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Cooperative Membership and Community Engagement: Findings From a Latin American Survey[1]

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Cooperatives as organization have mainly been explored in the field of business and management due to their operation in the business sector, and studies of nonprofit organizations have given little attention to them. Consequently, cooperatives studies have tended to examine economic outcomes, such as productivity and job security, comparing them to conventional business firms. Nevertheless, cooperatives are membership associations and have organizational characteristics in common with other types of voluntary associations. Furthermore, one explicit organizational principle of cooperatives is concern for community, and their contributions to the community have been covered frequently by media. Therefore, it is imperative to examine cooperative members' community engagement, and compare it to other types of association members. Using a national sample of Venezuelans, the relationships between association memberships and community involvement were compared across different types of associations. The results showed that cooperative members had a higher likelihood of being involved in community matters than those from other types of associations. Although the Venezuelan cooperatives have received vast support from the Chavez government for community development, this result can have an implication on the cooperatives' organizational identity as those who provide members with resources necessary for civic engagement beyond the organizations.

KEY WORDS: community engagement; cooperatives; Latin America; nonprofit organizations; voluntary associations; volunteering.

INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that civic engagement is one of the core elements for maintaining a healthy society, and many scholars have identified the role of voluntary associations in providing resources necessary for such political and/or social engagement to their members. Affiliation with membership associations leads members to expand their networks (Putnam 1993), generate trust in others (Glanville 2016), and acquire more resources, such as knowledge of attending public meetings (Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995), for further civic participation beyond their organizational boundaries.

Of the extensive research on the role of voluntary organization in the development of civic engagement, however, a certain type of membership association—cooperatives—has received less attention. When examining membership-based organizations for their contribution to society, scholars in the United States have

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tended to exclude cooperatives, presumably due to the violation of "nondistribution constraint"[3] in terms of nonprofit organizational definition (Steinberg 2006); cooperatives do distribute profits gained from their business to their members. On the other hand, most research of cooperatives has concentrated on the organizations' economic outcomes, such as a protective human resource attitude toward coworkers (Edelstein 1982), a higher level of productivity and job satisfaction (Logue and Yates 2006), a higher technical efficiency in agricultural cooperatives (Abate, Francesconi, and Getnet 2014), and a better quality of day-care programs in child day-care cooperatives than other types of childcare centers (Leviten-Reid 2012). As a result of this positive economic outcome, the United Nations recognized the year 2012 as the International Year of Cooperatives.

In spite of this definitional violation of cooperatives as a nonprofit organization and such positive outcomes in economic aspects, cooperatives' organizational characteristics—voluntarily formed and membership based—are compatible to other dimensions in the definition of voluntary associations. Concomitantly, the exclusion of cooperatives from membership organization studies is less evident in Europe because cooperatives are contained within the boundary of social economy (Defourny and Develtere 1999). In addition, most cooperatives explicitly and publicly adopt "concern for community" as one of their seven organizational principles.[4] Local companies and other types of nonprofit organizations do embrace and/or pursue such a value, though it is not easily seen as an explicit organizational principle.

Whether to define cooperatives as a part of the nonprofit sector is not the focus of this study. We suggest that it is worth examining cooperatives in relation to other conventional voluntary associations, given the organizational characteristics they have in common. Therefore, this study seeks to answer the following research questions: Is cooperative membership related to community engagement? How are cooperative memberships different from other types of voluntary associations?

The answer to the research question will be sought by two steps of analyses, using the data of voluntary organizations in Venezuela. The first step investigates whether active participation in cooperatives is related to a higher level of community engagement. This analysis will serve to verify the findings of a qualitative study that examined 15 Venezuelan cooperatives and identified their positive role in community development (Harnecker 2009). The second analysis compares the different types of associations, including cooperatives in terms of members' community engagement. In doing so, it will be possible to find out whether cooperatives differ from other types of associations in regard to providing members with resources for further engagement in their community.

[3] The distribution of surplus to member owners in cooperatives should be handled cautiously. For example, worker cooperatives usually regulate the ratio of CEO wage to the lowest wage among workers, and thus the difference of income between the highest and the lowest earners is not as big as one in conventional firms (Cheney 1999). In contrast, CEOs' salaries in big national nonprofit organizations are far greater than those of front-line employees and the executives' business trips are coordinated in a luxury way.

[4] Referred to the seven principles listed on the website of International Cooperative Alliance.

VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Numerous scholars have identified positive relationships between affiliation with voluntary associations and members' political and/or civic engagement beyond their organizations (Beck and Jennings 1982; Coleman 1988; Flap 1999; Kwak, Shah, and Holbert 2004; Pollock 1982; Walker 2008). Despite a disagreement on the strength of the relationship due to the type and the number of organizations that people are affiliated with (Farkas and Lindberg 2015; Glanville 2016), the general argument is that when people are involved in voluntary associations, they are likely to participate in political or social affairs beyond their organizations because they acquire the human, social, and cultural capital needed for civic engagement through participation in such organizations (Wilson and Musick 1997). This claim has been elaborated by diverse mediating factors that promote such political or civic engagement, including a core group of people to mobilize other members (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993), social capital (Putnam 1993), and sense of community (Davidson and Cotter 1989).

