Race, Neighborhood Poverty, and Participation in Voluntary Associations

Michael A. Stoll[1]

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 influences the number of associations to which individuals belong, even when considering differences in personal and other residential characteristics. Moreover, once the negative influence of 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.

INTRODUCTION

The growing interest in social capital in recent years among 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 voting behavior and interest in public affairs (Almond and Verba, 1963; Sallach *et al.*, 1972; Verba *et al.*, 1993b), but also because it is a pathway to building social capital (Bourdieu, 1983;

---

[1]Department of Policy Studies, School of Public Policy and Social Research, University of California, Los Angeles, 3250 Public Policy Building, Los Angeles, California 90095-1656.

Kaufman, 1999). 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 is likely to positively influence 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 United States, racial differences in civic participation could have large implications for minority groups' disadvantage, particularly if these groups are found to participate less. Past research using data from the 1960s and 1970s indicated that once relevant factors were taken into account, blacks participated more than whites in voluntary associations, suggesting that blacks' disadvantaged position during this time was not likely worsened by lower levels of participation (Olsen, 1970; Orum, 1966). However, changes in the economic, political, and social landscape of the United States in the years since the civil rights movement, in particular the rise of concentrated poverty in black and Latino neighborhoods (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 neighborhood context influences participation, and further, whether blacks and other minority groups participate to a greater or lesser degree than whites in voluntary associations once these influences are taken into account. Thus, it is unclear whether differences in participation in voluntary associations exist among racial/ethic groups in this more recent period in the United States.

Using unique data from the 1994 Los Angeles Survey of Urban Inequality (LASUI), which includes Latino and Asian American samples, this paper extends past research by accounting for the influence of neighborhood poverty on participation and by reexamining racial differences in participation. Motivated by Wilson's urban underclass theory (Wilson, 1987), a large body of research has developed that examines whether residence in poor areas disadvantages individuals by influencing them to drop out of school and choose welfare over work, among other things (Brooks-Gunn *et al.*, 1993; Elliot *et al.*, 1996; Vartanian, 1997). However, little of this research has focused on whether or how residence in poor areas is associated with participation in voluntary associations. The research that does exist in this area focuses on public opinion and political participation, but does not address whether racial differences in participation exist

once one considers the influence of neighborhoods (Cohen and Dawson, 1993).

PARTICIPATION, RACE, AND POVERTY

In the 1960s and early 1970s, researchers who studied race and participation reached consensus on three points. First, using data from the 1950s and early 1960s 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 these same time periods and controlling for racial differences in socioeconomic status, researchers found that the pattern reversed: blacks tended to participate more than whites (Antunes and Gaitz, 1975; Cohen and Kapsis, 1978; Olsen, 1970; Orum, 1966; Williams *et al.*, 1973). Black–white differences in social and political participation were attributed to the tendency of whites to have considerably higher socioeconomic status than blacks, as socioeconomic status, as measured by education, occupation, and income, is known to correlate positively with participation (Verba and Nie, 1972). During this same 1960–70 period, researchers found that Latinos participated less than whites, but that this difference could be entirely explained by Latinos' low socioeconomic status (Antunes and Gaitz, 1975; Williams *et al.*, 1973).

Third, researchers found 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 Mydral *et al.* (1944), suggests that due to 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). The ethnic community model argues that residence and 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 that members participate to improve the status of the group (McPherson, 1977; Olsen, 1970; Verba and Nie, 1972; Williams *et al.*, 1973).

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 more or less than whites. Researchers categorize organizations as either expressive or instrumental (Gordon and Babchuk, 1959; Woodard, 1986). Expressive organizations, such as social clubs and sports organizations, provide pleasurable interaction among members and

participants often participate 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 to influence the creation or maintenance of a desired condition. These organizations are associated with ethnic community processes. Thus, if blacks are found to participate more in expressive or instrumental organizations than whites, support is found for the compensatory or ethnic community theory, respectively.[2]

In this current period, it is unclear whether ethnic community processes are still prompting blacks to participate more than other groups. Since the 1960s and 1970s, 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 socioeconomic 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 antidiscrimination 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 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 (Bobo and Gilliam, 1990; Ellison and Gay, 1989; Verba *et al.*, 1993).[3] 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, tremendous structural transformations in society and the economy have led to the spatial redistribution of disadvantage.

