Today Asian Americans make up 6% of America’s population, a record 18.2 million. Of these, nearly three-quarters are foreign-born immigrants (Pew Research Center, 2012). To serve this segment of America’s population, a number of sporting events have recently emerged (see www.dallaskoreansoftball.com). The management of such events is a struggle due to a lack of resources, despite this ethnic group’s ever-growing demand for quality sport experiences. The struggle becomes more arduous for sporting events dominated by a specific ethnic group. Indeed, it is not uncommon to see ethnic sporting events are suddenly terminated (Kim, 2012). All this contributes to ethnic groups’ hesitance to take part in sports (Verma & Darby, 1994). This stands as a challenge for sport managers and practitioners and their development of the recreational and sporting experiences of American ethnic groups.

Several factors contribute to these difficulties, such as a lack of professionalism and leadership, little infrastructure, little support of ethnic group, few participants, ethnic group’s incompatible culture with sport, and economic influences (Kay, 2006; McGuire & Collins, 1998). What really pertains to sport managers’ failure is their lack of understanding of how ethnic members participate in sporting events. The importance of this becomes more pronounced if they aim to build an event whose participants are tied to cultural heritage or origin. A number of approaches have discovered several components that explain ethnic group’s consumption behaviors (e.g., Lisa & Gilly, 1999; Ogden, Ogden, & Schau, 2004). Relatively, few in any systemic studies have examined ethnic group’s culture-specific consumption of sport event participation.

A number of studies have revealed several antecedents that affect culture-specific consumption behaviors of ethnic groups (e.g., Ogden et al., 2004; Xu, Shim, Lotz, & Almeida, 2004). Amongst them, socialization factors and ethnic identity are found to be salient for predicting culture-related consumption of the groups (Xu et al., 2004). Substantial studies in socialization literature have found how consumption can be affected by peers (Flouri, 1999; Moschis & Moore, 1979). Such influences, in particular, become more obvious in ethnic community because of its intense and tight ethnic-friendship networks (Xu et al., 2004). This socialization factor has a direct impact on ethnic identity as well. In fact, a sense of ethnic identity has been found to influence ethnic group’s general consumption as well as their culture-specific consumption (Hirschman, 1981; Penalozza, 1994).

Psychological and behavioral aspects of sport participants are explained by various factors (cf. Caro & Garcia, 2007a; Madrigal, 1995). For example, Green and Chalip (1998) found, in youth sport, that the mechanism that motivates parents’ commitment to children’s sport organization is determined by their satisfaction and perceived benefits of the event. The higher the level of satisfaction and perceived benefits was linked to a greater commitment to the sport organization. In sport consumer’s literature, the higher the level of commitment to the organization is more likely to cause the participant to consume sport products and event, taking a mediating role between participants’ sport experience and consuming behavior (Haggerty & Denomme, 1991).

Several studies of social identity theory have suggested relationships between a person’s identity and the organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Given this, the model includes a bidirectional relationship between ethnic identity and commitment; such modeling is intended to shed light on how both influence sport participation. Finally, the study proposes a model in which ethnic identity and commitment to a sport organization partially mediate participants’ satisfaction, perceived benefits, peer influences, and their sport participation. The model aims at finding the effects of designed variables on ethnic group’s sport participation and predicting the model’s appropriateness to the group.

During October and November in 2012, the data were collected across several Korean sporting events taking place in the American Southwest. The events were soccer and softball tournaments held exclusively for Korean immigrants. The final sample consisted of 229 participants. The sample consisted mostly of males (n = 226, 98.7%).
bachelor degree holders (n = 87, 38.0%), and their mean age was 31.9 (median = 31). Their average length of stay in the U.S. was 9.7 years.

Three items measured the participants’ socialization by inquiring about their tendencies to associate with Koreans and not Americans (Moschis & Moore, 1979). Their ethnic identity was characterized by their feeling proud of being Korean and the Korean group’s achievements and a sense of belonging to the Korean group (Xu et al., 2004). Among sport experience-related factors, participants’ satisfaction was measured regarding their feeling about the facility, event operation, and overall experience (Caro & Garcia, 2007b). The degree to which the participants were committed to the organization was measured by asking about friendly attitudes, behavioral support, and steady interest for the organization (Haggerty & Denomme, 1991). Perceived benefits were investigated in terms of physical, social, and psychological aspects (Green & Chalip, 1997). Finally, the survey asked the participants three items concerning their sport participation by asking about the future likeliness of their attending another event, sport participation as a recreation, and sport participation as a competition (Green & Chalip, 1998). For all these items, the study used a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much). All items’ Cronbach’s alpha ranged from .79 to .90.

SEM was employed to test the proposed framework. First, the measurement model was tested through confirmatory factor analysis, using AMOS 22. The measurement model achieved an acceptable fit for the data based on the selected approximation fit indices (p < .001, 221.51/120 = 1.85, CFI = .96, GFI = .90, NFI = .92, RMSEA = .06). In terms of the model’s convergent validities, all the model’s constructs showed acceptable levels of average variance extracted (AVE), ranging from .58 to .76 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In addition, discriminant validity was achieved by indicating that the largest squared correlation was .51 between perceived benefits and commitment, which was lower than the smallest AVE of .58 on sport participation (MacKenzie & Olshavsky, 1996). An acceptable fit of the measurement model for the data led the study to perform comprehensive model testing. The test resulted in acceptable fit indices for the data of the sample (p < .001, 225.31/125 = 1.80, CFI = .96, GFI = .90, RMSEA = .06). All hypothesized paths were found to be significant (p < .05). Mediating effects were also found to be significant for ethnic identity (p = .018) and organizational commitment (p = .016) on sport participation. More details on magnitude and significance of each path will be shown at the presentation.

Sport managers often understand the importance of customized strategies for a specific segment (Hanlon & Coleman, 2006). The expected findings of this study will result in significant implications that can be leveraged to design and implement ethnic sporting events to attract more participants. These strategies, in particular, would work for such a niche market as an ethnic sporting event.