

Relational Model of Political Participation:
: Tackling “Identity-to-Politics Link” through Latent Class Models

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Abstract

Existing research on political participation has struggled to understand the unique participation patterns of racial and ethnic minorities. This article suggests a new theoretical and methodological approach to the issue. Relying on the framework of “relational analysis,” I apply Latent Class Models on survey data from Los Angeles to develop four ideal types of political participation: “Standard participants” who follow the standard patterns of informed electoral participation; “protesters” who are more attuned to contentious politics; “non-participants” who feel not capable of participating; and “not interested” who feels capable but has no interest in politics. Then I cross-classify these four types with racial and ethnic groups to show how individual patterns of political participation constructs the group-specific patterns, and explain how different groups are situated against each other within a common political field. I conclude by discussing implications of my model to further research.

Introduction: The Problem of “Identities-to-Politics Link”

Existing research on political participation has struggled to produce a comprehensive framework for understanding political participation of racial minorities and immigrants (Lee 2008). Although many years of research has confirmed education and socio-economic status as the strongest predictors of political participation (Verba and King 1972; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995), the same model has been less successful in explaining the cases of racial minorities and immigrants. Studies based on survey data have suggested a series of different models applicable to various racial and ethnic groups (Cho et al. 2006; Cho 1999; Leighley and Vedlitz 1999; Jang 2009; Ramakrshnan 2005), while works focusing on specific locales and groups yielded more comprehensive accounts of political behavior that often exceeded the boundary of the standard SES model (Jones-Correa 1998; Garcia-Bedolla 2005; Kasanitz 1991; Hero 1992; Wong 2006). However, the literature remains fragmented without a common framework to encompass different configurations of “identities-to-politics link” (Lee 2008). As the minority share of U.S electorate is rapidly increasing, this gap in research is becoming a more pressing concern.

In this context, this paper attempts to sketch out a new theoretical and methodological approach to assess political participation of racial and ethnic minorities. Taeku Lee (2008) aptly summarized pitfalls of the existing research on this topic with the phrase “identities-to-politics link.” First, researchers often fail to consider the complexities associated with the identity categories and the way through which it operates. Second, researchers take the conventional definition of political participation, such as voting in elections, for granted and fail to grasp other possible venues of politics

such as protesting on streets or community organizing in neighborhoods. Both “identities” and “politics” pose unique challenges regarding their definitions and operationalizations, while establishing a linkage between the two is no less difficult a task. In this paper, I attempt to suggest a new theoretical and methodological approach to these issues.

I proceed on two steps: first, drawing on the literature on sociology of stratification and class, I present a theoretical framework of “relational way of thinking” (Bourdieu 1984; Fourcade et al. forthcoming) as an alternative guiding principle in building the models of political participation; second, departing from the exclusive reliance on linear regression techniques, I use a method for categorical data analysis, namely Latent Class Analysis (Goodman 1972; henceforth LCA), to demonstrate my alternative approach with empirical examples. Analyzing Immigration and Intergenerational Mobility in Los Angeles dataset (ILLMA 2004), I develop four ideal-types of individual-level political participation and examine their relationships with race and ethnicity. I conclude by discussing how my approach can incorporate the previous studies while providing hints in clarifying with “identities-to-politics link”

The Models of Political Participation

The previous studies on political participation—at least the ones that are based on survey data—focus on predicting individual-level political behavior, most notably voting in elections. The canonical model in this literature is the socio-economic status (SES) model: people with higher socio-economic status possess more resources for participation, such as time, skill and knowledge, hence they are more likely to participate in the politics (Verba and King 1972). Among the indicators of SES, educational

attainment has been identified as the most consistent predictor of active political participation of various forms across the context (Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1995), although the causal mechanism seems less clear than stated in the SES model (Kam and Palmer 2008; 2011; Henderson and Chatfield 2011; Mayer 2011; Berinsky and Lenz 2010).

On the other hand, explaining the case of racial minorities has been a challenge from the beginning. The scholars found out early that the standard model did not apply as well to the voting behaviors of racial minorities. They point towards group identity of minorities as a reason, and assume that the specific mechanisms through which the identity is enforced and perceived within society would matter in political participation. Explaining the relatively high participation rate of African-Americans, Dawson conceptualized the belief in a shared collective interest, or “linked fate,” as a driving force behind participation (1994). Subsequent works emphasized that some kind of group-level factors are in effect, along with the standard SES: experience of racial prejudice (Shingles 1981) race and ethnicity of politicians (Bobo and Gilliam Jr. 1990; Junn and Masuoka 2008; McConnaughy et al 2010); pan-ethnic identity and national identity (Sanchez 2006; Hero 1992; Leighley and Vedlitz 1999; Wong, Ramakrishnan, Lee and Junn 2011); and group size and local demographics (Jang 2009) have all been pointed out as some of those factors. The research on political participation of immigrants and their children largely falls into the same pattern (Ramakrishnan 2005; Cho, Gimpel, and Dyck 2006; Cho 1999). A recent study showed that the most educated immigrants second-generation groups are least likely to vote, and negative effect of group identity on

participation was even greater than the positive one from education (Kasinitz et al. 2008:276).

