



WESLEYAN
UNIVERSITY

Unseen and Unheard: Exploring the U.S. Healthcare System from the Lens of Bangladeshi Immigrants

Tashfia Jilu and Anthony R. Hatch

Science in Society Program, Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT 06459

TRIO

RONALD E. MCNAIR
POST-BACCALAUREATE
ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

Introduction

Bangladeshi immigrants constitute one of the fastest-growing immigrant populations in the United States. Approximately 54% of this group are classified as having Limited-English Proficiency (LEP), which means they speak English less than ‘very well.’ Facilitating good communication between this group and healthcare providers is a key feature of healthcare and health equity. Federally funded healthcare facilities are legally mandated to provide interpreters for patients with LEP, yet most do not have adequate language services. The experience of Bangladeshi immigrants with medical interpretation services has not been studied, so this project asks:

What experiences do Bangladeshi immigrants have as they navigate the healthcare system in New York City?

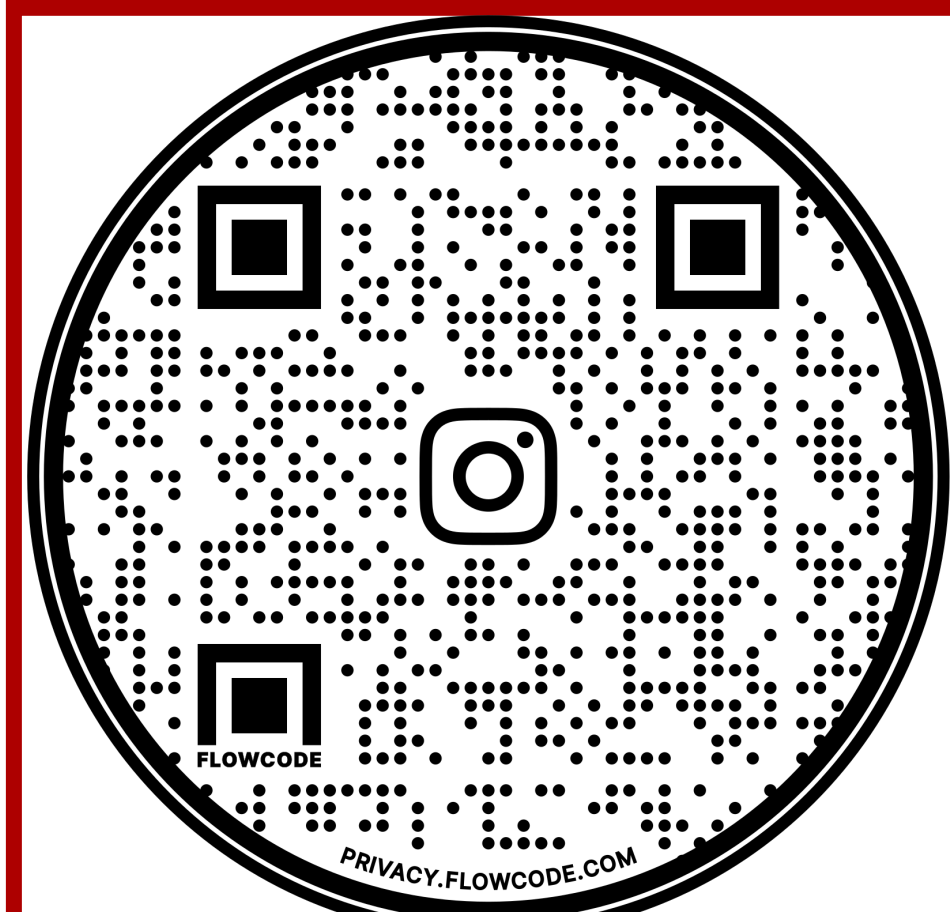
Methods

Community-Wide Survey

- Conduct a community-wide survey through social media (Instagram and Facebook) and local canvassing
 - Analyze the data for common themes and elements of healthcare experiences

Interviews

- Identify 10 LEP individuals and conduct in-depth interviews
 - Analyze the interviews for common themes and elements of healthcare experiences



Scan this code to follow my thesis Instagram page @unseen.unheard.wesu to learn more about the issue of language accessibility and stay up-to-date on my progress!

