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Brittle bridges: ethnic segregation across and within civic organizations

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Civic organizations are often depicted as vehicles for social integration: Since they gather people around common interests and have relatively low entry barriers, they may facilitate interactions that bridge social divides prevailing in other domains. However, this hopeful portrayal rests on several critical yet largely untested assumptions. This study more closely investigates the bridging potential of civic organizations, focusing on ethnicity as a key social boundary. Using unique Dutch survey data, we show that: (i) There is strong ethnic segregation *across* civic organizations, which persists after accounting for educational differences between individuals and organizations; (ii) There is ethnic segregation *within* civic organizations in participants' contacts with co-members; (iii) Participants integrate less well in organizations with more ethnic outgroup members and are more likely to leave such organizations. In sum, homophilous sorting dynamics when people join, interact within, and leave civic organizations limit their capacity to facilitate positive inter-ethnic contact. Additional efforts are thus necessary for civic organizations to fully live up to their bridging potential and mitigate rather than reinforce existing ethnic divides.

Introduction

Civic organizations such as sports clubs, leisure groups, and cultural associations are often portrayed as vehicles for social integration, as anybody could, in principle, get involved in their activities. The hope is that civic organizations act as meeting places for people from different backgrounds, thus facilitating positive intergroup contact, fostering generalized trust, and contributing to a more cohesive and inclusive society (Stolle and Rochon, 1998; Putnam, 2000; Schiefer and Van der Noll, 2017). Notwithstanding more skeptical views, arguing that civic organizations reinforce existing social divisions (e.g. Brady, Scholzman and Verba, 1999), notions about the integrative power of civic organizations remain very popular among pundits and policymakers. The Joint Economic Committee of the U.S. Congress (2021, pp. 38–39), for example, advocates a renewal of the American civic tradition on the ground that '[civic] institutions help to cultivate relationships between people who may not otherwise meet', thereby promoting social trust and improving life chances. Similarly, the European Commission (2021) recently launched a program to improve the social integration of marginalized groups through sports clubs. The underlying idea is that intergroup ties formed in civic organizations could help members of disadvantaged groups access resources that facilitate their integration into wider society while also reducing prejudice among dominant social groups.

Ethnic differences are among the most salient and divisive boundaries in society (McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Cook, 2001). People disproportionally know, interact with, and confide in coethnics (DiPrete *et al.*, 2011; Smith, McPherson and Smith-Lovin, 2014; van Tubergen, 2015). To an important degree, ethnic segregation in personal networks can be traced back to the strong segregation of neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces along ethnic lines (Mollenhorst, Völker and Flap, 2008; Ferguson and Koning, 2018; Hwang and McDaniel, 2022). Entry to these settings is typically subject to demanding entry requirements, related to financial means or educational qualifications—resources that are unequally distributed across ethnic groups. Since civic organizations can usually be joined more easily, civic life may provide more fertile soil for inter-ethnic mixing (Mollenhorst, Völker and Flap, 2008).

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Nevertheless, the ability of civic organizations to bridge ethnic divides depends on a range of conditions. Key questions include: (i) Are different ethnic groups equally represented in civic life? (ii) Are they involved in the same organizations? (iii) Do participants interact with ethnic outgroup members inside their organizations? (iv) Do inter-ethnic contacts within organizations have a durable character? (v) Do such contacts influence outcomes beyond the organization, such as inter-ethnic attitudes? Without affirmative answers to these questions, hopes that civic organizations will help bridge ethnic divides may need to be scaled down.

Most previous research on the nexus between civic engagement and ethnic integration has focused on the first of these questions, documenting that ethnic minorities are less often involved in civic organizations than their ethnic majority counterparts (e.g. Gijsberts, der Meer and Dagevos, 2012; Greenspan, Walk and Handy, 2018; Dagevos, de Voogd-Hamelink and Damen, 2022). These differences likely stem from inequalities in financial, human, and social capital, as well as from discriminatory practices by gatekeepers in these organizations (Voicu and Şerban, 2012; Gomez-Gonzalez, Nesseler and Dietl, 2021). Furthermore, recent studies have shown that both ethnic majority and minority members tend to join civic organizations with relatively large shares of coethnics (Wiertz, 2016; Van Haaften, 2019).

Scholars have additionally started to explore the relationship between civic engagement and broader social outcomes. This body of work suggests that civic engagement may improve the ethnic diversity of friendship networks and intergroup attitudes, but that these effects—insofar as they are causal to begin with—vary across organizational contexts (Glanville, 2004; Farkas and Lindberg, 2015; Wang and Morav, 2021). However, most of this research does not account for possibly the most important aspects of organizational contexts, namely the social composition of civic organizations and the intergroup dynamics taking place within them. As a notable exception, Van der Meer (2016) does consider the ethnic composition of civic organizations, finding that involvement in ethnically diverse organizations does not influence inter-ethnic tolerance and trust, nor ethnocentrism.

Altogether, while previous studies provide relevant insights regarding the contribution of civic organizations to ethnic integration, several essential issues remain understudied. Most importantly, previous studies rarely examine actual inter-ethnic contact within civic organizations (see questions iii and iv)—the core mechanism around which claims about the bridging capacity of civic organizations are centered (Glanville, 2016). At best, they look at the ethnic composition of civic organizations (e.g. Wiertz, 2016), yet this only captures *exposure* to ethnic outgroups rather than actual inter-ethnic contact. More generally, there is much theorizing about the effects of civic engagement on social integration but few direct tests of the underlying arguments. Our study addresses this gap by studying ethnic segregation both across and within civic organizations and by examining how organizations' social composition affects participants' integration and commitment (in)to their organizations. In doing so, we directly assess several related and often implicit assumptions on which optimistic claims about the integrative potential of civic engagement are based.

