



# Which Voluntary Organizations Function as Schools of Democracy? Civic Engagement in Voluntary Organizations and Political Participation

Cheon Lee<sup>1</sup>

© International Society for Third-Sector Research 2020

**Abstract** Voluntary organizations have been praised as “schools of democracy” that promote citizens’ political participation. The neo-Tocquevillian approach argues that civic engagement in voluntary organizations facilitates higher levels of political participation. However, empirical studies on the theory have been inconclusive. One possible reason for this is the heterogeneity of voluntary organizations and of political participation. This paper explores the relationship between the civic engagement and political participation of U.S. respondents to the World Values Survey. The results show that only certain types of voluntary organizations facilitate certain types of political participation. Voluntary organizations that pursue social missions are more likely to facilitate political participation. Active civic engagement is more strongly associated with political participation, but passive civic engagement can also promote political participation in some organizations.

**Keywords** Civic engagement · Political participation · Democracy · Voluntary organizations

## Introduction

Alexis de Tocqueville (1840[2012]) saw voluntary organizations as key actors strengthening democracy in America. Following Tocqueville’s emphasis on the role of voluntary organizations in democracy, the neo-Tocquevillian approach regards voluntary organizations as “schools

of democracy” that allow members to acquire civic skills and build trust which leads to a higher level of political participation (Dodge and Ospina 2016; Verba et al. 1995). The neo-Tocquevillian approach has gained popularity in the last few decades (Howard and Gilbert 2008; Jeong 2013; Putnam 1995; Van Stekelenburg et al. 2016; Verba et al. 1995). The approach claims that civic engagement in voluntary organizations can foster a higher level of political participation. As members *actively* interact with others within voluntary organizations, they learn and practice communication skills, understand diverse opinions, and build trust in others. With the skills and resources acquired from civic engagement, members then become more likely to participate in politics. Thus, voluntary organizations can lead citizens to engage in broader political participation (Dodge and Ospina 2016; Jeong 2013; Verba et al. 1995).

To examine the arguments of the neo-Tocquevillian approach, the literature has focused on the scope of civic engagement, the intensity of civic engagement, and the socialization mechanism. However, empirical findings from the literature are inconclusive. Some have shown a positive relationship between civic engagement in voluntary organizations and political participation (Fung 2003; Han 2016; Jeong 2013; Kløver 2004), and others have reported a negative relationship or no relationship (Newton et al. 2018; Zmerli and Newton 2007). The literature also shows contrasting findings about the importance of active civic engagement (Alexander et al. 2010; Li and Zhang 2017; Newton 1997; Van Der Meer and Van Ingen 2009). The inconclusive findings may stem from the heterogeneity of voluntary organizations and political participation. Studies have yet to consider the characteristics of diverse types of voluntary organizations and types of political participation. As there are so many types of organizations, researchers have tried to categorize them into a few groups

✉ Cheon Lee  
c11105@scarletmail.rutgers.edu

<sup>1</sup> School of Public Affairs and Administration, Rutgers University, Newark, USA

and compare them (Alexander et al. 2010; Van Der Meer and Van Ingen 2009; Van Stekelenburg et al. 2016). In such cases, it is difficult to compare voluntary organizations that are categorized together, especially when many types are included in one category. For instance, voluntary organizations in the same category may facilitate different types of political participation (Jeong 2013; LeRoux 2007; Wallman Lundåsen 2015).

This study examines how civic engagement in voluntary organizations influences political participation. Specifically, this study plans to show whether civic engagement in each type of voluntary organization influences different types of political participation. It examines the influence of the scope of civic engagement and the intensity of civic engagement in terms of passive and active engagement. This study expects that the intensity of civic engagement (both active and passive) positively influences political participation, but that not all voluntary organizations will show the expected relationship. Furthermore, it expects that civic engagement only facilitates certain modes of political participation. This study is based on U.S. responses to the World Values Survey, which measures civic engagement in nine types of voluntary organizations through five modes of political participation. The survey provides rich data to measure the intensity and the scope of civic engagement.

The results reveal positive relationships between civic engagement in voluntary organizations and political participation. For each mode of political participation, civic engagement in six out of nine types of voluntary organizations is positively associated with political participation. The scope of civic engagement does not influence political participation when the intensity of civic engagement is considered at the same time. The positive relationship between passive engagement and political participation is only found in a few cases, implying that active civic engagement is an essential condition for facilitating political participation. This study contributes to the existing literature by showing how civic engagement in various types of voluntary organizations influences different modes of political participation.

## Theoretical Framework

### Civic Engagement in Voluntary Organizations and Political Participation

Voluntary organizations play a vital role in connecting citizens and the democratic political system. From the seminal writing of Alexis de Tocqueville (1840[2012]), *Democracy in America*, voluntary organizations have been acclaimed as “schools of democracy” that strengthen a

democratic society (Dodge and Ospina 2016). De Tocqueville viewed voluntary organizations in America as “political schools that can be considered as great free schools, where citizens come to learn the general theory of associations” (de Tocqueville 1840[2012], p. 914). He witnessed Americans forming and engaging in voluntary organizations to provide public goods and participate in politics.

Americans of all ages, of all conditions, of all minds, constantly unite. Not only do they have commercial and industrial associations in which they all take part, but also they have a thousand other kinds: religious, moral, intellectual .... Americans associate to celebrate holidays, establish seminaries, build inns, erect churches, distribute books, send missionaries to the Antipodes; in this way they create hospitals, prisons, schools (de Tocqueville 1840[2012], p. 896).

Almond and Verba (1963) have identified that civic engagement in voluntary organizations has a positive relationship with political participation in their book, *The Civic Culture*. Putnam’s (1993, 1995, 2000) works have also inspired scholars to explore the positive relationship between civic engagement and political participation, and this line of research emphasizing the positive relationship is often regarded as “the neo-Tocquevillian approach.” While de Tocqueville (1840[2012]) insisted that voluntary organizations will give away their roles to the government as the tasks of government increase, the neo-Tocquevillian approach argues that voluntary organizations serve as “civic intermediaries,” bridging citizens and government by facilitating citizens’ political participation (LeRoux 2007).

The key internal mechanism of facilitating political participation is providing opportunities for *civic engagement*, defined as “formal and informal, individual and collective activities that build social capital to address public issues” (Schein 1977, p. 3). By becoming members of voluntary organizations, citizens experience organizational socialization, “the process by which an individual acquires the social knowledge and skills necessary to assume an organizational role” (Schein 1977, p. 3). During the process, voluntary organizations provide opportunities to acquire political resources (Verba et al. 1995), to learn civic skills such as organizing meetings or giving presentations (Brady et al. 1995), build essential networks and opportunities for mobilization (Verba et al. 1993), develop feelings of efficacy from the activities (Howard and Gilbert 2008), and build social trust by interacting with other members that create organizational contexts to facilitate activism or participation (Han 2016). Activities provided by voluntary organizations determine the success of the socialization process because “associational activity

generates social interaction that facilitates and promotes cooperative behavior” (Armony 2004, p. 25). With these political resources, citizens become more likely to participate in politics, and thus voluntary organizations improve democracy as their members can participate in a broader political world, the external effect of civic engagement (Ayala 2000; Fung 2003).

