Race, Neighborhood Poverty and Participation in Voluntary Associations

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February 2000

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Abstract

This paper examines racial differences in participation in voluntary associations. It extends past research by accounting for the influence of neighborhood poverty on participation. Using unique data from the 1993/94 Los Angeles Survey of Urban Inequality (LASUI), the analysis reveals that neighborhood poverty is significantly related to the number of associations to which individuals belong, even when considering differences in personal and other residential characteristics. Moreover, once neighborhood poverty is taken into account, blacks participate in more voluntary associations than do whites and other groups, while Asians participate the least. Evidence supports the ethnic community theory of blacks' greater participation as blacks living in black communities participate in more organizations, particularly in ones that are political, than blacks who do not.

Keywords: race, neighborhood poverty, participation, voluntary associations.

Introduction

The growing interest in social capital in recent years by sociologists has led to renewed concern over community participation in America. A concern over participation dates back to Tocqueville (1835) who argued that the joining of voluntary associations was intimately and positively intertwined with the functioning of American democracy. Civic participation is important not only because of its influence on individuals' voting behavior and their interest in public affairs (Verba, et al., 1993b; Sallach, et. al., 1972; Almond and Verba, 1963), but also because it is a pathway to building social capital (Kaufman, 1999; Bourdieu, 1983). By participating in civic organizations, individuals build social relationships and access social resources that are likely to enhance their social and economic prospects. Although there is great disagreement over whether or not civic participation has declined in America in recent decades (Paxton, 1999; Putman, 1995), there is less debate about the benefits gained by individuals and society from participation.

Since participation in voluntary associations likely positively influences the social and economic outcomes of individuals, differences in associationalism may lead to or reinforce social or economic disadvantages of particular groups. Considering this interpretation and given the longstanding concern in sociology over racial inequality in the U.S., racial differences in civic participation could have large implications for blacks, or other minority groups, disadvantage in society, particularly if these groups are found to participate less. Past research indicates that once relevant factors were taken into account, blacks participated more than whites in voluntary associations, particularly in the 1960s and 70s, suggesting that blacks' disadvantaged position was not likely worsened by lower levels of participation. However, changes in the economic, political, and social landscape of the U.S. in the years since the civil rights movement, in particular the rise of concentrated poverty neighborhoods among blacks and Latinos (Jargowsky, 1997; Wilson, 1987) and the decline in influence of the civil rights movement, have most likely changed the face of participation in voluntary associations for racial/ethnic groups. Yet little of the current research on

civic participation has focused on whether blacks and other minority groups participate to a greater or lesser degree than whites in voluntary associations. Thus, it is unclear whether differences in participation in voluntary associations exist among racial/ethic groups in this more recent period in the U.S. since researchers have overlooked key structural factors, namely the rise of concentrated poverty in neighborhoods, which has become increasingly important in minority communities since the civil rights movement.

This paper examines racial differences in participation in voluntary associations. Using unique data from the 1994 Los Angeles Survey of Urban Inequality (LASUI), which includes Latino and Asian American samples, it extends past research by accounting for the influence of neighborhood poverty on participation. Motivated by Wilson's (1987) urban underclass theory, a large body of research has developed that examines whether residence in poor areas disadvantages individuals along a number of dimensions including welfare receipt and dropping out of school (Vartanian, 1997; Elliot, et. al., 1996; Brooks-Gunn, et. al, 1993). However, little of this research has focused on whether residence in poor areas is associated with participation in voluntary associations. The research does exist in this area focuses on public opinion and political participation, but does not address whether race differences in participation exist once one considers the influence of neighborhoods (Cohen and Dawson, 1993).

Participation, Race and Poverty

In the past, researchers focused on examining racial and ethnic (in particular black and white) differences in participation because of the importance of race in the U.S. In the 1960s and early 70s, researchers who studied participation reached consensus on three points. First, using data from the 1950s and early 60s researchers found that, on average, blacks tended to participate in fewer voluntary associations than whites (Wright and Hyman, 1958), leading scholars to believe that isolation and cultural inhibition explained blacks' lower levels of participation. Second, using data from the 60s and 70s and after controlling for racial differences in socioeconomic status, researchers

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found that the pattern reversed: blacks tended to participate more than whites (Cohen and Kapsis, 1978; Antunes and Gaitz, 1975; Williams, Jr., et. al., 1973; Olsen, 1970; Orum, 1966). Black-white differences in social and political participation were attributed to the tendency of whites to have considerably higher socioeconomic status than blacks. Socioeconomic status, as measured by education, occupation and income, is known to correlate positively with participation. During this same 1960 to 1970 period, researchers found that Latinos' participated less than whites, but that this difference could be entirely explained by Latinos' low socio-economic status (Antunes and Gaitz, 1975; Williams, Jr., et. al., 1973).

Third, researchers reached a consensus that a strong sense of ethnic community, as opposed to compensatory behavior, was the stimulus for higher levels of participation by blacks. The compensatory theory, which has its roots in the work of Myrdal, et. al. (1944), suggests that due to their subordinate status and inability to achieve goals in a hostile, white society, blacks compensate by participating in predominately black organizations, usually ones that are expressive in nature, such as social clubs (Babchuk and Thompson, 1962; Orum, 1966). On the other hand, the ethnic community model argues that membership in subordinate minority communities leads people to develop strong feelings of group consciousness and attachment. This phenomenon encourages the emergence of group norms that prompt community leaders to demand action to improve the status of the group (Olsen, 1970; Verba and Nie, 1972; Williams, et al., 1973; McPherson, 1977).

A strategy researchers use to evaluate compensatory and ethnic community theories of blacks' greater participation includes categorizing the types of associations according to their purpose and then evaluating whether blacks participate in them more or less than whites. Researchers categorize organizations as either expressive or instrumental (Woodard, 1986; Gordon and Babchuk, 1959). Expressive organizations, such as social clubs and sports organizations, provide pleasurable interaction among members and participants often attend them to increase their self-esteem. These organizations are associated with compensatory behavior. On the other hand,

instrumental organizations, such as political and PTA associations, are task-oriented and individuals participate in them to influence the creation or maintenance of a desired condition. These organizations are associated with ethnic community processes. Thus, if blacks participate more in expressive or instrumental organizations than whites, support is found for the compensatory or ethnic community theory, respectively.[1]

In this more recent period, it is unclear whether ethnic community processes are still prompting blacks to participate more than other groups. Since the 1960s and 70s, much of the civil rights fervor and activities that swept through black communities and that greatly influenced blacks to participate in associations have likely diminished. Moreover, blacks have made enormous strides in socio-economic status both absolutely and relative to whites in part due to the tearing down of legal barriers in the 1960s and 1970s that prevented blacks from fully participating in American social, political and economic life and to the institutionalization of strong anti-discrimination and affirmative action efforts in the 1970s (Jaynes, 1990). As a result of these events, it is arguable that in the 1990s the need for blacks to participate more than whites in voluntary organizations has likely diminished. Recent evidence on participation seems to suggest that this is true. Using data from the 1980s, research indicates that after controlling for socioeconomic status and other relevant characteristics, blacks participate in politically based civic associations and events to the same degree as whites (Ellison and Gay, 1989; Bobo and Gilliam, 1990; Verba, et. al., 1993).[2] These findings tempt the reader to conclude that the importance of race in understanding patterns of participation in voluntary associations has declined.

