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## La participación de las personas mayores en organizaciones políticas: modelos explicativos centrados en el individuo

Rodrigo Serrat Fernández

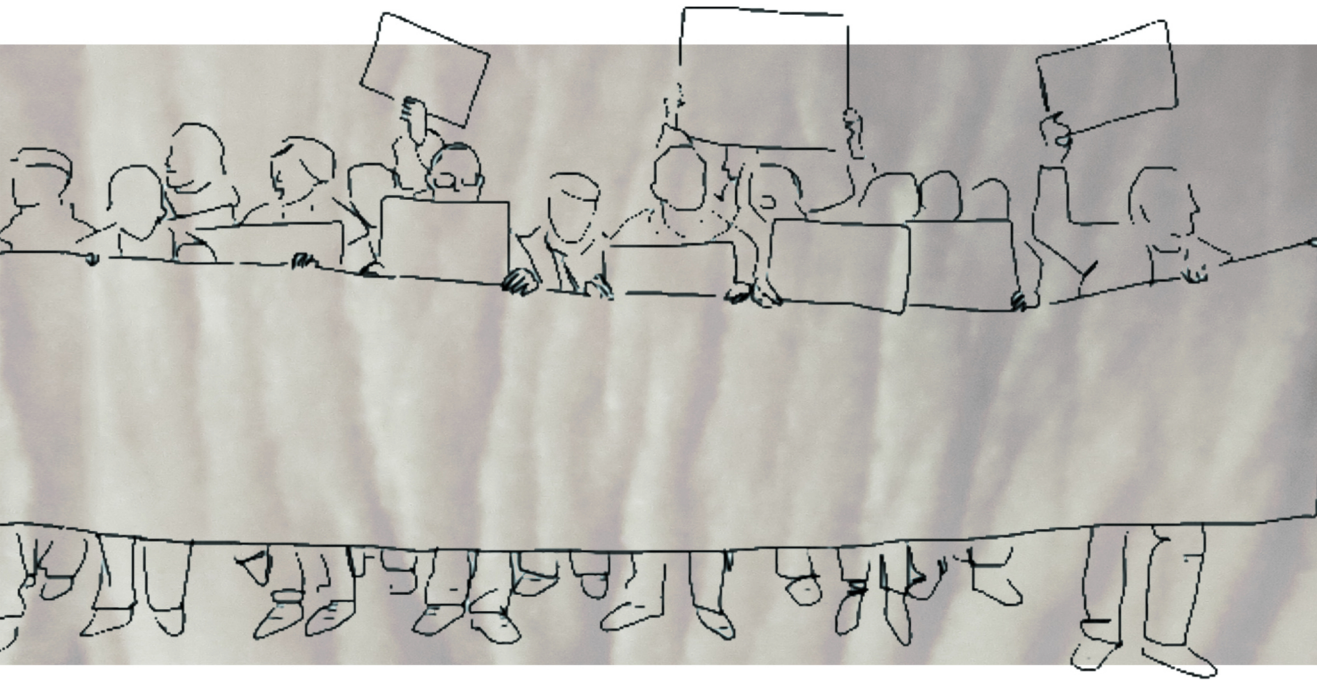
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TESIS DOCTORAL

**LA PARTICIPACIÓN DE LAS PERSONAS MAYORES  
EN ORGANIZACIONES POLÍTICAS: MODELOS  
EXPLICATIVOS CENTRADOS EN EL INDIVIDUO**



**Rodrigo Serrat Fernández**

Director: Dr. Feliciano Villar Posada



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**Programa de Doctorado en Intervención Psicosocial  
Facultad de Psicología - Universidad de Barcelona  
Trienio 2013-2015**



**UNIVERSITAT DE  
BARCELONA**

**Maquetación:**

Alba Carrera Artés y Rodrigo Serrat Fernández

**Diseño de portada:**

Alba Carrera Artés, 2016

*Para Lucas*



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## PREFACIO

---

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**Serrat, R.,** Villar, F., & Celdrán, M. (2015). Factors associated with Spanish older people's membership in political organizations: The role of active-aging activities. *European Journal of Ageing*, 12(3), 239-247. DOI: 10.1007/s10433-015-0341-4 (Impact factor 2014 = **1.338**; 14/32 (Q2) Gerontology).

**Serrat, R.,** Villar, F., Warburton, J., & Petriwskyj, A. (under review). Generativity and political participation in old age: A mixed method study of Spanish elders involved in political organisations.

**Serrat, R. &** Villar, F. (under review). Older people's motivations to engage in political organizations: Evidence from a Catalan study.

**Serrat, R.,** Petriwskyj, A., Villar, F., & Warburton, J. (in press). Barriers to the retention of older participants in political organisations: Evidence from Spain. *Ageing & Society*. DOI: 10.1017/S0144686X15001361 (Impact factor 2014 = **1.230**; 15/32 (Q2) Gerontology).

La presente tesis doctoral está estructurada en seis capítulos. En los **Capítulos I y II** se ofrece una revisión del estado del arte, en el **Capítulo III** se especifican los objetivos de la tesis y su relación con los cuatro estudios empíricos que la componen, en el **Capítulo IV** se presentan los estudios que conforman el compendio, en el **Capítulo V** se discuten y relacionan los hallazgos más importantes de la tesis y, finalmente, en el **Capítulo VI**, se ofrece una síntesis de sus principales conclusiones.

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## RESUMEN

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El objetivo de esta tesis es realizar una aproximación multidimensional al fenómeno de la participación de las personas mayores en organizaciones políticas, explorando y analizando una serie de modelos explicativos centrados en el individuo. En concreto, se utilizaron los modelos basados en los recursos, los centrados en los factores de personalidad, así como también los que abordan las motivaciones y barreras para participar en actividades políticas.

Este objetivo global se concretó en cuatro objetivos específicos relacionados con esos modelos: (1) analizar los factores asociados con la participación de las personas mayores en organizaciones políticas; (2) analizar la relación entre generatividad y participación en organizaciones políticas; (3) explorar las motivaciones de las personas mayores para participar en organizaciones políticas; y (4) explorar las barreras para la permanencia de las personas mayores en organizaciones políticas. Cada objetivo se encuentra relacionado con un estudio.

Del primer objetivo surgió el Estudio 1, en el que se analizó el rol de los recursos socioeconómicos y del hecho de estar implicado en actividades de envejecimiento activo en la participación de los mayores en organizaciones políticas. Los resultados mostraron que el nivel educativo, las actividades de ocio, las actividades de aprendizaje y sólo el voluntariado en el caso de las actividades productivas, se asociaban con la participación en organizaciones

políticas. Los resultados obtenidos son compatibles con el modelo del voluntarismo cívico (Verba, Scholzman, & Brady, 1995), y sugieren que la participación de los mayores en organizaciones políticas podría ser explicada a partir de factores movilizados tales como mayores oportunidades educativas o redes sociales más extensas.

Del segundo objetivo se derivó el Estudio 2, en el que se analizó la relación entre la participación en organizaciones políticas y diferentes dimensiones de la generatividad. Los resultados mostraron que los individuos que participan en organizaciones políticas obtienen mayores puntuaciones en interés generativo, reportan más metas generativas en el presente y futuro, y perciben más demandas culturales generativas que aquéllos que no realizan esta actividad. Los resultados sugieren que la participación en organizaciones políticas puede ser considerada como una expresión de la generatividad en la vejez y que el rol de la generatividad en la participación política es más complejo que el simple hecho de expresar intereses generativos.

Del tercer objetivo surgió el Estudio 3, que exploró las motivaciones de las personas mayores para participar en organizaciones políticas y examinó la asociación de estas motivaciones con características sociodemográficas y de participación. Los resultados mostraron que las motivaciones para participar en organizaciones políticas iban principalmente orientadas a generar cambios a nivel comunitario, aunque el alcance de los cambios deseados tendió a variar. Uno de

cada seis participantes expresó motivaciones de tipo egoísta. Las motivaciones para participar se relacionaron con algunas características individuales y otras del contexto organizacional, sugiriendo que estos factores deben ser considerados por las organizaciones políticas en el desarrollo de estrategias de reclutamiento.

Finalmente, el cuarto objetivo dio lugar al Estudio 4, que exploró las barreras para la permanencia de los mayores en organizaciones políticas y examinó la asociación de estas barreras con características sociodemográficas y de participación. Las barreras percibidas por los participantes se ajustaron a tres categorías generales relacionadas con cambios en los recursos, las motivaciones o las oportunidades para participar. El primer tipo de barrera fue el más frecuentemente identificado. Tanto el tipo de organización como algunas características sociodemográficas y de participación tuvieron un impacto en las razones expresadas por los mayores para dejar de participar en el futuro, sugiriendo que estas dimensiones deberían ser tenidas en cuenta por las organizaciones políticas en el desarrollo de estrategias de retención.

Tras la presentación de estos cuatro estudios, se discuten y relacionan los hallazgos más importantes aportados por los mismos, se señalan las principales limitaciones de la tesis y se sugieren posibles líneas futuras de investigación, así como también algunas implicaciones prácticas de los resultados.





## ABSTRACT

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The aim of this dissertation is to provide a multidimensional approach to older people's participation in political organizations, by exploring and analyzing different explanatory models focused on the individual. Specifically, resources-based models, personality-focused models, as well as models addressing the motivations and barriers to participate in political activities were used.

This overall aim was operationalized into four specific objectives related to those models: (1) to analyze the factors that are associated with older people's participation in political organizations; (2) to analyze the relationship between generativity and participation in political organizations; (3) to explore older people's motivations to participate in political organizations; and (4) to explore the barriers to the retention of older participants in political organizations. Each goal is associated with one study.