Empirical studies in the literature support the neo-Tocquevillian approach in general (Almond and Verba 1963; Dodge and Ospina 2016; Fung 2003; Howard and Gilbert 2008; Jeong 2013; Li and Zhang 2017; Verba et al. 1993). These studies show a positive relationship between civic engagement and political participation. However, this romantic view of the neo-Tocquevillian approach has often been challenged by scholars (King and Griffin 2019; Van Der Meer and Van Ingen 2009; Van Deth et al. 2007). Those who question the approach have pointed out that the approach is “too optimistic” (Armony 2004) and “uncritically assumes” that civic activism is inherent in voluntary organizations (Dodge and Ospina 2016). There have been studies revealing that voluntary organizations do not enhance political tolerance toward other groups (Torpe 2003), that they promote inequalities among members (Schlozman et al. 2013), and that they do not foster social trust (Armingeon 2007; Hooghe and Stolle 2003; Newton et al. 2018; Zmerli and Newton 2007). However, the inconsistent findings in the literature do not deny the importance of civic engagement in voluntary organizations and their roles in facilitating political participation. In fact, such findings may imply that civic engagement is a multifaceted phenomenon (Van Stekelenburg et al. 2016) due to the heterogeneity of voluntary organizations and of political participation. It would be not cost-efficient or effective for voluntary organizations to promote all modes of political participation. Based on their missions and purposes, voluntary organizations are likely to focus on certain modes of political participation in accordance with their capabilities. Thus, voluntary organizations are good at facilitating certain modes of political participation by being schools of democracy. To explore this complex phenomenon, this study aims to empirically examine key aspects of the neo-Tocquevillian approach and identify variations in the relationship between civic engagement and political participation.

### Types of Political Participation

In a democratic system, there are multiple ways to take part in politics, from an institutionalized type of participation like voting to a noninstitutionalized type such as demonstrating or boycotting. These types of political participation require different levels of effort and resources from participants (Verba et al. 1995). Nonetheless, the literature on

the neo-Tocquevillian approach has not yet paid much attention to the differences among types of political participation or between specific modes within a type. Voluntary organizations socialize their members, but their efforts may only facilitate certain types of political participation (Jeong 2013; LeRoux 2007; Van Stekelenburg et al. 2016; Wallman Lundåsen 2015). As voluntary organizations face resource restraints, they may promote certain types of political participation rather than promoting all types. For instance, some organizations may promote voting, which is an institutionalized type of participation, while others, such as consumer groups or labor unions, may focus on modes such as boycotts and strikes that are noninstitutional and have more specific purposes. LeRoux (2007) has shown that civic engagement in community organizations facilitates voting and contacting public officials, while Wallman Lundåsen (2015) found that civic engagement has a positive relationship only with contacting local elites. Such findings imply that voluntary organizations may be schools of democracy that foster specific types of political participation in accordance with their purposes and circumstances. Thus, it is necessary to identify whether the relationship between civic engagement in voluntary organizations and political participation differs by the types of political participation. This study categorizes five modes of political participation into three types based on the studies of Van Deth (2014) and van Stekelenburg et al. (2016): *institutional* (voting in national elections), *noninstitutional and individualized* (signing a petition and joining boycotts), and *noninstitutional and collective* (joining peaceful demonstrations and strikes).

### Types of Voluntary Organizations

There are numerous types of voluntary organizations with different purposes and characteristics, but few studies have sought to identify which types are most effective in stimulating political participation. Due to the heterogeneity of voluntary organizations and political participation, the relationship between civic engagement and political participation may not show a uniform pattern. The neo-Tocquevillian approach emphasizes the importance of non-political settings in voluntary organizations, but it has not been clear about *which types* are better at facilitating political participation (Almond and Verba 1963; Newton 1997; Putnam 1995; Verba et al. 1995). Empirical findings from the literature show that there are significant variations, and not all types promote democracy (Alexander et al. 2010; Armingeon 2007; Jeong 2013; Van Der Meer and Van Ingen 2009; Van Stekelenburg et al. 2016). Civic engagement in organizations that pursue social missions or members’ interests tend to show a strong positive

relationship with political participation, while the relationship for non-political organizations is much weaker and less significant (Armingeon 2007; Van Der Meer and Van Ingen 2009; Van Stekelenburg et al. 2016). This study aims to identify which types organizations are indeed serve as schools of democracy by examining civic engagement in nine types of voluntary organizations.

### Scope of Civic Engagement

As there are numerous voluntary organizations with different purposes, citizens are often members of multiple voluntary organizations for various reasons. Naturally, scholars have paid attention to the scope of civic engagement, often measured by “the number of affiliations to which one belongs” (Li and Zhang 2017), which assumes that a wider scope of civic engagement is associated with higher levels of political participation (Alexander et al. 2010; Li and Zhang 2017; Teorell 2003; Wollebæk and Strømsnes 2008). Being engaged in different types of voluntary organizations can, even with passive involvement, provide bridging social capital among people in different groups and promote more political participation (Teorell 2003). Those who engage in a wider scope can acquire knowledge of various political and social issues, interact with people from different groups with diverse interests and backgrounds, and become more likely to participate in politics.

Findings from studies converge into a positive relationship between the scope of civic engagement in voluntary organizations and political participation (Alexander et al. 2010; Jeong 2013; Li and Zhang 2017; Wallman Lundåsen 2015; Wollebæk and Strømsnes 2008). Wallman Lundåsen (2015) found the average number of voluntary associations of local residents was positively related to contacting local elites in a Swedish community. This study expects a positive relationship between the scope of civic engagement and political participation.

### The Intensity of Civic Engagement

When citizens engage in voluntary organizations, not everyone engages enthusiastically. Some are very active and engage in activities every week. Those who are inactive may engage a few times a year or just pay membership fees. The intensity of civic engagement, how actively an individual engages in voluntary organizations, is a crucial aspect of meaningful civic engagement. For the neo-Tocquevillian approach, members’ active engagement in voluntary organizations is a prerequisite for the organizations to perform their socializing function to facilitate political participation. For citizens to experience meaningful interactions and communication among members of voluntary

organizations, active civic engagement is necessary. When citizens are actively engaged in voluntary organizations, they can acquire political resources required for political participation from face-to-face interactions, and eventually show higher levels of political participation (Almond and Verba 1963; Brady et al. 1995; Howard and Gilbert 2008; Li and Zhang 2017). In highly formalized organizations such as mailing list organizations or large nonprofits that provide “checkbook” memberships, members seldom have such opportunities to interact with other members for communication and deliberation, as the organizations tend to be hierarchical and undemocratic (Putnam 1995, 2000). Hence, the neo-Tocquevillian approach argues that passive membership or inactive civic engagement is insufficient for stimulating political participation, and, further, those who are not actively engaged are the same as nonmembers.