Widely examined and developed by political scientists, resource mobilization theory has primarily been applied to social movement organizations. A core, professional group of people in a social movement organization brings in diverse resources, such as financial resources, supporters, media attention, and organizational alliances to mobilize other members toward achieving collective goals. Through the core group's effort, other members have an extended opportunity to participate in political affairs outside their organizations (McCarthy and Zald 2001).

Social capital, which has been widely explored by sociologists and political scientists, is nurtured through interactions among members in voluntary associations. Members with different backgrounds and interests can exchange ideas, opinions, and information and consequently develop trust in other members (Glanville 2016). Therefore, such organizations are settings for political discussion, community building, and gaining civic skills needed for further civic engagement (Erickson and Nosanchuk 1990; Stolle 1998; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Cultivation of such social capital is not limited to political organizations. Other types of social affiliations, including religious and recreational organizations, also contribute to its promotion because members of these associations also exchange their experiences of political or civic involvement (Kwak et al. 2004; Liu et al. 1998).

In a similar sense, scholars have identified the generation of values, including a sense of community, community attachment, and sense of belonging, that enabled members to develop psychological ties to their communities (Beggs, Hurlbert, and Haines 1996; Cassel 1999; Davidson and Cotter 1989). In addition, the more people developed such emotional ties to their communities, the more actively they were likely to be engaged in community matters (Liu et al. 1998; Unger and Wandersman 1985).

Building on these theoretical research and practical findings, scholars have compared different types of associations in terms of beyond-organizational-boundary outcomes, seeking to find out if such a relationship is consistent regardless of the sort of organizations. In the realm of these comparative studies, however, few

scholars have included cooperatives. Studies of youth organizations (Frisco, Muller, and Dodson 2004; Glanville 1999) do not include cooperatives because the latter group tends to be adult organizations. Yet cooperatives have hardly been examined by research of adult voluntary associations as well (Moyser and Parry 1997). Moreover, this trend is not limited to U.S. scholars (Walker 2008), but expands to European research, including that of the Netherlands (Bekkers, 2005), Belgium (Quintelier 2008), and Italy (Putnam 1993). Even review articles that categorized voluntary organizations by functional areas, such as occupational, educational, community-oriented, recreational, and political associations, excluded cooperatives (Moyser and Parry 1997).

COOPERATIVES

Not much scholarly attention to cooperatives as nonprofit organizations is due primarily to the group's operation in the business sector. According to a report from the Center for Cooperatives at University of Wisconsin (2009), there are approximately 30,000 cooperatives in the United States, and they carry out business in four aggregate economic areas: commercial sales and marketing, social and public services, financial services, and utilities. In addition, the organizations operate at 73,000 places of business throughout the United States, own more than $3 trillion in assets, and generate more than $500 billion in revenue and approximately $25 billion in wages.

Considering the various industries in which cooperatives operate and their ownership structure, they are categorized broadly into eight groups; producer, value added, service, housing, supply, consumer, financial, and worker cooperatives (Williams 2007). Agricultural organizations tend to fall under producer cooperatives, food coops are a well-known type of consumer cooperatives, and credit unions are a typical example of financial cooperatives. Taxi companies or child day-care programs are usually identified as service cooperatives, and most manufacturing firms are worker cooperatives.

Regardless of their type, however, most cooperatives tend to embrace the seven organizational principles upon their establishment, adopted by the pioneers of the Rochdale Cooperative in 1844 (Williams 2007): (1) voluntary and open membership; (2) democratic member participation; (3) equal and fair investment by members; (4) free of intervention from outside power; (5) education of members and the community about the principles, values, and benefits of cooperatives; (6) encouragement of cooperation among cooperatives; and (7) concern for community.

Of these seven principles, the second and the third—co-ownership and democratic participation in decision making—make cooperatives distinct from other business entities. Consequently, studies of cooperatives have concentrated on the relationship between these two organizational characteristics and organizations' economic outcomes, identifying cooperatives' superior performance in productivity and job satisfaction (Logue and Yates 2006) and technical efficiency (Abate et al. 2014) when compared to similar conventional companies.

Moreover, these positive outcomes were not limited to one country or one industry but consistent across many countries and industries, such as U.S. plywood producer cooperatives (Conte 1982), agricultural cooperatives in Ethiopia (Abate et al. 2014), the Mondragon cooperatives in the Basque region of Spain (Thomas and Logan 1982), French cooperatives (Estrin and Jones 1992), and West German cooperatives (Cable and FitzRoy 1980). In addition, Lyons (2001) reported the positive impact of cooperatives on the public's internalization of egalitarianism in Australia. Analyzing more than a hundred of these empirical studies in terms of cooperation, competition, and individual operation, Williams (2007) concluded that cooperation resulted in a higher level of productivity and achievement than either competition or individual effort.

