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Trust, Identity, Skills, or Recruitment? Assessing Four Explanations of the Relationship between Associational Involvement and the Political Participation of Migrants

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Abstract

This article investigates the nature of the relationship between associational involvement and migrant political participation. We explore the extent to which empirical evidence supports the mechanisms proposed by four popular theories in the political participation literature: social capital, group consciousness, civic voluntarism, and mobilization theory. To do so, we employ a mediation-effect approach with data from random samples of migrants in four European cities. Our results show that associational membership mainly operates through a direct effect stressing organizations' role as agents of mobilization and that associational membership and the links that migrants forge in these associations are crucial for their political engagement. The evidence presented shows that the mobilizing role of voluntary associations — not their role in developing trust, furthering group identity, or providing skills — remains the key to understanding why such organizations spur migrant political participation.

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Introduction

Both sociologists and political scientists have long examined the role of associational involvement for spurring political participation. Members of voluntary associations have been shown to be more politically involved than nonmembers, even when controlling for social status and political attitudes (Verba and Nie 1972; Verba, Nie, and Kim 1978; Leighley 1995; Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1995). Membership in voluntary associations, research shows, is conducive to political action for a variety of reasons (van Stekelenburg, Klandermans, and Akkerman 2016). In particular, four major theories, described in more detail below, aim to explain the role of membership for spurring political action: social capital, group consciousness, civic voluntarism, and mobilization theory. The first theory focuses on the role of social capital in fostering social and political trust, the second on collective identity and empowerment, the third on the civic skills developed within an association, and the last on the potential for recruitment as members of an association.

Voluntary associations' mobilizing role has also been supported by evidence from research on migrant political participation (Leighley and Vedlitz 1999; Leighley 2001; Strömblad and Adman 2011). While such studies have tried to disentangle the impact of different variables specified by prominent theories of participation, we still know little about which mechanism is responsible for the linkage between associational involvement and political participation among migrants. This article provides an analysis of whether the effect of associational membership on migrant political participation is mediated by the main variables representing the mechanisms specified in these four theories of political participation. Our analysis allows us to shed light on why joining associations supports migrant political participation and integration more broadly.

By analyzing the extent to which the key variables specified by these four approaches mediate the effect of associational membership on migrant political participation, we address the question of whether any of these approaches is backed by empirical support: social capital (trust), group consciousness (identity), civic voluntarism (skills), and mobilization (recruitment). To do so, we analyze data from random samples of migrants residing in four European cities: two in Spain (Barcelona and Madrid) and two in Switzerland (Geneva and Zurich). Our key aim is to explore the relationship between associational involvement and political participation among migrants and, in doing so, to empirically test what mechanisms link associational involvement to political participation.

By examining what links associational involvement to political participation, we can disentangle what it is about associational involvement or membership that contributes to effective participation for a particularly low-resourced and marginalized group. This focus is important for questions about migrant integration in society, their ability to make their voices heard politically, and better democratic practices in societies where migrants comprise large portions of the public. Particularly in an increasingly negative and punitive context for migrants, understanding how to

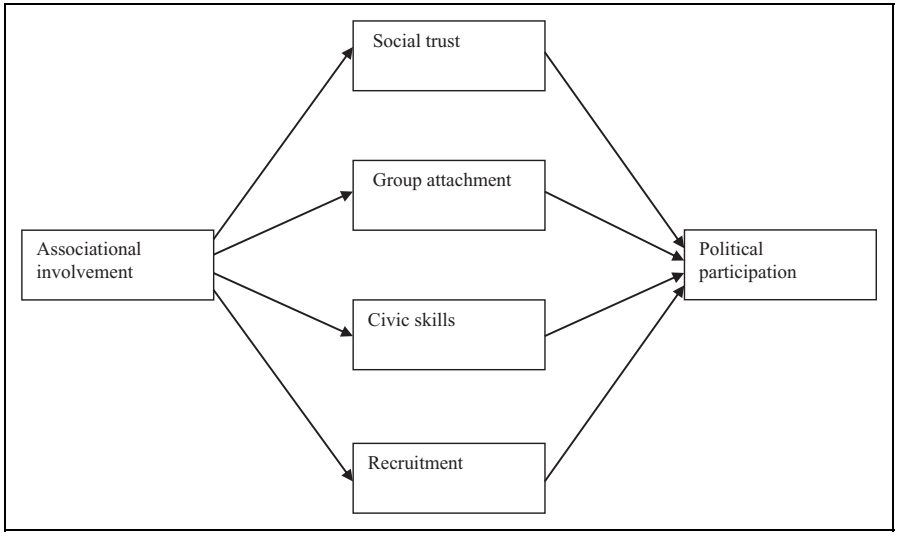

Figure 1. Four mechanisms linking associational involvement and political participation.

encourage their political participation through organizations is key to helping migrants find a voice in the running of the society of which they are part, to bringing them out of marginalization, and to compensating for poor resources.

Four Mechanisms Linking Associational Involvement to Political Participation

Since the behaviorist "revolution" of the 1950s and 1960s, scholars have developed different approaches to explain why some people participate politically, while others do not (Verba and Nie 1972; Verba, Nie, and Kim 1978; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Brady, Verba, and Scholzman 1995; Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1995). Four such theories emphasize voluntary associations' role in facilitating political participation: the social capital model, the group consciousness model, the civic voluntarism model, and the mobilization model. The first two theories are more sociological, whereas the latter two are closer to a political science perspective. Most importantly for our purposes, all four stress, at the individual level, the impact of associational involvement but differ in the mechanisms they specify. In other words, they differ in the kinds of resources that they see individuals drawing on to spur political involvement, in turn increasing the likelihood of political participation. Although all four theories have broader applications to the general population, they can also be applied to explain migrant political participation more specifically. Figure 1 summarizes the key mechanisms posited by the four approaches upon which our analysis focuses.

