Understanding Diversity in the Phenomenon of Immigrant Organizations: A Comprehensive Framework

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Abstract Voluntary immigrant organizations are a worldwide phenomenon. Yet, despite the fact that all of these organizations were founded as a consequence of immigration, their actual characteristics and activities are very diverse, and even in some cases, immigrants do not found organizations at all. Therefore, this paper deals with the question: under which conditions are different associations founded—and when are they not founded? Following a brief mapping of the wide category of immigrant organizations, the paper discusses the term *immigrant organization* itself and suggests a definition. Finally, the paper outlines a comprehensive and systematic framework, which integrates findings of the existing literature as well as adding some new factors. Within this framework, four main variables are particularly relevant in determining the uniqueness of each immigrant organization: (1) the attributes of the immigrant population, (2) the characteristics of the country of origin, (3) gaps vis-à-vis the host society, and (4) attitudes and policies of the host society in relation to immigrants. Combinations of these four variables, which are unique in each settlement process, explain the formation of diverse types of organizations among immigrant groups.

Keywords Immigrant organizations · Ethnic associations · Immigrants · Voluntary organizations

Introduction

Voluntary immigrant organizations, such as churches, sports clubs, or schools, are a very frequent phenomenon which crosses religions, economic status, and types of immigration. These associations are created to address practical and cultural issues related to the settlement process in host countries. However, despite the fact that all of them are founded as a consequence of the immigration process itself, they are not a

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uniform phenomenon. On one hand, very different kinds of organizations are founded, with diverse characteristics and activities (Basch 1987; Layton-Henry 1990; Moya 2005; Schrover and Vermeulen 2005). On the other hand, there are cases of immigrant groups that have not founded any formal organizations at all (Shokeid 1988; Markowitz 1992). That raises an interesting sociological question, which is the focus of this paper: under which circumstances do immigrants found different kinds of organizations and under which circumstances do they not found any organizations at all?

This paper suggests a comprehensive and systematic framework for better understanding the different manifestations of the phenomenon of voluntary immigrant organizations. By integrating findings of the existing literature, as well as adding some new factors, this framework identifies the following four variables as particularly relevant in determining the uniqueness of each immigrant organization:

1. The attributes of the immigrant population
2. The characteristics of the country of origin
3. Gaps vis-à-vis the host society
4. The attitudes and policies of the host society toward immigrants

The framework, which follows Castle's (2010) suggestion, contributes to the understanding of one specific aspect of the immigration process: the phenomenon of establishing voluntary organizations.

Following a brief mapping of the wide category of immigrant organizations, this paper will discuss the term *immigrant organization* itself as distinct from *ethnic organization*—terms that are often used synonymously in the literature. Finally, in the third section, I will develop, in more detail, the comprehensive framework mentioned above.

Mapping Immigrant Organizations: A Review

Waves of immigration around the world have led to the founding of many and varied immigrant organizations. Some were found by the first group of immigrants and others, at later stages of immigration. Some were found by immigrants sharing the same origin, while others are multiethnics (e.g., Osuji 2013). Immigrant organizations can be big and very well established or small, unstable, and transitory. Moreover, they have different purposes and services, such as the so-called "initial welcome," primary counseling for the immigrant, welfare and religious services, heritage preservation, and advocacy for rights (Dumont 2008; Camozzi 2011). As an example, Philippine immigrants in California have founded self-help associations, regional associations, workers' unions, churches, and social clubs (Almirol 1978).

It is important to mention that in some cases, several different purposes and functions are combined within one immigrant organization, making it a multipurpose and hybrid organization (Hasenfeld and Gidron 2005). One example of this type is Korean churches in the USA, which offer not only religious services but also social services, a social framework, and a framework for the preservation of Korean culture and tradition (Min 1992). Another example of multipurpose organizations is mutual aid societies, which offer millions of immigrants everywhere not only a space for social

interaction but also a variety of services. In exchange for a monthly fee, immigrants can obtain services "from the cradle to the grave," such as health services, employment insurance, burial services, etc. In addition, they usually offer social clubs as well as playing a central role as patriotic organizations and advocacy groups (Moya 2005).

