

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' POLITICAL AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION IN NEPAL:
STUDENTS' FACEBOOK USES, TRENDS AND ITS ROLES IN THEIR PARTICIPATION

By

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Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School
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Since the 1950s, Nepalese undergraduate students from the public schools have made many great contributions during the nation's political and social changes and transformations. One of the main purposes of the private schools, however, was to enroll those students who were less interested in or not interested in student politics, unlike those in the public institutions. The private school setting encourages the students to be less politically and civically active.

Meanwhile, media development and the rise of private educational institutions were two major outcomes of the political and social transformations. The increase in the use of the Internet to access the social networking site, Facebook, is also one of the latest outcomes of the media development in Nepal. The increasing popularity of Facebook is even greater among undergraduate level students from both private and public institutions. The purpose of this study is to measure the existing level of political and civic participation of the students in private and public colleges, who are on the upper and lower undergraduate level. Other areas to explore include students' Facebook usage patterns, and devices used most to access Facebook.

The results of a survey conducted by the author during July-August 2012 showed that Nepalese undergraduate students in lower levels of public schools were more politically active.

Students in higher levels of public schools are more civically active. The study also found that students in public schools show greater political and civic participation even today. The impact of Facebook on political and civic participation varied between the students in public and private institutes. The study also discussed some of the major patterns of outcomes Facebook uses, such as the kinds of devices used to access Facebook, reasons for creating Facebook pages, frequency of Facebook access by the students per day, and amount of time spent on Facebook. There was a positive correlation between the civic and political participations of the student and the news they obtained from Facebook and other online sources, the amount of time they spent on Facebook, and those who were members of a college Facebook group page.

CHAPTER 1 BACKGROUND

Since the inception of the first constitutional monarchy in 1950, Nepal has been a vibrant but politically unstable country. The past six decades have seen various experiments with different forms of government in the pursuit of democracy. However, many political crises have obstructed this pursuit of democracy. The crises included events such as the monarch and the political parties who jointly overthrew the 107-year-old Rana regime and established a constitutional monarchy in the 1950s. Later, the monarchy took power from the political parties after having fought jointly against the Rana regime. Then in 1979, King Birendra allowed a nationwide referendum (explained below). In the early 1990s, a constitutional monarchy was reestablished. This was followed by the rise of Maoist insurgency in the 1990s, followed by the abolition of the monarchy in 2008, and several failed attempts to rewrite the 1990's constitution.

During this unrest, however, the country had a taste of democracy; there was a rise in private sector enterprises—including private media and private educational institutions—and student civic and political participation. The generations that grew up after the mid-20th century have been through different types of rulings and administrations such as the monopoly and authoritarian monarchy, the party-less Panchayat System (a council of ministers handpicked by the King to help run the administration), a failed multiparty democracy, and even communism. But none of them succeeded in providing long-term stability.

The country and its people are still in pursuit of the type of democracy that suits them best. During these phases, young university students helped shape the country's transitions. Changes in the country's education system, however, have affected the political and civic participation of young educated people. The exclusion of student politics in the rising number of private educational institutions at all levels, including at the undergraduate level, is said to have

created a political gap between private and public enrollees. Meanwhile, media development has helped the political and civic participation of all people, including undergraduate level students (ULS). Media development and youth political and civic participation have always moved in conjunction with one another to help Nepal in its pursuit of the democratic form that suits the country best and lasts over time, as discussed below.

Since the 1990s, open access to the Internet in Nepal, as in many countries around the world, has become a sign of a developing democracy. Nepal has seen a rise in the use of the Internet and new media. In 2010, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) indicated that the total number of Internet users in Nepal increased by 160 percent. Many Internet users use their cell phones for Internet accessibility. A similar effect is seen in the media among journalists (Acharya et al., 2012, p. 8). Even for journalists, Facebook has become the second biggest source of news, and plays a role in civic and political participation (Acharya et al., 2012, p. 18).

With this background, the focus of this study is to measure the existing gap in political and civic participation between students in public and private undergraduate institutions (schools/colleges). Private institutions were created after the increase in the number of private undergraduate institutions, which was one of the aftermaths of the rise in private sector enterprise in the 1990s (Snellinger, 2005). My study also measured students' news consumption habits and the role of the Internet and the social networking site, Facebook, on its development.

Undergraduate students from two public and two private undergraduate institutions were approached for a survey to assess their levels of political and civic participation. The survey also attempted to measure the role of the Internet and the use of Facebook on students' news consumption and their political and civic participation habits.

In Nepal, there are two categories of public educational institutions at all levels, and all of them receive some form of financial support from the government. Thus, they are called public (government) schools. Aided public schools receive regular government grants, and unaided public schools do not receive regular grants from the government. On the other hand, all levels of the private educational institutions are financed, managed and regulated by bodies other than the government, which includes those such as parents' association, business, non-profit organizations or religious institutions (Thapa, 2011, p. 31). These private institutions do not receive any kind of government grants, and "are defined as *institutional schools*" (p. 31).

This type of categorization for public and private financing structure applies to all six levels (sections) of present day educational systems. According to the Ministry of Education (MOE), the sections can be listed as: Pre-primary–equivalent to below Grade 1; Primary–equivalent to Grade 1 to 5; Lower Secondary–equivalent to Grade 6 to 8; Secondary–equivalent to Grade 9 and 10; Higher Secondary–equivalent to Grade 11 and 12 and Higher Education–equivalent to the University level (MOE, 2010). The university level includes the undergraduate level, post undergraduate level, and higher. Unlike in the United States, undergraduate programs in Nepal offer flexible 3, 4, or 5 year programs depending on the discipline (The United States educational foundation in Nepal [USEF], 2013).

This study included two colleges (1 public and 1 private) that follow the 4-year curriculum, and two colleges (1 public and 1 private) that follow the 3-year curriculum. The first year of undergraduate level in Nepal is equivalent to the freshman year in the United States; the second year is equivalent to the sophomore year, and so forth. Two undergraduate level colleges with only three year's degree plan were included to represent those undergraduate students

enrolled in three years undergraduate disciplines. Many disciplines in the undergraduate level in Nepal still follow a three year curriculum (MOE, 2010); USEF, 2013).

Thapa (2011) writes that public and private colleges in Nepal also vary in their sizes, missions, influence, availability and employment of resources, average cost per student, quality of teachers and teaching facilities, monetary and non-monetary contribution and involvement in school matters, and students' demographic characteristics (see Thapa, 2011, p. 31-33). Those students enrolled in private educational institutions are gaining the upper hand in comparison to those enrolled in the public educational institutions, because the private institutions that are better managed are equipped with a better school environment that helps in developing students who are better motivated. Further, this team work between the students and the management in the private schools is also backed up by better homes and community of the students enrolled in the private institutions. Political influence is another feature that affect(ed) private and public schools differently in Nepal about which is discussed below (Thapa, 2011; Snellinger, 2005; Caddell, 2006, 2007).

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Public Sphere Theory: Conceptual Framework

This study is grounded in the theoretical construct of the “public sphere” to examine the existing gap in civic and political participation between students in public and private undergraduate institutions (schools) in Nepal post-1950. Following this contextual trajectory, many attributes of the public sphere theory address the changes that occurred in Nepalese society, politics and educational system, economy and media since the inception of the first constitutional monarchy in 1950. Habermas (1989/1962) outlined the evolution of the public sphere in the 17th and 18th centuries and its decline in the 20th century. Looking at Nepalese history, it could be said that the country and its people have gone through similar phases more than once since the 1950s.

The notion of civil society that Habermas (1989/1962) mainly dealt with, explained the public sphere and the kind of society that existed in Western Europe. Nonetheless, we can presume that for the first time, the public sphere was becoming a domain of the Nepalese social life from the 1950s movement onwards. Public opinions were formed out of rational public debates, which according to Habermas, plays a crucial part in democracy (Habermas, 1989/1962). Similar public opinions picked up during the 1950s in Nepal, except that the public sphere occurred in the initiation of newly formed political parties (then the rebels). They were supported by students’ groups at the university level, who participated in the uprising that overthrew the Rana regime (Snellinger, 2005; BBC News, 2013). The rebels, most of whom were also students, had fled to India in 1947 and started the undertaking by participating in the student movement called *Jayatu Sankshitam* (Victory to Sanskrit) (Snellinger, 2005). This was the first student protest against the Rana regime on record.

Similarly, in May 1979, King Birendra allowed a nationwide referendum as a response to another protest led by the university level students' protests in May 1979. It was up to the people to choose between a multi-party system or the Panchayat system, but the people's consensus favored the Panchayat system. This victory legally banned other political parties' movements for the time being. However, students' organizations were the legal bodies "could operate in their official capacity" (Snellinger, 2005, p. 26). Since then, the legally restricted political parties established their respective extensions within student bodies. Thus, these student organizations became the parties' sister organizations and started working for the respective parties' cause. In short, it was because the joint student bodies agreed to support the political parties that the country was able to overthrow the Panchayat system a decade later. The movement carried out on the streets by students during this period in history held not only the parties' "limelight" (p. 29), but also presented a glimpse of future leaders to the general public, representing them on the streets and fighting for their (public's) rights. This made the citizens realize that the coming generation, consisting of young politicians, "identified and would change" everything that was wrong with the country (Snellinger, 2005, p. 29). Snellinger (2005), however, points out that after the 1990s movement, youth participation saw a timely downfall that allowed political groups as well as the royal family to take advantage of the unstable political situation.

The power of students' movements was again felt during the transition period from the early 2000s to the mid-2000s. In 2002, King Gyanendra first disrupted the parliamentary process, and by 2005, he was imposing authoritarian rule (Snellinger, 2005). This triggered the awakening of a new wave of student participation. The initial student protest in 2002 was to criticize an oil price hike, to which the government under the King responded by conceding to their demands. Despite this concession, the student bodies later joined their mother organizations

to support the ongoing movement against the authoritarian monarchy (Snellinger, 2005). They went so far as to declare their student bodies independent from their mother organizations, when required, for political autonomy. Snellinger (2005) also mentions that during the struggle, suspected politically active and several charismatic students who were suspected of being politically active, were tracked down by the state, along with other political leaders, for being political threats.

It is noticeable that the university level students were the common denominator in each of the major political transitions that are discussed above: the 1950s overthrowing of Rana regime and installation of the first constitutional monarchy; the 1979 nationwide referendum; the 1990s peoples' movement that overthrew the Panchayat system; and the 2002-2005 peoples' movement that established the Republic of Nepal by overthrowing the 239-year-old monarchy (Chand, 2011; Acharya, 2009; Thapa & Sharma, 2009; Nepal, n.d.; The New York Times, 2008). Meanwhile, it is also important to understand that the university level students included mostly students from public educational institutions.

Habermas (1974; 1989) explains that the rise of a new class, the bourgeoisie, along with the rise of media played a big role in the public sphere in 17th and 18th century in Europe.

The public sphere as a sphere which mediates between society and state, in which the public organizes itself as the bearer of public opinion, accords with the principle of the public sphere—that principle of public information which once had to be fought for against the arcane policies of monarchies and which since that time had made possible the democratic control of the state activities (Habermas 1974, p. 50).

During each of the Nepalese political transitions mentioned above, the concept of the public sphere and public opinion in the Nepalese community saw an increase in a similar fashion as it did in the 18th century Europe as discussed by Habermas (1989/1962). During these transitions in Nepal from the 1950s onwards, the educated university-level student groups were

the “new class” of the Nepalese public sphere. This can again be compared to the bourgeois society of 17th and 18th century Europe. Just as Habermas suggests, there was a space formed and realized between the economy and polity in Nepal where the Nepalese students’ groups were informed and discussed the recent political developments (events/activities) and acted upon them. Media, the instrument of the public sphere (like Habermas’ newspapers, books, salons and debating societies) were beginning to develop and became available to the Nepalese public just about this time. The development of these types of media are still in progress. The communicative forum (the media) was similar to what Habermas saw as a model for the public sphere that facilitated rational and critical debates amongst the public (citizens). Such debates ensured development of the public’s political will that is crucial in a struggling democracy. The Nepalese media developed in a parallel line with the country’s struggle for democracy as explained in the following passages.

Media’s Struggle and Its Role During Political Crisis; Youth Civic and Political Participations

Freedom of the press and freedom of expression have been disrupted in Nepal on many occasions over these years of high political instability. Events related to the harassment of journalists and censorship of traditional media by the state, the monarchy, and the Maoists have been reported time and again. On August 1986, Panchayat government forces attacked a journalist named Padam Thakurathi, who was almost killed (Human Right Watch, 1989; Adhikari, 2007). The NPI further reports that this incident ignited a major political event. Thakurathi condemned the Panchayat system, and was backed by Nepalese media professionals (press) and university student unions. According to NPI (2010), the Nepalese media played a significant role during the people’s movement in the 1990s, alongside the National Congress Party (NCP) and other leftist parties backed by student unions (Snellinger, 2005). This was

especially true during the last 50 days before the end of the partyless Panchayat System that forced King Birendra to re-establish the constitutional monarchy in 1990 (NPI, 2010; Chand, 2011).

The country's media have crossed remarkable milestones since the parliament was re-established in the 1990s (Duwadi, 2010). Like the private educational institutions' enterprises, a "vibrant" growth of free independent media emerged during this time (Nepal, n.d.). Prior to the 1990s, there were only state-owned television and radio broadcasting, and two major newspapers, *Gorkhapatra* and *The Raising Nepal*, that are published in Nepali and English languages, respectively (Duwadi, 2010, p. 211). Even though Nepali journalism had a long history, it did not flourish until this period. King Birendra's efforts to re-establish a constitutional monarchy for the second time in the nation's history, this time by overthrowing the partyless Panchayat System, offered provisions that attracted private investments in the media sector (Duwadi, 2010). Duwadi's (2010) observations on Nepal's media history further indicate that there was a boom in Nepali media in all three sectors of old media, including newspaper, television, and radio, along with the new media—the Internet. Since then, there have been 6,181 newspapers registered throughout the country as of mid-March 2012. That includes 494 daily, 35 bi-weekly, 2,346 weekly, 431 fortnightly, 1,841 monthly, 321 two-monthly, 529 tri-monthly, and 35 quarterly papers. Four thousand two hundred and seventy-five of these are published in Nepali. Another 457 are in English, and 1,030 are bilingual (Nepali/English) (Central Bureau of Statistics [CBS], 2011). There are also publications that can be found in more than a dozen other languages (CBS, 2011).