In summary, two key findings emerge from this survey: first, the standard SES model did not seem to apply as well to racial and ethnic minorities, at least not to the extent that it does to native whites; second, researchers have revised the standard model by adding in various group-level factors, resulting in a series of different models for different groups. For instance, in case of a recent study (Jang 2009), we see that the interaction between group size and group-level income is an important indicator of political participation for Latinos, but not for Asians. In the case of Asians, absolute group size and local racial demographics matter more. Here we have two different models for Latinos and Asians—yet we are not clear why they are different and how they relate to each other. If we go further down from pan-ethnic groups to national origin groups, variations in models proliferate with many exceptional subgroups emerging (Leighley and Vedlitz 1999; Ramakrishnan 2005; Wong et al. 2011). Unless we suppose that the two groups live in totally different spaces and engage in separate field of politics, these questions must be answerable in order to further understand the relationship between minorities and politics. In other words, political science research has not produced a comprehensive framework to account for the relationships between different identities that exist in a common political field.

Relational Framework: Two Levels

The previous survey studies of political participation relied heavily on what Andrew Abbott calls “general linear reality:” a mentality that accepts linear equation as a proper representation of the social reality and its causal mechanisms (2001: 37). Abbott

argued that because researchers are usually accustomed to seeing the empirical world through the tools that they employ in research, they often give their methodological assumptions epistemological prestige over empirical reality. Researchers often try to fit the reality into the specific methodological tools—such as linear regression models—with which they feel comfortable rather than coming up with a proper new model. Much of this criticism, originally formulated against conventional sociological practice (or what Abbott calls “variable paradigm”), applies to political participation literature as well. The innovation in research has focused on extending the standard SES model by adding in group-level variables, or further isolating the causal mechanisms within the existing model through matching techniques and experimental methods, not on stepping out of the “general linear reality” (Kam and Palmer 2008; 2011; Henderson and Chatfield 2011; Mayer 2011; Berinsky and Lenz 2010).

Relational analysis offers an alternative perspective (Bourdieu 1984; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Fourcade, Schofer, and Lande forthcoming; Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994). In *Distinction* (1984), Bourdieu preceded Abbott’s (2001) criticism in problematizing “linear thinking” of American sociology: he charged the American literature on stratification and social mobility as insufficiently isolating the relationship of “direct determination” between independent and dependent variable and neglecting “the structure of relations between all the pertinent properties which gives its specific value to each of them and to the effects they exert on practices” (1984: 106-107). According to Bourdieu, we cannot understand the totality of class and reproduction system by isolating the most significant independent variable—such as father’s occupation—for mobility, because class is defined by both properties (i.e. money, power...) and practices (i.e. life

style, bodily dispositions...). Furthermore, the combination of these variables begets their meaning as a description of a class only through its relationships with other classes—for example, working class is defined not by its natural, independent characteristics, but by its position *against* middle or upper class in its specific characteristics. It is important to recognize that the relational framework operates in two levels here: First within the multiple variables that constitute a class, and second between the classes. In other words, in order to understand working class, we should know more than the fact that someone's father worked in manual labor; we should recognize the relationship between manual labor and practical habits associated with it, such as emphasis on masculinity or preference for practical, popular aesthetics, and establish a configuration of working class identity (first level); then, we should see how these variables is defined against those of other classes, such as manual labor vis-à-vis property ownership and popular aesthetics vis-à-vis high culture, and in the end, how they together construct working class identity vis-à-vis upper class (second level).

Let us further clarify the relational framework with an example from our topic, minority political participation. To understand political participation of minorities, it is not sufficient to identify only the isolated effect of racial and ethnic identity on political participation, or group-level factors that pertain only to minorities; we should grasp the relationship of multiple variables from which the definition of politics emerge. Obvious indicators such as voting matters, but other forms of political behavior, such as participation in street protest, are equally important; socio-economic status and political knowledge are important, and so are factors relating to specific group identity such as experience of discrimination. In the first level, the configurations of these variables

define distinctive types of political (non-)participation. As for the second level, these configurations of political participation intertwine with the existing grid of racial and ethnic identity, further complicating the picture of field in which political participation is enacted.

