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Who Participates in Ethnic Organizations: Immigrant Children in Los Angeles

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ABSTRACT

Who Participates in Ethnic Organizations: Immigrant Children in Los Angeles

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This exploratory descriptive study looks at the characteristics of immigrant children in the greater metropolitan Los Angeles area who participate in organizations associated with their parents' country of origin. By drawing on the 2004 Immigration and Intergenerational Mobility in Metropolitan Los Angeles (IIMMLA) survey dataset, I bring together aspects of the participation and assimilation literatures in order to better understand who participates in ethnic organizations.

Results provide evidence that ethnic organization participants differ from the full sample and from respondents who participate in community organizations; they exhibit more ethnic resource characteristics. Significant determinants of participation in ethnic organizations include having a larger numbers of close relatives in the Los Angeles metropolitan area, literacy in their parents' native language, higher education levels, and being married. These findings indicate that ethnic resources are more important to immigrant children who participate in ethnic organizations than attaining dominant characteristics or straight-line assimilation in society.

Keywords: participation, immigrant children, Los Angeles, ethnic organizations, ethnic resources, dominant status, assimilation, segmented assimilation, dominant status

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Introduction

Participation in community organizations has often been described as a sort of "panacea for our social ills" (Hallman 1974; Kotler 1969; Langton 1978; Perlman 1978; Wandersman 1981: 47) and is associated with a variety of positive outcomes among individuals. The present study examines participation by the adult children of immigrants in organizations associated with their ethnic origin, with attention to who participates and factors associated with participation. Research on ethnic organizations has shown that ethnic *college* organizations are critical venues of cultural familiarity, expression, advocacy, and validation (Museus 2008). Such organizations allow immigrant populations to express their cultural and racial identities (Harper and Quaye 2007; Inkelas 2004; Museus 2008; Taylor and Howard-Hamilton 1995; White 1998), and the ethnic primary group support they provide facilitates cultural and socioeconomic status (SES) adaptation (Yetman 1999). These findings challenge the idea that structural and cultural assimilation is associated with "the decline of an ethnic distinction and its corollary cultural and social differences" (Alba and Nee 2003: 10) as individuals take on the characteristics of the dominant, or sociocultural system-valued/preferred, set of social positions and roles in society (Lemon, Palisi, and Jacobson 1972; Smith 1994).

Also relevant to ethnic organizational participation is the citizen participation literature, which informs us that the first central issue in studying citizen participation is the question of who participates (Wandersman and Florin 2000: 248), with participation defined as "a process in which individuals take part in decision making in the institutions, programs, and environments that affect them" (Heller et al. 1984: 339; Wandersman and Florin 2000). The present study is devoted to exploring that first central issue among a population of adults who are children of

immigrants, primarily comprised of 1.5, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th generation immigrants who I will refer to as "immigrant children."

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to describe participation in ethnic organizations among the population of immigrant children in the Greater Los Angeles Metropolitan area. Research on ethnic student organizations has not clarified the effects of organizational participation in the larger immigrant and ethnic population. In 2009, only 39 percent of immigrants and 33 percent of immigrant children had graduated from college (US Census 2010). Given the benefits associated with participation in ethnic student organizations, research is needed that addresses the factors that drive participation in other ethnic organizations. This study analyzes the characteristics of individuals who identify themselves as participants in organizations related to their parents' ethnicity in order to establish what factors predict participation and whether those predictors reflect ethnic resources, socially dominant statuses, or both.

Using data from the 2004 Immigration and Intergenerational Mobility in Metropolitan Los Angeles (IIMMLA) survey, this study extends the research on ethnic immigrant organization participation beyond a college setting. The survey spans over five California counties: Los Angeles, Ventura, Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino. Together with San Diego County, this area is home to one in five of all immigrants in the United States. It includes the largest concentrations of Mexicans, Salvadorans, Guatemalans, Filipinos, Taiwanese, Koreans, Vietnamese, and Cambodia outside of their respective home countries (Rumbaut 2008: 209). IIMMLA respondents are predominately pan-ethnically Asian and Latino, as are over four-fifths of non-European immigrants to the United States over the past thirty years (Bean, Brown and Rumbaut 2006). Thus, these data are ideal for the proposed analysis of the characteristics of the

children of immigrants who choose to take advantage of their proximity to fellow ethnics as they participate in ethnic organizations.

Literature Review

Participation

Participation is a "multidimensional and fluid concept, with multiple overlaps and blurred boundaries between different forms of participation" (Brodie *et al*. 2009: 15), making it difficult to clearly define and measure. Organizational participation is proposed to have a wide variety of benefits at the national, community, interpersonal, and individual levels (Florin and Wandersman 1990: 43). These include improvements to neighborhoods and communities (Cassidy 1980; Hallman 1974; Yin and Yates 1974), stronger interpersonal relationships and social fabric (Unger and Wandersman 1983; Woodson 1981), feelings of personal and political efficacy (Cole 1974; Cole 1981; Florin and Wandersman 1984; Zimmerman and Rappaport 1988), and personal and collective efficacy (Bandura 1986).

In their review of participation literature, Wandersman and Florin (2000: 248) have identified three central sets of issues in citizen participation:

1. What are the basic characteristics of people who participate? Why do they participate? Who are the people who do not participate? Why not?
2. What are the characteristics of organizations or environments that facilitate or inhibit effective participation? What are the characteristics of organizations that are effective and survive vs. those what die out?
3. What are the effects of different forms of participation? What are the benefits and costs to the individual who participates? How does participation affect the program or community in which it occurs?

These represent "the antecedents of participation, the process of participation, and the effects of participation," which are key features of any participation framework (Wandersman and Florin 2000: 249). The present study looks at the first central issue: Who participates and what are their basic characteristics? The IIMMLA survey provides us with basic demographic variables about the individual respondents and environmental variables related to their families and communities to aid us in answering the question of who participates.

(INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE)

Dominant Status Theory

Dominant status theory provides a useful framework for analyzing the characteristics and demographics of participants in voluntary organizations. According to the dominant status theory, participation is greater among individuals who express a dominant, or sociocultural system-valued/preferred, set of social positions and roles, both ascribed and achieved (Lemon, Palisi, and Jacobson 1972; Smith 1994). It is consistent with the straight-line assimilation theory, which contends that each generation achieves greater cultural and structural assimilation (Yetman 1999).

The first attempts to understand the relationship between ethnic minority immigrants and their new communities assumed a linear process involving the acquisition of characteristics similar to the majority group (Park 1950). However, subsequent research revealed that stages of assimilation occur in different patterns and sequences (Gordon 1964). Even so, "scholars almost uniformly assess immigrant and second-generation incorporation by using conventional measures of socioeconomic status" and structural assimilation, including education, income, and occupational prestige (Zhou et al. 2008: 41).

Research using the dominant status framework identifies several characteristics which may play a role in increased participation, including being male and married, having higher levels of income and wealth, higher occupational prestige, and formal education (Smith 1994). It appears that "more education is the strongest and most consistent predictor of volunteer participation" (Smith 1994: 248). Other important factors include higher income (Auslander and Litwin 1988; Cutler 1980; Hodgkinson et al. 1992; Sundeen 1992), higher occupational prestige (Palisi and Korn, 1989; Vaillancourt and Payette 1986), and being married (Auslander and Litwin 1988; Hodgkinson and Weitzman 1986; Hodgkinson et al. 1992; Vaillancourt and Payette 1986).

Participation in College Ethnic Organizations

While the literature on immigrant participation in ethnic organizations is limited, there is "a small and growing body of research [which] indicates that at least one type of subculture – ethnic student organizations – can play an important role in positively shaping the experiences and outcomes of racial/ethnic minority students" (Museus 2008: 569). On one hand, there is evidence that immigrant children become increasingly removed from their culture with each generation (Rumbaut 2008). Thus, Rumbaut (2008) found that proficiency in and preference for English is well established by the second generation, while proficiency in immigrants' native language has diminished. On the other hand, research on participation in college ethnic organizations shows that both immigrants and immigrant children benefit from ethnic solidarity found in such groups to the extent that participation facilitates larger campus adjustment and involvement without sacrificing their ethnic identities (Allen 1985; DeSousa and King 1992; Mallinckrodt and Sedlacek 1987; Murguia, Padilla, and Pavel 1991; Saylor and Aries 1999; Sedlacek 1987). The skills and experiences participants gain from their involvement in ethnic

organizations easily transfer to other aspects of their lives including the cultivation of identity, cultural adjustment, and a sense of engagement (Bankston and Zhou 1995; Inkelas 2004; Museus 2008; Saylor and Aries 1999; Yetman 1999).

Ethnic Resources and Assimilation

Cornell and Hartmann's (2007) framework for studying ethnic groups suggests that ethnic group assimilation is shaped by both contextual features and the internal resources of each individual group, which result in varied paths of assimilation. For example, Portes and Rumbaut's (2006: 274) concept of segmented assimilation is defined as "a set of strategic outcomes in the lives of young children of immigrants." Outcomes include various ways individuals can achieve successful assimilation, such as educational attainment, improved socioeconomic status, and acquisition of language skills. The achievement of such outcomes, however, represents acquisition of dominant group characteristics, often through the use of specific ethnic group resources. Thus, complete assimilation is not necessary for the children of immigrants to achieve success in one area or another. They can acculturate selectively, choosing to adopt some dominant features of society while maintaining their cultural traits in other ways that may suit their needs. For example, language is one area in which cultural assimilation may occur as individuals learn to speak English fluently, taking on the dominant language in society. Indeed, "English proficiency has always been a key to the socioeconomic mobility of immigrants and their children in the United States" (Rumbaut 2008: 217). However, language use may also indicate segmented assimilation and cultural maintenance, as individuals learn English and sustain their fluency in their parents' language.

Ethnic resource variables suggested by Cornell and Hartmann (2007) and Rumbaut (2008), such as ethnic language and relationships to family and community, provide alternative

variables for analyses of ethnic organization participation. Additionally, Wandersman and Florin (2000: 250) suggest an important explanation for attention to ethnic resources: people who avoid participation in larger society due to their own perceived inefficacy will potentially "respond with enthusiasm to an arena of concrete local concerns." Similarly, organizations deal with issues specific to an ethnic group, and thus may also inspire enthusiasm among participants. It follows that general demographic characteristics "may be less relevant to participation in community organizations than characteristics such as specific relations to the community" (Milbrath 1965; Wandersman and Florin 2000: 250). Looking at spatial proximity to other members of one's ethnic group, including family members, then becomes an important factor in possible participation.

Neighbors, who may also be family members, are also "particularly handy sources of aid" (Unger and Wandersman 1985; Wandersman and Florin 2000: 263). Neighbors act as important sources of information and referral to needed services, and neighboring fosters a sense of identification with the area, develops a sense of community, buffers feelings of isolation, and provides emotional and material aid (Wandersman and Florin 2000: 263). Furthermore, individuals with more friends in their neighborhood and closer ties with their neighbors are more likely to be members of local community groups (Ahlbrandt and Cunningham 1979; Hunter 1974; Wandersman and Florin 2000). Thus, if immigrants live near their relatives, then the proximity of these relatives becomes relevant to organizational participation. Within the ethnic enclave economy, the bounded solidarity and enforceable trust that exist between members promote collective economic action (Portes and Zhou 1992; Waldinger 1993).

Hypotheses

Several hypotheses may be drawn from the literature discussed above. First, the concepts associated with the dominant status framework and straight-line assimilation indicate that for individual-level variables – education, income, occupational status, gender, and marital status – those with the dominant or socially preferred statuses will be more likely to participate in community organizations. Second, respondents with greater access to ethnic resources – having more close relatives living in the Los Angeles metropolitan area, speaking multiple languages while growing up, and literacy in parents' language – will be more likely to participate as well. Third, dominant status variables should have less influence on participation relative to ethnic resources.