Likewise, there are 15 privately owned television channels broadcasting within the country, apart from NTV, which is a government-owned TV network (CBS, 2011). CBS also

claims that during the fiscal year 2011/12 there were 721 licensed cable TV operators. The number of privately owned radio broadcast stations experienced a big increase during this time as well. During the same fiscal year, there were 341 out of 400 registered radio broadcasting stations that operated along with the government-owned radio station, Radio Nepal (CBS, 2011).

This boom of media nullified 2005's weeklong media blackout during which the country's Internet network was cut off by King Gyanendra, which is another example of the media suppression in Nepal (Nepal, n.d.). Media developed during this phase would play a big role in mobilizing the political and civic participation of young citizens during the 2006 revolution that not only overthrew King Gyanendra's authoritarian monarchy, but also ended the decade-long Maoist insurgency.

This increase in private sectors during the 1990s also saw a temporary decline of the Nepalese students' participation in politics as mentioned by Snellinger (2005) earlier. Nonetheless, the students were again seen in the political forefront throughout several political events since the late 1990s until these events led up to the one that shaped the overthrow of the monarchy in 2008. The overthrow of the monarchy resembles the transformation of the European feudal estates that later became part of public authorities. It was about this time that "those occupied in trades and professions" (such as private media and schools in Nepal), in the hope of establishing "urban corporation and territorial organization" (which in the case of Europe was already established), developed into a sphere consisting of bourgeois society holding private autonomy of their own (Habermas, 1974, p. 51). The second constitutional monarchy of 1990s and present day republic and secular Nepal (The New York Times, 2008) is a reflection of the representative public sphere. According to Habermas (1974), such outcomes are the results of the new sphere of "public authority:"

The bourgeois public sphere could be understood as the sphere of private individuals assembled into a public body which almost immediately laid claim to the officially regulated “intellectual newspapers” for use against the public authority itself (p. 51).

Youth Participation

This provides a perfect place to pitch the worldwide understanding of young citizens’ political and civic participation (youth participation), followed by how it has been affected by Nepalese social, political, educational and media structure in Nepal. Let’s begin with Checkoway’s (2010) statement that says youth participation is any incident in which young people show their involvement in the institutions and decisions affecting them. Likewise, the United Nations Development Program believes, “people’s participation [in the community] is becoming the central issue of our time... [Participation] can become a source of tremendous vitality and innovation of the creation of new and more just societies” (cited in Checkoway, 2010; Xu, 2007, p. 622).

Checkoway (2010) further talks about the importance of youth participation in helping to build expertise. This type of participation makes the youth informed and able to practice their rights, which is important in a democratic society. It is a right that is protected by the Convention of Rights of the Child on which Checkoway presents the following historical information:

The first declaration of rights was adopted by the International Save the Children Union in Geneva in 1923, and endorsed by the League of Nations General Assembly in 1924, as the World Child Welfare Charter. The Declaration of the Rights of the Child was proclaimed by the United Nations in 1959, and was the basis for the Convention of the Rights of the Child adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989 (p. 340).

According to the government of Nepal’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), Nepal joined the United Nations on December 14, 1955 (MoFA, 2013), which is about the time in history when Nepal’s first constitutional monarchy was installed by overthrowing the Rana regime. As discussed above, many national hurdles in Nepal have been overcome via the civic

and political participation of young people, especially the participation of college students. Every time the nation called for a change, this group of youths (the Nepalese students) responded and pushed the nation through each of the transitions.

Nepalese students have played a fundamental part in the country's political development and its outcomes. Since the 1950s, Nepalese students are seen at the forefront of the struggle for statehood democracy and making radical political demands. Nevertheless, there is a give and take relationship between mainstream politics and student political and civic participation. An article published in a national online news portal (<http://www.gorkhapatraonline.com/trn/world/1203-students-in-politics-nu.html>), (gorkhapatraonline.com, n.d.) suggests that it is not wrong to say the Nepalese concept of college students' (youth) politics and their direct role in Nepalese mainstream politics puts them in a unique position. The mainstream political parties serve as the mother organization for these college student political organizations (wings). It is important that almost all the political parties have a desire for their youth wings to be present in every major educational institutions at all levels. At the same time many popular present-day political leaders, in almost all political parties, started their political careers in their respective party's student wings (Gorkhapatraonline, n.d.).

This leads back to Snellinger's (2005, p. 29) earlier discussion about students' street movements presenting a glimpse of future leaders during the overthrow of the Panchayat system. According to the Carter Center's (2011) report, some of those youth wings even had influence on major national interest issues such as tender processes (contractors' bidding process to qualify for open public projects like road, bridge or building constructions), taxation and other activities that have to do with mainstream political space, development and public security. If the youth

wings are not involved in national interests, many youth wings are at least active in low-profile public or community activities organized by their respective mother organizations (Carter Center, 2011).

Private and Public Schools in Nepal

Post-1990s, the people's movement saw a decline of such political influence and involvements by the Nepalese students, which Snellinger (2005) believes was due to a change that occurred in the Nepalese education system. Post-1990s, people's movements encouraged the "private schools industry" along with the media and other private industries (Snellinger, 2005). The Nepalese government allowed this growth of privately owned schools to make up for its own inability to provide enough public educational institutions. As far as Snellinger (2005) is concerned, the increase of the "private schools industry" at all levels is another reason for poor civic participation in the post-1990 people's movement. Because public (government) schools are easy targets for the political strikes that are common in Nepal, private schools make this issue a "selling point," whereby the impacts of the political and civic strides made by the student political organizations and political parties are not felt in the privately owned educational institutions (Snellinger, 2005, p. 37).

After the establishment of new universities in the 1990s, the commercialization of education, including in higher education (university level) came at a price. The students at the private higher education institutions paid higher tuition in comparison to public universities and taught job-oriented courses such as engineering and medicine (Hachhethu, 2004). The CBS (2011) reports that just 7.5% of Nepali students were enrolled in private schools until 1995-1996 at all levels. The number increased to 16.7% in 2003-2004. By the year 2010-2011, the numbers increased to 26.8% (CBS, 2011). As a result, citizens who were trained under private educational facilities were normally better off economically because they can (are) better qualified for

private sector jobs and peruse towards them. At the same time, according to Snellinger (2005), the political class, those who were graduates from the lesser-rated and poor public schools, tended to be “improperly trained to pursue the political goal of public office (p. 37). This is one of the major factors that widened the political gap between these two groups of young citizens. According to the CBS’s (2011) latest available report, over 72% of Nepalese students are enrolled in public institutions (CBS, 2011, p. 83) schools and colleges. The number of enrollees in the private schools began to increase over the years, but more than half of students still attend public schools, even in urban areas. However, 80% are in public school in rural areas (CBS, 2011).

Decline of Public Sphere in Nepal

The public sphere is important for a modern society in that it serves as a forum in which citizens collectively discuss topics that are relevant and informative to themselves about the progress occurring in society. They may also use the public sphere to “observe and control” the elites of the society (Gerhards & Schäfer, 2009, p. 2). The elites may include the ones involved in political, economic and other sectors of society (p. 2). Out of several normative theories that explain how the public sphere should be structured to meet the task of developing norms for a country like Nepal, it can be stated that the ideal “participatory” (or “discursive”) model can also be implemented to explain the situation of the public sphere in Nepal. As far as the participatory model of the public sphere is concerned, communication can be considered “better” when it includes many actors with plural evaluations and arguments. Gerhards & Schäfer (2009) also mentioned that Habermas (1989, 1992 and 1998) indicates support for this model. It may have been possible that the necessary plurality was something that was missing in the Nepalese public sphere despite the increase in media in the last quarter of the 20th century, which is explained below.

So far, by analyzing Nepalese history since the 1950s through mid-2000s, it is noted that there have been public (students') political and civic participation, media development, and increases in private schools, along with other private sectors. This passage of history has also helped in the evolution of a divided public sphere and political participation by the Nepalese students as explained here. Habermas (1989/1962) claimed that there was a decline of the public sphere in the 20th century. Habermas was also very critical about the fact that the old media were unable to promote the public sphere because the old media isolated people from the public realm. Such a decline was seen in Nepalese (public) student participation after the 1990s, which Snellinger (2005) mentioned in her work. Snellinger claims that the nation was entering into privatization (i.e., an increase in private schools) that could have caused the decline.

It is important to attempt to connect the dots between these various aspects: Snellinger's claims on the decrease in students' political participation; an increase in privatization and an increase in the number of private schools; the rapid increase in the "old" mass media, TV stations, radio and newspapers in Nepal, right about the time period during which Habermas developed his critical view towards the old media vs. the public sphere, and the effect of the market economy on the old media in respect to its 20th century's decline in the public sphere. it is possible that the increase of the old mass media also hampered the students' political participation, along with the increase in private schools in Nepal. The increase of the old mass media in Nepal could have failed to promote free and plural communication as mentioned by Habermas' normative theory of the public sphere. The fact that the increase of old mass media was an outcome of the increase of private market economy post-1990s can be considered a basis for the claim; because it also increased the number of old media that carried the same features such as 'plural communication' explained above. According to Habermas (1989, 1992 and 1998)

the old media did not consider the plurality in communication that is important for public sphere. These growing media could have isolated the students from one another by affecting the way they participated in political and social issues in the past that was necessary for public sphere. Their isolation from old practices added to the already existing gap created by the private schools. Therefore, it may be safe to say that it was the combination of the two, an increase in private schools and the increasing availability of the old media that could have contributed in promoting the decline in political participation of the Nepalese students.

Now, going back to the "participatory" (or "discursive") model, it is described as (1) an "encounter in the public sphere," i.e., one that needs one-on-one casual communication between citizens in everyday places (like coffee shops and saloons) where the public discusses various issues but has less reach; (2) a "public event," such as a press meeting, public speech, or street protest that influenced society and had a larger reach to more public; and (3) "the mass media" with a reach far exceeding the previous two, but which discarded the public as a passive receiver of "self-observation and opinion" (Ferree, 2002, p. 10). Added to this limitation of the "old" media (newspaper or television) was their biased nature due to economic pressures and political preferences. These were quite the case as far as the Nepalese media and Nepalese public sphere were concerned. Revisiting the incident about Padam Thakurathi, who was almost killed (Human Right Watch, 1989; Adhikari, 2007); lack of non-governmental media until the 1990s; the 2000-2005, government imposed strict media censorship (Sedhai, 2012; also read Freedom House, 2012) explain how these historic events affected the public sphere in Nepal.

Another reason for the lack of political consciousness and passive observation of the political situation in Nepal has to do with (1) the lack or restriction on political freedom to choose ones' (i.e., students') political affiliation (Snellinger, 2005); (2) the lack of proper social

study courses that teach real democratic norms, which are common courses in democratic countries; and (3) there is little effort to question the kind of nationalist history being taught, which is the outcome of the embedded memorization culture in the Nepalese education system (Snellinger, 2005). Concluding her analysis, Snellinger (2005) finds significance in inclusive politics. She emphasizes the importance of communication and the representation of “the needs of those who have been left behind by the era of democracy and development” (p. 41).

Political parties, through the political-affiliated student organizations run by student politicians, fight for their access and reach out to the newly enrolled undergraduate students. Snellinger (2005) provides evidence that the political-affiliated student organizations increase their reach to public secondary schools, high schools, colleges, and universities for political indoctrination of young and newly enrolled undergraduate students starting from their first (freshmen) year of undergraduate level schooling. Snellinger (2005, p. 37) specifies that such indoctrination leads to “contrived” student participation, especially during the first year, instead of free party affiliations. Therefore, it may be true that not all the new enrollees, in their freshmen year are always interested in political participation. But at the same time, the past few decades’ of history also indicates that there has rarely been any political transition without some kind of contribution from students from all levels of undergraduate study at different public schools in Nepal. This leads to an indication that over time many of these “contrived” students in their freshmen year may eventually generate interest in politics at some point during the completion of their undergraduate courses in Nepal.

As a result, there is always a regular and required supply of services from the young students from public college, who Snellinger (2005) claims have been “contrived” in their earlier years. So, it may be plausible that the level of political participation increases subsequently in

later years (sophomore, junior and senior) during undergraduate study among the Nepalese students in the public colleges, including the ones who unwillingly take part in some kind of political participation in their first years. This study will seek to identify the nature and magnitude of relationships between civic and political engagement of undergraduate students with their level (year) of undergraduate study by using the following hypothesis:

- **H1:** Nepalese undergraduate students enrolled in their lower level (1st and 2nd year) are less politically and civically active than students in the upper level (3rd and 4th year) of schooling in public undergraduate institutions.

Meanwhile, private schools are designed to allow for the practice of little or no political activity on campus. Those who wanted their schooling free from politics, were least interested in “political opportunities, and could afford private education,” and did want their activities interrupted by politics, could choose private education (Snellinger, 2005, p. 37). So, it can also be hypothesized that:

- **H2:** Nepalese undergraduate students enrolled in all levels in private educational institutions demonstrate lower levels of civic and political activity than undergraduate students enrolled in public undergraduate institutions.

Based on these discussions, it would not be wrong to state that most of the youth participations so far have usually been the result of turnouts from public university students. According to Snellinger (2005), their role has a huge effect on the ways Nepali mainstream politics function, despite the fact that these students represent only a small portion of their age group.