Admittedly this theoretical formulation can sound abstract and esoteric. Yet in fact, important works on minority political participation that focus on specific locations rely on similar logics (Jones-Correa 1998; Garcia-Bedolla 2005; Kasinitz 1992). In all of these works, the authors find different forms of politics that cannot be captured by the previous studies on political participation. In analyzing non-participation, community politics, contentious politics, and even street carnivals, these authors emphasize the need to understand how race, gender, and local context intertwine with individual-level factors such as education to shape a particular practice of political participation. In the end, they suggest how these patterns fit within the specific locations in which they are interested, and present a model to understand relationship between racial and ethnic identities and political participation.

My approach brings in the wisdom of these studies to survey data, and discuss how they can help solving the challenges posed by “identities-to-politics link.” Instead of building yet another different model for a different group, I highlight diverse patterns of political participation; explain how these models relate to each other; and sketch out how they intertwine with racial and ethnic identity to constitute a space of political participation

Data and Method

I use Immigration and Intergenerational Mobility in Los Angeles (ILLMA 2004) data set in conducting my analysis. ILLMA consists of the survey responses from 4,655 individuals who were living in metropolitan Los Angeles area from April to October 2004. The survey specifically targeted children of immigrants from age 20 to 40, ranging from 1.5 to 4th generation. It included 6 major immigrant groups, namely Mexican, Salvadorna/Guatemalan, Chinese/Taiwanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Filipino, and others, plus native whites and native blacks as comparison groups.

As for the specific method, I use Latent Class Models developed by Goodman (1974; 2002). Simply put, LCA finds an optimized number of categories (termed latent classes) to account for combinations of certain values in given variables. This feature corresponds well to the aim of my analysis, because it detects configurations of variables that constitute unique participation patterns, unlike regression techniques that focus on isolating effects of a particular variable of interest. In a sense LCA detects the most prevalent types among cases—I argue that this feature is congruent with “ideal types” approach often employed in analysis of interview or historical data (see Haggens 1989 on using LCA in this manner).¹

¹ In this regard there is some degree of affinity between Ragin’s (2000; 2008) Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) and LCA, largely because they both rely on the notion of ideal-type of cases rather than effects of variables. A formal comparison of the two methods exceeds aim of this paper but it should be noted that LCA is closer to the conventional statistical models than QCA in the sense that it attempts to construct a model and test it against the existing data. LCA’s reliance on the traditional indicators of statistical significance such as chi-square and p-value clearly demonstrates this point.

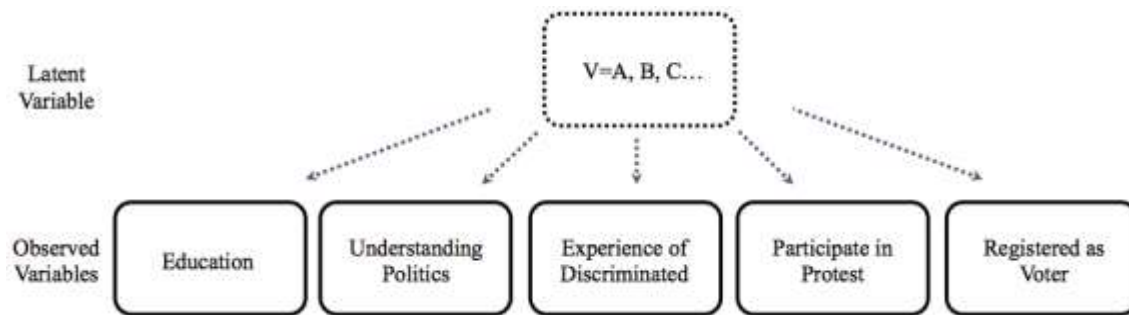


Figure 1. Conceptual Illustration of LCA

Figure 1 illustrates the logic of LCA. As for the variables included in LCA, I follow the examples of the previous research and include four variables that have been found to be effective in predicting political participation, in addition to participation in street protest, a unique feature in my dataset.

Following the example of the standard SES model, I start with the indicators of socio-economic status and political behavior: education and voter registration status. The importance of education, although somewhat less salient for the case of some minorities (Wong et al. 2011; Ramakrishnan 2005), is well established in political participation literature. For political behavior, I use voter registration status instead of voting. Voting in elections can be swayed by period-specific and election-specific factors. However, by being registered as voter, individuals become a part of political circuit, through which information and mobilization attempts circulate. In addition, I add participation in protests as another indicator of political behavior. Although previous studies of participation often overlooked direct political action, street protest has been an integral part of minority political participation throughout American history from the Civil Rights movement to the recent mobilizations of undocumented students movement (Lee 2002).