Other scholars have paid further attention to the third organizational principle —democratic participation in decision making—and examined its relationship with members' political behavior (Sobel 1993) outside work. Examining 55 U.S. firms, including worker cooperatives and conventional companies, Smith (1985) demonstrated that workers with participatory experience are more likely to participate in community politics, such as signing a petition, participating in a rally, or wearing a political button. Surveying about 200 employees of a company, Elden (1981) found that workers with experiences of self-management were more likely to develop political efficacy and increase their participation in politics outside work than their counterparts.

As such, although scholars have found positive performances from cooperatives, findings were concentrated on the economic dimensions, and consequently the organizations were compared to conventional business entities. However, cooperatives are membership associations and one of their organizational principles is concern for community, which is likely to affect members' behavior toward their community.

COOPERATIVES AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Although cooperatives maintain similar characteristics to nonprofits, which tend to affect members' civic engagement outside work, few scholars examined cooperatives in their comparative research of voluntary organizations, excepting a few (Quarter et al. 2001; Seligson 1999). Even these comparative studies that included cooperatives did not look into the relationship between membership associations and civic engagement. Quarter et al. (2001) compared cooperatives with other types of member-based organizations in terms of organizational characteristics, such as democratic decision making and government dependence. Seligson (1999) also included cooperatives in examining different types of voluntary associations in regard to members' political behavior. As such, Quarter et al.'s study was carried out at the organizational level, and Seligson's research was limited to members' political activities.

Despite the lack of studies that examined cooperatives explicitly as a type of nonprofit organization, a few studies have found the potential of cooperatives to generate values and attitudes that are related to civic engagement. Turniansky and

Cwikel (1996) examined Israel's kibbutzim, which share organizational principles and ideologies with cooperatives in many ways, including mutual aid among members and collective work and life. They found that members of a kibbutz developed a positive attitude toward helping others not just within their kibbutz but also outside the communal institution. In a case study of a home care cooperative, Majee (2007) found that the members acquired trust derived from diverse organizational values, including respect, fairness, openness, generosity, and responsibility. This psychological trait also expanded to all stakeholders around the organization, including clients and hired office administrators. More recently, Schoening (2010) examined a bike cooperative and found that the cooperative managed its operation following community interests. In doing so, the cooperative was able to generate a social-oriented organizational culture and values that were shared among the members.

Moreover, some scholars have shown that the experience of membership associations can have a greater influence on communal activities (Sherkat and Ellison 1999; Smidt 1999), such as community work than traditional forms of individualized political participation, such as voting and joining political campaigns (Verba et al. 1995). Others have also argued that cooperatives can be used as a strategy for community development (Bendick and Egan 1995; Zeuli and Radel 2005). For example, Bendick and Egan (1995) examined the impact of 20 worker-owned cooperatives on community economic development. They found worker ownership and participation enhanced cooperatives' ability to generate quality employment for people in the community but outside the economic mainstream. They also identified other positive influences of cooperatives on their communities: (1) provision of social services to the workers and their families through the cooperatives' programs or referrals to other social agencies and (2) participation in joint business strategies in the community or in the industry they belong to.

Furthermore, a new form of cooperative reflecting on the organizational principle of concern for community, known as social cooperatives, have been on the rise over the past few decades in many European countries, such as Italy, Spain, Portugal, Poland, Hungary, and Greece (Borzaga et al. 2014). Differing from conventional cooperatives in terms of distributing profits,[5] this new type of cooperative aims to provide an organized entrepreneurial response to growing social assistance needs in the local community (Thomas 2004). As a result, these highly specialized and generally small-sized cooperatives with largely local roots are assumed to have played a significant role in the delivery of social services to their local communities (Picciotti et al. 2014). In sum, cooperatives possessing the voluntary associations' characteristics deserve more attention as nonprofits and should be included in studies that examine or compare different types of associations.

[5] When the cooperatives are allowed to distribute part of their profits, their assets are normally locked due mainly to a multistakeholder membership, including in their governance all the different actors participating in the production process: workers, volunteers, customers, and even other private or public organizations (Thomas 2004).

COOPERATIVES IN VENEZUELA

This is a case study of Venezuelan cooperatives, which requires an understanding of some distinct features of this nation, especially under the Chavez administration that declared "twenty-first-century socialism" as its developmental goal in 2005. Cooperatives became central to the new socioeconomic model under the Chavez government because the organizational model fit well with Chavez's emphasis on egalitarianism and participatory democracy. During a part of his term, the number of cooperatives increased substantially from about 900 in 1998 to arguably 60,000 in 2007, an estimated 14% of the labor force (Harnecker 2009). This change is reflected in the number of affiliations with different types of organizations in our data. Compared to affiliation with political movement organizations (15%), professional/farmers' associations (9%), and unions (7%), not a small number of people in the sample joined cooperatives (13%; Table I). The promotion of this type of organization by the Chavez administration is not just for solving problems with unemployment, but also for collective well-being rather than a few people's capital accumulation (Harnecker 2009), fulfilling not only member's desires but also satisfying local community needs.