Data and Methods

Sample

The data for this study were obtained through the 2004 Immigration and Intergenerational Mobility in Metropolitan Los Angeles study conducted by the University of California at Irvine under a grant from the Russell Sage Foundation. This survey focused on second-generation immigrants in Los Angeles in their young adult years, with the goal of gathering systematic information about how successful assimilation strategies differ among groups (Rumbaut et. al 2004). The survey was intended to provide comparisons to the 1996 Immigrant Second Generation in Metropolitan New York (ISGNY) study. It has also been used to extend and supplement both the ISGNY study and the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (1991 – 2006).

The IIMMLA study was conducted as a large-scale 35-minute telephone survey among targeted random samples of 1.5, 2nd, and selected 3rd generation young adults (ages 20 to 40)

living in the greater Los Angeles metropolitan area comprised of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura Counties. Researchers utilized multi-stage random sampling to reach the targeted populations. Respondents who came to the United States before age 15 are classified as 1.5 generation. Respondents born in the United States to one or two parents who were born outside of the United States are classified as 2nd generation. Those born in the United States and whose parents were also born in the United States are classified as 3rd+ generation. Targeted populations include six foreign born (1.5 generation) and foreign parentage (2nd generation) ethnic groups: Mexicans, Vietnamese, Filipinos, Koreans, Chinese, and Central Americans (Guatemalans and Salvadorans). Three native-born-and-native-parentage (3rd+ generation) groups were also targeted: Mexican Americans, non-Hispanic Whites, and Blacks.

Variables, Indicators, and Statistical Analyses

For this study, participation is analyzed as self-reported membership in a community organization and as self-identified participation in any kind of organization associated with the respondents' parents' country of birth. The dependent variables are participation in organizations associated with one's ethnic origin and participation in any community organization as operationalized by self-reported involvement.

Statistical analyses include two logistic regression models that assess the relative influence of specific characteristics or variables on organization participation and clarify who participates in (1) ethnic organizations and (2) community organizations. While the survey items that measure ethnic organization participation differ from those for community organizations, comparison to participants in community organizations is useful despite the problems inherent in using differing indicators. Ethnic organization participation is measured by a question whether respondents or their parents were born outside the United States and whether participated in any

kind of organization associated with their parents' country of birth in the past twelve months. This question is limited by both the general use of the term participation, which does not indicate the type of participation or type of organization the respondent could be referring to, and by the qualification that the respondent or their parents were born outside of the United States. Third and fourth generation immigrants are excluded from the analysis, which limits the degree to which this study can signify any interest in ethnic resources by generations who are further removed from their ethnic culture of origin.

Community organization participation is measured by respondents indicating whether they belong to any community organization, work-related organization, sports teams, or other non-religious organization. This question is also limited by the vagueness of what it means to belong to an organization and doesn't specify how involved respondents were or to what kind of organization they belong.

Independent Variables: *Dominant Status Variables*

Education: Education is measured by the highest level of education the respondent achieved in adulthood, measured as a continuous variables with the following categories of education: 8th grade or less, 9th through 11th grade, 12th grade, 1 year of college, 2 years of college, 3 years of college, 4 years of college, 1-2 years of graduate school, or having a doctoral or professional degree.

Income: Income is measured by the respondent's reported total gross income for 2003. I have coded responses into three categories: low income is coded for respondents who indicated earning between nothing and $29,999, middle income for earning between $30,000 and $69,999, and high income for $70,000 or more.

Occupational Status: This variable is indicated by occupational prestige scores based on Duncan's (1961) model. Duncan developed individual occupational scores based on public perception of occupational prestige which were derived from survey results combined with information from the Census of Population (Duncan 1961; Simons 2011). Respondents' current occupation have been translated into the detailed codes for occupation developed by the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) in 1990, then they have been assigned a prestige score based on Duncan's Socioeconomic Index for this study (Simons 2011). I have also coded these scores into three categories: low for a score of 25 or less, middle for scores between 26 and 50, and high for scores between 51 and 100.

Gender. Gender is coded with 1 as male and 0 as female.

Marital Status: Marital Status is coded into three categories: single-never married, married, and other (cohabiting, divorced, separated, or other).

Independent Variables: Ethnic Resource Variables

Ethnicity: This variable refers to one of the 10 main categories the IIMMLA survey identified: Mexican, Salvadorian/Guatemalan, Other Latin American, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Filipino, Other Asian, White (non-Hispanic), and Black (non-Hispanic).

Family Proximity. Family proximity is measured by two variables: whether respondents have close relatives living in the Los Angeles metropolitan area not including those in the respondents' household, and if they do have close relatives in the area, the number of close relatives they have there.

English Preference: This variable is measured by whether the respondents said they grew up speaking a language other than English at home – yes or no.

Second Language. This variable has been coded into the following categories: respondents who cannot understand their parents' language, those who can understand but cannot speak or read or write that language, those who can understand and speak it only, and those who can understand, speak, read, and write their parents' language.

Control Variables

Age: Age is a continuous variable ranging from 20 to 40.

Parental Acculturation and Assimilation. Variables that measure parental accutluration and assimilation include parents' educational status, English proficiency, and number of years in the U.S.

Parental educational status includes the highest levels of education of both mother and father. High School is coded for parents who either did not complete high school or only completed high school. College is coded for parents who had some college, were college graduates, or attended graduate school. Other is coded for parents who attended vocational or trade school. Parental English proficiency is coded into two variables: well is coded if the respondents' mother/father speaks English well or very well, and not well is coded if the respondents' mother/father speaks English not well or not at all. Number of years the respondents' parents have been in the United States refers to whether the reported number of years is more than 10, less than 10, or not reported.

Data Analysis

Data analysis consists of first calculating descriptive statistics for all variables used in the analysis, then calculating descriptive statistics for all variables for only the population of participants in ethnic organizations. This provides the basic characteristic profile of participants in ethnic organizations which I will be able to compare against the full survey sample, thereby

identifying characteristics that set ethnic organization participants apart from those who participate in voluntary organizations generally or from members of the wider society generally.