Our contribution is threefold. Firstly, we extend earlier research on ethnic segregation *across* civic organizations by accounting for their educational composition. Earlier work, by contrast, could not identify whether ethnic segregation across organizations is driven by ethnic homophily or a byproduct of segregation along other social dimensions (Wiertz, 2016). Secondly, we study ethnic segregation *within* organizations in terms of actual contacts. After all, even if people from different ethnic groups are involved in the same organizations, they might still primarily interact with coethnics. Such internal dynamics may also explain why Van der Meer (2016) found no positive effects of involvement in ethnically diverse organizations on inter-ethnic attitudes. Thirdly, we examine how the ethnic composition of organizations affects the intra-organizational integration and continued involvement of ethnic majority participants. Together, these advances enable a more comprehensive appraisal of the extent to which civic organizations foster inter-ethnic contact.

Our analysis draws on Dutch survey data, collected in 2011 and 2017 through the LISS panel (Longitudinal Internet studies for the Social Sciences). Civic engagement is very common in the Netherlands and regarded as a central part of Dutch culture (Eurostat, 2017). The largest ethnic minorities in the Netherlands have roots in Turkey, Morocco, Suriname, and the Antilles, stemming from the country's colonial past, guest worker migration, and subsequent family reunification. These minorities traditionally face social disadvantages, as expressed in worse economic and educational outcomes, among other things, although these inequalities are declining (Dagevos, de Voogd-Hamelink and Damen, 2022). Still, only 70 per cent of the ethnic majority support the multicultural society, and hiring discrimination against ethnic minorities has even risen in recent decades (Quillian and Lee, 2023), underlining that ethnicity remains a salient fault line in Dutch society.

Our analysis reveals that both ethnic minorities and the ethnic majority tend to sort into organizations with more ethnic ingroup members. Inside organizations, civic participants interact disproportionately with

coethnics, even after controlling for intra-organizational contact opportunities. Finally, ethnic majority participants are more poorly integrated in organizations containing larger shares of ethnic minority members, which partially explains why they are more likely to leave such organizations. Social dynamics *within* organizations thus reinforce ethnic segregation *across* them. Although these findings expose limits to the bridging capacity of civic organizations, they also point to ways in which civic organizations could more effectively promote harmonious inter-ethnic relations.

Background and Hypotheses

Civic organizations have the potential to bring ethnic groups closer to each other. Compared to other settings, such as neighborhoods or workplaces, they are relatively easy to join and centered around shared interests that may ease social mixing among people from different backgrounds. Civic organizations may hence facilitate inter-ethnic contact that is less likely to arise in other settings. As an example, members of different ethnic groups may often live in different neighborhoods and work in different jobs, but they may still meet each other in their football clubs. Such contact, in this case organized around people's common love of football, could, in turn, foster intergroup respect, tolerance, and understanding (Allport, 1954).

However, for such effects to materialize, several conditions must be met. Firstly, to create opportunities for inter-ethnic contact, people from different ethnic groups must join the same organizations. Secondly, these contact opportunities must be capitalized upon, for it is primarily through direct contact that participants can learn about each other. Thirdly, civic organizations must ideally not merely expose participants to occasional, superficial contact with ethnic outgroups but stimulate durable connections. Below we review each of these criteria, discussing ethnic segregation across civic organizations and within them, as well as internal integration and exit dynamics.

Segregation across organizations

Ethnic segregation is common across many settings, including neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces (Ferguson and Koning, 2018; Boterman, 2019; Hwang and McDaniel, 2022). People may be willing to incur significant costs to attain or avoid settings with specific ethnic compositions (Lewis, Emerson and Klineberg, 2011), and access to many settings is contingent on financial, social, and educational resources, of which ethnic minorities tend to have smaller stocks. That said, compared to other settings, we may expect more ethnic mixing across civic organizations. After all, the composition of civic organizations may be less consequential to participants (involving less frequent contact), which may weaken any ingroup preferences. In addition, there may be fewer structural barriers to ethnic mixing because joining and leaving civic organizations is comparatively easy in terms of associated costs or other requirements.

Still, there are reasons to expect substantial ethnic segregation across civic organizations. First, precisely because it is relatively easy to join and leave organizations, people can easily 'escape' outgroup exposure if they wish to (Mollenhorst, Völker and Flap, 2008). Second, existing participants usually recruit new ones from within their homophilous social circles, reinforcing organizations' homogeneity (McPherson and Smith-Lovin, 1987; Brady, Scholzman and Verba, 1999). Third, the goals and activities of organizations are often linked to particular interests and social positions that may relate to people's ethnic background (e.g. people of Dutch and Turkish origin may join different cultural organizations). Fourth, majority-dominated organizations might discriminate against ethnic minorities (Gomez-Gonzalez, Nesseler and Dietl, 2021). Finally, because many organizations primarily attract members from their local surroundings, ethnic segregation across neighborhoods may be reproduced across civic organizations.

In support of these arguments, previous research documents strong ethnic segregation across civic organizations (Wiertz, 2016; Van Haaften, 2019). Nevertheless, it remains unclear whether this ethnic segregation arises independently or as a byproduct of segregation along other social dimensions. After all, people do not only cluster and display homophily based on ethnicity (McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Cook, 2001), and civic organizations are also segregated along other social dimensions such as age, gender, and education (McPherson and Smith-Lovin, 1987; Dederichs and de Graaf, 2023). Of these dimensions, education deserves particular attention, because ethnic minorities often have lower levels of educational attainment (Spörlein and van Tubergen, 2014), and rates and areas of civic involvement differ systematically between higher- and lower-educated individuals due to differences in resources, worldviews, and networks (Musick and Wilson, 2008; Gesthuizen and Scheepers, 2012). Indeed, many civic organizations are centered around interests or activities that may primarily appeal to particular educational groups (e.g. certain cultural interests or certain types of sports) and many people are drawn into civic activities through their personal networks (Brady, Scholzman and Verba, 1999), which are strongly stratified by ethnicity as well as education. Accordingly, if people exhibit no ethnic homophily but do sort along educational lines, the result may still be substantial ethnic segregation. We can draw a parallel

here with ethnic segregation across neighborhoods, which is shown to partially result from socioeconomic sorting (Quillian and Lagrange, 2016). To better understand what any ethnic segregation across organizations signifies, it is thus important to account for education as a correlated social dimension.