As such, cooperatives benefited greatly from the relevant laws under the Chavez government. One could argue that this unique circumstance has influenced the group of organizations and concomitantly affected their members in terms of community engagement.

On the other hand, the supportive government policy for these organizations mainly focused on the economic aspect in the local community, and the consequence of this policy may not be irrelevant to Harnecker's (2009:316) finding that "many

Table I. Description of Variables

Variables	Mean or Percentage
Community engagement (Yes = 1, No = 0)	Yes = 35.3%
Membership (Once a year + = 1, never = 0)	
Cooperatives	Yes = 13.1%
Religious organizations	Yes = 54.2%
Political organizations	Yes = 15.0%
Professional/Farmers associations	Yes = 8.5%
Parent–Teacher Associations	Yes = 38.9%
Unions	Yes = 7.0%
Community Councils	Yes = 34.7%
Individual Characteristics	
Age	Mean = 36.3 (SD = 14.1)
Gender (Male = 1, Female = 0)	Male = 50.1%
Education	Mean =10.5 (SD = 4.4)
Marital status (Single = 1, Couple = 0)	Single = 51.7%
Employment (Employed = 1, Not = 0)	Employed = 56.2%
Political ideology	Mean = 5.3 (SD = 3.1); 10 = 16%
(Very progressive 1 to Very conservative 10)	5 and 6 = 33%, 1 = 21% (Mode)
Household Characteristics	
Children (Yes = 1, No = 0)	Yes = 72.7%
Household income (10 categories)	Median = 8, Mode = 10 (25%)
Residence location (Urban = 1, Rural = 0)	Urban = 95.2%

cooperatives were behaving like capitalist enterprises, seeking to maximize their net revenue." That is, cooperatives in Venezuela did not seem to operate properly as social enterprises or membership associations that can provide members with resources needed for community engagement, which tend to address more than mere economic growth.

In addition to this conflictual environment surrounding cooperatives in terms of community involvement—supportive government policy to the expansion of cooperatives on the one hand and the economic emphasis placed on the policy on the other—it should be acknowledged that the numeric expansion of organizations is not necessarily associated with individuals' behavioral change beyond the organizational boundaries. Given the conditions with mixed leverages for or against community engagement, it is worth examining these cooperatives in Venezuela quantitatively as to whether their members are engaged in community matters. This study can then provide a valuable insight into what position cooperatives occupy in the spectrum of organizational operation, ranging from business entities to nonprofits.

DATA AND METHODS

Data

The data of Venezuelan cooperatives are part of the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) Americas Barometer 2006–2007. This project collects data annually in Central and South American countries. The data used for this study were collected in 2007 with a stratified (by socioeconomic level) cluster sample of dwelling units. The sample was drawn from the national capital and other major urban centers, using the most recent population census data. The questionnaire was written in Spanish; however, the institution that carries out the project has provided an English version of the questionnaire.

As the unit of analysis, individuals were selected using randomizing procedures and sex and age quotas. Information was collected from 1,510 respondents through door-to-door interviews region-wide. Respondents in this survey were asked about degrees of participation in seven different types of associations: community councils or committees, cooperatives, political party or movement organizations, professional/farmers' associations, parent–teacher associations (PTAs), religious organizations, and unions. Because the objective of this study was to identify the degree to which participation in cooperatives is associated with higher levels of civic participation among its members, community council members had to be eliminated from the analysis. This is because community council members are required to participate in community matters.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable for this study is community engagement. It was measured by the question, "Have you ever contributed to solve a problem in your community for the past year?" with a "yes/no" response. "Yes" was assigned "1" and

"0" for "No" (Table I). There were four subsequent questions: (1) whether they donated money, (2) gave labor or work, (3) attended community meetings, and, (4) tried to organize a group to solve problems in the community. These following questions show that the dependent variable encompasses a wide range of indicators for helping the respondents' local communities, providing validity to the measurement of community engagement. In a preliminary analysis, however, 13 out of 531 respondents who answered "yes" to the first question marked "no" to all subsequent questions. That is, 13 people did something else to help their community, which was not captured by the follow-up questions. Therefore, given a broad concept of community engagement, the first general question was used as the dependent variable.