I also include a variable on political knowledge, namely whether the respondent thinks she understands important political issues or not. Although the standard model

shows that political knowledge is a good indicator for political participation, the literature on minority politics has consistently shown that the link between knowledge and practice is much complex in the case of minorities, largely because they tend to lack access to and information about politics even when they are willing to participate (García Bedolla 2005; Wong 2006; Jones-Correa 1992). Finally, I include perceived experience of discrimination based on racial and ethnic identity. As a number of scholars argue, the everyday experience of discrimination is an important mechanism that reinforces identification with specific group (Dawson 1994; García Bedolla 2005; Omi and Winant 1994). Thus we can hypothesize that experience of discrimination will serve as an important building block within “identities-to-politics link.”

Variable	Survey Question
Understanding Politics	“I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country”
Protest	“In the past twelve months, have you taken part in any form of protest, such as picketing, a march, demonstration or boycott?”
Voter Registration	“Some people are registered to vote and others are not. How about you? Are you registered to vote in the voting precinct where you now live, are you registered to vote somewhere else, or are you not registered to vote?”
Discrimination	“Within the past year, did you feel as if someone was showing prejudice toward you or was discriminating against you because of your race or ethnicity?”
Education	Education level

Table 1. List of Variables Included in LCA

Results: “non-participants,” “standard participants,” “protesters,” and “not interested”

		LL	BIC (LL)	Npar	Chi-square	df	p-value	Class Err.
Model1	1 Class	-18442.34	36984.5284	12	765.5317	275	7.90E-48	0
Model2	2 Class	-18235.31	36678.6509	25	351.4852	262	0.00018	0.2061
Model3	3 Class	-18195.18	36706.5609	38	271.2262	249	0.16	0.2948
Model4	4 Class	-18179.06	36782.4923	51	238.9886	236	0.43	0.3484
Model5	5 Class	-18168.72	36869.9799	64	218.3072	223	0.57	0.3618
Model6	6 Class	-18161.98	36964.6562	77	204.8146	210	0.59	0.3673

Table 2 Estimates of Fit from Latent Class Models

Table 2 shows the estimates of fit from latent class models, ranging from 1 to 6 classes. The number of class denotes the optimal number of types of configuration for the variables described in table 1. I choose to focus on the model 4 based on chi-square estimation: when moving from model 3 to 4, goodness-of-fit chi-square decrease approximately 33 (from 271.2262 to 238.9886) in exchange for 13 degrees of freedom (from 249 to 236). The difference between the two models is significant ($p < 0.001$), while moving from model 4 to 5 do not yield statistically significant gains ($p = 0.0952 < 0.1$).² In all of the models only 4,108 out of 4,655 respondents were analyzed due to missing data.

	A	B	C	D
Class Size	0.36	0.31	0.21	0.12
Understanding Politics				
Very High	0.32	0.56	0.73	0.04

² In choosing the model, I evaluate several criteria including log likelihood (LL), Bayesian Information Criteria, and chi-square. Although BIC points toward model 2 as the most parsimonious model with the least possible number of parameters, I choose model 4 both in terms of chi-square probability and its substantial results. That is, I value explanatory power of the model more over parsimoniousness, given the complex nature of the data set that includes 4,655 respondents within 10 nested categories of groups (For specific criteria on selecting a model in LCA, see Vermunt 2003; Vermunt and Magdison, 2002; Hagenaars 2002).

High	0.45	0.41	0.24	0.80
Low	0.16	0.03	0.03	0.16
Very Low	0.08	0.00	0.01	0.00
Protest				
Yes	0.05	0.10	0.34	0.09
No	0.95	0.90	0.66	0.91
Voter Registration				
Yes	0.53	0.93	0.85	0.63
Somewhere	0.05	0.05	0.10	0.14
No	0.42	0.01	0.05	0.23
Discrimination				
Yes	0.32	0.11	0.67	0.43
No	0.68	0.89	0.33	0.57
Education				
No HSD	0.23	0.02	0.02	0.00
HSD	0.25	0.13	0.10	0.03
1-2yrs college	0.27	0.27	0.35	0.33
3-4yrs college	0.09	0.07	0.06	0.17
BA	0.13	0.35	0.27	0.39
Grad	0.03	0.16	0.20	0.08

Table 3 Profiles of Classes

The model 4 yields profiles for the four classes as displayed in table 3 above. Class size indicates the percentage of respondents belonging predominantly in the given class. For instance, 31% of the respondents belong to “A” class (approximately 1,230 cases), while 12% belong to “D” class (approximately 490 cases). Numbers for the variable response categories indicate conditional probabilities for a respondent in the class to answer affirmative to those categories. For instance, if one belongs to “A” class, one is very unlikely to protest (only 5%), while somewhat likely to be registered for voting (53%).

	Non-participants	Standard Participants	Protesters	Not Interested
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Understanding Politics	Y	Y	Y	S
Protest	N	N	Y	N
Voter Registration	N	Y	Y	S
Discrimination	S	N	Y	S
Education	N	Y	Y	Y

*. Y = yes; S = somewhat; N=no

Table 4 Simplified Profiles of Classes

In table 4, I simplify the results from table 3, and name the four classes based on their profiles.

