

Three Types of Voluntary Associations in Comparative Perspective: The Importance of Studying Associational Involvement through a Typology of Associations in 21 European Countries

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ABSTRACT *Although very different types of voluntary associations are often lumped together in (cross-national) analyses, we argue that scholars should distinguish between types of associations. In the first part of the paper, we develop a typology of voluntary associations based on theoretical considerations and previous empirical analyses of the primary concerns of these voluntary associations: leisure organizations fulfil recreational purposes, interest organizations aim to represent the interests of their members, and activist organizations advocate broad societal interests. We present a measure that is cross-nationally equivalent. The second part of the paper illustrates the validity and relevance of the typology for studies of associational involvement. First, the Mokken scale analysis shows that the repertoire of activities (membership, participation, volunteering, and donating money) that citizens employ differs across the three types. Second, cross-national analysis shows that the ratio between involvement rate and the share of volunteers in voluntary associations differs across the three types. Finally, the three types of associations are differently related to the (supposed) causes and consequences of associational involvement. We illustrate that many of these differences cancel each other out when we do not distinguish between leisure, interest and activist organizations. All in all, this article proves that the distinction between leisure, interest, and activist organizations has significant, substantial, and theoretically relevant outcomes.*

KEY WORDS: Voluntary associations, volunteering, schools of democracy, associational involvement

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Introduction

Comparative research on voluntary associational involvement is booming. Indicative is the amount of recent European publications on a large number of diverging data sets, including Ruiters and De Graaf (2006), Maloney and Roßteutscher (2007), Pichler and Wallace (2007), Meulemann (2008), Gesthuizen, Van der Meer and Scheepers (2008, 2009), and Van der Meer and Van Ingen (2009). Since the seminal study of Almond and Verba (1963), social scientists have been intrigued by the often large cross-national differences in the degree and type of associational involvement. Associational involvement has been linked to the success of democracy (Putnam, 1993) as well as other positive societal outcomes like wealthier, healthier, and less criminal societies (for an overview see Halpern, 2005). This has made associations an allegeable ‘all-purposive elixir for the ills of society’ (Uslaner & Dekker, 2001).

In cross-national research, different types of associations have often been grouped together: rather heterogeneous types of civic associations have been treated as homogeneous, in which citizens supposedly do the same activities, and from which the same causes and effects may be expected. However, we argue that grouping all types of voluntary associations together is reductionism to its extreme. Associational life includes a plethora of different *types* of voluntary associations in which citizens may be active. Some associations are concerned with playing golf, others with protecting the village green or defending particular interests. Some voluntary associations are singing choirs, unions, chess clubs, Rotary clubs, hiking clubs, parent/teacher organizations, fan clubs, or human rights organizations, and even clubs for lonely people. The list of voluntary associations is potentially endless. And why should we expect the same behavioural patterns, the same causes and the same effects from all these different types of associations?

The aim of this paper is to reduce this wide variety of voluntary associations, by building a cross-nationally comparable typology based on the primary aims of these associations. We argue theoretically and test empirically to what extent behavioural patterns and the associations with other variables differ across these types of associations. Moreover, we critically review the cross-national equivalence of measures of associational involvement available in the European Social Survey 2002. Only if the measures are equivalent cross-nationally are the conclusions of cross-national studies valid; by contrast, if different people do not interpret measures of associational involvement similarly, comparing and explaining their involvement rates do not produce robust insights.

Hence, our research questions are as follows:

- (1) To what extent does the repertoire of civic activities differ across types of voluntary associations and across countries?
- (2) To what extent do the levels of associational involvement differ across types of voluntary association and across countries?
- (3) To what extent is involvement in different types of voluntary association differentially related to individual-level variables?

Types of Voluntary Associations

In previous research, the potentially endless list of voluntary associations has been reduced by different procedures: (i) *a priori* distinctions¹ (e.g., Meulemann, 2008; Morales, 2001), (ii) data reduction techniques on membership data² (e.g., Gabriel *et al.*, 2002; Van Deth

& Kreuter, 1998; Wessels, 1997), and (iii) data reduction techniques on organization data regarding their primary concerns (e.g., Maloney & Roßteutscher, 2007; Roßteutscher & Van Deth, 2002).

We proceed with the latest insights on voluntary associations developed by Maloney and Roßteutscher (2007), integrating their empirical study on primary concerns of voluntary associations within a general theoretical model.³ The triangle in Figure 1 is a theoretical representation of the four domains of society (Cohen & Arato, 1992): it positions civil society (the whole network of voluntary associations), lying between the domains of the family (the intimate sphere), the market (the economic sphere) and the state. Yet, as the intermediate sphere between these three core domains, civil society stretches out and partly overlaps with each of these domains.