The relative importance of the scope and intensity of civic engagement has also attracted attention from scholars. The literature shows that the scope of civic engagement is more strongly related to political participation than the intensity of civic engagement (Alexander et al. 2010; Li and Zhang 2017). According to the studies, a wider scope of engagement can stimulate interest in diverse issues, which will eventually lead to more participation related to those issues. On the other hand, those who are actively engaged in a small number of organizations may have a deeper understanding of specific social issues and would be more likely to participate in political activities. Given that citizens require time and political resources for political participation, it would be difficult to participate in political activities promoted by several organizations at the same time. Thus, this study expects that the intensity of civic engagement is more strongly related to political participation than the scope of civic engagement.

There is no consensus in the literature about the necessity of active engagement. Many have questioned the necessity of active engagement, arguing that there is “no additional effect of face-to-face contact” compared to inactive civic engagement (Maloney 1999; Van Der Meer and Van Ingen 2009; Warren 2001; Wollebæk and Selle 2003; Wollebæk and Strømsnes 2008). These studies have a common finding in that passive engagement is associated with much higher levels of political participation than no engagement. Maloney (1999, pp. 116–117) has emphasized that “passive checkbook membership has allowed more people to participate in organizations, which is better than no participation at all, and creates a sense of community even if members never meet face to face.” Similarly, in their study of associational activity in Norway, Wollebæk and Selle (2003, p. 84) also argued that “there is nothing in the data to suggest that active participation, compared with passive, broadens social networks or strengthens civic engagement.” These empirical findings may imply that voluntary organizations do not foster social

capital among members as Putnam (1993, 1995) and others have insisted, but rather *institutionalize* social capital (Wollebæk and Strømsnes 2008). As Almond and Verba (1963) identified that passive membership was meaningful in terms of fostering political participation more than a half century ago, it is necessary to examine empirically whether active civic engagement is indeed required to facilitate political participation. Even without active membership, citizens can still acquire knowledge and skills without face-to-face interaction given that now they have more ways to communicate with others. This study expects that both passive and active civic engagement can facilitate political participation.

## Data and Method

### Data Source

To explore the relationship between civic engagement in voluntary organizations and political participation, this study uses the data of U.S. respondents to the 6th wave of the World Values Survey (WVS) conducted between 2010 and 2014. The WVS used an internet panel designed by Knowledge Networks to recruit participants. The panel consists of approximately 50,000 adult participants recruited through national random sampling. WVS selected a nationally representative sample of U.S. adults (18 and older) from the panel. The sample is a probability-based sample that recruited participants using a statistically valid sampling method with a published sample frame of residential addresses that covers approximately 97% of U.S. households. The sampling method used an equal probability sample design with post-stratification weight, a Spanish-language base weight and WVS-specific post-stratification weight.<sup>1</sup> A small pretest was conducted to verify the accuracy of the data. Out of 3150 people invited to participate from the panel, 2232 completed the survey. The participation rate was 70.86%. From the 2232 surveys, those with any missing data were dropped, leaving 2007 as the final sample size.

### Dependent Variables

This study measures three types of political participation (*institutional*, *noninstitutional and individualized*, and *noninstitutional and collective*) which include five modes. The dependent variable for institutional participation is voting, an ordinal variable measured by a survey item asking whether respondents “always,” “usually” or “never” vote in national level elections (0 = never,

1 = usually, 2 = always). The dependent variables for noninstitutional and individualized participation were measured by two survey items asking how many times respondents signed a petition or joined in a boycott in the last year. Lastly, the dependent variables for noninstitutional and collective participation were measured by two survey items asking how many times respondents participated in peaceful demonstrations or strikes. Previous studies have created summative scales to measure political participation (Howard and Gilbert 2008; Li and Zhang 2017; Van Der Meer and Van Ingen 2009; Van Stekelenburg et al. 2016; Wollebæk and Strømsnes 2008). However, a summative scale to measure political participation ignores the heterogeneous characteristics of political participation. For instance, joining strikes requires more time and energy than signing a petition, and not many voluntary organizations would promote joining a strike besides labor unions. Thus, this study plans to measure the relationship between civic engagement and political participation without creating a summative scale.

### The Scope of Civic Engagement

The scope of civic engagement in voluntary organizations is usually measured by an individual’s membership status (Armingeon 2007; Van Der Meer and Van Ingen 2009; Van Stekelenburg et al. 2016). An individual with memberships in several types of voluntary organization can be said to possess a broader scope of civic engagement compared to an individual with membership in one or two types. To measure the scope of civic engagement, this study creates a summative index measuring an individual’s membership status in nine types of voluntary organizations. The WVS asked respondents whether they were “active members,” “inactive members,” or “nonmembers” of the nine types. Nine binary variables were created based on the membership status (1 = active or inactive member, 0 = nonmember). Then, the variables were added to create one summative index ranging from 0 (narrow scope) to 9 (wide scope).

### The Types of Voluntary Organization and the Intensity of Civic Engagement

Voluntary organizations are quite different from one another in terms of their purposes and characteristics. It is reasonable to anticipate that not all voluntary organizations serve as schools of democracy and that some are better schools than others. There are studies that have categorized them into leisure, interest, and activist types (Van Der Meer and Van Ingen 2009; Van Stekelenburg et al. 2016), or into advocacy and social groups (Alexander et al. 2010). This study aims to examine the relationship between civic

<sup>1</sup> For more information about the survey, please refer to: <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV6.jsp>.

engagement and political participation without categorizing voluntary organizations and creating index variables, thus making it possible to capture differences between voluntary organizations that might have been grouped together.

The intensity of civic engagement has been measured in various ways, such as active and passive membership (Putnam 1995; Van Stekelenburg et al. 2016), the number of activities or volunteer tasks (Howard and Gilbert 2008; Li and Zhang 2017; Van Der Meer and Van Ingen 2009; Wollebæk and Strømsnes 2008), or the number of hours spent each year on activities provided by organizations (Alexander et al. 2010). As mentioned above, intensity is measured by items asking whether respondents are active, inactive, or nonmembers of nine types of voluntary organizations. Thus, intensity is an ordinal variable based on active and passive membership.

### Control Variables

Citizens with more socio-economic resources (SES) are more likely to participate in politics (Brady et al. 1995). Education and income are the two most important SES factors influencing political participation. Education enhances citizens' political interest and their civic skills (Brady et al. 1995). Those with high educational attainment are more likely to have jobs that provide greater opportunities to develop and exercise the civic skills, communication, and organizational capacities essential to participation. Education is measured as an ordinal variable based on the level of respondent's education from 1 (no formal education) to 4 (university level). Income is measured by an item asking the respondents to rank their income level using a ten-point Likert scale from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest). Political interest is a well-known factor that is positively related with political participation (Brady et al. 1995). It was measured with one item rating political interest from 1 (not at all) to 4 (very interested). Religious affiliation, age, gender, and ethnicity are also included in the analysis as control variables. Religious affiliation (whether a respondent is religious, 1 = yes and 0 = no), gender (0 = male, 1 = female), and ethnicity (0 = non-white, 1 = white) were coded as binary variables. Age was grouped into four categories (0 = under 30, 1 = 30 s or 40 s, 2 = 50 s or 60 s, and 3 = 70 s or older).