The multiple purposes of immigrant organizations are reflected in Martín Pérez's (2004) research in Spain about three organizations of immigrants from Morocco, Peru, and Ecuador. He found that these organizations run three types of activities: (a) welcoming, acclimatization, and employment; (b) housing, legal aid, education, and cultural integration; and (c) activities against discrimination in the host society.

Aside from multipurpose organizations, the variety of immigrant organizations reflects a complex picture that makes it difficult to classify them into unequivocal categories. Nevertheless, there are some researchers who offer different categorizations for immigrant organizations. Basch (1987) and Moya (2005) classify the organizations by their range of activities.

Basch (1987) places them into nine categories:

1. Benevolent societies
2. Sport and social clubs
3. Welfare organizations
4. Occupational associations
5. Educational and cultural clubs
6. Political clubs
7. Performing cultural clubs
8. Women's groups
9. Umbrella organizations

Moya (2005) offers a classification of six types of organizations:

1. Secret societies
2. Rotating credit associations
3. Mutual aid societies
4. Religious organizations
5. Hometown associations
6. Political groups

Unlike Basch and Moya, Layton-Henry (1990) offers a typology of immigrant organizations according to their orientation, resulting in three types:

1. Organizations oriented toward the country of origin;
2. Organizations oriented toward the new country;
3. Organizations oriented toward the country of origin as well as the new country. Lately, scholars have been referring to these kinds of organizations as "transnational" (Dumont 2008; Akcapar 2009; Clarke 2013; Zhou and Lee 2013).

Finally, Schrover and Vermeulen (2005) suggest that immigrant organizations can be one of two types: "defensive," as a response to social rejection, or "offensive," resulting from the immigrants' choice to differentiate themselves from the rest of the population.

The mapping of different typologies of immigrant organizations as depicted in the literature reveals a wide range of organizations with different characteristics. In the next section, I will suggest a definition for the entire category.

Immigrant Organizations: Proposing a Definition

The wide variety of organizations mentioned above makes it difficult to define immigrant organizations (Schrover and Vermeulen 2005; Moya 2005). Academic literature even alternates frequently between the terms *immigrant organization* and *ethnic organization* (Jenkins 1988; Fennema 2004).

The category of ethnic organization groups together three types of organizations, of which only one is, in fact, an immigrant organization since members of the other two types did not undergo the process of immigration. These two groups are native organizations (such as indigenous organizations in Latin America or in Australia) and organizations of descendents of immigrants (such as schools in which second- and third-generation immigrants study in the Jewish communities of Latin or North America).

In light of this distinction, it could be argued that while every immigrant organization is an ethnic organization, not every ethnic organization is an immigrant organization. Thus, these terms cannot be considered to have the same meaning. Ethnic organizations constitute a wider category, which includes not only immigrant organizations but also native minority groups and organizations for descendents of immigrants.

Consequently, the definition of an immigrant organization must be addressed. The complexity in defining the term is clearly pinpointed by Schrover and Vermeulen (2005, p. 825): "Do we regard organizations as immigrant organizations because the majority of their members are foreign-born, or because most of their members are descendants from immigrants? Do we call an organization an immigrant organization because the inspiration for the organization originally came from immigrants? And when does an organization stop being an immigrant organization?"

These questions highlight the difficulty in the demarcation of the term *immigrant organization*. However, immigrant organizations can primarily be seen as formal organizations which share the basic characteristics of the nonprofit sector: formal, private, nonprofit distributing, self-governing, and voluntary (Salamon and Anheier 1992). They are founded by new and long-term immigrants for their own communities. Therefore, it is important to emphasize that this category does not include ethnic for-profit organizations, such as shops that sell Indian food in London, neither does it include informal support networks among immigrants, such as family, friends, and acquaintances since these are not formal organizations. Finally, there are formal voluntary organizations that offer services aimed at the immigrant population, such as *Doctors for Human Rights*, which offers health services to migrant workers in Israel. However, these are run by people outside the community in question and are thus not part of the category under discussion.

