

## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROFILES AND YOUTH MEMBERSHIP IN ASSOCIATIONS: IMPLICATIONS FOR MARKETING IN THE NONPROFIT SECTOR

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### Abstract:

This paper presents the results from a survey on Spanish youths intended to analyse the relationship between civic engagement and participation in voluntary associations and, by this mean, providing some insights to improve the recruitment and retention processes of active young people. Respondents were compared in four dimensions of civic engagement (civic duty, civic skills, social connection and civic participation) and principal components analysis and multivariate analysis of variance were used to validate the measures of the study and perform the group comparisons. Results support previous research on the causes and consequences of voluntary membership. In this sense, it is concluded that, beyond the potential impacts of voluntary membership on youth civic engagement, civic-minded young people with similar civic profiles are more likely to be recruited into associations and, accordingly, socialization effects emerge after a preceding selection, once members are confirmed and further stimulated in their initial goals.

**Keywords:** *youth participation; membership associations; civic engagement; self-selection; socialization*

## LA CALIDAD DE VIDA SUBJETIVA Y LAS ACTIVIDADES CULTURALES

### Resumen:

Este artículo presenta los resultados de una encuesta a jóvenes españoles para analizar la relación entre el compromiso cívico y la participación en asociaciones de voluntarios y, por este medio, proporcionar algunas ideas para mejorar los procesos de reclutamiento y retención de jóvenes activos. Los encuestados fueron comparados en cuatro dimensiones de compromiso cívico (deber cívico, competencias cívicas, conexión social y participación cívica) y se usaron análisis de componentes principales y multivariante de la varianza para validar las medidas del estudio y hacer las comparaciones entre grupos. Los resultados apoyan investigaciones previas sobre las causas y consecuencias de la adhesión voluntaria. En este sentido, se concluye que, más allá de los potenciales impactos de la adhesión voluntaria en el compromiso cívico de los jóvenes, los jóvenes con mentalidad cívica y perfiles cívicos similares son más propensos a ser reclutados por asociaciones y, en consecuencia, los efectos de la socialización emergen tras una previa selección, una vez los miembros son reafirmados y aún más estimulados en sus objetivos iniciales.

**Palabras clave:** *participación juvenil; asociaciones de miembros; compromiso cívico; autoselección; socialización*

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## 1. Introduction

Voluntary associations represent a significant component of the nonprofit sector (Tschirhart 2006). In Europe, they account for over 4% of gross domestic product and their members comprised 50% of citizens (European Economic and Social Committee 2012). They are broadly defined as private, formally-organized entities with autonomy of decision and non-compulsory membership structures that produce non-market services, promote a common interest, and apply the principle of non-distribution of profits or surpluses (Knoke 1986; Harris 1998; Anheier 2005; Herrera and Ayuso 2009; European Economic and Social Committee 2012).

Specifically, membership associations play a variety of social, economic and political roles in society. Mainly, they promote active citizenship, support democratic processes, give voice to special interests, build social capital, and provide psychological and social rewards (Putnam 1993, 2000; Skocpol 2003; Tocqueville 2004; Tschirhart 2006; Schachter 2011). They have been said to be organizations engaged in producing “social merit goods”, mainly work and social integration as well as social services and community care (European Economic and Social Committee 2012). In nowadays societies, associations play also a very important role as vehicles of participation for the youth. In this respect, youth organizing has been said to combine collective work to advance shared interests and positive youth development. In addition to community-level impacts, youth organizing offers a powerful context for individual development (Christens and Kirshner 2011).

Many factors have led to the increasing prevalence of youth organizing during the past decades. One of them is the broader movement to include youth in civil society (Checkoway and Gutiérrez 2006). However, figures in the European countries are not entirely optimistic, with only a half of young people participating in associations. Furthermore, some differences exist depending on the type of organization. For instance, while young citizens are likely to be involved in a sports club (35%) or a leisure-time club (22%), only 15% of them are enrolled in a local organization aimed at improving the local community, and the figures of participation in human rights, environmental or political associations are still lower (Directorate General for Education and Culture 2013). In Spain, youth participation statistics are pretty close to the European average, in a context where personal involvement is considered to remain one of the main weaknesses of non-profit organizations in general (García-Mainar and Marcuello 2007).