### Statistical Models

Voting for national elections is an ordinal variable, so an ordered logistic regression model is used. As the other four modes of political participation are count variables, negative binomial regression models are used. Because these four dependent variables are count variables with discrete

and nonnegative properties, it would be problematic to use the traditional ordinary least squares (OLS) method for this analysis (Smith 2009). An alternative method is to use a Poisson model, with the assumption that the conditional mean and the variance of the event occurring are equal (Smith 2009). In other words, there should be no overdispersion of the count variable, meaning that the variance should not be greater than the conditional mean. However, Table 1 shows that the four count dependent variables have standard deviations greater than their means, which implies that Poisson regression might also not be an appropriate model. In a such case, it is appropriate to use a negative binomial regression model.

## Results

### Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 reports the descriptive statistics of the dependent variables. According to Table 1, 64% of respondents answered that they always vote in national elections. Voting can be regarded as an institutionalized type of political participation since only 17% of respondents responded that they never vote in national elections. On average, respondents participated the most in signing petitions, followed by joining boycotts, attending peaceful demonstrations and joining strikes. As attending demonstrations and joining strikes are collective type of political participation that require time and resources to plan and gather participants, the averages are lower than those of individualized types of participation. For all four noninstitutional types of political participation, the standard deviations are greater than the means and all negative binomial regression models show an alpha greater than zero, which implies overdispersion of the variables.

**Table 1** Political participation by type

	Never	Usually	Always
<i>Institutional type: voting (%)</i>			
National level	17	19	64
		Mean	SD
<i>Noninstitutional and individualized type</i>			
Signing a petition		0.83	1.18
Joining in boycotts		0.18	0.62
<i>Noninstitutional and collective type</i>			
Attending peaceful demonstrations		0.14	0.55
Joining strikes		0.03	0.27

Table 2 shows the scope of respondents' civic engagement and the intensity of their civic engagement by the types of voluntary organizations. On average, respondents were members of 2.28 types of voluntary organizations. For church or religious organizations 64% percentage of respondents replied that they were members, and of those, 37% responded that they were active members. Besides church and religious organizations, humanitarian or charitable organizations had the highest rates of membership; 31% of respondents said that they were members of humanitarian or charitable organizations. Overall, the high rates of nonmembership for most types of voluntary organizations show an overall decline in associational membership (Putnam 2000). With the decline of associational membership, voluntary organizations may not perform their role as schools of democracy.

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics of the control variables. More than half (59%) of respondents received a university-level education and 98% of respondents received education above secondary school. More than half of the respondents (54%) thought that they belonged to middle income groups (income levels 4 to 6). Respondents showed moderate levels of political interest with a mean of 2.67. 68% of respondents considered themselves to be religious people. The largest age group was 50 s and 60 s (40%), followed by 30 s and 40 s (31%). There were slightly more women (52%) than men (48%). In terms of ethnicity, 73% of the respondents were White, which is similar to the percentage of Whites in the 2016 U.S Census data (77%).

### The Scope and Intensity of Civic Engagement by Types of Voluntary Organization

Table 4 presents five models with the scope of civic engagement and Table 5 shows the five models with the intensity of civic engagement in nine types of voluntary organizations included as independent variables. According to Table 4, the scope of civic engagement is positively associated with political participation in all five models. Surprisingly, according to Table 5, the scope of civic engagement is no longer statistically significant in any of the five models when the intensity of civic engagement is considered, contradicting previous findings in the literature. Also, the relationship between civic engagement and political participation varies across types of voluntary organizations and types of political participation. The Brant test for the ordered logistic regression model has a  $p$  value greater than 0.05 (0.420), which means that the model is not violating the parallel regression assumption. For voting, civic engagement in church or religious organizations, civic engagement in environmental organizations, and civic engagement in humanitarian or charitable organizations are positively associated with voting and statistically significant. For a one unit increase in civic engagement in environmental organizations, the odds of "always" versus the combined "usually" and "never" categories are 1.70 times greater, given the other variables are held constant in the model ( $p < 0.01$ ). Civic engagement in church or religious organizations is also positively associated with voting (Odds-Ratio: 1.31,  $p < 0.001$ ), revealing that non-political organizations can also promote institutional type political participation.

As the four models for noninstitutional participation use negative binomial regression models, the incidence rate ratio (IRR) is calculated by exponentiating the coefficient

**Table 2** The scope and intensity of civic engagement in voluntary organizations

Organization type	Intensity of engagement (%)				
	Not a member	Inactive member	Active member		
Church or religious	36	27	37		
Sport or recreational	73	12	15		
Art, music or educational	77	11	12		
Labor union	84	9	7		
Environmental	82	13	5		
Professional association	72	15	13		
Humanitarian or charitable	69	15	16		
Consumer organization	89	8	3		
Self-help, mutual aid group	88	7	5		
	Observations	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Scope	2007	2.28	2.08	0	9

**Table 3** Descriptive statistics of control variables

Variable name	Frequency	Percentage		
<i>Control variables</i>				
<i>Education</i>				
No education	8	0		
Primary	32	2		
Secondary	787	39		
Univ. level	1180	59		
<i>Income level</i>				
1 to 3	395	20		
4 to 6	1095	54		
7 to 10	517	26		
Observations	Mean	SD	Min	Max
<i>Political interest</i>				
2007	2.67	0.95	1	4
	Frequency	Percentage		
<i>Religious affiliation</i>				
Not religious	645	32		
Religious	1362	68		
<i>Age</i>				
Under 30	350	17		
30–40 s	630	31		
50–60 s	806	40		
Over 70	221	11		
<i>Gender</i>				
Male	970	48		
Female	1037	52		
<i>Ethnicity</i>				
Nonwhite	541	27		
White	1466	73		

to better understand the results. For signing a petition, civic engagement in art, music or educational organizations (IRR: 1.12,  $p < 0.05$ ), civic engagement in environmental organizations (IRR: 1.41,  $p < 0.001$ ), and civic engagement in humanitarian or charitable organizations (IRR: 1.13,  $p < 0.05$ ) are positively related and statistically significant. Holding all other variables constant, a one-unit increase in civic engagement in environmental organizations increases the expected ratio of signing a petition by 41% ( $p < 0.001$ ). Although art, music and educational organizations are non-political organizations, the results show that they can also facilitate noninstitutionalized participation. Among control variables, education (IRR: 1.45,  $p < 0.01$ ), political interest (IRR: 1.51,  $p < 0.001$ ), and age (IRR: 1.21,  $p < 0.01$ ) are statistically significant and positively associated with signing a petition. Whites are

