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Cooperative Membership and Community Engagement: Findings from a Latin American Survey

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Findings from a Latin American Survey**

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Cooperative Membership and Community Engagement: Findings from a Latin American Survey

Abstract

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.

Keywords

Voluntary associations, Cooperatives, Community engagement

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 et al. 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 U.S. have tended to exclude cooperatives, presumably due to the violation of ‘non-distribution constraint’¹ 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 co-workers (Edelstein 1982), a higher level of productivity and job satisfaction (Logue and Yates 2006), a higher technical efficiency in agricultural cooperatives (Abate et al. 2014), and a better quality of day care programs in child day care cooperatives than other types of child care centers (Leviten-Reid

¹ 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.

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4 2012). As a result of this positive economic outcome, the United Nations recognized the year
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7 2012 as the International Year of Cooperatives.
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9 In spite of this definitional violation of cooperatives as a nonprofit organization and such
10 positive outcomes in economic aspects, cooperatives' organizational characteristics—voluntarily
11 formed and membership-based—are compatible to other dimensions in the definition of
12 voluntary associations. Concomitantly, the exclusion of cooperatives from membership
13 organization studies is less evident in Europe because cooperatives are contained within the
14 boundary of social economy (Defourny and Develtere 1999). In addition, most cooperatives
15 explicitly and publicly adopt “concern for community” as one of their seven organizational
16 principles². Local companies and other types of nonprofit organizations do embrace and/or
17 pursue such a value, though it is not easily seen as an explicit organizational principle.
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30 Whether or not to define cooperatives as a part of the nonprofit sector is not the focus of
31 this study. We suggest that it is worth examining cooperatives in relation to other conventional
32 voluntary associations, given the organizational characteristics they have in common. Therefore,
33 this study seeks to answer the following research questions: Is cooperative membership related to
34 community engagement? How are cooperative memberships different from other types of
35 voluntary associations?
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44 The answer to the research question will be sought by two steps of analyses, using the
45 data of voluntary organizations in Venezuela. The first step investigates whether active
46 participation in cooperatives is related to a higher level of community engagement. This analysis
47 will serve to verify the findings of a qualitative study that examined fifteen Venezuelan
48 cooperatives and identified their positive role in community development (Harnecker 2009). The
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58 ² Referred to the seven principles listed on the website of International Cooperative Alliance.
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4 second analysis compares the different types of associations, including cooperatives in terms of
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6 members' community engagement. In doing so, it will be possible to find out whether
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8 cooperatives differ from other types of associations in regards to providing members with
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10 resources for further engagement in their community.
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13 14 **Voluntary associations and civic engagement**

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16 Numerous scholars have identified positive relationships between affiliation with
17
18 voluntary associations and members' political and/or civic engagement beyond their
19
20 organizations (Beck and Jennings 1982; Pollock 1982; Coleman 1988; Flap 1999; Kwak et al.
21
22 2004; Walker 2008). Despite a disagreement on the strength of the relationship due to the type
23
24 and the number of organizations that people are affiliated with (Farkas and Lindberg 2015,
25
26 Glanville 2016), the general argument is that people when are involved in voluntary associations
27
28 they are likely to participate in political or social affairs beyond their organizations because they
29
30 acquire the human, social and cultural capital needed for civic engagement through participation
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32 in such organizations (Wilson and Musick 1997). This claim has been elaborated by diverse
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34 mediating factors that promote such political or civic engagement, including a core group of
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36 people to mobilize other members (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993), social capital (Putnam 1993)
37
38 and sense of community (Davidson and Cotter 1989).
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45 Widely examined and developed by political scientists, resource mobilization theory has
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47 primarily been applied to social movement organizations. A core, professional group of people in
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49 a social movement organization brings in diverse resources, such as financial resources,
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51 supporters, media attention, and organizational alliances to mobilize other members toward
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53 achieving collective goals. Through the core group's effort, other members have an extended
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4 opportunity to participate in political affairs outside their organizations (McCarthy and Zald
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7 2001).

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9 Social capital, which has been widely explored by sociologists and political scientists, is
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11 nurtured through interactions among members in voluntary associations. Members with different
12
13 backgrounds and interests can exchange ideas, opinions, and information, and consequently
14
15 develop trust in other members (Glanville 2016). Therefore, such organizations are settings for
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17 political discussion, community-building, and gaining civic skills needed for further civic
18
19 engagement (Erickson and Nosanchuk 1990; Verba et al. 1995; Stolle 1998). Cultivation of such
20
21 social capital is not limited to political organizations. Other types of social affiliations, including
22
23 religious and recreational organizations, also contribute to its promotion because members of
24
25 these associations also exchange their experiences of political or civic involvement (Liu et al.
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30 1998; Kwak et al. 2004).