However, since the 1970s, there have been tremendous structural transformations in society and the economy that have led to the spatial redistribution of disadvantage. Key among these changes is that poverty has become much more concentrated in the U.S., with blacks and Latinos disproportionately represented amongst those living in poor neighborhoods (Jargowsky, 1997). The increase in the concentration of poverty in neighborhoods is likely to have spurred changes in the

social structure of poor neighborhoods. Because of the increasing geographic concentration of poor people, the poor are increasingly socially isolated from mainstream institutions of work, education, and government, among other things, and mainly interact with others who are also poor (Tigges, et.a al., 1998). In particular, Wilson (1987) argues that over the 1980s the black poor have become increasingly socially isolated from mainstream institutions as a result of structural changes in the economy since the late 1960s that led to the movement of low-skill jobs out of inner-cities and to the migration of black middle-class role models out of inner-city areas. Given these changes in the social structure of poor neighborhoods, residence in them, according to Wilson, is likely to negatively influence the social and economic prospects of residents because they are unlikely to have access to positive role models, social resources, and information that is important for upward mobility in mainstream society. Research on the influence of neighborhoods provides support for these expectations, as residents in areas characterized by disadvantage are more likely to drop out of school, receive welfare, be victimized by crime, and have worse labor market outcomes than those who live in more advantaged communities, though there is some controversy over precisely how neighborhoods matter in influencing these outcomes (Sampson, et. al., 1997; Vartanian, 1997; Elliot, et. al., 1996; Green, et. al., 1995; Brooks-Gunn, et. al, 1993; Jencks and Mayer, 1990).

Given the importance of the influence of neighborhoods on individual outcomes, there are two main reasons why neighborhood context may affect participation in voluntary associations. The first takes into account the role of peer influences on participation. Neighborhood influences that stem from interactions with close social ties are likely to affect the individual's choice to participate in voluntary associations. For example, residents of poor neighborhoods are less likely to have access to a college-educated discussion partner than residents in more advantaged areas (Tigges, et al., 1998). Given that highly educated persons are more likely to participate in voluntary organizations (Brady, et. al., 1995; Orum, 1966), residents in poor areas are likely to participate less

because they are unlikely to be connected to the people that would positively influence their

participation in voluntary associations.

The second reason residents in poor neighborhoods may participate less in voluntary

associations is that they possess fewer opportunities to do so. There may be fewer voluntary

associations organized in high-poverty areas and residents may have fewer occasions to participate.

Neighborhood disadvantage, characterized by lack of social resources, such as people with money,

education or jobs, and institutions that serve neighborhoods, place barriers on the ability of residents

to start and maintain voluntary associations. This view is consistent with classic work of Shaw and

McKay (1942) on the social ecology of neighborhoods and with more contemporary studies of social

disorganization and urban poverty (Bursik, 1988). In these studies, it is thought that neighborhood

disadvantage grows over time to disrupt the social organizational process in neighborhoods by

weakening institutional and informal support for socialization.

Due to the growing understanding of the importance of neighborhood influence on social,

political and economic outcomes of individuals, the failure to include neighborhood quality

variables in previous models of participation suggests that estimates of racial differences in these

measures are incorrect. More specifically, if neighborhood poverty is associated with lower

levels of participation, and if blacks and other minority groups are over-represented in poorer

neighborhoods, previous estimates have likely understated the white-black difference in

participation in voluntary organizations.

Data, Description of Main Variables and Hypotheses for Participation

The primary data set used to examine racial differences in participation is the Los Angeles

Survey of Urban Inequality (LASUI). LASUI is a sample of single housing units (N = 4,025) with

approximately equal proportions of four racial/ethnic groups residing in Los Angeles County. The

survey, undertaken in 1994, is a stratified probability sample of households in the county by

income/poverty level and racial/ethnic composition of census tracts. All participants in the survey are at least 21 years old. Concentrated poverty areas were oversampled and the data file contains weights used throughout the analysis that adjust for both the oversampling and differential probabilities of selection due to household size. The LASUI data has been compared to 1990 *US Census* data within each major racial/ethnic category with respect to age, sex, nativity, education, and occupation. The sample data closely parallels *US Census* distributions for each variable within each racial/ethnic category. 4025 interviews were completed from 5,885 potentially eligible households for an overall 'raw' response rate of 68 percent. Adjusting the response rate by excluding nonrespondents raises the response rate estimate to 73 percent. The final results included the responses of 867 nonHispanic whites, 1119 blacks, 988 Latinos/Hispanics, and 1055 Asian Americans (Johnson, Oliver, and Bobo, 1994).

LASUI is unique because it contains information about respondents' residential locations as well as data on participation in civic organizations. This analysis uses LASUI data restricted to white, black, Latino and Asian respondents with complete information regarding variables used in this analysis. The lack of complete geocode information, which contains data on the respondent's residential census tract to which data on neighborhood poverty is attached, was the main reason causing the elimination of cases. F-tests indicate no statistical differences in the regression coefficients for personal variables between the full sample and the restricted sample (i.e., excluding those without complete information), suggesting little, if any, sample selection bias as a result of restricting the sample to those with complete information. After excluding those without complete information for variables included in this analysis, the sample consists of 756 nonHispanic whites, 962 nonHispanic blacks, 885 Latino/Hispanics, and 716 Asians.[3]

The main dependent variable in the analysis includes a count variable of the number of organizations to which respondents' belong. Following previous research, the number of organizations respondents belong to is measured simply by the total number of associations in which

respondents participate (Baumgartner and Walker, 1988). LASUI asked respondents whether or not they had participated in up to seven types of organization meetings in the last year prior to the survey. These organizations include: neighborhood or block associations; PTA or school related groups; social clubs or sports teams; political organizations; business or professional organizations; church-related groups; and ethnic or cultural organizations.

One problem with the LASUI participation questions is that they may underestimate the actual number of voluntary associations to which individuals belong. There are two critical factors influencing this error. First, the structure of these participation questions in LASUI is unlikely to count multiple memberships within an organization type. Baumgartner and Walker (1988) show that within categories of organizations (e.g., political organizations) individuals are likely to have multiple memberships. Since LASUI simply asks whether a respondent has attended meetings for a particular type of organization, it does not contain information about how many different meetings they attended within that organization type.[4]

The second factor influencing underestimation of the true number of voluntary affiliations is that LASUI provides categorical questions on participation for only seven types of organizations. Some previous studies of participation rely on surveys that allow for open-ended answers to the question of how many voluntary organizations to which individuals claim membership (Orum, 1966). These surveys capture more accurately organizational affiliation because they allow respondents to identify affiliations with other organizations that may not be included in questionnaires that provide a predetermined set of organization participation questions. In addition, previous studies that do use a predetermined set of organization participation questions provide more questions on participation than does LASUI. For example, the standard set of questions on participation developed by Verba and Nie (1972) include participation questions for fifteen types of organizations, and Olsen (1970) includes thirteen questions. Since LASUI provides only seven

questions, results most probably show lower estimates of organization participation than previous surveys as a result of the survey structure.

The second set of dependent variables includes dummies indicating participation in each of the seven organizations listed above. These variables are included to evaluate ethnic community or compensatory theories of blacks' greater participation, particularly if blacks are found to participate more than other groups. To do this, the associations are categorized by type.[5] Based on reviews of the literature, instrumental voluntary association memberships in LASUI that correspond with ethnic community processes include neighborhood associations, PTAs, political organizations and business/professional groups, while expressive organizations that are associated with compensatory theories include sports organizations (Williams, eta l, 1973; Gordon and Babchuk, 1959; Jacoby and Babchuk, 1963). Following Woodard (1986), an expressive-instrumental category is also included to accommodate the special and unique role of the black church in communities. On one hand, membership in church associations is expressive because such associations serve the traditional function of providing meaning for life events and an avenue for social interaction. On the other hand, membership in black church associations is highly instrumental because the black church performs many task-oriented functions related to education and organized social protest, and also serves as a social service and local economic development agency. In addition, ethnic/cultural organizations may be categorized as an instrumental as well as an expressive organization because such groups also serve the same dual purposes as the black church.