When compared with others, the respondents in “A” class are the least active participants: their likelihood to vote or protest is the lowest among the four classes. They report experiencing some discrimination based on their race and ethnicity, and they display the lowest level of educational attainment among the four classes. They are confident that they can understand the politics, even more than “D” class that display higher educational level and voter registration rate. I name this class as “non-participants,” denoting their avoidance of both electoral and contentious politics.

The respondents in “B” class seem to fit into the SES model: they are highly educated, knowledgeable in politics, and registered to vote. They have not experienced discrimination due to their race and ethnicity, and they are not participating in protest. I name them as “standard participants,” who follow the logic of the standard SES model of political participation.

The respondents in “C” class are the most active group in terms of their political engagement. They are educated; they know politics; and they confess that they have often encountered discrimination due to their race and ethnicity. They are active in both electoral and contentious politics: they are registered as voters and they have experiences of participating in protests. In fact, they are the only group who are relatively highly

likely to participate in protest. To highlight this unique feature, I name them “protesters.”

The respondents in “D” class are not easy to characterize. Although their education level fare with “standard participants” and “protesters,” they are relatively less likely to be registered as voters. More strikingly, they display less confidence in their knowledge of politics than “non-participants,” whose educational levels are significantly lower. It is as if their education is not serving them well, at least in terms of political knowledge and participation. I name them “not interested,” as those not willing to participate even though their objective socio-economic status matches the profiles of active participants

It is interesting to think through these four classes in light of the standard SES model. The distinction between “non-participants” and others confirms the findings from the SES model that highlights the role of education in participation. The distinction between “standard participants” and “protesters,” however, shows that there is a further divergence within educated voters. These two groups choose different venues of politics: “protesters” have experience of participating in protests while “standard participants” do not, perhaps because of their experience of discrimination. These configurations remind us of black politics (Dawson 1994). In addition, “not interested” occupies a unique position that cannot be explained by the SES model. Even though they have high levels of educational attainment, it does not translate into knowledge on politics or consciousness of racial prejudice. These characteristics correspond to the significant portion of Asian Americans and Latinos who do not fit into the SES model (Ramakrishnan 2005; Kasinitz et al. 2008; Wong 2006; Wong et al. 2008; Hero 1992).