It should be noted that immigrant organizations can undergo a developmental process over the years (Shrover and Vermeulen 2005) and eventually become solely ethnic organizations (Moya 2005). In this case, one can argue that the change is

manifested when the immigrant group ceases to be a significant factor in the organization, and it is run mainly by second- and third-generation immigrants. One example of this case is Jewish schools in Argentina that were founded by Jewish immigrants during the first decades of the 20th century and were thus, at that time, immigrant organizations. But nowadays, these schools cannot be included in the category of immigrant organizations, as they no longer serve immigrants; there is no Jewish immigration to Argentina. They do, however, belong in the category of solely ethnic organizations.

Beyond becoming solely ethnic organizations, immigrant organizations can eventually become accessible to the wider community. One example of such modification is the *German Hospital* in Buenos Aires, which was founded by German immigrants in order to provide healthcare for the German community. However, as time went by, it became open to everyone in Buenos Aires.

The transformation process, in both cases, happens gradually, and it is hard to pinpoint the exact moment when an organization ceases to belong to the category of immigrant organizations and becomes either ethnic or open to all. However, there is no doubt that after the transitional process, the organization can no longer be identified as an immigrant organization.

On the basis of the above distinctions, I would like to suggest defining immigrant organizations as nonprofit organizations, founded by immigrants at all stages of immigration, with the purpose of serving mainly the immigrant group itself. Organizations will be considered part of this category as long as the immigrants themselves are a significant factor in the organization. That is to say, they are the majority of members and have a significant presence on the board of directors.

Immigrant Organizations: A Framework for Explaining Diversity

Immigrant organizations are part of the broader category of voluntary organizations. Numerous theories have been developed to explain the reasons for the emergence of such organizations. The macro-level theories—such as contract failure (Hansmann, 1980), market failure (Salamon 1995), governmental failure (Weisbrod 1988), civil society (Putnam 1995), and interdependence theory (Salamon, 1987)—focus their analysis on society as a system. On the other hand, micro-level theories—such as altruism (Rose–Ackerman 1997), voluntarism (Wilson 2000), and philanthropy (Schervish 2005)—focus their analysis on individual needs and attitudes. All of these theories, which contribute different perspectives to the understanding of the general phenomenon of voluntary organizations, can also be definitely applied to the subcategory of immigrant organizations. However, they do not attempt to explain the diversity of organizations founded by immigrants.

Immigration studies have always mentioned the presence of voluntary organizations established by immigrants, but these organizations have only recently become a topic of research. Some case studies, community studies, and comparative research studies focus on different dimensions and aspects of the phenomenon of immigrant organizations. These aspects include participation (Schoenberg 1985), philanthropy (Marini 2013; Portes et al. 2007), voluntarism (Handi and Greenspan 2009), collective identity (Soyer 1997), civil participation, incorporation/integration (BiParva 1994; Sardinha

2005; Pirkkalainena et al. 2013), service delivery (Casey 1988; Jenkins and Sauber 1988; Korazim 1988), and transnational aspects/engagement (Marini 2013; Portes et al. 2007; Dumont 2008; Clarke 2013; Zhou and Lee 2013; Mugge 2011; Caselli 2012; Zhou and Lee 2013; BiParva 1994).

Despite the fact that there are some important studies which analyze the phenomenon of immigrant organizations as a whole (Schrover and Vermeulen 2005; Moya 2005), there is no comprehensive framework which explains the emergence of each individual organization with its particularities. Before presenting a framework for explaining diversity, I will address the circumstances that shape the emergence of immigrant organizations in general.

Immigrant Organizations: General Circumstances

The primary circumstance leading to the emergence of immigrant organizations is immigration itself (Moya 2005). In this process, three main dimensions can be identified as shaping the emerging organizations:

Response to Special Needs

First, migration from one society to another makes it difficult for immigrants to participate in voluntary organizations that already exist in the host country. Language barriers and discrimination are the main obstacles. Moreover, the objectives of existing organizations in local society may not answer the immigrants' needs in the new country. This leads to the establishment of immigrant organizations (Owusu, 2000).