---

[2]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 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, researchers measure racial identity and separate the sample 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).

[3]Bobo and Gilliam (1990) show that in areas with higher levels of black empowerment, as 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.

Key among these changes is that poverty has become much more concentrated in the United States, with blacks and Latinos disproportionately represented amongst those living in poor neighborhoods (Jargowsky, 1997). The increase in the concentration of poverty 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 al.*, 1998). In particular, Wilson (1987) argues that during the 1980s, the black poor became increasingly socially isolated from mainstream institutions as a result of structural changes in the economy after the late 1960s that led to the movement of low-skill jobs and 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 influence negatively the social and economic prospects of individuals 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 influence these outcomes (Brooks-Gunn *et al.*, 1993; Elliot *et al.*, 1996; Green *et al.*, 1995; Jencks and Mayer, 1990; Sampson *et al.*, 1997; Vartanian, 1997).

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, though with the data that is currently available it is difficult to distinguish empirically between them. The first takes into account the role of peer influences on participation. Neighborhood influences that stem from close, social interactions are likely to affect an 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 are 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 who 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 the 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.

Because of 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 overrepresented 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, taken 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. Of 5,885 potentially eligible households, 4025 interviews were completed for an overall "raw" response rate of 68%. Adjusting the response rate by excluding nonrespondents raises the response rate estimate to 73%. The final results included the responses of 867 non-Hispanic white, 1,119 non-Hispanic black, 988 Latino/Hispanic, and 1,055 non-Hispanic Asian Americans (Johnson *et al.*, 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 for the variables used in this analysis. The lack of complete geocode information, which contains data on respondents residential census tract to which data on neighborhood poverty is attached, was the main reason for eliminating certain cases. F-tests indicate no statistical differences in the regression coefficients for personal variables between the full 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 non-Hispanic whites, 962 non-Hispanic blacks, 885 Latino/Hispanics, and 716 Asians.[4]

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 the following: neighborhood or block associations; Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) or school-related groups; social clubs or sports teams; political organizations; business or professional organizations; church-related groups; and ethnic or cultural organizations.[5]

---

[4]Grouping Latinos and Asians is often problematic, since subgroup 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 25% of Central American decent, while Japanese, Chinese, and Korean backgrounds each represent a third of Asians in this sample. Dummy variables indicating these subgroup differences were included in separate participation regressions for Latinos and Asians, but were never statistically significant. Besides factors relating to socioeconomic status, what influenced the participation of these groups the most was whether or not they immigrated recently. While Latinos and Asians are categorized as only two groups in this analysis, it is acknowledged that each group is composed of different subgroups.

[5]One potential problem with the LASUI participation questions is that they may lead to underestimation of the actual number of voluntary associations to which individuals belong. 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. Second, LASUI provides categorical questions on participation for only seven types of organizations, whereas previous studies of participation allow for open-ended answers to the question of how many voluntary organizations to which individuals claim membership (Orum, 1966) or, if they do use a predetermined set of organization participation questions,

The second set of dependent variables includes dummies indicating participation in each of the seven organizations just listed. These variables are included to evaluate ethnic community or compensatory theories if blacks are found to participate more than other groups. To do this, the associations are categorized by type.[6] 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 (Gordon and Babchuk, 1959; Jacoby and Babchuk, 1963; Williams *et al.*, 1973). Following Woodard (1986), an expressive-instrumental category is also included to accommodate the 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 instrumental as well as expressive because such groups also serve dual purposes.