statistically more likely to sign a petition than Nonwhites (IRR: 1.25,  $p < 0.01$ ). Interestingly, those with a higher income are less likely to sign a petition (IRR: 0.96,  $p < 0.05$ ). It seems reasonable that signing a petition does not require a significant amount of money, and their financial resources may allow higher-income respondents to participate in other ways that they prefer. For joining in boycotts, civic engagement in environmental organizations (IRR: 1.74,  $p < 0.001$ ), civic engagement in humanitarian or charitable organizations (IRR: 1.43,  $p < 0.01$ ), and civic engagement in self-help and mutual aid groups (IRR: 1.50,  $p < 0.05$ ) are statistically significant. However, civic engagement in sports or recreational organizations is negatively affecting joining in boycotts. A one-unit increase in civic engagement in sport or recreational organizations decreases the expected ratio of joining in boycotts by 24% ( $p < 0.05$ ). Education (IRR: 1.78,  $p < 0.001$ ) and political interest (IRR: 2.02,  $p < 0.001$ ) are strong indicators for joining in boycotts.

For attending peaceful demonstrations, civic engagement in art, music or educational organizations (IRR: 1.80,  $p < 0.001$ ), civic engagement in environmental organizations (IRR: 1.75,  $p < 0.01$ ), and civic engagement in self-help and mutual aid groups (IRR: 1.66,  $p < 0.01$ ) show positive relationships. Political interest is positively associated with attending peaceful demonstrations (IRR: 2.10,  $p < 0.001$ ), whereas religious affiliation shows a negative relationship with attending peaceful demonstrations (IRR: 0.89,  $p < 0.05$ ). Females are expected to have 0.68 times lower cases of attending peaceful demonstration than males (IRR: 0.68,  $p < 0.05$ ), and Whites are expected to have 0.56 times lower cases of attending peaceful demonstration than Nonwhites (IRR: 0.56,  $p < 0.01$ ) are statistically negative. Lastly, for joining strikes, only civic engagement in labor unions is positively associated (IRR: 3.07,  $p < 0.001$ ).

The analysis of the five models reveals that the relationship between civic engagement in voluntary organizations and political participation varies by type of voluntary organization and by type of political participation. Civic engagement in six out of nine types (church or religious organizations, arts, music or educational organizations, environmental organizations, humanitarian or charitable organizations, self-help and mutual aid groups, and labor unions) have a positive relationship with at least one type of political participation. Across the five models, art, culture or educational organizations, environmental organizations, and humanitarian or charitable organizations show positive relationships between civic engagement and political participation. These organizations pursue social missions and try to find solutions for political issues. Thus, these organizations are directly engaged with political issues. As they seek to address political issues, they are



**Table 4** The relationships between scope of civic engagement and political participation

	Institutional (ordered logit)		Noninstitutional and individualized (negative binomial)				Noninstitutional and collective (negative binomial)			
	Voting		Signing a petition		Joining in boycotts		Attending peaceful demonstrations		Joining strikes	
	Coef.	Odds-ratio	Coef.	IRR	Coef.	IRR	Coef.	IRR	Coef.	IRR
Scope of civic engagement	0.09***	1.09	0.11***	1.11	0.14***	1.15	0.30***	1.34	0.31***	1.37
Education	0.94***	2.57	0.38***	1.46	0.50**	1.65	0.26	1.30	- 0.06	0.94
Income	0.15***	1.16	- 0.04*	0.96	- 0.08	0.92	- 0.02	0.98	- 0.17	0.84
Political interest	0.96***	2.61	0.44***	1.55	0.76***	2.12	0.78***	2.17	0.13	1.14
Religious affiliation	0.06	1.06	- 0.07	0.93	- 0.42*	0.64	- 0.11	0.89	0.11	1.11
Age	0.63***	1.87	0.12***	1.13	0.01	1.02	- 0.16	0.85	0.10	1.10
Female	0.12	1.13	0.09	1.09	- 0.09	0.92	- 0.31	0.74	- 0.23	0.79
White	0.68***	1.98	0.24***	1.28	0.21	1.21	- 0.51*	0.60	- 0.07	0.94
Constant			- 3.22***	0.04	- 5.70***	0.00	- 5.33***	0.00	- 3.67**	0.03
<i>Model fit</i>										
LR Chi <sup>2</sup>	815.42***		323.52***		117.63***		124.39***		19.26*	
Alpha			0.56***		4.77***		6.18***		29.32***	
N	2007		2007		2007		2007		2007	

\*Significant at 5%; \*\*significant at 1%; \*\*\*significant at 0.1%

more likely to educate their members and encourage a higher level of political participation.

Table 6 examines whether active civic engagement is required to promote political participation. Based on the results from Table 5, each model in Table 6 only includes independent variables that have statistically significant relationships with the dependent variable. For example, civic engagement in church or religious organizations, civic engagement in environmental organizations, and civic engagement in humanitarian or charitable organizations have a significant relationship with voting. The three organizations are included as independent variables in the model for voting. All control variables are also included in the models for the analysis. In these models, civic engagement in voluntary organizations is treated as a categorical variable to examine the relationship between passive engagement and political participation. All models use the same regression models based on the dependent variables, are statistically significant, and do not violate underlying assumptions.

The results show that both active and passive civic engagement facilitate political participation. Passive engagement in environmental organizations is positively associated with voting (Odds-Ratio: 1.55,  $p < 0.05$ ), signing a petition (IRR: 1.56,  $p < 0.001$ ), joining in boycotts (IRR: 2.02,  $p < 0.01$ ), and attending peaceful demonstrations (IRR: 2.02,  $p < 0.01$ ). In the case of labor unions, while holding the other variable constant in the

model, the expected ratio of joining strikes for inactive members in labor unions is 304% higher compared to non-union members ( $p < 0.01$ ). Except for active civic engagement in environmental organizations for voting and active civic engagement in sports or recreational organizations for joining in boycotts, active civic engagement is positively associated with political participation across five models. Figure 1 presents the means of noninstitutional types of political participation by the intensity of civic engagement. In general, the means of political participation increase as the intensity of civic engagement increases. Thus, the results show that active civic engagement is necessary to facilitate political participation in general, but they also show that passive civic engagement can positively influence political participation for some voluntary organizations. Although it is not the case for all types of voluntary organizations, being an inactive member can be sufficient to facilitate political participation.