Social capital has become a fashionable concept in both sociology and political science (for overviews, see Portes 1998; Lin 2001; Stolle 2007). Broadly speaking, there are two main strands of social capital theories: group level and individual level. In general, while the former stresses the collective benefits that high levels of social capital bring to communities, regions, or nation-states (Putnam 1993), the latter is more concerned with individuals accruing resources from their social networks (Li, Pickles, and Savage 2005). In the more specific literature on migrant political participation, the former argues that the number, variety, and density of organizations provide social capital at the group level (Fennema and Tillie 1999, 2000; Tillie 2004). On the other hand, the latter stresses the importance of being involved in organizations at the individual level for developing social ties and networks fostering trust and reciprocity norms, which in turn underpin political participation (Jacobs and Tillie 2004). On this reading, what matters is not so much the existence and density of organizational networks at the collective level but, rather, the fact that people are members of associations and participate in activities promoted by organizations, thus developing norms of trust and reciprocity, which in turn foster political participation.

Besides this distinction concerning the level of analysis, the literature on social capital also offers different conceptions. Following Stolle (2007), we distinguish between three main conceptualizations of social capital. The first defines social capital as the various aspects of social structure that provide actors with resources allowing them to fulfill their interests (Coleman 1988, 1990). A second approach sees social capital as an investment in social relations that has an expected return in the marketplace (Portes 1998; Lin 2001; Lin, Cook, and Burt 2001). Finally, a third perspective stresses the role of networks, reciprocity norms, and trust for mutual collective benefit at center stage (Putnam 1993, 2000).[1]

It is, above all, the latter perspective that has put the role of voluntary associations at center stage. In this regard, recent work has shown the benefits that people can accrue from involvement in voluntary associations in terms of political involvement (Baglioni 2004; Maloney and Rossteuscher 2007; Maloney, van Deth, and Rossteuscher 2008; Maloney and van Deth 2010). In short, social capital theory maintains that "voluntary associations create social trust, which spills over into political trust and higher political participation" (Jacobs and Tillie 2004, 421). In this view, associational involvement is seen as an important source of social capital.

[1] Stolle (2007) further distinguishes between network-oriented and attitudinal approaches to social capital. The former look at how the structure of networks determines access to social capital and related resources, while the latter stress the socializing impact of associations or social groups. In this sense, the latter approach more closely approximates the insights from the civic voluntarism approach.

This line of reasoning has been applied to the study of migrant political participation in European cities (Berger, Galonska, and Koopmans 2004; Jacobs, Phalet, and Swyngedouw 2004; Tillie 2004; Togeby 2004; Eggert and Giugni 2010; Morales and Giugni 2011). According to this perspective, the key mechanism linking associational involvement and migrant political participation is the creation of social trust through associational involvement, which in turn leads to higher levels of political trust and, therefore, political participation (Jacobs and Tillie 2004). Some, however, have recently stressed that the relationship between social capital and political participation is more complex than this approach implies (Teney and Hanquinet 2012). Nonetheless, social capital and its correlates, such as social and political trust as well as norms of reciprocity, tend to be the assumed mechanisms linking membership in voluntary associations to political participation.

A second approach focuses on the impact that voluntary associations and other types of organizations have on the creation of collective identities and group consciousness (Jackman and Jackman 1973; Gurin, Miller, and Gurin 1980; Miller et al. 1981; McClain et al. 2009). Here, the mechanism specified is socio-psychological in nature. The main focus is on the fact that voluntary associations bring together people with similar experiences and values. Therefore, such associations foster group consciousness and solidarity among members through their encounter with one another and through the recognition of common experiences of oppression, interests, and goals. This collective experience, in turn, motivates individuals to engage in political action. For example, voluntary organizations can politicize and collectivize subgroups' interests, in an effort to counter prejudice and discrimination from mainstream society (Calhoun-Brown 1996).

In this perspective, the resources favoring political participation are collective and based on identity and awareness of inequality and/or prejudice toward minorities and other marginalized groups (Miller et al. 1981). The group consciousness approach stresses the importance of constructing discrimination as a collective grievance that necessitates political action to redress it as instrumental for political engagement (ibid.). Without the construction of inequalities and/or discrimination as *social* problems amenable to and necessitating change through political action, there would be no motivation for political action. Such a social construction, in turn, is achieved through the development of group consciousness through membership in voluntary organizations. Group consciousness here is understood as a multidimensional concept combining the following components: group identification, polar affect (preference for the in-group with respect to the out-group), polar power (sense that the in-group is in an unfavorable hierarchical position with respect to the out-group), and individual versus system blame (ibid.). Thus, group identity and processes leading to empowerment, including feelings of discrimination,

can be seen as the main mechanisms connecting associational involvement and political participation in this approach.

Resource-based theories of political participation (Verba and Nie 1972), and more specifically the civic voluntarism model (Brady, Verba, and Scholzman 1995; Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1995), take another explanatory path. This model suggests that involvement with voluntary associations provides individuals with civic skills, that is, communications and organizational skills that facilitate effective participation (Brady, Verba, and Scholzman 1995). From this perspective, such civic skills are not only acquired early in life but also developed in nonpolitical institutional settings of adult life, such as workplaces, voluntary associations, and churches. In this article, however, we focus on the role of voluntary associations, understood, by this theory, as providing the social contacts and organizational skills necessary to understand the purpose of political action and to exert effective influence. Thus, against the social capital model, the civic voluntarism model assumes that associational involvement favors political participation through the development of certain skills "that are essential to political activities" (Brady, Verba, and Scholzman 1995, 271), rather than through social and political trust stemming from voluntary associations. Here, the main mechanism linking associational involvement to political participation lies in developing such civic skills, which then favor political participation.

To be sure, the civic voluntarism model is much broader than this specific focus on civic skills. Most notably, it points to other two sorts of factors: psychological engagement with politics and recruitment networks (Brady, Verba, and Scholzman 1995). The former refers more specifically to interest in politics, concern with public issues, feeling of political efficacy, and consciousness of being part of a group with shared political interests, whereas the latter stresses internal communication networks and organizational mobilization efforts as well as recruitment into politics, which we discuss below as a separate kind of explanation.