The first objective led to Study 1, which analyzed the role of socio-economic resources and being involved in active aging activities on older people's participation in political organizations. Results showed that educational level, leisure activities, learning activities, and only volunteering in the case of productive activities, were associated with participation in political organizations. Results are compatible with the model of civic voluntarism (Verba, Scholzman, & Brady, 1995), and suggest that older people's participation in political organizations could be explained as a function of mobilizing

factors, such as greater educational opportunities or extensive social networks.

The second aim led to Study 2, which analyzed the relationship between participation in political organizations and different dimensions of generativity. Results showed that participants in political organizations obtain significantly higher scores on generative concern, report more generative goals in the present and future, and note more perceived generative demands than comparison individuals. Overall, our findings suggest that participation in political organizations could be considered as an expression of generativity in later life, and that the role of generativity on political participation is more complex than simply expressing generative concerns.

The third objective led to Study 3, which explored older people's motivations to engage in political organizations, and examined the association of these motivations with sociodemographic and participatory characteristics. The results showed that the motives for engaging in political organizations were mainly focused on introducing changes in the community, although the scope of the changes desired tended to vary. One in six participants was motivated by self-interest. Motives for participating were related to the organizational context and individual characteristics, suggesting that these factors should be considered by political organizations in developing recruitment strategies.

Finally, the fourth aim led to Study 4, which explored the barriers to the retention of older participants in political organizations, and examined the association of these barriers with sociodemographic and participatory characteristics. The barriers perceived by participants fit into three overarching categories related to changes in means, motives or the opportunity context for participation. The first type of barrier was the most frequently identified. Both the type of organization and some socio-demographic and participatory characteristics had an impact on the reasons respondents indicated they may potentially stop participating in future, suggesting that these factors should be considered by political organizations in developing retention strategies.

Following the presentation of these four studies, the most relevant results are discussed and related, thesis limitations are highlighted, and potential future lines of research are suggested, as well as some practical implications of the findings.



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# CAPÍTULO I: LA PARTICIPACIÓN POLÍTICA DE LAS PERSONAS MAYORES

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## **1.1 LA PARTICIPACIÓN DE LAS PERSONAS MAYORES**

### **1.1.1 El envejecimiento demográfico: ¿Peligro u oportunidad?**

El envejecimiento de la población es un fenómeno sin precedentes en la historia de la humanidad. A lo largo del último siglo se ha producido un acelerado incremento de la población de personas mayores de 65 años en la mayoría de países desarrollados, y se prevé que esta tendencia se consolide en las próximas décadas. Harper (2013) calcula que hacia el año 2030 aproximadamente la mitad de la población europea tendrá más de 50 años, y la esperanza media de vida para los que alcancen esa edad será de 40 años.

España es una de las poblaciones más envejecidas del planeta, ocupando el puesto número 23 a nivel mundial en el ranking de países con la proporción más alta de personas mayores de 60 años de edad (United Nations, 2013). Según el último informe publicado por el IMSERSO (2014), la población de personas mayores en nuestro país se ha duplicado en los últimos 30 años, pasando de representar un 9.7% del total de la población en el año 1970 a un 17.3% en el año 2010. Se prevé que hacia el año 2050 habrá algo más de 15 millones de españoles de más de 65 años, casi el doble que en la actualidad, y este grupo representará más de un tercio del total de la población española (ver Figura 1.1).

Hay al menos tres razones que podrían explicar el envejecimiento de la población a nivel mundial (World Economic Forum, 2012): el

declive de la fertilidad, el incremento de la longevidad, y el marcado descenso de la mortalidad infantil que se produjo a partir de la cohorte del *baby boom*, es decir, la de las personas nacidas entre 1946 y 1964. Estos factores explicarían también el envejecimiento de la población española, aunque en nuestro país este proceso se inició más tarde, debido en gran parte a un comienzo también tardío del fenómeno del *baby boom* (Instituto de Mayores y Servicios Sociales, 2014).



**Figura 1.1:** Evolución de la población mayor en España 1900-2050.

El envejecimiento de la población es el resultado de los notables avances sociales, económicos y sanitarios que se produjeron durante el último siglo, y representa uno de los grandes triunfos de la historia de la humanidad. Sin embargo, los costes económicos asociados a la atención de la dependencia y al incremento en el número de pensionistas, han generado lo que Robertson (1990) ha denominado como “demografía apocalíptica”, un discurso de marcado carácter economicista en el que el envejecimiento poblacional, lejos de ser visto como un avance, se concibe como un grave problema social con múltiples consecuencias negativas.

Según Gee (2002), la demografía apocalíptica se basa en una serie de falacias, siendo una de ellas la de no tener en cuenta la heterogeneidad de las personas mayores. Así, la visión de los mayores como un colectivo de personas “... enfermas y frágiles, que no contribuyen a la sociedad [...] ‘usuarios’ de los programas sociales que no ofrecen nada a cambio” (Gee, 2002, p. 752), ha prevalecido durante mucho tiempo sobre el reconocimiento de la gran diversidad de formas de envejecer y de las importantes contribuciones que los mayores realizan a sus comunidades (Martin, Williams, & O’Neill, 2009).

La demografía apocalíptica ha tenido también su correlato en la gerontología, que hasta hace relativamente poco tiempo tendía a privilegiar una visión más bien negativa sobre la vejez, enfatizando los procesos de dependencia, declive y pérdida asociados al hecho de hacerse mayor (Thornton, 2002). Así, desde las ciencias sociales se

concebía a la vejez como un período de desvinculación progresiva del mundo exterior, en el que la introversión y la necesidad de reflexionar sobre las experiencias vitales pasadas ocuparían un lugar predominante en la vida de las personas. Algunos de los conceptos que reflejan esta línea de estudios sobre el envejecimiento son los de gerotranscendencia (Tornstam, 1997), interioridad (Neugarten, 1977), integridad (Erikson, 1963) o desvinculación (Cumming & Henry, 1961).

Sin embargo, desde principios de los '90 se ha abierto paso una perspectiva alternativa y más positiva sobre los procesos de envejecimiento, interesada en estudiar los procesos de adaptación a la vejez, los mecanismos que permiten a las personas mayores compensar y/o superar las eventuales pérdidas y las posibles ganancias asociadas al hecho de hacerse mayor (Villar, 2012b). Esta nueva perspectiva se ha concretado en conceptos como envejecimiento productivo (Bass, Caro, & Chen, 1993), envejecimiento positivo (Gergen & Gergen, 2006), envejecimiento activo (WHO, 2002) o envejecimiento satisfactorio (Baltes & Baltes, 1993; Rowe & Kahn, 1987, 1997).

Más allá de las diferencias conceptuales entre estos términos (para una discusión de estas diferencias véase Villar, 2012a, 2012b), este nuevo enfoque contempla la posibilidad de crecimiento y desarrollo personal durante la vejez y pone de relieve, al mismo tiempo, las contribuciones que los mayores realizan a sus familias y comunidades, y los beneficios tanto personales como sociales que se

derivan de esa participación (Villar, López, & Celdrán, 2013; Villar & Serrat, 2014). En este contexto, la participación de las personas mayores en actividades productivas ha cobrado especial relevancia, como una vía para promover el envejecimiento activo, por un lado, y como una posible solución a algunos de los desafíos que genera el envejecimiento de la población, por otro (Gonzales, Matz-Costa, & Morrow-Howell, 2015; Hinterlong & Williamson, 2006; Walker, 2002).

### **1.1.2 El envejecimiento activo y la participación de los mayores**

De entre los diferentes conceptos que han sido propuestos para explicar el “buen” envejecer, el de envejecimiento activo ha sido quizá el que ha tenido más calado en el discurso político europeo, debido en gran parte a la influencia de la Organización Mundial de la Salud y de la Comisión Europea (Foster & Walker, 2013). La Unión Europea, por ejemplo, declaró al año 2012 como el *Año Europeo del Envejecimiento Activo y de la Solidaridad Intergeneracional*. En España, el IMSERSO publicó el *Libro Blanco sobre el Envejecimiento Activo* (2011).

El concepto de envejecimiento activo fue definido originalmente por la Organización Mundial de la Salud (WHO, 2002) como “el proceso de optimizar las oportunidades de salud, participación y seguridad para promover la calidad de vida a medida que se envejece” (p. 12). Este concepto fue concebido para poner de relieve no sólo la

capacidad de mantener la actividad física y la autonomía hasta edades avanzadas, sino también la posibilidad de continuar participando activamente en la vida social, económica, cultural, espiritual y cívica durante la vejez.

La idea de envejecer “activamente” se encuentra estrechamente vinculada con la denominada teoría de la actividad, propuesta por Havighurst (1963) en contraposición a la teoría de la desvinculación (Cumming & Henry, 1961), mencionada más arriba. Según esta teoría, las personas mayores, lejos de desear desvincularse del mundo externo, intentan mantener el nivel de actividad previo y remplazan la pérdida de roles significativos por la asunción de nuevos roles. El mantenimiento de la actividad, por otro lado, se relacionaría con mayores niveles de satisfacción y bienestar personal durante la etapa de la vejez (Villar, 2012a).

Además de los beneficios individuales que se derivan de la promoción del envejecimiento activo, se ha destacado también su impacto en términos económicos. En este sentido, la implicación de los mayores en actividades productivas, como el voluntariado o las actividades de cuidado, constituiría una importante aportación de bienes y servicios cuyo valor económico ha sido poco reconocido. Johnson y Schaner (2005), por ejemplo, estimaron que la aportación de las personas mayores de 55 años a la economía estadounidense en el año 2002, en términos de actividades de voluntariado y cuidados informales, se situó entre los 96.6 y los 201.0 mil millones de dólares americanos. Fernández-Ballesteros et al. (2011) calcularon que la

cifra alcanzaría los 40 mil millones de euros en el caso de los españoles de entre 55 y 75 años, y se elevaría a 106 mil millones si se incluyesen en el cálculo otras actividades productivas, como las tareas domésticas.