Virtual Sphere and Political Participation in Nepal

It is clear from the above discussions that ‘old’ media can be regulated by privileged actors (elites such as media owners, political leaders and even the king) of society by excluding smaller organizations and civil society and essentially breaking public debate (Habermas, 1989/1962). Nepal was no exception. But in Nepal, it is a little known fact that unofficial

Internet news portals and blogs provided news about the country to the outside world when former king Gyanendra imposed authoritarian rule and shut down Internet access during the 2005-2006 uprising (Sedhai, 2012). Even though the government was able to restrict other forms of media, and shut down the Internet, the government officials knew little about blogs. Blogs became an “exceptional” source of news, especially to the people outside the country as they could still access anonymously fed “live testimony,” “user-generated videos and audios” etc. (Sedhai, 2012) that helped the outside world impose international pressure on Gyanendra in support of the people’s effort. In the early 2000s, government censorship included sending armed soldiers into various media houses. In 2005, government imposed strict media censorship. However, these efforts failed to crack down on the virtual sphere, the Internet. The uprising of 2005-2006 eventually contributed to the end of the monarchy, during which Internet access played crucial role.

Shedhai (2012), further reports this significant change in the Nepalese Internet media landscape is greatly important. Slowly but surely, since its first inception, the Internet has become a significant medium of communication alongside the “old” media such as newspaper, television and radio that were still fairly new to the Nepali public. Today, the Internet and its features are becoming ever more accessible to the Nepalese public as a legitimate source of information and Shedhai (2012) sees it surpassing old media in certain aspects.

At present, ... thousands of Nepali news portals, the official news portal of Kantipur Publications, now ekantipur.com, Nepal Republic Media's myrepublica.com, onlinekhabar.com, International Media Network Nepal's thehimalayantimes.com, mysansar.com, and nepalnews.com have garnered a substantial readership both inside the country and abroad...Readers can share news and express their views and comments instantly...online media will soon break monopoly of print media within a few years (*The Kathmandu Post*, 2012).

This is quite similar to what many scholars, including political scientists and media researchers, believe when they say that the Internet possesses the potential to change the way

societies communicate over time. Their studies signal that Internet communication can provide a better public sphere than old media has been able to do so far (van Os et al., 2007). The following section will verify whether this claim holds true and is applicable to the scenario in Nepal, which takes us to the Internet's early days and its evolution in Nepalese context.

A Look Back at the Advent of the Internet and Its Progress in Nepal

Even though the government-owned Royal Nepal Academy for Science and Technology (RONAST) provided the first email services and marked the advent of Internet technology in Nepal, it was the private sector that introduced the Internet to the public (Gyanwali, 2009; Montgomery, 2002). In 1994, an initiative of the Mercantile Office System first made commercial e-mail services available for use by the public. Later, the Ministry of Information and Communication issued licenses to two other Internet Service Providers (ISPs), World Link Communications and Computer Land Communication System (Gyanwali, 2009).

Per the Telecommunication Act of 1997, a new telecommunication regulatory body, the Nepal Telecommunication Authority (NTA), was formed in 1998. By the early 2000s, the majority of those few Nepalese Internet users had already started using the Internet for various purposes, such as e-mail, chatting, downloading games, and music (Montgomery, 2002). Montgomery (2002) further states that Internet technology was more popular among younger people.

By the end of 2009, the NTA had already issued licenses to 15 ISPs with the total bandwidth exceeding 10 Mbps. Currently there are 47 ISPs, out of which five provide Internet service to the rural areas of Nepal (NTA, 2012a). In September 2010, the ITU website quoted the NTA, which stated that the total number of registered Internet users in Nepal had grown 160 percent in a year (ITU, 2010). The NTA report indicated that there were 515,592 Internet users in the previous year, which increased to 1,359,805 that year (ITU, 2010). These stats have made

further subsequent quick progress in just three years down the road. According to the latest NTA report published in mid-2013, the number of Internet users is up to 6,685,427, showing a penetration rate of 25.23%. According to the ITU (2013) report, 31% of the developing world population is currently online. The average Internet penetration rate in Asia and the Pacific region in 2013 is 32% (ITU, 2013). In this regard, it can be said that Nepalese Internet penetration is showing good progress to meet the region's average Internet penetration rate. This progress took place against the backdrop of an increasing Nepalese population that totaled 26,494,504 per the Nepalese census 2011 (National Population and Housing Census [NPHC], 2011; Sharma, 2011).

Likewise, Table 2-1 shows that the mobile phone penetration rate reached 65.45% around mid-2013 (NTA, 2013a). NTA's (2013a) latest data show that there are 18,137,771 mobile phone users in Nepal. Nepal's telecom service penetration rate went up to 77.11%, with the highest contribution coming from mobile phone use of 68.45%. (NTA, 2013a). A number of factors contributed to this progress. *The Kathmandu Post* (2013) reported that for a long time the government had planned to bring together new cell phone service providers under a license regime that was unified and that helped to create competition among the service providers. Similarly, Koirala (2010) stated that the increase in the number of subscribers was the result of cheaper information technology and increasing competition among the service providers. Koirala (2010) quoted the spokesperson of the NTA, Kailash Prashad Neupane, who stated that the mobile phone was also growing popular with the younger generation. Neupane further stressed that the "service expansion" greatly contributed to education (Koirala, 2010) and other sectors.

Similar, Table 2-1 also indicates significant growth in mobile data (GPRS, Enhanced Data rates for GSM Evolution [EDGE], and 3G) along with the voice services, evolved in the

Nepalese domestic market (NTA, 2013a). As per the NTA's (2013a) report, there were 6,254,381 cell phone users with Internet service in mid-May, 2013. The total number of cell phone users with Internet service was, 6,079,353 and 5,865,902 for the previous two months, around mid-April and mid-March respectively (NTA, 2013a; 2013b). The same figures for mid-May 2012 and mid-May 2011 were 4,530,415 and 2,587,705 respectively (NTA, 2012b and 2011). The NTA's report published in November, 2012 states that it was only the GPRS system that provided the Internet for mobile phones in Nepal until late 2012. The EDGE and 3G were introduced in the Nepalese cell phone market during September-October, 2012 (NTA, 2012c). That could have caused the sudden increase in the users of mobile phones with the Internet service.

Internet Communication in Democratic Engagement

There are no definite answers, yet, to either support or deny whether Internet communication can increase people's political and civic participation, raise the public's voice and improve the communication between the citizens and the states. Some predictions have spoken in support of a positive relationship between the Internet communication mode and the act of participation (Sunstein, 2001; Xenos and Moy, 2007). At the same time, some find it hard to derive a relationship between the two. Over time, communication scholars have found that the use of the Internet and its features can be related to overall political engagement (Johnson and Kaye, 2003; Valenzuela, Park and Kee, 2009). In addition, they have also gone as far as to indicate that specific events such as the political or civic campaign's knowledge and participation increase as the result of Internet communication and its features, particularly Facebook, which provides a forum for campaigns' discussions (Vitak et al., 2011; Yun and Chang, 2011).

The Internet is the new public sphere allowing people to communicate regardless of age, class, race and gender by discarding the need for face-to-face interaction (Poster, 1997).

However, those who deny the relationship share similar beliefs as Puntam (2000), who felt that television was one of the causes of the decline of social capital. Scholars, such as Goldberg (2010) questioned the viability of the public/virtual sphere created by the Internet. Goldberg (2010, p. 739) suggests that online participation is “economized” at a fundamental level, thus raising questions in the data transmitted via the Internet. So, the virtual sphere is still “under-examined” in recent times (Goldberg, 2010, p. 739).

This study was conducted on the Nepalese undergraduate level students (NUGLS) to measure the political and civic participation of the students, and how their participation is affected by their use of Facebook and the Internet. The research may provide a new window to the “under-examined” virtual sphere. This study is also unique in the sense that it is the first study of its kind done in Nepal.

Internet communication offers a wide range of features, and not all of them can be related to political and civic participation (David, 2013). The declining engagement of young people may need to be approached differently. Perhaps, the traditional approach in measuring the political and civic participation of the new digital population is the reason why there is a decline in engagement (Bennett, 2008). Or, is it that the socio-political environment of the place where this group of population belong and their access to the Internet there that influences the nature of their participation? The next section in this study provides different examples of how the Internet, especially Facebook, have influenced young people’s civic and political participation in different democratic and non-democratic settings located in close proximity to Nepal. The following sections will also present an update on recent social media trends in the region and in Nepal respectively.

Internet, Facebook and Their Effect on Youth Participation in South [East] Asian Regions

It is a known fact that the new media (the Internet) is still in its infancy. It is even more so for a developing countries like Nepal. As a result there are very few studies conducted regarding the uses of the Internet and its features of social media, such as Facebook, and the impact it can have on a certain group of population (like undergraduate students) in Nepal. Therefore, this section will share the common focus of the use of new media, including Facebook, by young adults in the context of political and civic participation in close proximity to South and Southeast Asia, with specific socio-political structures. This is because the political systems found in this region have their own characteristics (Zhang & Lallana, 2013). It is much more complicated than just “a lack of democratic components,” and the complication applies also to new media that demonstrate “unique patterns” in different countries of the same region that are not “less advanced” by any means (Zhang & Lallana, 2013, p. 1-2). Zhang and Lallana (2013) compared research from five countries (Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore). The culminated outcome from the comparisons is applied to the youths’ (undergraduate students) political and civic participation in Nepal to derive subsequent hypotheses and research questions.

It is evident that different trends have been emerging across different Asian countries as a result of the mixture of new media, youth participation and differing political systems in the respective countries. Three trends that Zhang and Lallana (2013) observed in studying the various circumstances can be summarized as follows: The first trend indicated that it is important to understand the role of new media in terms of media that is already in existence, because the existing media determines the function of a new media. These functions can just be an alternative media or tool for civic action.

For example: In Malaysia and Singapore, the censored media environment helps its users' overcome political barriers in virtual space where people present their opinion. Meanwhile, where there is political freedom, in places such as India and the Philippines, new media are just additional tools for young participants to connect with the old media, the public and the government (Zhang and Lallana, 2013). A similar study by David (2013) mentioned that the dawn of new media technologies among young people (activists) have changed the manner of their political engagement. As a result there are fewer participants on the streets taking part in demonstrations. A web-based political and civic engagement has gained popularity as a result of the increasing number of social media users, including Facebook, along with an increase in Internet access.

The second trend that Zhang and Lallana (2013) mentioned is that party politics fails to include youth participation in some countries. Competitive political parties' inability to improve national progress leads to youth's self-exclusion and discourages them from being involved in political participation. This is evident even in countries where there is political freedom such as India and the Philippines, violent political conditions such as Bangladesh, and in countries with authoritative rule such as Malaysia and Singapore. The establishment of politics-free private educational institutions in Nepal seems like a similar act whereby the system encourages the exclusion of youth participation.

The third trend is something that is emerging as an aftermath of reduced party politics (Zhang and Lallana, 2013), whereby, the youth participants shift their attention towards "community-level engagement" (civic participation) by using Internet communication tools. This results in organized issue related activities that can be both local and global, instead of political party-related. Such civic participants use new media to seek help and attention from the

international community for the change. Two such recent and successful events “Nepal Unites” and “Occupy Baluwatar” are discussed below.

Popular Social Media Trends and Their Context in Nepal

Lack of reliable sources make it hard to determine the exact number of Facebook users from Nepal living around the world and those users who live in Nepal. The website <http://www.socialbakers.com/blog/1583-march-2013-social-media-report-facebook-pages-in-nepal>, however, indicates that there were over 1.9 million Nepalese Facebook users around the world by the end of March 2013. Meanwhile, the Website <http://www.Internetworldstats.com/asia.htm#np> states that there were already 1,940, 820 registered Facebook users from Nepal at the end of 2012, suggesting a penetration rate of 6.5% amongst the total Nepalese population. The official Facebook website https://www.facebook.com/ads/create/?fbid=280145788790036&campaign_id=365730201698&placement=fbpg1&extra_1=not-admgr-user&extra_2=2612 clarifies that there are currently (as of July, 2013), 980,000 Facebook users live in Nepal. Out of that number, 540,000 are in the 18-25 years old age group, which is roughly the age group that is considered for this study.

Looking back at the progress that Nepal has made in its Internet penetration rate, it is plausible to state that the country is not only moving toward an increase of Internet users, but also replicating the various global traits and trends that come along with it. As the country moves into the era of digital online communication, several features, including the social media networks, may play an important role in shaping the nations’ civic and political development. Some of the recent events such as the Arab Spring (still continuing) and many major “Occupy movements” are examples of this. Now, when it is evident that both the Internet and Facebook are increasing their penetration in Nepal, it is important to understand Nepal’s status as far as the online revolution is concerned. The advent of an online platform in Nepal has managed to force a

“cultural shift between the mainstream media and the community” that participates in the conversations initiated in the social media (Sherchan, 2012). In his analysis of similar Internet penetration rates mentioned above, Sherchan (2012) did not hesitate to acknowledge that Nepal’s digital development is still behind by a large margin when compared to many other countries. As a result, Nepalese people and other social institutions still cannot fully taste the benefits of the rise of social media has been experienced in some of the developed countries like the United States.

According to Nielsen and NM Incite’s latest Social Media Report, consumers continue to spend more time on social networks than on any other category of sites—roughly 20 percent of their total time online via personal computer (PC), and 30 percent of total time online time via mobile phones. Additionally, total time spent on social media in the U.S. across PCs and mobile devices increased 37 percent to 121 billion minutes in July 2012, compared to 88 billion in July 2011 (Nielsen, 2012).

Meanwhile, according to the Nepal population and the housing census of 2011 published by NPHC (2012) 1,669,765 of the total population had completed at least high school or higher. A total of 1,036,448 (over 62%) of this educated group were enrolled or eligible to enroll in some kind of undergraduate program (NPHC, 2012). Snellinger’s (2005) observation on Nepali college politics, claims a relationship between the use of the Internet and social media and political participation from various scholars in the section “Internet communication in democratic engagement” discussed above. In coordination with Snellinger’s research, from Zhang and Lallana’s (2013) observation on the political and civic participation of youth in Asia, it can be assumed that the NUGLS in public undergraduate colleges and universities are generally civically and politically active. It may also be possible that political and civic

participation of students of both public and private undergraduate students are related to their use of the Internet and social media (Facebook).