In the context of these figures, voluntary associations, like all non-profit organizations, must provide value in order to attract and retain members, since they are not financially compensated to join but, instead, are often expected to pay for the privilege of membership. Accordingly, it seems necessary to gain a better understanding of the factors that motivate young people to get involved in associations and the benefits they obtain from membership. Such a kind of insights could be used by practitioners and government bodies to fully incorporate young people in their work. In line with some previous researches in the field, this study is aimed at testing the usefulness of a multidimensional construct of civic engagement to predict the associational behaviour of young people, by combining previous literature on self-selection into associations and subsequent socialization processes. At this purpose, the paper is organized as follows: next section reviews previous literature on youth civic engagement and participation in voluntary associations, and set the hypotheses of the study; thereafter, an empirical study and its results are presented; finally, conclusions and practical implications are discussed.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Youth civic engagement and participation in associations

Civic engagement is a core outcome of current theories of positive youth development (Lerner et al. 2009). In general terms, literature defines civic engagement as participation in and contribution to the activities and institutions of the community and broader civil society (Boyd et al. 2011). However, recent approaches to the construct conceptualize it as an integration of cognitive, emotional and behavioural factors within the individual (Bobek et al. 2009; Zaff et al. 2010; Boyd et al. 2011; Zaff et al. 2011). This integrated view of the construct is rooted in Erikson’s ego identity theory (Erikson 1963; Marcia 1980), which involves a self-identity meeting the needs of both individuals and the society, and German action theories (Baltes 1987; Freund and Baltes 2002; Baltes et al. 2006) positing that cognitive and emotional processes and behaviours are inherently interconnected in the process of adaptive development. In line with this, civic engagement is considered as a key outcome of the mutually influential relations between individuals and their immediate contexts (Lerner 2004; Sherrod 2007; Lerner et al. 2011).

According to this view, civic engagement is perceived as more than civic behaviours enhancing the common good –through community action, advocacy or political participation–, as the concept also includes the motivation to engage in such actions (Zaff et al. 2011). Within this line of research, Bobek et al. (2009) proposed the Civic Identity/Civic Engagement (CICE) model of active citizenship, which was later refined by Zaff et al. (2010) within an Active and Engaged Citizenship (AEC) construct. Based on the previous literature regarding youth and civic engagement development (Flanagan and Faison 2001; Levine and Youniss 2006; Lerner et al. 2007; Levine 2007; Sherrod 2007), these authors identified four interrelated constructs that may be necessary for young individuals to be active and engaged citizens:

1. *Civic duty*: referring to the desire and mindset to get involved with others and make positive contributions to society.
2. *Civic skills*: concerning the ability and expertise to be involved in civil society and democracy.
3. *Social connection*: defined as a sense of generalized reciprocity, trust and bonding to others. Zaff et al. (2010) understand this component as related to an individual's surrounding neighbourhood and define it as the extent to which people in the community care about one another and their willingness to contribute to the common good (Lenzi et al. 2012).
4. *Civic participation*: referring to the engagement in activities for the betterment of the community.

The four components have been found to encompass a second-order construct of active engagement in early adolescent samples (Bobek et al. 2009; Zaff et al. 2010).

Despite the advances towards an integrated construct of civic engagement, both Bobek et al. (2009) and Zaff et al. (2010) listed some limitations of their studies and recommendations for further research. For instance, these authors pointed out the convenience of testing the model in other countries and regions to ensure that the construct and its measurement are culturally relevant. Moreover, it is needed to know whether the factor structure holds at different ages and examine it with older youths. Finally, to enhance the understanding of youth civic engagement, it should be linked to indicators of the outcomes that result from being an active and engaged citizen. Our study indirectly addresses these challenges by adapting the four-component model of civic engagement to explain Spanish young adults' participation in voluntary associations.