H1: There is ethnic segregation across civic organizations, which partially arises as a byproduct of educational sorting across organizations.

Segregation within organizations

Regarding the question of whether ethnic groups mix with each other *inside* civic organizations, there are several reasons for optimism. Leaders of civic organizations often promote equality among participants, and civic activities are typically cooperative in nature and oriented toward shared interests, all of which may stimulate intergroup contact (Allport, 1954). In working towards the goals of their organization, members from different ethnic groups may actively engage with each other's identity-specific backgrounds, which can foster mutual understanding and respect (Fulton, 2021). At the same time, shared rituals can strengthen their common identity as members of the organization, which may de-emphasize or even supersede their divergent ethnic identities in the organizational setting (Christerson, Edwards and Emerson, 2005). Moreover, if people have joined an organization with a significant ethnic outgroup presence, this might already provide an indication of their tolerant attitudes toward these outgroups (Van der Meer, 2016), making intra-organizational social mixing more likely.

Nevertheless, these favorable circumstances might not suffice to prevent ethnic segregation within civic organizations. Even people who have joined organizations with larger outgroup shares may still prefer to interact with coethnic participants within those organizations. Furthermore, intra-organizational practices may preserve the salience of ethnic identities among participants. Ethnographic studies of ethnically diverse sports clubs suggest that fruitful inter-ethnic contact within clubs is often inhibited by socioeconomic and cultural differences between groups, distinctively negative cross-ethnic encounters involving discrimination and aggression, as well as substantial variation in the ethnic composition of organizational subunits (e.g. teams within clubs) (Krouwel *et al.*, 2006; Walseth, 2008; Vermeulen and Verweel, 2009; Spaaij, 2012). Christerson, Edwards and Emerson (2005) observe similar obstacles to intergroup mixing in multiracial religious congregations, where externally prevailing racial hierarchies often get reproduced, friendship networks display ingroup biases, and internal conflicts frequently play out along racial lines.

Based on such findings, we expect that participants are more likely to interact and form social ties with coethnic fellow participants. Critically, we expect this internal segregation to manifest itself over and above any ethnic sorting across organizations as described in the previous subsection. We extend here McPherson and Smith-Lovin's (1987) pioneering work on civic organizations in Nebraska, which documented similar patterns of internal segregation with respect to sex, age, education, and occupation. The underlying notion is that, if we were to ignore sorting processes within organizations, we would likely underestimate the overall degree of ethnic segregation in civic life.

H2: There is ethnic segregation in social contacts *within* civic organizations, which persists after adjusting for contact opportunities inside organizations.

Internal integration and exit dynamics

Participants can usually choose their commitment level to an organization (e.g. how many meetings to attend or whether to do any volunteer work). This flexibility means that civic organizations continuously compete, with each other and alternative leisure activities, for participants' time (McPherson, Popielarz and Drobnic, 1992; Popielarz and McPherson, 1995). Organizations' social composition represents an asset in this competition: To a (prospective) participant, an organization's attractiveness may increase with the share of participants with characteristics similar to their own, because similarity eases communication, implies shared backgrounds, and raises the chance of already knowing other participants (McPherson and Smith-Lovin, 1987). For similar reasons, participants may develop more social ties in organizations with more ethnic ingroup members, which may further increase their organizational commitment.

On the flip side, participants may—even if they are eager to mingle—end up feeling out of place in organizations with larger ethnic outgroup shares. Christerson and Emerson (2003, 173–74), for example, describe the difficulties White Americans face in breaking into the social core of a Filipino-dominated church, quoting one congregation member who says: 'It seems hard to get involved in [Filipino] groups… They feel comfortable with each other, but I feel like an outsider'. Filipino congregants, by contrast, have very different experiences: 'I love the family aspect… I like the fellowship after church'. In other words, social integration is tightly linked to organizations' social structure and participants' position therein, whether we conceptualize social integration as developing close friendships with fellow participants or knowing them at a more superficial level (i.e. 'deep' or 'shallow' integration).

H3: Larger ethnic outgroup shares are associated with weaker integration into civic organizations, as signified by fewer social ties to fellow participants.

Being socially integrated within a civic organization typically strengthens one's bond to that organization. Ongoing involvement provides usually the easiest way to maintain friendships with co-members, and intra-organizational ties may provide normative pressure to stay involved. Conversely, the absence of meaningful connections may reduce the significance of an organization in a person's life and ultimately cause them to terminate their involvement. McPherson and colleagues argue in this regard that organizations will first lose those participants who are 'atypical' and poorly connected (McPherson, Popielarz and Drobnic, 1992; Popielarz and McPherson, 1995). Accordingly, social dynamics *within* organizations may increase segregation *across* organizations: If participants socialize more in organizations with larger ingroup shares and withdraw from social life in more diverse ones, civic organizations will systematically lose participants from underrepresented groups.

McPherson and colleagues show that membership durations are indeed longer among members closer to the 'social niche' of their organizations (McPherson, Popielarz and Drobnic, 1992; Popielarz and McPherson, 1995). However, their analyses do not consider ethnicity, nor do they directly test the proposed mechanism relating to members' social integration into their organizations. Instead, they simply assume that 'atypical members' have fewer intra-organizational ties. Improving upon this approach, we examine not only the effect of organizations' ethnic composition on participants' leaving rates, but also whether this effect is mediated by participants' social integration into their organizations.

H4: Larger ethnic outgroup shares in civic organizations are associated with higher leaving rates (4a), and participants' social integration mediates this relationship (4b).

Data and Measures

The LISS panel is an internet-based household survey covering a representative sample of the Dutch population (Scherpenzeel and Das, 2010; see www.lissdata.nl). The first part of our analysis draws on a module on intergroup contact among civic participants from 2017 (Meuleman, Tolsma and Kraaykamp, 2017). The second part exploits a module from 2011 about participants' social integration in civic organizations (Van Ingen, 2011). Tables A1 and B1 in the supplement provide summary statistics for all variables used in our analyses.