As intermediary organizations, voluntary associations are more or less concerned with each of the three core domains (Maloney & Roßteutscher, 2007). Voluntary associations are not part of the intimate sphere (as they are public by definition), nor of the economic sphere (as they do not primarily aim to make profit) nor of the state (as they do not make up, nor are controlled by the government), yet they may be concerned and even aim to influence each of these spheres.

Our typology thus distinguishes three aspects of civil society by the primary aims of voluntary associations: *leisure* organizations focus primarily on the intimate sphere, *interest* organizations focus primarily on the market, and *activist* organizations focus primarily on the state. The primary function of leisure organizations—like sport clubs—is to offer socializing and recreational activities (Lelieveldt, Astudillo & Stevenson, 2007). Interest organizations—like trade unions and consumer organizations—primarily aim to represent and defend the socio-economic interests of their members, which are often a specific target group (Lelieveldt, Astudillo & Stevenson, 2007). Participation in an interest organization thus, generally serves one's own economic or political interest. Activist organizations—like environmental

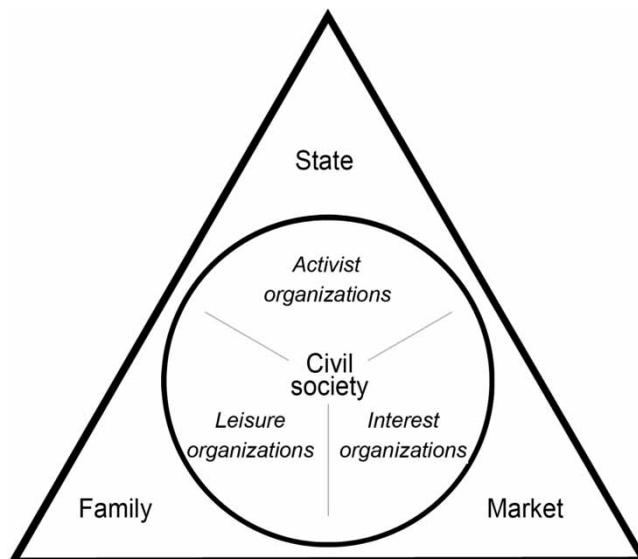


Figure 1. Three spheres of society.

organizations—primarily advocate broader societal interests that generally do not directly benefit the socio-economic interests of their members through mobilization (Lelieveldt, Astudillo & Stevenson, 2007). They generally aim to persuade individuals and societies to change their conduct (Aarts, 1995), whereas interest organizations lobby for governments to change specific laws.

The typology we propose is constructed by a combination of theoretical propositions and empirical analyses of organizational aims. The resulting distinction of associations by their primary aims is important to studies of associational involvement. Theories of associational involvement state that citizens need both incentives (motivation) and resources (means, such as time and money) to participate (Van der Meer, 2009). These specific incentives and resources are likely to differ across the type of association. The incentive of defending one's economic position will attract a person to interest organizations rather than leisure organizations. Similarly, the resources of leisure time and of sociability will be more useful in leisure than in activist organizations. Consequently, the extent, type, and correlates of associational involvement are likely to differ across types of organizations because of their different aims. Theoretically, this opens pathways to understanding associational involvement not merely as the product of citizens' characteristics, but as an interaction of citizens' and organizational characteristics. The next sections will show to what extent this is indeed the case empirically.

Data

To test the distinction between three types of associations—i.e., leisure, interest, and activist—we turn to the first wave of the European Social Survey (ESS), from 2002. This data set contains 48 measures of associational involvement in 21 societies: 16 Western European countries (including Germany, which we split into West Germany and (former) East Germany), three former communist countries from Central Europe, and Israel. This enables us to test the robustness of the typology cross-nationally. At the individual level, data collection in the ESS 2002 has been tight and uniform across countries, resulting in an average response rate of over 70%, containing 35,203 respondents of 18 years and older.

The 48 measures on associational involvement in the ESS 2002 are based on a lengthy list of questions that captures the concept of associational involvement in broad detail. Respondents are shown 12 types of voluntary associations. For each of these types of association, the respondents are asked whether they are a member of at least one organization, and—regardless of membership—whether the respondents participate in associational activities, do voluntary work or donate money.

However, with 48 measures data reduction becomes necessary.⁴ We perform data reduction in two steps. The first step is to reduce the number of types of organization according to their primary aims, which we do in this section. Second, we reduce the number of modes of involvement to a single hierarchical scale in the next section.