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33 In a similar sense, scholars have identified the generation of values, including a sense of
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35 community, community attachment, and sense of belonging that enabled members to develop
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37 psychological ties to their communities (Davidson and Cotter 1989; Beggs et al. 1996; Cassel
38
39 1999). In addition, the more people developed such emotional ties to their communities the more
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41 actively they were likely to be engaged in community matters (Unger and Wandersman 1985;
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44 Liu et al. 1998).

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47 Building on these theoretical research and practical findings, scholars have compared
48
49 different types of associations in terms of beyond-organizational-boundary outcomes, seeking to
50
51 find out if such a relationship is consistent regardless of the sort of organizations. In the realm of
52
53 these comparative studies, however, few scholars have included cooperatives. Studies of youth
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55 organizations (Frisco et al. 2004; Glanville 1999) do not include cooperatives because the latter
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4 group tends to be adult organizations. Yet cooperatives have hardly been examined by research
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6 of adult voluntary associations as well (Moyser and Parry 1997). Moreover, this trend is not
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8 limited to US scholars (Walker 2008), but expands to European research, including that of the
9
10 Netherlands (Bekkers 2005), Belgium (Quintelier 2008), and Italy (Putnam 1993). Even review
11
12 articles that categorized voluntary organizations by functional areas, such as occupational,
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14 educational, community-oriented, recreational, and political associations, excluded cooperatives
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16 (Moyser and Parry 1997).
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20 21 **Cooperatives** 22

23 Not much scholarly attention to cooperatives as nonprofit organizations is due primarily
24
25 to the group's operation in the business sector. According to a report from the Center for
26
27 Cooperatives at University of Wisconsin (2009), there are approximately 30,000 cooperatives in
28
29 the U.S., and they carry out business in four aggregate economic areas: commercial sales and
30
31 marketing, social and public services, financial services, and utilities. In addition, the
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33 organizations operate at 73,000 places of business throughout the U.S., own more than \$3 trillion
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35 in assets, and generate more than \$500 billion in revenue and approximately \$25 billion in
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37 wages.
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41 Considering the various industries in which cooperatives operate and their ownership
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43 structure, they are categorized broadly into eight groups; producer, value-added, service,
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45 housing, supply, consumer, financial, and worker cooperatives (Williams 2007). Agricultural
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47 organizations tend to fall under producer cooperatives, food coops are a well-known type of
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49 consumer cooperatives, and credit unions are a typical example of financial cooperatives. Taxi
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51 companies or child day care programs are usually identified as service cooperatives, and most
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53 manufacturing firms are worker cooperatives.
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4 Regardless of their type, however, most cooperatives tend to embrace the seven
5
6 organizational principles upon their establishment, adopted by the pioneers of the Rochdale
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8 Cooperative in 1844 (Williams 2007): 1) Voluntary and open membership, 2) Democratic
9
10 member participation, 3) Equal and fair investment by members, 4) Free of intervention from
11
12 outside power, 5) Education of members and the community about the principles, values, and
13
14 benefits of cooperatives, 6) Encouragement of cooperation among cooperatives, and 7) Concern
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16 for community.
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21 Of these seven principles, the second and the third—co-ownership and democratic
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23 participation in decision making—make cooperatives distinct from other business entities.
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25 Consequently, studies of cooperatives have concentrated on the relationship between these two
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27 organizational characteristics and organizations' economic outcomes, identifying cooperatives'
28
29 superior performance in productivity and job satisfaction (Logue and Yates 2006) and technical
30
31 efficiency (Abate et al. 2014) when compared to similar conventional companies.
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35 Moreover, these positive outcomes were not limited to one country or one industry, but
36
37 consistent across many countries and industries, such as U.S. plywood producer cooperatives
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39 (Conte, 1982), agricultural cooperatives in Ethiopia (Abate et al. 2014), the Mondragon
40
41 cooperatives in the Basque area of Spain (Thomas and Logan 1982), French cooperatives (Estrin
42
43 and Jones 1992), and West German cooperatives (Cable and FitzRoy 1980). In addition, Lyons
44
45 (2001) reported the positive impact of cooperatives on the public's internalization of
46
47 egalitarianism in Australia. Analyzing more than a hundred of these empirical studies in terms of
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49 cooperation, competition, and individual operation, Williams (2007) concluded that cooperation
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51 resulted in a higher level of productivity and achievement than either competition or individual
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53 effort.
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4 Other scholars have paid further attention to the third organizational principle—
5 democratic participation in decision-making—and examined its relationship with members’
6 political behavior (Sobel 1993) outside work. Examining 55 U.S. firms, including worker
7 cooperatives and conventional companies, Smith (1985) demonstrated that workers with
8 participatory experience are more likely to participate in community politics, such as signing a
9 petition, participating in a rally or wearing a political button. Surveying about 200 employees of
10 a company, Elden (1981) found that workers with experiences of self-management were more
11 likely to develop political efficacy and increase their participation in politics outside work than
12 their counterparts.
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25 As such, although scholars have found positive performances from cooperatives, findings
26 were concentrated on the economic dimensions, and consequently the organizations were
27 compared to conventional business entities. However, cooperatives are membership associations
28 and one of their organizational principles is concern for community, which is likely to affect
29 members’ behavior toward their community.
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37 **Cooperatives and community involvement**