The fourth and final approach puts recruitment networks at center stage. Indeed, this approach is perhaps the oldest and best established among the four theories under examination: mobilization theory (Rogers, Bultena, and Barb 1975; Pollock 1982; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Leighley 1996). From this perspective, membership in voluntary associations favors political participation insofar as one is "pulled" into it by other people within the association. This theory has been developed particularly in the work of Rosenstone and Hansen (1993), who stressed the importance of social-level variables for participation. For example, social networks allow the spread of information but are not enough to explain participation. Rather, they argue, we must look at mobilization. Activists and political entrepreneurs are strategic about whom they mobilize. For example, they exercise targeted mobilization from within political organizations, mobilizing those members that they think will provide most benefit, such as those whom they already know or who are more

central to the social networks and, therefore, more likely to mobilize other members in turn, including those with most power and resources.

The mobilization model — and, therefore, the importance of recruitment for political engagement — is also central in theories of social movements and protest behavior, given its relevance for explaining how having the opportunity to be mobilized influences actual participation. Various studies have shown that being asked to participate is a major channel through which people are brought into social movements and protest activities (Passy and Giugni 2001; Schussman and Soule 2005; Walgrave and Wouters 2014). As Meyer (2007, 47) maintains, "the best predictor of why anyone takes on any political action is whether that person has been asked to do so." From this perspective, recruitment is the key mechanism bringing people to protest behavior.

In sum, the four theories discussed here all assume the existence of a connection between associational involvement and political participation. However, each stresses a specific factor — or set of factors — to explain such linkage: social capital theory focuses on social and political trust, group consciousness theory on collective identity and empowerment, civic voluntarism theory on civic skills, and mobilization theory on recruitment. The remainder of this article confronts these four explanations in order to assess which best accounts for migrant political participation.

Data and Operationalization

Data analyzed in this study were collected as part of the LOCALMULTIDEM (Multicultural Democracy and Immigrants Social Capital in Europe: Participation, Organisational Networks, and Public Policies at the Local Level) collaborative research project (Morales et al. 2014).[2] The project gathered individual-level data through a survey conducted on random samples of different groups of migrants and a control group of autochthonous citizens in several European cities. This article focuses on four cities — two in Spain (Barcelona and Madrid) and two in Switzerland (Geneva and Zurich) — where all the necessary survey questions for our investigation were asked. Comparing cities both within and across countries gives us some leverage to generalize the findings beyond a specific local case. Furthermore, Spain and Switzerland provide two national cases with different immigration traditions. Both countries host sizeable stocks of immigrants today, although the migrant-origin population is larger in Switzerland than in Spain (Eurostat 2017). Another difference between the two countries lies in their specific migration histories: Switzerland is a traditional country of immigration, whereas Spain has historically been a country of emigration and only recently become a country of

[2] See Palacios and Morales (2013) for response rates, sample sizes, and other technical details. See Morales and Giugni (2011) for a summary of main findings.

immigration. Finally, the composition of each country's migrant population is different. Switzerland has traditionally hosted immigrants from Italy, Portugal, and Spain, although more recently, it has seen incoming flows from Turkey and the former Yugoslavia (Ruedin 2012). Spain, by contrast, is home to immigrants from its former colonies (most notably, Ecuadorians and Andeans) as well as from North Africa (most notably, Moroccans) (Ros 2011).

The migrant population included in our analysis varies in terms of place of residence, national origin, formal status (economic migrants or asylum-seekers), and religion (Catholic or Muslim), thus providing external validity to our findings. Specifically, the following migrant groups are included in the analysis: Ecuadorians, other Andeans (Bolivians, Colombians, and Peruvians), and Moroccans in Barcelona and Madrid; Kosovars and Italians in Geneva; and Kosovars, Italians, and Turks in Zurich. The overall sample includes 2,294 individuals, after deleting missing cases on any variable of interest.[3]

In Barcelona and Madrid, migrants were defined as those respondents who either were born in one of the foreign countries selected to define migrant origin or had at least one parent born in the respective country. In Geneva and Zurich, migrants were selected based on their nationality at the time of sampling, but respondents randomly selected to the autochthonous group that they were from, or who had parents from one of the respective foreign backgrounds, were reallocated to their respective migrant groups. A majority of respondents were born outside the country of residence. However, the proportion of foreign-born migrants is higher in the two Swiss cities than in the two Spanish cities.[4]

The survey was conducted in 2007–2008. Sampling strategies had to adapt to the different availability of registers or lists that covered the population of interest. In all four cities, nominal individual samples were randomly drawn from local population registers.[5] This study examines only data on migrants, as we wish to focus on the relationship between associational involvement and political participation among migrants. The dependent variable is political participation. It is measured by asking respondents whether they participated in a number of political activities in the 12

[3] Response rates in the original sample were the following: In Barcelona, Bolivians (68%), Colombians (50%), Ecuadorians (50%), Peruvians (46%), and Moroccans (44%); in Madrid, Bolivians (41%), Colombians (31%), Ecuadorians (45%), Peruvians (36%), and Moroccans (42%); in Geneva, Italians (51%) and Kosovars (60%); and in Zurich, Italians (48%), Kosovars (35%), and Turks (37%).

[4] The percentage of foreign-born migrants among respondents included in the analyses is 2.13 in Barcelona, 0.64 in Madrid, 8.94 in Geneva, and 10.37 in Zurich.

[5] In Barcelona and Madrid, due to problems with updating the local register and response rates, part of the autochthonous sample was selected through random routes, and a small proportion of the migrant samples was selected through a spatial sampling procedure. In Geneva and Zurich, the sampling frame for the autochthonous subsample was the telephone register.

months prior to the interview.[6] Based on answers to this question, one may distinguish between several main forms of participation (Teorell, Torcal, and Montero 2007). In our analyses, we examine a composite measure of political participation that includes all specific activities listed in the question. The resulting variable is a dummy variable coded 1 if respondents had taken part in at least one type of activity and 0 if they had not. This measure refers to participation addressing the country of residence and excludes participation addressing the home country. We do so in order to avoid comparing participation relating to home countries characterized by very different situations with regard to the place of the groups there. Moreover, some of our controls, such as political interest and trust, refer to the country of residence.[7]

Associational involvement is measured through a question listing different types of organizations and asking respondents whether they are currently members or have previously been members of each type of organization.[8] The resulting variable is a dummy variable coded 1 for respondents who were or had been members of at least one type of organization and 0 for those who were not. We also created an additional measure focusing on respondents who were members of at least one association and, therefore, excluding nonmembers. The resulting variable is a count variable ranging from 1 (the respondent was a member of only one type of association) to 8 (the respondent was a member of eight different types of association). Once again, both current and past membership, or both, are considered. As we explain in more detail below, we use this variable in additional analyses as a robustness check.