The main independent variable in the analysis is a measure of neighborhood poverty: the percent of households in a census tract that is impoverished. LASUI uses poverty data from the 1990 *US Census* and provides census tract geocode information for respondents' residential location. Thus, in this study, census tracts are used as the spatial unit for neighborhoods, and the definition of geographic neighborhoods that coincides with census tract boundaries is consistent with previous studies (Plotnick and Hoffman, 1999; Dornbush et al. 1991). In addition, the use of poverty as an

indicator of neighborhood quality is consistent with previous work (Aaronson, 1998; Tigges, et. al., 1998; Vartanian, 1997).

Neighborhood poverty is a good measure of neighborhood quality for numerous reasons. First, neighborhood poverty indicates the overall level of resources and well being in a community as poverty is in part the manifestation of other factors in neighborhoods. These factors include a high rate of high school dropouts and female headed households, and a high unemployment rate. In addition, the use of neighborhood poverty is consistent with Wilson's (1987) focus on concentrated poverty neighborhoods. However, use of alternative neighborhood quality measures does not produce qualitatively dissimilar results than those shown in this paper.[6] The strong pairwise correlations between these variables (all over .50) may help to explain this.

Previous work on the influence of neighborhoods on a variety of individual-level social and economic outcomes suggests that neighborhood poverty will correlate negatively with participation. As highlighted earlier, one expects residents in poor neighborhoods to participate in fewer organizations because of influence of social ties with low socio-economic status and because neighborhood disadvantage is likely to disrupt the social organizational process and limit the institutional infrastructure for voluntary organizations to develop and in turn the opportunity to participate.

Panel A in Table I shows the unadjusted means of the main variables in this study for each racial/ethnic group. The results for the number of organizations to which individuals belong indicate that whites participate in more organizations than other groups. These results are consistent with past research on racial differences in participation (Williams, Jr., et. al., 1973; Olsen, 1970; Orum, 1966). The results by the number of organizations indicate that whites participate at equal rates with other racial groups in the greatest number of organizations' category, i.e., in 6 to 7 organizations. Thus, the greater participation of whites is not due to upward skewing of their participation distribution.

Panel A in Table I also shows the percentage of respondents who participate in voluntary organizations by their specific organizational type. Whites are more likely to participate in neighborhood associations, sports organizations and business/professional groups, and in comparison with Latinos and Asians, in political organizations. On the other hand, blacks are more likely than other groups to participate in church related and cultural/ethnic organizations. These results are also consistent with past research on participation (Williams, Jr., et. al., 1973).

Finally, panel A in Table I shows the mean neighborhood poverty rate for respondents. Blacks, Latinos and Asians live in neighborhoods with higher poverty rates than those in which whites reside. For example, while the mean neighborhood poverty rate for blacks is nearly 21 percent, the comparable rate for whites is 9 percent.

Panel B shows the mean number of organizations to which respondents belong, summarized by the poverty rate of the respondent's neighborhood. For this table, the neighborhood poverty rates are broken down into three general categories: less than 20 percent, 20 to 40 percent and greater than 40 percent. These categories follow the literature on neighborhood poverty and represent low, moderate and high poverty areas, respectively (Jargowsky, 1997; Ricketts and Sawhill, 1988; Wilson, 1987). The results indicate that for all groups the number of organizations to which respondents belong is greater for those in low, not moderate or high, poverty areas. Most interesting, blacks participate in more organizations than whites and other groups in all three poverty categories, while Latinos and Asians participate in the fewest. Thus, given the overrepresentation of blacks, Latinos, and Asians in poor areas and given that individuals participate in fewer organizations when they live in poor areas, neighborhood poverty can account for some of the observed racial differences in participation. What remains unclear is whether neighborhood poverty is a proxy for other indicators of disadvantage, such as income or education. To the extent that it is, neighborhood poverty is unlikely to exert an independent effect on participation. Regression analysis is needed to untangle these questions.

Empirical Model and Estimation Strategy

The main analysis examines whether neighborhood poverty is independently related to participation after controlling for other, personal level indicators of socio-economic status. Then, the analysis focuses on whether blacks and Latinos participate more or less than whites after the influence of neighborhood poverty on participation is taken into account. Poisson regression models are used to estimate the relationship between the number of organizations individuals belong to and neighborhood poverty because the main dependent variable in the analysis is a count variable. OLS estimates of count variables often result in biased and inconsistent estimates (Kennedy, 1998). Logit models are used to estimate the relationship between participation in specific organizations and neighborhood poverty.

One must consider that due to the LASUI survey design, the use of normal poisson and logit models likely introduces bias in estimating model coefficients and standard errors. LASUI uses a stratified sampling technique to insure oversampling of the poor and to minimize the costs of data collection on specific racial/ethnic groups. Thus, LASUI is a clustered sample on only 98 of the 1,652 census tracts in Los Angeles County. Because of this sampling technique, key estimating assumptions, such as random individual effects and uncorrelated and independent error terms necessary for unbiased and efficient coefficient estimates, are violated. More importantly, the usual standard errors and test statistics for the slope coefficients may be seriously biased (Moulton, 1990). Thus, the poisson and logit models estimated below also control for clustering by taking into account the nonindependence of observations within groups (i.e., census tracts).

The analysis is captured by the following set equations:

$$N_i = F_1(\beta' \chi_i + \delta' R_i + P_{ij}\phi + u_1) \tag{1}$$

$$\Pr_{ik}(O = 1) = F_2(\beta' \chi_i + \gamma' R_i + P_{ij}\zeta + u_2) \tag{2}$$

where N is the number of organizations to which i belongs, $F_1(z_1) = e^{\ln(n) + z_1}$ is the poisson distribution for Eq. (1) where n is assumed to be 1, $\Pr_{ik}(O=1)$ is equal to the probability of participation in the kth organization type for the ith individual and $F_2(z_2) = e^{z_2}/(1 + e^{z_2})$ is the cumulative logistic distribution in Eq. (2), χ represents a vector of personal background characteristic control variables for individual i, R_j is a vector of residential control variables for i, P_{ij} represents the continuous neighborhood poverty rate for the jth neighborhood in which individual i lives, and u_1 and u_2 represent random disturbance terms.[7]

Controls are included for personal background characteristics that could affect participation independently. Personal controls include continuous variables for age and the log of family income, and dummy variables for sex, marital status, educational attainment, school enrollment status, employment, retirement status, and if the respondents have pre-school or school age children.[8] The personal controls also include dummy variables for participation in high school organizations, English language ability, citizenship and immigration status, church attendance, and the race of respondents. Most of these personal control variables are included in equations from previous research (Verba, et. al., 1993a; Bobo and Gilliam, 1990; Williams, Jr., et. al., 1973; Olsen, 1970; Orum, 1966). Whether the respondent participated in high school organizations is also included in the model specifications to fully predict participation.[9]

Residential characteristic control variables are also included in the analysis. The influence of neighborhoods on participation may in part be predicated on time spent in neighborhoods. Recently arrived community members are less likely to be influenced by the neighborhood of current residence than those members who have longer residential tenures.[10] Thus, a continuous residential tenure variable (in months) is included in equations to control for this. Moreover, a control variable for renters is included to control for residential owner status. Renters are more mobile than

homeowners and thus are likely to participate less than those who own and have greater interests in their community. The means of these personal and residential characteristic variables are shown in Table A.I in the appendix.