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 (Dornbush *et al.*, 1991; Plotnick and Hoffman, 1999). In addition, the use of poverty as an indicator

provide more than does LASUI (see, for example, Verba and Nie, 1972, and Olsen, 1970). Since LASUI provides fewer questions, results most probably show lower estimates of organization participation than previous surveys as a result of the survey structure. However, the greatest concern in this analysis is whether the underestimation of voluntary association memberships differs by race or ethnicity. I assume that they do not. This assumption seems reasonable, since, at the mean level, the racial patterns of participation are consistent with those from previous studies, though at slightly lower levels (Bobo and Gilliam, 1990; Ellison and Gay, 1989; McPherson, 1977; Olsen, 1970; Verba *et al.*, 1993a; Verba and Nie, 1972; Williams *et al.*, 1973).

[6]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 nonidentifiers, 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.

of neighborhood quality is consistent with previous work (Aaronson, 1998; Tigges *et al.*, 1998; Vartanian, 1997).[7]

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 (Olsen, 1970; Orum, 1966; Williams *et al.*, 1973). 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 6–7 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 *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%, the comparable rate for whites is 9%.

Panel B shows the mean number of organizations to which respondents belong, summarized by the poverty rate of the neighborhood. For this table, the neighborhood poverty rates are broken down into three general categories: less than 20%, 20–40%, and greater than 40%. These categories follow the literature on neighborhood poverty and represent low,

---

[7]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. Second, the use of neighborhood poverty is consistent with Wilson's (1987) seminal work on concentrated poverty neighborhoods. However, use of alternative neighborhood quality measures, such as the percent of tract that is not-in-labor-force, or composed of managers/professionals, female-headed households, public assistance recipients, or high school dropouts, did not produce qualitatively dissimilar results than those shown in this paper. The strong pairwise correlations between these variables (all over 0.50) may help to explain this. However, when the measures were entered as pairs, the poverty and managers/professionals measures dominated all others and caused their estimated coefficients to become insignificant.

Table I. Means (SD) of Main Variables

	White	Black	Latino	Asian	Total
A. Means					
Outcomes					
Number of organizations	1.39	1.23[a]	0.79[a]	0.84[a]	1.05
	(1.48)	(1.44)	(1.16)	(1.25)	(1.36)
By number of organizations					
0–1 Orgs.	0.63	0.68[a]	0.79[a]	0.78[a]	0.72
2–3 Orgs.	0.27	0.24	0.18[a]	0.17[a]	0.21
4–5 Orgs.	0.06	0.04	0.02[a]	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[a]	0.06[a]	0.05[a]	0.10
PTA	0.18	0.18	0.20	0.15	0.18
Sports orgs.	0.27	0.15[a]	0.15[a]	0.13[a]	0.17
Political orgs.	0.09	0.07	0.02[a]	0.03[a]	0.05
Businesses/professional orgs.	0.26	0.15[a]	0.06[a]	0.13[a]	0.15
Church-related orgs.	0.32	0.42[a]	0.23[a]	0.25[a]	0.31
Cultural or ethnic orgs.	0.10	0.14[a]	0.07[a]	0.10	0.10
Neighborhoods					
% Poverty–Tract level	0.087	0.207[a]	0.208[a]	0.142[a]	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[b]	1.21[b]	0.66[b]	0.69[b]	0.90[b]
	(1.22)	(1.34)	(1.01)	(1.25)	(1.24)
>40% Poverty in neigh.	0.82[b]	0.86[b]	0.54[b]	0.35[b]	0.71[b]
	(1.20)	(1.16)	(0.81)	(0.70)	(1.03)
N	756	962	885	716	3,291

[a]Values are statistically different than whites at the 5% level.
[b]Values are statistically different than neighborhoods with less than 20% poverty rate at the 5% level (within racial group).