As we explained, theoretically we distinguish three types of associations: leisure organizations, interest organizations, and activist organizations.⁵ These organizations are present in the ESS data set. Leisure organizations consist of 'sports', 'culture', and 'social' associations. Interest organizations consist of 'trade unions', 'professional/business', and 'consumer' organizations. Activist organizations consist of 'environmental' and 'humanitarian/peace' organizations.⁶ To reduce these organizations to three types, we

have two options: constructing sum scores (c.f. Curtis, Baer & Grabb, 2001; Gesthuizen, Van der Meer & Scheepers, 2008, 2009; Morales & Geurts, 2007; Parboteeah, Cullen & Lim, 2004; Van Oorschot & Arts, 2005) or constructing dichotomized scores (c.f. Curtis, Grabb & Baer, 1992; Gabriel *et al.*, 2002; Ruiter & De Graaf, 2006; Van der Meer & Van Ingen, 2009). The sum scores count how many of the twelve sub-types of associations in the ESS the respondent participates in. These sum scores (merely) measure the *variety* of organizations in which respondents are involved, which is evidently not the same as *intensity* of involvement⁷ (c.f. Morales & Geurts, 2007). We therefore prefer the use of a dichotomized variable over the sum scores. The dichotomized variable reports *whether* the respondent is active in any leisure, interest, or activist organization.

We calculated for leisure, interest, and activist organizations *separately* whether the respondent (i) is a member of at least one such voluntary association, (ii) participates actively in at least one such voluntary association, (iii) volunteers for at least one such voluntary association, and/or (iv) donates money to at least one such voluntary association.

Repertoires of Associational Involvement

Many studies focus on membership (e.g., Curtis, Baer & Grabb, 2001; Schofer & Fourcade-Gourinchas, 2001; Van Oorschot & Arts, 2005; Van Oorschot, Arts, & Gelissen, 2006), while others study voluntary work (e.g., Parboteeah, Cullen & Lim, 2004; Ruiter & De Graaf, 2006) or multiple modes of involvement separately (e.g., Gesthuizen, Van der Meer & Scheepers, 2008, 2009; Westholm, Montero & Van Deth, 2007). Two puzzles arise from this approach. First, most of these approaches implicitly consider each mode of involvement as somewhat unrelated to each other, while they in fact may be strongly related (Van der Meer, 2009). In this section, we therefore assess to what extent these modes of involvement may be reduced to a single scale.

Second, we expect that the dominant modes of involvement differ across the types of organization. Putnam (2000) claims that more traditional, leisure organizations are characterized by high levels of active participation and face-to-face contact, whereas more recent, activist organizations are characterized by passive modes of involvement, i.e., 'checkbook members' referring to citizens who are formally member of or donator to an association, but do not engage in activities within that association.

To test this expectation, we assess (i) whether and to what extent there is a unidimensional structure of modes of associational involvement, and (ii) to what extent this structure is similar across types of voluntary associations and (iii) across countries. For that purpose, we perform the Mokken scale or scalogram analysis (Sijtsma & Molenaar, 2002; Van Schuur, 2003) on the four dichotomous items indicating membership, active participation, volunteering, and donating money for the three types of associations and countries separately. Scalogram analysis asserts whether we can combine the four modes of associational involvement in one hierarchical scale, testing whether respondents who engage in less common activities also engage in the more common activities.⁸

First, we ran the Mokken scale analysis on the pooled data set to test the scalability of the items for each type of association separately. The *H*-coefficients of leisure (0.58) and interest (0.60) organizations indicate strong scales. The *H*-coefficient of activist organizations is substantially lower (0.40), but nevertheless implies that the items constitute a weak Mokken scale. As expected, the ordering of the items differs across type of

organization. For leisure organizations we find that membership is the most popular (most prevalent) mode of behaviour, followed by active participation and volunteering, respectively, whereas donating (extra) money is the least popular mode.⁹ For interest organizations, the ordering from most to least popular item is membership, active participation, donation, and volunteering. For activist organizations this ordering is quite different: donation, membership, active participation, and finally volunteering. The donation rate in activist organizations outnumbers their membership rates, whereas donating money is a less common activity for leisure and interest organizations (c.f. Morales & Geurts, 2007).

Next, we tested to what extent these Mokken scales may be used as a cross-nationally equivalent scale. For that purpose, we tested whether these three scales also fit within each of the countries in our data set. With the exception of three countries (Finland, Israel, and Italy) they did. Closer inspection of the data revealed why we could not construct scales for these three countries. In Finland, Israel, and Italy very few respondents checked more than one box for each type of association (c.f. Figure 2(a)–(c)). Although in the questionnaire people could report multiple modes of activity, less than 10% of the Finnish respondents, and approximately 5% of the Israeli and Italian respondents actually classified themselves under more than one header: respondents often classified themselves as *either* a non-participant, a member, an active participant, a donator *or* a volunteer. Consequently, in all three countries, we do find members, as well as volunteers, but hardly any members who are also volunteers. By contrast, in other data sets (World Values Survey, Eurobarometer) we do find multiple modes of associational involvement in Finland, Israel, and Italy. Therefore, it is likely that our findings regarding Finland, Israel, and Italy reflect measurement errors, although no errors had been reported yet online.¹⁰

Finally, we analysed for each country separately which ordering would make an optimized Mokken scale (Table 1). Unsurprisingly, we found that the orderings in most countries are in line with the sequence of items in the scale of the pooled data set. For leisure and interest organizations, the main differences are found in the sequence of the two least popular items: voluntary work and donation of money. Effectively, the proportion of the population that engages in these acts is so small, yet correlates so strongly, that this explains why some countries show slightly different sequences than the dominant pattern.