Immigrant organizations, therefore, are established to provide a response to the special needs that individuals share with other people of the same background, and not necessarily with the local community. These needs include not only practical guidance for the new immigrants but also the need for contact with other people who share the same language and background, as well as a desire for the preservation and continuation of the home culture (Owusu 2000; Cordero Guzman 2005; Clarke 2013). That is to say, the organizations constitute a space for "familiar communication" in the language and culture of origin, eliminating the effort needed to communicate in the host society (Brettel 2005; Graaf et al. 1988; Rex and Josephides 1987).

Thus, immigrant organizations fulfill a wide range of economic, cultural, social, and political roles, which are unique for immigrants in their new country. Furthermore, they are a kind of shelter, which provides support and a sense of belonging, by offering a response to the feeling of alienation. This feeling, which is prevalent in modern cities, is particularly experienced by immigrants (Owusu 2000; Grauw, 2008; Cheetham, 1988; Layton-Henry 1990; Basch 1987; Kemp and Raijman 2004; Camozzi 2011).

Representing the Community

Second, the role of immigrant organizations is not only limited to serving the immigrant community but also provides a way of representing that community (Caselli, 2010). On one hand, these organizations represent the community in the host society, as is the case with the Association of Colombian Professionals (Asociacion de Profesionales Colombianos) in New York. This organization worked to negate reports in the US

media which claimed that the entire Colombian community had been involved in drug-trafficking (Sassen-Koob 1979). On the other hand, the organizations can represent the community in the home country, as is the case of the Association of Absent Dominicans (Asociación de Dominicanos Ausentes). This association was founded in 1979 to enable Dominicans living in the USA to fight for the right to vote in elections in the Dominican Republic.

Collective Identity

Finally, the immigration process tends to strengthen and shape collective identity (Senkman 1988). Immigration is an event that challenges ethnic identity and requires reevaluation of its cultural basis and its meaning, for both new and long-term migrants. Thus, immigrant organizations serve as a place for the construction of a unique collective identity, through festivals and customs from the country of origin (Owusu 2000; Moya 2005; Schrover and Vermeulen 2005; Caselli 2010; Akcapar 2009; Camozzi 2011; Rex 1987; Brettel 2005; Li 1999).

Given these similarities, what are the factors that make immigrant organizations so diverse?

Immigrant Organizations: Diversity and Uniqueness

In order to analyze the factors that shape different immigrant organizations, I suggest a framework as presented in Fig. 1.

The Immigrant Population and Its Characteristics

The characteristics of the immigrant population itself, regardless of its home and host country, influence the nature of the voluntary organizations that it establishes (Schrover and Vermeulen 2005; Akcapar 2009). First, the size of the immigrant community determines whether or not to found a formal organization. When the number of immigrants is small, the group tends to remain an informal network. Formal
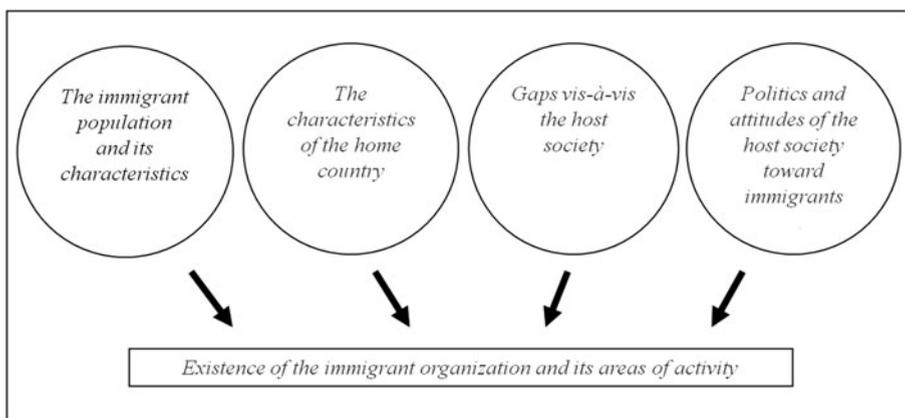
Fig. 1 Factors influencing the establishment of immigrant organizations

organizations are only established when there are sufficient immigrants to support them (DeSantis and Benkin 1980, p. 138; Schrover and Vermeulen 2005).