I have also conducted an extensive cross-tabulation analysis of each variable discussed in the descriptive analysis for both community and ethnic organizations. While this is not included in my final analysis, reviewing these data was helpful for determining which variables might have a significant effect on participation. These comparisons suggested to me that higher education levels, higher income categories, higher occupational prestige scores, older age, being female, being married, having parents with higher education levels, having parents who speak English well and have lived in the United States for a longer period of time, and having a high number of relatives who in the Los Angeles metropolitan area were potentially significant indicators of participation. This analysis suggested to me that access to ethnic resources might have a greater influence on participation than access to dominant characteristics.

I conducted a logistic regression analysis for each of the dependent variables, participation in ethnic organizations and participation in community groups or organizations, using the independent and control variables. Comparing participation within ethnic organizations to participation within community organizations suggests what makes the ethnic organization participants unique, or whether they are unique at all. If they are unique, then it provides a stronger case for the assumption that ethnic organizations play a distinctive role in the lives of adult immigrant children.

This study is limited by the number of respondents who said that they participated in ethnic organizations. However, that portion of the sample has relevant experience through their association with ethnic organizations. The potential benefits of ethnic organization participation may significantly affect the way individuals view themselves and how they interact with others

in their ethnic group and with members of the wider society. Of 4,655 survey respondents, 6 percent (281 people) indicated that they do participate in organizations associated with their parents' country of birth. While 6 percent is only a small proportion, the data show that they differ substantially from both the full survey sample and from those who indicate that they belong to a community group or organization (916 people and 19.7 percent of the sample).

My study is also limited by the fact that respondents may have answered affirmatively to both belonging to a community organization and to participating in ethnic organizations. There is no way for us to know if they participate in multiple organizations including an ethnic organization or if they responded to both questions with reference to the same organization.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Summary statistics for individual characteristics and social background variables reported in Table 1 indicate that the average level of education respondents had attained was just over 2 years of education beyond high school. The mean occupational prestige score among respondents was 49.71, which falls in the middle range of Duncan's socioeconomic index. However, the mean for income is relatively low at 3.71, which translates to being on the upper end between the $12,000 – $19,999 and $20,000 – $29,999 pay categories.

The region of origin or ethnic group to which respondents belong is distributed evenly as all ethnic groups represent close to ten percent of the survey sample with the exception of the Mexican category being more than a quarter of the sample – an overrepresentation which reflects the composition of both Los Angeles and United States. The majority of the sample is comprised of 1.5 and second generation immigrants. Respondents are slightly more likely to be female than

male with a mean age of 28.52. A majority of them are single, having never been married before (51%), and a sizeable portion of them are also married (34%).

(TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE)

Summary statistics for family characteristics and contextual variables show results for parental acculturation and assimilation, family proximity, and second language experience. Respondents had a mixed variety of parental educational achievement. The largest number of respondents reported that the highest level of education that both their mothers and fathers have received was the completion of high school (29 and 30 percent respectively). Regarding parental English speaking ability, responses were pretty evenly distributed among parents speaking very well, well, and not well, with the highest response being that they speak well (32 and 35 percent respectively). The mean number of years respondents' mothers have lived in the United States was 26.44, and for fathers it was 27.29. Relating to family proximity, a large majority of respondents reported that they and their parents are living in the same household (73 percent). The data does not tell us if the children are supporting their parents or the parents are supporting their children. Respondents also tend to live close to other relatives having a large number of close relatives living in the metropolitan Los Angeles area with a mean of 18.06.

(TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE)

As for their family's second language, a majority of respondents said they grew up speaking a language other than English at home (64 percent). Most reported that they speak that language very well (48 percent) or well (35 percent) and that they understand it very well (62 percent) or well (32 percent). When it comes to reading and writing their family's second language, responses were more varied and fewer respondents reported proficiency with 25 to 35 percent of respondents being able to read or write it well or very well.

Descriptive Statistics for Ethnic Organization Participants

In order to analyze the characteristics of second-generation immigrants who participate in organizations associated with their parents' country of birth, I will first take a more detailed look at the descriptive statistics for this sample. Summary statistics for individual characteristics and social background variables among participants in ethnic organizations reported in Table 3 indicate the average level of education respondents attained was between three and four years of education beyond high school. This indicates that those who participate in ethnic organizations have a slightly higher education level than those who do not. However, occupational prestige scores were slightly lower than those of the general survey population with a mean of 46.50 as compared to 49.71 with the entire survey sample. At 3.84, the mean for income falls close to the mean for income of the general survey population (3.71), which is still relatively low. Both scores translate to being on the upper end between the $12,000 – $19,999and $20,000 – $29,999 income categories.

The region of origin or the ethnic groups respondents belong to is distributed evenly with each categories making up close to 10 percent of the sample, with the exception of Filipino which made up 21 percent of the sample. The next most common ethnic groups for this population were Mexicans (15 percent), Koreans (14 percent), and then Vietnamese (13 percent). The entire sample is comprised of 1.5 and second generation immigrants due to the way the question was asked. Respondents were also more likely to be female (54 percent) than male (46 percent) with a mean age of 27.80. A majority of them were single, having never been married before (63 percent), and a sizeable portion of them were also married (27 percent). Thus, ethnic organization participants were slightly more female, younger, and more single than the larger sample.

(TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE)

We turn now to family characteristics and contextual variables. The parents of participants in ethnic organizations tended to be more highly educated, with 34 percent of mothers and 33 percent of fathers having a college degree. Regarding parental English speaking ability, the most frequent response was that 40 percent of respondents' mothers and 46 percent of their fathers speak English very well. The mean number of years respondents' mothers have lived in the United States was 26.27 and for fathers it was 28.37. Relating to family proximity, a majority of respondents (80 percent) reported that they and their parents lived in the same household. The average number of close relatives respondents have living in the metropolitan Los Angeles area is 20.77compared to 18.06 for the total immigrant survey sample.

(TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE)

Regarding respondents' second language abilities, most respondents said they grew up speaking a language other than English at home (81 percent). Respondents most frequently responded that they speak (56 percent), understand (69 percent), and read (36 percent) that language very well, and that they write it well (32 percent) or very well (29 percent).

Participation in Ethnic Organizations

A logistic regression was also used to predict participation in in organizations related to respondents' parents' country of origin (ethnic organizations). Results are presented in Table 5. Model 1 looks at the individual characteristics of respondents that represent the straight-line assimilation and dominant status variables. Education was highly significant as the likelihood of participation increased 25.4 percent with each one level increase in education. Being married also depressed participation significantly as married respondents were nearly half as likely to

participate in ethnic organizations as single respondents. The other variables were not significant at any level.

Model 2 incorporates community and family context variables that represent ethnic resources. Both education and being married remained significant at the same levels. Among the ethnicity variables, only Filipinos and Other Asians were significant being three to four and a half times more likely to participate than respondents who identified their ethnicity as White. Having close relatives in the Los Angeles metropolitan area is not significant. However, the number of close relatives in the area is significant, indicating a slightly increased likelihood of participation as the number of relatives nearby increases. Language variables are also significant if the respondent is literate in their parents' language. What language respondents grew up speaking at home was not significant, while being able to understand, speak, and read or write their parents' language was significant. Being able to understand, speak, and read or write that language more than doubles the likelihood of participation in ethnic organizations. The dramatic increase in chi-square from 84.9 to 239.7 indicates that ethnic resource variables are better predictors of ethnic participation than are the variables measuring dominant status.

Model 3 added control variables including parents' background. The same variables that were significant in Model 2 were significant in Model 3, in addition to the variable indicating whether respondents can understand and speak their parents' language. Among the control variables, the only significant characteristic was having a mother with a college education, which increases the likelihood of participation.

(TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE)

Participation in Community Organizations

Logistic regression was also used to predict participation as indicated in belonging to community groups and organizations. Results are presented in Table 6. Model 1 refers to the individual characteristics of respondents that represent dominant status and straight-line assimilation variables again. Results differ from the ethnic organization analysis. While education is again highly significant, in this analysis having higher income levels and higher occupational status are also significant and increases the likelihood of participation by close to 50 percent. Marital status is not significant.

Model 2 adds ethnic resource variables to the analysis. The variables which were significant in Model 1 were again significant at the same levels in Model 2. Among ethnic variables, most categories were significant with the exception of Mexicans, Other Latinos, Other Asians, and Blacks. Of the significant ethnicities, all were half as likely to belong to community organizations as White respondents. Again, while having close relatives in the Los Angeles metropolitan area is not significant, the number of close relatives in the area is significant indicating a slightly increased likelihood of participation as the number of relatives nearby increase. Language characteristics were not significant. The chi-square values also increased in this model.

Model 3 incorporates control variables into the analysis. The same variables that were significant in Model 2 remained significant in Model 3 with the exception of ethnicity: the Salvadoran/Guatemalan ethnic group is no longer significant. Age was significant, although the likelihood of participation as age increases only increases by about 3 percent. Both mothers' and fathers' educational status are significant; respondents with parents who have achieved a college education or a vocational or trade school education were roughly 30 to 80 percent more likely to

participate in community organizations than those with parents who had a high school education or less. Parents' English proficiency was also significant. Interestingly, respondents with mothers who do not speak English well or at all are about a third less likely to participate although those with fathers who do not speak English well or at all are about a third more likely to participate than those with parents who speak it well or very well.

(TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE)

Discussion

The first hypothesis connects dominant status characteristics, or variables indicating straight-line assimilation, to participation in ethnic organizations. Some socially dominant traits prove to be significant predictors of participation, namely education and being married. However, while education is positively associated with participation, being married is not. Dominant status variables are not reliable predictors of participation in ethnic organizations. In contrast, membership in community organizations is correlated with dominant status characteristics, or variables indicating structural and cultural assimilation. All dominant socioeconomic characteristics were significant predictors of participation in community organizations. Thus, it appears that participation in ethnic organizations does not follow the dominant status or assimilation patterns apparent in community organization participation.

Results from the analysis on ethnic organization participants support my second hypothesis that participation in ethnic organizations is correlated with access to ethnic resources, while participation in community organizations partially supports this hypothesis. Having larger numbers of close relatives in the Los Angeles metropolitan area and literacy in the respondents' parents' language are significant predictors of participation among ethnic organization participants. The findings for these variables are consistent with the literature on neighbors and

close ties. I infer that having relatives nearby – and potentially others of the same ethnic group – leads to an increase in interaction and opportunities to utilize ethnic resources and characteristics within their cultural context, i.e., speaking their native language more often and more fluently. However, the only ethnic resource characteristic that was significantly linked to participation among community organization was the number of close relatives living in the Los Angeles metropolitan area. It is not clear that proximity to relatives is associated with greater access to ethnic resources, although the descriptive statistics show that participants in ethnic organizations have more relatives nearby (an average of 20.71) than do participants in community organizations (17.76). Taking the literature into account, ethnic resources play a larger role in localized ethnic community organizations that address their cultural needs and desires. The difference could be due to the proximity of respondents to their ethnic community apart from family members, which this study does not take into account.

Chi-square results also support the hypothesis that participation is more correlated with access to ethnic resources. In both models, the chi-square increased after ethnic resource variables were added. This indicates a better fit and that ethnic resources better explain participation than dominant status measures. The third hypothesis remains unsupported by my analysis as dominant status/assimilation variables tended to maintain their significance (or insignificance) as ethnic resources and control variables were introduced.

Conclusion

I have combined the perspectives found in two different literatures – the literature on citizen participation in community organizations, and the race and ethnic relations literature that addresses the role of ethnic resources and organizations in the assimilation process – to learn more about participation in voluntary organizations among adult children of immigrants.