In the 2017 module (analytic sample of 2,485 respondents, response rate 70 per cent), respondents were asked whether they were involved in civic organizations in different domains, such as sports, religion, or education. Those who reported being a member or volunteer for at least one organization were asked, for the organization most important to them, how many of their fellow participants had a non-Western background (examples given: Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese, Antillean) and how many a higher vocational or university degree. The response options were: almost none, less than 5, 5–10, 10–25, 25–50, 50–75, and 75–100 per cent. We collapse these categories to distinguish between organizations where less than/at least 5 per cent of all members have a non-Western background and where less than/at least 50 per cent of all members completed higher education. These cut-offs are in line with the composition of the civically active Dutch population. Finally, respondents had to indicate how often they had contact with co-members of non-Western origin: never, several times a year, monthly, or weekly.

At the time of this data collection, ethnic groups in the Netherlands were commonly classified as 'Western' and 'non-Western'. However, as this classification comes with several problems (Statistics Netherlands, 2022), we will henceforth speak about people of Dutch vis-à-vis TMSA origin, referring with the latter term to the four largest ethnic minority groups in the Netherlands (i.e. those of *T*urkish, *M*oroccan, *S*urinamese, or *A*ntillean origin), which were also mentioned in the wording of the organizational composition question.[1] Furthermore, we acknowledge that respondents' estimates of the composition of their organizations may not match their objective composition. Among other things, these estimates may be shaped by respondents' ethnicity, their amount of inter-ethnic contact, or their inter-ethnic attitudes (Laméris *et al.*, 2018). We must therefore approach them with caution. That said, a previous comparison shows that subjective estimates of organizations' compositions correlate strongly with alternative measures based on reports by officials or measurements at meetings (McPherson and Rotolo, 1995). Moreover, subjective estimates reflect how participants *experience* their organizations, which may be at least as relevant to organizations' bridging capacity, given that composition perceptions have a stronger impact on attitudes and behaviors than objective measures do (Wong, 2007).

In the 2011 module (analytic sample of 1,532 organizational affiliations across 640 respondents, response rate 83 per cent), respondents were asked to identify up to three organizations most important to them. For each of these, respondents indicated the total number of affiliates (i.e. organization size), the number of fellow

participants they knew by name, and the number of fellow participants they discussed important personal matters with during the preceding six months. We use this information to measure respondents' integration into their organizations, calculating the proportion of participants known by name as an indicator of weak ties and the logarithm of the number of participants whom respondents discuss important matters with as an indicator of strong ties.[2] Using their own characteristics as benchmark respondents also estimated the share of participants from a different ethnic group, with the same education level, and of the same sex, using a nine-point scale from 'none (0 per cent)' to 'everyone (100 per cent)'. We convert these responses to continuous variables capturing outgroup shares that range from zero to one. For our exit analyses, we additionally consider a LISS survey fielded nine months later, where respondents were asked whether they were still involved in the earlier identified organizations.[3]

Analytic Approach

Using the 2017 data, we examine ethnic segregation across civic organizations through multinomial logistic regressions that model respondents' likelihood of involvement in organizations with different compositions. The independent variables are respondents' ethnicity and educational attainment. For ethnicity, we distinguish respondents of Dutch origin (i.e. themself and both parents born in the Netherlands), those of TMSA origin (i.e. themself or at least one parent born in Turkey, Morocco, Suriname, or the Antilles), and everyone else. For educational attainment, we distinguish respondents who hold or study toward a higher vocational or university degree and those who do not. Sample size restrictions prevent us from applying more granular distinctions (e.g. we observe in total 140 individuals of TMSA origin, of which no more than 55 are involved in civic organizations).

Still using the 2017 data, we study ethnic segregation within civic organizations through ordered logistic regressions that assess whether the frequency of contact with co-members of TMSA origin differs across ethnic groups. In these analyses, we only consider respondents involved in at least one organization, and we control for organizations' ethnic compositions as a measure of intra-organizational contact opportunities. To capture that some organizations involve more contact than others in general, we also control for the typical frequency of contact for different organization types, as approximated by the median number of fellow participants known by name according to the 2011 data. We distinguish low-frequency (e.g. environment, human rights, fair trade; median <5), medium-frequency (e.g. school/youth, music/drama/hobby, neighborhood; median 5–15), and high-frequency organizations (e.g. sports, religion; median >15).

To examine people's social integration in civic organizations and the durability of their involvement, we use the 2011 data, where the units of observation are organizational affiliations nested in respondents. We apply linear regressions that model the relationship between organizations' ethnic compositions and respondents' intra-organizational weak and strong ties, as well as their decisions to stay involved or leave within the next nine months. Crucially, these regressions include respondent fixed-effects, exploiting that we observe multiple organizational affiliations for 40 per cent of all civic participants. We thus effectively compare the effects of organizational characteristics between multiple organizations that the same individual is involved in. The analyses are accordingly restricted to respondents with at least two organizational affiliations.[4] Because there are only 40 respondents of TMSA origin that meet this condition, we further restrict the analytic sample to individuals of Dutch origin. The fixed-effects setup accounts for *all* individual- and area-level characteristics that may drive selection into, interactions within, and decisions to leave organizations. This includes difficult-to-measure variables such as inter-ethnic attitudes and local civic opportunities. At the organization level, we control for educational and sex composition, organization size, and organization type. Finally, we conduct a mediation analysis that estimates the proportion of the total effect of organizations' ethnic compositions on respondents' leaving propensities that runs through their stock of intra-organizational weak and strong ties.