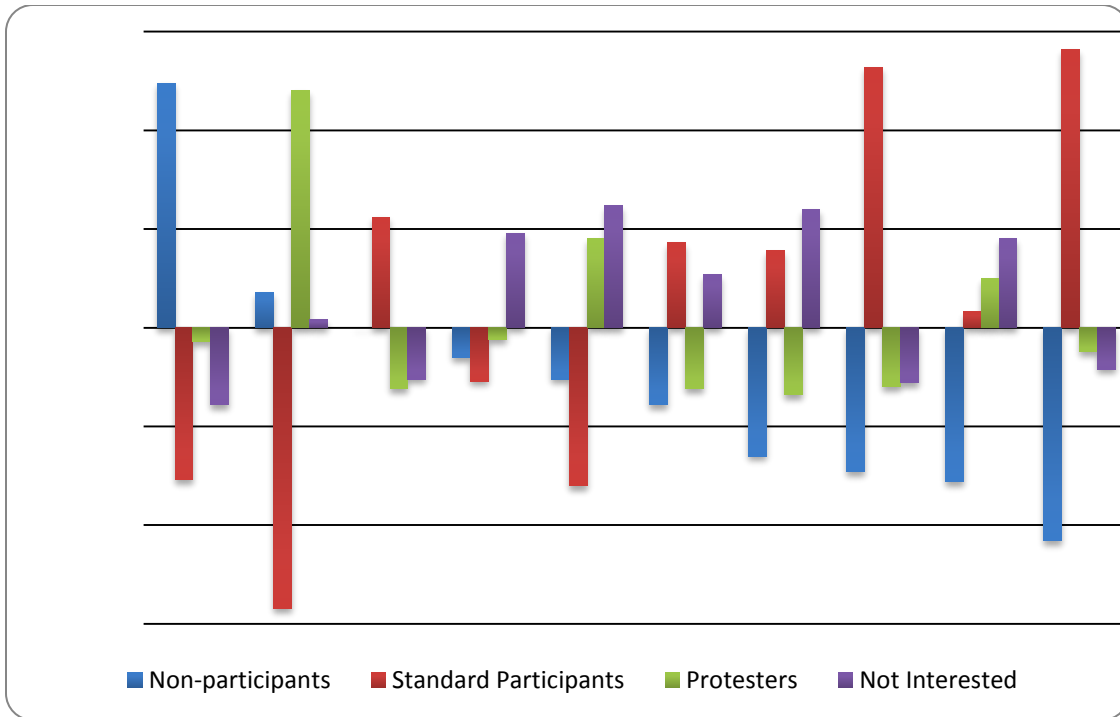


Figure 2. Classes by 10 Major Groups

Figure 2 depicts the percentage of the respondents belonging in each of the four classes, broken down by the 10 groups within the ILLMA data set.³ From this figure, we can see that there is a predominant trend in each group: Mexicans are most likely to belong to “non-participants,” whereas African-Americans are more likely to be “protesters” over “standard participants;” Filipino and Chinese are more likely to be either “standard participants” or “not interested;” and whites, Salvadorans, Guatemalans, and other Latinos are highly likely to be “standard participants.” There are, however, considerable heterogeneities within groups aside from the dominant trends. If we compare Vietnamese, Chinese, and Koreans, for example, “not interested” is the leading

³ All of the frequencies are standardized around the overall class size. In other words, if Mexicans are noted as +13% in “non-participants,” it means that among Mexicans “non-participants” take up 49% of the respondents, whereas in the whole data set they only take up 36% of the respondents. Therefore we can conclude that Mexicans are more likely to belong to “non-participants” class than the other groups, or “non-participants” are more likely to be Mexican than others. With the same logic, Mexicans are less likely to belong to “standard participants” category.

class in all four of them, but the compositions of other classes are quite different: whereas Vietnamese and Chinese are relatively highly likely to be “standard participants” when they do not belong to “not interested,” Koreans are more likely to be “protesters” than “standard participants.” In other words, because each group has a unique distribution of participation patterns, the composition within a group matters as much as the dominant trend in understanding their political participation patterns.

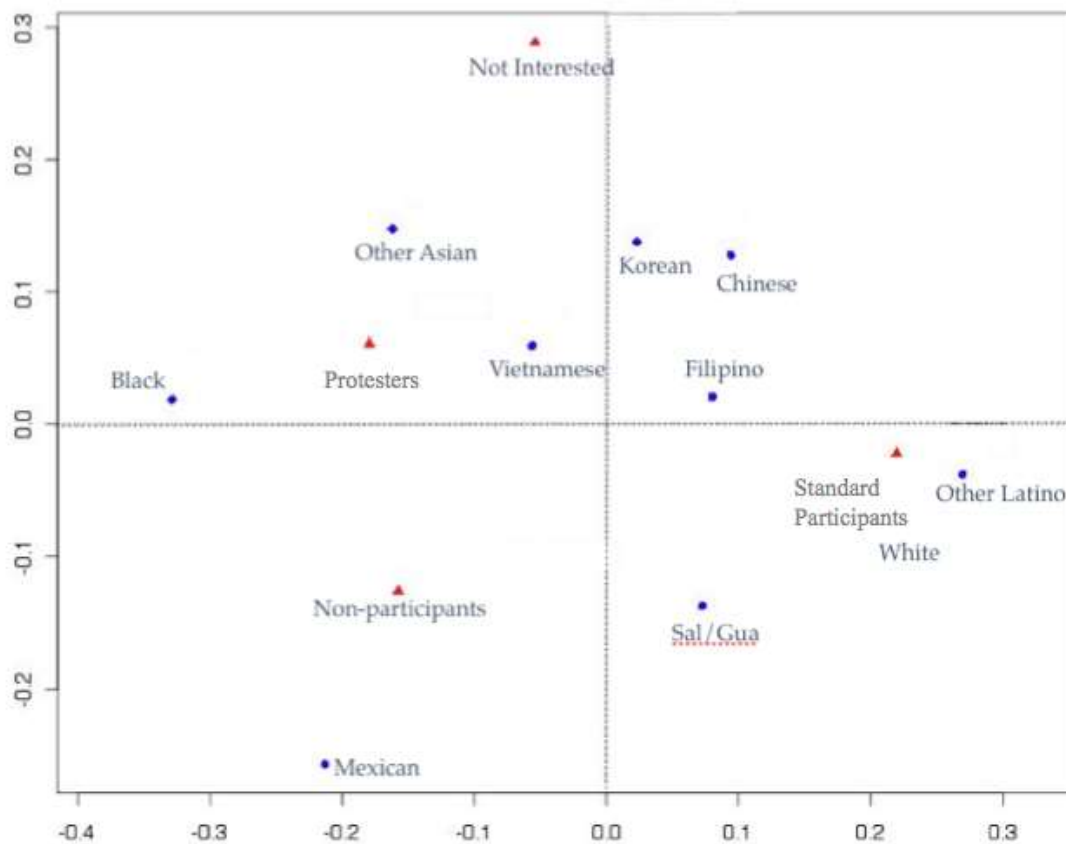


Figure 3. Multiple Correspondence Analysis of the Results in Figure 2.

