┼─────┼─────┤

    b. "Sometimes politics seems and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on"

Strongly agree   Neither agree or disagree   Strongly disagree
├─────┼─────┼─────┼─────┼─────┼─────┼─────┤

    c. "People like me don't have any say about what the government does"

Strongly agree   Neither agree or disagree   Strongly disagree
├─────┼─────┼─────┼─────┼─────┼─────┼─────┤

    d. "Voting is the only way that people like me have a say about how government runs things"

Strongly agree   Neither agree or disagree   Strongly disagree
├─────┼─────┼─────┼─────┼─────┼─────┼─────┤

Appendix 4 – Discussion prompts for 18-24 year olds

A. background questions:

1. Where were you born?
2. How long have you been in New Zealand?
3. What is your highest educational qualification? Which country is this qualification from? Where did you gain most of you education?
4. Do other members of your family live in New Zealand?

B. Political interest
5. Are you interested in New Zealand politics?
6. Are the policies that are discussed in the mainstream media of interest to you?
7. What policies interest you? What issues are of a concern to you?

C. Access to political information
8. Do you feel you have access to enough information regarding candidates in elections?
9. Do you feel you have access to enough information regarding New Zealand's electoral and political system?
10. Do you read English language political material or of another language?
11. Would you like there to be more foreign language materials available? In which language?

D. Political participation

12. Did you vote in the last general election? Why/why not?
13. Have you ever taken part in any political activities apart from voting?
14. Do you follow the news in New Zealand or in your home country?
15. Do you participate in any other political activities overseas?
16. Do you think that it is important to participate in politics?
17. In high school did you participate in any political activities? Why?
18. Have other members of your family voted or taken part in politics informally? That is activities such as signing a petition, taking part in a protest, written a letter to a newspaper.
19. Have you or anyone close to you been approached by a political party or organization? Did this influence your political behaviour?

B. Efficacy questions:

Agree or disagree with the statements:

20. Sometimes politics seems so complicated it is hard for people like me to understand what is going on
    a. Why? Why not?
21. During election campaigns, political parties and candidates discuss issues that are of real interest to me
    a. Why? Why not?
22. People like me don't have any say in what the Government does
    a. Why? Why not?

E. Barriers to participation
23. What do you perceive to be barriers to your participation?
24. Is the enrolment process a problem?
25. Have you ever experienced racial discrimination in New Zealand? Did this in any way influence the way in which you participate in New Zealand politics or society?

F. Political socialization
26. What is your earliest political memory? In New Zealand, in your home country?
27. Do you think your parents are interested in politics?
28. Who do you discuss politics with the most? Your family, friends?
29. Do you think your political leanings are similar to those of your parents? If not, who are they similar to?
30. If you wanted some political information on an issue who would you turn to and why?
31. Would another member of your family be prepared to discuss their attitude to politics in New Zealand?

G. Acculturation
32. Do you mix mostly with Asian New Zealanders, Pakeha New Zealanders, Maori New Zealanders, Pacific Island New Zealanders or a mixture of these groups?

Appendix 5 – Questionnaire for parents

1. What is your age? Please circle one.

   35-40   41-45   46-50   51-55   56-60   60+

2. What is your gender?

   Male   ☐

   Female   ☐

3. What is your occupation? (Please specify)

4. Which ethnic group do you most identify with?

   Asian New Zealand   ☐

   Chinese New Zealand   ☐

   Indian New Zealand   ☐

   Korean New Zealand   ☐

   New Zealander   ☐

   Other   ☐   Please specify……………………

5. Which income bracket best describes your annual income?

   Less than $30,000   ☐

   $30,000 - $40,000   ☐

   $40,000 - $50,000   ☐

   $50,000 - $60,000   ☐

   $60,000 - $70,000   ☐

   $70,000 - $80,000   ☐

   $80,000 +   ☐

6. Did you vote in the 2005 General Election? (Please tick one)

Yes ☐ If yes please specify which electorate did you vote

in?... (If you do not know your electorate, at what address had you

lived for the last 4 weeks on September 17 2005?...)
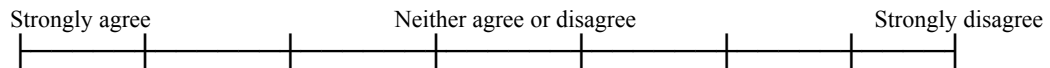
No ☐

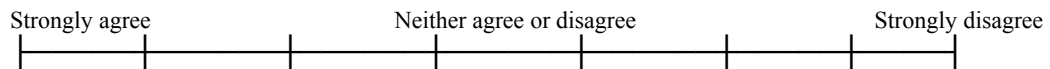7. Did you vote in the recent local body elections?