When immigrants establish organizations, the size of the immigrant community and its properties determine whether the organizations are run according to the town of origin, county or district of origin, country of origin, or a combination of a number of countries. For instance, the Ghanaian community in Toronto has founded a network of organizations that includes organizations according to hometown and ethnic groups of different tribes in Ghana, as well as national organizations open to all Ghanaian immigrants. Examples of organizations which encompass immigrants from several countries are those of Asian and Latin American immigrants in the USA, who have established "pan-ethnic" organizations that form one unified voice (Brettel 2005).

Second, demographic characteristics of immigrant groups, such as age and gender, encourage the founding of different frameworks according to the needs of the groups. Thus, the establishment of schools for children, orphanages, youth movements, and/or nursing homes for the elderly depends on the age composition of the community. For example, among migrant worker communities, as in the case of Indian caregivers in Israel, schools or nursing homes are not established since this is a transient community with no children or elderly people.

Third, the immigrants' socioeconomic status is another factor that influences the type of organizations established. Among groups of immigrants with low economic resources, "rotating credit associations"—known in the sociological literature as *roscas*—are frequently founded, allowing initial capital accumulation for entrepreneurial immigrants (Moya 2005; Couton 2003). Sassen-Koob (1979) has conducted some research comparing Dominican and Colombian organizations in New York. The findings show that the Dominican immigrants mainly founded social clubs for leisure time, while the Colombians founded organizations with instrumental goals, such as unions. Sassen-Koob explains this difference as follows: the Dominicans are migrant workers coming from the countryside, whereas the Colombian immigrants are more educated and come from developed cities.

Beyond the type of organization, immigrant socioeconomic status influences the services that are offered, even by similar kinds of organizations. Min (1992), found that the system of services offered by Korean churches in the 1990s in the USA differed from those offered by synagogues and churches to the European immigrants in the 1930s. The immigrants from Europe arrived with limited economic resources; therefore, synagogues and churches assisted them in finding employment and housing. Conversely, Korean immigrants generally arrived with economic resources. Therefore, Korean churches focused their services on consultation and education for the immigrant families, as these were the main issues troubling them.

Fourth, the immigrants' legal status is a critical factor in their ability to establish formal organizations. While legal immigrants have political rights and can found organizations, such activities give illegal immigrants a public presence and prominence that they must avoid (Muñoz, 2004). Furthermore, the restrictive employment pattern of harsh working conditions for migrants with no legal status prevents the immigrants from founding and maintaining voluntary organizations (Kemp and Raijman, 2008).

Finally, the characteristics of the leaders play a crucial role in immigrant organizations. Pirkkalainena et al. (2013), in their research about the Somali Associations'

trajectories in Italy and Finland, observed similar characteristics and networking processes in both cases. However, they found that the long-term functionality of the associations was determined by the characteristics of the leaders. Leaders, who can be seen as "professionals of mobilization," have a direct influence on the professionalization of their organizations.

Characteristics of the Home Country

The characteristics of immigrants' home countries are another factor influencing the type of organizations that they establish in their host countries. Furthermore, the kinds of activities that immigrants develop in their organizations are sometimes a direct result of the country they left behind. In this context, political, economic, existential, and cultural circumstances in the home country must be accounted for as follows.

Political circumstances in home countries may shape organizational activities in host countries. Political activity that was oppressed in home countries can often thrive in organizational frameworks in the diaspora. Examples of this are Spanish immigrant organizations in France, the Netherlands, and Switzerland, whose main activities were against Franco's regime. Another example is the Cuban immigrant organizations in Miami that were politically opposed to Castro's regime (Rex 1987; Moya 2005; Layton-Henry 1990; Verdonk et al. 1987; Sznajder and Roniger, 2009). In some cases, political conflicts at "home," as well as different political agendas for coping with them, lead to disagreement among immigrants and often become an obstacle to the establishment of unified organizations (Brettel 2005).