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 should 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 socioeconomic 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 ensure 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.[8]

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 the presence of preschool or school-age children in the household.[9] 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 (Bobo and Gilliam, 1990; Olsen, 1970; Orum, 1966; Verba *et al.*, 1993a; Williams *et al.*, 1973). Whether the respondent participated in high school organizations is also included in the model specifications to fully predict participation.[10]

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 those neighborhoods. Recently arrived community members are less likely to be influenced by the neighborhood than those members who have longer residential tenures.[11] To control for this, a continuous residential tenure variable (in months) is included in equations. In addition, a control variable for renters is included to control for residential

---

[8]Following Crane (1991), models using a categorical neighborhood poverty variable corresponding to neighborhood poverty rates of 0–20, >20–40, and >40% were alternatively used in the analysis to account for possible non-liner effects. F-tests indicated no statistically significant difference between the coefficients for >20–40 and >40% poverty (with <20% poverty as the reference category) on participation, though both of these were negative and statistically significant in the equations.

[9]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.

[10]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.

[11]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.

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. In brief, socioeconomic status is expected to correlate positively with participation. Individuals with higher family income levels and higher levels of educational attainment are expected to participate more than those with lower socioeconomic status (Orum, 1966; Schlozman *et al.*, 1994; Verba *et al.*, 1993a). Older individuals and those with greater time at their disposal, such as people who are retired, unemployed, or 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 preschool 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. The standard errors in the poisson models are adjusted for clustering on census tracts. 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%, though still remains statistically significant. Thus, differences in personal characteristics, including socioeconomic 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%.

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.[12] 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 socioeconomic 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 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 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,

---

[12]Separate regressions by racial/ethnic group indicated that, consistent with Wilson's theory (Wilson, 1987) 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.

Table II. Poisson Regressions of Number of Organizations[a]

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)
Neighborhoods			
% Tract in poverty	−1.723***	−0.409**	−0.385**
	(0.113)	(0.154)	(0.157)
Personal			
Age	—	0.010***	0.009***
		(0.002)	(0.002)
Ln(family income)	—	0.201***	0.192***
		(0.023)	(0.024)
Female	—	0.046	0.046
		(0.035)	(0.036)
Married	—	0.057	0.052
		(0.039)	(0.040)
Preschool-age children (≤5)	—	−0.051	−0.049
		(0.047)	(0.047)
School-age children (>5–18)	—	0.356***	0.360***
		(0.038)	(0.038)
H.S. Degree	—	0.255***	0.265***
		(0.061)	(0.061)
Some college	—	0.514***	0.508***
		(0.068)	(0.068)
College degree or more	—	0.749***	0.754***
		(0.067)	(0.068)
Enrolled-in-school	—	0.216***	0.208***
		(0.063)	(0.064)
Employed	—	0.088*	0.090*
		(0.043)	(0.044)
Retired	—	−0.064	−0.071
		(0.075)	(0.076)
English language difficulty	—	−0.129*	−0.104
		(0.062)	(0.064)
Citizen	—	0.103	0.089
		(0.063)	(0.063)
Recent immigrant	—	−0.213**	−0.207**
		(0.068)	(0.068)
Participated in high school	—	0.256***	0.252***
		(0.055)	(0.054)
Church	—	0.477***	0.479***
		(0.034)	(0.035)
Black	—	0.120**	0.129**
		(0.045)	(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)
−Log *L*	−5,986.7	−4,492.3	−4,428.4
N	3,291	3,291	3,291

[a]Standard errors are adjusted for clustering on census tract and are in parentheses.
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table III. Sensitivity Analysis of Racial/Ethnic 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

Note. Regressions that include personal and residential background characteristics in the specifications include variables listed in Table II. Standard errors are adjusted for clustering on census tract. Standard errors are in parentheses.
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

those with higher income and education, those who have school-age children, attend church, participated in high school, or are enrolled in school belong to more organizations than those who do not.