At the moment, evidence on the relationship between civic engagement as multidimensional variable and participation in membership associations needs to be found in isolated researches that consider specific components of the overall construct. Firstly, a number of studies show that civic duty and other related attitudinal variables are important potential factors affecting volunteering and participation in associations (Sundeen 1992; Smith 1994; Bekkers 2005; Haddad 2006; Badescu and Neller 2007; Stadelmann-Steffen and Freitag 2011; Quintelier 2013). Secondly, the relationship between civic skills and voluntary association membership has also been addressed in the previous literature (Almond and Verba 1965; Verba et al. 1995; Wollebæk and Selle 2007; van der Meer and van Ingen 2009). Thirdly, several studies have also documented the positive link between social capital and participation in associations (Stolle 1998; Jennings and Stoker, 2004; Bekkers 2005; Duke et al. 2009; Hooghe and Botterman 2012; Lenzi et al. 2012). Fourthly, membership and participation in local organizations has been conceptualized by many researchers as a behavioural component of youth civic engagement, (Duke et al. 2009; Lenzi et al. 2012), thus concluding that active people are more likely to join associations and groups in general (McClurg 2003; van der Meer and van Ingen, 2009).

However, only a few studies on civic engagement and membership in associations have been specifically focused on young people (Duke et al. 2009), and even these usually consider samples of adolescents (Lenzi et al. 2012; Quintelier 2013). Nevertheless, given the normative integration of older youths into many different spheres of labour, social and public participation (Handy et al. 2010), it seems pertinent to explain their associative behaviour from variables which have been proved relevant in other lifecycle stages. Similarly, such studies usually compare the levels of civic engagement displayed by members and non-members, or analyse the correlates of membership. However, those approaches do not differentiate among the self-selection and socialization effects of voluntary membership, i.e. do people develop certain civic profiles through their membership in voluntary associations, or do they self-select into these associations on the basis of pre-existing civic propensities? (Quintelier 2013). This paper is intended to respond this question by comparing the levels of civic engagement displayed by three groups of young people: members, non-members and past members.

## 2.2. Processes of self-selection and socialization. Hypotheses

Traditionally, voluntary associations have been considered as prime sources of social trust and civic engagement (Putnam 1993, 2000), that is, they have been said to be *schools of democracy* (Almond and Verba 1965; Tocqueville 2004) which socialize individuals in specific civic values. Regarding this, youth-oriented associations have been assigned a mission of preparing young people for active citizenship. In this sense, youth participation in community-based organizations and voluntary associations results in the acquisition of certain skills and social capital that may transfer to forms of civic engagement (Claibourn and Martin 2000; Lerner 2004; Benson et al. 2006; Spanring et al. 2008; Conway et al. 2009; Perks and Haan 2010; Quintelier 2013). Hooghe (2003), for instance, offer evidence for the existence of a strong and significant relation between participation in voluntary associations and the adherence to democratic attitudes.

However, when analysing the civic causes and consequences of membership in different kinds of associations a number of authors claim that the mechanisms of socialization and self-selection interact (Adams 1983; Wilson and Musick 1999; Cigler and Joslyn 2002; Hooghe 2003; Chen et al. 2013). In other words, beyond the potential impacts of voluntary membership on citizen engagement what seems to be clear is that civic minded people are more likely to join associations (Stolle 1998; van der Meer and van Ingen 2009; Quintelier 2013). From this view, it is assumed that not everyone has the same propensity to join a voluntary organization (Hooghe 2003) and individuals are attracted to those who resemble them (Theiss-Morse and Hibbing 2005), so that people with similar civic profiles are more likely to be recruited into associations. Accordingly, socialization effects would emerge after a preceding selection, once members are confirmed and further stimulated in their initial goals (van der Meer and van Ingen 2009). In the same respect, some other authors suggest that there are other sources of social capital outside of the associational life, which can also strengthen civil society and democracy (Stolle 1998; Wollebæk and Strømsnes 2008).