El concepto de envejecimiento activo, sin embargo, no ha estado exento de críticas. En concreto, la ambigüedad inherente al término “actividad” (Villar, 2012a) ha sido señalada como la principal responsable de una notoria falta de acuerdo en la definición operacional del mismo (Boudiny & Mortelmans, 2011; Perales et al., 2014). Así, aunque la definición propuesta originalmente por la OMS abarcaba un amplio rango de actividades sociales, económicas, culturales, espirituales y cívicas, los enfoques basados en una sola dimensión del envejecimiento activo han sido, en gran medida, prevalentes. En particular, un enfoque economicista centrado en la ampliación de la vida laboral, y un enfoque médico centrado en el mantenimiento actividad física, han ocupado el lugar central (Boudiny, 2013).

No obstante, el perfil cada vez más cambiante y heterogéneo de las personas mayores ha dado lugar a múltiples y diversas formas de envejecer. Tal y como destaca Villar (2012b), las nuevas generaciones de personas mayores están desafiando muchos de los estereotipos de dependencia y pasividad que tradicionalmente se asociaban a la vejez. Al menos en los países desarrollados, estas cohortes gozan de un mayor nivel educativo, mejor salud y más recursos financieros que cualquiera de las cohortes precedentes. En



nuestro país, esta tendencia comenzó a ser notoria a partir de la generación del desarrollo - la de las personas nacidas a partir del año 1945-, y se consolidará definitivamente cuando la siguiente generación -la del llamado *baby boom*- llegue a la vejez. Pérez, Abellán y Ramiro (2012) afirman:

Las generaciones españolas de mayores se renuevan actualmente por otras que mejoran de forma nunca vista nuestros tópicos sobre esas edades. Son generaciones, por primera vez en la historia, libres de grandes catástrofes en su vida pasada, con una dotación educativa básica universal, trabajadores desde muy jóvenes, mayoritariamente urbanos, con ahorros y algún patrimonio, y con buena salud. (p. 17)

Asumir un enfoque reduccionista del modelo de envejecimiento activo acarrea una serie de problemas importantes (ver por ejemplo Holstein & Minkler, 2003; Ranzijn, 2010). Entre ellos, el hecho de no “reconocer la heterogeneidad de las personas mayores” (Foster & Walker, 2013, p. 4), y el dejar de lado otras actividades significativas que sin duda contribuyen al bienestar de las personas mayores, como las actividades de ocio, las actividades de aprendizaje y la participación cívica (Boudiny, 2013).

Respecto a este último punto, muchas personas mayores llevan una vida activa y continúan realizando importantes contribuciones al entorno familiar y comunitario (Villar & Serrat, 2014), contribuciones que van más allá de las que han sido clásicamente contempladas dentro del marco del envejecimiento activo. A nivel

familiar, proporcionan cuidados auxiliares a sus nietos, ejercen de cuidadores informales de familiares dependientes o proporcionan ayuda económica o instrumental a sus hijos (Fernandez-Ballesteros et al., 2011). A nivel comunitario, se implican en actividades como la participación política o el voluntariado (Villar, Celdrán, Fabà, & Serrat, 2013). En este sentido, una actividad que ha recibido escasa atención en el marco del envejecimiento activo es la participación cívica de las personas mayores.

### **1.1.3 ¿Por qué estudiar la participación cívica de los mayores?**

La participación activa de la ciudadanía en los asuntos públicos es el eje central de los sistemas democráticos. A este respecto, Verba, Scholzman y Brady (1995) afirman:

La participación ciudadana es el corazón de la democracia. De hecho, la democracia sería impensable sin la capacidad de los ciudadanos para participar libremente en el proceso de gobierno [...] La participación política provee el mecanismo por el cual los ciudadanos pueden comunicar información sobre sus intereses, preferencias y necesidades, y generar presión para ser escuchados. (p. 1)

En una sociedad cada vez más envejecida, los ciudadanos de más edad conforman un activo imprescindible para el sostenimiento y mejora de la democracia. Sin embargo, aunque la importancia de incluir al conjunto de la ciudadanía en los procesos de gobierno

parece estar fuera de discusión, el colectivo de personas mayores experimenta numerosas dificultades para participar activamente en los procesos de decisión política. Tal y como señala Subirats (2011):

Cuando afirmamos que las personas mayores tienen el derecho a gozar de una ciudadanía plena y a participar activamente de manera integral en nuestra sociedad, ello implica que los mayores no pueden seguir siendo simples objetos de atención y de administración. Implica que han de estar presentes en las dinámicas sociales y políticas de cada ciudad y de cada comunidad [...] Pero detectamos también muchas barreras, muchas reticencias para que puedan ejercer plenamente su condición de ciudadanos responsables en el variado conjunto de las instituciones del país. (p. 98)

Por otro lado, los estereotipos de pasividad y dependencia asociados a la vejez contribuyeron a forjar una imagen de los mayores como seres “apolíticos”. Según Walker (2006), al menos dos factores podrían haber contribuido a esta situación. Por un lado, la identificación de las personas mayores como principales beneficiarios de las políticas asociadas al estado de bienestar supuso concebirlos como personas dependientes a nivel económico, al tiempo que reforzó estereotipos edadistas de la vejez como un período de pobreza y fragilidad. Por otro lado, la implementación de los sistemas de jubilación implicó desvincularlos forzosamente de las estructuras económicas y políticas formales:

La jubilación operó como un proceso de exclusión social y política, que desvinculó a las personas mayores de las principales fuentes de concienciación política y canales representativos. Esta exclusión contribuyó a la visión de las personas de más edad como seres políticamente pasivos. Por otro lado, la situación reforzó los estereotipos edadistas de las personas mayores como inactivas, conformistas, centradas en la familia y, por lo tanto, desinteresadas en la participación política. (Walker, 2006, p. 341)

Según Vicent, Patterson y Wale (2001), junto a este estereotipo ha convivido otro situado en el extremo opuesto, el de las personas mayores como un colectivo de “vejestorios codiciosos” (“*greedy geezers*”) con altos niveles adquisitivos, buena salud, mucho tiempo libre disponible y una gran capacidad para influir en los asuntos públicos, debido a su creciente peso a nivel poblacional (Gee, 2002; Vincent et al., 2001).

En relación a este último punto, el aumento del número de votantes mayores de 65 años y las altas tasas de participación entre este sector de la población (Goerres, 2007), han propiciado cierta especulación sobre la aparición de un bloque político “gris” con una conciencia política común y una creciente capacidad para influir en los procesos de toma de decisiones, particularmente en los asuntos relacionados con la vejez (véase Schulz & Binstock, 2006). Este modelo del poder político “gris” se basa en dos asunciones básicas: a) que las personas mayores tienen los mismos intereses en materia de seguridad social y pensiones y que, por lo tanto, b) tienden a votar en bloque para

asegurar o mejorar estos intereses materiales (Davidson, 2012). Sin embargo, es poco probable que una cohorte de nacimiento, diversa por naturaleza, homogenice su conciencia y comportamiento políticos al llegar a la vejez (Binstock, 2006; Goerres, 2009; Nygard & Jakobsson, 2013b). Los intentos por determinar un grupo de interés político sobre la base de una categoría de identidad única (como "las personas mayores") son problemáticos (Barnes & Newman, 2003) y se basan en gran medida en estereotipos sobre las personas mayores como actores políticos (Vincent et al., 2001).

Sin duda, la proliferación de estas visiones estereotipadas sobre las personas mayores y su comportamiento político es reflejo de la escasa investigación que se ha realizado hasta el momento sobre este fenómeno. En las últimas décadas, sin embargo, se han abierto nuevas perspectivas para el estudio de la participación cívica de las personas mayores. En un contexto marcado por la búsqueda y promoción de modalidades de envejecimiento activas, la participación de las personas mayores en actividades cívicas se convirtió en un importante foco de atención de investigadores y políticos. El potencial de esta participación para generar un escenario de doble ganancia, en el que los mayores recibirían importantes beneficios a nivel personal al tiempo que contribuirían al desarrollo de sus comunidades, impulsó el desarrollo de la investigación y de políticas sociales orientadas a promoverla (e.g. Freedman, 1999; Morrow-Howell & Freedman, 2006).

#### 1.1.4 Participación cívica: Dos notas críticas

Sin embargo, es necesario mencionar dos importantes críticas a la promoción de la participación cívica de las personas mayores. La primera de ellas tiene que ver con los posibles efectos negativos de promover formas deseables y homogéneas de envejecer dirigidas a un sector de la población que es –por naturaleza- diverso, la segunda, está relacionada con la posibilidad de generar prácticas tokenistas, al promover oportunidades de participación con escaso o nulo impacto real sobre los procesos de toma de decisiones.

Con respecto al primer punto, se ha argumentado que la promoción indiscriminada de formas de envejecimiento activo o exitoso podría tener consecuencias edadistas y segregadoras (Villar & Serrat, 2015), ya que sólo podrían acceder a envejecer “activamente” o de forma “exitosa” una minoría privilegiada de personas mayores (Angus & Reeve, 2006; Martinson & Berridge, 2014). Martinson y Halpern señalan (2011): “... los ideales normativos sobre el envejecimiento positivo sirven para diferenciar entre aquellos que satisfacen la definición de personas mayores saludables, exitosas y productivas, y aquellos que no lo hacen” (p. 428). En este sentido, el modelo del envejecimiento activo podría resultar irrelevante o inapropiado para muchos subgrupos de personas mayores que no “encajan” en él por diferentes motivos. Por otro lado, la promoción del envejecimiento activo conlleva una connotación moral insoslayable, ya que sugiere “... que es posible, e indeseable, envejecer *insatisfactoriamente* o

*improductivamente*” (Martinson & Halpern, 2011, p. 428, énfasis añadido).