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. Although 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% and makes it positive and statistically significant. On the other hand, the coefficients for Latinos and Asians increase by 47

and 6%, 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 difference in extensive participation between whites and Asians, one-half between whites and Latinos, and all of the difference 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%, 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 (Bobo and Gilliam, 1990; Ellison and Gay, 1989; 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 not to 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. The standard errors in these models are adjusted for clustering on census tracts. 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 preschool-age children since parents with school age children are most likely to attend PTA meetings. Similarly, in the church organization equation, neighborhood poverty is interacted with information on whether the respondent attends

Table IV. Logit Regressions of Participation in Specific Organizations[a]

Variables	Neigh assocs.	PTA	Sports orgs.	Political orgs.	Business/prof. orgs.	Church orgs.	Cultural/ethnic orgs.
% Tract in poverty	0.547	0.111	−0.981*	0.337	−1.164*	−0.554	−0.759
	(0.546)	(0.657)	(0.453)	(0.791)	(0.534)	(0.509)	(0.568)
% Tract in poverty × Preschool-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	0.092	−0.269*	0.255	0.176	0.524***	0.753***
	(0.167)	(0.170)	(0.131)	(0.219)	(0.144)	(0.138)	(0.185)
Latino	−0.028	0.102	0.225	0.143	−0.528**	−0.096	0.617**
	(0.218)	(0.196)	(0.161)	(0.311)	(0.206)	(0.171)	(0.229)
Asian	−0.807***	−0.484**	−0.510**	−0.485	−0.577***	−0.227	0.289
	(0.216)	(0.187)	(0.162)	(0.282)	(0.172)	(0.159)	(0.202)
Preschool-age children (>5)	—	−0.208	—	—	—	—	—
		(0.214)					
School-age children (>5–18)	—	2.355***	—	—	—	—	—
		(0.188)					
Church	—	—	—	—	—	2.168***	—
						(0.157)	
Prob. $>\chi^2$	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

Note. Regressions include all personal and residential background characteristics listed in Table II.
[a]Standard errors are adjusted for clustering on census tract and are in parentheses.
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

church, since churchgoers are more likely to participate in church related organizations.[13]

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.[14] 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 publicly 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. Although not shown here, 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 more than 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.[15]

Table V summarizes the results of this analysis by comparing the unadjusted and adjusted means for the main participation variables, with

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

[14]Selectivity is a major concern in the regressions predicting participation in business/professional organizations. Those who participate in these organizations are also likely to be highly selected on the basis of socioeconomic status. More educated individuals with higher 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.

[15]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.

Table V. Unadjusted and Adjusted Organization Participation Means

	Unadjusted means				Adjusted means			
	White	Black	Latino	Asian	White	Black	Latino	Asian
Variables								
Number of organizations[a]	1.39	1.23[b]	0.79[b]	0.84[b]	1.13	1.28[b]	1.15	0.86[b]
Participation in organizations								
Neighborhood assoc.[c]	0.17	0.14	0.06[b]	0.05[b]	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.06[b]
PTA[c]	0.18	0.18	0.20	0.15	0.20	0.21	0.21	0.14[b]
Sports orgs.[c]	0.27	0.15[b]	0.15[b]	0.13[b]	0.20	0.15[b]	0.22	0.13[b]
Political orgs.[c]	0.09	0.07	0.02[b]	0.03[b]	0.05	0.07	0.06	0.03
Businesses/professional orgs.[c]	0.26	0.15[b]	0.06[b]	0.13[b]	0.18	0.20	0.12[b]	0.12[b]
Church related orgs.[c]	0.32	0.42[b]	0.23[b]	0.25[b]	0.30	0.39[b]	0.29	0.27
Cultural or ethnic orgs.[c]	0.10	0.14[b]	0.07	0.10	0.07	0.14[b]	0.12[b]	0.09

[a] Adjusted means based on Poisson Regression results in Model 3, Table II.
[b] Values are statistically different from whites at the 5% level.
[c] Adjusted means based on respective organization's Logit Model results in Table IV.

unadjusted means taken from Table I.[16] The adjusted means show that, adjusting for 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 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 overall, probably because a large percent of Asians are recent immigrants, and recent immigrants are less likely to participate than other groups.

Either ethnic community or compensatory theories and not cultural inhibition or isolation theories can 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 differences in participation in

[16] 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.