Based on these postulates, Quintelier (2013) analyzed the political attitudes of different groups of Belgium adolescents depending on their level of participation in deliberative associations: participants, entry members, exit members and non-participants. Results showed that both self-selection and socialization play a role with respect to political interest, but not for other political attitudes, such as political trust and tolerance. Further, long-lasting engagement and membership in multiple associations has the strongest socializing effect.

By using a similar design, our study aims to analyze the levels of civic duty, civic skills, social connection, and civic participation displayed by Spanish young people depending on their status as members, non-members or past/previous members of associations. Particularly, we expect that youths with similar civic engagement profile self-select into associations while, at the same time, participation in associations strengthen previous civic minds. Accordingly, we propose the following two hypotheses:

*H<sub>1</sub> (self-selection):* members of associations have stronger civic duty, civic skills, social connection and civic participation than non-members.

*H<sub>2</sub> (socialization):* past members of associations have the same levels of civic duty, civic skills, social connection and civic participation than current members, and stronger levels than non-members.

## 3. Methodological issues

### 3.1. Sampling

A survey-based study with a sample of Spanish youths aged 18 to 30 years old was conducted to test the above mentioned hypotheses. Although youth participation is usually said to cover an age period from 14 to 30, it was decided not to include adolescents younger than 18 in order to ensure the homogeneity of the sample in terms of work transition, civic rights and integration into areas of social and political participation. Likewise, studying this cohort allows holding constant the variations in motivations for membership related to life-cycle (Handy et al. 2010). Respondents were randomly selected from urban areas providing the same opportunities to participate in associations and other civic actions.

A total figure of 394 questionnaires were completed, a sample size which ensures representativeness for a confidence level of 95% ( $e = \pm 5\%$ ;  $p = q = 0.50$ ). From this figure, 188 respondents (47.7%) were identified as members of associations at the time of the survey, 106 (26.9%) were members in the past,

and 100 (25.4%) had no experience as members of voluntary associations. The final sample was composed of 186 males (47.2%) and 208 females (52.8%), with an average age of 22.23 ( $SD = 3.63$ ). Distribution by gender reflected the natural composition of the population considered. Most respondents (82.2%) were studying at the time of the survey, and from these, 85.8% were university students. Only 24.9% were working and an additional 31.7% had some previous work experience, this resulting in an 87.3% of respondents being economically dependent on their families.

### 3.2. Measures

A set of 25 items was used to estimate the four components of civic engagement, based on previous literature (Bobek et al. 2009; Duke et al. 2009; Zaff et al. 2010; Lenzi et al. 2012), but adapting their content to the developmental stage of the sample considered in this study.

So *civic duty* was measured with seven sentences defining personal attitudes towards the importance of getting involved with others to make positive contributions to society (e.g., “*helping to reduce hunger and poverty in the world*”, “*helping to make the world a better place to live in*”) and respondents were asked to rate the importance of each sentence on a five-point Likert-type scale from “*unimportant*” to “*very important*”.

The *civic skills* scale comprised eight items on perceptions of ability to perform civic actions (e.g., “*send an e-mail or written petition to an institution*”, “*participate in a debate forum in the Internet*”). Respondents had to express their level of agreement with each sentence on a five-point scale from “*strongly disagree*” to “*strongly agree*”.

Likewise, *social connection* was measured according to five points of agreement with statements defining trust in institutions and agents of the surrounding community (e.g., “*in my neighbourhood there are lots of people who care about me*”, “*I trust the institutions of my city*”). As in previous case, respondents were asked to express their level of agreement with each sentence on a five-point scale from “*strongly disagree*” to “*strongly agree*”.

Finally, the *civic participation* scale was comprised of five items asking youths how often they got involved in specific activities for the betterment of society (e.g., “*volunteer your time*”, “*collaborate in social or environmental campaigns in your city*”). Response options ranged from “*never*” to “*very often*” on a five-point Likert-type scale.