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39 Although cooperatives maintain similar characteristics to nonprofits, which tend to affect
40 members’ civic engagement outside work, few scholars examined cooperatives in their
41 comparative research of voluntary organizations, excepting a few (Quarter et al. 2001; Seligson
42 1999). Even these comparative studies that included cooperatives did not look into the
43 relationship between membership associations and civic engagement. Quarter et al. (2001)
44 compared cooperatives with other types of member-based organizations in terms of
45 organizational characteristics, such as democratic decision-making and government dependence.
46 Seligson (1999) also included cooperatives in examining different types of voluntary
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4 associations in regards to members' political behavior. As such, Quarter's study was carried out
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6 at the organizational level, and Seligson's research was limited to members' political activities.
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9 Despite the lack of studies that examined cooperatives explicitly as a type of nonprofit
10 organization, a few studies have found the potential of cooperatives to generate values and
11 attitudes that are related to civic engagement. Turniansky and Cwikel (1996) examined Israel's
12 Kibbutzim, which share organizational principles and ideologies with cooperatives in many
13 ways, including mutual aid among members and collective work and life. They found that
14 members of a kibbutz developed a positive attitude toward helping others not just within their
15 kibbutz but also outside the communal institution. In a case study of a home care cooperative,
16 Majee (2007) found that the members acquired trust derived from diverse organizational values,
17 including respect, fairness, openness, generosity, and responsibility. This psychological trait also
18 expanded to all stakeholders around the organization, including clients and hired office
19 administrators. More recently, Schoening (2010) examined a bike cooperative and found that the
20 cooperative managed its operation following community interests. In doing so, the cooperative
21 was able to generate a social-oriented organizational culture and values that were shared among
22 the members.
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42 Moreover, some scholars have shown that the experience of membership associations can
43 have a greater influence on communal activities (Sherkat and Ellison 1999; Smidt 1999), such as
44 community work than traditional forms of individualized political participation, such as voting
45 and joining political campaigns (Verba et al. 1995). Others have also argued that cooperatives
46 can be used as a strategy for community development (Bendick and Egan 1995; Zeuli and Radel
47 2005). For example, Bendick and Egan (1995) examined the impact of twenty worker-owned
48 cooperatives on community economic development. They found worker ownership and
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4 participation enhanced cooperatives' ability to generate quality employment for people in the
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6 community but outside the economic mainstream. They also identified other positive influences
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8 of cooperatives on their communities: 1) provision of social services to the workers and their
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10 families through the cooperatives' programs or referrals to other social agencies, and 2)
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12 participation in joint business strategies in the community or in the industry they belong to.
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16 Furthermore, a new form of cooperative reflecting on the organizational principle of
17
18 concern for community, known as social cooperatives, have been on the rise over the past few
19
20 decades in many European countries, such as Italy, Spain, Portugal, Poland, Hungary, and
21
22 Greece (Borzaga et al. 2014). Differing from conventional cooperatives in terms of distributing
23
24 profits³, this new type of cooperative aims to provide an organized entrepreneurial response to
25
26 growing social assistance needs in the local community (Thomas, 2004). As a result, these highly
27
28 specialized and generally small-sized cooperatives with largely local roots are assumed to have
29
30 played a significant role in the delivery of social services to their local communities (Picciotti et
31
32 al. 2014). In sum, cooperatives possessing the voluntary associations' characteristics deserve
33
34 more attention as nonprofits and should be included in studies that examine or compare different
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36 types of associations.
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41 42 **Cooperatives in Venezuela**

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44 This is a case study of Venezuelan cooperatives, which requires an understanding of
45
46 some distinct features of this nation, especially under the Chavez Administration that declared
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48 "twenty-first-century socialism" as its developmental goal in 2005. Cooperatives became central
49
50 to the new socioeconomic model under the Chavez government because the organizational
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54 ³ When the cooperatives are allowed to distribute part of their profits, their assets are normally locked due
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56 mainly to a multi-stakeholder membership, including in their governance all the different actors
57
58 participating in the production process: workers, volunteers, customers, and even other private or public
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60 organizations (Thomas 2004).