Tough *economic circumstances* in home countries tend to shape the activities of immigrant organizations as well. In this case, immigrant organizations tend to conduct philanthropic campaigns among migrants to benefit societies in the home countries. The efforts are mainly focused on supporting community development, education, and health care (Orozco and Lapointe 2004; Sassen-Koob 1979; Owusu 2000; Caselli 2012; Portes et al. 2007). For example, African migrant worker organizations in Israel carried out fund-raising campaigns among their community members in order to support hospitals, schools, and orphanages in their home countries. One of these campaigns was organized by the Ghanaian migrant worker organization, with the purpose of sending donations of food, clothing, and cleaning products to a leper hospital in Ho City, Ghana (Wurgaft, 2006, p.107-111). Conversely, this kind of campaign is not found at all among English or French immigrant organizations in Israel.

Existential circumstances in home countries may lead to activities of perpetuation among immigrant organizations. An example is Jewish immigrants from Europe who settled in Israel and around the world. These immigrants founded organizations in which commemoration of their former communities, which were annihilated in the Holocaust, became a central focus. Perpetuation as an organizational goal was carried out by different practices of collective memory, such as the publication of "*yizkor* (memorial) books," ceremonies, etc. (Kidron 2005). Another example is Cambodian immigrant organizations founded in North America following the Khmer Rouge Genocide, such as the Cambodian American Heritage Museum and the Killing Fields Memorial (Schlund-Vials 2012).

Lastly, the culture of a home country may shape immigrant organizations by the use of language and symbols, traditional practices, customs, and festivals. However, *cultural circumstances* in the home country may actually even prohibit the founding of organizations among immigrants. Examples of this are the diasporas of Israeli immigrants and Russian Jews around the world. Shokeid (1988), in his anthropological research about Israelis in New York, indicates that no organizations were identified among this community, but informal meetings, such as "public singing" evenings, were carried out. The explanation for this situation, according to Shokeid, is the negative perception in the home country that existed toward Israelis who decided to emigrate to another country, to the extent that they were even pejoratively called *yordim*, meaning "those going down."

In research about Jewish Russian immigrants, Markowitz (1992) notes that more than 300,000 Russian Jews who emigrated to the west in the seventies did not find any voluntary organization, unlike all other immigrant groups. According to her, the absence of formal organizations is not the result of an inability to be organized, but rather derives from a self-help culture through a network of informal and intensive connections. This pattern is basically a reconstruction of the community pattern that was very common during the Soviet regime, which opposed formal voluntary organizations.

Gaps vis-à-vis the Host Society

One of the central explanations for the founding of immigrant organizations is the fact that immigrants bring their own culture, customs, language, and/or religion, which are different from those of the host country. As a result of these gaps, voluntary organizations serve as a framework for the creation and conservation of an ethno-cultural minority (Owusu 2000).

Religious differences between immigrant groups and the population in the host country lead to the founding of religious institutions among immigrants, which hold religious ceremonies practiced in the home country (Rex 1987; Moya 2005). One example is Muslim immigrants in Christian countries, as in the case of 40 mosques founded in Berlin by Turkish immigrants (Gimetz and Wildert, 1987) and 38 mosques serving a Pakistani population of 45,000 people in Birmingham, UK (Layton-Henry 1990, p. 95). According to the findings of DeSantis and Benkin (1980), religious organizations played a central role in the first settlement of Lithuanian Jews and Christians in Chicago. However, it is important to mention that the prevalence of religious associations reflects the relevance of religion in their immigrants' group identity (Moya 1998).

A different phenomenon may occur when a local ethnic community in the host country has existed for a long time. In this case, even if a significant gap exists between the immigrant group and the general society, immigrants may not establish new organizations, but join existing institutions of the local ethnic community which are not immigrant organizations. An example of this phenomenon is Argentinean Jews who immigrated to Mexico at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century. This group did not establish immigrant organizations for themselves, but joined the existing ethnic organizations of the Jewish community in Mexico.