To illustrate this point further, I applied multiple correspondence analysis to the data presented in Figure 2. Figure 3 illustrates the relationships between groups and participation patterns. We should keep in mind that the points for the groups note the median points for all group members—it is likely that individual patterns of political

participation are dotted throughout this space, with the dominant trends within the groups skewing the distribution one way or the other. Mexican and Black positions denote the strong presences of “non-participants” and “protesters” within the groups, respectively; we can also see that some groups are torn between competing patterns of political participation, as noted by Korean, Chinese, Filipino, and Vietnamese.

Through this spatial representation of political participation patterns and groups, we can understand the relationship between different models of political participation. In short, the various models suggested in the literature correspond to certain sections of this diagram. The standard SES model can explain the logic of political participation around “standard participants,” or the lower-right corner of the figure. This explains why native whites and other groups in the section fit better to the standard model. On the other hand, the models that take into account experience of discrimination will fare better in the upper-left corner, explaining the cases of blacks, other Asians, and, to a lesser degree, Vietnamese. The positions of “not interested” and “non-participants” show why the literature had trouble in finding consistent models for Asians and Latinos—they are more widely scattered than other groups, and seem to follow neither of the standard SES model or the group-level factor model such as the “linked fate” model.

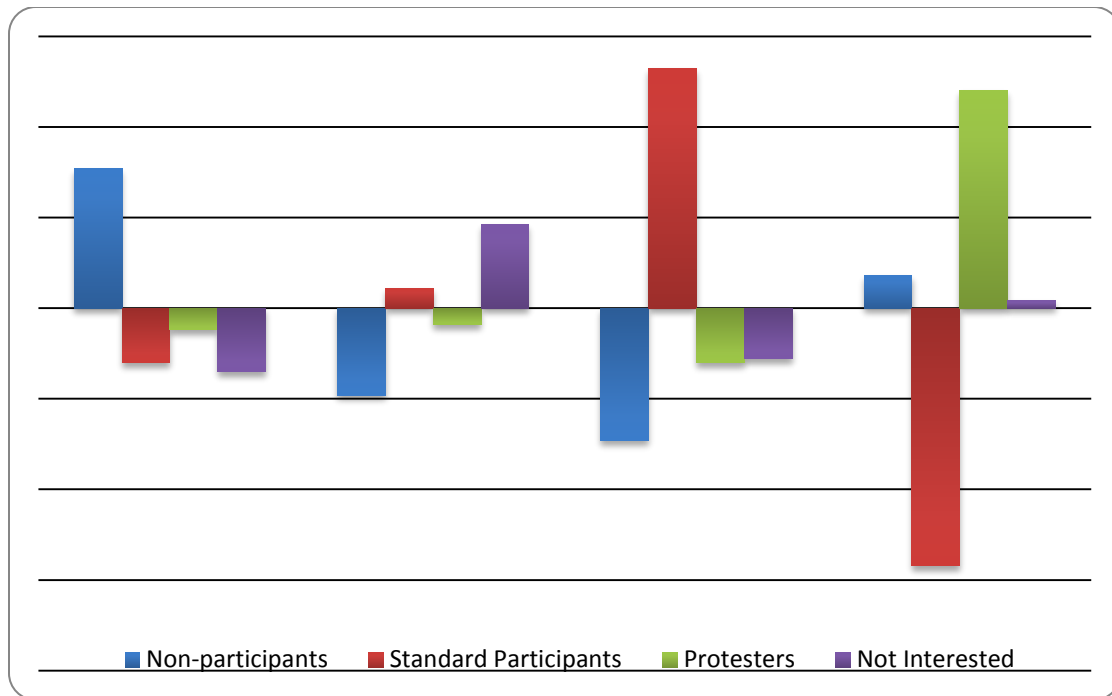


Figure 4. Classes by 4 Pan-ethnic Groups

Figure 4 shows the same results, collapsed by 4 pan-ethnic groups. The results somewhat confirms the conventional stereotypes of each pan-ethnic group: whites as “standard participants,” and blacks as “protesters” struggling against prejudice and unequal treatment; Asian Americans as well-educated but “not interested” in politics, and Latinos as not having much resource for participation, and thus “non-participants.” Yet the results described in figure 4 should be understood in relation to those in figure 1 and 2. As much as there are dominant trends in each category, the categories themselves are nested structures with different compositions within them. The stereotypes are true to the extent that they note the most dominant trends in the groups. However, they do not convey any information on the compositions of other patterns. For instance, even though Latinos are portrayed as “non-participants” in figure 2, figure 1 shows that there are considerable differences between Salvadorans, Guatemalans, and other Latinos and Mexicans. If we consider the realistic wisdom that the politics in the Los Angeles—or

more generally, U.S. as a whole—operates along the racial and ethnic cleavages, understanding these patterns of composition is even more crucial than noting the most dominant trends for the groups.