Past research and general theory about participation provide insight into the expected relationship between the independent variables and participation. The relationships between the personal variables and participation will not be the focus of attention in this analysis because they have been well documented in previous research. Nonetheless, socio-economic status is expected to positively correlate with participation. Individuals with higher family income levels and higher levels of educational attainment are expected to participate more than those with lower socio-economic status (Schlozman, et. al., 1994; Verba, et. al., 1993a; Orum, 1966). Older individuals and those with greater time at their disposal, such as those who are retired, unemployed and who have school age children, are expected to participate more than those who are younger and have less time on their hands, such as those who are employed and those who have pre-school age children (Brady, et. al., 1995). In addition, individuals who have a history of participating, such as those who participated in high school and who attend church, are expected to participate more than those who have little history of community involvement. It is also anticipated that those who have difficulty speaking English, are not citizens or who are recent immigrants will be less likely to participate (Brady, et. al., 1995).

The presentation of regression results highlights first the sensitivity of the neighborhood poverty coefficient in the participation equation to the inclusion of personal and residential control variables. It then focuses on the sensitivity of the race dummy variables to the inclusion of neighborhood poverty into the participation equation. The first part of the analysis estimates the baseline neighborhood poverty effect on extensive participation and then systematically adds the personal background and residential characteristic variables into the equation. Examination of the

change in magnitude and significance of the neighborhood poverty coefficient after inclusion of such variables into the equation will determine whether, and to what extent, neighborhood poverty is independently related to extensive participation. The second part of the analysis estimates baseline racial differences in participation and then systematically adds the personal background, residential, and neighborhood poverty characteristic variables into the equation. Examination of the change in magnitude and significance of the race coefficients after inclusion of the neighborhood poverty variable into the equation will determine whether and to what extent neighborhood poverty accounts for the racial differences in participation.

Results

Models (1) through (3) in Table II highlight the poisson neighborhood poverty coefficient in the equation predicting the number of organizations to which respondents belong for the pooled sample. Model (1) estimates the baseline neighborhood poverty coefficient. The results indicate a significant and strong correlation between neighborhood poverty and the number of voluntary associations in the expected direction: that residents in poorer neighborhoods participate in fewer organizations. Model (2) adds personal and residential characteristic control variables into the equation: the estimated negative coefficient on neighborhood poverty declines by 76 percent, though still remaining statistically significant. Thus, differences in personal characteristics, including socio-economic status, among those living in neighborhoods with varying poverty rates account for a substantial amount, but not all, of the baseline neighborhood poverty effect on extensive participation. Model (3) adds the residential characteristic variables into the equation and shows the same patterns, although the neighborhood poverty coefficient declines by only 6 percent.

These results indicate that after controlling for relevant personal and residential characteristics, neighborhood poverty is strongly correlated with the number of organizations to which individuals belong.[11] Individuals who live in neighborhoods with lower poverty rates belong to a greater number of organizations than those who live in neighborhoods with higher poverty rates.

These findings indicate that neighborhood poverty is not a proxy for individual-level socio-economic characteristics, but that it is independently and negatively related to the number of organizations to which individuals belong.

The results of the other independent variables in the analysis are as expected. The only exception is the data on the influence of being employed on extensive participation. Employed persons belong to a greater number of organizations than those who are not employed. If unemployed persons spend their time looking for work or are engaged in household work or childcare activities, it is conceivable that they participate in fewer organizations because they have even less time than those who work. Another explanation of the findings might be that employed persons have more opportunities to participate in organizations as a result of job contacts, or because they perceive a need to participate for career-related reasons. As expected, older persons, less recent immigrants, those with greater family income and education, those who have school age children or attend church, participated in high school or are enrolled in school belong to more organizations than those who do not possess these characteristics.

A central concern of this paper is whether blacks participate in more organizations than whites once relevant personal characteristics and neighborhood poverty are taken into account. Though the discussion of the results in Table II does not focus on the racial/ethnic dummy variables, it indicates that in the full model specification, blacks, but not Latinos or Asians, participate in more organizations than whites. Table III provides a more focused sensitivity analysis of the racial/ethnic dummy variable coefficients for the number of organizations equations to the inclusion of the personal, residential and neighborhood poverty variables. The coefficient results of these variables are suppressed since they are identical to those in Table II.

Model (1) in Table III includes only black, Latino and Asian controls in the equation and indicates that all three groups participate in fewer organizations than whites. The results from this specification correspond to the mean racial/ethnic differences in the number of organizations

individuals belong to presented in Table I. They also provide baseline estimates of racial and ethnic

differences in extensive participation, against which the results from the more richly-specified

models will be compared. The model in column (2) adds neighborhood poverty into the basic

equation in column (1). The inclusion of neighborhood poverty into this equation increases the

coefficient for blacks by 230 percent and makes it positive and statistically significant. On the other

hand, the coefficients for Latinos and Asians increase by 47 and 6 percent, respectively, once

neighborhood poverty is included in the basic equation, but they still remain negative and statistically

significant. By itself, neighborhood poverty explains a small fraction of the differences in extensive

participation between whites and Asians, one-half between whites and Latinos, and all of the

differences between whites and blacks.

The model in column (3) adds the personal characteristics listed in Table II to the basic

specification in column (1). Adding personal control variables to this specification yields a large

decrease in the coefficient estimate for blacks and Latinos, and to some degree for Asians.

Controlling for personal characteristics substantially decreases the coefficients for black, Latino and

Asian relative to the results in column (1): about 153, 103, and 49 percent, respectively. More

importantly, the coefficients for black and Latino lose statistical significance. Differences in

personal characteristics between whites and blacks (Latinos) account for all of the racial differences

in extensive participation. These results are consistent with studies of participation for blacks and

whites using data from the 1980s, but they differ from results using data collected from earlier

periods, which show greater participation by blacks once differences in personal characteristics are

considered (Ellison and Gay, 1989; Bobo and Gilliam, 1990; Verba, et. al., 1993a).

The specification in column (4) adds residential characteristic control variables to the

specification in column (3). Adding the residential controls does not significantly change the

coefficients on black, Latino or Asian. Hence, racial and ethnic differences in extensive participation

appear to not be related to the length of time spent in neighborhood or to homeownership. In the

final column, the control for neighborhood poverty is added to the specification in column (4). Once neighborhood poverty is included in the equation, the coefficient estimate for blacks becomes larger in magnitude and significant, indicating blacks participate in more organizations than whites, all else equal. No substantial changes are observed for the coefficients for Latinos or Asians once neighborhood poverty is controlled for in the analysis.

Table IV presents logit regression results predicting participation in each of the seven different organization types included in the analysis. These regressions examine whether neighborhood poverty is correlated with participation in specific organizations and examine racial and ethnic differences in participation in these organizations controlling for relevant characteristics in order to gain insight into the relevance of ethnic community or compensatory theories. For the PTA and church organization regressions, the neighborhood poverty variable is interacted with specific personal characteristic variables to accurately model the relationship between neighborhood poverty and participation in these organizations. For the PTA equation, neighborhood poverty is interacted with information on whether the respondent has school age or pre-school age children since it is parents with school age children who are most likely to attend PTA meetings. Similarly, in the church organization equation, neighborhood poverty is interacted with information on whether the respondent attends church: churchgoers are more likely to participate in church related organizations and a vast majority of those who participate in such organizations are churchgoers.[12]

The results in Table IV indicate that neighborhood poverty is negatively correlated with participation in sports, business/professional, and PTA organizations for those who have school age children.[13] It is understandable that neighborhood poverty correlates negatively with participation in business/professional groups, since professionals are less likely to live in poor areas. It is also possible that a lack of sports facilities (fields, courts, gyms, etc.) and public sponsored leagues explain why people in poorer areas participate less in sports associations. No such negative correlations are found between neighborhood poverty and participation in neighborhood associations,

political, church or cultural/ethnic organizations. Though not shown in this analysis, this also holds for church related organizations, even when neighborhood poverty is not interacted with church attendance. Results also indicate that after controlling for personal and residential characteristics and neighborhood poverty, blacks still participate in church related and ethnic/cultural organizations to a greater degree than do whites, and they participate less than whites in sports organizations. Latinos also participate in business/professional organizations to a lesser extent than whites, even after controlling for personal, residential and neighborhood poverty characteristics, but participate at greater rates than whites in ethnic/cultural organizations. Finally, once controls are included, Asians participate at lower rates than whites in neighborhood associations, sports organizations, business/professional groups, and PTAs.[14]

Table V summarizes the results of this analysis by comparing the unadjusted and adjusted means for the main participation variables, with unadjusted means taken from Table I.[15] The adjusted means show that net of differences in personal, residential and neighborhood poverty characteristics blacks participate in more organizations than all other groups, and that their extensive participation stems principally from their greater participation in church based and ethnic/cultural organizations. Conversely, Latinos participate to the same extent as whites once personal characteristics and neighborhood poverty are taken into account. Asians are the least likely group to participate, probably because a large percent of Asians are recent immigrants, and recent immigrants are less likely to participate than other groups.

