

SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF ETHNIC COMMUNITIES IN THE USA

T.G. Bortnikova

Department of Foreign Languages, TSTU

Represented by Member of Editorial Board Professor V.I. Konovalov

Key words and phrases: cohorts organization; discrimination; district; ethnic communities; immigration; membership; problems of adaptation; race; stratification factors; support groups.

Abstract: The paper deals with problems of local ethnic communities' activity in the USA. The main question is the adaptation of immigrants into society and involvement of ethnic minorities into local organizations in conformity with stratification factors.

The problems that confront non-English speaking immigrants are of great importance. Newcomers to San Francisco, for example, who cannot speak English have a hard time finding an apartment, a job, or health care. About 30,000 people moved to San Francisco from foreign countries in 1991, according to the Immigration and Naturalization Service. About one-quarter of these (7,300) came from Mexico, while 13 percent (4,100) came from mainland China, 12 percent (3,700) came from the Philippines, 7 percent (2,100) from the former Soviet Union, and 5 percent (1,400) from Hong Kong. Some of them arrived without contacts and needed immediate help.

In San Francisco, this help comes rather from local ethnic communities than from the government organizations such as the Chinatown Youth Center and Jewish Family and Children's Services, which apply for grant money and provide services to immigrants. Many Hispanic immigrants to the city seek help at the Good Samaritan Family Resource Center in the heart of the Mission district.

Good Samaritan Center teaches "survival" English to help people get by until they can control in a regular language class. The center also teaches newcomers about life in San Francisco, such as how to find health care and schools. The center offers support groups that function as extended families. If a client is afraid to go to the hospital, for example, someone from the support group will go with.

San Francisco's Tenderloin district is a magnet for new arrivals; many of them turn to the Center for Southeast Asian Refugee Settlement, which offers basic English classes and job training to a wide variety of immigrants.

But organizations of ethnic groups help to solve not only immigrant problems. Some psychologists, sociologists and culturologists consider ethnic communities to predict differences by race in the utilization of formal organizations across cohorts.

Sonia Miner and Stewart Tolnay's research uses age stratification, isolation, compensatory, and ethnic community perspectives to predict differences by race in the utilization of formal organizations across cohorts. Voluntary organizations are classified into three general types: social service clubs, job-related groups, and neighborhood organizations.

They hypothesize that racial differences in organizational participation will be wider for older cohorts than for younger cohorts, as a result of historical racism. Moreover, they expect the racial differences across cohorts to be greater for those organizations (i.e., social service and job-related groups) where racial barriers to membership were the strongest.

They use the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH) and logistic regression analysis to determine the predicted probabilities of membership in organizations by race, age, and type of membership.

The results reveal higher levels of participation in organizations for young Blacks (than for young Whites). At the oldest ages, however, the race differential reverses direction for social-service and job-related organizations. For neighborhood organizations, the race differential is more stable across cohorts, consistent with expectations.

The authors stated, that involvement in formal organizations provides individuals with a direct linkage to the larger social structure. However, some social groups have been exposed to exclusionary rules for membership in certain formal organizations.

For example, it is well-known, that racial minorities have historically experienced barriers to some types of formal social activity in American society (Farley & Allen, 1987; Miner, 1993). Those formal organizations centered in the general society (e.g., country clubs, social-service and fraternal organizations) were more likely to maintain exclusionary policies.

In contrast, African Americans have had relatively open access to church-related activities as well as to local neighborhood and school organizations (Milburn & Bowman, 1991). Historical barriers to formal participation have weakened substantially for the Black population in the years since the supportive legislation of the Civil Rights (Act of 1964), which prohibited discrimination in public accommodations and facilities. Because segregation and discrimination had been more effective at excluding African Americans from involvement in the formal sphere, this legislation should have had a greater impact on minority involvement in organizations rooted in the larger society than on those located closer to home in the African American community.

Prior research on minority membership in voluntary organizations typically has combined different age cohorts of individuals into a single group or all organizations into a single category, and this has yielded conflicting results. For example, Wright and Hyman (1958) concluded that Blacks had lower rates of membership than did Whites. This finding has led to the "isolation hypothesis," which suggests that Blacks are isolated from civic activities because they are excluded from meaningful involvement in the larger society. Others, however, have found greater formal participation among Blacks (see e.g., Babchuk & Thompson, 1962; Clemente, Rexroad, & Hirsch, 1975; Myrdal, Sterner, & Rose, 1944; Orum, 1966; Williams, Babchuk, & Johnson, 1973) and have argued in favor of the "compensation hypothesis," which claims that Blacks overcompensate for barriers to the larger society by becoming highly involved in available voluntary organizations. Another explanation of greater voluntary organization participation among Blacks is the "ethnic community perspective," which suggests that high levels of race and class consciousness lead to greater Black membership in formal organizations (Ellison & London, 1992; Olsen, 1970). These conflicting findings about racial differences in voluntary organization participation may be due to a failure by previous investigators to distinguish simultaneously between different types of organizations (with varying barriers to membership) and to consider cohort differences within the minority and majority populations.

The authors resume that the civil rights movement is critical to this process because it had two effects on social participation for racial minorities. First, the Black community was empowered by the momentum of the movement, which resulted in a higher degree of social participation and community involvement (Olsen, 1970). Second,

the legal barriers of segregation decreased when the civil rights legislation of the 1960s prohibited racial discrimination in many sectors of public life. In contrast, discrimination has been more persistent in some types of private organizations, such as country clubs and fraternal organizations. Therefore, it is important to distinguish between different types of organizations, which may vary in accessibility for minority group members. Cohort membership is also an important consideration, because older cohorts have experienced greater levels of social discrimination.

Finally, in this research they examined age and race as contexts in which to study voluntary organization membership. They acknowledge that there are other variables that could also play roles, such as gender. The authors recommend that future research focus on gender stratification as well as additional stratifying variables, such as class and ethnicity, by age cohort to determine differences in voluntary organization membership for these subcohorts over the life course.

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Особенности деятельности этнокультурных организаций США

Т.Г. Бортникова

Кафедра иностранных языков, ТГТУ

Ключевые слова и фразы: группы поддержки; дискриминация; иммиграция; когорты; организация; проблемы адаптации; район; раса; стратификационные факторы; членство; этнические группы.

Аннотация: Рассматриваются особенности деятельности этнокультурных общественных организаций в США. Ключевыми вопросами здесь выступают проблемы адаптации иммигрантов в американском обществе и зависимость вовлеченности в деятельность общественных организаций от стратификационных параметров.

Besonderheiten der Tätigkeit der ethnokulturellen Organisationen USA

Zusammenfassung: Es werden die Besonderheiten der Tätigkeit der ethnokulturellen gesellschaftlichen Organisationen in USA betrachtet. Als Schlüsselfragen treten hier die Probleme der Anpassung der Immigranten in der amerikanischen Gesellschaft und die Abhängigkeit der Heranziehung in die Tätigkeit der gesellschaftlichen Organisationen von Stratifikationsparametern auf.

Aspects spécifiques des communautés ethniques aux USA

Résumé: Sont examinés les problèmes de l'activité des communautés ethniques aux Etats-Unis, en particulier les problèmes de l'adaptation des immigrants dans la société américaine ainsi que la dépendance de la participation à l'activité des associations sociales des paramètres de stratification.