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4 model fit well with Chavez's emphasis on egalitarianism and participatory democracy. During a
5
6 part of his term, the number of cooperatives increased substantially from about 900 in 1998 to
7
8 arguably 60,000 in 2007, an estimated 14% of the labor force (Harnecker 2009). This change is
9
10 reflected in the number of affiliations with different types of organizations in our data. Compared
11
12 to affiliation with political movement organizations (15%), professional/ farmers associations
13
14 (9%), and unions (7%), not a small number of people in the sample joined cooperatives (13%,
15
16 Table 1). The promotion of this type of organization by the Chavez Administration is not just for
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18 solving problems with unemployment, but also for collective wellbeing rather than a few
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20 people's capital accumulation (Harnecker 2009), fulfilling not only member's desires, but
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22 satisfying local community needs.
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29 Insert Table 1 here
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33 As such, cooperatives benefited greatly from the relevant laws under the Chavez
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35 government. One could argue that this unique circumstance has influenced the group of
36
37 organizations and concomitantly affected their members in terms of community engagement.
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40 On the other hand, the supportive government policy for these organizations mainly
41
42 focused on the economic aspect in the local community, and the consequence of this policy may
43
44 not be irrelevant to Harnecker's (2009) finding that "many cooperatives were behaving like
45
46 capitalist enterprises, seeking to maximize their net revenue (p.316)." That is, cooperatives in
47
48 Venezuela did not seem to operate properly as social enterprises or membership associations that
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50 can provide members with resources needed for community engagement, which tend to address
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52 more than mere economic growth.
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4 In addition to this conflictual environment surrounding cooperatives in terms of
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6 community involvement—supportive government policy to the expansion of cooperatives on the
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8 one hand and the economic emphasis placed on the policy on the other—it should be
9
10 acknowledged that the numeric expansion of organizations is not necessarily associated with
11
12 individuals' behavioral change beyond the organizational boundaries. Given the conditions with
13
14 mixed leverages for or against community engagement, it is worth examining these cooperatives
15
16 in Venezuela quantitatively as to whether their members are engaged in community matters. This
17
18 study can then provide a valuable insight into what position cooperatives occupy in the spectrum
19
20 of organizational operation, ranging from business entities to nonprofits.
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25 **Method**

26 Data

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28 The data of Venezuelan cooperatives is a part of the Latin American Public Opinion
29
30 Project (LAPOP) Americas Barometer 2006-2007. This project collects data annually in Central
31
32 and South American countries. The data used for this study was collected in 2007 with a
33
34 stratified (by socioeconomic level) cluster sample of dwelling units. The sample was drawn from
35
36 the national capital and other major urban centers, using the most recent population census data.
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38 The questionnaire was written in Spanish; however, the institution that carries out the project has
39
40 provided an English-version of questionnaire.
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47 As the unit of analysis, individuals were selected using randomizing procedures and sex
48
49 and age quotas. Information was collected from 1,510 respondents through door-to-door
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51 interviews region-wide. Respondents in this survey were asked about degrees of participation in
52
53 seven different types of associations: community councils or committees, cooperatives, political
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55 party or movement organizations, professional or farmers associations, PTAs, religious
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4 organizations, and unions. Since the objective of this study was to identify the degree to which
5 participation in cooperatives is associated with higher levels of civic participation among its
6 members, community council members had to be eliminated from the analysis. This is because
7 community council members are required to participate in community matters.
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13 Dependent variable

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16 The dependent variable for this study is community engagement. It was measured by the
17 question, "Have you ever contributed to solve a problem in your community for the past year?"
18 with a 'yes/no' response. 'Yes' was assigned '1' and '0' for 'No' (Table 1). There were four
19 subsequent questions: 1) whether they donated money, 2) gave labor or work, 3) attended
20 community meetings, and, 4) tried to organize a group to solve problems in the community.
21
22 These following questions show that the dependent variable encompasses a wide range of
23 indicators for helping the respondents' local communities, providing validity to the measurement
24 of community engagement. In a preliminary analysis, however, 13 out of 531 respondents who
25 answered 'yes' to the first question marked 'no' to all subsequent questions. That is, 13 people
26 did something else to help their community, which was not captured by the follow-up questions.
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28 Therefore, given a broad concept of community engagement, the first general question was used
29 as the dependent variable.
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44 Independent Variables

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46 The main independent variable for this study is frequency of attending membership
47 meetings, and has four categories: never, once or twice a year, once or twice a month, and once a
48 week. Membership meetings are utilized for discussing not only organizational/managerial
49 topics, but also community affairs in cooperatives. A degree of participation in membership
50 meetings can represent a level of exposure to community matters and to the organizational norm
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4 of concern for community. For the first analysis in which members and non-members of
5
6 cooperatives are compared, three dummy variables for the three latter categories were created
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8 with a reference group 'never.' For the second analysis of comparing community engagement
9
10 across different association members, the three latter categories were grouped together and
11
12 assigned '1' to represent membership and 'never' category was coded '0' as non-members. Other
13
14 independent variables in this second analysis are participation in the other five types of
15
16 membership associations, and the categorization of each variable is the same as that of
17
18 cooperative members.
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22 Control Variables.