Ethnic community or compensatory theories and not cultural inhibition or isolation theories explain why blacks participate in more organizations than whites and other groups. On the other hand, cultural inhibition or isolation theories may explain why Asians participate less than other groups. Examination of white-black difference in participation in expressive, instrumental, and expressive-instrumental organizations will shed light on whether ethnic community or compensatory theories help explain blacks' greater participation. The adjusted means in Table V indicate that

blacks participate less in expressive sports organizations than do whites, but participate more than whites in expressive-instrumental organizations such as church-based and cultural/ethnic organizations. Although the observed lower participation of blacks in purely expressive organizations is inconsistent with compensatory theories of blacks' greater participation, it is difficult to reject this theory since they participate more than whites in organizations that are partly expressive. Another difficulty is that the greater participation of blacks in expressive-instrumental organizations is consistent with both ethnic community and compensatory theories. Data limitations prevent a more thorough evaluation of the compensatory theory of blacks' greater participation in organizations, as LASUI contains no personal variables on self-esteem and only one question on participation in organizations that are considered purely expressive in nature by this study (sports organizations).

Yet it is possible to further evaluate the ethnic community theory of blacks' greater participation by examining whether their participation in organizations is positively correlated with residence in black communities. A key premise of the ethnic community theory of blacks' greater participation is that heightened ethnic consciousness, resulting from their socio-economic disadvantage in society, leads blacks to participate more than other groups, particularly in instrumental organizations. Residents in black communities may be influenced by group norms, which are centered on political awareness and participation, and which demand action by residents to improve the status of the group. Such norms are likely to be strong in black communities, particularly in the aftermath of the civil rights movement of the 1960s when such concerns solidified (Olsen, 1970; Williams, et al., 1973; McPherson, 1977). Dawson's (1994) black utility heuristic model of blacks' political choices and participation strengthens this argument. Dawson explains that a group sense of shared fate leads blacks to reinforce the political salience of racial interests, to use racial group status as information to make political choices and to participate politically to improve the status of the group. Dawson indicates that residence in black communities reinforces this view as

residents interact daily with local black institutions, such as black media outlets, kinship networks, community and civil rights organizations, and especially the black church, all of which influence residents to get involved to improve the status of the community. A positive correlation between blacks' participation, in particular in instrumental organizations, and residence in black communities would be consistent with the ethnic community theory.

Using racial composition data for census tracts gathered from the 1990 *US Census* (STF3A) and controlling for clustering, Table VI shows results from poisson regressions of the number of organizations to which blacks belong as a function of the black composition of the neighborhood, neighborhood poverty, and all other control variables listed Table II.[16] Model (1) indicates that controlling for personal and residential characteristics, the number of organizations blacks belong to is negatively related to the neighborhood poverty level, and that this relationship for blacks is stronger than that observed for all racial groups taken as a whole (see Table II, Model (3)). This is consistent with Wilson's (1987) urban underclass theory on the unique influence of concentrated poverty on blacks' social and economic outcomes and with recent research on the influence of neighborhood poverty on blacks' political participation (Cohen and Dawson, 1993). Model (2) adds the variable on the percentage of the neighborhood that is black and indicates that blacks' participation in organizations is positively and significantly related to the percentage of the neighborhood that is black, even after neighborhood condition is taken into account. Model (3) tests for non-linear effects of these variables by including dummy variables for residence in neighborhoods that have low (<20%, the reference group), moderate (20-40%) and high (>40%) poverty levels and small (<33%, the reference group), moderate (33-66%) and high (>66%) concentrations of blacks and indicates that there are few such effects. The results of these models are consistent with the ethnic community theory of blacks' greater participation in voluntary associations, as black residents who live in black communities (areas with black populations greater

than 33%) participate in more organizations than those who do not (Olsen, 1970; Williams, et al., 1973; McPherson, 1977).

Model (4) better illustrates this point. Model (4) includes dummies for residence based on the racial composition and poverty level of the neighborhood. The results indicate that within moderate and high poverty areas blacks participate in more organizations in neighborhoods with greater concentrations of blacks, though overall blacks participate in fewer organizations in poorer areas. These results suggest that black organizations, which are more likely to be located in black communities irrespective of their poverty levels, play a tremendous role in reinforcing norms and influencing residents to participate. Such an analysis is possible because of the multi-racial and multi-ethnic composition of Los Angeles where there is racial/ethnic heterogeneity among those living in poor areas.

Finally, to further evaluate the ethnic community theory of blacks' greater participation, Table VII presents logit regressions (again controlling for clustering) of participation in specific organizations for black respondents as a function of the variables described above. The results from the political and cultural/ethnic organization regressions provide further support for the theory. They indicate that blacks' participation in purely instrumental and expressive-instrumental organizations is positively and significantly related to the concentration of blacks in the neighborhood. The results from these models suggest that organizations in black communities are particularly influential in getting residents to participate in political activities that are designed to improve group conditions. The remaining coefficients in the other organizational regressions for blacks are consistent with those from Table III for all groups combined.

Conclusion

The growing understanding of the importance of participation in voluntary associations to the development of social capital and the functioning of democracy allows us to see that participation may lead to great benefits for individuals and groups in society. The engagement in civic life is not

only likely to enhance social trust in society, but to also establish and reinforce norms in communities that mitigate the negative consequences of living in isolated poor communities (Paxton, 1999; Sampson, et. al., 1999). More importantly, engagement in voluntary associations is likely to expand the social resources available to individuals, which in turn can help facilitate social and economic mobility and perhaps neighborhood improvement (Kaufman, 1999). Thus, there are strong reasons to be concerned with racial differences in participation, since differences in participation among various groups in society may lead to differences in social and economic prospects among them.

This paper examined racial differences in participation in voluntary associations to evaluate whether currently blacks participate more than other groups once the influence of neighborhood condition is taken into account. Neighborhood poverty is strongly and negatively correlated with the number of associations to which individuals belong, even after relevant personal and socio-economic characteristics are taken into account. The results also show that blacks participate in more organizations than whites when neighborhood poverty is taken into account, thus reversing results from earlier studies using 1980 data. These studies indicate that the greater participation by blacks in the 1960s and 70s seemed to have waned in the 1980s, probably because of the social and economic advancement of blacks since the 1970s, resulting from a number of factors including the dismantlement of Jim Crow laws and the enactment of anti-discrimination laws (Ellison and Gay, 1989).