Discussion and Conclusion

The above results provide crucial insights into the existing research. As discussed above, the survey research on political participation of minorities produced many different models for different groups. Yet the results from LCA show that the models only explained *a part* of their respective ethnic groups, not to speak of the total population. For instance, the standard SES model is most applicable to “standard participants,” and therefore works well within the data set dominated by sample of whites (Verba and King 1972; Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1995). Yet it does not capture the fact that there are other groups within whites who practice politics in a different way, such as “protesters” or “not interested.” With the same logic, the model that includes consciousness of racial prejudice is bound to work well with African-Americans because “protesters” are the predominant class within the group (Bobo and Gilliam Jr 1990). The exceptional groups in Ramakrishnan (2005) reflect the strong presence of “not interested” class within some groups. Because the respondents from “not interested” do not follow the standard model, their relative size within ethnic groups determine whether they will confirm to the standard model or not.

With LCA, we can substitute different models for different groups with four unique classes and their composition within groups. Figure 3 allows us to understand the relationship between different models as resulting from different positions within a field of political participation patterns. As discussed above, we can situate each model as

explaining a certain territory within this field, but not others. We can understand competing trends within groups as indicating their ambivalent positions between these territories. In sum, we can understand political participation patterns as a form of spatial order—in the manner much like we understand the politics of different neighborhoods in urban politics (Garcia-Bedolla 2005; Mollenkopf 1992; Mollenkopf, Champeny, Sonenshein, and Drayse 2006; Kasinitz 1992). Combination of LCA and MCA, I argue, brings survey data much closer to the findings from these non-survey studies.

I do not imply that this analysis answers all of the challenges of “identities-to-politics link” (Lee 2008). Some of the concerns, however, can certainly be resolved using this approach. For instance, the problem of treating race or ethnicity as a single dummy variable within a regression equation (Martin and Yeung 2003) can be avoided by using LCA. Figure 2, 3 and 4 above provide examples on how race and ethnicity can be thought as nested structures, or a position within a larger system of positions (Bourdieu 1984), rather than an isolated attribute of an individual.

The problem of identification with given race or ethnicity can be addressed in this framework as well, albeit with further analysis: if there is a strong, dominant trend in a group and one is classified as a member of the group by others, one is bound to take the trend into consideration in deciding her actions. It is an open question whether the dominant trend will make an individual confirm or rebel. The skewed composition, however, will likely to exercise higher pressure to individual whereas an even distribution will likely to provide more options. At the same time, it is possible that certain categories, such as “protesters,” will be more compelling than others. More evidences, especially on the psychological mechanisms of how individuals identify with

race and ethnic groups, are required to clarify this process. Yet the important point is to understand race and ethnicity as a contested terrain of identity formation process where the processes of identification, consciousness formation, and political participation all come together to produce different modes of politics.

The problem of venue selection and choice (Lee 2008: 469-470) can also be analyzed further with this framework as well. The four classes represent four different mode of participating in the politics: obviously the division between “standard participants” and “protesters” marks difference between electoral politics and contentious politics. Furthermore, with experience of discrimination, four classes show that there are actually different motivations driving different forms of politics. “Non-participants” represents ironical state of expressing political will through apathy: even though “non-participants” are confident about their knowledge of politics, they *choose* to be absent from the field of politics, at least as represented by electoral or contested politics. Whether they will be active in other forms of politics, such as neighborhood or local politics, is an open matter to be investigated. “Not interested” can be interpreted as representing different means of pursuing interest. As Lee argues with the case of Asian-American communities investing economic and social realms than politics to further their group interest (2008:496), these respondents might be the ones who choose to invest in individual success through education than politics. In this case they should be understood as participating in politics in another way, not simply deviant cases from the standard model. Although all of above statement remains speculative at this point, my analysis of interview data from New York City presents one way of analyzing these patterns further.

In sum, LCA and relational analysis effectively tackle some of the challenges in analyzing “identities-to-politics link” by doing away with theoretical and methodological assumptions imposed by linear thinking. By highlighting different associations of variables, and placing them within racial and ethnic groups as nested structures, the framework provide an alternative way of analyzing political participation. The analysis could progress even further by incorporating additional quantitative and qualitative evidences. For qualitative evidence, we can easily think of linking interview data or historical analysis of group formation with the categories generated by LCA. For quantitative data such as additional variables from the survey, simple cross-classification can yield more information on classes, whereas additional measurement on identification will provide more information on how individual enacts different participation patterns.

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Data sets

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