Each model is operationalized, for the empirical tests, through one key variable. The social capital model is assessed by means of generalized social trust, a key intermediary in the social capital mechanism. The dataset does not include a

[6] The list includes 12 specific political activities: contacted a politician; contacted a government or local government official; worked in a political party; worked in a political action group; wore or displayed a badge, sticker, or poster; signed a petition; took part in a public demonstration; boycotted certain products; deliberately bought certain products for political reasons; donated money to a political organisation or group; took part in a strike; or contacted the media.

[7] We also ran all models with another measure of political participation — and additive scale — for robustness purposes. The results were virtually identical.

[8] The following types of organizations were considered: sports club or club for outdoor activities; organization for cultural activities, tradition-preserving, or any hobby activities; political party; trade union; business, employers, professional, or farmers' organization; organization for humanitarian aid, charity, or social welfare; organization for environmental protection or animal rights; human-rights or peace organization; religious or church organization; immigrant or specific ethnic groups' organization; anti-racism organization; educational organization; youth organization; organization for the retired/elderly; women's organization; residents, housing, or neighborhood organization; or other organization. Involvement in political parties has been excluded to avoid explaining political participation with political participation.

straightforward indicator of reciprocity, which is another crucial aspect stressed by this approach, but to our knowledge previous studies do not include this measure either. Social trust is measured through a question asking respondents to what extent they think that most people can be trusted or that one cannot be too careful. This is a scale (0–10), where 0 means *lowest* and 10 *highest trust*.

The group consciousness approach is operationalized by means of ethnic group attachment. We consider it an indicator of group identification, which is a key aspect in this theory. Group attachment is measured by a question asking respondents how attached they felt to people of the same ethnic group. This is a scale (0–10), where 0 means *weakest* and 10 means *strongest group attachment*.

The civic voluntarism model is operationalized by means of a proxy for civic skills, which is the core aspect underlined in this theoretical model. This proxy uses, for each type of association, the weekly number of hours devoted to the association in which respondents were more active. The idea is that the more time one devotes to an association, the more he or she may acquire civic skills, since devoting time in an association generally means doing work that can provide such civic skills, according to Brady, Verba, and Scholzman (1995). This number ranges in our sample from 0 to 285.[9] We rescaled the variable to range between 0 and 10 to obtain coefficients comparable with the others.

The mobilization model is operationalized by means of a proxy for recruitment in the association. This proxy uses the number of years respondents were or had been involved in the association. The idea is that the longer one has been involved in an association, the more likely he/she is to have met people and been asked to participate. This number ranges from 0 to 164.[10] Again, we rescaled the variable to range between 0 and 10 to obtain coefficients comparable with the others.

We include the usual control variables for political participation in the regression analyses. More specifically, we control for age (continuous variable),[11] male gender, and education (ordinal variable with six categories going from the lowest to the highest level with tertiary education as the reference category). In addition, since we are dealing with a population of migrant origin, we also control for proficiency in the language of the place of residence (a dummy for speaking fluently). Additionally, we control for a number of political attitudes traditionally considered by scholars of political participation: political interest, trust, and efficacy. Political interest is measured through two items capturing the interest in host society politics. This is a scale (1–4), where 1 means *lowest* and 4 means *highest interest* (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$). Political trust is measured through a standard question on the extent to which

[9] The number of hours may exceed the total hours in a week as one can be involved in more than one type of association.

[10] The number of years may exceed the total years one may plausibly have been involved in a lifetime as one can be involved in more than one type of association.

[11] We excluded respondents younger than 18 or older than 85.

respondents trust a variety of political institutions. We created a scale (0–10) from the original scale variables (0–10), combining nine items where 0 means *lowest* and 10 means *highest trust* (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.90$): trust civil servants, trust city government, trust city assembly, trust regional parliament, trust the police, trust regional government, trust country government, trust legal system, and trust country national parliament. Political efficacy is measured by asking respondents to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: "People like me definitely have an influence on governmental politics." This is a scale (1–5), where 1 means *lowest* and 5 *highest efficacy*. Further, we control for the duration of stay, measured as the number of years respondents had spent in the country of residence. This measure is particularly important insofar as our main indicator of the mobilization model consists of the number of years spent in an organization.[12] Finally, we control for city differences with fixed effects. Appendix A shows the descriptive statistics of the variables included in the analyses. Appendix B shows the means of all variables by city and group, so as to provide some contextual information.

Our main analysis is performed on the full sample made of both members and nonmembers of voluntary associations. However, we also run two additional analyses, using the count measure for associational involvement instead of the dummy variable: first on the same sample and then on a smaller sample of 570 individuals who were members of associations, therefore excluding nonmembers. The latter analysis is done because in the main analysis, the value 0 on the variables pertaining to the number of hours respondents devoted to the association and the number of years they were or had been involved in the association has two different meaning: in both cases, respondents who were not members and respondents who devoted zero hours or had been involved zero years in the association cannot be distinguished. Therefore, migrants who were not members of any associations take the same value as those who were members but either devoted zero hours or were members less than one year.

Findings

The aim of our analysis is to ascertain whether we observe any mediation effects of the relationship between associational membership and political participation through indicators pertaining to the theories discussed earlier (one indicator for each theory). Each path represents the link between associational membership and political participation as a potential mechanism for the influence of associational involvement, as depicted in Figure 1. For a mediation effect to be present, three requirements must be met (Baron and Kenny 1986). First, the independent variable (here, associational membership) must have an effect on the dependent variable

[12] The number of years in the country and the number of years in the association are only weakly correlated (the Pearson correlation coefficient is lower than 0.30).

Table 1. Effects of Associational Involvement on Migrant Political Participation (Step 1).