Desde esta perspectiva, entonces, se ha cuestionado la idea de que incentivar la participación cívica sea deseable y positivo para todas las personas mayores. Tal y como afirmamos en una publicación anterior (Villar & Serrat, 2014), dividir dicotómicamente a los mayores entre aquellos que “envejecen bien”, es decir, aquellos que son activos, que participan, que contribuyen, y aquellos que no lo hacen:

Facilita la estigmatización de ciertos colectivos (los más mayores, los que tienen dependencias, los enfermos, los que se encuentran solos, los pobres, etc.) que se considera que no pueden participar ni contribuir, cuando quizá lo que necesitamos es encontrar vías para que lo hagan, en la medida en la que sea posible y si lo desean. Por otra parte, una definición del buen envejecer basada en la participación parte del supuesto de que lo ‘bueno’ es participar, ser generativo y estar activo. Sin embargo, muchas personas que podrían participar simplemente no lo hacen porque no quieren, o porque prefieren otras alternativas u otros estilos de vida, sin que necesariamente tengan que estar ‘envejeciendo mal’. (p. 355)

La segunda crítica a la promoción de la participación cívica, tiene que ver con la posibilidad de generar prácticas tokenistas. A este respecto, Binstock (2006) refiere un artículo del sociólogo americano Erving

Goffman, titulado *On Cooling the Mark Out* (1952), para ilustrar este peligro. El título del artículo proviene de la jerga de timadores y estafadores y retrata lo que algunos autores han denominado como “filosofía de la consolación”. Goffman refiere que las víctimas de fraudes criminales muchas veces ven amenazada su seguridad y su estatus como consecuencia del crimen que han padecido. Entonces, en el modus operandi de muchos estafadores que trabajan en equipo, uno de los estafadores intenta consolar (“*cooling out*”) a la víctima (“*the mark*”) definiendo lo que le ha pasado de una manera en que le resulte más fácil aceptar la pérdida y evitando –entre otras cosas- que denuncie la situación a la policía. Según Goffman, esta es una situación bastante frecuente en la vida social. Así, al amado que pierde a su pareja se lo invita a redefinir la situación en términos de “amistad”, o al deportista de élite que padece una lesión se le ofrece la posibilidad de trabajar entrenando a otros deportistas. Entre la diversidad de situaciones descritas por Goffman se encuentra la jubilación, una pérdida de la que debemos “consolarnos” si queremos aceptar nuestro nuevo estatus. Binstock (2006) refiere que muchas de las oportunidades de participación cívica que se ofrecen a las personas mayores podrían caer dentro de esta descripción. En efecto, se trataría de una estrategia para que las personas mayores acepten su nuevo estatus social empobrecido ofreciéndoles la posibilidad de participar en actividades cuyo impacto real a nivel político y social es muy limitado o nulo.

A continuación realizaremos una revisión crítica de los conceptos de participación cívica, participación social y participación política.



## **1.2 PARTICIPACIÓN CÍVICA, SOCIAL Y POLÍTICA**

### **1.2.1 Algunas precisiones conceptuales**

La participación política de las personas mayores ha sido tradicionalmente estudiada dentro del marco conceptual más amplio de la participación cívica (“*civic engagement*”). Sin embargo, hasta el presente no ha habido consenso entre los diferentes autores respecto a la definición del concepto de participación cívica. Desde la publicación de la obra de Robert Putnam *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (1993), obra en la que aparece por primera vez este concepto, se han multiplicado las publicaciones que hacen referencia al mismo (para un análisis de esta evolución véase Berger, 2009). Putnam (Putnam et al., 1993) entendía a la participación cívica como el conjunto de vínculos asociativos, de naturaleza social y/o política, que promueven normas de confianza y expectativas de reciprocidad entre los individuos. Para Putnam, por consiguiente, la participación cívica constituía la base del denominado capital social.

Sin embargo, ni en la obra mencionada más arriba ni en su sucesora, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (2000), Putnam define explícitamente el concepto de participación cívica. Así, la descripción más detallada que ofrece del término forma parte de sus reflexiones sobre el declive de la participación en Estados Unidos:

El abandono del compromiso cívico parece ser un infortunio compartido. El declive pronunciado y continuado de las reuniones de clubs, visitas a familiares, servicio comunitario, asistencia a la iglesia, generosidad filantrópica, juegos de cartas y participación electoral, ha golpeado virtualmente todos los sectores de la sociedad americana durante las últimas décadas y aproximadamente en la misma medida. (Putnam, 2000, p. 185)

Para Putnam, entonces, el concepto de participación cívica englobaba un amplio rango de actividades formales e informales, tanto de carácter social como político, que constituyen la base y el fundamento del capital social. En este sentido, se ha argumentado que el interés primario de Putnam se encontraba en el concepto de capital social, eje de su obra, y no en el concepto de participación cívica, que queda muchas veces solapado con el primero (e.g. R. Adler & Goggin, 2005; Berger, 2009).

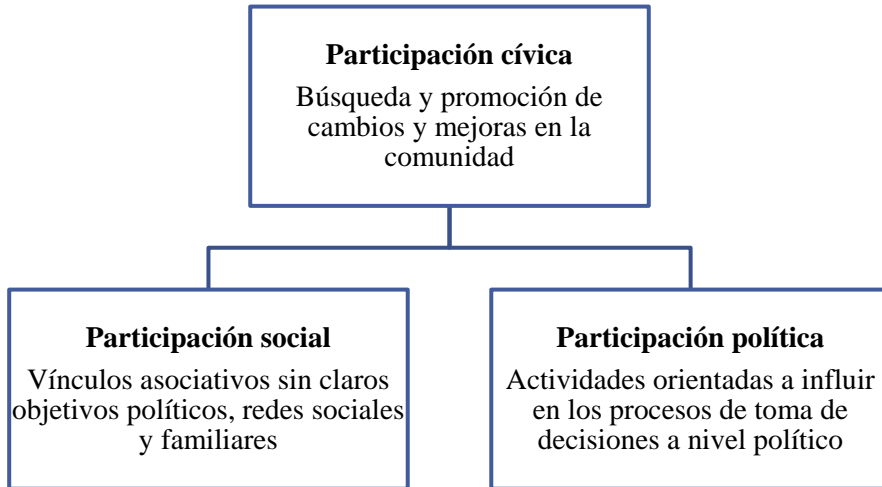
Tal y como afirma Berger (2009), la creciente popularidad del concepto de participación cívica que siguió a la publicación de *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* corrió paralela a una pérdida de coherencia conceptual en su utilización académica. En un artículo de revisión sobre el concepto, Adler and Goggin (2005) concluyen que no existe un significado único y comúnmente aceptado del término, que ha sido aplicado a una gran variedad de actividades cuya naturaleza y funciones no son siempre coincidentes. Así, mientras algunos investigadores han utilizado el concepto de manera amplia, para hacer referencia a todas aquellas

actividades que contribuyen a la creación de capital social (en la línea de Putnam), otros han limitado el alcance del mismo a actividades como el voluntariado (e.g. Cutler, Hendricks, & Neill, 2011) o la participación política (e.g. Burr, Caro, & Moorhead, 2002).

Esta falta de acuerdo en la definición del concepto de participación cívica ha supuesto una dificultad importante para el avance de la investigación (Cutler et al., 2011). A este respecto, Berger (2009) llegó incluso a afirmar que el concepto de participación cívica se había convertido en poco más que una palabra de moda, vaga e imprecisa en su definición, y que había llegado el momento de arrojar este concepto al “cubo de basura” y reemplazarlo por otros más operativos:

Cuando nuestras palabras nos conducen a “conceptualizaciones vagas y amorfas”, en lugar de a conceptos ampliamente aceptados –conceptos que significan algo similar para la mayoría de la gente la mayoría de las veces- no podemos estudiar, operacionalizar o discutir los fenómenos sociales y políticos que nos rodean. (Berger, 2009, p. 335)

Con el objetivo de lograr una mayor claridad conceptual, algunos autores han propuesto diferenciar dos componentes principales dentro del concepto de participación cívica: la participación social o comunitaria y la participación política (R. Adler & Goggin, 2005; Berger, 2009; McBride, Sherraden, & Pritzker, 2006) (ver figura 1.2).



**Figura 1.2:** Dimensiones de la participación cívica.

La participación social engloba el conjunto de vínculos asociativos sin clara finalidad política, así como también las redes sociales y familiares y las expectativas de confianza y reciprocidad que de ellas se dependen. Actividades como la prestación de cuidados o el voluntariado de tipo asistencial quedarían comprendidas dentro de este componente. En cuanto a la participación política, se refiere a las acciones que se orientan principalmente a influir en los procesos de toma de decisiones políticas, sea cual sea el nivel en el que se produzcan.

Aunque existe un creciente número de investigaciones sobre la participación social y comunitaria de las personas mayores, y particularmente sobre el voluntariado (para una revisión véase Morrow-Howell, 2010), la investigación sobre la participación política de las personas mayores se encuentra aún en estado incipiente (Nygard & Jakobsson, 2013a). Tal y como afirman

Martinson y Minkler (2006): “Cuando la participación cívica se reduce al voluntariado formal, otras actividades asociadas con la participación en la vida pública, como la participación electoral o el activismo político [...] son notablemente ignorados” (p. 319). Esta tesis tiene como foco la participación política de las personas mayores.

### **1.2.2 Participación política: Hacia una definición conceptual**

Quizá la definición más clásica de participación política, y una de las más utilizadas en la literatura, es la propuesta por Verba y Nie (1972): “la participación política se refiere a aquellas actividades de los ciudadanos que están más o menos directamente destinadas a influir en la elección de las personas que gobiernan y/o en las decisiones que adoptan” (p. 2). Esta definición supuso un avance importante al ampliar el abanico de canales participativos que se tomaban en consideración, ya que hasta entonces sólo se había tenido en cuenta la participación electoral. Sin embargo, la presunción de que “los resultados políticos están siempre determinados por la élite política” (Torcal, Montero, & Teorell, 2006, p. 10) fue señalada como una importante limitación de esta definición, ya que excluye las actividades ciudadanas que se orientan a influir en las decisiones de actores políticos que no forman parte del gobierno o de las élites políticas. En este sentido, las acciones dirigidas a impactar en las decisiones de actores no gubernamentales, como empresas o lobbies económicos, podrían ser también entendidas como participación política (Ekman & Amnå, 2012; Norris, 2002).