It is also an encouraging sign to see some of the statistics mentioned above from ITU (2012), the website <http://www.Internetworldstats.com/> (2012), and NTA (2012). These numbers can easily be backed up by some of the recent incidents that occurred solely because of easier access to the Internet in Nepal. Some of them are as follows.

Occupy Baluwatar: A campaign that has lasted over 100 days since December 28, 2012, *Occupy Baluwatar* is a peaceful protest that addresses the problem of gender-based violence. Protesters gathered outside the prime minister's official residence in Baluwatar, Kathmandu. The campaign was ignited by young activists who launched the public campaign, *Occupy Baluwatar*, demanding justice for Sita Rai (name changed) (The Kathmandu Post [TKP], 2012). Rai, 21, was a migrant worker who was robbed by immigration officials and allegedly raped while returning home from Saudi Arabia (TKP, 2012). *The Kathmandu Post* also reported that the campaign used social networking sites, including Facebook. Later the movement received wide public attention from various groups and went viral in social media, both nationally and internationally. This encouraged even more participation of the general public (Bajracharya, 2013; Adhikari, 2013).

Nepal Unites: Another such example of online participation for civic causes is the online forum called Nepal Unites. Since its inception, this online forum has pioneered and initiated online campaigns like “Die Nepal Bandha” (strikes and national closedown) and “No to Bandha—Yes to Constitution,” because the ad-hoc government has repeatedly failed to provide a remodeled constitution since the termination of the monarchy in 2008. Another similar campaign was a bike rally against Bandha (a Nepali word that translates as “closed,” used as a form of

protest by political activists to call for a general strike), which aimed to stop constitutional assembly lawmakers from traveling abroad. Like several other recent Occupy movements, this Nepali online movement has received a lot of support and appreciation from Nepalese, both those in country and living abroad as well. “Nepal Unites” forums (like <http://nepalunites.org/>) have been formed overseas, i.e., Nepal Unites UK and Nepal Unites Australia.

The popular social media site Facebook played a huge role in both of these cases. Studies have suggested that social networking sites, like Facebook, increase political and civic participation (Gil de Zúñiga, H., Jung, and Valenzuela, 2012; Valenzuela, Park and Kee, 2009), which is important for a democratic society. Occupy Baluwater and Nepal Unites movements are still active in Facebook to mobilize page subscribers and seek participation. However, at the same time, there are various generic purposes for which people use social media. Therefore, the following research questions can be posed to measure the usage pattern of the Internet, Facebook, mobile devices (with or without the Internet), and the impact of the Internet and Facebook usages seen in NUGLS’s political and civic participation.

- **RQ1:** What are the usage patterns of Facebook by Nepalese undergraduate students?
- **RQ2:** What is the difference in the level of access between the students enrolled in the public and private schools for Facebook and the Internet via different kinds of devices?
- **RQ3:** How does the use of information on the Internet and Facebook regarding political and civic events influence the Nepalese student in their political and civic participation?

Use of Internet and Social Media by Nepali Media and Journalists

Nepal was one of the first countries in South Asia that saw the development of online journalism. *The Kathmandu Post* (TKP), a daily English newspaper affiliated with Kantipur Publications, provided its first online news portal through the University of Illinois website in September 1995 (Sedhai, 2012). This made *TKP* the first newspaper in South Asia to make its online presence felt, in a joint effort by Mercantile Communication, the *Kantipur Publications*

and Rajendra Shrestha, an engineering student at the University of Illinois (Sedhai, 2012). In April 2000, the publication launched a full-fledged website with the domain name *kantipuronline.com*. Today, almost every major daily newspaper in Nepal has its own online version to serve the interest of its ever-growing online readership, both nationally and internationally.

The large number of online readers includes not only those who are educated and have access to the Internet, but also the Nepalese migrant citizens (Mahato, 2012). Mahato further states that the Nepalese online community forms a “new public sphere” which was limited within old media. The number of people who have Internet access and use social media (Facebook) is greater than the combined readership of all major newspapers put together (Mahato, 2012).

Today, the Nepalese media and its professionals have moved a step ahead when it comes to their online presence. Many Nepalese journalists today have not only increased their social media presence but also developed their regular online portals such as blogs. This is a new phenomenon in Nepalese journalism. One of the few research studies done on the use of social media by the Nepali journalists was published by the *Center of Media Research-Nepal*. According to this report, social media is on the verge of becoming a force in Nepali journalism that cannot be neglected (Acharya et al., 2012).

There are many reasons why media houses and journalists use social media. Apart from their personal uses, journalists in Nepal use social media to promote their published work; they also look “for tips, leads or to get a feel for any issue” on the rise at a particular period of time (Acharya et al., 2012, p. 23). Findings from another survey conducted by the Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) (2012) mentioned that as many as 86.5% of the journalists use social media. For many journalists it is a source of information. FNJ (2012) also suggested that social

media sites like Facebook were more helpful and increased the productivity of Nepalese journalists, who spend 4.32 hours on average on the Internet every day (FNJ, 2012). *Republica* (2012) reported that the use of social media by the majority of Nepali journalists has helped them increase their reach to a larger audience and enhanced their professional output. For many, social media is the best way to reach out to their readers and colleagues.

Based on the aforementioned findings related to the increase of the Internet and Facebook users among journalists and citizens, the increase in online media options, the increase of online literacy in Nepal, and the change in the political climate of the education system, the following research questions can be posed:

- **RQ4:** Is reading, listening or watching news on the Internet correlated with the Nepalese undergraduate students' activities related to political and civic participations on Facebook?

News consumption, either online or offline, has a strong relationship with both civic and political participation (Bachmann, Kaufhold, Lewis & de Zúñiga, 2010). Because news consumption, online or offline, is one of the indicators of civic and political participation, the level of news consumption by Nepalese undergraduate students in the public and private schools (RQ4) will be tested by measuring students' Internet and Facebook activities. The differences in the level of use of the Internet and Facebook for news consumption, and the political and civic participation among the Nepalese undergraduate level students enrolled in the public and private schools will measure the current status on an existing gap in the online political and civic participation between the two groups of students.

Use of the Internet and Facebook by Nepalese students is one of the factors that affects the political and civic participation of this group of population living in this new era of the digital age, which according to Mahato (2012) is a new form of a virtual public sphere for this age group. However, it has to be considered that there are many social and economic class factors

that contribute to ones' political and civic participation. They include such items as mobilization, social contacts, religious activities, newspaper readership, personal resources, income, education, civic values, personal efficacy, government responsiveness, and socialization (Uslaner, n.d.).

Table 2-1. NTA Annual Reports 2011-2013

Year	Period	Total Mobile Phone Users	Mobile with Internet		Total Internet Users	Penetration Rate %	
			Total Users	Service		Mobile	Internet
2013	Mid-May	18,137,771	6,254,381	GPRS, EDGE, 3G	6,685,427	68.45	25.23
	Mid-April	17,743,246	6,079,353	GPRS, EDGE, 3G	6,494,007	66.96	24.51
	Mid-March	17,395,182	5,865,902	GPRS, EDGE, 3G	6,279,129	65.65	23.69
2012	Mid- September	15,810,621	4,816,688	GPRS, EDGE, 3G	5,192,945	59.67	19.60
	Mid-May	14,750,173	4,530,415	GPRS	4,867,254	55.40	18.28
2011	Mid-May	1,09,50,420	2,587,705	GPRS	2,865,986	38.31	10.03

Source: Nepal Telecommunication Association (NTA)

CHAPTER 3 METHOD

Originally, data were collected via a survey questionnaire based on the research questions mentioned above. The survey was administered for two months, during the month of July through early September, 2013. The student participants included only those who were enrolled in six undergraduate level colleges that were considered for this study. All of the six colleges are located in the Kathmandu Valley affiliated to two different universities. Out of the six, three are the public undergraduate level colleges, whereas the remaining three include private undergraduate level colleges. The three public undergraduate level schools are Institute of Engineering (IoE), Shankar Dev Campus (SDC) and Tri-Chandra Campus (TCC), all of which are affiliated to the Tribuwan University (TU). Likewise, Xavier International College (XIC), DAV College of Management (DAV-CoM) and School of Environmental Science and Management (SchEMs) are three private undergraduate level campuses included in this study. The first two private colleges are affiliated with TU and later one is affiliated to Pokhara University (PU). Later, it was not possible to collect data from the students in their third year (junior level) and fourth year (senior level) enrolled in SDC and XIC due to their unavailability. Therefore, the data provided by first year (freshman level) and second year (sophomore level) student enrollees from SDC and XIC were not included in the actual study to avoid biased result.

The survey questionnaire was originally in English and later translated into Nepali, the national language of Nepal and circulated among the Nepalese students at UF and the University of South Florida (USF) as a demo survey to check the clarity of the questionnaire content. The demo survey also demonstrated that the average time required to complete the survey was 20-30 minutes (less than half an hour). The survey questionnaire was approved by the institutional review board (IRB) at the University of Florida (UF). To ensure that the translation was properly

done, a back-translation of the survey (Nepali copy), Nepali to English, was also done by a third party to match the back-translated copy to the original survey (in English) that was translated into Nepali.

A paper-based survey was preferred to an online survey, since there was a high chance of unreliable Internet and computer accessibility for the student participants at the colleges. Also, regular power outages are another factor that can be a barrier to an online survey method in Nepal. Facilitators associated with a youth run Non-governmental organization (NGO), Integrated Effort for Development Nepal were appointed to conduct the survey. The facilitators have completed at least an undergraduate degree or higher. They were trained online addressing each of the 37 questions included in the survey. The trainers were first asked to read and participate in the survey to come up with queries related to the survey. The trainers were given two days of training, two hours per day. The trainers were also informed about the sampling method that was used for this study.

Stratified sampling, a second factor in sampling theory was used for this study. The student participants were selected randomly in each of the undergraduate level colleges mentioned above instead of selecting a student participation from the total student population available at large (Babbie, 2010) in educational institutions mentioned above that are located in the Kathmandu Valley.

A total of 275 survey questionnaire were collected from each colleges and campuses. An attempt was made so there are equal participants of first year (freshman), second year (sophomore), third year (juniors) and fourth year (seniors). For two colleges with only 3 year's degree plan, their samples were considered as freshman, sophomore and junior categories to maintain consistency with other four year's programs included in this study. Despite being

exceptional, undergraduate colleges with three years degree programs were included in this study to represent other three year's undergraduate level studies in the country. There are significant numbers of 3 year's undergraduate degree programs in most of the undergraduate colleges, as explained in the 'background' section of this study, affiliated to almost every university in the country. This also suggests that there is significant number of students enrolled in a 3 year's degree program that cannot be left out in this study.

The student participants' confidentiality was maintained for the information that was provided by the students in this survey. There were no anticipated risks, compensation or other direct benefits to the participants. The students were informed that they were free to withdraw their consent to participate and could discontinue their participation in the survey at any time without any consequence.

The survey gathered information of following categories from each of the student participants:

General Information

The first five questions (1-8) in the first section of the questionnaire collected the general information from the student participant. The information will include their gender, level (year) of school, age, whether they grew up in or outside the Kathmandu Valley, names of the campus/colleges and the university their institution is associated to, and student's email addresses, which was optional. The general information questions are as follows:

Personal Values

Four questions were asked to measure the *personal values* of the students, particularly overall politics and civic participation. The first two questions (9 and 10) measured their opinion on overall student political and civic participation. The latter two questions (11 and 12) asked

about the student participants' personal political and civic participation level. Thus the next four questions in this section were as follows:

For personal value questions, all the participants were asked to choose from these options: (a) extremely interested, (b) very interested, (c) somewhat interested, (d) a little interested, and (5) not at all interested for all. (Appendix A.)

Political Participation

Given the focus of this study, students' political participation was also measured. Political participation was measured through a series of *yes/no* questions (10-14). The first four measured students' overall political participation activities, like participation in national elections, affiliation with any political organization on or off campus, previous participation in campus/university level elections, and their willingness to vote (if they have never voted in any kind of elections earlier). It was possible that a student had never voted either due to the political instability of the country, or it being their first year of enrollment on campus, or that no election took place since the student turned 18 years old, which is the legal voting age in Nepal. The first four questions were as follows:

The next question (17) (a-g) included a series of *yes/no* sub-questions that measure students' political participation activities within last 12 months. This measured eight types of political activities. (Appendix A.)

Civic Participation

Students' on- and off-campus civic participation was measured through another set of *yes/no* questions (18) (a-h) that measure their civic participation activities within the last 12 months. This measured 8 types of political activities. (Appendix A.)

Online Civic and Political Participation

The impact of the Internet on student participation has already been discussed above (particularly during the two Occupy Baluwatar and Nepal Unite programs). News reports and postings from Bajracharya (2013) and Adikari (2012) and many other news portals and social media group activity indicate that the increase in the participation of such movement was mainly due to the uses of the Internet, possibly in different devices, including computers and cell phones. So, it is plausible to measure students' online civic and political participation. Question (17) (h) and (18) (i) were asked to measure their *online civic and political participation*. These *yes/no* questions asked if any of the political and civic activities in questions (17) (a-g) and (18) (a-h) that they have done were performed online, using the Internet. The questions listed are 17. (h) and 18. (i). (Appendix A.)

Media/News Consumption Habit and the Internet/Facebook Use

A set of 19 different questions (19-37) were asked to find out their *media/news consumption habits and Internet/Facebook use*. The first three questions asked how often do the student participant read news, watch televised news programs, and read/watch news online. Meanwhile, the fourth question (22) in this section measured students' main source of news (information), where the participants chose only one option, either two from the list, or all three to form a combination (explained in the Result section below). (Appendix A.)

Since the study is to also find out about students' use of Facebook in their civic and political participation, the following section measured students' online activities on the Internet. This began by asking the students to list the top five social networking and/or micro-blogging sites that they use most. This helped us to find out if Facebook is their top five priorities. (Appendix A.)