Associational membership	0.90***	(0.11)
Controls		
Age	–0.01*	(0.01)
Male	0.12	(0.11)
Education (ref.: first and second stage of tertiary)		
Not completed primary	–0.36	(0.25)
Primary or first stage of basic	–0.49**	(0.19)
Lower level of secondary or second stage basic	–0.54***	(0.16)
Upper secondary	–0.44**	(0.16)
Post-secondary, non-tertiary	–0.38	(0.20)
Language (ref.: speaks at best reasonably)	0.55***	(0.14)
Political interest	0.45***	(0.06)
Political trust	–0.05	(0.03)
Political efficacy	0.03	(0.04)
Years in country	0.01*	(0.01)
City (ref.: Madrid)		
Barcelona	0.56***	(0.13)
Geneva	0.58**	(0.18)
Zurich	–0.15	(0.19)
Constant	–2.22***	(0.34)
Log likelihood	–1,148.42	
Pseudo *R*-squared	0.11	
N	2,294	

Note: Logistic regressions (unstandardized coefficients). Standard errors in parentheses.
*$p \leq 0.05$. **$p \leq 0.01$. ***$p \leq 0.001$.

(here, political participation) when the mediating variable (here, each of the four indicators described above) is left out of the model. Second, the independent variable must have an effect on the mediating variable. Third, the independent variable's effect on the dependent variable must be reduced, and the dependent and mediating variable must be positively correlated, when controlling for the mediating variable.

The analysis itself proceeds in three stages accordingly, as depicted in Tables 1 to 3. Each table reflects one of the three steps just described. Table 1 shows the results for the tests of the direct effect of associational membership on political participation (step 1). Table 2 presents results for the effects of associational membership on each of the four mediating variables: social trust, group attachment, civic skills, and recruitment (step 2). Finally, Table 3 provides evidence allowing us to ascertain whether there is a mediating role for these four variables by examining their effects on political participation (step 3).[13]

[13] Logistic or linear regressions have been applied, depending on the nature of the dependent variable, which is binary in certain models and continuous in others. Since we are not

Table 2. Effects of Associational Involvement on Mediating Variables (Step 2).

	Social Capital Model: Social Trust		Group Consciousness Model: Group Attachment		Civic Voluntarism Model: Civic Skills (Hours Devoted to Association)		Mobilization Model: Recruitment (Years in Association)	
Associational membership	0.03	(0.13)	–0.06	(0.12)	0.18***	(0.01)	0.72***	(0.03)
Controls								
Age	–0.01	(0.01)	–0.01	(0.01)	–0.00**	(0.00)	0.00**	(0.00)
Male	–0.02	(0.11)	0.02	(0.10)	0.02	(0.01)	0.07**	(0.03)
Education (ref.: first and second stage of tertiary)								
Not completed primary	–0.55*	(0.24)	0.87***	(0.23)	–0.09**	(0.03)	–0.08	(0.06)
Primary or first stage of basic	–0.62**	(0.19)	1.01***	(0.18)	–0.10***	(0.02)	–0.04	(0.05)
Lower level of secondary or second stage basic	–0.15	(0.17)	0.69***	(0.16)	–0.09***	(0.02)	0.02	(0.04)
Upper secondary	–0.21	(0.17)	0.58***	(0.16)	–0.09***	(0.02)	–0.02	(0.04)
Post-secondary, non-tertiary	–0.22	(0.21)	0.38	(0.20)	–0.09***	(0.02)	0.01	(0.05)
Language (ref.: speaks at best reasonably)	–0.66***	(0.13)	0.26*	(0.12)	0.03	(0.02)	0.00	(0.03)
Political interest	0.17**	(0.06)	0.06	(0.06)	0.01*	(0.01)	0.05**	(0.02)
Political trust	0.39***	(0.03)	0.15***	(0.03)	–0.00	(0.00)	0.01	(0.01)
Political efficacy	–0.00	(0.04)	0.06	(0.03)	0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.01)
Years in country	0.01*	(0.01)	–0.00	(0.01)	0.00***	(0.00)	0.02***	(0.00)
City (ref.: Madrid)								
Barcelona	–0.32*	(0.14)	–0.36**	(0.13)	0.04*	(0.02)	0.00	(0.03)
Geneva	–0.46*	(0.19)	–0.04	(0.18)	0.05*	(0.02)	–0.05	(0.05)
Zurich	–1.00***	(0.18)	–0.02	(0.17)	–0.01	(0.02)	–0.07	(0.04)
Constant	3.39***	(0.34)	6.14***	(0.32)	0.10*	(0.04)	–0.50***	(0.09)
Adjusted *R*-squared	0.10		0.03		0.11		0.30	
N	2,294		2,294		2,294		2,294	

Note: Ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions (unstandardized coefficients). Standard errors in parentheses.
*$p \leq 0.05$. **$p \leq 0.01$. ***$p \leq 0.001$.

Table 3. Effects of Mediating Variables on Migrant Political Participation (Step 3).

