

ABSTRACT

Title of Document:

***POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND LINGUISTIC
INTEGRATION OF NEPALESE AMERICANS***

Hir Bhandari, Ph.D., 2021

Directed By:

Dr. Loren Henderson, Associate Professor of
Public Policy, The School of Public Policy

Since the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965, the United States has become home to more immigrants from Asia, Africa, and Latin America, rather than just Europe. As a result, there has been a growing scholarly interest in understanding the relationship between Asian-Americans' socio-economic attainment, citizenship coexisting, and political participation. The previous studies on this topic show that Asian Americans have low political participation relative to their socio-economic status (SES). A higher level of SES among Asian Americans does not demonstrate a strong correspondence with a higher level of formal aspects of political participation. Even though Asian Americans have high socio-economic attainments, their voter participation rates were lower than those of the Black and White populations. The following research questions framed this study: To what extent is the Nepalese American population politically engaged? To what extent is the Nepalese American population linguistically integrated? While previous studies have explored the civic engagement and political participation of Asian Americans as a holistic group, this

dissertation focused on Nepalese Americans. Using quantitative data obtained from participants selected from a respondent pool of 10,000, cross-sectional survey data ($N=519$) were analyzed to capture the experiences of Nepalese Americans and offer insights about Nepalese Americans' political participation and linguistic integration. The demographic variables of the study included gender, current legal status, education, income, marital status, age, and occupation. These dimensions had not been specifically addressed in previous scholarship.

The results of this study contrasted with those of previous research, which indicated that higher group levels of SES among Asian Americans did not necessarily correspond strongly with a higher level of political participation. Nepalese Americans with higher incomes were found to be more likely to engage in political activities, such as voting and participating in political groups. In addition, those with higher education and income were more likely to be linguistically integrated, and those with U.S. citizenship had higher levels of linguistic integration. These empirical effects of such immigrant-related variables as education and socio-economic status identify critical needs of policy interventions which help increase political engagement and hence consolidate the essence of participatory democracy.

Keywords: Culture, community engagement, civic engagement, political participation