This was followed by a *yes/no* question (24), asking the students if they have an active Facebook account. This is to keep in mind that if Facebook is one of the top five social networking sites that the student uses, the answer for this *yes/no* question (24) will be ‘Yes’. A ‘Yes’ for an answer to question (24) meant that the participant skipped question (25) and its subsequent open ended question and carried on the survey from question (26) onwards that asked students to explain what prompted them to create a Facebook account. However, if the participant students answered ‘No’ to the question (24), the following questions (25) was applied to them, asking them if they deactivated their Facebook account and the reason “Why” for deactivating the Facebook account. Also, a ‘No’ to the question (24) also meant that the following question (25) and its subsequent question will be the question s/he will respond to. (Appendix A.)

As mentioned above, the following questions (26-37) did not apply to those who answered a ‘No’ for the question (24). To those who answered ‘Yes’, question (26) was asked to present the reason for creating a Facebook account. An open ended question was used here; questions (27-28) measured the duration and frequency of student participants’ Facebook use respectively. (Appendix A.)

For those who answered option ‘(a) *Multiple times a day**’ for question (29), a follow-up question was asked about the frequency of getting on their Facebook account. This will be an open-ended question no. 29. Average time spent by the participating students on the Facebook daily was measured by asking question (30). To measure the mode of student participants’ Internet connection, two questions (31-32) were asked about the kind of device that the students had been using recently to get on to their Facebook account. The question (31) allowed student

participants to choose from more than one option, but the next question (32) asked which device they use most to get on Facebook from the same options as shown in (Appendix A.)

The following questions (33), (34), (35), and (37) measured the kinds of social, political, and civic activities that students do on Facebook and how often did they do it like question (33) and (34). If the student participants' answered (a) Multiple times a day* for question (33), question (34) applied to them that asked about "how many times a day?" Answering the question (36), the students need to rank their activities 1 through 6, with "1" being the activity done most and "6" being the activity done least on Facebook. (Appendix A.)

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

Hypothesis 1 stated that “Nepalese undergraduate students enrolled in the lower levels are less politically and civically active than students in the upper levels of schooling in public undergraduate institutions.” A total of 117 students who attended public schools out of 270 total students were observed for Hypothesis 1. The remaining 153 students attended private schools (Table 4-1). Out of the total of 116 students from the public schools, 53 students were in the lower level, whereas 63 students were in the upper level of their respective undergraduate school programs (Table 4-1).

The mean score showed the prevalence of political participation by students in the lower level in the public schools was $M = 5.0566$. On the other hand, the mean score by students in the upper level in the public schools was $M = 3.7937$ (Table 4-2). The difference in the mean scores indicates that the level of political participation for students in the lower level was higher than those in the upper level. Likewise, the mean score also showed the prevalence of civic participation by students in the lower level in the public institutions was $M = 4.4717$. The mean score by students in the upper level in the public schools was $M = 4.7302$ (Table 4-2). The difference in the mean scores indicates that the level of civic participation shown by the students in the lower level was less than those students who attended the upper level of public undergraduate institutions.

In Table 4-2, the mean scores for political participation and civic participation suggested that the level of political participation for students enrolled in the lower level of the public undergraduate institutions was higher than the students in the upper level of public undergraduate institutions. However, the civic participation of students enrolled in lower levels

of the public undergraduate institutions was lower than the students enrolled in the upper level of public undergraduate institutions.

Meanwhile, a one-way MANOVA shown in Table 4-3 reveals a significant multivariate main effect for levels (upper vs. lower), $F(2, 264.00) = 5.602$, $p = 0.004$. This indicated that there is a significant multivariate main effect for the levels of education. Thus, the level of students' education has a significant impact on the political and civic participation of Nepalese undergraduate students overall.

Another one-way MANOVA shown in Table 4-3 reveals a significant multivariate main effect for types of educational institutions (public vs. private), $F(2, 264.00) = 54.548$, $p < 0.001$. This indicated that there is a significant multivariate main effect for types of educational institutions. Thus, the level of students' education in combination with type of educational institution has a significant impact on the political and civic participation of Nepalese undergraduate students overall.

Next, one-way MANOVA shown in Table 4-3 reveals a significant multivariate main effect for levels (upper vs. lower) in combine with types of educational institutions, $F(2, 264.00) = 3.436$, $p = 0.034$. This indicated that there is a significant multivariate main effect for the levels of education together with the types of educational institution a students is enrolled in for their political and civic participation overall. Hypothesis 1 is partially supported. Students in upper level scored higher on civic participation. However, the mean difference for the political participation of students in upper level was lower than in lower level in public and private institutions, the opposite of the prediction in Hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 2 stated that, "Nepalese undergraduate students enrolled in all levels (years) in private educational institutions demonstrate lower levels of civic and political activity than

undergraduate students enrolled in public undergraduate institutions.” An independent-samples *t*-test shown in Table 4-5 was conducted to compare political and civic participation of the undergraduate students enrolled in public undergraduate institutions and private undergraduate institutions.

There is a significant difference between the score for political participation of the undergraduate students enrolled in public institutions with the mean score ($M=4.3761$, $SD=2.62523$) and those of the undergraduate students enrolled in private institutions with the mean score ($M=1.8031$, $SD=1.93238$) with conditions displayed in Table 4-4; $t(268)=9.179$, $p < 0.001$. Also, there was a significant difference in the score for civic participation of undergraduate students enrolled in public institutions ($M=4.6496$, $SD=2.40802$) and undergraduate students enrolled in private institutions ($M=2.4379$, $SD=1.89470$) with conditions displayed in Table 4-3; $t(268)=8.446$, $p = 0.027$.

In Table (4-4), the mean scores for political participation and civic participation by the Nepalese students who were enrolled in public or private undergraduate institutions show that students in the public schools scored higher on both political participation and civic participation. Specifically, these results indicate that Nepalese students enrolled in public undergraduate institutions show greater political and civic participations. Thus, Hypothesis 2 is supported.

Next, research Question 1 asked about the “usage patterns of Facebook by Nepalese undergraduate students.” A frequency was measured to obtain the Facebook “usage pattern” a set of variables from Question 24 through 30 in the survey questionnaire were considered.

Table 4-6 summarizes the results for the usage patterns of Facebook by Nepalese undergraduate students. Out of 275 (N) undergraduate student participants, 259 (94.2%) participants were active Facebook users, and only 11 (4%) of the total student participants had

deactivated their Facebook accounts, 1 student participant (.4%) was not using Facebook, but did not deactivate it, and 4 (1.5) never had a Facebook account. Some of the common reasons for de-activating Facebook include disinterest, finding it useless or disliking it, or never creating an account before. A few also had no proper reason for not having a Facebook account.

Table 4-7 shows that among the 226 (N, 82.2%) who responded to Question 26, which was an open ended question, 153 (55.6%), answered that they created a Facebook account to communicate with either friends, family, or both. Only 22 (8.0%) student respondents said that it was because they liked Facebook's social networking features such as "Status Updates, Comment, Like, Share, Tag, Email, Chat" etc. Meanwhile, 17 (6.2%) of the student participants felt they had to have a Facebook account to keep up with modern trends. However, only 4 (1.5%) participants mentioned that they use Facebook for news and entertainment, whereas 14 (5.1%) of the Nepalese undergraduate students use Facebook for personal interests.

Table 4-8 also summarizes that 274 (N, 99.6%) responded to Question 27 that asked the student participants, "How long have you been using Facebook?" Interestingly, 159 (57.8%) student respondents have been using Facebook for "3 years or more" and 68 (24.7%) have been using Facebook for "2 to 3 years." Only 26 (9.5%) and 5 (1.8%) of the current Facebook users among Nepalese undergraduate students who responded to question 27 have been using Facebook for "1 to 2 years" and "less than a year," respectively.

Table 4-9 explains that only 24 (8.7%), 2 (0.7%), and 10 (3.6%) of the student participants responded that they use Facebook once every week, once a month and rarely. Out of 274 (N, 99.6%) respondents to Question 28, "How often do you use Facebook account" 129 (46.9%) use Facebook at least on a "daily" basis, and 93 (33.8%) used Facebook "multiple times a day."

Finally, Table 4-10 reveals an average number/s of the hour/s per day each of the undergraduate student participants spent on Facebook as per Question 30. From a total of 272 (N, 98.9%) responses received, a total of 77 (28%) student respondents use Facebook for “less than 1 hour” per day. (Table 4-10). Likewise, 87 (31%) of the student participants used Facebook for “1-2 hours” per day, 47 (17.1%) of the student participants use for “2-3 hours” per day, 23 (8.4%) student participants use Facebook “3-4 hours” per day, 14 (5.1%) student participants use the program between “4-5 hours” per day, and only 8 (2.9%) of the student participants use Facebook for more than 5 hours’ per day on an average.

Research Question 2 asked, “What is the difference in the level of access of Facebook via different kinds of devices used between students enrolled in the public and private undergraduate programs?” We measured the differences in levels of Facebook and Internet access by using different devices such as personal computer (PC) and laptops, cell phones and other mobile devices such as tablets, iPads etc., by the undergraduate students enrolled in private and public undergraduate programs.

Table 4-11 shows that 69.4% of students in public institutions and 68% of students in private undergraduate institutions use PCs or laptops to access Facebook and the Internet, while 24.8% of the student from the public institutions and 26.1% students of private students do not use PCs and laptops to access both Facebook and the Internet. A chi-square test explained in Table 4-12 that shows no significant relationship between students enrolled in public and private undergraduate level institutions and their access to Facebook via PCs and laptops, $\chi^2 (2, N = 274) = .070, p = 0.966$.

Similarly, Table 4-13 also revealed that 61.2% and 56.9% of total student participants in public and private undergraduate institutions use cell phones to access Facebook and the Internet,

while 33.1% of the students from the public institutions and 37.3% students of private institutions do not use cell phones to access both Facebook and the Internet. A chi-square test from Table 4-14 indicates that there is no significant relationship that can be determined between students enrolled in public and private undergraduate level institutions and their access to Facebook using a cell phone, $\chi^2 (2, N = 274) = .549, p = 0.760$.

Table 4-15 also revealed that 76.5% and 79.3% of total student participants in public and private undergraduate institutions, respectively, use all three types of devices to access Facebook and the Internet, while 17.6% of the students from the public institutions and 14.9% students of private institutions do not use all types of devices. Another chi-square test in Table 4-16 shows no significant relationship between students enrolled in public and private undergraduate level institutions and their access to Facebook using all of the devices, $\chi^2 (2, N = 274) = .388, p = 0.823$.

Finally, Table 4-17 reveals an outcome for all four categories from the above tests by showing the relationship between the students enrolled in public and private undergraduate institutions and the device/s that were used by each to access Facebook and the Internet. In total, 47.1% of student participants used PCs and laptops most of the time rather than other devices to access Facebook and the Internet in public undergraduate institutions. At the same time, 45.1% of the students in private institutions used PCs and laptops most of the time rather than other devices to access Facebook and the Internet. In the private institutions, 42.5% of the students used cell phones most to access Facebook and the Internet, whereas it was 42% for students in public schools. A total 2.5% of student participants used other mobile devices of the students enrolled in public institutions, and 2% of them in the private institutions. Students enrolled in public institutions who used all three types of devices (PCs and laptops, cell phones, other

mobile devices) totaled 4.6% compared to 2.5% in the private institutions. When a chi-square test in Table 4-18 was performed, there was no significant relationship found between students enrolled in public and private undergraduate level institutions and the category of device/s they used mostly to get access to Facebook , $\chi^2 (4, N = 272) = .923, p = 0.921$.

Research question 3 asked: “How does the use of information on the Internet and Facebook regarding political and civic events influence the Nepalese student in their political and civic participation?” Several tests were computed on different variables to find out about the effect of the use of information on the Internet via Facebook regarding political and public events influencing Nepalese undergraduate students in their political and civic participations. Different tests varied based on kinds of variables considered for the respective tests.

A Pearson’s r test was conducted to assess the relationships between political and civic participations and number of days in a typical week the participants read, listen to, or watch news online. There was a positive correlation between political participation of the Nepalese undergraduate student and the number of days in a typical week they read, listen to or watch news content online, $r = .316, n = 270, p < .001$, with $M=2.9333$ and $SD=2.258448$ shown in Table 4-20. Table 4-20 also shows that a positive correlation was found between the civic participation of Nepalese undergraduate students and the number of days in a typical week they read, listen to or watch news content online ($r = .334, n = 270, p < .001$, with $M=3.3963$ and $SD=2.39469$). The mean and standard deviation are shown in Table 4-19. In general, there was a strong positive correlation between Nepalese undergraduate students’ political and civic participation and frequency of days they spent online news reading, listening to, or watching news content.

Additionally, the following one-way ANOVA test for statistically significant differences for both political participation and civic participation between the groups' means of various methods of receiving most of the current affairs news by the Nepalese undergraduate students. The methods included of a) print news (newspaper and magazines); b) broadcast (television and radio); c) online (news portals, social media); d) print and broadcast; e) print and online; f) broadcast and online and g) print, broadcasting and online.

Table 4-22 suggests that the political participation of the Nepalese undergraduate students is statistically significant across the seven different sources of most news mentioned above, $F(6, 263) = 5.738, p < .001$, with $M = 2.9333$ and total $SD = 2.58448$. Likewise, the civic participation of the Nepalese undergraduate students is also statistically significant across the same six different news sources mentioned above, $F(6, 263) = 2.541, p = 0.021$ with total $M = 3.3963$ and total $SD = 2.39469$ shown in Table 4-22.

Similarly, the following six one-way ANOVA tests also tested for statistically significant differences for both political participation and civic participation between the groups' means consisting of Facebook group member of: a) college; b) college student organization; c) university group page; d) political group page; e) news portal; and f) social/civic organization group page; and those who are not.

College: Table 4-24 suggests that the political participation of the Nepalese undergraduate students is not statistically significant across those who are members of their respective colleges' Facebook group page and those who are not, $F(1, 267) = 2.889, p = .090$, with total $M = 2.9405$ and $SD = 2.58660$ shown in Table 4-23. But, the civic participation of the Nepalese undergraduate students statistically significant across the students those who are

members of their respective colleges' Facebook group page and those who are not, $F(1, 267) = 7.019$, $p = .009$, with total $M=3.3866$ and $SD=2.39386$ shown in Table 4-23.