	Social Capital Model: Social Trust		Group Consciousness Model: Group Attachment		Civic Voluntarism Model: Civic Skills (Hours Devoted to Association)		Mobilization Model: Recruitment (Years in Association)	
Associational membership	0.90***	(0.11)	0.90***	(0.11)	0.84***	(0.12)	0.70***	(0.13)
Mediating variables								
Social trust	0.04	(0.02)	—		—		—	
Group attachment	—		–0.03	(0.02)	—		—	
Civic skills (hours devoted to association)	—		—		0.33	(0.18)	—	
Recruitment (years in association)	—		—		—		0.30***	(0.08)
Controls								
Age	–0.01*	(0.01)	–0.01*	(0.01)	–0.01*	(0.01)	–0.01*	(0.01)
Male	0.12	(0.11)	0.12	(0.11)	0.11	(0.11)	0.09	(0.11)
Education (ref.: first and second stage of tertiary)								
Not completed primary	–0.34	(0.25)	–0.34	(0.25)	–0.33	(0.25)	–0.33	(0.25)
Primary or first stage of basic	–0.46*	(0.19)	–0.45*	(0.19)	–0.45*	(0.19)	–0.47*	(0.19)
Lower level of secondary or second stage basic	–0.53**	(0.16)	–0.51**	(0.16)	–0.51**	(0.16)	–0.55***	(0.16)
Upper secondary	–0.43**	(0.16)	–0.42**	(0.16)	–0.41*	(0.16)	–0.43**	(0.16)
Post-secondary, non-tertiary	–0.37	(0.20)	–0.37	(0.20)	–0.35	(0.20)	–0.38	(0.20)
Language (ref.: speaks at best reasonably)	0.57***	(0.14)	0.55***	(0.14)	0.54***	(0.14)	0.55***	(0.14)
Political interest	0.44***	(0.06)	0.45***	(0.06)	0.44***	(0.06)	0.43***	(0.06)
Political trust	–0.06	(0.03)	–0.04	(0.03)	–0.05	(0.03)	–0.05	(0.03)
Political efficacy	0.03	(0.04)	0.03	(0.04)	0.03	(0.04)	0.03	(0.04)
Years in country	0.01*	(0.01)	0.01*	(0.01)	0.01	(0.01)	0.01	(0.01)
City (ref.: Madrid)								
Barcelona	0.57***	(0.13)	0.55***	(0.13)	0.54***	(0.13)	0.56***	(0.13)
Geneva	0.59**	(0.18)	0.58**	(0.18)	0.56**	(0.18)	0.61***	(0.18)
Zurich	–0.12	(0.19)	–0.15	(0.19)	–0.15	(0.19)	–0.14	(0.19)
Constant	–2.34***	(0.35)	–2.02***	(0.37)	–2.25***	(0.34)	–2.03***	(0.34)
Log likelihood	–1,146.93		–1,147.34		–1,146.42		–1,140.79	
Pseudo *R*-squared	0.11		0.11		0.11		0.12	
N	2,294		2,294		2,294		2,294	

Note: Logistic regressions (unstandardized coefficients). Standard errors in parentheses.
*$p \leq 0.05$. **$p \leq 0.01$. ***$p \leq 0.001$.

The first stage of our analysis (Table 1) examines the direct effect of our measure of associational membership on the indicator of political participation (first requirement for the presence of a mediation effect). The results are quite straightforward: net of certain individual characteristics and of the local context, those migrants who were members of voluntary associations are significantly more likely to have participated politically in the 12 months prior to the interview, as compared to those who were not members. As discussed earlier, this finding is consistent with widespread evidence in the literature on associational membership's positive influence for political participation in general (Verba and Nie 1972; Verba, Nie, and Kim 1978; Leighley 1995; Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1995) and among migrants more specifically (Leighley and Vedlitz 1999; Leighley 2001; Strömblad and Adman 2011).

The first model also allows us to briefly discuss the role of the control variables. Among the socio-demographic characteristics, both education and language proficiency seem to matter. Specifically, migrants with first and second stages of tertiary education (the reference category) were more likely to participate in associations than were migrants with lower education, except for the lowest (not completed primary education) and second highest (post-secondary, non-tertiary education) levels. We also observe a statistically significant, though very small, effect of age. By contrast, gender has no significant effect. Finally, among the political controls, we observe a strong effect of political interest on our measure of participation. This finding should not surprise us, given the strong and obvious connection between political interest and participation (Brady, Verba, and Scholzman 1995). Neither political trust nor political efficacy, however, is significantly related to migrants' participation. A significant but small effect can also be seen for the variable measuring the duration of stay in the country of residence.

The second stage of the analysis (Table 2) tests for the presence of associational membership's effect on the mediating variables (second requirement for the presence of a mediation effect). Since we are testing the mediation effect of four variables, we ran four separate models. The first model refers to social capital theory, the second to group consciousness theory, the third to civic voluntarism theory, and the fourth to mobilization theory. For a mediation effect to be present, we should observe an effect of associational membership on these variables. The results suggest that only the civic voluntarism and mobilization mechanisms meet the requirements of this second step for a mediation role, as we observe a positive effect of associational membership on civic skills (hours devoted to association) and recruitment (years in association). The effect is particularly strong for the mobilization model. The social capital and group consciousness theories, by contrast, are not supported by this second step of the analysis. Membership in voluntary associations

interested in comparing the size of the magnitude of different variables within models, we show unstandardized coefficients.

is uncorrelated with the indicator of social capital (social trust) or with the indicator of group consciousness (grou attachment). We can therefore already conclude that there is no mediation for these variables.

A remark concerning the social capital model is in order. As mentioned earlier, at least in the applications carried out in existing studies of migrant political participation, voluntary associations are seen as creating social trust, which in turn spills over into political trust to favor participation (Jacobs and Tillie 2004). In the model looking at the mediation effect of social trust, we observe a statistically significant and strong positive effect of political trust. Given the theoretical, but also empirical, connection between these two forms of trust, we also ran a model without political trust among the predictors, a model with political trust as the dependent (mediating) variable and social trust among the predictors, and a model with political trust as the dependent (mediating) variable and without social trust among the predictors. The result remains the same in all these additional analyses: the social capital mechanism finds no support. Associational membership's effect on political trust is significant at the 10 percent level in the latter two models, but the effect's sign is negative and points in the opposite direction than social capital theory would predict.

The third stage (Table 3) of the analysis examines the reduction of associational membership's effect on the indicator of political participation, as well as the presence of a positive correlation between the dependent and mediating variables, when the latter are included in the models (third requirement for the presence of a mediation effect). Again, we show four separate models, one for each theory. As we can see, the effect of associational membership remains virtually unchanged in the case of social trust and group attachment. This finding suggests that neither the social capital nor group consciousness model — which already failed in the first step — shows a mediation effect. Furthermore, neither social trust nor group attachment is significantly correlated with political participation. Associational involvement's effect is slightly reduced in the case of civic skills, indicating a potential mediation of this variable. However, besides this reduction being quite limited, civic skills, as measured through the hours devoted to association, are not significantly correlated with political participation, although very close to being significant at the 5 percent level. A mediation effect, by contrast, clearly occurs for recruitment. Once we include the years in association in the fourth model, associational membership's effect goes from 0.90 to 0.70, meaning that part of its effect is explained by the duration of membership. The latter, in turn, increases the likelihood that migrants have been recruited to political participation. Moreover, recruitment's effect on participation in this model is also statistically significant, suggesting the presence of a mediation effect in the mobilization model.