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 do 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 (i.e., 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 socioeconomic 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, centered on political awareness and participation, and which demand action 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 (McPherson, 1977; Olsen, 1970; Williams *et al.*, 1973). Dawson's black utility heuristic model (Dawson, 1994) 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 and to use racial group status as a basis on which to make political choices and to participate. 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 support the ethnic community theory.

Table VI. Poisson Regressions of Number of Organizations for Blacks[a]

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)
% Tract in poverty	−0.690**	−0.575**	—
	(0.237)	(0.239)	
% Tract black	—	0.479***	—
		(0.130)	
<20% Tract in poverty ×	—	—	0.594**
% tract black			(0.241)
20–40% Tract in poverty ×	—	—	0.459*
% tract black			(0.210)
>40% Tract in poverty ×	—	—	0.438*
% tract black			(0.228)
−Log L	−1,355.5	−1,348.5	−1,353.7
N	964	964	964

Note. Regressions include personal and residential background characteristics listed in Table II.
[a]Standard errors are adjusted for clustering on census tract and are in parentheses.
$^*p < .05; ^{**}p < .01; ^{***}p < .001.$

Using racial composition data for census tracts gathered from the 1990 *U.S. Census* (STF3A files) and adjusting the standard errors for clustering on census tracts, 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 in Table II.[17] 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 urban underclass theory (Wilson, 1987) 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 is positively and significantly related to the percentage of the neighborhood that is black, even after neighborhood condition is taken into account. Model 3 runs the effect of the percentage of the neighborhood that is black on participation through neighborhoods that have low (<20%), moderate

[17]Separate poisson regressions of the number of organizations to which respondents belong 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 suggest the unique role of black communities in influencing participation by blacks in voluntary organizations.

(20–40%), and high (>40%) poverty rates. The results indicate that within low, moderate, and high poverty areas, blacks participate in more organizations in neighborhoods with greater concentrations of blacks. These results suggest that black organizations, which are more likely to be located in black communities, play a tremendous role in reinforcing norms and influencing residents to participate. The results of these models are consistent with the ethnic community theory of blacks' greater participation in voluntary associations.

Finally, to further evaluate the ethnic community theory of blacks' greater participation, Table VII presents logit regressions (controlling for clustering) of participation in specific organizations 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. The engagement in civic life is not only likely to enhance social trust, but also likely to 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

Table VII. Logit Regressions of Participation in Specific Organizations for Blacks[a]

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 × Preschool-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 × Preschool-age children	—	-0.291 (1.118)	—	—	—	—	—
% Tract black × School-age children	—	-0.494 (0.857)	—	—	—	—	—
% Tract black × Church	—	—	—	—	—	0.478 (0.688)	—
Preschool-age children (≤5)	—	0.337 (0.806)	—	—	—	—	—
School-age children (>5–18)	—	2.952*** (0.696)	—	—	—	—	—
Church	—	—	—	—	—	1.780** (0.542)	—
Prob. > χ^2	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
N	962	962	962	962	962	962	962

Note. Regressions include all personal and residential background characteristics listed in Table II.
[a]Standard errors are adjusted for clustering on census tract and are in parentheses.
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

groups once the influence of neighborhood condition is taken into account. The results indicate that blacks participate in more organizations than whites and other racial/ethnic groups when the negative influence of neighborhood poverty on participation is taken into account. These results reverse those using earlier 1980 data, which suggested that the black advantage in participation found by researchers in the 1960s and early 1970s seemed to have waned or disappeared, in part because of the social and economic advancement of blacks since the 1970s.

The results of this study suggest that race is still a very important factor to consider in understanding patterns of participation in the United States. Blacks continue to overcompensate for their disadvantaged position in society by participating in more voluntary associations than other groups. That blacks living in black communities participate in more organizations than those who do not, irrespective of the poverty level of the neighborhood, only strengthens this conclusion and provides support for the ethnic community theory of blacks' greater participation. Black organizations, which are more likely to be located in black communities, appear to reinforce norms that stress actions to improve the condition of the community. These results suggest that relative to other similarly situated groups, blacks, especially those living in poor, black communities, are not passive subjects, but active agents in transforming their living conditions.