College student organization: Next, Table 4-26 suggests that for students' political participation and civic participation, their preferences to become members of any college student organization's Facebook group page showed statistically significant differences between those who are members of a college student organization on Facebook and those who are not. The statistical significance of political participation and civic participation were $F(1, 267) = 27.995$, $p < .001$, with total $M= 2.9405$ and $SD= 2.58660$ shown in Table 4-25 and $F(1, 267) = 26.617$, $p < .001$, with total $M= 3.3866$ and total $SD= 2.39386$ shown in Table 4-25.

University group page: Next, Table 4-28 suggests that for students' political participation and civic participation their preferences to become members of their respective universities' Facebook group page showed statistically significant difference across those who are member of the university Facebook group and those who are not. The statistical significance of political participation and civic participation were $F(1, 267) = 19.690$, $p < .001$, with total $M=2.9405$ and total $SD=2.58660$ shown in Table 4-27; and $F(1, 267) = 14.775$, $p < .001$, with total $M= 3.3866$ and total $SD= 2.39386$ shown in Table 4-27, respectively.

Political group page: Next, table 4-30 for students' political participation and civic participation suggests that the preferences to become a member of a Facebook political group page/s by the students showed statistically significant difference across those who are member a facebook political groups page/s and those who are not. The statistical significance of political participation and civic participation were $F(1, 267) = 117.421$, $p < .001$, with total $M=2.9405$ and total $SD=2.58660$ shown in Table 4-29; and $F(1, 267) = 214.3$, $p < .001$, with total $M=3.3866$ and total $SD=2.39386$ shown in Table 4-29, respectively.

News portal: Similarly, another ANOVA test shown in table 4-32 for students' political participation and civic participation suggests that becoming a member of a Facebook news portal page/s by the students also showed statistically significant difference between those who are member of a Facebook news portal page/s and those who are not. The statistical significance of political participation and civic participation were $F(1, 267) = 28.528, p < .001$, with total $M=2.9405$ and total $SD=2.58660$ shown in Table 4-31; and $F(1, 267) = 28.051, p < .001$, with total $M=3.3866$ and total $SD=2.39386$ shown in Table 4-31, respectively.

Social/civic organization group page: Similarly, another ANOVA test in table 4-34 for students' political participation and civic participation suggests that choosing to become a member of Facebook pages (group) belonging to a social/civic organization of the students showed statistically significant difference result for those who follow and do not follow a social/civic organization on Facebook. The statistical significance of political participation and civic participation were $F(1, 267) = 18.216, p < .001$, with total $M= 2.9405$ and total $SD= 2.58660$ shown in Table 4-33; and $F(1, 267) = 31.029, p < .001$, with total $M=3.3866$ and total $SD=2.39386$ shown in Table 4-33, respectively.

The question 4 asked, "Is reading, listening or watching news on the Internet correlated with the Nepalese undergraduate students' activities related to political and civic participations on Facebook?" A Pearson's r test in Table 4-35 was computed to find out if there is correlations between habit of dissemination of news content from online sources by the Nepalese undergraduate students and their certain Facebook activities' patterns such as becoming a member or following certain news portals on Facebook, and using Facebook features (such as Comment, Tag, Like, or Share) on the posts or pages belonging to News Portals, political activities, and social activity.

Table 4-35 shows a positive correlation between the variables act of reading, listen or watching news content online and becoming a member or following certain news portal(s) Facebook page $r = .438$, $n = 274$, $p < .001$. Overall, there was a positive correlation between disseminating news content from online sources by the students and becoming a group member or following certain news portal(s) Facebook page. Increase in disseminating news from online sources was positively correlated with increase in becoming a member or following Facebook page(s) belonging to certain news portal(s) and commenting, tagging, liking or sharing the content.

Table 4-35, however, on the other hand, also indicates that there were negative correlations between the variables of reading, listening or watching news content from online sources and those who commented, tagged, liked or shared a) political activity, and b) social activities, showing a) $r = -.194$; $n = 124$, $p = .031$; b) $r = -.287$ and b) $n = 154$, $p < .001$ respectively. Therefore, there were negative correlation between disseminating news content from online sources by the students and their activities on Facebook (commenting, tagging, liking or sharing) on posts/pages belonging to political activities, and social activities. This infers that that increase in the dissemination of news from online sources is correlated will decrease in activities on Facebook (such as commenting, tagging, liking or sharing) on the posts/pages belonging to political activities, and social activities.

Table 4-1. Total Student Participation (N) Between-Public vs. Private Institutions and Upper vs. Lower Undergraduate Level

		Value Label	N
Lower vs. Upper	1	Lower	125
	2	Upper	144
Private vs. Public	1	Public Institute	116
	2	Private Institute	153

Table 4-2. Descriptive Statistics for Political Participation and Civic Participation of Lower and Upper Undergraduate Level in Public Institute vs. Private Institutes

	Lower vs. Upper	Private vs. Public	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Political Participation	Lower	Public Institute	5.0566	2.76249	53
		Private Institute	2.0833	2.12795	72
		Total	3.3440	2.82302	125
	Upper	Public Institute	3.7937	2.39730	63
		Private Institute	1.6049	1.72249	81
		Total	2.5625	2.31057	144
	Total	Public Institute	4.3707	2.63597	116
		Private Institute	1.8301	1.93238	153
		Total	2.9257	2.58621	269
Civic Participation	Lower	Public Institute	4.4717	2.37458	53
		Private Institute	2.6806	2.08837	72
		Total	3.4400	2.37731	125
	Upper	Public Institute	4.7302	2.40434	63
		Private Institute	2.2222	1.68819	81
		Total	3.3194	2.37897	144
	Total	Public Institute	4.6121	2.38390	116
		Private Institute	2.4379	1.89470	153
		Total	3.3755	2.37452	269

Table 4-3. Multivariate Tests for Lower vs. Upper; Public vs. Private; and Lower vs. Upper* Public vs. Private

	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Upper vs. Lower	5.602 ^b	2.000	264.000	.004
Private vs. Public	54.548 ^b	2.000	264.000	< .001
Lower vs. Upper * Private vs. Public	3.436 ^b	2.000	264.000	.034

Table 4-4. Group Statistics Between Political and Civic Participation for Public and Private Institutes

	Private vs. Public	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Political Participation	Public Institute	117	4.3761	2.62523	.24270
	Private Institute	153	1.8301	1.93238	.15622
Civic Participation	Public Institute	117	4.6496	2.40802	.22262
	Private Institute	153	2.4379	1.89470	.15318

Table 4-5. *t*-test Results Comparing Political and Civic Participation of students in Public and Private Institutes

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Political Participation	Equal variances assumed	15.487	< .001	9.179	268	< .001
	Equal variances not assumed			8.821	205.160	< .001
Civic Participation	Equal variances assumed	4.947	.027	8.446	268	< .001
	Equal variances not assumed			8.184	215.050	< .001

Table 4-6. Frequency for Active and Non-Active Facebook Users

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Active FB user	259	94.2
	Deactivated FB	11	4.0
	Didn't deactivated FB	1	.4
	Never had a FB account	4	1.5
	Total	275	100.0

Table 4-7. Frequency for Reason for Creating Facebook Account

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Friends and Family Circle	153	55.6
	FB social networking features	22	8.0
	New trend	17	6.2
	Personal interest	14	5.1
	News/Entertainment	4	1.5
	Deactivated/No FB account	16	5.8
	Total	226	82.2
Missing	No Response	49	17.8
	Total	275	100.0

Table 4-8. Frequency for Length of Time Using Facebook

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Less than 1 year	5	1.8
	1 to 2 years	26	9.5
	2 to 3 years	68	24.7
	3 years or more	159	57.8
	Deactivated/No FB account	16	5.8
	Total	274	99.6
Missing	No Response	1	.4
	Total	275	100.0

Table 4-9. Frequency for “How Often” Student Use Facebook

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Multiple time a day	93	33.8
	Daily	129	46.9
	Weekly	24	8.7
	Monthly	2	.7
	Rarely	10	3.6
	Deactivated/No FB account	16	5.8
	Total	274	99.6
Missing	No Response	1	.4
	Total	275	100.0

Table 4-10. Frequency for Hours/Day Facebook Use

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Less than 1 hour	77	28.0
	1-2 hours	87	31.6
	2-3 hours	47	17.1
	3-4 hours	23	8.4
	4-5 hours	14	5.1
	More than 5 hours	8	2.9
	Deactivated/No FB account	16	5.8
	Total	272	98.9
Missing	No Response	3	1.1
	Total	275	100.0

Table 4-11. Crosstab Between User and Non-Users of PCs and Laptops to Access Facebook in Private and Public Institutes

			Private vs. Public		Total
			Public	Private	
			Institute	Institute	
FB Device/s PCs Com/Laptop	Don't use PCs Computer/Laptop	Count	30	40	70
		% within Private vs. Public	24.8%	26.1%	25.5%
	Use PCs Computer/Laptop	Count	84	104	188
		% within Private vs. Public	69.4%	68.0%	68.6%
	Deactivated/No FB account	Count	7	9	16
		% within Private vs. Public	5.8%	5.9%	5.8%
	Total	Count	121	153	274
		% within Private vs. Public	100.0%	100.0%	100.0 %

Table 4-12. Chi-Square Tests for User and Non Users of PCs and Laptops to Access Facebook in Private and Public Institutes

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.070 ^a	2	.966
Likelihood Ratio	.070	2	.966
Linear-by-Linear Association	.002	1	.967
N of Valid Cases	274		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 7.07.

Table 4-13. Crosstab Between User and Non-Users of Cell Phones to Access Facebook in Private and Public Institutes

			Private vs. Public	Total	
			Public Institute	Private Institute	
FB Device/s Phones	Don't use phone	Count	40	57	97
		% within Private vs. Public	33.1%	37.3%	35.4%
	Use phone	Count	74	87	161
		% within Private vs. Public	61.2%	56.9%	58.8%
	Deactivated/No FB account	Count	7	9	16
		% within Private vs. Public	5.8%	5.9%	5.8%
	Total	Count	121	153	274
		% within Private vs. Public	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 4-14. Chi-Square Tests for User and Non-Users of Cell Phones to Access Facebook in Private and Public Institutes

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.549 ^a	2	.760
Likelihood Ratio	.551	2	.759
Linear-by-Linear Association	.036	1	.850
N of Valid Cases	274		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 7.07.

Table 4-15. Crosstab Between User and Non-Users of All Devices to Access Facebook in Private and Public Institutes

			Private vs. Public		Total
			Public	Private	
			Institute	Institute	
FB Device/s All of them	Don't use	Count	96	117	213
	PCs/Laptops/Phones/Other devices	% within Private vs. Public	79.3%	76.5%	77.7%
	Use	Count	18	27	45
	PCs/Laptops/Phones/Other devices	% within Private vs. Public	14.9%	17.6%	16.4%
	Deactivated/No FB account	Count	7	9	16
		% within Private vs. Public	5.8%	5.9%	5.8%
	Total	Count	121	153	274
	% within Private vs. Public	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

Table 4-16. Chi-Square Tests for User and Non-Users of Other Mobile Devices to Access Facebook in Private and Public Institutes

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.388 ^a	2	.823
Likelihood Ratio	.391	2	.822
Linear-by-Linear Association	.030	1	.863
N of Valid Cases	274		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 7.07.

Table 4-17. Crosstab Between Device Most Use to Access Facebook by Private and Public Institutes Students

			Private vs. Public		Total
			Public Institute	Private Institute	
Device most used	Use PC Computer/Laptop	Count	56	69	125
		% within Private vs. Public	47.1%	45.1%	46.0%
	Use phone	Count	50	65	115
		% within Private vs. Public	42.0%	42.5%	42.3%
	Use other mobile devices	Count	3	3	6
		% within Private vs. Public	2.5%	2.0%	2.2%
	Use PC Computer/Laptops/Phones/Other mobile devices	Count	3	7	10
		% within Private vs. Public	2.5%	4.6%	3.7%
	Deactivated/No FB account	Count	7	9	16
		% within Private vs. Public	5.9%	5.9%	5.9%
Total	Count	119	153	272	
	% within Private vs. Public	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

Table 4-18. Chi-Square Tests for Device Most Use to Access Facebook by Private and Public Institutes Students

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.923 ^a	4	.921
Likelihood Ratio	.952	4	.917
Linear-by-Linear Association	.097	1	.756
N of Valid Cases	272		

a. 3 cells (30.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.63.