To check the robustness of our findings, we ran two additional analyses, using the count measure of associational membership instead of the dummy variable: one performed on the full sample and another on the smaller sample of members. Table 4 summarizes the results of these additional analyses. They are largely in line with the main findings. In the full sample, the count measure of associational

Table 4. Summary Findings of Additional Analyses (Count Variable).

	Social Capital Model: Social Trust	Group Consciousness Model: Group Attachment	Civic Voluntarism Model: Civic Skills (Hours Devoted to Association)	Mobilization Model: Recruitment (Years in Association)
Full sample ($N = 2{,}294$)				
Direct effect of associational membership on political participation (step 1)	0.52***	0.52***	0.52***	0.52***
Effect of associational membership on mediating variables (step 2)	0.04	0.00	0.12***	0.55***
ffect of associational membership on political participation when controlling for the mediating variables (step 3)	0.52***	0.52***	0.49***	0.39***
Effect of mediating variables on political participation (step 3)	0.04	–0.03	0.26	0.25**
Member-only sample ($N = 570$)				
Direct effect of associational membership on political participation (step 1)	0.29**	0.29**	0.29**	0.29**
Effect of associational membership on mediating variables (step 2)	–0.02	0.12	0.11***	0.59***
Effect of associational membership on political participation when controlling for the mediating variables (step 3)	0.30**	0.30**	0.29*	0.15
Effect of mediating variables on political participation (step 3)	0.15***	–0.08*	–0.01	0.26*

Note: Same model specification as in Tables 1–3. The coefficients in the first row for each of the two analyses are repeated from the model with no mediating variables. *$p \leq 0.05$. **$p \leq 0.01$. ***$p \leq 0.001$.

membership has a statistically significant effect on political participation (step 1), as well as on the measures of civic skills and recruitment (step 2). Moreover, this effect is reduced when controlling for these two mediating variables (step 3) — although to a very limited extent in the case of hours devoted to association — while only years in association displays a significant effect in the same model (step 3). In the smaller member-only sample, we observe once again a significant effect of the extent of associational membership on political participation (step 1), as well as on civic skills and recruitment (step 2), and a reduction when controlling for recruitment (step 3), while the latter variable displays a significant effect on political participation in the same model (step 3). In both cases, the additional evidence supports above all the mobilization model and its stress on recruitment, while the other three theories are not backed by these analyses. This lack of support holds especially for the social capital and group consciousness theories. Recruitment's mediation effect in the member-only sample is even stronger as the effect is no longer statistically significant when controlling for the mediating variable.

In sum, our analysis yields three main findings. First, it suggests that migrants who were involved in voluntary associations were more likely to engage in political actions. Second, the evidence presented here does not provide support for three of the four mechanisms under study. However, we did find evidence of a mediation effect for the mobilization model, suggesting that recruitment is the main mechanism linking associational membership to migrant political participation. The additional analyses using an alternative measure of our main independent variable (the extent of associational membership), first on the full sample and then on a sample restricted to members only, yield similar results, providing a robustness check to our main analysis.

Conclusion

Research on migrant political participation has found that their associational involvement supports their political participation across groups and countries (Verba and Nie 1972; Verba, Nie, and Kim 1978; Leighley 1995; Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1995). But why does associational involvement foster political participation? There is scant research addressing this question and offering explanations for such linkage. The present study sheds light on the nature of this relationship. Often, scholarship has assumed that associational membership leads to increased levels of political participation through the generation of social capital, as well as through the impact of the latter on social and political trust (Berger, Galonska, and Koopmans 2004; Jacobs, Phalet, and Swyngedouw 2004; Tillie 2004; Togeby 2004; Eggert and Giugni 2010; Morales and Giugni 2011). However, this connection is more often assumed than empirically shown. It is therefore important to investigate the mechanisms linking migrants' associational involvement and political participation. To this end, we explored the

extent to which empirical evidence supports the mechanisms proposed by four key theories of political participation: social capital (trust), group consciousness (identity), civic voluntarism (skills), and mobilization (recruitment). We operationalized four alternative mechanisms linking associational membership to political participation, with reference to the theories commonly outlined in studies of migrant political participation. Each theory linking associational involvement and political participation among migrants points to a specific mechanism as mediating this relationship and explaining the effect of associational involvement on political participation.

To operationalize each theoretical mechanism by means of the available data, some simplifying assumptions had to be applied. We took social trust to capture the social capital model, group attachment to capture the group consciousness model, the number of hours devoted to an association — as an indicator of civic skills — to capture the civic voluntarism model, and finally the number of years spent in an association — as an indicator of the likelihood of recruitment — to capture the mobilization model. Had more variables been available, a more nuanced operationalization of each model would have been ideal, but we believe that these variables cover the crucial elements of the mechanisms specified by each theory, at least as they have been applied to the study of migrant political participation.

Our findings challenge two of the four theories, as we found no strong evidence supporting the main mechanisms they posit. At least when it comes to migrant political participation, the evidence presented in this study suggests that neither social capital nor group consciousness theories hold much promise for making sense of associational involvement's effect involvement on participation. The civic voluntarism theory was similarly not strongly backed by our evidence. Yet we found, above all, evidence supporting the mobilization model and its underlying mechanism stressing recruitment — "being asked," in Brady, Verba, and Scholzman's (1995) formulation — within voluntary associations. As such, our study's main conclusion is that associational membership's effect on participation is likely to be the result of mobilization through network effects of membership, facilitating the spread of information about political activities and the meeting of others who may ask one to join in political action. Voluntary associations thus play a mobilization role and favor political participation, regardless of their impact on social capital, group consciousness, or civic skills. Such a mobilizing role has been shown by research on engagement in social movements and protest activities (Passy and Giugni 2001; Schussman and Soule 2005; Walgrave and Wouters 2014), and social networks' impact on political participation is a well-established finding more generally (Campbell 2013). Such an effect might not work in precisely the ways in which certain popular theories — such as social capital, group consciousness, and civic voluntarism — have posited, at least not when applied to the study of migrant political participation. As we have tried to show, in the case of migrants, voluntary associations act as a powerful recruitment channel into politics.