Background Information

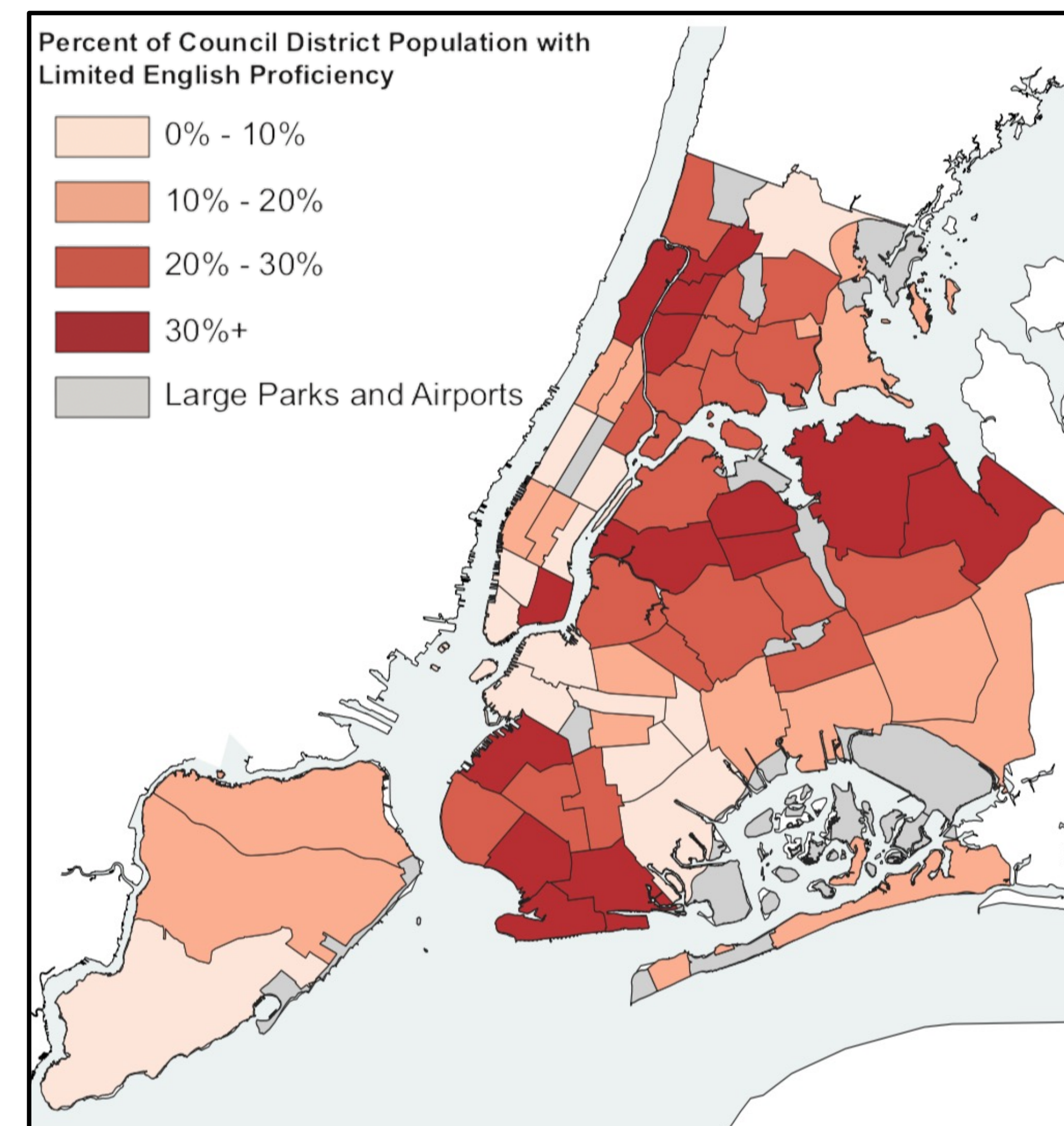


Figure 1: New York City Populations with LEP by City Council District (American Community Survey, 2018).

Bangla is the second most requested language at NYC Health + Hospitals’ facilities. 6 of these hospitals report Bangla as their second most requested language.

1. NYC Health + Hospitals / East New York
2. NYC Health + Hospitals / Elmhurst
3. NYC Health + Hospitals / Jacobi
4. NYC Health + Hospitals / Morrisania
5. NYC Health + Hospitals / North Central Bronx
6. NYC Health + Hospitals / Queens

2 of these hospitals are located in the Bronx and 3 in Queens.