Specifically, this study has looked at the characteristics of a sample of adult children of immigrants compared them with the subgroup of participants in ethnic organizations.

According to Wandersman and Florin's (2000) framework of participation, understanding who participates and their characteristics is a critical step toward further research on participation in ethnic organizations. In this framework, the next steps are to analyze the characteristics of organizations that are considered to be ethnic organizations and the effects of participation in these types of organizations. The present study affirms the significance of ethnic resources in participation in ethnic organizations. Given the existing literature on participation in ethnic college organizations, my results suggest that participation in broader ethnic organizations has an effect on the assimilation and acculturation processes among second generation immigrant populations. Participation in organizations is the means by which many people and groups support their goals, gain access to resources, make visible their challenges, express themselves culturally, engage in social activities, and make their voices heard. Participation "is said to be a force for creating a sense of community and a sense of control over our lives and institutions" (Wandersman 1987: 534), and is a platform for asserting a sense of identity (Cornell and Hartmann 2007). My results illuminate an aspect of community or social life that has the potential to influence both immigrant ethnic groups and ethnic group members. Knowing who participates in ethnic organizations is an essential first step in the efforts to increase participation and the positive benefits that derive from it.

Immigrants are typically inclined to assimilate and take on dominant features of their host society, but how they do this does not always involve giving up their culture. There seem to be many paths to assimilation that vary with the different sets of ethnic resources available to immigrant groups. One path toward assimilation is through participation. Being involved in

ethnic organizations allows immigrants and their children to learn to adjust to society while maintaining their cultural and ethnic identities. Participation also provides access to resources and opportunities that assist group members' adjustment to the larger society. However, characteristics of participants vary depending on the context of the organizations in which individuals participate. Including more information regarding the characteristics of the organizations themselves in future studies, as Wandersman and Florin suggest (2000), will help develop a clearer picture of participation. Having more details about ethnic organizations may also provide more information about what types of participation are associated with features of assimilation, cultural maintenance, and cultural pluralism. This information may give us a better idea of what kinds of activities and organizations aid, or perhaps even impede, different aspects of immigrant integration into American society.

The findings in this study show that participants in ethnic organizations have a propensity for cultural pluralism through characteristics that indicate adaptation to the larger society (e.g., participants having characteristics typical of the dominant group) and characteristics that indicate differences (i.e., high levels of second language skills). A follow up to this study could look at the geographic concentrations of respondents to see if they reside among others with similar ethnic backgrounds. Los Angeles has many ethnic enclaves and concentrations of many ethnic groups, and ethnic resources are specific to each group (Cornell and Hartmann 2007). Studies are needed of the contexts of each specific ethnic group and associated participation patterns.

Ethnic college organization participation research may provide a guide for future studies designed to clarify participation in the larger ethnic and immigrant population. Future research on organizational participation also has potential impacts for policymakers who must deal with the growing ethnic and immigrant populations in the United States. By understanding more about

how organizational participation affects these populations, they can develop better policies and methods for reaching out to their communities, fostering more participation in the larger society, and helping more people get the resources and help that they need. The present study is a small step in that direction.

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Figure 1. Wandersman and Florin's (2000: 249) Framework of Participation

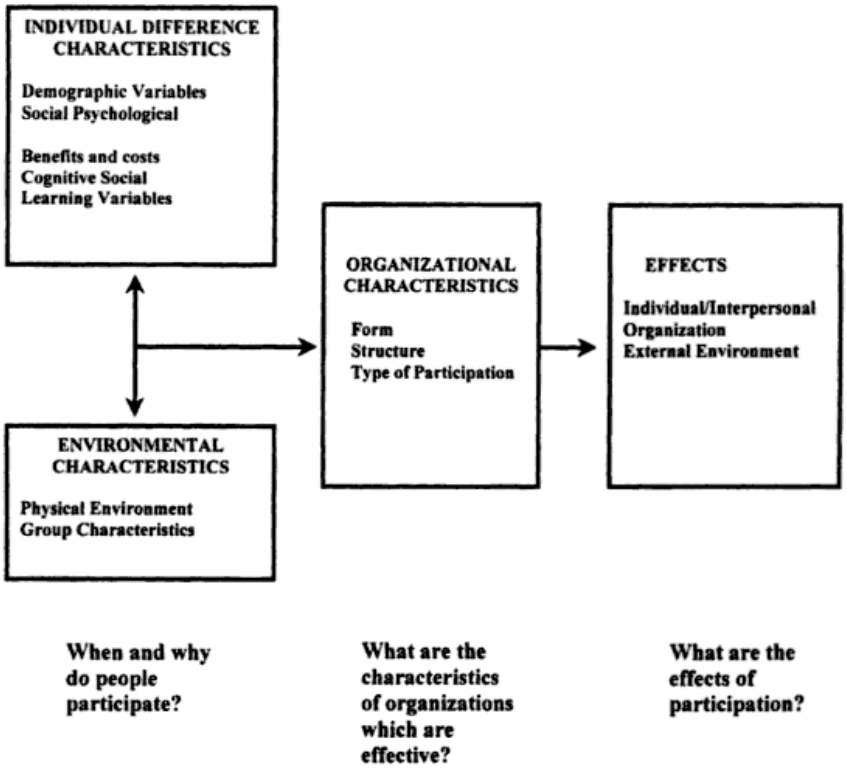

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Individual Characteristics/Social Background Variables, IIMMLA 2004 (N = 4,655)