## Discussion and Conclusion

This study examines the relationship between civic engagement in voluntary organizations and political participation and shows that the relationship is indeed complex and varies by the type of voluntary organization and the type of political participation. To disentangle the relationship, this study examines how civic engagement in nine

**Table 5** The relationships between civic engagement and political participation by organization type

	Voting		Signing a petition		Joining in boycotts		Attending peaceful demonstrations		Joining strikes	
	Coef.	Odds-ratio	Coef.	IRR	Coef.	IRR	Coef.	IRR	Coef.	IRR
Scope	- 0.16	0.85	0.00	1.00	- 0.16	0.85	- 0.12	0.89	0.09	1.10
Church or religious	0.27***	1.31	0.00	1.00	- 0.04	0.96	0.22	1.04	- 0.39	0.68
Sport or recreational	0.17	1.18	- 0.05	0.95	- 0.27*	0.76	- 0.17	0.84	- 0.44	0.64
Art, music or edu.	0.15	1.16	0.11*	1.12	0.23	1.25	0.59***	1.80	0.12	1.13
Labor union	0.17	1.18	0.02	1.02	0.27	1.31	0.30	1.35	1.12***	3.07
Environmental	0.53**	1.70	0.34***	1.41	0.55***	1.74	0.56**	1.75	0.50	1.65
Professional asso.	0.14	1.15	0.04	1.04	- 0.04	0.96	0.21	1.23	- 0.37	0.69
Humanitarian or charitable	0.33**	1.39	0.12*	1.13	0.36**	1.43	0.26	1.29	0.12	1.13
Consumer org.	- 0.10	0.90	- 0.11	0.90	0.26	1.30	- 0.01	0.99	0.04	1.04
Self-help/mutual aid	- 0.08	0.93	0.12	1.13	0.41*	1.50	0.51**	1.66	0.72	2.06
Education	0.92***	2.50	0.37**	1.45	0.58***	1.78	0.21	1.23	0.35	1.41
Income	0.15***	1.16	-0.04*	0.96	-0.05	0.95	0.00	1.00	-0.13	0.88
Political interest	0.94***	2.57	0.41***	1.51	0.71***	2.02	0.74***	2.10	0.08	1.08
Religious affiliation	- 0.06	0.94	0.01	1.01	- 0.21	0.81	- 0.12*	0.89	0.59	1.81
Age	0.62***	1.85	0.11**	1.21	- 0.03	0.97	- 0.11	0.90	0.19	1.19
Female	0.10	1.10	0.04	1.04	- 0.22	0.81	- 0.38*	0.68	- 0.26	0.77
White	0.64***	1.89	0.22**	1.25	0.17	1.19	- 0.58**	0.56	- 0.39	0.68
Constant			- 3.14***	0.04	- 5.75***	0.00	- 5.09***	0.01	- 5.15***	0.01
<i>Model fit</i>										
LR Chi <sup>2</sup>	843.83***		368.35***		154.53***		156.16***		47.90***	
Alpha			0.50***		4.01***		5.18***		2.82***	
N	2007		2007		2007		2007		2007	

\*Significant at 5%; \*\*significant at 1%; \*\*\*significant at 0.1%

types of voluntary organization is related to political participation. Political participation is categorized into three types: institutional participation, noninstitutional and individual participation, and noninstitutional and collective participation. The existing literature shows that both the scope and the intensity of civic engagement in voluntary organizations facilitate more political participation. However, the results of this study indicate that there is no significant relationship between the scope of civic engagement and political participation. Being engaged in many voluntary organizations does not necessarily mean that members experience socialization processes in all of those organizations. Engaging in a few voluntary organizations where citizens can truly have opportunities to learn and to develop civic skills is more crucial for citizens to participate more in politics.

Not all types of voluntary organizations facilitate political participation. Previous studies have categorized voluntary organizations and examined the relationships of each category to political participation (Van Der Meer and Van Ingen 2009; Van Stekelenburg et al. 2016). However,

such categorization may not accurately capture the characteristics of organizations within the categories. This study examined civic engagement by each type of voluntary organization to identify which organizations are performing their roles as schools of democracy. In general, the findings show that voluntary organizations such as art, music or educational organizations, environmental organizations and humanitarian or charitable organizations are more likely to facilitate the political participation of their members. These voluntary organizations that advocate for broad public interests and represent the economically disadvantaged have limited organizational representation in Washington politics due to the free rider problem and resource constraint problem (Schlozman et al. 2013). Thus, they tend to facilitate noninstitutional means of participation, such as signing petitions and joining peaceful demonstrations. On the other hand, civic engagement in labor unions shows a positive relationship only with joining strikes and that in professional associations has no meaningful relationship with any types of political participation. This finding corresponds to the fact that these interest

**Table 6** Intensity of civic engagement and political participation

(Note: Baseline is nonmember)	Voting		Signing a petition		Joining in boycotts		Attending peaceful demonstrations		Joining strikes	
	Coef.	Odds-ratio	Coef.	IRR	Coef.	IRR	Coef.	IRR	Coef.	IRR
<i>Church or religious</i>										
Inactive member	0.06	1.06								
Active member	0.38***	1.46								
<i>Sport or recreational</i>										
Inactive member					- 0.32	0.73				
Active member					- 0.66**	0.51				
<i>Art, music or edu.</i>										
Inactive member			0.05	1.05			0.41	1.29		
Active member			0.23*	1.25			1.09***	0.99		
<i>Labor union</i>										
Inactive member									1.40**	4.04
Active member									2.47***	11.87
<i>Environmental</i>										
Inactive member	0.44*	1.55	0.45***	1.56	0.70**	2.02	0.70**	2.10		
Active member	0.42	1.52	0.59***	1.80	0.93**	2.53	1.13***	0.89		
<i>Humanitarian or charitable</i>										
Inactive member	0.27	1.31	0.16	1.18	0.29	1.34				
Active member	0.38*	1.46	0.23**	1.26	0.59**	1.80				
<i>Self-help/mutual aid</i>										
Inactive member					- 0.26	0.77	0.08	1.08		
Active member					0.82**	2.27	0.99**	2.69		
LR Chi <sup>2</sup>	835.78***		364.86***		151.46***		145.91***		32.62***	
Alpha			0.51***		4.06***		5.39***		21.84***	