Independent Variables

The main independent variable for this study is frequency of attending membership meetings, and has four categories: never, once or twice a year, once or twice a month, and once a week. Membership meetings are utilized for discussing not only organizational/managerial topics but also community affairs in cooperatives. A degree of participation in membership meetings can represent a level of exposure to community matters and to the organizational norm of concern for community. For the first analysis in which members and nonmembers of cooperatives are compared, three dummy variables for the three latter categories were created with a reference group "never." For the second analysis of comparing community engagement across different association members, the three latter categories were grouped together and assigned "1" to represent membership and "never" category was coded "0" as nonmembers. Other independent variables in this second analysis are participation in the other five types of membership associations, and the categorization of each variable is the same as that of cooperative members.

Control Variables

Demographic backgrounds, socioeconomic status, and household characteristics known to be associated with civic engagement (Anheier and Salamon 1999; Jackson et al. 2005; Musick and Wilson 2008) were controlled for to rule out their possible effect on the members' community engagement. Such variables included age, gender, marital status, education, monthly income, employment status, having children, and residence location. Age and education are continuous, household income is a categorized interval, and the rest are dichotomous variables (Male = 1 and Female = 0; Single = 1 and Couple = 0; Employed = 1 and Unemployed = 0; Having children = 1 and No children = 0; Urban = 1 and Rural = 0, respectively). For marital status, common-law marriage and married people are grouped together as "couple," while single people, widows, separated, and divorced people are categorized together as "single" (Table I).

Political ideology was also controlled for, ranging from 1 = extremely progressive to 10 = extremely conservative, based on a claim that conservative people were

more likely to donate than their counterparts (Frumkin 2005). Most importantly, affiliation with more than one organization was considered. Some scholars have argued that multiple associational membership was more related to members' civic engagement rather than the length of affiliation with an organization (Glanville 2016; Wollebaek and Selle 2002). Hence, we created a variable by summing the number of affiliations to control for the possible effect of multiple affiliations on community engagement. This variable had six variations because regression analysis was conducted six times (once for each of the six associations) and the variable should not include the type of association examined in its calculation. That is, the range of the multiple affiliation variable used for bivariate analysis was 0 to 6 and its range in each regression analysis was 0 to 5. As shown in Table II, individuals with no membership comprise 24.4%, one membership is 36.4%, two memberships are 25%, and more than two memberships are just 16%, respectively.

On top of this, we included affiliation with a community council as a control variable rather than as a distinct type of organization being compared, because it is evident for council members to be involved in community matters.

Analytical Strategy

Intensity of organizational involvement can produce different effects on members' behavior (Li and Zhang, forthcoming). This finding led to our first analysis of relationship between different degrees of attending membership meetings in a cooperative and the probability of community engagement. The second analysis was a comparison of the likelihood of helping the community across different types of association members. Due to the binary response of the dependent variable, binomial logistic regression was adopted, and odds ratios of community engagement along with regression coefficients were reported in the results. After the listwise deletion for missing cases, 1,126 cases were used in the analyses.

For the first analysis, odds ratios of community engagement by cooperative members with different degrees of attending meetings (once or twice a year, once or twice a month, and once a week) were compared to that of the reference group, noncooperative members. In the second analysis, odds ratio of community engagement by all members (a grouped variable of the three participating categories) of each type of association were calculated and compared across different types of memberships.

Table II. Total Number of Memberships

Number	Frequency	Percent
0	359	24.4
1	535	36.4
2	368	25.0
3	137	9.3
4	48	3.3
5	17	1.2
6	7	0.5
Total	1,471	100.0

In regard to the second analysis, the respondents were asked about whether they attended meetings for each type of organization, and thus some respondents were members of multiple associations. Accordingly, the analysis of comparison was not between cooperatives as a reference group and other types of associations. Rather, this study compared the difference in the likelihoods of community engagement by members and nonmembers across distinct types of associations. This way, it is possible to compare all six types of organizations with each other and concomitantly to see which association members are more likely to engage in community matters, controlling for other characteristics.

RESULTS

Bivariate Analysis

Of the respondents in the sample, approximately 13% attended cooperative membership meetings at least once a year and more than half went to religious organization meetings. More than a third attended PTA meetings, and 15%, 9%, and 7% went to political movement organizations, professional/farmers' associations, and unions respectively (Table I).

In terms of their involvement in community matters, bivariate analysis indicates that age, marital status, employment, and political ideology as individual characteristics were significantly associated with helping to solve community problems (Table III). However, gender and education were not related to community

Table III. Bivariate Relationship Between Each Variable and Community Engagement

Variables	Chi-2 (χ)
Membership (Once a year+ =1, never = 0)	
Cooperatives	61.288***
Religious organizations	13.161***
Political organizations	77.184***
Professional/Farmers associations	34.539***
Parent–Teacher Associations	13.777***
Unions	16.271***
Individual Characteristics	
Age	38.296***
Gender (Male = 1, Female = 0)	1.198
Education	0.149
Marital status (Single = 1, Couple = 0)	15.103***
Employment (Employed = 1, Not = 0)	11.262***
Political ideology (Very progressive 1 to Very conservative 10)	17.490***
Household Characteristics	
Children (Yes = 1, No = 0)	26.273***
Household income (10 categories)	7.596**
Residence location (Urban = 1, Rural = 0)	5.906*
Other Memberships	
Community councils	273.832***
Multiple affiliations (0–6)	112.238*** (0.270***)

Chi-2 test; *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.
0.270 next to the Chi-2 value (112.238) for Multiple affiliations denotes correlation coefficient.

engagement, and thus these variables were dropped in regression analysis. Considering household characteristics, income, having children, and residence location were all significantly related to community engagement. As for membership affiliation, all types of association members were more likely to be involved in community matters when compared to nonmembers in each type of association. In particular, affiliation with community council and multiple memberships were very strongly related to community engagement.