Variables	*Mean*	*SD*	*Min.*	*Max.*
Dependent variables				
Participation in parents' country of origin group				
Yes	0.08	0.27	0	1
No	0.92	0.27	0	1
Belong to community group/organization				
Yes	0.20	0.40	0	1
No	0.80	0.40	0	1
Individual Characteristics				
Socioeconomic Status				
Education level attained	14.29	2.276	8	20
Total 2003 personal income*	3.71	1.717	1	8
Occupational prestige	49.71	21.32	6	96
Ethnicity				
Mexican	0.27	0.44	0	1
Salvadoran/Guatemalan	0.08	0.27	0	1
Other Latino	0.04	0.20	0	1
Chinese	0.09	0.28	0	1
Korean	0.09	0.28	0	1
Vietnamese	0.09	0.28	0	1
Filipino	0.09	0.28	0	1
Other Asian	0.02	0.14	0	1
White	0.15	0.36	0	1
Black	0.10	0.29	0	1
Generational cohort				
1.5	0.35	0.48	0	1
2nd	0.39	0.49	0	1
3rd	0.08	0.27	0	1
4th +	0.18	0.39	0	1
Other Characteristics				
Age	28.52	6.15	20	40
Gender (Male)	0.49	0.50	0	1
Marital Status				
Single, never married	0.51	0.50	0	1
Married	0.34	0.47	0	1
Cohabiting	0.08	0.27	0	1
Divorced, separated, or other	0.07	0.25	0	1

* Coded 1=nothing, 2 = less than $12,000, 3 = $12,000 - $19,999, 4= $20,000 - $29,999, 5 = $30,000 - $49,999, 6 = $50,000 - $69,999, 7= $70,000 - $99,999, 8= $100,000 or more.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Family Characteristics/Contextual Variables, IIMMLA 2004 (N = 4,655)

Variables	*Mean*	*SD*	*Min.*	*Max.*
Parental Acculturation and Assimilation				
Education level – Mother				
Did not complete high school	0.23	0.42	0	1
High school	0.30	0.46	0	1
Vocational or trade school	0.03	0.18	0	1
Some college	0.16	0.37	0	1
College graduate	0.22	0.41	0	1
Graduate school	0.06	0.23	0	1
Education level – Father				
Did not complete high school	0.19	0.39	0	1
High school	0.29	0.45	0	1
Vocational or trade school	0.03	0.17	0	1
Some college	0.13	0.34	0	1
College graduate	0.24	0.43	0	1
Graduate school	0.12	0.33	0	1
How well mother speaks English				
Very well	0.28	0.45	0	1
Well	0.32	0.47	0	1
Not well	0.31	0.46	0	1
Not at all	0.09	0.29	0	1
How well father speaks English				
Very well	0.34	0.47	0	1
Well	0.35	0.48	0	1
Not well	0.22	0.41	0	1
Not at all	0.08	0.28	0	1
Years in the US				
Number of years mother lived in US	26.44	10.45	0	85
Number of years father lived in US	27.29	11.69	0	87
Family Proximity				
Parents living in household				
Yes	0.73	0.44	0	1
No	0.27	0.44	0	1
Number of close relatives in LA metro (not HH)	18.06	23.616	0	99
Second Language				
Growing up speaking language other than English at home				
Yes	0.64	0.48	0	1
No	0.36	0.48	0	1
How well do you speak (Language)				
Very well	0.48	0.50	0	1
Well	0.35	0.48	0	1
Not well	0.16	0.36	0	1
Not at all	0.01	0.08	0	1
How well do you understand (Language)				
Very well	0.62	0.49	0	1
Well	0.32	0.47	0	1
Not well	0.06	0.24	0	1
Not at all	0.00	0.05	0	1

How well do you read (Language)				
Very well	0.35	0.48	0	1
Well	0.27	0.44	0	1
Not well	0.25	0.43	0	1
Not at all	0.13	0.33	0	1
How well do you write (Language)				
Very well	0.25	0.44	0	1
Well	0.25	0.43	0	1
Not well	0.32	0.47	0	1
Not at all	0.18	0.38	0	1

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Individual Characteristics/Social Background Variables for Ethnic Organization Participants, IIMMLA 2004 ($N = 281$)

Variables	*Mean*	*SD*	*Min.*	*Max.*
Individual Characteristics				
Socioeconomic Status				
Education level attained	15.35	2.04	8	20
Total 2003 personal income*	3.84	1.82	1	8
Occupational prestige (Jason's)	46.50	21.76	6	93
Ethnicity				
Mexican	0.15	0.36	0	1
Salvadoran/Guatemalan	0.06	0.24	0	1
Other Latino	0.04	0.20	0	1
Chinese	0.08	0.27	0	1
Korean	0.14	0.35	0	1
Vietnamese	0.13	0.34	0	1
Filipino	0.21	0.41	0	1
Other Asian	0.06	0.25	0	1
White	0.09	0.29	0	1
Black	0.03	0.18	0	1
Generational cohort				
1.5	0.41	0.49	0	1
2nd	0.59	0.49	0	1
3rd	0.00	0.00	0	1
4th +	0.00	0.00	0	1
Other Characteristics				
Age	27.80	6.11	20	40
Gender (Male)	0.46	0.50	0	1
Marital Status				
Single, never married	0.63	0.48	0	1
Married	0.27	0.44	0	1
Cohabiting	0.05	0.21	0	1
Divorced, separated, or other	0.06	0.23	0	1

* Coded 1=nothing, 2 = less than $12,000, 3 = $12,000 - $19,999, 4= $20,000 - $29,999, 5 = $30,000 - $49,999, 6 = $50,000 - $69,999, 7= $70,000 - $99,999, 8= $100,000 or more.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for Family Characteristics/Contextual Variables for Ethnic Organization Participants, IIMMLA 2004 ($N = 281$)