Attitudes and Policies of the Host Society Toward Immigrants

Beyond cultural and religious gaps, the nature of immigrant organizations is influenced by the national environment of the host country (Clarke 2013). This environment can either be formal, through government policy, or informal, via the attitudes of the host population toward immigrant groups. In this context, the creation of organizations can be a direct response when immigrants experience social exclusion, such as rejection, racism, discrimination, and inequality, from different sectors of the host society (Basch 1987; Nelson and Tiende, 1983, in Owusu 2000; Kemp et al. 2000; Schrover and Vermeulen 2005; Akcapar 2009). For example, Camozzi's research about migrant organizations in Milan found that "the forms of misrecognition as human beings and citizens that migrants experience in the relationship with Italian public institutions and native-born Italians represent the decisive incentive to create or join associations" (Camozzi 2011, p. 486). Therefore, Zetter et al. (2005) refer to these organizations as "defensive organizations." In their research about refugee organizations in England, they even claim that these are not a product of civil society, but rather a direct response to social segregation. Furthermore, this hostility even affects the types of activities conducted by the organizations. The relative lack of integration in the host country seems to encourage migrant organizations to develop social welfare programs for the benefit of their home country. These initiatives allow them to be recognized as actors in the home country, as well as in the host country (Marini 2013).

Patterns and effectiveness of immigrant organizations are also influenced by laws, institutions, and processes of policymaking in the host societies (Layton-Henry 1990 p. 104). Encouraging policy toward immigrants may often be a crucial factor for the creation of voluntary organizations, as is the case of Bosnian refugees in the UK. Informal networks do exist among those refugees, yet their organization is not an institutionalized expression of their community. Rather, it reflects the expectations of British society. The social policy of the British government designates grants for refugee communities, which can be obtained only through formal institutions. Therefore, in this case, governmental support plays a crucial role in the existence of the Bosnian organization (Kelly 2003).

Governmental intervention can therefore foster, and even promote, immigrants' and refugees' capability of founding and operating community organizations. Bloemraad (2005) has studied Portuguese and Vietnamese communities in Boston and Toronto and found that policies of settlement and multiculturalism provide material and symbolic resources that can help immigrants build a wide and varied organizational infrastructure. Through assistance in community building, host societies can encourage civil participation in the new country.

These findings are also evident in some comparative research conducted by Vermeulen (2005) between Surinam and Turkish immigrant organizations in Amsterdam. The different approach of the local authorities toward immigrants from the colonies and migrant workers shaped the potential development of their organizations. While Surinam organizations were treated inclusively, receiving governmental subsidies, the authorities ignored and even alienated Turkish organizations. Contrary to these findings, Owusu (2000) found in his research about Ghanaian immigrants in Canada that the multicultural policy in Canada indeed was influential, yet was not a critical factor in the establishment of the immigrant

organizations. This finding is supported by the existence of Ghanaian immigrant organizations in countries with fewer multicultural policies, such as the USA, France, England, and Germany.

Conclusions

This paper has addressed the challenge of understanding the factors that lead to the diversity of immigrant organizations. As we have seen, several shared factors resulting from the immigration process itself—such as collective identity, response to special needs, and community representation—offer a general explanation for the entire phenomenon of immigrant voluntary organizations. However, these factors do not explain the diversity that exists within immigrant organizations, nor does it explain those cases where no such organization was founded.

Therefore, a framework of four variables was identified: 1. The immigrant population and its characteristics, such as age, gender or economic standing; 2. Characteristics of the country of origin, for example its politics, culture, and economic situation; 3. Gaps vis-a vis the host society, in areas such as religion and culture; and 4. Attitudes and policies of the host society with relation to immigrants, such as racism and exclusion. I suggest that the diverse types of organizations among immigrant groups can be explained by means of these four variables or a combination of any number of them.

For the future, I would suggest using the above framework in qualitative and quantitative research. The comparison of empirical data from different immigrant organizations through the four variables of this framework may contribute to new insights and understandings of the phenomenon of nonprofit organizations within immigrant communities. Moreover, future research could study, through the four variables, the dynamics of these organizations in terms of their growth, survival, and disappearance. They could also explore why some immigrant groups found a plethora of associations with specific and narrow purposes, while others established fewer types of associations that pursue multiple functions.

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