Interestingly, a more general pattern is found. When we leave out the item ‘donation of money’, the ordering from most popular to least popular items is identical in all types of association in nearly all countries, namely: membership—active participation—voluntary work.¹¹ Apparently, the difficulty of donation of money differs across types of voluntary associations, and to a lesser extent across countries. Donation of money is the least popular mode of behaviour for leisure organizations, the second-least popular item for interest organizations and the most popular item for activist organizations.

In short, the three types of association differ profoundly in the pattern of activities. The scalograms are sufficiently strong for all types. We find no violations of the assumption of monotonicity.¹² We therefore build on the three Mokken scales, each based on four items.

Average Levels of Associational Involvement

Because we assessed that the Mokken scales are cross-nationally equivalent, we may apply them to compare countries. First, we discuss Figure 2(a)–(c), which represent the levels of

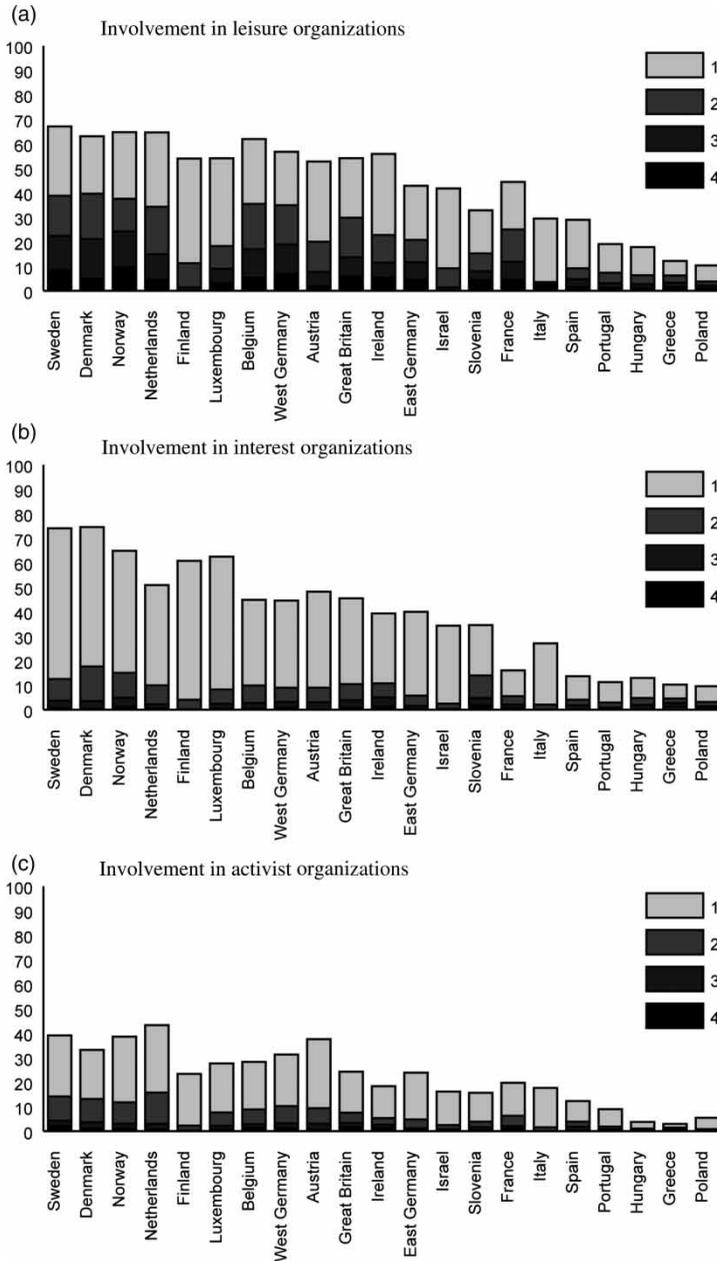


Figure 2. (a) Involvement in leisure organizations (b) Involvement in interest organizations (c) Involvement in activist organizations.

Notes: 1: Respondents who engage in one activity; 2: Respondents who engage in two activities; 3: Respondents who engage in three activities; 4: Respondents who engage in four activities. Mokken scale analysis shows that these scores may also be interpreted as follows: ‘1-2-3-4’ represents, respectively, ‘membership-active participation-volunteering-donating money’ for leisure organizations, membership-active participation-donating money-volunteering for interest organizations, and ‘donating money-membership-active participation-volunteering’ for activist organizations.