Results

Segregation across organizations

Figure 1 shows average predicted probabilities for involvement in civic organizations with different compositions, based on multinomial logistic regressions. The regression underlying Panel A focuses on the ethnic composition of organizations and only includes individual ethnicity as a predictor. This panel shows that individuals of Dutch origin and those of TMSA origin tend to join organizations with different ethnic compositions. Individuals of Dutch origin are almost three times as likely as those of TMSA origin to be involved in organizations with few (<5 per cent) members of TMSA origin, with predicted probabilities of 36 versus 13 per cent. When we instead consider organizations with relatively many members of TMSA origin (≥5 per cent), the probability of involvement drops steeply among individuals of Dutch origin but doubles among those of TMSA origin (23 vis-à-vis 26 per cent). The predicted probabilities of not being involved in

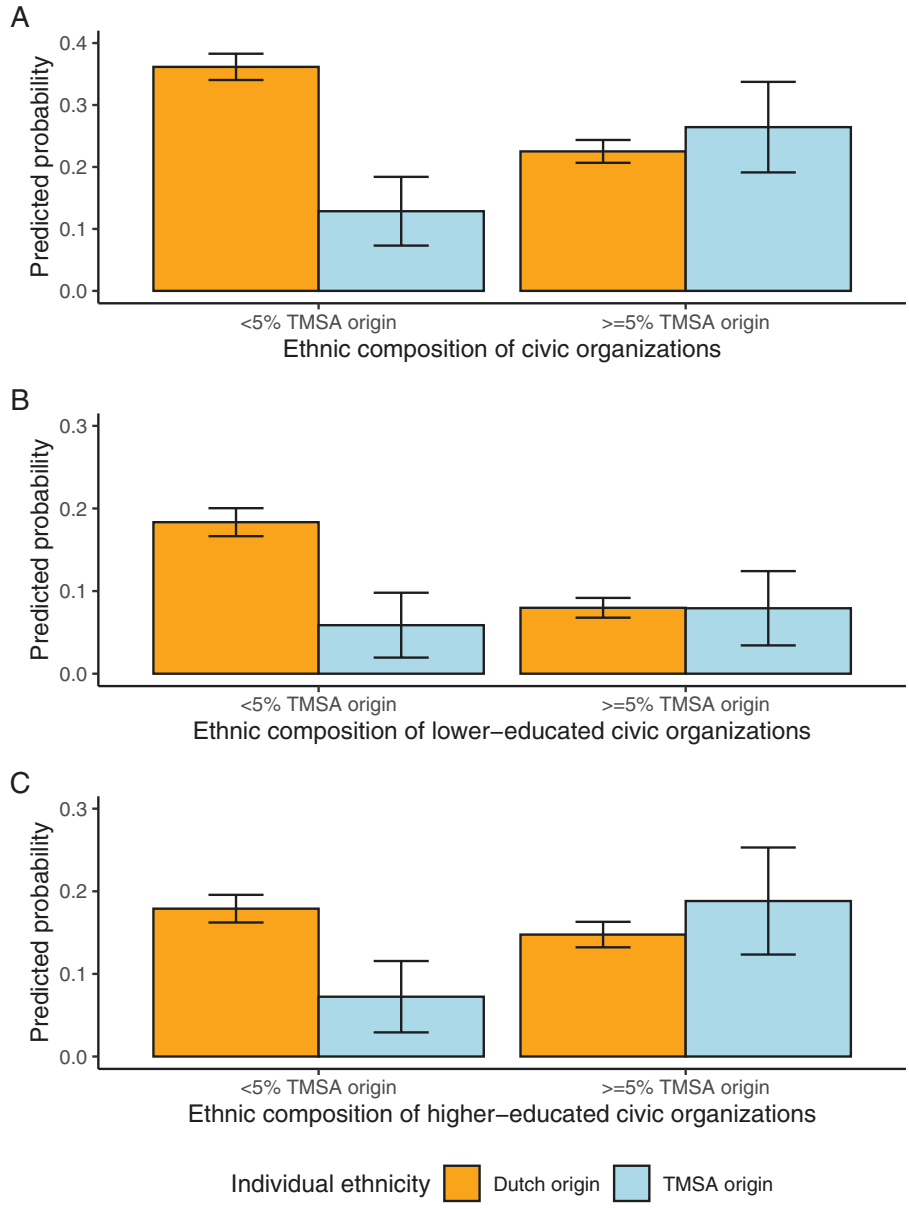

Figure 1 Average predicted probabilities of involvement in civic organizations of different compositions, by individual ethnic origin. *Note*: Predictions are derived from multinomial logistic regressions. Error bars reflect 95 per cent confidence intervals. Panel A distinguishes organizations by their ethnic composition. Panels B and C distinguish organizations by their ethnic and educational composition and are based on the same regression. 'TMSA origin' refers to individuals of Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese, or Antillean origin. The distinction between 'lower-educated' and 'higher-educated' organizations reflects whether less than or at least 50 per cent of members hold a higher vocational or university degree. For brevity, we do not show predictions for not being involved in any civic organization and for individuals of 'other' ethnic groups. See Tables A2a-b in the supplement for the underlying regression results

any organization are 41 vis-à-vis 61 per cent among those of Dutch and TMSA origin, respectively (not shown in Figure 1).

These results corroborate earlier findings (Wiertz, 2016) and deviate considerably from a scenario in which people sort randomly across organizations. In that case, most organizations would contain about four per cent minority members (the share of minority members in the entire civically active population), and individuals of Dutch and TMSA origin would be about as likely to be involved in organizations with less than or more than five per cent minority members. Our

Table 1 Ordered logistic regressions for the frequency of intra-organizational contact with co-members of TMSA origin

	Model 1		Model 2	
Ethnicity				
Dutch origin (ref.)				
TMSA origin	3.07***	(0.73)	1.77*	(0.47)
Other origin	1.69***	(0.23)	1.41*	(0.20)
Co-members of TMSA origin				
None (ref.)				
Less than 5 per cent			4.00***	(0.53)
5–10 per cent			6.27***	(0.94)
10–25 per cent			4.86***	(0.86)
25–50 per cent			5.24***	(1.22)
50–75 per cent			13.16***	(5.87)
75–100 per cent			10.44***	(6.80)
Contact frequency organization type				
Low (ref.)				
Medium			3.01***	(0.80)
High			2.82***	(0.73)
N	1,599		1,599	

Note: Coefficient estimates are presented as odds ratios, with the accompanying standard errors reported in parentheses. The outcome variable has the response categories: never, a few times per year, monthly, weekly. 'TMSA origin' refers to individuals of Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese, or Antillean origin. $^{*}P < 0.05$, $^{**}P < 0.01$, $^{***}P < 0.001$ (two-tailed tests).

results thus underscore that civic organizations often only offer limited opportunities for inter-ethnic mingling. Indeed, additional analyses using data from the Survey Integration Migrants (Dagevos and Kappelhof, 2020) provide no evidence that individuals encounter more opportunities for inter-ethnic contact in their civic organizations than in their neighborhoods, workplaces, or educational settings (see Figure A3 in the supplement).