Members vs. Nonmembers of Cooperatives

Table IV displays the relationship between the different levels of participation in cooperative membership meetings and their community involvement. In Model 1, all three levels of participation in membership meetings were statistically significantly related to members' community engagement, net of individual characteristics. The odds ratios of involvement in community by those who attended meetings monthly and yearly were 2.68 and 2.75 ($p < .000$), respectively. That is, compared to nonmembers, when cooperative members attended meetings once per month or year, their likelihood of helping to solve community problems increased by 168%[6] or 175%, respectively. Meanwhile, the odds ratio of community engagement by those who attended meetings weekly was about 5.8 times that of nonmembers. In other words, cooperative members' weekly attendance of meetings was related to a 480% increase in the likelihood of contribution to community development, compared to those who never attended meetings in cooperatives. As such, between the weekly attendance and the other two groups, a substantial difference of the likelihood of community involvement was detected, controlling for individual demographic characteristics.

Marital status, employment, and political ideology were all associated with community engagement. In terms of political ideology, when people became more conservative, they were less likely to contribute to community development (B = –.07). Each year, increase in members' age was positively related to the likelihood of helping the community. Singles and the employed were less likely to engage in community matters than couples and the unemployed.

Household conditions were included in Model 2 to rule out their effect on community engagement, but such additional controlling did not change the overall pattern and statistical significance. When variables such as having children, household income, and residence location were introduced in the model, all levels of participation in cooperative meetings were still associated with involvement in community. Moreover, the likelihood of community engagement by those who attended weekly was still substantially higher than those of monthly and yearly attendees (5.82 vs. 2.75 and 2.55, respectively). A slight change is that members who attended meetings monthly had a higher likelihood than those who attended yearly, in contrast to the previous model. The effect of marital status and employment disappeared, but age and political ideology remained statistically significant in relation to community engagement. The variables of having children and residence location had no

[6] Likelihood formula: (2.68 – 1) x 100 = 168%.

Table IV. Logistic Regression of Community Engagement on Different Levels of Participation in Cooperative Membership Meetings

	Community Engagement		
Variables	Model 1 (N = 1,311)	Model 2 (N = 1,160)	Model 3 (N = 1,126)
Cooperative Membership			
(Omitted = Never attend)			
Weekly attend	1.76*** (5.79)	1.76*** (5.82)	1.34** (3.80)
Monthly attend	0.99*** (2.68)	1.01*** (2.75)	0.56* (1.76)
Yearly attend	1.01*** (2.75)	0.93*** (2.55)	0.73* (2.07)
Individual Characteristics			
Age	0.03*** (1.03)	0.03*** (1.03)	0.03*** (1.03)
Marital status	−0.25* (0.78)	−0.07 (0.93)	−0.04 (0.96)
(Single = 1, Couple = 0)			
Employment	0.34** (1.41)	0.26 (1.30)	0.33* (1.39)
(Employed = 1, Not = 0)			
Political ideology	−0.07*** (0.93)	−0.06** (0.94)	−0.03 (0.97)
(Prog. 1 – Cons. 10)			
Household Characteristics			
Children (Yes = 1, No = 0)		0.22 (1.25)	−0.12 (0.89)
Household income		0.06* (1.06)	0.07* (1.07)
Residence location		−0.35 (0.70)	−0.30 (0.74)
(Urban = 1, Rural = 0)			
Other Memberships			
Community council			1.65*** (5.20)
Multiple affiliations (0–5)			0.14 (1.15)

Binomial logistic regression; *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.
Numbers are regression coefficients and numbers in parentheses are odds ratios.

association with helping the community, in contrast to the result of the bivariate analysis. Household income was positively related to the likelihood of community engagement.

Most importantly, Model 3 included the variables of affiliation with community council and multiple memberships. The variable, Multiple Affiliations, was not related to community engagement, net of other conditions. The introduction of affiliation with community council, however, had some effects on the relationship between different levels of participation in cooperative meetings and members' community involvement. Overall, the statistically significant relationship of independent variables with community engagement remained the same, but the odds ratio of involvement in community matters by all levels of cooperative meeting attendees decreased. As indicated in the bivariate analysis, affiliation with community councils would explain the relationship between cooperative membership and community involvement to a degree.