Table 4-19. Descriptive Statistics for Students' Reading/Listening/Watching Online News Per Week, Political Participation and Civic Participation

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Political Participation	2.9333	2.58448	270
Civic Participation	3.3963	2.39469	270
Read/listen/watch news online day(s)/week	3.47	2.775	275

Table 4-20. Correlations Between Students' Between Reading/Listening/Watching Online News and Student Political and Civic Participation

		Political Participation	Civic Participation	Read/listen/watch news online day(s)/week
Political Participation	Pearson Correlation	1	.549**	.316**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		< .001	< .001
	N	270	269	270
Civic Participation	Pearson Correlation	.549**	1	.334**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	< .001		< .001
	N	269	270	270
Read/listen/watch news online day(s)/week	Pearson Correlation	.316**	.334**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	< .001	< .001	
	N	270	270	275

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4-21. Descriptive Statistics for Political and Civic Participation and News Source

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Political Participation	Printed (Newspaper/Magazines)	53	3.7736	2.75012
	Broadcast (Television/Radio)	82	2.2073	2.00455
	Online (News portals, social media)	89	2.6067	2.29930
	Print and Broadcast	13	4.2308	3.98233
	Print and Online	6	3.6667	2.94392
	Broadcast and Online	9	1.4444	1.50923
	Print, Online and Broadcasting	18	4.9444	2.99946
	Total	270	2.9333	2.58448
Civic Participation	Printed (Newspaper/Magazines)	53	3.5283	2.36646
	Broadcast (Television/Radio)	83	2.8313	2.26758
	Online (News portals, social media)	89	3.5169	2.45927
	Print and Broadcast	12	3.8333	2.62274
	Print and Online	6	4.3333	2.16025
	Broadcast and Online	9	2.4444	1.23603
	Print, Online and Broadcasting	18	4.8889	2.44682
	Total	270	3.3963	2.39469

Table 4-22. ANOVA Between Political and Civic Participation, and News Source Combination

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Political Participation	Between Groups	207.998	6	34.666	5.738	< .001
	Within Groups	1588.802	263	6.041		
	Total	1796.800	269			
Civic Participation	Between Groups	84.525	6	14.088	2.541	.021
	Within Groups	1458.071	263	5.544		
	Total	1542.596	269			

Table 4-23. Descriptive Statistics for Colleges' Facebook Group Page Members, and Their Political and Civic Participation

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Political Participation	Not a member of FB college group	58	2.4310	2.24087
	Member of FB college group	211	3.0806	2.66157
	Total	269	2.9405	2.58660
Civic Participation	Not a member of FB college group	57	2.6491	2.52481
	Member of FB college group	212	3.5849	2.32386
	Total	269	3.3866	2.39386

Table 4-24. ANOVA Between Political and Civic Participation, and Facebook Group Page Members and Non-Members

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Political Participation	Between Groups	19.194	1	19.194	2.889	.090
	Within Groups	1773.854	267	6.644		
	Total	1793.048	268			
Civic Participation	Between Groups	39.338	1	39.338	7.019	.009
	Within Groups	1496.454	267	5.605		
	Total	1535.792	268			

Table 4-25. Descriptive Statistic for Political and Civic Participation, and College Student Organization's Facebook Group Members

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Political Participation	Not a member of FB Col. Std. Org. grp.	165	2.3091	2.17418
	A member of FB Col. Std. Org. grp.	104	3.9423	2.86874
	Total	269	2.9405	2.58660
Civic Participation	Not a member of FB Col. Std. Org. grp.	164	2.8110	2.20309
	A member of FB Col. Std. Org. grp.	105	4.2857	2.41276
	Total	269	3.3866	2.39386

Table 4-26. ANOVA Between Political and Civic Participation, and College Student Organization's Facebook Group Members and Non-Members

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Political Participation	Between Groups	170.158	1	170.158	27.995	< .001
	Within Groups	1622.890	267	6.078		
	Total	1793.048	268			
Civic Participation	Between Groups	139.223	1	139.223	26.617	< .001
	Within Groups	1396.569	267	5.231		
	Total	1535.792	268			

Table 4-27 Descriptive Statistics for Political and Civic Participation and University Facebook Group

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Political Participation	Not a member of Univ. FB group pg.	198	2.5354	2.30565
	A member of Univ. FB group pg.	71	4.0704	2.98244
	Total	269	2.9405	2.58660
Civic Participation	Not a member of Univ. FB group pg.	197	3.0558	2.18107
	A member of Univ. FB group pg.	72	4.2917	2.71375
	Total	269	3.3866	2.39386

Table 4-28. ANOVA Between Political and Civic Participation and University Facebook Group Members and Non-Members

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Political Participation	Between Groups	123.148	1	123.148	19.690	< .001
	Within Groups	1669.900	267	6.254		
	Total	1793.048	268			
Civic Participation	Between Groups	80.531	1	80.531	14.775	< .001
	Within Groups	1455.261	267	5.450		
	Total	1535.792	268			

Table 4-29. Descriptive Statistics for Political and Civic Participation and Facebook Political Group Page/s

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Political Participation	Not a member of Polit. FB grp pg.	232	2.3707	2.06614
	A member of Polit. FB grp pg.	37	6.5135	2.68351
	Total	269	2.9405	2.58660
Civic Participation	Not a member of Political FB group pg.	232	3.0302	2.25514
	A member of Political FB group pg.	37	5.6216	2.01868
	Total	269	3.3866	2.39386

Table 4-30. ANOVA Between Political and Civic Participation, and Facebook Political Group Page/s Members and Non-Members

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Political Participation	Between Groups	547.684	1	547.684	117.421	< .001
	Within Groups	1245.364	267	4.664		
	Total	1793.048	268			
Civic Participation	Between Groups	214.300	1	214.300	43.298	< .001
	Within Groups	1321.491	267	4.949		
	Total	1535.792	268			

Table 4-31. Descriptive Statistics for Political and Civic Participation and Facebook News Portal Page/s Member

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Political Participation	Not a member of news portal FB pg.	185	2.4000	2.31301
	A member of news portal FB pg.	84	4.1310	2.76719
	Total	269	2.9405	2.58660
Civic Participation	Not a member of news portal FB pg.	184	2.8859	2.24047
	A member of news portal FB pg.	85	4.4706	2.36838
	Total	269	3.3866	2.39386

Table 4-32. ANOVA Between Political and Civic Participation, and Facebook News Portal Page/s Member and Non-Members

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Political Participation	Between Groups	173.089	1	173.089	28.528	< .001
	Within Groups	1619.960	267	6.067		
	Total	1793.048	268			
Civic Participation	Between Groups	146.012	1	146.012	28.051	< .001
	Within Groups	1389.780	267	5.205		
	Total	1535.792	268			

Table 4-33. Descriptive Statistics for Political and Civic Participation and Social/Civic Organization Facebook Page Member

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Political Participation	Not a mem. of Soc/Civ.Org FB grup.	191	2.5236	2.35489
	A mem. of Soc/Civ. Org. FB pg.	78	3.9615	2.84875
	Total	269	2.9405	2.58660
Civic Participation	Not a mem. of Soc/Civ.Org FB grup.	190	2.8895	2.26625
	A mem. of Soc/Civ. Org. FB pg.	79	4.5823	2.27927
	Total	269	3.3866	2.39386

Table 4-34. ANOVA Between Political and Civic Participation, and Social/Civic Organization Facebook Page Members

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Political Participation	Between Groups	114.520	1	114.520	18.216	< .001
	Within Groups	1678.529	267	6.287		
	Total	1793.048	268			
Civic Participation	Between Groups	159.898	1	159.898	31.029	< .001
	Within Groups	1375.894	267	5.153		
	Total	1535.792	268			

Table 4-35. Correlations Between Facebook Features Usage and Group Page Types

		Grup.Mem. News Portal	Political Activities	Social Activities
Read/listen/watch news online day(s)/week	Pearson Correlation	.438**	-.194*	-.287**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	< .001	.031	< .001
	N	274	124	154

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

A set of two hypotheses and four research questions were employed to measure the existing gap in the political and civic participation between the Nepalese private and public college undergraduate students. Meanwhile, the role of Facebook is considered in order to understand its impact on the political and civic participation rates of these two groups of students enrolled in different types of educational institution settings. The results obtained from the survey questionnaire data analysis are discussed in this section.

Hypothesis 1: Based on the results obtained from the two public schools, it can be seen that the pattern of political and civic participation varies between the students in the higher and lower levels of study in the public institutions. Interestingly, the public university undergraduate students enrolled in the lower undergraduate levels (Freshmen and Sophomore levels) showed greater political participation than those undergraduate students enrolled in the upper undergraduate levels (Junior and Senior levels). At the same time, the public university undergraduate students enrolled in the lower undergraduate levels showed lower civic participation than those enrolled in upper undergraduate levels. Additionally, the results from the multivariate test (Table 4-3) elaborates that the political and civic participation of the Nepalese undergraduate students are significantly affected by the students' undergraduate level, the types of educational institution they are enrolled in, and both combined.

Generally, the newly enrolled undergraduate students in the public schools know that the public schools are politically vibrant institutions. The students in Nepal, therefore, come prepared to be involved in student politics at the undergraduate level in public schools. The excitement and enthusiasm in their attempt to understand and to get involved in politics could have led the students in their early years of undergraduate schooling towards political

participation. By the time students make it to the upper level, however, they have greater social pressure, such as family responsibilities, planning a career, earning a living, and most importantly, completing their undergraduate degree and finding a job. These added reasons may have led many students to participate less in political activities.

However, civic participation for students in the upper levels increased. This may be due to the students' educational attainment, which has an effect on their civic participation at both lower and upper levels. It is noticeable that education on civic participation exists even in the environment of a struggling democracy like Nepal. In other words, the education level can have a positive effect on civic participation not only in a "functioning democracy" (Dee, 2004, pg. 1717), but also in a struggling democracy as shown by this study. Therefore this finding also supports a claim in a study by Campbell (2006), in which he stated that the positive relationship between education and civic engagement is universal (p. 23).

Hypothesis 2: Further tests on the political and civic participation of the Nepalese undergraduate students and provided evidence supporting the claim by Snellinger (2005). Snellinger (2005) claimed that the students enrolled in public schools are more politically active than students enrolled in private schools, and this remains true even today. The gap in political participation was born with the introduction of private schools which prevailed through the 1990s, the first decade of the 21st century and still continuing. The findings also suggest that the administrative bodies belonging to the respective private schools remained reluctant to change their institutions' "selling point" whereby they restricted students' political participation. The findings of this study show that the practice continues even today.

In addition, this study has also found out that the undergraduate students enrolled in public schools are also more civically active in comparison to the ones enrolled in private

schools, overall. So, the gap exists not only in the political participation of the students, but also in the civic participation between the student groups in public and private schools. It is unknown however, if the gap in civic participation is also an outcome of the increase in private schools. Contrasting to this finding, there is evidence suggesting that most private schools are better at encouraging students' civic engagement than the public schools (e.g., Dee, 2003; and Cambell, 2001), in the western countries.

This is not quite the case in Nepal. According to Snellinger (2005), the Nepalese education system does not provide the student with an opportunity to debate on the nationalist history that is being taught (p. 38). Due to this lack of opportunity for debate, the students in private schools in Nepal, a struggling democracy, are not encouraged to engage in civic participation. This finding about private schools in Nepal contradicts Dee's (2003) and Cambell's (2001) finding about private schools located in the developed world where students enjoy a democratic setting, and engage in debates on topics of national interest incorporated into the curriculum. This is quite different from the environment in Nepalese educational institutions, especially in private schools, where the administrators' primary motives are to restrict students' political participation.

Alongside these arguments, this finding helps reaffirm that the effects of corporate educational culture continue to show similar effects on the public sphere of students as it did in early 1990s. The private school administrators in Nepal ignore the possible overriding of democratic impulses and practices of students. This threatens not only the understanding of democracy and participation of students, but also the manner in which these students address the real purpose of higher education. This corresponds well with the observations of Edward Herman and Robert McChesney (1997), where non-commercialized public spheres did have an

important role in the past “as places and forums where issues of importance to a political community is discussed and debated, and where information is presented that is essential to citizen participation in community life” (p. 3). In Nepal, however, private school students are structured in a manner to silence their public voices as the market advantages of private schools replace the democratic, political and civic freedom of students. It is because the private schools in Nepal hesitate to provide the “places and forums” like the public schools do.

Furthermore, it is important to mention again that the public sphere, which according to Habermas (1974; 1989) evolved into informal institutions such as “coffeehouses” that helped in the emergence of bourgeois society in the 17th and 18th century, later saw a decline. The decline in this liberal political theory was largely associated with the introduction of capitalism in the public realm. In Nepal, the public university and the colleges associated with it were the modern day coffeehouses where the public sphere saw its birth.

On the other hand, the private schools are still serving the purpose of capitalism that is creating the political and civic gap between the student groups in the public and private schools. Due to sociopolitical situations like the one in Nepal, and similar situations in other developing countries, the gap between student interest in political and civic actions continues to exist in public and private schools. Several scholars like Farser (1992) argued that public sphere theory was important for critical theory, which even Habermas (1992) acknowledges. The concept of a single public sphere does not bring competing spheres into an account. One such competing sphere in Nepal is students. There can also be other competing spheres formed as the result of cast, creed, color, religion, and social status etc., both throughout the country and within the realm of the student population. All of them may differ individually from Habermas’ bourgeois

public sphere. Public spheres in such conditions can also create discourse in these spheres, as it is most likely that there are also the possibility of unequal opportunities.

Research questions: Another significant contribution of this study is evaluating the role of Facebook in the political and civic participation gap which exists between the Nepalese undergraduate students in private and public schools. Several studies from the past that were conducted in different settings and school environments suggest that there is a strong relationship between the use of Facebook (social media) and the users' political and civic participation. However, this study is the first of its kind to examine the impact of Facebook (social media) on political participation by a group of people (undergraduate students) measured in a setting where there is already an existing gap created by the private and public school settings. Therefore, for research purposes, the pattern of Facebook usage by the Nepalese students is introduced in the section below.

To discover that over 94% of Nepalese students are active Facebook users at present was a surprising result, considering that both the Internet and Facebook were not easily available in Nepal until the mid-2000s. Close to 60% of Nepalese students have also been using Facebook, and the Internet for 3 years or more, with as many as 55.6% using it to communicate with friends, family or both. The descriptive finding also indicated that close to 80% of the students use Facebook at least once a day, and close to 60% of students spent at least one hour every day on Facebook.

More often than not, new technologies always have had their mobilizing power. This remains true for 18th century newspapers, the electric telegraph in 1837, telephone in 1876, radio in 1895, and television in 1923 (Shirky, 2012). It looked like these forms of media were going to serve the public sphere after their invention and upon their adoption by the people. Yet, in the

19th century there was the decline of the Habermas' public sphere. Along with the commercialization, the decline occurred because these "old mass media" aided mainly one-to-many mode of communication. This was especially true with the TV, radio and newspapers.

The new media, the Internet and Facebook, are comparatively better than just one-to-many in general. The findings in Research Question 1 indicated that the Internet and Facebook have mobilized this trait with full power among the Nepalese undergraduate students. This mobilizing power is seen not just in the medium (the Internet and Facebook), but in the devices that support the medium as well. The finding in Research Question 2 affirms this mobilization of devices that are used to access Facebook and the Internet.