In Panels B and C, we examine whether the ethnic segregation displayed in Panel A persists after accounting for educational differences across individuals and organizations. These panels separately display ethnic segregation across 'lower-educated' and 'higher-educated' organizations. The underlying regression uses individual ethnicity and educational attainment as well as their interaction as predictors. As Panels B and C illustrate, ethnic segregation across organizations is not explained away by educational sorting across organizations. More specifically, when we compare lower-educated organizations with few vis-à-vis many members of TMSA origin (Panel B), the likelihood of involvement for individuals of Dutch origin drops considerably. When we compare higher-educated organizations with few vis-à-vis many members of TMSA origin (Panel C), the likelihood of involvement for individuals of TMSA origin increases. We observe no ethnic sorting among ethnic minorities for lower-educated organizations and only minor differentials among individuals of Dutch origin for higher-educated organizations. Overall, however, there remains significant ethnic segregation after correcting for educational sorting across organizations, in line with hypothesis 1. This conclusion is upheld by further analyses in which we account for the urbanicity of respondents' localities as a proxy for differential civic opportunity structures that individuals may be exposed to (see Figure A4 in the supplement).

Segregation within organizations

Table 1 shows the results of ordered logistic regressions of the frequency of contact with ethnic minority co-members among civic participants. The presented estimates are the odds ratios of the independent variables for being in a higher contact frequency category (never, a few times per year, monthly, weekly). See Figure A5 in the supplement for predicted probabilities of different contact frequencies for each ethnic group.

Model 1 shows that the odds of reporting more regular contact with co-members of TMSA origin are about three times as large among participants of TMSA origin as they are among those of Dutch origin. Accounting for the ethnic composition of civic organizations, Model 2 shows that individuals tend to have more contact with co-members of TMSA origin when there are more of such members in their organization—that is, contact opportunities matter. However, in line with

Table 2 Fixed-effects linear regressions for participants' weak and strong ties within their organizations and their propensity to leave their organizations

	Model 1 Weak ties		Model 2 Strong ties		Model 3 Leaving		Model 4 Leaving	
Proportion of co-members with different…								
Ethnicity	−0.16*	(0.06)	−0.42**	(0.16)	0.23*	(0.09)	0.18*	(0.09)
Education	−0.09*	(0.04)	−0.32**	(0.10)	−0.03	(0.06)	−0.06	(0.06)
Sex	−0.14***	(0.04)	−0.23*	(0.09)	−0.01	(0.07)	−0.04	(0.06)
Proportion of weak ties							−0.09	(0.06)
Number of strong ties (logged)							−0.09***	(0.02)
Organization size (logged)	−0.15***	(0.01)	0.10***	(0.02)	−0.05***	(0.01)	−0.06***	(0.01)
Type of organization								
Sports (ref.)								
Culture/Hobby	0.02	(0.02)	0.11	(0.06)	0.03	(0.04)	0.04	(0.04)
Union	−0.20***	(0.05)	−0.33*	(0.14)	0.20*	(0.08)	0.15	(0.08)
Professional	−0.03	(0.04)	0.02	(0.10)	0.25***	(0.07)	0.25***	(0.07)
Consumer	−0.18**	(0.06)	−0.17	(0.12)	0.11	(0.09)	0.08	(0.08)
Humanitarian aid	−0.07	(0.04)	−0.13	(0.11)	0.02	(0.06)	0.00	(0.06)
Environmental	−0.12*	(0.05)	−0.39**	(0.13)	0.03	(0.08)	−0.01	(0.08)
Religious	−0.02	(0.03)	0.26**	(0.08)	−0.11*	(0.05)	−0.09	(0.04)
Political	−0.15***	(0.05)	−0.44***	(0.13)	0.16*	(0.07)	0.11	(0.07)
Education	0.00	(0.04)	−0.20*	(0.09)	0.02	(0.06)	0.00	(0.06)
Social/Youth	0.02	(0.03)	0.13	(0.08)	0.08	(0.06)	0.10	(0.06)
Other	−0.03	(0.03)	−0.07	(0.08)	0.15**	(0.05)	0.14**	(0.05)
Constant	0.57***	(0.01)	0.00	(0.04)	0.57***	(0.02)	0.57***	(0.02)
Individual fixed-effects	Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes	
N	1,532		1,532		1,532		1,532	

Note: All regressions only include respondents of Dutch origin who are involved in multiple organizations. Model 1 considers the proportion of fellow participants the participant knows by name; Model 2 the number of fellow participants they discuss important personal matters with (logged); Models 3 and 4 whether they leave the organization within the next nine months. Coefficients are presented in unstandardized format, with the accompanying standard errors reported in parentheses. $^{*}P < 0.05$, $^{**}P < 0.01$, $^{***}P < 0.001$ (two-tailed tests).

hypothesis 2, we still find notable ethnic differences in the frequency of contact with co-members of TMSA origin after accounting for contact opportunities. The relevant odds ratio is statistically significant and at 1.77 substantial in magnitude. Hence, beyond any ethnic sorting across organizations, we also observe ethnic sorting within organizations in terms of contact patterns between participants. Segregation tendencies across and within organizations thus work together in sustaining ethnic boundaries in civic life.

Internal integration and exit dynamics

Turning to the 2011 data, Table 2 summarizes linear regressions with respondent fixed-effects that estimate the effect of organizations' ethnic composition on respondents' social integration (Models 1 and 2) and their likelihood of leaving (Models 3 and 4). Recall that the units of analysis are organizational affiliations of respondents of Dutch origin.

In support of hypothesis 3, Models 1 and 2 show that an increase of the ethnic outgroup share by 10 percentage points is associated with a decrease of 1.6 percentage points in the share of fellow participants known by name (Model 1) and a decrease of 4 per cent in the number of close affiliates ($\exp(-0.42*0.1) = 0.96$; Model 2). Although both effects are small, partially reflecting the fixed-effects design of our analyses, they are statistically significant. Ethnic majority participants thus integrate less well in organizations with larger ethnic outgroup shares.

