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**POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF
“ASIAN” NEW ZEALANDERS:
A CASE STUDY OF ETHNIC CHINESE
AND KOREAN NEW ZEALANDERS**

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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Studies**

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ABSTRACT

Politics is a numbers game. Having sufficient numbers is a prerequisite for any ethnic minority group to have political influence in a host country. But numbers are only a prerequisite – numbers do not automatically increase the group's political power. Individual members of the group need to have sufficient resources, interest, knowledge, and the confidence to participate in politics in order for the group to transform its numbers into political power. Having strong ethnic communities and political parties that actively seek out minority voters can also facilitate this process by encouraging ethnic minority groups to participate in politics. But even with the right combination of these individual and community factors, without a liberal institutional structure which facilitates political participation, it would be difficult for any minority group to have adequate political representation in a host country. A study on the political participation of Asian New Zealanders proves that understanding ethnic minority groups' political participation is a complex yet interesting issue, which challenges various aspects of traditional theories on political participation.

This thesis is a first in many ways. The thesis introduces Asians for the first time into the literature that seeks to explain what factors influence the political participation of people living in New Zealand. The thesis also introduces Asian New Zealanders for the first time into the international literature that seeks to explain what factors influence the political participation of Asian immigrants in Western democratic countries. The findings of the survey conducted as a part of the thesis indicate that Asian New Zealanders, as the newest and most rapidly growing segment of New Zealand society, provide an important and unique insight into our understanding of political participation, and that Asian New Zealanders are set to emerge as even more important players in New Zealand politics in the coming decade.

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