En un intento de superar esta limitación, Brady (1999) propuso definir a la participación política como la “acción del ciudadano ordinario dirigida a influir en algunos resultados políticos”. Según este autor, en toda definición de participación política se deben considerar cuatro elementos básicos:

- ✓ Actividad: debe haber un componente de participación activa y voluntaria, excluyéndose –por lo tanto- elementos como las actitudes hacia la política, en los que este componente de actividad se encuentra ausente.
- ✓ Ciudadanía: el objeto de estudio es la participación política de los ciudadanos “ordinarios”, excluyéndose –por consiguiente- a las élites políticas que ejercen esta actividad de manera profesional.
- ✓ Política: el objetivo de la actividad es obtener un resultado político, es decir, influir sobre la determinación de las prioridades de una sociedad o, en palabras de Torcal et al. (2006), sobre “...la asignación jerárquica de valores” (p. 11). Se excluyen –por consiguiente- las actividades que no responden a este objetivo.
- ✓ Influencia: se refiere a acciones que exigen demandas, excluyendo –por lo tanto- acciones que simplemente expresan un interés por la política pero en las que no hay la voluntad expresa de influir (como mantenerse informado de la actualidad política).

En este trabajo se adopta la definición de participación política propuesta por Nygard y Jakobsson (2013a), en la que se contemplan los cuatro elementos básicos señalados por Brady (1999). Así, la participación política puede ser entendida como:

La participación individual, no profesional y voluntaria en actividades que se dirigen, directa o indirectamente, a influenciar los resultados políticos, cambiar las premisas institucionales de la actividad política o influir en la elección de las personas que gobiernan y/o en las acciones que adoptan. (Nygard & Jakobsson, 2013a, p. 67)

### **1.2.3 Participación política y ciclo vital**

Se ha argumentado que los patrones de participación política mostrarían oscilaciones a lo largo del ciclo vital, debido principalmente al efecto de ciertos eventos y características propias de las diferentes etapas vitales sobre el comportamiento político de los individuos (Mcbride et al., 2006). Así, diversos autores han señalado que los niveles de participación electoral se incrementarían entre la juventud y la adultez y se mantendrían estables durante la vejez (Jennings & Markus, 1988; Verba & Nie, 1972). El interés por la política seguiría el mismo patrón (Jacobs, 1990; Jennings & Markus, 1988). Otros autores (Goerres, 2007; Melo & Stockemer, 2014), sin embargo, encontraron que la participación electoral se incrementaría con la edad, llegando a sus niveles más altos durante la vejez.

Respecto a otras actividades políticas, se ha argumentado que la relación entre edad y participación política se aproximaría a la forma de una U invertida. Así, los niveles de participación en diferentes actividades políticas mostrarían su nivel más bajo durante la juventud, comenzarían a incrementarse a partir de la adultez temprana, alcanzarían su pico máximo en la etapa media de la vida y decrecerían ligeramente al llegar a la vejez, aunque manteniéndose por encima de los niveles de participación de los jóvenes (e.g. Burr et al., 2002; Jennings & Niemi, 1981; Nie, Verba, & Kim, 1974). Este patrón de participación ha sido también hallado por Morales (2003) en la población española tomando en consideración tres tipos de actividad política: participación electoral, acciones de protesta y pertenencia a organizaciones políticas.

Asumiendo un patrón de U invertida, que se ajustaría a la mayoría de actividades políticas, algunos autores (e.g. Burr et al., 2002; Jankowski & Strate, 1995; Quintelier, 2007) señalan que las transiciones de rol y de estatus a lo largo de la vida podrían explicar los cambios que se observan en los niveles de participación. En este sentido, los jóvenes experimentarían transiciones vitales importantes (como obtener una educación, conseguir un trabajo estable o formar una familia) que les dejarían poco tiempo disponible para la actividad política. La menor disponibilidad de recursos económicos, el escaso desarrollo de habilidades cívicas y la falta de experiencia política, podrían estar también en la base de sus menores niveles de participación.



Las personas adultas, más preocupadas por las posibles consecuencias de la acción política sobre sus intereses personales o familiares, mostrarían más interés por la política y estarían más motivadas para participar. Así, factores como tener hijos en edad escolar, tener un mayor nivel de ingresos o tener un fuerte vínculo con la comunidad (por haber residido durante muchos años en el mismo barrio o poseer una vivienda en propiedad), explicarían las mayores tasas de participación de este grupo de edad. Además, las personas adultas han tenido más tiempo para proveerse de los recursos y desarrollar las habilidades cívicas necesarias para participar, y tienen menos posibilidades de experimentar cambios vitales que les dificulten ocuparse de aspectos como la participación.

Finalmente, las transiciones vitales críticas vuelven a ser relevantes durante la vejez y pueden tener un impacto sobre la participación política. Aspectos como la jubilación, la viudez o los problemas de salud o dependencia, afectarían las posibilidades de participación de los mayores. Por otro lado, algunos de los recursos necesarios para participar en actividades políticas (como el tiempo, el dinero o las habilidades cívicas) podrían disminuir también con la edad, dificultando por consiguiente la participación en algunos tipos de actividad política.

Sin embargo, este modelo ha sido objeto de debate. Además de que algunos tipos de actividad -como se ha mencionado más arriba- no se ajustan al patrón de U invertida, se ha argumentado que el declive de la participación política en la vejez no sería tan acusado si se

controlan variables como la educación, el género o el estatus socioeconómico (Nie et al., 1974; Verba & Nie, 1972). La relación entre edad y participación, entonces, sería compleja y se vería afectada por numerosos factores. Esto señala la necesidad, por un lado, de ir más allá de los modelos que explican los bajos niveles de participación política en la vejez a partir de teorías como la de la desvinculación y de tomar en consideración los factores estructurales que podrían afectar la participación de los mayores durante la etapa de la vejez (Walker, 2006). Por otro lado, pone de relieve la importancia de distinguir entre las diversas modalidades de participación política, que podrían seguir patrones diferenciados.

#### **1.2.4 Las diferentes modalidades de participación política**

La participación política es un fenómeno multidimensional que agrupa una gran diversidad de actividades. Tal y como señalan Huntington y Nelson (1976): “el concepto de participación política no es sino un cajón de sastre que acomoda formas muy diferentes de acción que constituyen fenómenos diferenciados, por lo que es necesario acudir a explicaciones de diferente naturaleza” (p. 14).

En la literatura sobre participación política se han sugerido algunos criterios para clasificar las diferentes modalidades de actividad política. Verba et al. (1995) proponen clasificar las actividades políticas atendiendo al nivel de recursos (tiempo, dinero o habilidades cívicas) que requieren del individuo. Así como votar en una elección, por ejemplo, exigiría una limitada cantidad de tiempo

y habilidades cívicas, otras actividades, como militar en un partido político o en un sindicato, requerirían de una inversión incomparablemente más elevada de los mismos recursos personales. La cantidad de tiempo, dinero o habilidades cívicas necesarias para participar permitiría, entonces, clasificar a las actividades políticas en actividades de baja o alta inversión de recursos.

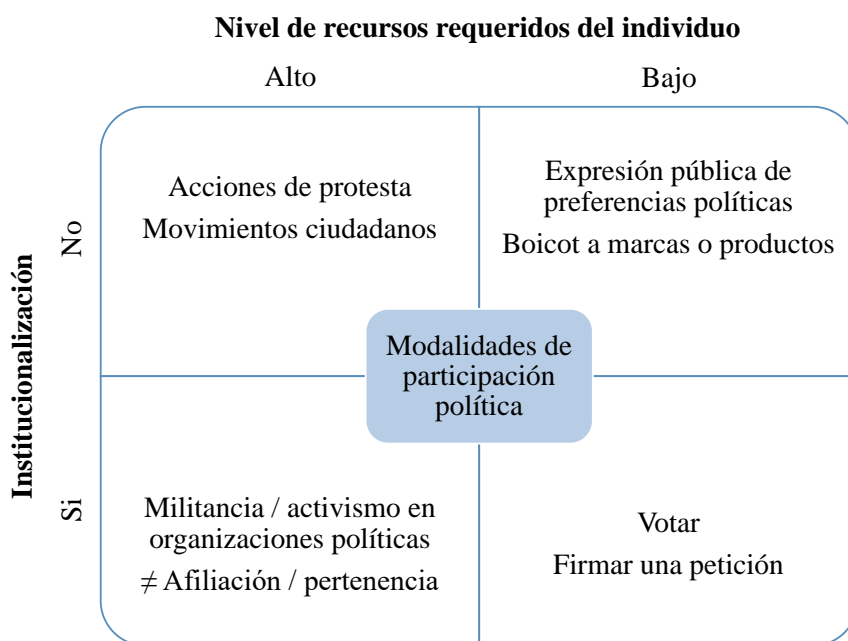
Kaase y Marsch (1979), por su parte, proponen diferenciar entre formas convencionales y no convencionales de participación política. Las actividades convencionales son aquellas que son consideradas habituales dentro de los marcos de un determinado régimen político (como hacer campaña para un candidato o votar en el marco de las democracias representativas). En contraste, las actividades no convencionales serían aquellas que “no se corresponden con las leyes y costumbres que regulan la participación política bajo un determinado régimen” (p. 41). Sin embargo, algunos autores han argumentado que esta distinción, que resultaba relevante para analizar la participación política hace algunas décadas, podría no ser apropiada en la actualidad, ya que los límites entre lo que se considera acción política convencional y acción política no convencional son cada vez más difusos (Norris, 2002). En este sentido, se ha propuesto distinguir entre formas institucionalizadas y no institucionalizadas de participación política. En el primer caso se trataría de actividades políticas formales, de carácter organizado, como el voto, en tanto que en el segundo estaríamos frente a actividades de carácter más informal y espontáneo que se producen por fuera de la esfera política

institucional, como las acciones de protesta o boicot (Kaase, 1999; Nygard & Jakobsson, 2013a).