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25 Demographic backgrounds, socio-economic status and household characteristics known
26
27 to be associated with civic engagement (Anheier and Salamon 1999; Jackson et al. 2005; Musick
28
29 and Wilson 2008) were controlled for to rule out their possible effect on the members'
30
31 community engagement. Such variables included age, gender, marital status, education, monthly
32
33 income, employment status, having children, and residence location. Age and education are
34
35 continuous, household income is a categorized interval, and the rest are dichotomous variables
36
37 (Male=1 and Female=0; Single=1 and Couple=0; Employed=1 and Unemployed=0; Having
38
39 children=1 and No children=0; Urban=1 and Rural=0, respectively). For marital status, common
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41 law marriage and married people are grouped together as 'couple', while single people, widows,
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43 separated, and divorced people are categorized together as 'single' (Table 1).
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50 Political ideology was also controlled for, ranging from 1=extremely progressive to
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52 10=extremely conservative, based on a claim that conservative people were more likely to donate
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54 than their counterparts (Frumkin 2005). Most importantly, affiliation with more than one
55
56 organization was considered. Some scholars have argued that multiple associational membership
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4 was more related to members' civic engagement rather than the length of affiliation with an
5 organization (Wollebaek and Selle 2002; Glanville 2016). Hence, we created a variable by
6 summing the number of affiliations to control for the possible effect of multiple affiliations on
7 community engagement. This variable had six variations because regression analysis was
8 conducted six times (once for each of the six associations) and the variable should not include
9 the type of association examined in its calculation. That is, the range of the multiple affiliation
10 variable used for bivariate analysis was 0 to 6 and its range in each regression analysis was 0 to
11 5. As shown in Table 2, individuals with no membership comprise 24.4%, one membership is
12 36.4%, two memberships are 25%, and more than two memberships are just 16%, respectively.
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25 On top of this, we included affiliation with a community council as a control variable
26 rather than as a distinct type of organization being compared, since it is evident for council
27 members to be involved in community matters.
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37 Analytic Strategy

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39 Intensity of organizational involvement can produce different effects on members'
40 behavior (Li and Zhang Forthcoming). This finding led to our first analysis of relationship
41 between different degrees of attending membership meetings in a cooperative and the probability
42 of community engagement. The second analysis was a comparison of the likelihood of helping
43 the community across different types of association members. Due to the binary response of the
44 dependent variable, binomial logistic regression was adopted, and odd-ratios of community
45 engagement along with regression coefficients were reported in the results. After the list-wise
46 deletion for missing cases, 1,126 cases were used in the analyses.
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4 For the first analysis, odds-ratios of community engagement by cooperative members
5 with different degrees of attending meetings (once or twice a year, once or twice a month, and
6 once a week) were compared to that of the reference group, non-cooperative members. In the
7 second analysis, odds-ratio of community engagement by all members (a grouped variable of the
8 three participating categories) of each type of association were calculated and compared across
9 different types of memberships.
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18 In regards to the second analysis, the respondents were asked about whether they
19 attended meetings for each type of organization, and thus some respondents were members of
20 multiple associations. Accordingly, the analysis of comparison was not between cooperatives as
21 a reference group and other types of associations. Rather, this study compared the difference in
22 the likelihoods of community engagement by members and non-members across distinct types of
23 associations. This way, it is possible to compare all six types of organizations each other and
24 concomitantly to see which association members are more likely to engage in community
25 matters, controlling for other characteristics.
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37 **Results**

38 Bivariate analysis

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42 Of the respondents in the sample, approximately 13% attended cooperative membership
43 meetings at least once a year and more than half went to religious organization meetings. More
44 than a third attended PTA meetings, and 15%, 9%, and 7% went to political movement
45 organizations, professional/ farmers associations, and unions respectively (Table 1).
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51 In terms of their involvement in community matters, bivariate analysis indicates that age,
52 marital status, employment, and political ideology as individual characteristics were significantly
53 associated with helping to solve community problems (Table 3). However, gender and education
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were not related to community 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 non-members in each type of association. In particular, affiliation with community council and multiple memberships were very strongly related to community engagement.