### 3.3. Data analysis

Once data was collected and processed, a principal components factor analysis with program SPSS 17.0 was used to replicate the four-factor structure of the civic engagement construct. Thereafter, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted in order to perform a group comparison regarding the factors identified among youths in the three groups of members, non-members and previous members.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Factor analysis

A principal components factor analysis was used to test the construct validity of the civic engagement variables. Prior to the analysis, the suitability of data was assessed. Inspection of the correlation matrix revealed the presence of many coefficients of 0.30 and above. Also, the Kaiser-Meyer-Okin value was 0.832, so exceeding the recommended value of 0.60 (Kaiser 1970, 1974) and the Barlett’s Test of Sphericity (Barlett 1954) reached statistical significance, supporting the factorability.

The analysis revealed the presence of five factors with eigenvalues exceeding 1, explaining 62.21% of the total variance. Nevertheless, by using the Catell’s scree test (Catell 1966) it was decided to retain only four components for further analysis. To aid in the interpretation of the components identified and its discriminant validity, Varimax rotation was performed. The rotated solution presented in Table 1 revealed the multidimensionality of the scales, according to the four expected factors of *civic duty*, *civic skills*, *social connection* and *civic participation* (Bobek et al. 2009; Zaff et al. 2010). In this sense, every item had a loading above 0.50 in its respective construct, explaining 16.18%, 18.47%, 10.86%, and 12.23% of the total variance. Moreover, all the scales retained were associated to Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  values of reliability over the recommended value of 0.70 (Nunnally 1978).

**Table 1.** Civic engagement scales

Constructs and items	Loadings			
<i>Civic duty</i> (“unimportant” to “very important”; 5-point)				
Helping to reduce hunger and poverty in the world	0.81			
Helping to make the world a better place to live in	0.81			
Helping to make sure all people are treated fairly	0.77			
Ensuring that people in the future can have things better	0.67			
Contributing to improve the community and society	0.67			
Helping disadvantaged people	0.65			
Helping people around me	0.62			
<i>Civic skills</i> (“strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”; 5-point)				
Send an e-mail or written petition to an institution	0.80			
Participate in a debate forum in the Internet	0.79			
File a formal complaint against a firm or public entity	0.77			
Contact the media to express your opinion on an issue	0.76			
Contact a political representative in the community	0.76			
Spread political or social messages by e-mail	0.72			
Participate in conversations on topical issues	0.68			
Use social nets for advocating	0.67			
<i>Social connection</i> (“strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”; 5-point)				
In my neighbourhood there are lots of people who care about me		0.75		
I trust the institutions of my city		0.75		
In my town or city, I feel like my opinion counts		0.72		
I could ask for help or a favour from neighbours		0.64		
In my neighbourhood, people often stop to talk to each other		0.62		
<i>Participation</i> (“never” to “very often”; 5-point)				
Volunteer your time			0.81	
Collaborate in social or environmental campaigns in your city			0.77	
Attend and participate in local charitable events			0.76	
Donate money to social or environmental organizations			0.68	
Donate blood			0.58	
% Variance explained	16.2	18.5	10.90	12.20
Cronbach’s $\alpha$ reliability	0.86	0.90	0.75	0.82

#### 4.2. Group comparison

Table 2 displays the means, standard deviations and correlations among variables obtained for the total sample. In general terms, respondents expressed moderate levels of *civic duty* ( $M = 3.77$ ) and *civic skills* ( $M = 3.30$ ), while mean scores in case of *social connection* ( $M = 2.76$ ) and *civic participation* ( $M = 2.36$ ) were lower.