Table 1. Scalability of associational involvement items, by type of association, by country

Leisure	Leisure organizations	Interest organizations	Activist organizations
Pooled data set	$H = 0.58$ (MAVD)	$H = 0.60$ (MADV)	$H = 0.40$ (DMAV)
Austria	$H = 0.46$ (MADV)	$H = 0.50$ (MADV)	$H = 0.29$ (DMAV)
Belgium	$H = 0.56$ (MAVD)	$H = 0.48$ (MAVD)	$H = 0.34$ (DMAV)
West Germany	$H = 0.65$ (MAVD)	$H = 0.70$ (MAVD)	$H = 0.47$ (DMAV)
East Germany	$H = 0.63$ (MAVD)	$H = 0.73$ (MAVD)	$H = 0.34$ (DMAV)
Denmark	$H = 0.65$ (MAVD)	$H = 0.62$ (MADV)	$H = 0.46$ (DMAV)
Spain	$H = 0.60$ (MADV)	$H = 0.60$ (MADV)	$H = 0.38$ (DMAV)
Finland	$H = 0.04$ (MAVD)	$H = -0.07$ (MAVD)	$H = 0.06$ (DMAV)
France	$H = 0.60$ (MAVD)	$H = 0.65$ (MADV)	$H = 0.37$ (DMAV)
Great Britain	$H = 0.61$ (MADV)	$H = 0.66$ (MADV)	$H = 0.57$ (DMAV)
Greece	$H = 0.81$ (MADV)	$H = 0.87$ (MADV)	$H = 0.66$ (DMAV)
Hungary	$H = 0.57$ (MAVD)	$H = 0.77$ (MAVD)	$H = 0.28$ (ADVM)
Ireland	$H = 0.56$ (MADV)	$H = 0.68$ (MADV)	$H = 0.52$ (DMAV)
Israel	$H = 0.21$ (MAVD)	$H = 0.22$ (MADV)	$H = 0.19$ (DMAV)
Italy	$H = 0.08$ (MAVD)	$H = 0.04$ (MADV)	$H = 0.02$ (DMAV)
Luxembourg	$H = 0.57$ (MAVD)	$H = 0.56$ (MADV)	$H = 0.45$ (DMAV)
Netherlands	$H = 0.51$ (MAVD)	$H = 0.53$ (MADV)	$H = 0.39$ (DMAV)
Norway	$H = 0.63$ (MAVD)	$H = 0.65$ (MAVD)	$H = 0.38$ (DMAV)
Poland	$H = 0.61$ (MADV)	$H = 0.64$ (MADV)	$H = 0.43$ (DMAV)
Portugal	$H = 0.57$ (MADV)	$H = 0.62$ (MDAV)	$H = 0.37$ (DMAV)
Sweden	$H = 0.59$ (MAVD)	$H = 0.71$ (MAVD)	$H = 0.58$ (DMAV)
Slovenia	$H = 0.48$ (MAVD)	$H = 0.69$ (MDAV)	$H = 0.45$ (DMAV)

Notes: The H -coefficients indicates the strength of the Mokken scale. Between brackets we present the sequence of associational involvement items from the easiest (relatively high percentage of the population participates in this mode) to the most difficult (relatively low percentage of the population participates in this mode). 'M' represents membership of a voluntary association. 'A' represents active participation in the activities deployed by a voluntary association. 'V' represents volunteering for a voluntary association. 'D' represents donating money to a voluntary association.

associational involvement cross-nationally. In these figures, the countries are ordered from left to right based on their overall level of associational involvement (disregarding the typology of voluntary associations).

Although the levels of associational involvement strongly differ cross-nationally, that is not of central interest here (for extensive analyses, see Curtis, Baer & Grabb, 2001; Gesthuizen, Van der Meer & Scheepers, 2008; Pichler & Wallace, 2007; Van der Meer, 2009; Van Oorschot & Arts, 2005). Rather, we are interested in the question to what extent the average levels of participation and the ordering of countries differs between the three types of associations. The figures show that the average levels of involvement indeed differ between the types of organizations: generally (but not in all countries) involvement in leisure organizations is most popular, followed by interest organizations and, lastly, activist organizations. Regarding the ordering of countries, the typology differentiates somewhat better than the overall associational involvement scale. The overall ordering of countries is not so well mirrored in Figure 2(c) in particular. The typology illuminates several country specific patterns: France (relatively high on leisure, relatively low on interest organizations), Austria (relatively high on activist organizations) and the Netherlands (relatively low on interest, relatively high on activist organizations). Yet, to a large extent, the ordering of countries remains similar, and the same groups of countries

have high levels on each of the scales (North-Western Europe) compared with others (Southern and Eastern Europe). In other words, there does not seem to be an urgent reason to distinguish between the three types of voluntary associations if one wants to merely describe cross-national differences.