All control variables are included in the models but not shown here

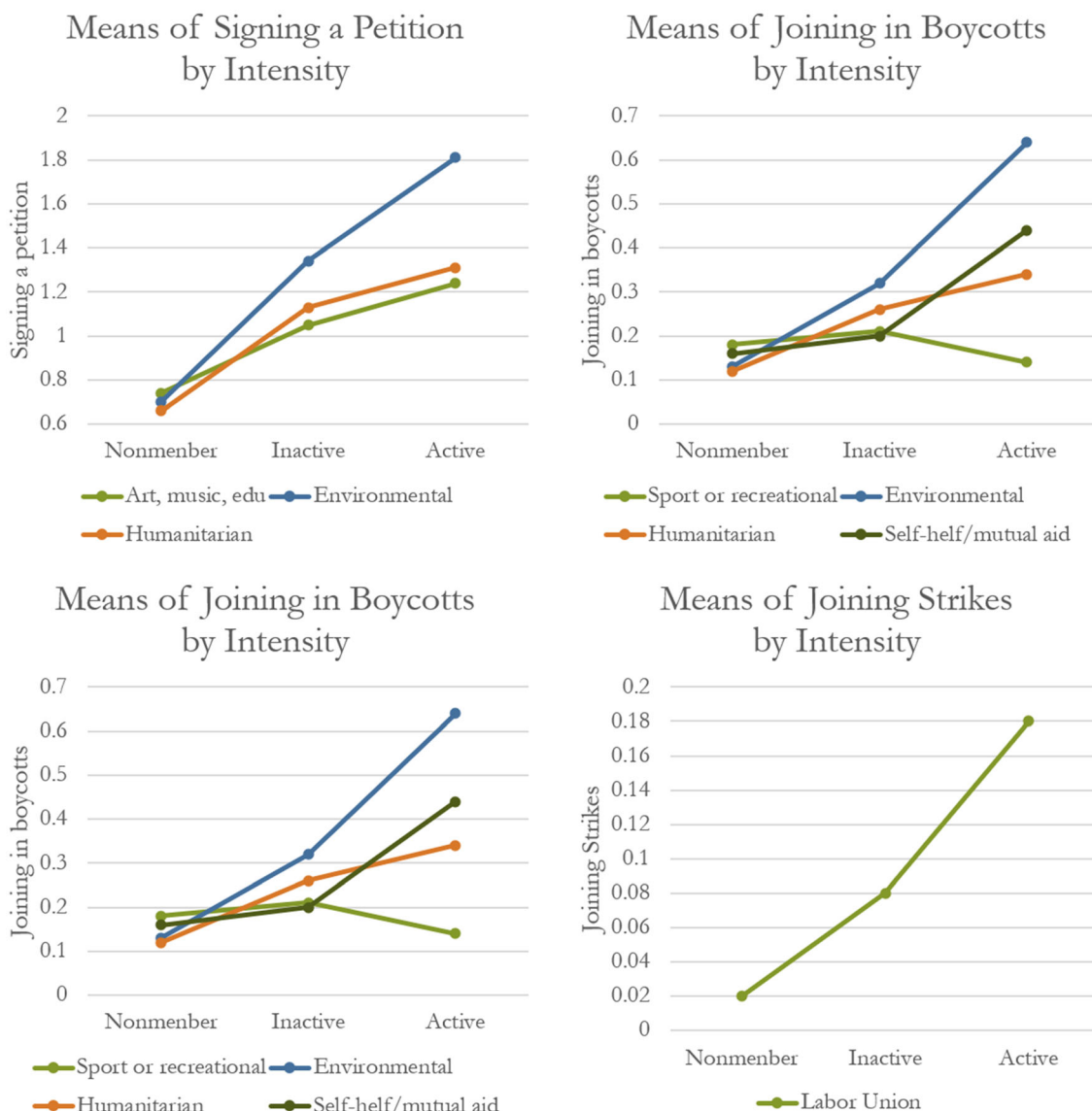
\*Significant at 5%; \*\*significant at 1%; \*\*\*significant at 0.1%

groups seek to influence Washington politics directly (Schlozman et al. 2013). As their political voices are more likely to be represented in Washington Politics, they are less motivated to educate their members to participate in noninstitutional political activities. Interestingly, civic engagement in church or religious organizations influences voting in national elections. Religious organizations rarely engage in organized interest activities (Schlozman et al. 2013); instead, they can provide opportunities for communication between members to share knowledge and opinions about general politics relevant to national elections.

Voluntary organizations do not facilitate all types of political participation. Citizens who are engaged in these organizations are more likely to participate in only certain types of political activities. For instance, civic engagement in humanitarian or charitable organizations only facilitate voting, signing a petition and joining in boycotts, which can be done individually. Labor unions only facilitate

joining strikes, which seems reasonable considering that labor unions mobilize members to go on strikes. Perhaps the findings from this study show why there are contradictory findings about the democratic role of voluntary organizations. Because not all organizations are schools of democracy and schools do not teach everything about political participation, findings from studies vary according to the types of voluntary organizations and types of political participation they used for analysis.

The neo-Tocquevillian approach underscores the role of active civic engagement in voluntary organizations to promote political participation. This study shows that active engagement is important, but it is not a prerequisite for political participation. Findings from this study show that passive civic engagement can also promote political participation. Nonetheless, active civic engagement is still crucial for voluntary organizations to facilitate political participation. The low rate of membership across voluntary organizations and the difficulty of fostering active civic



**Fig. 1** Means of political participation by intensity

engagement may weaken the role of voluntary organizations in the future.

This study makes several contributions to the literature. First, it reveals that some types of voluntary organizations promote political participation and that not all types are performing their role in democracy. By examining the relationships between civic engagement in nine types of organizations and political participation, this study shows which types are good schools of democracy. Second, it shows that voluntary organizations facilitate only certain types of political participation. Voluntary organizations may know that certain types of political participation are more effective for advocating their missions with the resources they possess. Third, active civic engagement in voluntary organization is indeed important for political

participation, but it does not necessarily mean that passive engagement is not meaningful at all. Voluntary organizations can connect members and stakeholders using the internet and social media to build social capital and intersectoral networks in an interconnected environment (Xu and Saxton 2019). Saxton and Guo (2020) have found that 70% of all nonprofits on GuideStar had at least one social media account and nonprofits had 2.77 social media accounts on average in 2019. By utilizing social media and other means of online communication, voluntary organizations can socialize members and facilitate political participation without face-to-face interactions.

This study has practical implications for voluntary organizations. First, voluntary organizations should understand which political participation is more

appropriate to pursue for their missions. Based on the organizational environment and their capacity, voluntary organizations need to choose and focus on certain types or modes of political participation. Second, voluntary organizations should find solutions to make active and passive engagement more meaningful to their members. Providing opportunities for frequent and direct interactions between members can encourage members to actively engage in activities. For members who cannot take part in those activities, voluntary organizations should provide other means to learn and improve their civic skills with the help of new technologies.

There are several limitations in this study. First, there is a problem of endogeneity. Civic engagement in voluntary organizations can facilitate political participation by teaching civic skills, building trust, and providing knowledge to their members. On the other hand, participating in political activities can make citizens more interested in political and social issues, and citizens become more likely to join and become more actively engaged in voluntary organizations. The possibility of reverse causality should be understood as a “virtuous cycle” that reinforces citizens’ participation in democracy and civic engagement in voluntary organizations. Second, the intensity of civic engagement in voluntary organizations is a subjective measure rather than an objective measure. On the WVS, a respondent’s status as an active or inactive member was based entirely on his or her personal judgment. Thus, it is not possible to measure how inactive or how active respondents actually were in voluntary organizations. Third, the findings from this study may not be applicable to other countries with different political systems and contexts. In a country without a stable democratic system and high levels of civic engagement in voluntary organizations, the relationship between civic engagement and political participation may show different patterns. Lastly, with the WVS data, it was not possible to identify why only certain types of organizations facilitated political participation, and why voluntary organizations facilitate certain types of political participation. It is only possible to speculate on a few possible reasons for the findings. Future research using multiple objective indicators to measure the intensity of civic engagement (e.g., hours of volunteering, amount of donations or frequency of attending events, etc.) in each type of organization can further examine the relationship between civic engagement and political participation by types of organization and type of political participation. Also, in-depth qualitative studies can shed light on how voluntary organizations facilitate the civic engagement of members that lead to political participation. Qualitative studies may reveal the black box of how voluntary organizations provide socialization processes to their

members and how citizens become more politically active by engaging in voluntary organizations. If it is possible to acquire data from multiple countries, future studies can compare patterns in countries with different political systems, cultures, and voluntary sectors.