But that conclusion may not be correct. This paper has argued that the previous estimates of racial differences in participation in voluntary associations are incorrect because the models failed to include measures of neighborhood condition. The rise of concentrated poverty neighborhoods since the 1970s in the U.S. is a critical factor to consider when modeling participation, particularly since recent research has found that neighborhoods influence a host of other social and economic outcomes, such as welfare participation and school attendance, independent of individuals' family

background and personal characteristics (Tigges, et. al., 1998; Plotnick and Hoffman, 1999; Duncan, 1994; Osterman, 1991), and since blacks and other minority groups are overrepresented amongst those living in poor neighborhoods (Jargowsky, 1987). Residence in concentrated poverty neighborhoods influences participation negatively because residents in poor areas are likely to interact and be influenced by peers with low socio-economic status who in turn are unlikely to participate themselves. In addition, as a result of disadvantage and a lack of social resources, there may be fewer opportunities to participate in poor areas, since fewer associations are able to organize. Unfortunately, it is not possible with the data used in this analysis to examine which of two explanations of how poor neighborhoods influence participation is more accurate.

These results suggest that blacks continue to over-compensate for their disadvantaged position in society by participating in more voluntary associations than other groups. Race is therefore still a very important factor to consider in understanding patterns of participation in the U.S. That blacks living in black communities participate in more organizations than those who do not strengthens this conclusion. These results provide support for the ethnic community theory of blacks' greater participation. This suggests that black organizations, which are more likely to be located in black communities, reinforce norms in black communities that stress actions to improve the condition of the community. The influence of organizations in black communities is most clearly evident when one views blacks' participation within areas defined by poverty type. Blacks living in poor black areas participate in more organizations than do those who live in non-black poor areas.

The results further indicate that there are differences in participation for other racial/ethnic groups. For both Latinos and Asians, neighborhood poverty explains much less of the participation differences between these groups and whites. This makes sense because neighborhood poverty has the weakest influence on Latinos' and Asians' participation, though it is not clear from this analysis why. Future research should more closely examine the reasons for this, which may include the unique influence of immigrant communities in mitigating the negative influence of neighborhood

poverty on participation. Once differences in socio-economic status are taken into account, Latinos participate in the same number of associations as whites, although they participate in different organizations. These results are consistent with previous research, which indicates that Latinos' lower levels of participation as compared to whites is explained entirely by their lower socio-economic status (Antunes and Gaitz, 1975). Asians, who in this sample are more likely to be recent immigrants than Latinos, are significantly less likely to participate than whites and other groups, again even after differences in socio-economic status are taken into account. It is difficult to determine with the data used in this analysis whether cultural inhibition or isolation theories explains their lower participation. Future research should examine the reasons why Asians participate less than other groups and the implications that this may have on their future social, political and economic well-being.

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284-294.

Table I
Means (std. dev.) of Main Variables

	White	Black	Latino	Asian	Total
A. Means					
Outcomes					
Number of Organizations	1.39	1.23*	0.79*	0.84*	1.05
	(1.48)	(1.44)	(1.16)	(1.25)	(1.36)
By Number of Organizations					
0 – 1 Orgs.	0.63	0.68*	0.79*	0.78*	0.72
2 – 3 Orgs.	0.27	0.24	0.18*	0.17*	0.21
4 – 5 Orgs.	0.06	0.04	0.02*	0.04	0.06
6 – 7 Orgs.	0.04	0.04	0.02	0.01	0.01
Participation in Organizations					
Neighborhood Assoc.	0.17	0.14*	0.06*	0.05*	0.10
PTA	0.18	0.18	0.20	0.15	0.18
Sports Orgs.	0.27	0.15*	0.15*	0.13*	0.17
Political Orgs.	0.09	0.07	0.02*	0.03*	0.05
Businesses/Professional Orgs.	0.26	0.15*	0.06*	0.13*	0.15
Church Related Orgs.	0.32	0.42*	0.23*	0.25*	0.31
Cultural or Ethnic Orgs.	0.10	0.14*	0.07*	0.10	0.10
Neighborhoods					
% Poverty – Tract Level	0.087	0.207*	0.208*	0.142*	0.153
	(0.064)	(0.119)	(0.121)	(0.105)	(0.116)
B. Means by Poverty Level of Neighborhood					
Number of Organizations					
<20% Poverty in Neigh.	1.52	1.58	1.12	0.91	1.25
	(1.51)	(1.69)	(1.43)	(1.25)	(1.48)
20 - 40% Poverty in Neigh.	0.95#	1.21#	0.66#	0.69#	0.90#
	(1.22)	(1.34)	(1.01)	(1.25)	(1.24)
>40% Poverty in Neigh.	0.82#	0.86#	0.54#	0.35#	0.71#
	(1.20)	(1.16)	(0.81)	(0.70)	(1.03)
N	756	962	885	716	3,291

Note: * indicates statistically different than whites at the 5% level.
# indicates statistically different than neighborhoods with less than 20% poverty rate at the 5% level (within racial group).

Table II
Poisson Regressions of Number of Organizations
(std. errors in parentheses)

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)
Neighborhoods			
% Tract in Poverty	-1.723*** (0.113)	-0.409** (0.154)	-0.385** (0.157)
Personal			
Age	--	0.010*** (0.002)	0.009*** (0.002)
Ln(Family Income)	--	0.201*** (0.023)	0.192*** (0.024)
Female	--	0.046 (0.035)	0.046 (0.036)
Married	--	0.057 (0.039)	0.052 (0.040)
Pre-School Age Children (≤5)	--	-0.051 (0.047)	-0.049 (0.047)
School Age Children (>5 – 18)	--	0.356*** (0.038)	0.360*** (0.038)
H.S. Degree	--	0.255*** (0.061)	0.265*** (0.061)
Some College	--	0.514*** (0.068)	0.508*** (0.068)
College Degree or More	--	0.749*** (0.067)	0.754*** (0.068)
Enrolled-in-School	--	0.216*** (0.063)	0.208*** (0.064)
Employed	--	0.088* (0.043)	0.090* (0.044)
Retired	--	-0.064 (0.075)	-0.071 (0.076)
English Language Difficulty	--	-0.129* (0.062)	-0.104 (0.064)
Citizen	--	0.103 (0.063)	0.089 (0.063)
Recent Immigrant	--	-0.213** (0.068)	-0.207** (0.068)
Participated in High School	--	0.256*** (0.055)	0.252*** (0.054)
Church	--	0.477*** (0.034)	0.479*** (0.035)
Black	--	0.120** (0.045)	0.129** (0.049)

Latino	--	0.032	0.014
		(0.061)	(0.062)
Asian	--	-0.261***	-0.281***
		(0.057)	(0.057)
Residential			
Renter	--	--	-0.040
			(0.043)
Tenure (in months)	--	--	0.001
			(0.002)
Constant	0.350***	-3.154***	-3.008***
	(0.025)	(0.259)	(0.284)
Pseudo R^2	0.02	0.23	0.24
N	3,291	3,291	3,291

Note: Statistical significance: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table III
Sensitivity Analysis of Racial/Ethnic Binary Variable Poisson Regression Coefficients
(Dependent Variable=Number of Organizations)

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Black	-0.128***	0.166***	0.068	0.069	0.129**
	(0.039)	(0.044)	(0.046)	(0.046)	(0.049)
Latino	-0.565***	-0.300***	0.019	-0.001	0.014
	(0.046)	(0.049)	(0.061)	(0.062)	(0.062)
Asian	-0.505***	-0.474***	-0.257***	-0.278***	-0.281***
	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.057)	(0.057)	(0.057)
Constant	0.332***	0.546***	-3.339***	-3.176***	-3.008***
	(0.029)	(0.032)	(0.239)	(0.270)	(0.284)
Personal Variables	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Residential Variables	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
% Tract in Poverty Variable	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
N	3,291	3,291	3,291	3,291	3,291

Notes: Regressions that include personal and residential background characteristics in the specifications include variables listed in Table II.
Statistical significance: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table IV
Logit Regressions of Participation in Specific Organizations
(std. errors in parenthesis)