In order to analyse the usefulness of the four civic engagement factors previously identified to discriminate between groups of young people, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted with *membership in voluntary associations* as independent variable categorized in the three groups of *members*, *past members* and *non-members*. Results displayed in Table 3 show a statistically significant difference between respondents within the three groups considered on the combined dependent variables:  $F(8.382) = 2.32, p < 0.05$ ; *Wilks’  $\lambda$*  = 0.909; *partial  $\eta^2$*  = 0.046.

When the results for the dependent variables were considered separately, differences in only two factors reached statistical significance according to a Bonferroni adjusted  $\alpha$  level of 0.0125 (0.05/4). These were *civic duty*  $-F(2,194) = 3.22$ ; *partial  $\eta^2$*  = 0.032– and *civic participation*  $-F(2,194) = 7.10$ ; *partial  $\eta^2$*  = 0.068–. Differences in *civic skills* and *social connection* were not statistically significant.

**Table 2.** Correlations and summary statistics

	1	2	3	4
1. <i>Civic duty</i>				
2. <i>Civic skills</i>	0.16*			
3. <i>Social connection</i>	0.32**	0.18*		
4. <i>Civic participation</i>	0.50**	0.24**	0.19*	
Mean ( <i>M</i> )	16.2	18.5	10.90	12.20
Standard Deviation ( <i>SD</i> )	0.86	0.90	0.75	0.82

\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ **Table 3.** Results from MANOVA

Variable	<i>Wilks' λ</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Partial η</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>F</i>	<i>Partial η</i> <sup>2</sup>
1. <i>Civic duty</i>				3.22**	0.032
2. <i>Civic skills</i>	0.909	2.32*	0.046	0.18	0.002
3. <i>Social connection</i>				1.35	0.014
4. <i>Civic participation</i>				7.10**	0.068

\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.0125$  (Bonferroni adjusted  $\alpha$  level)

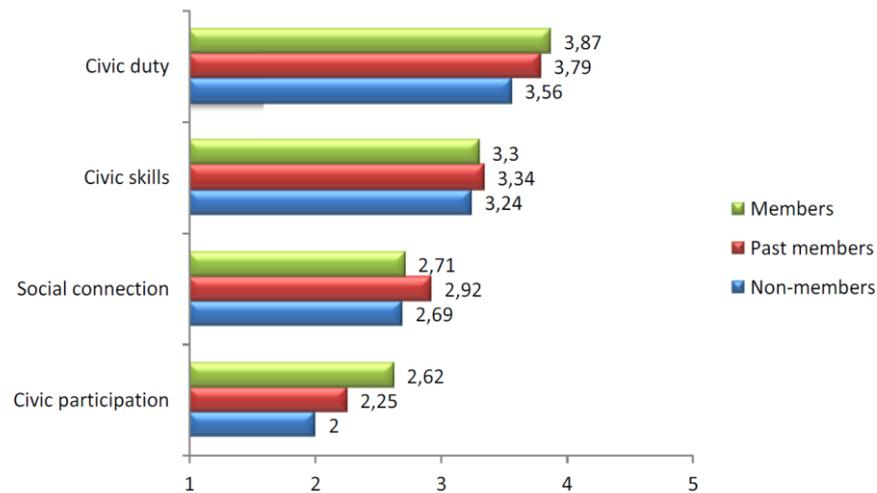
A HSD Tukey *post hoc* test was performed to analyze the differences between young people based on their participation in associations more in depth. Statistically significant differences obtained by using an  $\alpha$  level of 0.05 are shown in Table 4. In a general way, youth *non-members* reported lower levels of *civic duty* and *civic participation* than *members* in voluntary associations, thus supporting the self-selection hypothesis for these two factors.

Likewise, statistically significant differences were not found when comparing *past members* with *current members* or *non-members* in these two dimensions. These results provide partial support to the socialization hypothesis, since *past members* did not differ from *members* in their levels of civic attitudes and actions, thus suggesting the retention of some level of civic learning. However, those socialising effects are not strong enough to differentiate them from non-members with no previous experience in voluntary associations.