 Insert Table 3 here

Members vs. non-members of cooperatives

Table 4 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 non-members, when cooperative members attended meetings once per month or year, their likelihood of helping to solve community problems increased by 168%⁴ or 175% respectively. Meanwhile, the odds ratio of community engagement by those who attended meetings weekly was about 5.8 times that of non-members. 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

⁴ Likelihood formula: $(2.68-1) \times 100 = 168\%$

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4 substantial difference of the likelihood of community involvement was detected, controlling for
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6 individual demographic characteristics.
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10 Insert Table 4 here
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14 Marital status, employment, and political ideology were all associated with community
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16 engagement. In terms of political ideology, when people became more conservative they were
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18 less likely to contribute to community development ($B = -.07$). Each year increase in members'
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20 age was positively related to the likelihood of helping the community. Singles and the employed
21
22 were less likely to engage in community matters than couples and the unemployed.
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26 Household conditions were included in Model 2 to rule out their effect on community
27
28 engagement, but such additional controlling did not change the overall pattern and statistical
29
30 significance. When variables such as having children, household income, and residence location
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32 were introduced in the model, all levels of participation in cooperative meetings were still
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34 associated with involvement in community. Moreover, the likelihood of community engagement
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36 by those who attended weekly was still substantially higher than those of monthly and yearly
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38 attendees (5.82 vs. 2.75 and 2.55, respectively). A slight change is that members who attended
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40 meetings monthly had a higher likelihood than those who attended yearly, in contrast to the
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42 previous model. The effect of marital status and employment disappeared, but age and political
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44 ideology remained statistically significant in relation to community engagement. The variables of
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46 having children and residence location had no association with helping the community, in
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48 contrast to the result of the bivariate analysis. Household income was positively related to the
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50 likelihood of community engagement.
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4 Most importantly, Model 3 included the variables of affiliation with community council
5 and multiple memberships. The variable, Multiple Affiliations, was not related to community
6 engagement, net of other conditions. The introduction of affiliation with community council,
7 however, had some effects on the relationship between different levels of participation in
8 cooperative meetings and members' community involvement. Overall, the statistically
9 significant relationship of independent variables with community engagement remained the
10 same, but the odds ratio of involvement in community matters by all levels of cooperative
11 meeting attendees decreased. As indicated in the bivariate analysis, affiliation with community
12 councils would explain the relationship between cooperative membership and community
13 involvement to a degree.
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28 Members' community engagement across different types of associations
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30 In order to compare the relationship between attending membership meetings and
31 community engagement across different associations, logistic regression analysis was conducted
32 six times, once per each type (Table 5). In contrast to the result of the bivariate analysis,
33 participation in PTA, religious organizations, professional/farmers associations, and unions had
34 no statistically significant association with community engagement when controlling for other
35 individual and household characteristics. Meanwhile, members of cooperatives and political
36 movement organizations were likely to help their community, net of other conditions. The odds
37 ratios of community involvement by cooperative and political movement organization members
38 were 2.22 and 1.67, respectively. In other words, the probabilities of helping the community
39 were 69%⁵ by cooperative members and 63% by political organization members, respectively.
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58 ⁵ Probability Formula: $2.22/(2.22+1) = 0.69$
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Insert Table 5 here

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9 Marital status, political ideology, having children, and residence location had no
10 relationship with community engagement, whereas age, employment, and household income
11 were statistically significantly related to the dependent variable. Similar to the direction in the
12 previous analysis, as one is older, employed, and had a higher income, they were more likely to
13 be involved in community matters.
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21 An important point to be noted is the mediating effect of affiliation with community
22 councils and multiple memberships on the relationship between each type of associational
23 membership and community engagement. In the bivariate analysis, memberships of all six types
24 of associations were significantly related to involvement in community issues. However, the
25 introduction of the two variables, the community council membership and the multiple
26 affiliations, fully explained the relationship of the four associational memberships (PTAs,
27 religious organizations, professional/ farmers associations, and unions) with community
28 engagement whereas the relationship between cooperatives and political organization
29 memberships and community involvement remained statistically significant.
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42 **Discussion**