Supporting hypothesis 4a about the durability of organizational involvements, Model 3 shows that larger shares of ethnic outgroup members imply higher probabilities of leaving the organization. If the ethnic

outgroup share increases by 10 percentage points, the probability of leaving increases by 2.3 percentage points (the average leaving probability in our sample is 60 per cent). Although this may again seem like a small effect, it will compound over time, thereby strengthening segregation across civic organizations. Interestingly, neither of the other composition dimensions (i.e. sex and education) significantly predict the durability of participants' involvement, underlining the relative salience of ethnic boundaries in civic life.

In Model 4, we include our social integration indicators as predictors, which causes the estimated effect of organizations' ethnic composition to drop from 0.23 to 0.18, although it remains statistically significant. This suggests that social ties within organizations, as proposed by hypothesis 4b, play a mediating role in keeping participants involved. At the same time, a large portion of the effect of organizations' ethnic composition on participants' leaving propensities remains unexplained, indicating that social integration is only part of the story. These conclusions are supported by our mediation analysis summarized in Table 3. This decomposition shows that 22 per cent of the total effect of organizations' ethnic outgroup shares on participants' propensity to leave runs through participants' intra-organizational social integration—six per cent through weak ties and 16 per cent through strong ties. The remaining 78 per cent can be interpreted as the sum of all other mechanisms (e.g. ethnically diverse organizations having higher dissolution rates or individuals having more negative encounters in organizations with larger ethnic outgroup shares).

Conclusions and Discussion

This study connects two topics of lively sociological debate, namely ethnic integration and civic engagement. The structural integration of ethnic groups has been widely studied in other domains, including education, work, and neighborhoods, but insights on ethnic integration in civic life remain limited. Civic engagement, in turn, has been hailed as a promising pathway to social integration and harmonious intergroup relations, yet also here empirical evidence is scarce. Various theories have been put forward for why civic engagement would or would not foster integration (e.g. Brady, Scholzman and Verba, 1999; Putnam, 2000), but previous tests of these theories have generally been indirect, making assumptions about intergroup dynamics taking place within civic organizations rather than investigating these dynamics directly. It thus remains unclear whether civic engagement really helps in bringing ethnic groups closer to each other. Against this backdrop, we examine ethnic integration in civic life using detailed data about the social composition of civic organizations and the social dynamics within them.

Our findings firstly corroborate earlier research showing that ethnic minorities are less likely to be civically involved than their ethnic majority counterparts (Musick and Wilson, 2008; Gijsberts, der Meer and Dagevos, 2012; Voicu and Şerban, 2012; Greenspan, Walk and Handy, 2018), and that both groups also tend to sort into different organizations (Wiertz, 2016; Van Haaften, 2019). Extending this literature, we demonstrate that ethnic segregation across organizations is not merely a byproduct of educational sorting but arises, at least in part, independently of that.

Critically, we also document ethnic segregation *within* organizations: Civic participants of foreign origin interact more often with ethnic minority comembers than their Dutch origin counterparts do, even after accounting for their organizations' ethnic composition. The mere existence of ethnically diverse civic organizations is thus not necessarily enough to bridge ethnic divides. Yet, previous research has exclusively considered the ethnic *composition* of organizations, which only measures opportunities for inter-ethnic contact and not actual contact (Van der Meer, 2016; Wiertz, 2016; Achbari, Gesthuizen and Holm, 2018; Wang and Morav, 2021), thereby overlooking an important element of ethnic segregation in civic life.

Table 3 Mediation analysis for the effect of organizational ethnic outgroup share on participants' leaving propensities, via their intra-organizational integration

	Effect	95 per cent confidence interval	Percentage of total effect
Direct effect	0.180	[0.038; 0.322]	78.26
Indirect effect (strong and weak ties combined)	0.050	[0.023; 0.082]	21.74
Only via weak ties	0.014	[0.000; 0.032]	6.09
Only via strong ties	0.036	[0.013; 0.065]	15.65
Total effect	0.230	[0.088; 0.373]	100.00

Note: Standard errors to construct the confidence intervals were obtained using 10,000 bootstrapping rounds. The underlying linear models comprise the same control variables as the analyses summarized in Table 2. The full set of estimates can be found in Tables B3a and B3b in the supplement.

Our findings furthermore reveal that participants' social integration within civic organizations is weaker when organizations contain larger shares of ethnic outgroups, which helps explain why participants are more likely to leave those organizations. By jointly examining these integration and exit dynamics, we find support for a key mechanism that has recurringly been proposed in the ecological literature on civic affiliations but that has remained untested so far (McPherson, Popielarz and Drobnic, 1992; Popielarz and McPherson, 1995): People integrate better in organizations where they are more similar to their fellow participants, which increases their commitment to stay involved and thereby consolidates organizations' social homogeneity. While this part of our analysis was restricted to ethnic majority individuals, its findings resonate with ethnographic studies that illuminate how cultural barriers, network mechanisms, and discriminatory practices imply that minority members often end up in marginalized positions in their organizations, which in turn undermines their organizational attachment (Christerson, Edwards and Emerson, 2005; Walseth, 2008; Spaaij, 2012).

Altogether, civic participants tend to be involved in organizations where their ethnic ingroup is overrepresented (segregation across organizations), disproportionally interact with coethnics within these already segregated contexts (segregation within organizations), integrate better into organizations with more coethnics (selective social integration), and are more likely to stay involved in such organizations (selective leaving). All these factors limit the bridging capacity of civic organizations and help explain why previous studies have found at best limited effects of civic involvement on extra-organizational indicators of social cohesion, including generalized trust and inter-ethnic tolerance, as well as behavioral outcomes (Hooghe and Quintelier, 2013; Rapp and Freitag, 2015; Van Ingen and Bekkers, 2015; Van der Meer, 2016; Achbari, Gesthuizen and Holm, 2018). Indeed, the pervasive ethnic sorting tendencies we document in this study suggest that inter-ethnic mixing in civic life may be better thought of as an *outcome* of ethnic integration in other life domains than as a precursor to it.