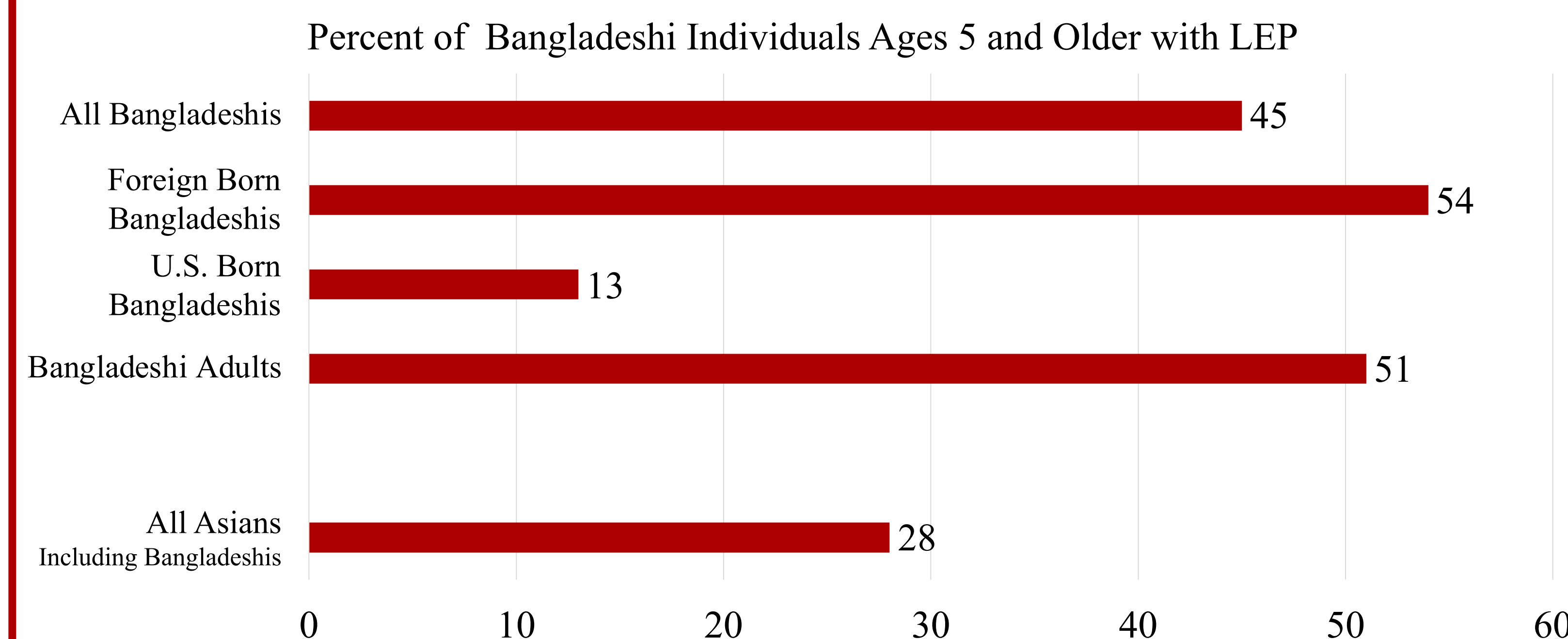


Figure 2: LEP Proficiency of Bangladeshi population in the U.S., 2019 (Pew Research Center).

Significance

Without proper language services, LEP patients are more likely to be treated without informed consent, to suffer adverse effects as a result of medical care, be less satisfied with medical care, and stray away from receiving care in general. This analysis will allow us to better understand the social determinants of health in Bangladeshi immigrant communities in the United States, which can help inform medical providers as to how to provide better care to this community.

As a country built on the back of immigrants, such as the Bangladeshi community, the United States is structurally inaccessible and unaccommodating in many, if not all, aspects of life. Reforming healthcare, a basic human right, needs to be a top priority; more specifically, increasing access through the most elementary aspect: communication. As a community that is underrepresented and underresearched, this research will not only gather data on the lived experiences of Bangladeshis but will hopefully raise awareness and give them a voice to be heard.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor Anthony Hatch for being my mentor and faculty advisor, as well as the McNair Program, the Davenport Program, and Wesleyan Summer Experience for sponsoring my research. I’d also like to thank the Arab-American Family Support Center for partnering with me and giving me the opportunity to expand my research base.

Sources

1. “English Proficiency of Bangladeshi Americans,” Pew Research Center’s Social & Demographic Trends Project, September 8, 2017, <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/chart/english-proficiency-of-bangladeshi-population-in-the-u-s/>.
2. Richard C. Palmer et al., “Social Determinants of Health: Future Directions for Health Disparities Research,” *American Journal of Public Health* 109, no. S1 (January 30, 2019): S70–71, <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2019.304964>.
3. Showstack, Rachel & Santos, Maricel & Feuerherm, Emily & Jacobson, Holly & Martinez, Glenn. (2018). Language as a Social Determinant of Health: An Applied Linguistics Perspective on Health Equity.