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44 We compared the degrees of community engagement among cooperative members with
45 different levels of participation in their organizations. We also looked into the difference in the
46 degrees of community involvement between members and non-members in each type of
47 association, and doing so made it possible to compare the six different types of organizations in
48 terms of members' engagement in community matters.
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4 The results showed that membership in PTA, religious organizations,
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6 professional/farmers associations, and unions were not related to community engagement,
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8 whereas affiliation with cooperatives and political organizations was found to be associated with
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10 involvement in their communities. In particular, cooperative members' probability of community
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12 engagement was the highest among others, and hence it should be noted further.
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16 The reason for the high level of cooperative members' involvement in community can be
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18 explained in one or both of the following two ways. One reason can be cooperatives' explicit
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20 promulgation of democratic decision making, co-ownership, and concern for community as
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22 organizational principles in addition to other characteristics that can be found in other types of
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24 associations. The second reason can be due to the affiliation with cooperatives by those who are
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26 already dedicated to their community development.
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30 In regards to the first state, other types of associations also perform decision makings
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32 democratically (i.e. unions) or try to be involved in community matters (i.e. churches and PTAs)
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34 to some degree. However, it is not common for these groups to adopt both principles as explicitly
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36 as cooperatives do. Scholars claim that worker cooperatives can have a synergy coming from
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38 democratic decision making and a sense of ownership, and this synergy makes it possible to have
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40 a higher level of productivity and job satisfaction than other types of business entities, including
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42 Employee Stock Ownership Plans (ESOPs) that also have a co-ownership (Rooney 1992). As
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44 such, cooperatives might have a higher level of community engagement than other types of
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46 associations due to the combined effect driven from the three explicit organizational principles:
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48 democratic participation in decision making, concern for community, and co-ownership.
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53 First, a decision-making structure in a fully democratic organization like cooperatives can
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55 have a different effect on the promotion of organizational values among members than in large
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4 or formal nonprofit organizations such as the political parties, unions, and professional
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6 associations examined in this study. Discussing cooperatives' democratic decision making in-
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8 depth, Kaswan (2014) argued that cooperative decision making would promote the capacity to
9
10 align members' individual interests with those of the larger community. Moreover, Rothschild
11
12 (2016) differentiated large nonprofit organizations ("Democracy 1.0") from cooperatives and
13
14 other small civil society organizations ("Democracy 2.0") in terms of the decision-making
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16 structure. According to her typology, large nonprofits tend to have their organizational values
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18 specified in their mission statement, while the latter group embraces the values in almost every
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20 decisional occasion. This structural distinction in coping with organizational values can serve a
21
22 basic rationale for the different levels of members' community engagement between
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28 cooperatives and other types found in this study.

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30 With the difference in the decision-making structure, the explicit declaration of concern
31
32 for community as one of the organizational principles might have had a strong impact on
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34 members' behavior. As Christenson et al. (1988) explained organizational norms that played a
35
36 critical role in affecting individuals' behavior toward society, definite organizational norms tend
37
38 to override personal values when the two values are in conflict. Therefore, even if members join
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40 cooperatives for financial reasons, their organizations' explicit norm of concern for the
41
42 community would probably affect members' behavior. Moreover, this norm would be persistent
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44 within the organization through direct participations in various level of decision making
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46 meetings and a sense of ownership, which makes it possible for members to have a mindset as
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48 representatives of their organizations, embracing the organizational philosophy and spirit.

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50 As a result, this synergy of all three principles could possibly generate a higher level of
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52 psychological attribute (Pateman 1970), concern for community, and a higher degree of
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4 community engagement than other association members. This speculation may be the essence of
5
6 the participatory theory of democracy developed by Rousseau, Mill, and Cole in that
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8 “individuals, their psychological qualities and characteristics, and authority structures of
9
10 institutions are all interrelated; responsible social and political action of the individuals depends
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12 largely on the sort of institutions within which they have to act” (Pateman, 1970, p. 29).
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17 Clearly, this first scenario may not be the only reason if cooperative members were
18
19 already concerned about community matters before joining and have actively been engaged in
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21 community. Though Greenberg (1986) argued that typical reasons for joining cooperatives for
22
23 the first time tended to be financial, such as good investment, relatively high wages, and job
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25 security, rather than the philosophy of helping community, this may not be true for Venezuelan
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27 cooperatives, which received a great deal of support from the government for community
28
29 development and thus attracted many community organizers and activists.
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33 One of the main focuses on public policy in the Chavez government was democratic
34
35 participation because Hugo Chavez himself went from being an outsider candidate to a landslide
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37 winner of the presidential election in 1998 due mainly to a highly effective message of
38
39 participatory democracy (Smilde 2008). Political movement activists and/or community
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41 organizers took advantage of this policy and were actively involved in community councils and
42
43 other participatory forms to deliver their messages to the public (Leon and Smilde 2009). The
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45 statistical significance and high levels of community engagement by the members from political
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47 movement organizations and cooperatives seem to represent this circumstance.
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52 If one of these two conjectures is not the sole reason for the high level of cooperative
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54 members’ community involvement, it may be both instead; already active in community
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56 involvement and became more active through participation in cooperatives.
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4 Regardless of whether cooperatives generated such a strong psychological attribute of
5 concern for community among members or those who already had community-oriented mindsets
6 joined the organizations, the current study is not seeking a causal relationship between
7 cooperative membership and a higher level of community involvement. The main argument of
8 this study is the identification of cooperatives' operation as voluntary associations that provided
9 resources needed for civic engagement, and one clear finding is that cooperatives were
10 functioning with such members who were concerned about their communities.
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20 Some scholars might just take it for granted that cooperatives are nonprofits. However,
21 there is a scholarly argument that cooperatives are not nonprofits due to the violation of the key
22 definition of "non-distribution of profits" (Steinberg 2006). In addition, if cooperatives are
23 considered nonprofit organizations they should have received the same degree of attention as
24 other types of organizations, but it has not been true.
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32 **Conclusion**