However, Figure 2(a)–(c) also provides some information on the ratio between active and passive participants across types of associations. On this subject, some claim that at the country level, high membership rates are related to relatively small shares of volunteers (Dekker & Van den Broek, 2005): supposedly, after a certain threshold no more volunteers are required and additional members remain passive. Yet, others conclude that ‘levels of involvement do not appear to be strongly related to the level of activity among those involved’, suggesting that ‘it is safer to conclude that there is no relationship between the two aspects of involvement’ (Morales & Geurts, 2007). Bringing together the findings of the previous sections, we find support for Dekker and Van den Broek (2005) for interest and activist organizations: high membership rates go hand in hand with a high share of passive members. However, for leisure organizations, we find support for Morales and Geurts (2007). This supports the distinction between our three types of association.

Causes and Consequences of Associational Involvement

Finally, we test the relevance of our distinction between the three types of organizations by showing their relations with other relevant factors. If the relations between associational involvement and these factors are not substantially different for the three types of associations, we may consider the typology low on divergent validity. To test this, we focus on two groups of factors: background characteristics (like gender, age, education, and religion) that are generally considered to be determinants of associational involvement (c.f. Halpern, 2005; Putnam, 2000; Van Oorschot & Arts, 2005), and political variables like political action and political trust that are considered to be outcomes of associational involvement (c.f. Maloney, Van Deth, & Roßteutscher, 2008; Van der Meer & Van Ingen, 2009; Van Deth, 2006).

We test these associations in a multivariate hierarchical analysis (Snijders & Bosker, 1999), using the ML-Win 2.0 package. Hierarchical models are needed to take into account the clustered data (respondents live in countries), even if we only focus on individual level associations. In these and subsequent analyses, we left out four countries. Finland, Israel, and Italy are not included in the analyses because the Mokken scales did not fit these countries, which might affect our findings. Finally, Luxembourg is left out of the analysis as it is an outlier on several individual and country level characteristics: in Luxembourg nearly one-third of the respondents are not a citizen of that country, and the level of income is very high.

The distribution of our dependent variables may be considered to be proportional, capturing the number of activities respondents do: the effective number of activities respondents engage in (i.e. 0–4), relative to the total number of activities that respondents could engage in (i.e., 4). Considering this distribution—which is the result of four binomial distributions, we use hierarchical logistic regression: we estimate models (simultaneously at the individual and state level) that report the logit of participating in the three types of organizations. Positive values indicate a higher likelihood of participating civically, negative values a lower likelihood.

Background Characteristics

In Table 2, a large number of background characteristics are related to our three measures of associational involvement. Table 2 shows that the distinction between types of association matters. Some effects (like those of level of education, age, and church attendance) are in the same direction for all types of association, though the strength of the effects differs profoundly. However, for even more determinants, we find opposite effects.

Table 2. Associational involvement and its determinants: background characteristics (logistic regression)

	Any organization	Leisure organization	Interest organization	Activist organization
<i>Individual-level predictors</i>				
Level of education	0.17 (0.01)	0.14 (0.01)	0.14 (0.01)	0.23 (0.01)
Income	0.07 (0.00)	0.07 (0.00)	0.06 (0.01)	0.07 (0.01)
Source of income (profit/salary)				
Pensioned	-0.01 (0.03)	0.15 (0.03)	-0.41 (0.04)	0.09 (0.05)
Unemployed	-0.38 (0.06)	-0.39 (0.07)	-0.49 (0.09)	-0.18 (0.11)
Other social benefit	-0.17 (0.05)	-0.12 (0.06)	-0.59 (0.08)	0.09 (0.08)
Other	0.30 (0.06)	0.31 (0.07)	-0.32 (0.11)	0.42 (0.10)
Age	0.02 (0.00)	0.01 (0.00)	0.08 (0.00)	0.02 (0.00)
Age-squared (/100)	-0.02 (0.00)	-0.01 (0.00)	-0.08 (0.00)	-0.02 (0.00)
Length of residence (decades)	0.02 (0.00)	0.03 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)	-0.03 (0.01)
Urbanization	-0.03 (0.01)	-0.06 (0.01)	-0.02 (0.01)	0.04 (0.01)
Gender (man)				
Woman	-0.18 (0.02)	-0.28 (0.02)	-0.38 (0.02)	0.26 (0.03)
Marital status (married)				
Divorced	0.05 (0.03)	0.01 (0.04)	0.03 (0.04)	0.04 (0.05)
Separated	0.05 (0.06)	0.05 (0.07)	-0.16 (0.09)	-0.06 (0.10)
Widowed	0.04 (0.03)	0.10 (0.04)	-0.23 (0.06)	-0.09 (0.06)
Unmarried	0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.03)	-0.00 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.04)
Household size	-0.01 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)	-0.04 (0.01)	-0.05 (0.02)
Children at home	0.00 (0.02)	-0.09 (0.03)	0.07 (0.03)	0.00 (0.04)
Religion (none)				
Catholic	-0.01 (0.02)	0.04 (0.03)	-0.08 (0.03)	-0.15 (0.04)
Protestant	0.08 (0.04)	0.10 (0.03)	0.07 (0.03)	0.00 (0.04)
Orthodox	-0.12 (0.09)	-0.00 (0.11)	-0.34 (0.14)	-0.52 (0.16)
Other	-0.17 (0.02)	-0.28 (0.06)	-0.22 (0.07)	-0.03 (0.07)
Attendance of religious services	0.15 (0.01)	0.07 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)	0.09 (0.01)
Citizen of country of residence	0.40 (0.05)	0.43 (0.06)	0.38 (0.08)	0.10 (0.08)
Time spent on watching TV	-0.06 (0.00)	-0.06 (0.00)	-0.04 (0.01)	-0.08 (0.01)
Time spent on watching politics on TV	0.05 (0.01)	0.05 (0.01)	0.04 (0.01)	0.08 (0.01)