#### Compliance with ethical standards

**Conflict of interest** The author declares that he has no conflict of interest.

#### References

- Alexander, D. T., Barraket, J., Lewis, J. M., & Considine, M. (2010). Civic engagement and associationalism: The impact of group membership scope versus intensity of participation. *European Sociological Review*, 28(1), 43–58. <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcq047>.
- Almond, G. A., & Verba, S. (1963). *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Armington, K. (2007). Political participation and associational involvement. In J. W. Van Deth, J. R. Montero, & A. Westholm (Eds.), *Citizenship and involvement in European democracies* (pp. 382–407). Abingdon: Routledge.
- Armony, A. (2004). *The dubious link: Civic engagement and democratization*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press.
- Ayala, L. J. (2000). Trained for democracy: The differing effects of voluntary and involuntary organizations on political participation. *Political Research Quarterly*, 53(1), 99–115.
- Brady, H. E., Verba, S., & Schlozman, K. L. (1995). Beyond ses: A resource model of political participation. *The American Political Science Review*, 89(2), 271–294. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2082425>.
- de Tocqueville, A. (1840[2012]). *Democracy in America : In two volumes*. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, Incorporated.
- Dodge, J., & Ospina, S. M. (2016). Nonprofits as “schools of democracy” a comparative case study of two environmental organizations. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 45(3), 478–499.
- Fung, A. (2003). Associations and democracy: Between theories, hopes, and realities. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 29(1), 515–539.
- Han, H. (2016). The organizational roots of political activism: Field experiments on creating a relational context. *American Political Science Review*, 110(2), 296–307.
- Hooghe, M., & Stolle, D. (2003). Age matters: Life-cycle and cohort differences in the socialisation effect of voluntary participation. *European Political Science*, 3(2), 49–56.
- Howard, M. M., & Gilbert, L. (2008). A cross-national comparison of the internal effects of participation in voluntary organizations. *Political Studies*, 56(1), 12–32.
- Jeong, H. O. (2013). From civic participation to political participation. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 24(4), 1138–1158.
- King, D., & Griffin, M. (2019). Nonprofits as schools for democracy: The justifications for organizational democracy within nonprofit organizations. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 48(5), 910–930. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764019837603>.
- Kluver, J. D. (2004). Disguising social change: The role of nonprofit organizations as protective masks for citizen participation. *Administrative Theory and Praxis*, 26(3), 309–324.

- LeRoux, K. (2007). Nonprofits as civic intermediaries: The role of community-based organizations in promoting political participation. *Urban Affairs Review*, 42(3), 410–422.
- Li, H., & Zhang, J. (2017). How do civic associations foster political participation? The role of scope and intensity of organizational involvement. In D. R. Young (Ed.), *Nonprofit policy forum* (Vol. 8, p. 3). Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Maloney, W. (1999). Contracting out the participation function. Social capital and cheque-book participation. In J. van Deth, et al. (Eds.), *Social Capital and European Democracy*. London: Routledge.
- Newton, K. (1997). Social capital and democracy. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 40(5), 575–586.
- Newton, K., Stolle, D., & Zmerli, S. (2018). Social and political trust. In E. M. Uslaner (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of social and political trust* (p. 37). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Putnam, R. (1993). The prosperous community: social capital and public life. *The American Prospect*, 4, 35–42.
- Putnam, R. D. (1995). Tuning in, tuning out: The strange disappearance of social capital in America. *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 28(04), 664–683. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1049096500058856>.
- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Saxton, G. D., & Guo, C. (2020). Social media capital: Conceptualizing the nature, acquisition, and expenditure of social media-based organizational resources. *International Journal of Accounting Information Systems*, 36, 100443. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.accinf.2019.100443>.
- Schein, E. H. (1977). *Toward a theory of organizational socialization* (Vol. 960–977). Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Sloan School of Management.
- Schlozman, K. L., Verba, S., & Brady, H. E. (2013). *The unheavenly chorus: Unequal political voice and the broken promise of American democracy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Smith, C. R. (2009). Institutional determinants of collaboration: An empirical study of county open-space protection. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 19(1), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/mum037>.
- Teorell, J. (2003). Linking social capital to political participation: Voluntary associations and networks of recruitment in Sweden. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 26(1), 49–66. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9477.00079>.
- Torpe, L. (2003). Democracy and associations in Denmark: Changing relationships between individuals and associations? *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 32(3), 329–343. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764003254594>.
- Van Der Meer, T. W. G., & Van Ingen, E. J. (2009). Schools of democracy? Disentangling the relationship between civic participation and political action in 17 European countries. *European Journal of Political Research*, 48(2), 281–308. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.2008.00836.x>.
- Van Deth, J. W. (2014). A conceptual map of political participation. *Acta Politica*, 49, 349–367.
- Van Deth, J. W., Montero, J. R., & Westholm, A. (2007). *Citizenship and involvement in European democracies: A comparative analysis* (Vol. 17). Abingdon: Routledge.
- Van Stekelenburg, J., Klandermans, B., & Akkerman, A. (2016). Does civic participation stimulate political activity? *Journal of Social Issues*, 72(2), 286–314.
- Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L., & Brady, H. E. (1995). *Voice and equality: Civic voluntarism in American politics*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L., Brady, H., & Nie, N. H. (1993). Citizen activity: Who participates? What do they say? *American Political Science Review*, 87(2), 303–318. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2939042>.
- Wallman Lundåsen, S. (2015). Civil society and political participation: What type of political participation is influenced by community level involvement in civil society? *Swiss Political Science Review*, 21(1), 140–157. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spsr.12140>.
- Warren, M. (2001). *Democracy and association*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Wollebæk, D., & Selle, P. (2003). Participation and social capital formation: Norway in a comparative perspective 1. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 26(1), 67–91. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9477.00080>.
- Wollebæk, D., & Strømsnes, K. (2008). Voluntary associations, trust, and civic engagement: A multilevel approach. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 37(2), 249–263. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764007304754>.
- Xu, W., & Saxton, G. D. (2019). Does stakeholder engagement pay off on social media? A social capital perspective. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 48(1), 28–49. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764018791267>.
- Zmerli, S., & Newton, K. (2007). Trust in people, confidence in political institutions, and satisfaction with democracy. In J. W. Van Deth, J. R. Montero, & A. Westholm (Eds.), *Citizenship and involvement in European democracies* (pp. 59–89). Abingdon: Routledge.

**Publisher's Note** Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.