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, in part because neighborhood poverty has the weakest influence on their participation, though the reason is not clear from this analysis. 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. However, once differences in socioeconomic 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 socioeconomic 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 socioeconomic 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.

APPENDIX

Table A.I. Means (SD) 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
Preschool-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 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

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

REFERENCES

Almond, Gabriel, and Sidney Verba
1963 The Civic Culture. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Aaronson, Daniel
1998 "Using sibling data to estimate the impact of neighborhoods on children's educational outcomes." Journal of Human Resources 33:915–946.

Antunes, George, and Charles M. Gaitz
1975 "Ethnicity and participation: A study of Mexican-Americans, blacks, and whites." American Journal of Sociology 80:1192–1211.

Baumgartner, Frank R., and Jack L. Walker
1988 "Survey research and membership in voluntary associations." American Journal of Political Science 32:908–928.

Babchuk, Nicholas, and Ralph V. Thompson
1962 "The voluntary association of negroes." The American Sociological Review 27:647–655.

Bobo, Lawrence, and Franklin D. Gilliam, Jr.
1990 "Race, sociopolitical participation, and black empowerment." American Political Science Review 84:377–393.

Bourdieu, Pierre
1983 "Forms of capital." In John G. Richardson (ed.), Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education. New York, NY: Greenwood Press.

Brady, Henry E., Sidney Verba, and Kay Lehman Schozman
1995 "Beyond SES: A resource model of political participation." American Political Science Review 89:271–294.

Brooks-Gunn, Jeanne, Greg J. Duncan, Pamela Kato Klebanov, and Naomi Sealand
1993 "Do neighborhoods influence child and adolescent development?" American Journal of Sociology 99:353–395.

Bursik, Robert J., Jr.
1988 "Social disorganization and theories of crime and delinquency: Problems and prospects." Criminology 26:519–551.

Cohen, Cathy J., and Michael C. Dawson
1993 "Neighborhood poverty and African American politics." American Political Science Review 87:286–302.

Cohen, Steven, and Robert E. Kapsis
1978 "Participation of blacks, Puerto Ricans, and whites in voluntary associations: A test of current theories." Social Forces 56:1053–1071.

Crane, Jonathan
1991 "The epidemic theory of ghettos and neighborhood effects on dropping out and teenage childbearing." American Journal of Sociology 96:1226–1259.

Dawson, Michael C.
1994 Behind the Mule: Race and Class in African-American Politics. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Dornbusch, Sanford M., L. Phillip Ritter, and Lawrence Steinberg
1991 "Community influences on the relation of family statuses to adolescent school performance: Differences between African Americans and non-Hispanic whites." American Journal of Education 38:543–567.

Elliott, Delbert S., William Julius Wilson, David Huizinga, Robert J. Sampson, Amanda Elliott, and Bruce Rankin
1996 "The effects of neighborhood disadvantage on adolescent development." Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency 33:389–426.

Ellison, Christopher G., and David A. Gay
1989 "Black political participation revisited: A test of compensatory, ethnic community and public arena models." Social Science Quarterly 70:101–119.

Gordon, Wayne, and Nicholas Babchuk
1959 "Typology of voluntary association." American Sociological Review 24:22–29.

Green, Gary P., Leann M. Tigges, and Irene Browne
1995 "Social resources, job search and poverty in Atlanta." Research in Community Sociology 5:161–182.

Jacoby, Arthur, and Nicolas Babchuk
1963 "Instrumental and expressive voluntary associations." Sociology and Social Research 47:461–477.

Jarkowsky, Paul A.
1997 Poverty and Place: Ghettos, Barrios, and the American City. New York, NY: Russell Sage.

Jaynes, Gerald D.
1990 "The labor market status of black Americans: 1939–1985." Journal of Economic Perspectives 4:9–24.

Jencks, Christopher, and Susan E. Mayer
1990   "The social consequences of growing up in a poor neighborhood." In National Research Council (ed.), Inner-City Poverty in the United States. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Johnson, James, Jr., Melvin L. Oliver, and Lawrence Bobo
1994   "Understanding the contours of deepening urban inequality: Theoretical underpinnings and research design of a multi-city Study." Urban Geography 15:77–89.