Members' Community Engagement Across Different Types of Associations

In order to compare the relationship between attending membership meetings and community engagement across different associations, logistic regression analysis was conducted six times, once per each type (Table V). In contrast to the result of the bivariate analysis, participation in PTA, religious organizations,

Table V. Logistic Regression of Community Engagement on the Affiliation With Different Types of Associations

Variables	Community Engagement (N = 1,126)					
	Cooperatives	Political	Parent–Teacher Associations	Religious	Trade Associations	Union
Individual Characteristics						
Members vs. Nonmembers	0.80*** (2.22)	0.51** (1.67)	−0.15 (0.86)	0.22 (1.24)	0.42 (1.52)	−0.08 (0.93)
Age	0.03*** (1.03)	0.03*** (1.03)	0.02*** (1.03)	0.03*** (1.03)	0.03*** (1.03)	0.03*** (1.03)
Marital status (Single = 1, Couple = 0)	−0.03 (0.97)	−0.02 (0.98)	0.00 (1.00)	−0.03 (0.98)	−0.03 (0.97)	−0.03 (0.97)
Employment (Employed = 1, Not = 0)	0.34* (1.40)	0.34* (1.41)	0.33* (1.40)	0.34* (1.40)	0.33* (1.39)	0.36* (1.43)
Political ideology (Prog. 1 – Cons. 10)	−0.03 (0.97)	−0.02 (0.98)	−0.03 (0.97)	−0.03 (0.97)	−0.03 (0.97)	−0.03 (0.98)
Household Characteristics						
Children (Yes = 1, No = 0)	−0.14 (0.87)	−0.16 (0.85)	0.02 (1.02)	−0.18 (0.83)	−0.16 (0.85)	−0.19 (0.83)
Household income	0.07* (1.07)	0.07* (1.07)	0.06* (1.06)	0.07* (1.07)	0.07* (1.07)	0.07* (1.07)
Residence location (Urban = 1, Rural = 0)	−0.32 (0.73)	−0.30 (0.74)	−0.28 (0.75)	−0.30 (0.74)	−0.30 (0.74)	−0.30 (0.74)
Other Memberships						
Community council (Yes = 1, No = 0)	1.65*** (5.20)	1.62*** (5.07)	1.65*** (5.23)	1.64*** (5.16)	1.64*** (5.17)	1.64*** (5.16)
Multiple affiliations (0–5)	0.15* (1.16)	0.20** (1.23)	0.37*** (1.44)	0.27*** (1.31)	0.24*** (1.27)	0.30*** (1.34)

Binomial logistic regression; *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.
Numbers are regression coefficients and numbers in parentheses are odds ratios.

professional/farmers' associations, and unions had no statistically significant association with community engagement when controlling for other individual and household characteristics. Meanwhile, members of cooperatives and political movement organizations were likely to help their community, net of other conditions. The odds ratios of community involvement by cooperative and political movement organization members were 2.22 and 1.67, respectively. In other words, the probabilities of helping the community were 69%[7] by cooperative members and 63% by political organization members, respectively.

Marital status, political ideology, having children, and residence location had no relationship with community engagement, whereas age, employment, and household income were statistically significantly related to the dependent variable. Similar to the direction in the previous analysis, as one is older, employed, and had a higher income, they were more likely to be involved in community matters.

An important point to be noted is the mediating effect of affiliation with community councils and multiple memberships on the relationship between each type of associational membership and community engagement. In the bivariate analysis, memberships of all six types of associations were significantly related to involvement in community issues. However, the introduction of the two variables, the community council membership and the multiple affiliations, fully explained the relationship of the four associational memberships (PTAs, religious organizations, professional/farmers' associations, and unions) with community engagement whereas the relationship between cooperatives and political organization memberships and community involvement remained statistically significant.

DISCUSSION

We compared the degrees of community engagement among cooperative members with different levels of participation in their organizations. We also looked into the difference in the degrees of community involvement between members and nonmembers in each type of association, and doing so made it possible to compare the six different types of organizations in terms of members' engagement in community matters.

The results showed that membership in PTA, religious organizations, professional/farmers' associations, and unions were not related to community engagement, whereas affiliation with cooperatives and political organizations was found to be associated with involvement in their communities. In particular, cooperative members' probability of community engagement was the highest among others, and hence it should be noted further.

The reason for the high level of cooperative members' involvement in community can be explained in one or both of the following two ways. One reason can be cooperatives' explicit promulgation of democratic decision making, co-ownership, and concern for community as organizational principles in addition to other characteristics that can be found in other types of associations. The second reason can be

[7] Probability formula: $2.22/(2.22 + 1) = 0.69$.

due to the affiliation with cooperatives by those who are already dedicated to their community development.