33 This study examined cooperatives and other types of membership associations in terms of
34 members' community engagement, using national survey data collected in Venezuela.
35 Community engagement in this study included such activities as donating money or labor,
36 attending community meetings, and trying to organize a group to solve problems in their
37 community. The reason for comparing cooperatives with other types of associations is the lack of
38 studies that considered cooperatives as a type of nonprofit organizations in spite of the
39 cooperatives' nonprofits-like characteristics.
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51 Findings show that cooperatives did function as other types of membership associations
52 in terms of providing the members with resources needed for further civic engagement. Such
53 findings could be limited to Venezuelan cooperatives since they received practical supports from
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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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Table 1: Description of each variable

Variables	Mean or Percentage
Community engagement (Yes=1, No=0)	Yes=35.3%
<i>Membership</i>	
Cooperatives (Once a year + = 1, never = 0)	Yes=13.1%
Religious organizations	Yes=54.2%
Political organizations	Yes=15.0%
Professional/ Farmers associations	Yes=8.5%
PTAs	Yes=38.9%
Unions	Yes=7.0%
Community Councils	Yes=34.7%
<i>Individual Characteristics</i>	
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 (Very progressive 1 to Very conservative 10)	Mean=5.3 (SD=3.1); 1=21% (Mode), 5&6=33%, 10=16%
<i>Household Characteristics</i>	
Children (Yes=1, No=0)	Yes=72.7%
HH income (10 categories)	Median=8, Mode=10 (25%)
Residence location (Urban=1, Rural=0)	Urban=95.2%

Table 2: 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	1471	100.0

Table 3: Bivariate relationship between each variable and community engagement

Variables	Chi-2 (χ)
<i>Membership</i>	
Cooperatives (Once a year+=1, never= 0)	61.288***
Religious organizations	13.161***
Political organizations	77.184***
Professional/ Farmers associations	34.539***
PTAs	13.777***
Unions	16.271***
<i>Individual Characteristics</i>	
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***
<i>Household Characteristics</i>	
Children (Yes=1, No=0)	26.273***
HH income (10 categories)	7.596**
Residence location (Urban=1, Rural=0)	5.906*
<i>Other memberships</i>	
Community Councils	273.832***
Multiple affiliations (0-6)	112.238*** (0.270***)

- Chi-2 test; *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001
- 0.270 below the chi-2 value in multiple affiliation denotes correlation coefficient.

Table 4: Logistic regression of community engagement on different levels of participation in cooperative membership meetings

Variables	Community Engagement		
	Model 1 (N=1311)	Model 2 (N=1160)	Model 3 (N=1126)
<i>Cooperative membership</i> (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)
<i>Individual Characteristics</i>			
Age	0.03*** (1.03)	0.03*** (1.03)	0.03*** (1.03)
Marital status (Single=1, Couple=0)	-0.25* (0.78)	-0.07 (0.93)	-0.04 (0.96)
Employment (Employed=1, Not=0)	0.34** (1.41)	0.26 (1.30)	0.33* (1.39)
Political ideology (Prog. 1 – Cons. 10)	-0.07*** (0.93)	-0.06** (0.94)	-0.03 (0.97)
<i>Household Characteristics</i>			
Children (Yes=1, No=0)		0.22 (1.25)	-0.12 (0.89)
HH Income		0.06* (1.06)	0.07* (1.07)
Residence location (Urban=1, Rural=0)		-0.35 (0.70)	-0.30 (0.74)
<i>Other memberships</i>			
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 odd ratios

Table 5: Logistic regression of community engagement on the affiliation with different types of associations

Variables	Community Engagement (N=1126)					
	Cooperatives	Political	PTA	Religious	Trade Assoc.	Union
<i>Individual Characteristics</i>						
Members vs. Not-members	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)
<i>Household Characteristics</i>						
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)
HH 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)
<i>Other memberships</i>						
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 odd ratios