Variables	Neigh Assocs.	PTA	Sports Orgs.	Political Orgs.	Business/Prof. Orgs.	Church Orgs.	Cultural/Ethnic Orgs.
% Tract in Poverty	0.547 (0.546)	0.111 (0.657)	-0.981* (0.453)	0.337 (0.791)	-1.164* (0.534)	-0.554 (0.509)	-0.759 (0.568)
% Tract in Poverty * Pre-School Age Children	--	1.220 (0.748)	--	--	--	--	--
% Tract in Poverty * School Age Children	--	-1.430* (0.712)	--	--	--	--	--
% Tract in Poverty * Church	--	--	--	--	--	0.062 (0.609)	--
Black	0.081 (0.167)	0.092 (0.170)	-0.269* (0.131)	0.255 (0.219)	0.176 (0.144)	0.524*** (0.138)	0.753*** (0.185)
Latino	-0.028 (0.218)	0.102 (0.196)	0.225 (0.161)	0.143 (0.311)	-0.528** (0.206)	-0.096 (0.171)	0.617** (0.229)
Asian	-0.807*** (0.216)	-0.484** (0.187)	-0.510** (0.162)	-0.485 (0.282)	-0.577*** (0.172)	-0.227 (0.159)	0.289 (0.202)
Pre-School Age Children (≤5)	--	-0.208 (0.214)	--	--	--	--	--
School Age Children (>5 – 18)	--	2.355*** (0.188)	--	--	--	--	--
Church	--	--	--	--	--	2.168*** (0.157)	--
Prob. > chi2	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
N	3,291	3,291	3,291	3,291	3,291	3,291	3,291

Notes: Regressions include all personal and residential background characteristics listed in Table II.
   Statistical significance: * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

Table V
Unadjusted and Adjusted Organization Participation Means

Variables	Unadjusted Means				Adjusted Means			
	White	Black	Latino	Asian	White	Black	Latino	Asian
Number of Organizations[a]	1.39	1.23*	0.79*	0.84*	1.13	1.28*	1.15	0.86*
Participation in Organizations								
Neighborhood Assoc.[b]	0.17	0.14	0.06*	0.05*	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.06*
PTA[b]	0.18	0.18	0.20	0.15	0.20	0.21	0.21	0.14*
Sports Orgs.[b]	0.27	0.15*	0.15*	0.13*	0.20	0.15*	0.22	0.13*
Political Orgs.[b]	0.09	0.07	0.02*	0.03*	0.05	0.07	0.06	0.03
Businesses/Professional Orgs.[b]	0.26	0.15*	0.06*	0.13*	0.18	0.20	0.12*	0.12*
Church Related Orgs.[b]	0.32	0.42*	0.23*	0.25*	0.30	0.39*	0.29	0.27
Cultural or Ethnic Orgs.[b]	0.10	0.14*	0.07	0.10	0.07	0.14*	0.12*	0.09

Notes: * indicates statistically different than whites at the 5% level.
[a] adjusted mean based on Poisson Regression results in Model (3), Table II.
[b] adjusted mean based on respective organization's Logit Model results in Table IV.

Table VI
Poisson Regressions of Number of Organizations for Blacks
(std. errors in parentheses)

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
% Tract in Poverty	-0.690** (0.237)	-0.575** (0.239)	--	--
% Tract Black	--	0.479*** (0.130)	--	--
20-40% Tract in Poverty	--	--	-0.221*** (0.068)	--
>40% Tract in Poverty	--	--	-0.244** (0.091)	--
33-66% Tract Black	--	--	0.391*** (0.088)	--
>66% Tract Black	--	--	0.367*** (0.093)	--
20-40% Tract in Poverty & >33% Tract Black	--	--	--	-0.699*** (0.140)
20-40% Tract in Poverty & 33-66% Tract Black	--	--	--	-0.089 (0.079)
20-40% Tract in Poverty & >66% Tract Black	--	--	--	-0.174 (0.096)
>40% Tract in Poverty & <33% Tract Black	--	--	--	-0.725*** (0.188)
>40% Tract in Poverty & 33-66% Tract Black	--	--	--	-0.318** (0.162)
>40% Tract in Poverty & >66% Tract Black	--	--	--	-0.355** (0.171)
N	964	964	964	964

Notes: Regressions include personal and residential background characteristics listed in Table II.
        Statistical significance: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table VII
Logit Regressions of Participation in Specific Organizations for Blacks
(std. errors in parenthesis)

Variables	Neigh Assocs.	PTA	Sports Orgs.	Political Orgs.	Business/Prof. Orgs.	Church Orgs.	Cultural/Ethnic Orgs.
% Tract in Poverty	-0.767 (0.822)	0.805 (1.113)	-1.329* (0.627)	-1.082 (1.141)	-1.457* (0.689)	-0.833 (0.831)	-1.125 (0.873)
% Tract in Poverty * Pre-School Age Children	--	0.897 (1.496)	--	--	--	--	--
% Tract in Poverty * School Age Children	--	-2.553* (1.232)	--	--	--	--	--
% Tract in Poverty * Church	--	--	--	--	--	1.346 (1.127)	--
% Tract Black	0.408 (0.448)	0.979 (0.652)	0.623 (0.427)	1.634** (0.611)	0.710 (0.442)	0.147 (0.467)	1.243** (0.484)
% Tract Black * Pre-School Age Children	--	-0.291 (1.118)	--	--	--	--	--
% Tract Black * School Age Children	--	-0.494 (0.857)	--	--	--	--	--
% Tract Black * Church	--	--	--	--	--	0.478 (0.688)	--
Pre-School Age Children (≤5)	--	0.337 (0.806)	--	--	--	--	--
School Age Children (>5 – 18)	--	2.952*** (0.696)	--	--	--	--	--
Church	--	--	--	--	--	1.780** (0.542)	--
Prob. > chi2	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
N	962	962	962	962	962	962	962

Notes: Regressions include all personal and residential background characteristics listed in Table II.
Statistical significance: * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

Table A.I
Means (std. dev.) of Background Variables

	White	Black	Latino	Asian	Total
Personal					
Age	45.1	42.0	36.9	46.2	42.2
	(15.5)	(15.8)	(12.8)	(16.2)	(16.0)
Female	0.55	0.58	0.52	0.52	0.54
Married	0.58	0.36	0.55	0.66	0.58
Pre-School Age Children (≤5)	0.16	0.18	0.29	0.16	0.20
School Age Children (>5 – 18)	0.22	0.28	0.40	0.32	0.31
No H.S. Degree	0.05	0.19	0.52	0.18	0.23
H.S. Degree	0.39	0.52	0.31	0.27	0.35
Some College	0.20	0.18	0.09	0.16	0.16
College Degree or More	0.36	0.11	0.08	0.39	0.27
Enrolled-in-School	0.08	0.09	0.12	0.09	0.09
Employed	0.62	0.46	0.64	0.59	0.61
Retired	0.15	0.16	0.04	0.17	0.12
English Language Difficulty	0.02	0.01	0.53	0.59	0.32
Citizen	0.93	0.98	0.34	0.43	0.62
Recent Immigrant	0.03	0.03	0.29	0.42	0.20
Participated in High School	0.15	0.19	0.17	0.14	0.16
Church	0.28	0.44	0.44	0.32	0.36
Family					
Family Income	55,707	37,363	27,317	45,839	43,981
	(49,435)	(34,011)	(21,922)	(42,844)	(41,693)