Importantly, however, we do not argue that civic organizations can never bridge ethnic divides. Even though ethnic segregation across civic organizations does not seem any weaker than it is across other settings such as workplaces or neighborhoods, some people might still have more inter-ethnic contact through their civic involvement than they otherwise would have had if they were not civically involved. Furthermore, there are ethnically diverse organizations that do succeed in stimulating durable intergroup contact among their participants. What is more, intergroup contact within civic organizations might have more beneficial effects than similar contact in other settings. After all, the conditions under which intergroup contact in civic organizations takes place (e.g. common goals and relatively equal status of members) may be more conducive to improving intergroup relations (Allport, 1954).

Our findings can inform efforts to further strengthen civic organizations' capacity to bridge social divides, helping to address systematic obstacles to their bridging capacity. A first step would be to promote exposure to outgroups by reducing ethnic segregation across organizations. In this context, multiple studies show that intergroup relations can improve when ethnic sorting is eliminated by (quasi-)randomly assigning participants to civic settings (Laurence, 2020; Mousa, 2020; Lowe, 2021). However, randomized allocations are in practice rarely feasible, and because people leave organizations with larger ethnic outgroup shares at higher rates, merely increasing outgroup exposure may not suffice to promote durable inter-ethnic contact anyway. It is therefore important to consider additional interventions. Our findings especially highlight the gains that could be made by stimulating intergroup contact within civic organizations and keeping participants from underrepresented groups connected. Organizations may, for example, engage in practices or rituals that emphasize commonalities among participants, downplay or celebrate intergroup differences, and promote a shared sense of community (Braunstein, Fulton and Wood, 2014). Moreover, organizations could set up 'buddy networks' for minority members, reshuffle teams or subunits, and educate their participants about the value of inclusivity.[5]

Evaluating the effectiveness of such alternative interventions would be a fruitful task for future research. Furthermore, we encourage closer attention to the mechanisms that drive ethnic segregation across and within organizations. We have, for example, tested one key mechanism for segregation across organizations (i.e. selective social integration driving organizational exits), but our mediation analysis suggests other mechanisms are at work as well. Similarly, it would be worthwhile to distinguish between positive and negative experiences of intergroup contact within organizations, since the former may attenuate ethnic boundaries whilst the latter may reinforce them (Laurence, Schmid and Hewstone, 2018). Moreover, we encourage future research to oversample immigrants and their descendants when collecting data to study diversity in civic life. This would provide more leverage to differentiate origin groups and immigrant generations. We finally recommend investigating integration and segregation in civic life as dynamic processes using longitudinal data. In particular, our social integration analysis cannot

distinguish the temporal ordering between joining organizations and forming social ties: Some participants might, in fact, have joined after being recruited by other participants whom they were already knew. Nevertheless, in a follow-up survey of the 2017 data, the proportion of joiners who were recruited through social networks—instead of joining on their own initiative—is similar across organizations with different ethnic compositions (see Table A6 in the supplement). This suggests that, rather than different joining pathways, it is intra-organizational dynamics that cause the observed variation in social integration across organizations with different ethnic compositions.

In conclusion, our analysis suggests that promoting civic engagement is not a straightforward solution to prevailing ethnic divides, as multiple social dynamics combine to separate people from different ethnic backgrounds in civic life rather than bringing them together. By uncovering these obstacles, our findings can help organizations and policymakers make more targeted efforts to improve ethnic diversity and intergroup mixing in civic life. Richer insights into sorting and contact dynamics within civic organizations, as provided in this study, are an indispensable ingredient to inform such efforts.

Notes

1. It is not evident that all individuals of TMSA origin will regard each other as part of their ethnic ingroup. However, sample size restrictions and question wordings force us to group individuals of TMSA origin together. Although this is not ideal, evidence suggests that minorities of different TMSA origins feel more closely related to each other than they do to the Dutch origin majority: e.g. individuals of Turkish origin have more friends of Moroccan than Dutch origin, and those of Moroccan origin display similar patterns (Wiertz, 2016).
2. Since the number of weak ties largely depends on organization size, we use the *relative* number of weak ties. Because the number of strong ties is limited by respondents' socializing capacity, we use the *absolute* number of strong ties. We truncate the number of strong ties to 10 before taking the logarithm.
3. Strictly speaking, the follow-up survey asked respondents about their involvement in various *types* of organizations. Since respondents may have switched between organizations of the same type (e.g. leaving one sports club and joining another), our analyses may underestimate the number of organizational exits.
4. In our sample, involvement in multiple organizations (vis-à-vis one) is associated with being older, single, higher-educated, living in a rural area, having multiple children, larger discussion networks, agreeableness, and emotional stability. In Table B2 in the supplement, we present analyses that weight respondents by their inverse probability of being involved in at least two organizations, with largely similar results as presented in the main text.
5. Equally, ethnic mixing may not always be necessary: minority-dominated organizations may serve as 'safe havens' where ethnic minorities can develop civic skills and social trust, which promote their integration into wider society (Foner and Alba, 2008). That said, evidence for such 'stepping stone' effects of minority- dominated organizations remains scarce (Bloemraad, Chaudhary and Gleeson, 2022).

Supplementary data

Supplementary data are available at *ESR* online.

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Data availability

The data analysed in this study are available in the DANS archive: https://doi.org/10.17026/dans-xah-fukw (LISS 2017 module), https://doi.org/10.17026/dans-z54-h227 (LISS 2011 module), https://doi.org/10.17026/dans-zaf-casa (regular LISS modules on social integration and leisure), https://doi.org/10.57990/qn3k-as78 (LISS background variables), https://doi.org/10.17026/dans-26h-xn4n (Survey Integration Migrants 2020). The LISS data can also be accessed through the LISS data archive: https://www.dataarchive.lissdata.nl/. Software code to replicate our analyses is available at https://github.com/kasimirdederichs/Ethnic_Segregation_Civic_Organizations.

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