Variables	*Mean*	*SD*	*Min.*	*Max.*
Parental Acculturation and Assimilation				
Education level – Mother				
Did not complete high school	0.14	0.35	0	1
High school	0.21	0.41	0	1
Vocational or trade school	0.05	0.21	0	1
Some college	0.18	0.38	0	1
College graduate	0.34	0.47	0	1
Graduate school	0.09	0.28	0	1
Education level – Father				
Did not complete high school	0.10	0.31	0	1
High school	0.16	0.36	0	1
Vocational or trade school	0.05	0.21	0	1
Some college	0.14	0.34	0	1
College graduate	0.33	0.47	0	1
Graduate school	0.23	0.42	0	1
How well mother speaks English				
Very well	0.40	0.49	0	1
Well	0.32	0.47	0	1
Not well	0.23	0.42	0	1
Not at all	0.05	0.23	0	1
How well father speaks English				
Very well	0.46	0.50	0	1
Well	0.32	0.47	0	1
Not well	0.15	0.36	0	1
Not at all	0.07	0.26	0	1
Years in the US				
Number of years mother lived in US	26.27	10.33	2	75
Number of years father lived in US	28.37	12.41	2	78
Family Proximity				
Parents living in household				
Yes	0.80	0.40	0	1
No	0.20	0.40	0	1
Number of close relatives in LA metro (not HH)	20.77	26.151	0	99
Second Language				
Growing up speaking language other than English at home				
Yes	0.81	0.39	0	1
No	0.18	0.39	0	1
How well do you speak (Language)				
Very well	0.56	0.50	0	1
Well	0.32	0.47	0	1
Not well	0.11	0.31	0	1
Not at all	0.00	0.07	0	1
How well do you understand (Language)				
Very well	0.69	0.46	0	1
Well	0.26	0.44	0	1
Not well	0.04	0.21	0	1
Not at all	0.00	0.00	0	1

How well do you read (Language)				
Very well	0.36	0.49	0	1
Well	0.35	0.48	0	1
Not well	0.18	0.39	0	1
Not at all	0.09	0.28	0	1
How well do you write (Language)				
Very well	0.29	0.45	0	1
Well	0.32	0.47	0	1
Not well	0.26	0.44	0	1
Not at all	0.13	0.34	0	1

Table 5. Logistic Regression Odds Ratios, Ethnic Organization Participation IIMMLA 2004 (*N* = 4,655)

Explanatory Variables	*Model 1*	*Model 2*	*Model 3*
Education			
Education level attained	1.254***	1.235***	1.191***
Income			
Low	1.154	1.071	1.030
Middle	-----	-----	-----
High	1.021	0.988	0.918
Occupational Status			
Low	0.808	0.968	1.028
Middle	-----	-----	-----
High	0.953	1.031	1.010
Gender			
Males	0.898	0.929	0.918
Females	-----	-----	-----
Marital Status			
Single	-----	-----	-----
Married	0.592***	0.592**	0.639*
Other	0.679	0.785	0.872
Ethnicity			
White		-----	-----
Mexican		0.716	0.820
Salvadoran/Guatemalan		0.683	0.639
Other Latino		0.957	0.750
Chinese		0.846	0.682
Korean		1.450	1.119
Vietnamese		1.457	1.364
Filipino		3.408***	2.119**
Other Asian		4.585***	3.433**
Black		0.754	1.100
Close Relatives in Los Angeles Metropolitan Area			
Yes		2.109	1.935
No		-----	-----
Number of Close Relatives in Los Angeles Metropolitan Areas		1.006*	1.006*
Language Preference Growing Up			
Spoke language other than English at home		-----	-----
Spoke only English at home		0.663	0.797
Literacy in Parents' Language			
Can't Understand		-----	-----
Understand Only		0.657	0.621
Understand and Speak		0.916	0.818
Also Read and Write		2.344**	2.206**
Controls			
Age			1.002

Mother's Educational Status			
High School			-----
College			1.494*
Other			1.643
Father's Educational Status			
High School			-----
College			1.339
Other			1.917
Mother's English Proficiency			
Well			-----
Not Well			0.864
Father's English Proficiency			
Well			-----
Not Well			0.985
No. of Years Mother has been in the U.S.			
Not Reported			0.440
10 or Less			-----
More than 10			1.270
No. of Years Father has been in the U.S.			
Not Reported			1.034
10 or Less			-----
More than 10			1.099
Chi-Square	84.911	239.688	283.585
Constant	-5.843	-6.965	-6.705

* p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Table 6. Logistic Regression Odds Ratios, Community Organization Participation IIMMLA 2004 (*N* = 4,655)

Explanatory Variables	*Model 1*	*Model 2*	*Model 3*
Education			
Education level attained	1.254***	1.285***	1.238***
Income			
Low	0.984	0.998	1.061
Middle	-----	-----	-----
High	1.434*	1.507*	1.461*
Occupational Status			
Low	0.959	0.895	0.912
Middle	-----	-----	-----
High	1.368**	1.356**	1.313**
Gender			
Males	1.120	1.151	1.147
Females	-----	-----	-----
Marital Status			
Single	-----	-----	-----
Married	1.034	0.931	0.870
Other	0.993	0.882	0.849
Ethnicity			
White		-----	-----
Mexican		0.773	0.956
Salvadoran/Guatemalan		0.567**	0.703
Other Latino		0.969	0.954
Chinese		0.541***	0.561**
Korean		0.451***	0.473***
Vietnamese		0.431***	0.532**
Filipino		0.507***	0.453***
Other Asian		0.753	0.782
Black		0.748	0.763
Close Relatives in Los Angeles Metropolitan Area			
Yes		1.131	1.113
No		-----	-----
Number of Close Relatives in Los Angeles Metropolitan Areas		1.005**	1.005**
Language Preference Growing Up			
Spoke language other than English at home		-----	-----
Spoke only English at home		0.975	0.933
Literacy in Parents' Language			
Can't Understand		-----	-----
Understand Only		1.024	1.011
Understand and Speak		1.032	1.075
Also Read and Write		0.905	0.940
Controls			
Age			1.027**

Mother's Educational Status			
High School			-----
College			1.441***
Other			1.749**
Father's Educational Status			
High School			-----
College			1.330**
Other			1.841**
Mother's English Proficiency			
Well			-----
Not Well			0.702**
Father's English Proficiency			
Well			-----
Not Well			1.330*
No. of Years Mother has been in the U.S.			
Not Reported			1.374
10 or Less			-----
More than 10			1.452
No. of Years Father has been in the U.S.			
Not Reported			0.801
10 or Less			-----
More than 10			0.785
Chi-square	282.213	345.171	414.792
Constant	-4.969	-5.052	-5.754

* p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001