Additional analyses with an alternative measure counting the number of associations of which one is a member yielded very similar results, providing robustness checks. These additional analyses, done both on the full sample and on a smaller sample restricted to those respondents who were members of at least one association, strengthen our findings. The one performed on the smaller sample, in particular, calls for further research on the *extent* of associational membership rather than on the simpler members/nonmembers distinction most often used in previous research (Berger, Galonska, and Koopmans 2004; Jacobs, Phalet, and Swyngedouw 2004; Tillie 2004; Togeby 2004; Eggert and Giugni 2010; Morales and Giugni 2011).

Our conclusion must be understood in the context of the limitations of our analysis, which rests on a limited choice of indicators to test the four theories and the mechanisms derived from them. We argue, however, that the variables used in our analysis can be seen as key to these theories. Another, more fundamental, limitation inherent in our study is methodological. Since we are using cross-sectional data, we cannot fully rule out the possibility of reciprocal causality. While this possibility is shared by much previous work in this field (Bekkers 2012), it remains an important consideration when evaluating results. Most importantly, with cross-sectional data one cannot exclude selection effects. Recent work on civic engagement and political socialization has shown that self-selection effects, rather than socialization effects, explain this relationship, that is, that voluntary associations work more like "pools of democracy" than "schools of democracy" (van Ingen and van der Meer 2016). While we cannot fully exclude the same kind of effects in our own study, we believe that this problem is more important when assessing associational involvement's direct effect on political participation than when looking at the mechanisms explaining this relationship.

The present study's main goal was to test the empirical evidence for the paths posited by four theories linking membership and participation. Future studies should focus on panel data featuring repeated measures over time in the same individuals to assess any reciprocal and selection effects. Also, future research should extend this analysis beyond specific migrant groups to cover all migrants and the general population. While previous research suggests that social-psychological mechanisms known to affect natives also work for immigrants to a great extent (Klandermans, van der Toorn, and van Stekelenburg 2008), some specific features of the immigrant population might lead to different results. Moreover, following Sampson (2012), we might consider future research on the influence of location and how civic organizations influence patterns of individual mobilization across different neighborhoods. We hope that the current investigation has shown that the literature on migrant political integration can no longer take for granted the major posited mechanisms but should empirically disentangle the link between membership and engagement and further test whether recruitment is the major mechanism linking the two.

Appendix A

Descriptives

	N	Mean	*SD*	Min.	Max.
Full sample					
Political participation	2,294	0.25	0.43	0	1
Associational membership (dummy)	2,294	0.25	0.43	0	1
Associational membership (count)	2,294	0.37	0.78	0	7
Social trust	2,294	4.99	2.60	0	10
Group attachment	2,294	7.72	2.38	0	10
Hours devoted to association	2,294	0.09	0.30	0	6.53
Years in association	2,294	0.26	0.75	0	9.45
Age	2,294	40.37	13.35	18	85
Male	2,294	0.56	0.50	0	1
Education	2,294	2.58	1.48	0	5
Language	2,294	0.64	0.48	0	1
Political interest	2,294	2.34	0.89	1	4
Political trust	2,294	6.19	1.84	0	10
Political efficacy	2,294	2.54	1.48	1	5
Years in country	2,294	14.16	12.98	0	69
Member-only sample					
Political participation	570	0.43	0.50	0	1
Associational membership (count)	570	1.48	0.90	1	7
Social trust	570	5.00	2.65	0	10
Group attachment	570	7.55	2.36	0	10
Hours devoted to association	570	0.25	0.40	0	3.37
Years in association	570	0.86	1.25	0	9.45
Age	570	42.10	13.98	18	81
Male	570	0.61	0.49	0	1
Education	570	3.09	1.50	0	5
Language	570	0.75	0.43	0	1
Political interest	570	2.49	0.92	1	4
Political trust	570	6.09	1.76	0	10
Political efficacy	570	2.42	1.46	1	5
Years in country	570	16.17	14.40	0	59

Appendix B

Group Characteristics (Means)

	Barcelona			Madrid			Geneva		Zurich		
	Moroccans	Ecuadorians	Other Andeans	Moroccans	Ecuadorians	Other Andeans	Kosovars	Italians	Kosovars	Italians	Turks
Political participation	0.35	0.32	0.38	0.09	0.28	0.23			0.15	0.16	0.18
Associational membership	0.28	0.29	0.33	0.04	0.25	0.33	0.44	0.25	0.30	0.13	0.20
Social trust	5.44	4.32	4.67	5.81	4.74	4.95	0.44	0.19	5.34	4.68	4.59
Group attachment	7.09	7.79	7.26	7.80	8.03	7.77	4.77	5.61	7.87	8.34	7.11
Hours devoted to association	0.10	0.13	0.14	0.01	0.07	0.10	7.72	7.85	0.08	0.05	0.04
Years in association	0.17	0.25	0.28	0.03	0.12	0.19	0.22	0.10	0.81	0.13	0.19
Age	36.06	39.48	40.03	33.28	35.14	36.94	0.82	0.12	58.16	40.17	40.30
Male	0.71	0.48	0.49	0.62	0.44	0.43	56.77	34.94	0.67	0.77	0.59
Education	2.32	2.78	3.39	2.03	2.38	3.09	0.54	0.55	2.17	2.36	2.53
Language	0.57	1.00	1.00	0.26	1.00	1.00	2.53	2.80	0.14	0.36	0.29
Political interest	2.50	2.30	2.39	2.25	2.25	2.32	0.60	0.58	2.17	2.54	2.41
Political trust	6.02	5.81	5.63	5.95	6.08	5.76	2.20	2.40	6.58	6.94	6.32
Political efficacy	2.67	2.20	2.22	2.96	2.27	2.15	6.16	7.06	2.51	2.69	3.22
Years in country	11.45	7.03	7.88	7.30	7.08	6.22	2.40	2.82	37.12	16.62	17.69
N	176	219	212	246	259	239	35.49	12.99	187	213	186

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