Kaufman, Jason
1999   "Three views of associationalism in 19th century America: An empirical examination." American Journal of Sociology 104:1296–1345.

Kennedy, Peter
1998   A Guide to Econometrics. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

McPherson, J. Miller
1977   "Correlates of a social participation: A comparison of the ethnic community and compensatory theories." The Sociological Quarterly 18:197–208.

Moulton, B. R.
1990   "An illustration of a pitfall in estimating the effects of aggregated variables on micro units." Review of Economics and Statistics 72:334–338.

Mydral, Gunnar, Richard Sterner, and Arnold Rose
1944   An American Dilemma. New York, NY: Harper and Brothers.

Oaxaca, Ron
1973   "Male-female wage differential in urban labor markets." International Economic Review 14:693–709.

Olsen, Marvin E.
1970   "The social and political participation of blacks." American Sociological Review 35:682–696.

Orum, Anthony
1966   "A reappraisal of the social and political participation of negroes." American Journal of Sociology 72: 32–46.

Paxton, Pamela
1999   "Is social capital declining in the United States? A multiple indicator assessment." American Journal of Sociology 105:88–127.

Plotnick, Robert D., and Saul D. Hoffman
1999   "The effect of neighborhood characteristics on young adult outcomes: Alternative estimates." Social Science Quarterly 80:1–19.

Putnam, Robert D.
1995   "Bowling alone: America's declining social capital." Journal of Democracy 6:65–78.

Ricketts, Erol R., and Isabel V. Sawhill
1988   "Defining and measuring the underclass." Journal of Policy Analysis and Management 7:316–325.

Sallach, David L., Nicolas Babchuck, and Alan Booth
1972   "Social involvement and political activity: Another view." Social Science Quarterly 52:879–892.

Sampson, Robert J., Jeffrey D. Morenoff, and Felton Earls
1999   "Beyond social capital: Spatial dynamics of collective efficacy for children." American Sociological Review 64:633–660.

Sampson, Robert J., Stephen W. Raudenbush, and Felton Earls
1997   "Neighborhoods and violent crime: A multilevel study of collective efficacy." Science 277:918–924.

Schlozman, Kay Lehman, Nancy Burns, and Sidney Verba
1994   "Gender and the pathways to participation: The role of resources." The Journal of Politics 56:961–990.

Shaw, Clifford R., and Henry D. McKay
1942   Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Tocqueville, Alexis de
1835   Democracy in America. New York, NY: Vintage.

Tigges, Leann M., Irene Browne, and Gary P. Green
1998   "Social isolation of the urban poor: Race, class, and neighborhood effects on social resources." The Sociological Quarterly 39:53–77.

Vartanian, Thomas P.
1997   "Neighborhood effects on AFDC exits: Examining the social isolation, relative deprivation, and epidemic theories." Social Service Review 71: 548–573.

Verba, Sidney, and Norman H. Nie
1972   Participation in America. New York, NY: Harper and Row.

Verba, Sidney, Kay Lehman Scholozman, Henry Brady, and Norman H. Nie
1993   "Race, ethnicity, and political resources: Participation in the United States." British Journal of Political Science 23:453–497.
1993   "Citizen activity: Who participates? What do they say?" American Political Science Review 87:303–318.

Williams, J. Allen, Jr., Nicolas Babchuk, and David R. Johnson
1973   "Voluntary associations and minority status: A comparative analysis of Anglo, black, and Mexican Americans." American Sociological Review 38:637–646.

Wilson, William J.
1987   The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Woodard, Michael D.
1986   "Voluntary association Membership among black Americans: The Post-Civil rights era." The Sociological Quarterly 28:285–301.

Wright, Charles R. and Herbert H. Hyman
1958   "Voluntary association memberships of American adults: Evidence from national sample surveys." American Sociological Review 23:284–294.