Otras dimensiones relevantes para clasificar la actividad política, propuestas por Verba et al. (1995), tienen que ver con la capacidad de los actos políticos para informar a los representantes sobre las circunstancias y preferencias de los individuos y el grado de presión que estos actos ejercen sobre los gobernantes. Así, actividades como la participación electoral proporcionan escasa información respecto a las preferencias políticas individuales, pero pueden tener una importante influencia sobre los procesos políticos si se consideran en conjunto. En el otro extremo, actividades como asistir a manifestaciones o protestas tienen una mayor capacidad para informar sobre las preferencias políticas de los individuos pero, dependiendo de las circunstancias, podrían tener escaso efecto sobre los procesos políticos. En la figura 1.3 se presentan algunos ejemplos de actividad política clasificados de acuerdo con las dos primeras dimensiones mencionadas, a saber, el nivel de recursos requerido del individuo y el carácter institucionalizado o no institucionalizado de la actividad.

A pesar de las muchas formas que puede asumir la participación política, la mayoría de estudios sobre la participación de las personas mayores se han centrado sobre todo en una actividad, como la votación (e.g. Binstock, 2000; Cheung, Kam, Chan, & Leung, 2001; Strate, Parrish, Elder, & Ford, 1989), o en una combinación de algunos tipos de actividad política, como votar, asistir a reuniones,

firmar peticiones, participar en protestas o contactar representantes políticos (e.g. Jirovec & Erich, 1992; Melo & Stockemer, 2014; Nygard & Jakobsson, 2013a, 2013b). Sin embargo, ha habido muy poca investigación sobre otro tipo de actividades políticas, tales como la participación de las personas mayores en organizaciones políticas. Este trabajo se centra en esta forma específica de participación política.



**Figura 1.3:** Clasificación de las actividades políticas de acuerdo al nivel de recursos requeridos del individuo y el carácter institucionalizado o no institucionalizado de la actividad.

### **1.3 LA PARTICIPACIÓN EN ORGANIZACIONES POLÍTICAS**

Estudiar la participación de las personas mayores en organizaciones políticas podría ser relevante por una serie de motivos. En primer lugar, la participación en organizaciones políticas requiere un mayor nivel de compromiso e inversión en términos de tiempo, habilidades cívicas e incluso un mayor coste emocional que otro tipo de actividades políticas más frecuentemente estudiadas, como el voto (Verba et al., 1995). En segundo lugar, mientras que las actividades no institucionalizadas, como participar en acciones de protesta o de boicot de marcas o productos, son transitorias y no requieren de un compromiso a largo plazo (Goerres, 2009), la participación en organizaciones políticas tiende a ser estable en el tiempo y a sostenerse de manera continuada a lo largo de la vida. Las características de esta modalidad de participación, por lo tanto, podrían ser únicas y difíciles de comparar con las que revisten otros tipos de actividad política.

En relación con este último punto, el estudio de la pertenencia a organizaciones políticas -como forma estructurada y estable de participación- podría contribuir a la comprensión de otros fenómenos que se producen de manera más espontánea o esporádica. Las organizaciones políticas aportarían “continuidad y predictibilidad a procesos sociales que de otra manera serían inciertos” (Wilson, 1995; citado en Morales, 2001, p. 154). Además, las organizaciones políticas constituyen el principal punto de contacto entre los ciudadanos y el sistema político, hasta el punto de que la disminución

de esta modalidad de participación se ha relacionado con la disminución de otras actividades políticas, como el voto. Por consiguiente, la participación en organizaciones políticas “no sólo resulta interesante en sí mismo como fenómeno de comportamiento político, sino también en la medida en que influye sobre otros comportamientos y actitudes políticas, y resulta fundamental para entender otros procesos de participación política” (Morales, 2001, p. 154).

Como hemos visto en el apartado anterior, la definición de participación política ha sido objeto de un debate considerable en la literatura (e.g. Berger, 2009; Ekman & Amnå, 2012) y este debate se ha trasladado también a la definición de organización política. En esta tesis se adopta la definición de organizaciones políticas propuesta por Morales (2001):

Aquellos grupos organizados de ciudadanos que persiguen bienes colectivos -sean bienes públicos puros u otro tipo de bienes colectivos- y que tienen como principal objetivo influir en los procesos de toma de decisiones políticas, ya sea intentando influir en la selección del personal gubernamental o en sus actividades, introduciendo temas en la agenda o intentando cambiar los valores y preferencias que guían la toma de decisiones políticas. (p. 160)

Es importante destacar en esta definición tres elementos básicos:

- ✓ Grupos organizados: se refiere a grupos en los que existe cierto grado de interacción formal entre sus miembros. En este sentido, las organizaciones políticas se distinguen de los movimientos sociales o movilizaciones ciudadanas.
- ✓ Bienes colectivos: es decir, se trata de organizaciones que persiguen bienes caracterizados por la imposibilidad de exclusión del consumo, en contraposición a los bienes privados, sobre los que sí existe esta posibilidad (Morales & Mota, 2006).
- ✓ Política: se refiere a organizaciones que tienen como objetivo influenciar algún aspecto de la actividad política, es decir, de la determinación de las prioridades de una sociedad, excluyéndose –por consiguiente– las organizaciones que no responden a esta orientación.

La participación de las personas mayores en las organizaciones políticas por lo general se ha estudiado en su conjunto, sin distinguir entre tipos de organización (e.g. Jirovec & Erich, 1995; Kam, Cheung, Chan, & Leung, 1999). Sin embargo, establecer diferencias entre tipos de organización podría ser relevante para la definición de ciertas características de la participación política. Goerres (2009), por ejemplo, encontró que los patrones de participación política en diferentes grupos de edad eran diferentes para partidos políticos, sindicatos y organizaciones de causa única. En este sentido, el tipo de organización podría ser también una variable relevante al abordar otras características de la participación política de los mayores, como las motivaciones o barreras para la participación, ya que, en función



de sus objetivos o alcance, las organizaciones podrían atraer o rechazar a personas mayores con determinadas características.

En el presente trabajo, se propone clasificar a las organizaciones políticas atendiendo a dos dimensiones básicas:

- ✓ Ámbito de actuación de la organización: Así como algunas organizaciones políticas circunscriben su actuación a ámbitos geográficos muy determinados (por ejemplo, las asociaciones de vecinos que operan a nivel de barrios), otras ejercen su influencia a nivel estatal (por ejemplo, los partidos políticos o los sindicatos).
- ✓ Diversidad o especificidad de los objetivos que se persiguen: Mientras que algunas organizaciones políticas persiguen objetivos amplios y diversos, buscando influir en diferentes áreas de la política (por ejemplo, los partidos políticos), otras organizaciones centran su accionar en la consecución de objetivos muy específicos (por ejemplo, las agrupaciones de causa única).

Por otro lado, se han utilizado diferentes términos para denominar la pertenencia de los individuos a organizaciones políticas, entre ellos: afiliación, pertenencia, activismo, militancia. Más allá de los significados que han recibido estos términos en distintas tradiciones académicas (para una discusión de estas diferencias véase Morales, 2001, 2004), es importante destacar que en los dos primeros (afiliación / pertenencia) no hay implícito un componente de

actividad (en muchos casos se trata de una simple adhesión a la organización). Por el contrario, los términos de militancia y activismo connotan una participación activa en el seno de la organización. Con el objetivo de hacer más fluida la exposición, en esta tesis se utilizan estos términos de manera intercambiable. Sin embargo, conviene remarcar que su objeto de estudio es la militancia o activismo de las personas mayores en organizaciones políticas, es decir, la implicación activa en estas organizaciones y no la mera pertenencia o afiliación a las mismas.

#### **1.4 LA PARTICIPACIÓN POLÍTICA DE LOS MAYORES EN ESPAÑA**

El estudio de la participación cívica de las personas mayores en España ha sido muy limitado y se ha centrado principalmente en la participación en actividades de voluntariado. A lo largo de la última década, diferentes entidades públicas y organismos de investigación han comenzado a incluir este tema en sus agendas y actualmente contamos con algunos datos empíricos procedentes de nuestro país (e.g. del Barrio, 2007; Instituto de Mayores y Servicios Sociales, 2008; G. Rodríguez, Rodríguez, Castejón, & Morán, 2013; V. Rodríguez, Fernández, & Rojo, 2012). Sin embargo, una limitación importante de estos estudios es que abarcan un rango limitado de actividades cívicas, y en la mayoría de casos, no incluyen información sobre la participación de las personas mayores en actividades políticas. A pesar de estas limitaciones, estas

investigaciones constituyen un buen punto de partida para cualquier investigación sobre la participación cívica de las personas mayores.

Del análisis de estos estudios se desprende que la participación cívica de las personas mayores en España es un fenómeno poco frecuente. V. Rodríguez et al. (2012), en su análisis de las actividades de ocio y participación social, concluyeron que el 50% de las personas mayores españolas tenían un bajo nivel de actividad. De aquellos que eran activos, la mayoría se dedicaba a actividades relacionadas con el entorno social y residencial (31.2%) y, un grupo menos numeroso, a actividades formativas, culturales o de viaje-turismo (13.7%). Solo el 5.1% participaba activamente en asociaciones de voluntariado, deportivas, culturales, vecinales y otras.