Notes: Bold figures represent significant effects at the 0.05-level.

With regard to gender, we find that men participate more in leisure and interest organizations, but less in activist organizations than women. Likewise, people from urbanized communities and people who have lived in their community for a short time are more likely to be involved in activist but less likely to be involved in leisure and interest organizations. In other instances, the effects even tend to cancel each other out. When we do not distinguish between types of association, we would expect that being pensioned does not matter for associational involvement, and neither does being Catholic, being Orthodox, household size, having children, and marital status. However, when we do distinguish between leisure, interest, and activist organizations, we find that in fact their effects are relevant.

This means that for (comparative) research on these individual-level relationships, it is important to distinguish between the three types of voluntary association, as compared with an aggregate measure of associational involvement which would cloud these differences in direction and effect size.

Political Involvement

The same can be said for the three measures of political involvement that are often proclaimed to be the outcomes of associational involvement. In Table 3 we modelled the effects of involvement in the three types of voluntary associations on conventional political action (i.e., campaigning, contacting an official etc.), unconventional political action (protesting and consumerism), and trust in parliament. Often, it is said that voluntary organizations function as ‘schools of democracy’ (Morales & Geurts, 2007): through socialization effects citizens obtain more positive attitudes towards politics and a stronger inclination to participate (for overviews and tests of this idea, see Maloney, Van Deth & Roßteutscher, 2008; Van der Meer & Van Ingen, 2009; Van Deth, 2006). Theoretically, there are (opposing) claims that the type of association matters for this social spiral effect. According to Putnam (2000), face-to-face contact in horizontal organizations is most important. Others find that more politicized associations like the interest and activist

Table 3. Associational involvement and its supposed outcomes: political outcomes

	Conventional political action	Unconventional political action	Trust in parliament
Model A			
Any organization	0.38 (0.01)	0.34 (0.01)	0.09 (0.01)
Model B			
Leisure organizations	0.22 (0.01)	0.17 (0.01)	0.06 (0.01)
Interest organizations	0.35 (0.02)	0.31 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)
Activist organizations	0.42 (0.02)	0.61 (0.02)	0.12 (0.02)

Notes: Logistic hierarchical regression analysis. Bold figures represent significant effects at the 0.05-level. Models are controlled for: gender, age, age-squared, income, education, length of residence, household size, urbanization of the community, income source, marital status, having children, citizenship, church attendance, denomination (not displayed).

organizations would be most inductive to political participation and political trust (e.g. Armingeon, 2007).

Indeed, in Table 3, we find that our distinction between types of organizations illuminates much that otherwise would have remained clouded. Activist organizations are far more strongly related to trust in parliament, conventional political action, and especially to unconventional political action than interest and leisure organizations. Again, we find support that a distinction in types of association matters.¹³

Conclusion

This article presented a typology of voluntary associations, based on previous theoretical and empirical studies, considering the primary aims of the potentially endless list of voluntary associations. We distinguished between *leisure organizations* (which are primarily recreational), *interest organizations* (which primarily defend members' interests), and *activist organizations* (which primarily advocate broad, societal interests). Our analyses showed that the distinction between types of association is highly relevant. First, the Mokken scale analysis showed that the repertoire of activities differs across the three types. Donating money is a rather uncommon activity in leisure (and to a lesser extent, interest) organizations, but the dominant mode of involvement in activist organizations. Yet, within each type of organization, the different forms of involvement may be reduced to a similar single hierarchical scale. These measures are cross-nationally equivalent in all countries under study, except for three. Second, although associational involvement rates differ strongly across countries and across types of association, the relative ranking of countries does not differ much across type of organization. Yet, the ratio between absolute involvement rate and the share of volunteers in these organizations does differ across the type of organization: for interest and activist organizations (but not for leisure organizations) the share of volunteers drops, when the absolute involvement rate grows. Third, the three types of associations are differently related to the (supposed) causes and consequences of associational involvement. In some cases, opposite effects would even cancel each other out when we do not distinguish between leisure, interest, and activist organizations. Women, for instance, are less likely to participate in leisure and interest organizations than men, but more likely to participate in activist organizations. Similarly, activist organizations are more strongly related to political participation and political trust than leisure and interest organizations.