Yes ☐

No ☐

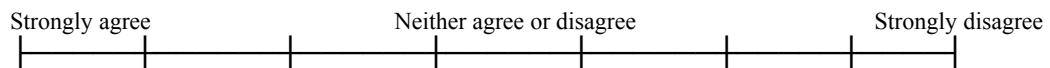8. Please read the following statements and indicate on the line to what extent you agree or disagree with them

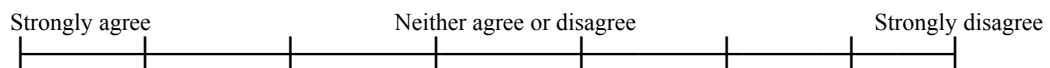   a. "I don't think politicians care much about what people like me think"

Strongly agree   Neither agree or disagree   Strongly disagree

├──────┼──────┼──────┼──────┼──────┼──────┤

    b. "Sometimes politics seems and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on"

Strongly agree   Neither agree or disagree   Strongly disagree

├──────┼──────┼──────┼──────┼──────┼──────┤

    c. "People like me don't have any say about what the government does"

Strongly agree   Neither agree or disagree   Strongly disagree

├──────┼──────┼──────┼──────┼──────┼──────┤

    d. "Voting is the only way that people like me have a say about how government runs things"

Strongly agree   Neither agree or disagree   Strongly disagree

├──────┼──────┼──────┼──────┼──────┼──────┤

Appendix 6 – Discussion prompts for parents

A. Background information:

1. Where were you born?
2. How long have you been in New Zealand?
3. What is your highest educational qualification and in which country did you receive most of your schooling?

B. Political interest

4. Are you interested in New Zealand politics?
5. Are the policies that are discussed in the mainstream media of interest to you?
6. What policies interest you? What issues are of a concern to you?

C. Access to political information

7. Do you feel you have access to enough information regarding candidates in elections?
8. Do you feel you have access to enough information regarding New Zealand's electoral and political system?
9. Do you read English language political material or of another language?
10. Would you like there to be more foreign language materials available? In which language?

D. Political participation

11. Did you vote in the last general election? Why/why not?
12. Do you participate in any other political activities in New Zealand or overseas?
13. Do you think that it is important to participate in politics?
14. Have you or anyone close to you been approached by a political party or organization? Did this influence your political behaviour?

E. Efficacy questions:

Agree or disagree with the statements:

15. Sometimes politics seems so complicated it is hard for people like me to understand what is going on
    a. Why? Why not?

16. During election campaigns, political parties and candidates discuss issues that are of real interest to me
    a. Why? Why not?
17. People like me don't have any say in what the Government does
    a. Why? Why not?

F. Barriers to participation

18. What do you perceive to be barriers to your participation?
19. Is the enrolment process a problem?
20. Have you ever experienced racial discrimination in New Zealand? Did this in any way influence the way in which you participate in New Zealand politics or society?

G. Political socialization

21. What is your earliest political memory in your home country? In New Zealand?
22. Did you participate in politics in your country of birth? If so, how?
23. Would you say that you participate more or less in politics in New Zealand than in your home country?
24. Do you discuss political matters with your children?
25. Do you think your children are interested in politics?
26. Who do you discuss politics with the most? Your family (spouse, children), friends?
27. Do you think your political leanings are similar to those of your children? If not, who are they similar to?
28. If you wanted some political information on an issue who would you turn to and why?

G. Acculturation

29. Do you mix mostly with Asian New Zealanders, Pakeha New Zealanders, Maori New Zealanders, Pacific Island New Zealanders or a mixture of these groups?
30. Since you have been in New Zealand do you think that you have become more, less, or still have the same level of interest in New Zealand politics?
    a. Why?
31. Since you have been a PR/ citizen in New Zealand do you think that you now participate more, less, or at around the same level in New Zealand politics?
    a. Why?

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