Estos datos coinciden con los estudios disponibles sobre la participación de las personas mayores españolas en actividades de voluntariado. Así, mientras en países como EEUU la tasa de voluntariado entre los mayores de 65 años se sitúa en un 23.5% (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009), en Europa, la media de participación en actividades de voluntariado entre las personas mayores de 50 años es sólo del 10% (Hank & Erlinghagen, 2009). Dentro del contexto europeo, marcado por notorias diferencias entre los países del norte y los del sur, España se sitúa claramente por debajo de la media, con solo un 3% de personas mayores de 50 años implicadas en actividades de voluntariado.

Si limitamos el análisis a la participación en actividades políticas, nos encontramos con un patrón de participación similar. En este sentido, la participación del conjunto de la población española en actividades políticas se caracterizaría por unos niveles marcadamente bajos en comparación con otros países occidentales. Tal y como señala Morales (2003):

España destaca como uno de los países occidentales con los niveles más bajos de participación política y compromiso cívico. Junto con otras naciones del sur de Europa, España muestra algunos de los niveles más bajos de interés en la política, discusión política y pertenencia asociativa. En consecuencia, España ha sido descrita como una sociedad desmovilizada y apática. (p. 5)

Dentro de este contexto, las personas mayores conforman el grupo de edad con los niveles más bajos de participación política. Aunque sus tasas de participación electoral son similares a las de otros grupos de edad e incluso ligeramente superiores a las de los jóvenes (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 2011), las personas mayores de 65 años son menos propensas a asistir a manifestaciones, participar en huelgas, firmar peticiones (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 2011; Instituto de Mayores y Servicios Sociales, 2008), boicotear productos por razones éticas o políticas, participar en acciones de desobediencia cívica (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 2011) o ser miembros de organizaciones políticas (Morales, 2003), aunque en este último caso existirían diferencias de acuerdo al tipo de organización política considerada (Centro de Investigaciones

Sociológicas, 2011). Sin embargo, en las últimas elecciones generales del mes de noviembre de 2011, las personas mayores de 65 años constituían el 23% del electorado. Esto significa que, si se movilizaran, podrían constituir un importante lobby de influencia de las políticas gubernamentales.

Por otro lado, las tasas de participación política entre los mayores españoles variarían no sólo de acuerdo al tipo de actividad política considerada, sino también de acuerdo al perfil sociodemográfico de los individuos. De acuerdo con el informe del IMSERSO (2008) sobre la participación social de las personas mayores:

La actividad política de las personas mayores se caracteriza por: registrar cuotas todavía más bajas que la población en general, por diferencias significativas entre hombres y mujeres, mostrando ellos niveles más altos que ellas: por que las cuotas van en disminución en función del aumento de la edad; por que a mejor formación, mayores niveles de interés, al igual que las personas mayores situadas en las clases sociales más altas; por el contrario, las personas mayores católicas y las que residen en ámbitos rurales muestran menos interés político. (p 34)

Se ha argumentado que las tasas tan bajas de participación en actividades de voluntariado y actividades políticas entre los mayores españoles responderían a un patrón típico de participación propio de los países del sur de Europa, en el que las contribuciones a nivel familiar, particularmente en tareas de cuidado (Hank & Buber, 2009),

serían más frecuentes que aquellas que se realizan a nivel comunitario. En nuestra propia investigación con una muestra representativa de la población española mayor de 65 años (Villar, Celdrán, et al., 2013), encontramos que mientras sólo el 9.1% y el 8.4% respectivamente se implicaba en actividades de voluntariado o de participación política, estos porcentajes ascendían al 31.2% y al 13.9% en el caso del cuidado de nietos y del cuidado informal de personas con algún tipo de dependencia. Cabe destacar que solo la participación política se asociaba significativamente con una mayor satisfacción personal y una menor preocupación por la vejez.

Por otro lado, las características de la participación política de las personas mayores estarían altamente influenciadas por el contexto socio-histórico (Goerres, 2009). El caso de España, en este sentido, es particularmente paradigmático. Las generaciones actuales de personas mayores vivieron parte de su juventud y adultez durante la dictadura franquista. Fueron tiempos de severas limitaciones de derechos y libertades, en el que cualquier tipo de actividad o manifestación política estaba prohibida. No fue sino hasta la transición a la democracia que las organizaciones políticas fueron legalizadas y las actividades políticas permitidas.

Goerres (2009) argumenta que las generaciones que experimentan limitaciones importantes a sus derechos fundamentales durante la juventud y adultez podrían percibir menores posibilidades de participación al llegar a la vejez, y este podría ser el caso de España. Diversos autores han señalado las claras diferencias generacionales

en el comportamiento y las actitudes políticas entre las cohortes españolas (Montero & Torcal, 1990; Torcal, 1992). En este sentido, se prevé que el progresivo recambio generacional por cohortes educadas y socializadas en democracia dará lugar a una expansión gradual de las actitudes y comportamiento políticos democráticos (Montero & Torcal, 1990; Torcal, 1992). España es una democracia joven y se encuentra aún en el proceso de construir una cultura política estable (Morales, 2003).

En el siguiente capítulo, examinaremos los diferentes modelos que se han propuesto para explicar la participación política.

## CAPÍTULO II: MODELOS EXPLICATIVOS DE LA PARTICIPACIÓN POLÍTICA

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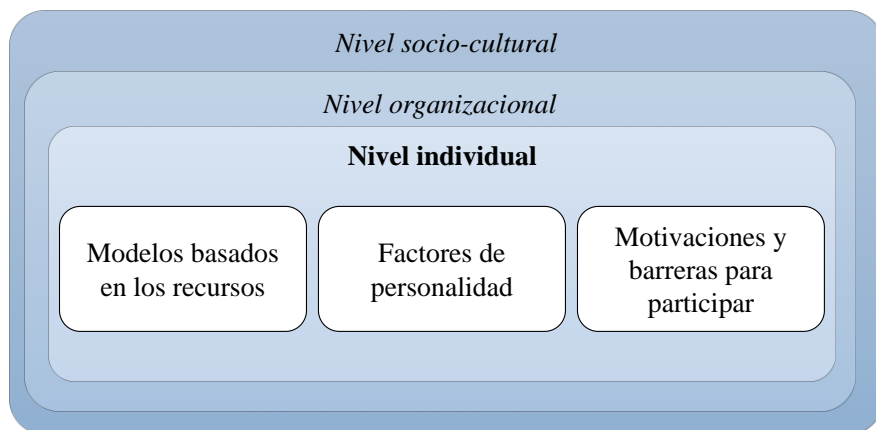




## 2.1 NIVELES EXPLICATIVOS DE LA PARTICIPACIÓN POLÍTICA

Como todo fenómeno social complejo, la participación política puede ser abordada desde múltiples perspectivas y niveles explicativos. Más allá de sus diferencias, la mayoría de enfoques coincide en la idea de que entender los factores que facilitan, promueven o impiden la participación es esencial para comprender el comportamiento político de los individuos. Como se verá a lo largo de este capítulo, la aplicación de estas teorías al ámbito de la vejez ha sido limitada, aunque ha habido algunas excepciones a esta regla general.

Con el objetivo de facilitar la exposición y siguiendo la propuesta de diversos autores (e.g. McBride et al., 2006; Norris, 2002), se clasifican las diferentes teorías de la participación política según el nivel de análisis utilizado en las explicaciones (ver figura 2.1).



**Figura 2.1:** Niveles explicativos de la participación política (adaptado parcialmente de Norris, 2002).

En primer lugar reseñaremos, de manera breve, algunas teorías que se ubican en los niveles macro (socio-cultural) e intermedio (organizacional) de explicación (ver Norris, 2002), para centrarnos, seguidamente, en los modelos explicativos centrados en el individuo, que constituyen el foco de esta tesis.

## **2.1.1 Nivel socio-cultural**

### ***2.1.1.1 Teorías de la modernización***

La idea central de las teorías de la modernización es que los cambios económicos, culturales y políticos siguen trayectorias globales, similares y predecibles, aunque las formas específicas que asumen estos cambios puedan variar en consonancia con las particularidades de cada sociedad (Norris, 2002). Se ha sugerido, por ejemplo, que las formas de participación política en las democracias occidentales se han visto afectadas por una serie de cambios sociales y económicos comunes a todas las sociedades postindustriales (e.g. mejora sustantiva de los estándares de vida, incremento de las oportunidades educativas, crecimiento del sector de servicios, etc.). Como efecto de estos cambios, las modalidades institucionalizadas de participación política estarían siendo reemplazadas por formas más alternativas, en las que los ciudadanos tendrían un rol activo (para una exposición más detallada véase Norris, 2002).

### **2.1.1.2 Rol del Estado - Instituciones**

Este conjunto de teorías pone el énfasis en la influencia de las estructuras estatales e institucionales en la participación política de los individuos. Se ha argumentado, por ejemplo, que aspectos como las leyes electorales y el funcionamiento de los partidos políticos, podrían explicar las diferencias en la participación electoral que se observan entre países (e.g. Jackman, 1987).

## **2.1.2 Nivel organizacional**

### **2.1.2.1 Agentes movilizadores**

Desde esta perspectiva, se estudia el rol que ejercen determinados agentes movilizadores (como los partidos políticos, los sindicatos o las organizaciones religiosas o civiles) en el reclutamiento, organización y retención de militantes (e.g. Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993). En este sentido, por ejemplo, hay un amplio consenso en considerar que ser invitado a unirse a una organización política aumenta las probabilidades de convertirse en miembro de la misma (e.g. Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993; Verba et al., 1995). El modelo de capital social propuesto por Putnam (Putnam et al., 1993; Putnam, 2000) y comentado más arriba, apunta también en esta dirección. Las redes de confianza y las expectativas de reciprocidad que se generan como efecto de la participación en la vida social y asociativa, podrían actuar como agentes movilizadores y facilitar la acción cooperativa de los individuos en asuntos de interés público (Norris, 2002).