The findings from Research Question 2 suggest that PCs and laptops are the most used devices to access Facebook by the Nepalese undergraduate students. Cell phones are the next most widely used devices to access Facebook. The fact that the cell phone usage is closing the gap with the use of PCs and laptops for Internet access provides further evidence to back up the claims made by NTA's (2011, 2012a, 2012b, 2013a and 2013b) reports on the increasing number of cell phone users with Internet access in Nepal, as shown in Table 2-1. Other mobile devices, such as the iPod, iPad, tablet, etc., are the least used devices by the Nepalese students to access Facebook and the Internet. However, no significant relationship was found between students who are enrolled in the public and private undergraduate institutions and their use of various devices to connect with Facebook and the Internet.

Another important finding of this study was that use of PCs/laptops and use of mobile technology was virtually the same for both private and public students. This indicates that there is no technology gap or digital divide between the two students' groups. Thapa (2011) mentioned that socioeconomic status and other social backgrounds of a student determine whether a student

will join a public school or a private school. However, these findings suggest the socioeconomic differences and other social background classifications have no relationship with the type of devices the Nepalese undergraduate students choose in order to access Facebook and the Internet. This is especially true for the devices such as PCs, laptops and cell phones. In other words, there may be differences in choosing what type of school a student can/may choose depending upon the socioeconomic background of the students, but not necessarily what devices are used for accessing Facebook and the Internet. However, as suggested by Koirala (2010) earlier, this may be the outcome of market competition between service providers in the IT field, as the result of which, the devices and services are getting cheaper over time.

In this case, the findings present an interesting scenario that is both similar as well as contrasting to Habermas' public sphere where he talks about the decline of the public sphere in the 19th century. The decline was mainly because the market economy and commercialization interfered with the media. In Nepal, however, the impact of the market economy and commercialization improved the political and civic participation (public sphere) of the students. Perhaps, we can put it this way. It is the commercialization of the media (the devices and the medium) that benefits and increases the public sphere. On the other hand, the commercialization of the media (the content) is the one that causes the decline of the public sphere. This is true, at least in Nepal. Besides, Habermas (1996) has mentioned that the public spheres are continuously changing, a process which may be accelerated by the Internet. Therefore, changes in the society provoke discussion about the public spheres that are present at the time of crisis. On top of that, when the medium (the Internet) becomes cheaper in some developing countries, such as Nepal in this case, growth in informational empowerment of the students is experienced. Meyer (1997) describes such benefits from the use of the Internet, in the economic and political domain.

Next, it is important to see if the new media, Facebook and the Internet, are going to replicate better or worse results when serving the norms of the public sphere by leading to greater democratization in Nepal. The author examined some of the features which may lead to such democratization such as: the ability to exchange dialogues rapidly, including those of students (from both public and private schools) by providing the same opportunity to participate; eradicating the blockades created by the private schools to limit their marginalized students from fully accomplishing their democratic rights etc.

It seems, at present, that the virtual space may provide a practice that is equivalent to the public sphere. The communication and debates in Nepalese schools that occurred before the advent of the Internet and Facebook did not take place without institutional coercion, especially in the private schools. The current digital electronic network, however, transfers Habermas' "ideal speech situation" that in fact increases the possibility for a better democratic environment where there is a true representation of students from both public and private schools.

Likewise, Research Question 3 found that there was a positive correlation between the political and civic participation and number of days in a typical week the students read, listened to, or watched news content on the Internet. Basically, this finding suggests the more a Nepalese undergraduate student goes online for news and current affairs in a typical week, the more he/she is likely to be both politically and civically active and vice versa. This was true for students in both public and private schools.

Similarly, the findings from Research Question 4 indicate a positive correlation between online news consumption habits of the students and their chances of following a Facebook page which belongs to news portals. Those who read news from online sources were more likely to

become a member of the Facebook pages which belong to news portals and also comment, tag, like, or share the posts from the new portals' Facebook pages.

In contrast, it was interesting to find out that there is a negative correlation between the students' online news consumption habits and their chances of becoming a member of a Facebook page that belonged to political, and social activities. In other words, it can be said that those who get their news from online sources are not likely to follow Facebook pages belonging to a political activity or social activity. This indicates that an increase in online news consumption by the students does not motivate them to follow Facebook pages related to political and social activities. Or, an increase in news consumption from online sources decreases political and civic participation on Facebook. Therefore, it is less likely that the students will also comment, tag, like or share the posts on the Facebook pages that belong to political parties (or organizations) and social organizations. However, it does not guarantee the students offline political and civic participation.

The correlation can also be viewed from the perspective that the differences in the students' institution types did not influence the possible influence that the Internet and Facebook have on their political and civic participation. Here, the new media seem to have provided the openness of expression that is much needed for Habermas' 'ideal speech situation.' Another reason for obtaining such a result may well have to do with very little differences between students in the public and private schools in; there is no technology gap or digital divide between the two groups of students (Research Question 3); and their online news consumption habit and their political and civic participation on Facebook (Research Question 4).

Consequently, it appears that the new virtual media and the virtual sphere have provided an equal opportunity and condition for Habermas' "ideal speech situation" and is helping to keep

a balance on the online in political and civic participation gaps among the students in public and private schools. Whereas, there is still a gap in their offline political and civic participation.

Recommendations: First it is recommended that future studies attempt to find the reasons for the contrasting behavior shown by Nepalese undergraduate students who consume news from online sources, but show no political and civic participation on Facebook (Research Question 4). Future academic endeavors are also recommended to make use of the tests in Research Question 3 as a stepping-stone for further exploration and confirmatory empirical work towards understanding the causalities of the outcome. The outcome suggested that there is a positive correlation between the political and civic participation and number of days in a typical week the students read, listened to, or watched news content on the Internet. It is important to give focus to the specific contextual elements because they have created a public sphere in the specific circumstances in Nepal.

Apart from these recommendations, future researchers can also study the use of Facebook by politicians and the resulting effect on the students' (or publics') political and civic participation. After all, the recent 2nd constitutional election in Nepal held on November 19th, 2013, is the first of its kind on many fronts. This was the first election where many the electoral candidates used Facebook (social media), which may have had a high chance of affecting the civic and political participation of the populace. At the same time, it was also be the first time that the Nepalese voters (the public) may have discussed or followed a certain candidate or a political party's election campaign over the Internet or via social media. These scenarios may provide a great window to look at the political and civic participation behavior as shown by the Nepalese public, while the country heads towards making a great leap forward, not just politically and socially, but also digitally as has been demonstrated for the past few years.

Limitations: There are basically two major limitations that the author presents about this study. The tests here are conducted to study the public and private undergraduate colleges located in the Kathmandu Valley. Therefore, the results may not present a true picture of the political and civic participation by the students enrolled in the undergraduate level colleges outside Kathmandu Valley, or the entire nation.

This study has included four undergraduate level colleges affiliated to two different university systems of Nepal. As mentioned earlier, three undergraduate level schools—Institute of Engineering (IoE), Tri-Chandra Campus (TCC), and DAV College of Management (DAV-CoM)—were affiliated with the Tribuwan University (TU), and the School of Environmental Science and Management (SchEMs) was affiliated with Pokhara University (PU). Since the 1990s, the number of universities has increased. There are over a dozen universities in Nepal. Every university prefers and allows different levels of political participation. Therefore, it may also be possible that the findings of this study may not reflect the real picture of the political and civic participation by the students enrolled in other universities.

This study was conducted with limited facilities and under a time constraint. It is also the first of its kind in Nepal. Although the samples collected were from Kathmandu, it is important to understand that all the educational institutions located in the Kathmandu Valley, irrespective of their affiliation with different universities, enroll students from all over the country. This study provides a window of opportunity for future researchers interested in conducting a similar kind of study or the studies that are recommended by the author.

APPENDIX
SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

General Information

1. Sex ___Male _____Female

2. Your Age

3. Level of Undergraduate

- a. 1st Year
- b. 2nd Year
- c. 3rd Year
- d. 4th Year

4. Where did you grow up in a Nepal?

- a. Kathmandu Valley**
- b. Outside the Kathmandu Valley

5. If (b) **Outside the Kathmandu Valley****, Where?

6. Name of your college/campus _____

7. Affiliated University _____

8. Email (Optional) _____

Personal Value

9. How interested do you think students should be in politics?

- a. Extremely interested
- b. Very interested
- c. Somewhat interested
- d. A little interested
- e. Not at all interested

10. How interested do you think students should be in *civic participation?

- a. Extremely interested
- b. Very interested
- c. Somewhat interested
- d. A little interested
- e. Not at all interested

11. How interested would you say you are in politics?
- Extremely interested
 - Very interested
 - Somewhat interested
 - A little interested
 - Not at all interested
12. How interested would you say you are in *civic participation?
- Extremely interested
 - Very interested
 - Somewhat interested
 - A little interested
 - Not at all interested

* **Civic participation** refers to activities such as membership of any organization, volunteering project or organization, charity work, activism, voting, protest, attending ***nonpolitical rallies** etc.

***Nonpolitical** – Issues like load shedding (power cuts), drinking water supply, road construction and maintenance, etc.

Political Participation

13. Have you ever voted in a national election?
Yes No
14. Are you part of any political organization on or off campus?
Yes No
15. Have you ever taken part in a campus/university level election to vote for a student representative?
Yes No
16. Will you most likely vote in an upcoming national or campus election?
Yes No
17. During Last 12 months, have you done any of the following?
- Contacted a government official at any level of government to express your opinion
Yes No
 - Worked for a political party or candidate
Yes No
 - Contributed money for a political campaign
Yes No
 - Attended a political meeting, rally, or speech
Yes No

- e. Displayed a political button, sticker, sign
Yes No
- f. Signed or written petition about a political issues
Yes No
- g. Tried to persuaded others to vote in an election
Yes No
- h. Performed at least one of the above activities (a-g) online?
Yes No

Civic Participation

18. During last 12 months, have you done any of the following on or off campus?
- a. Served as a part/member of any organization?
Yes No
 - b. Worked or volunteered on community project
Yes No
 - c. Worked or volunteered for nonpolitical organization, such as student association group
Yes No
 - d. Raised money for a charity
Yes No
 - e. Donated money for a nonpolitical issue
Yes No
 - f. Attended a nonpolitical meeting, rally or speech
Yes No
 - g. Displayed *nonpolitical buttons, stickers, signs
Yes No
 - h. Signed or written petition about *nonpolitical issues
Yes No
 - i. Performed at least one of the above activities (a-h) online?
Yes No

***Nonpolitical** – Issues like Load Shielding (Power cuts), drinking water supply, road construction and maintenance etc.

Media/News consumption habit and Internet/Facebook use

19. How many days in a typical week do you read a newspaper?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

20. How many days in a typical week do you watch televised news programs?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

21. How many days in a typical week do you read/listen/watch news online?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

22. Where do you get MOST of your news (information) about current events?

- a. Printed (Newspaper/Magazines)
- b. Broadcast (Television/Radio)
- c. Online (News portals, social media)

23. List and rank the TOP 5 social networking sites and/or micro-blogging sites that you visit/have accounts with, if you visit any? (1-being visit most and 5-being fifth most least)

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____

24. Do you currently have an active Facebook account?

Yes No

****If your answer to question (24) is YES skip (26)**

25. Did you deactivate your *Facebook* account?

- a. Yes**
- b. No
- c. Never had one so far.

(If '**YES') Why did you deactivate your Facebook account?

****IF your answer to question (25) is 'YES' skip the rest of the survey (26-37).**

26. What prompted you to create a *Facebook* account?

27. For how long have you been using Facebook?

- a. Less than 1 Year
- b. 1 to 2 Years
- c. 2 to 3 years
- d. 3 years or more

28. How often do you use your *Facebook* account?

- a. Multiple times a day*
- b. Daily
- c. Weekly
- d. Monthly
- e. Rarely
- f. Never

29. If (a) **Multiple times a day***, how many times a day? _____

30. On average, how much time do you spend on Facebook daily?

- a. Less than 1 hour
- b. 1-2 hours
- c. 2-3 hours
- d. 3-4 hours
- e. 4-5 hours
- f. More than 5 hours

31. How do you connect to your Facebook account? Check [] all that applies

- a. [] PC Computer/Laptop
- b. [] Phone
- c. [] Other mobile devices
- d. [] All of the above.

32. Which one do you use the most to connect to Facebook?

- a. PC Computer/Laptop
- b. Phone
- c. Other mobile devices
- d. All of the above

33. How often do you update/change your Facebook status?

- a. Multiple times a day*
- b. Once a day
- c. Weekly
- d. Monthly
- e. Rarely
- f. Never

34. If (a) **Multiple times a day***, how many times a day? _____

35. I am Facebook group member with [Check [✓] all that implies to you]

- a. [] Your College
- b. [] College student organization
- c. [] University group page
- d. [] Political group page
- e. [] News portal
- f. [] Social/Civic organization group page
- g. [] Others _____
- h. [] None

36. Rank your following activities 1-6, 1-being activity that you do most and 6-being activity that you do least

- a. ___ Update status
- b. ___ Comment others' activities
- c. ___ Like others' activities
- d. ___ Share others' activities
- e. ___ Tagging Pictures
- f. ___ E-mail

37. Of those mentioned below, CHECK [✓] with whom you are a Friend/Member and how often do you Comment, Tag a picture, Like or Share their post/s?

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Rarely	Never
a. [] Friends	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
b. [] Family	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
c. [] Celebrities	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
d. [] College Activities	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
e. [] Political Activities	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
f. [] Societal Activities	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
g. [] Current events/News outlets	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
h. [] Co-workers	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
i. [] Work	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
j. [] Others _____	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

A Sanam Bhaila was born in 1982 in Nepal. He spent his early years in Banepa, Nepal with his family. He went to Thanjavur located in the state Tamil Nadu, India to complete his schooling from 7th grade onwards, until high school. He returned to Nepal in 2001. He completed his diploma in Media Technology from Shepherded College of Media Technology in Kathmandu. After completing his diploma, in 2006, he came to the U.S. in August 2006 to complete his undergraduate degree. In 2010, he received his Bachelor of Arts in Journalism from University of Nebraska, Kearney. He received his MAMC from the University of Florida in the fall of 2013.