Residential

Renter	0.40	0.54	0.67	0.53	0.54
Tenure (in months)	129.2	116.2	65.4	66.2	93.1
	(136.3)	(135.6)	(86.6)	(90.0)	(116.2)
% Tract White	0.649	0.201	0.402	0.512	0.401
	(0.168)	(0.264)	(0.309)	(0.189)	(0.306)
% Tract Black	0.045	0.435	0.084	0.044	0.105
	(0.065)	(0.311)	(0.157)	(0.056)	(0.194)
% Tract Latino	0.223	0.284	0.582	0.308	0.379
	(0.174)	(0.169)	(0.258)	(0.211)	(0.271)
% Tract Asian	0.082	0.080	0.109	0.136	0.111
	(0.071)	(0.073)	(0.114)	(0.121)	(0.185)
N	756	962	885	716	3,291

Endnotes

[1] A second strategy used to evaluate the compensatory and ethnic community theory of blacks' greater participation uses psychological information on blacks' racial identity and self esteem. To evaluate the compensatory theory, researchers measure self-esteem and then separate the sample of blacks according to high and low self-esteem. Support for the compensatory theory is found when blacks with high self-esteem participate more than their counterparts with low self-esteem (McPherson, 1977). Similarly, to evaluate the ethnic community theory, research measures blacks' racial identity and separate the sample of blacks according to strong and weak racial identity. Support for the ethnic community theory is found when blacks with strong racial identities participate more than those with weak racial identities (Cohen and Kapsis, 1978).

[2] Bobo and Gilliam (1990) show that in areas with higher levels of black empowerment, measured by cities that have an elected black mayor, blacks participate politically more than whites. However, black empowerment areas represent a small fraction of all metropolitan areas in their sample. Thus, it is unclear at the general level whether blacks participate more than whites once relevant personal characteristics and black empowerment levels are taken into account.

[3] Grouping Latinos and Asians is often problematic, since sub-group differences in outcomes often exist. Latinos and Asians in this sample are heterogeneous groups. Seventy-five percent of the Latinos are of Mexican decent, with the remaining twenty-five percent of Central American decent, while Japanese, Chinese and Korean backgrounds each represent a third of Asians in this sample. Dummy variables indicating these sub-group differences were included in separate participation regressions for Latinos and Asians, but were never statistically significant. Besides factors relating to socio-economic status, what influenced the participation of these groups the most was whether or not they immigrated recently. While Latinos and Asians are grouped in this analysis, it is acknowledged that they are composed of different sub-groups.

[4] In this analysis, the greatest concern is whether the underestimation of voluntary association memberships differs by race or ethnicity. Previous research examining the underestimation of voluntary association memberships has not focused on race or ethnicity, and thus it is not clear whether there are systematic differences in the underestimation along these dimensions. To the extent that there are systematic underestimates of participation by race or ethnicity in LASUI, there will be bias in the measures of voluntary associations reported for the various racial and ethnic groups, though it is not possible to tell the direction of bias. It is encouraging that, at the mean level, the racial patterns of participation are consistent with those from previous studies (Ellision and Gay, 1989; Bobo and Gilliam, 1990; Verba, et. al., 1993a; Olsen, 1970; Verba and Nie, 1972; Williams, et al., 1973; McPherson, 1977). Thus, in this analysis it is assumed that if the number of voluntary associations that individuals belong to is underestimated because of the structure of participation questions in LASUI, it is likely to be similar across racial and ethnic groups.

[5] This distinction is critical since it is not possible to evaluate theories of blacks' greater participation using other approaches found in the literature, which examine participation differences between black ethnic identifiers and non-identifiers, or between those with and without self-esteem. These approaches cannot be used in this analysis because no questions on identity or self-esteem are included in LASUI.

[6] Alternatively, variables measuring the percent of tract that is employed, managers/professionals, female-headed households, public assistance recipients, high school dropouts or not-in-labor-force were used as measures of neighborhood quality. When all neighborhood quality specifications were entered into equations simultaneously, none were found to be significant. This is likely caused by problems of multicollinearity, as correlations among neighborhood measures are all greater than .50. However, when the measures were entered as pairs, poverty and managers/professionals dominated all other neighborhood quality measures and caused their estimated coefficients to become insignificant.

[7] Following Crane (1991), models using a categorical neighborhood poverty variable corresponding to neighborhood poverty rates of 0-20, >20-40, and > 40 percent were alternatively used in the analysis to account for possible non-liner effects. None were found and the results from this exercise were not qualitatively different than those shown in this study.

[8] Controls for major occupation were also included in models but were never statistically significant and did not change the results of the estimates shown in this paper. Thus, they were not included in the analysis.

[9] Past participation in high school organizations is included in the equations to in part control for unobserved characteristics that may also predict participation. For example, participation may be a function of motivation, but motivation is not observed in the data used here. The impact of motivation could run through the coefficients of other variables if it is not included in model specification. Failure to include such variables in models is likely to bias coefficients of observed characteristics in the empirical models, i.e., omitted variable bias. Past participation in high school is a good proxy for motivation and a good predictor of current and future participation.

[10] LASUI does not provide residential identifiers for the previous residential location of respondents. Thus, it is not possible to measure the neighborhood characteristics of previous residence for recent movers.

[11] Separate regressions by racial/ethnic group indicated that, consistent with Wilson's (1987) theory of the impact of concentrated poverty on blacks' social and economic outcomes, neighborhood poverty had the largest negative impact on blacks' participation, while it had the weakest impact on Asians' and Latinos' participation.

[12] Only 19 percent of those who do not go to church participate in church related organizations, whereas nearly 80 percent of those who do go to church participate in such organizations.

[13] Selectivity is a major concern in the regressions predicting participation in business/professional organizations. Those who participate in these organizations are also likely those who are highly selected on the basis of socioeconomic status. More educated individuals with higher family incomes are likely to participate in business/professional organizations at a much greater rate than their less advantaged counterparts. The problem in the analysis is that such individuals are also less likely to be living in poor neighborhoods. However, regression models of participation in business/professional associations restricted to those who are highly educated, i.e., those with at least some college education, displayed similar results to those shown here.

[14] A concern in this analysis centers on the interpretation of the effect of neighborhood poverty on participation. An alternative interpretation, which falls under the topic of residential endogeneity bias, is that individuals who share common characteristics that are unobservable to the researcher but influence choices concerning participation may choose to live in the same neighborhood. Thus, what may initially appear to be neighborhood poverty effects on participation may in fact be the effect of residential choice. The problem of residential choice will lead to upward bias in the estimated coefficient on neighborhood poverty. In cross-sectional studies, solutions to residential choice are never fully satisfactory. The results of this study are favorable because it is not clear why this bias would be more true for models predicting participation in certain organizations than in others, as shown in Table IV.

[15] The adjusted means presented in Table V are based on the pooled regressions presented in Tables II and IV. These regressions used the pooled sample and therefore assumed that the effects of the independent variables (i.e., the slopes) are similar across racial/ethnic groups. Separate regressions for each racial and ethnic group were also conducted to verify this assumption. These regressions allowed the slopes of the independent variables to vary across groups. These racially specific regressions revealed that the effects of the independent variables were similar for each racial group. Moreover, calculations of the adjusted means for the main organization variables in the analysis using Oaxacca (1973) like partial decompositions of these racially specific regressions produced similar results to those shown in Table V using pooled regressions. In these decompositions, black (Latino) characteristics were evaluated using black (Latino) coefficients, except for the neighborhood poverty variable. For this variable, whites' mean neighborhood poverty rate was substituted for that of blacks (Latinos), but was evaluated using blacks' (Latinos') coefficient.

[16] Separate poisson regressions of the number of organizations respondents belong to for whites, Latinos and Asians indicate that Asians' and Latinos' participation is unaffected by the Asian and Latino composition of the neighborhood, respectively. For whites, only participation in sports organizations is greater in white neighborhoods. The results for blacks suggest the unique role of black communities in influencing participation by blacks in voluntary organizations.