In regard to the first state, other types of associations also perform decision makings democratically (i.e., unions) or try to be involved in community matters (i.e., churches and PTAs) to some degree. However, it is not common for these groups to adopt both principles as explicitly as cooperatives do. Scholars claim that worker cooperatives can have a synergy coming from democratic decision making and a sense of ownership, and this synergy makes it possible to have a higher level of productivity and job satisfaction than other types of business entities, including Employee Stock Ownership Plans (ESOPs) that also have a co-ownership (Rooney 1992). As such, cooperatives might have a higher level of community engagement than other types of associations due to the combined effect driven from the three explicit organizational principles: democratic participation in decision making, concern for community, and co-ownership.

First, a decision-making structure in a fully democratic organization like cooperatives can have a different effect on the promotion of organizational values among members than in large or formal nonprofit organizations such as the political parties, unions, and professional associations examined in this study. Discussing cooperatives' democratic decision making in depth, Kaswan (2014) argued that cooperative decision making would promote the capacity to align members' individual interests with those of the larger community. Moreover, Rothschild (2016) differentiated large nonprofit organizations ("Democracy 1.0") from cooperatives and other small civil society organizations ("Democracy 2.0") in terms of the decision-making structure. According to her typology, large nonprofits tend to have their organizational values specified in their mission statement, while the latter group embraces the values in almost every decisional occasion. This structural distinction in coping with organizational values can serve a basic rationale for the different levels of members' community engagement between cooperatives and other types found in this study.

With the difference in the decision-making structure, the explicit declaration of concern for community as one of the organizational principles might have had a strong impact on members' behavior. As Christenson et al. (1988) explained organizational norms that played a critical role in affecting individuals' behavior toward society, definite organizational norms tend to override personal values when the two values are in conflict. Therefore, even if members join cooperatives for financial reasons, their organizations' explicit norm of concern for the community would probably affect members' behavior. Moreover, this norm would be persistent within the organization through direct participations in various levels of decision-making meetings and a sense of ownership, which makes it possible for members to have a mind-set as representatives of their organizations, embracing the organizational philosophy and spirit.

As a result, this synergy of all three principles could possibly generate a higher level of psychological attribute (Pateman 1970), concern for community, and a higher degree of community engagement than other association members. This speculation may be the essence of the participatory theory of democracy developed by Rousseau, Mill, and Cole in that "individuals, their psychological qualities and

characteristics, and authority structures of institutions are all interrelated; responsible social and political action of the individuals depends largely on the sort of institutions within which they have to act" (Pateman 1970:29).

Clearly, this first scenario may not be the only reason if cooperative members were already concerned about community matters before joining and have actively been engaged in community. Although Greenberg (1986) argued that typical reasons for joining cooperatives for the first time tended to be financial, such as good investment, relatively high wages, and job security, rather than the philosophy of helping community, this may not be true for Venezuelan cooperatives, which received a great deal of support from the government for community development and thus attracted many community organizers and activists.

One of the main focuses on public policy in the Chavez government was democratic participation because Hugo Chavez himself went from being an outsider candidate to a landslide winner of the presidential election in 1998 due mainly to a highly effective message of participatory democracy (Smilde 2008). Political movement activists and/or community organizers took advantage of this policy and were actively involved in community councils and other participatory forms to deliver their messages to the public (Léon and Smilde 2009). The statistical significance and high levels of community engagement by the members from political movement organizations and cooperatives seem to represent this circumstance.

If one of these two conjectures is not the sole reason for the high level of cooperative members' community involvement, it may be both instead; already active in community involvement and became more active through participation in cooperatives.

Regardless of whether cooperatives generated such a strong psychological attribute of concern for community among members or those who already had community-oriented mind-sets joined the organizations, the current study is not seeking a causal relationship between cooperative membership and a higher level of community involvement. The main argument of this study is the identification of cooperatives' operation as voluntary associations that provided resources needed for civic engagement, and one clear finding is that cooperatives were functioning with such members who were concerned about their communities.

Some scholars might just take it for granted that cooperatives are nonprofits. However, there is a scholarly argument that cooperatives are not nonprofits due to the violation of the key definition of "nondistribution of profits" (Steinberg 2006). In addition, if cooperatives are considered nonprofit organizations, they should have received the same degree of attention as other types of organizations, but it has not been true.

CONCLUSION

This study examined cooperatives and other types of membership associations in terms of members' community engagement, using national survey data collected in Venezuela. Community engagement in this study included such activities as donating money or labor, attending community meetings, and trying to organize a

group to solve problems in their community. The reason for comparing cooperatives with other types of associations is the lack of studies that considered cooperatives as a type of nonprofit organizations in spite of the cooperatives' nonprofits-like characteristics.

Findings show that cooperatives did function as other types of membership associations in terms of providing the members with resources needed for further civic engagement. Such findings could be limited to Venezuelan cooperatives because they received practical supports from the government. Future research can examine cooperatives in developed countries and compare them to other types of associations to see if cooperative members' community engagement is a generalizable phenomenon.

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