**Table 4.** HSD Tukey *post hoc* analysis

Dependent variable	Independent variable		Mean dif. (I-J)	Std. error
	Group I	Group J		
1. <i>Civic duty</i>	Non-members	Members	-0.31*	0.122
		Previous members	-0.22	0.137
2. <i>Civic skills</i>	Non-members	Members	-0.07	0.164
		Previous members	-0.10	0.184
3. <i>Social connection</i>	Non-members	Members	-0.02	0.142
		Previous members	-0.22	0.161
4. <i>Civic participation</i>	Non-members	Members	-0.62*	0.171
		Previous members	-0.25	0.193

\*  $p < 0.05$

**Figure 1.** Mean differences by groups

Regarding *civic skills* and *social connection*, differences among *members*, *past members* and *non-members* were not statistically significant, thus not supporting any of the self-selection or socialization hypotheses. These results are also summarized in Figure 1. As observed, the three groups analyzed displayed similar mean scores in the *civic skills* scale, thus suggesting that youth civic abilities are neither cause or effect of their participation in associations. Otherwise, mean scores in terms of *social connection* were slightly higher for *past members* of associations, while *members* and *non-members* obtained pretty close scores.

## 5. Conclusions

This study has aimed to analyse the relationship between civic engagement and participation in voluntary associations, in order to identify the profile of young people more active in associations and provide some insights to improve the recruitment and retention processes in these non-profit organizations. Particularly, we have tested a multidimensional construct of civic engagement to predict the associational behaviour of young people, by combining previous literature on self-selection and socialization.

According to the *self-selection* perspective, we first hypothesized that civic minded people is more likely to be recruited into associations. Our findings reveal that young *members* display stronger levels of *civic duty* and *civic participation* than *non-members*, thus supporting this prediction for two of the four civic engagement constructs analysed. Hence, it can be concluded that youths with positive attitudes and propensities to participate in other civic actions are more prone to get involved in associations. Otherwise, there were not statistically significant differences between *members* and *non-members* in *civic skills* and *social connection*, these constructs not being useful to predict self-selection into associations.

Regarding our second hypothesis, we expected a *socialization* effect of voluntary associations when compared the levels of civic engagement of young *members*, *non-members* and *past members*. As expected, we found that *past members* do not differ from *members* in none of the civic factors. This suggests the retention of some levels of *civic duty* and *civic participation* as a consequence of socialization in the association. However, those socialising effects are not strong enough to differentiate *past members* from *non-members* with no previous experience in voluntary associations. In line with previous studies (e.g., Quintelier 2013), these results suggest that both self-selection and socialization effects play a role with respect to civic attitudes and actions, but not for *civic skills* and *social connection*.

The better understanding of youth civic engagement and the mechanisms through which it promotes associational involvement has important implications for practitioners interested in improving the recruitment and retention of engaged and active young people in associational contexts. In this sense, this study highlights that associational participation may originate in different civic engagement factors, what allows precise information to recruit engaged youths with different civic orientations. In this respect, it is

confirmed that civic duty and actions are predictive of willingness to join associations, whereas civic skills and social connection are not related to participation in associations to the same extent.

In explaining this pattern of findings, it should be noticed that we did not control for the nature of the associations considered in the study. That is, belonging to activist associations may cause different effects on civic engagement than membership in leisure associations. Accordingly, further research is needed to clarify the extent to which different profiles of civic engagement are related to different types of membership goals, and whether this can interact with the self-selection and socialization effects documented in the previous literature.

Certainly, this study has some other limitations. Mainly, it should be noted the novelty of the application of the multidimensional model of civic engagement to the study of youth associational involvement and so, the own operationalization of the factors included in the research model. Given the exploratory nature of the design, the civic engagement measures were based on previous research carried out with adolescent samples (Bobek et al. 2009; Zaff et al. 2010). Although reliability and validity of the scales were ensured, more research into the conceptualization of the used factors would be helpful. Similarly, data derived from a single sample of Spanish youths. Hence, before generalizing the implications of this study, the model should be tested in other settings.

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