The distinction between leisure, interest, and activist organizations has significant, substantial, and theoretically relevant outcomes. This study shows that previously undifferentiated (null) findings should be carefully reconsidered. We need to treat civil society not as an undifferentiated monolith, but as a complex sphere of associations with different aims and different needs. Citizens do not simply join any association; they join an association to which they are attracted. They do not engage in similar activities in all associations; different types of associations have need for different forms of involvement. To understand associational involvement, it becomes imperative to study characteristics of individual citizens and characteristics of the associations synchronously. The combination of individual incentives and resources and organizational aims and needs offers a good starting point for this theoretical and empirical refinement.

Notes

1. Although this approach is strong in its theoretical argumentation, its weakness is the lack of empirical foundation.
2. This empirical approach starts from the questionable assumption that members of any organization are likely to become members of similar organizations (e.g., chess players would also embark on playing checkers) which seems doubtful (Van der Meer, 2009).
3. The typology of Maloney and Roßteutscher is more refined than the one we propose: they distinguish two types of leisure organizations (around family concerns and around leisure concerns), two types of political organizations (around 'old' politics and around 'new' politics), and three types of market organizations (around general welfare, around group-specific welfare and around traditional socio-economic interest representation).
4. The large number of measures in the ESS is not even extraordinary for recent cross-national survey research in this field. The unofficial record holder is the CID with four types of involvement in 27 (!) types of organization, leading to 108 measures.
5. From the 12 types of voluntary associations we leave out political parties and religious/church organizations. We consider participation in a political party as political rather than civic participation, as it falls under the label of 'legal activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they take' (Verba, Nie & Kim, 1978). Political parties are professionalized campaigning parties, rather than the mass parties of before (Katz & Mair, 1994). Participation in religious and church organizations is left out as 'church membership (...) may be somewhat less "voluntary" than other types of association involvement, even though most adults are formally free to change church memberships and sometimes do' (Curtis, Grabb & Baer, 1992; see also Van Oorschot & Arts, 2005).
6. This typology is based on the primary concern of these voluntary associations. We do not support this form of data reduction with factor analysis (see paragraph 2 of this article).
7. Suppose we have two respondents. Respondent A is a member of no less than six sport clubs. Respondent B is a member of one sport club and one cultural club. Although respondent A has the most memberships, respondent B would score higher (i.e., '2') than respondent A (i.e., '1'). Although it is sometimes used as such, the sum scores simply do not measure intensity but merely variety of civic participation (c.f. Morales & Geurts, 2007).
8. In this case with four items, there would be five correct orderings in the Mokken scale procedure. From the most common activity to the least common activity these correct orderings are: 0000, 1000, 1100, 1110, and 1111. A score of, for instance, 1010 would violate the rule that people who engage in a less common activity also engage in all more common activities. These violations are reflected in the H-coefficient, in which scores of 0.30 to 0.40 reflect a weak scale, and scores higher than 0.50 reflect strong scales.
9. Consequently, the score of 0 represents no involvement, 1 represents membership, 2 represents membership and active participation, 3 represents membership and active participation and volunteering, 4 represents membership and active participation and volunteering and donation of money.
10. Probably the respondents in Finland, Israel, and Italy classified themselves under the header that fits them best (f.i. either a member, or a volunteer), whereas the respondents in the other countries in the ESS data set reported for each type of activity whether they participated in that manner or not (f.i. both active as a member and as a volunteer). These differences may in turn be caused by translation, instruction or interpretation differences.
11. The three exceptions to this rule are activist organizations in Hungary, The Netherlands, and Slovenia.
12. A test on monotone homogeneity implies that if the value of the latent variable increases, the probability of a positive response to the item also increases. A stricter test is the one on double monotonicity, implying that the item response functions do not intersect. In case this assumption holds, it implies that the order of the manifest probabilities reflects an ordering of items according to their popularity that is uniform across sub-groups, i.e., countries in our case (Sijtsma & Meijer, 1992; Sijtsma & Molenaar, 2002).
13. Moreover, additional analyses show that these differences in effect sizes are stable across countries. The types of organizations do not have exactly the same effect on political action, but at least the same relative importance cross-nationally.

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