### **2.1.3 Nivel individual**

Este conjunto de teorías centran su análisis en la dimensión individual de la participación e intentan explicar por qué individuos que comparten contextos socio-culturales y organizacionales similares muestran diferencias en sus niveles de participación. Los modelos centrados en el individuo se orientan, entonces, a explorar los factores que afectan la participación política a nivel individual e intentan responder a preguntas como qué factores facilitan o impiden la participación, por qué algunos individuos participan más que otros o qué motiva a los individuos a participar y qué barreras encuentran para hacerlo.

A continuación se reseñan los tres enfoques que han tenido más desarrollo en la literatura sobre participación política: las teorías basadas en los recursos, las centradas en los factores de personalidad y las que abordan las motivaciones y barreras para participar en actividades políticas.

## **2.2 TEORÍAS BASADAS EN LOS RECURSOS**

Los modelos basados en los recursos se centran en estudiar la influencia de la disponibilidad de recursos como el tiempo, el dinero o las habilidades cívicas en la participación ciudadana. El modelo del voluntarismo cívico, desarrollado por Verba et al. (1995), es sin duda alguna el ejemplo paradigmático de los modelos explicativos basados

en los recursos y podría ser considerado el marco analítico y conceptual más completo para responder a la pregunta de por qué determinados individuos se implican en actividades políticas.

Según Verba et al. (1995), la manera más sencilla de responder a esta pregunta es invirtiéndola y preguntándose en su lugar por qué hay personas que no participan. En este sentido, habría al menos tres razones no excluyentes entre sí por las cuales algunos individuos no participan en la vida pública: a) porque no pueden participar, b) porque no quieren participar y, c) porque nadie les ha pedido que participen. Aplicando este marco conceptual, los autores desarrollan un modelo explicativo de la participación política basado en tres factores: a) Recursos, b) Motivaciones y, c) Redes de reclutamiento. Aunque la propuesta de Verba et al. (1995) considera el rol que tienen los agentes movilizadores y las motivaciones individuales en la participación, los recursos ocupan un lugar central en el modelo y son los que han generado más investigación.

Por otro lado, mientras que los recursos y las motivaciones son considerados componentes imprescindibles del modelo, las redes de reclutamiento ocupan un lugar más secundario. Tal y como afirman Verba et al. (1995): “el reclutamiento para la actividad política –el hecho de ser invitado a participar- juega un rol importante, pero la participación puede, y de hecho sucede, en ausencia de demandas específicas para participar. En contraste, es difícil de imaginar que pueda haber actividad política sin un módico nivel de recursos y cierto interés psicológico en la misma” (p. 270). Hemos mencionado

ya el papel de los agentes movilizadores en el punto 2.1.2 y abordaremos las motivaciones para participar en el punto 2.4.1, nos centraremos entonces a continuación en el rol de los recursos en la participación.

### **2.2.1 Recursos socio-económicos y participación política en la vejez**

Los recursos para participar son la cara opuesta del coste de la participación. Las actividades políticas requieren que el individuo invierta diferentes cantidades de recursos como tiempo, dinero o habilidades cívicas. Los recursos de los que el individuo dispone, por otro lado, determinan el coste relativo de su actividad política y, por lo tanto, su predisposición a participar. Tal y como afirma Morales (2004):

Quando un ciudadano tiene un alto nivel de ingresos el coste relativo de contribuir económicamente con una organización política es menor que cuando tiene un bajo nivel de ingresos; cuando uno tiene poco tiempo libre disponible el coste de participar en una organización es mayor que cuando uno dispone de ese tiempo; los ciudadanos que tienen pocos recursos educativos y cognitivos enfrentan mayores costes para informarse que aquellos que disponen de estos recursos en abundancia. (p. 37)

La conclusión lógica del modelo es que los ciudadanos que disponen de más recursos tienen más probabilidades de participar en

actividades políticas. Verba et al. (1995) demostraron que las posibilidades de participación no se distribuyen de manera homogénea entre los diferentes grupos sociales. El acceso de los individuos a la vida cívica es claramente desigual, siendo la pertenencia a un grupo de edad uno de los factores que podría estar en la base de estas diferencias. Tal y como afirma Morales (2001), las “diferencias sociales como el género, la edad, la clase social, el nivel educativo o la raza se transforman -según los contextos- en diferencias de recursos sociales y económicos que facilitan o dificultan el acceso a la esfera pública” (p. 154). El acceso desigual a las oportunidades para influenciar los procesos políticos contribuye a su vez a potenciar esas desigualdades, generando un ciclo que profundiza la exclusión de determinados colectivos de las esferas de decisión política.

Sin embargo, la cantidad y proporción de recursos requeridos del individuo difieren de acuerdo al tipo de actividad considerada, de ahí la importancia de considerar esta variable en cualquier análisis de la actividad política. El nivel educativo, por ejemplo, influye en un amplio rango de actividades políticas. Los individuos con niveles educativos más altos son más propensos a votar (Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980), a asistir a reuniones u ofrecerse como voluntarios de campañas electorales (Burr et al., 2002) y a contactar con representantes políticos, protestar en contra de sus decisiones, escribir cartas a la prensa o boicotear productos o empresas (Nygard & Jakobsson, 2013b). Sin embargo, el nivel educativo no tendría un rol determinante en otro tipo de actividades políticas, como la



desobediencia cívica o la participación en protestas ilegales, en las que otros factores –como la edad- ejercerían un mayor efecto (Morales, 2004). Melo and Stockemer (2014) argumentan que la capacidad para pensar de manera crítica y entender escenarios políticos complejos, habilidades relacionadas con el nivel educativo, se encuentra en la base de esta mayor probabilidad para participar en algunos tipos de actividad política.

Se ha comprobado también que existe una relación positiva entre el nivel de ingresos y la participación política. Las personas con niveles de ingresos más altos tienen más probabilidades de implicarse en numerosas formas de participación política: son más propensos a donar dinero para campañas electorales (Burr et al., 2002), a pertenecer a organizaciones políticas, a contactar con representantes políticos y a implicarse como voluntarios en campañas electorales (Verba et al., 1995). En este sentido, se ha argumentado que disponer de recursos financieros adecuados facilitaría el desarrollo de habilidades cívicas y capital social, lo que a su vez, aumentaría la probabilidad de implicarse en actividades políticas (Burns, Schlozman, & Verba, 2001; Melo & Stockemer, 2014).

El modelo desarrollado por Verba et al. (1995) ha hallado sustento empírico, en algunos casos sólo parcial, en diferentes muestras de personas mayores (G. Adler, Schwartz, & Kuskowski, 2007; Cheung et al., 2001; Kam et al., 1999; Nygard & Jakobsson, 2013a, 2013b). Sin embargo, aún no se ha probado empíricamente en relación con actividades políticas que requieren un nivel de compromiso elevado

de parte del individuo, como la pertenencia a organizaciones políticas. Por otro lado, el modelo no ha sido aplicado aún en nuestro contexto.

### **2.2.2 Participación política y actividades de envejecimiento activo**

Además del rol que desempeña la disponibilidad de recursos como la educación o los ingresos, existen otros factores que podrían estar asociados con la participación política, particularmente cuando se consideran actividades que exigen un nivel de compromiso elevado por parte del individuo. Así, para emprender estas actividades no sólo sería necesario poseer un buen nivel de competencias cívicas (Verba et al., 1995), sino también disponer de una cantidad considerable de tiempo (Burr et al., 2002). La participación política podría tener entonces un rol complementario o competitivo respecto de otras actividades que exigen también una inversión de tiempo y esfuerzo por parte del individuo. Por un lado, la participación en otras actividades de envejecimiento activo, como las actividades de ocio, sociales o productivas, por ejemplo, podría desviar el tiempo y el esfuerzo que se necesita para participar en actividades políticas. Por otro lado, la participación del individuo en estas actividades podría potenciar sus redes sociales y vínculos institucionales, incrementando entonces sus oportunidades para implicarse en actividades políticas.

Aunque no disponemos de estudios que hayan examinado la complementariedad / competitividad de las actividades de envejecimiento activo en relación con la participación política, existen algunas investigaciones relacionadas con el voluntariado. Así, por ejemplo, se ha encontrado que los mayores que desempeñan un trabajo remunerado tienden a implicarse más en actividades de voluntariado que aquellos que están desempleados o jubilados (Choi, 2003) y que el voluntariado también se asocia positivamente con la prestación de cuidados (Burr, Choi, Mutchler, & Caro, 2005). Estos hallazgos sugieren que las actividades de envejecimiento activo se complementan entre sí en lugar de competir entre sí.

A este respecto, explorar las interacciones entre diferentes tipos de actividad podría ser especialmente relevante, aunque esta variable raramente ha sido considerada (Burr, Mutchler, & Caro, 2007). Las personas mayores que mantienen un estilo de vida “activo” se implican – por lo general- en una amplia gama de actividades. No obstante, no todas las actividades consideradas en el modelo del envejecimiento activo tienen las mismas características. Estas actividades requieren diferentes niveles de recursos y responden a diferentes motivaciones, y estas dimensiones podrían ser clave a la hora de considerar sus interacciones con la participación política.

Manell (1993) propuso clasificar las actividades durante la vejez como actividades de baja o alta inversión de recursos, teniendo en cuenta el nivel de esfuerzo requerido del individuo para llevarlas a cabo. En su análisis de la participación social en la vejez, Bukov,

Mass, y Lampert (2002) propusieron, entre otras dimensiones, clasificar a las actividades -teniendo en cuenta su orientación- como actividades orientadas hacia el individuo (cuando el individuo recibe recursos del entorno social) u actividades orientadas socialmente (cuando el individuo aporta recursos al entorno social).

Tomando en cuenta estas dimensiones, es posible identificar tres tipos diferentes de actividades de envejecimiento activo: (1) actividades orientadas hacia el individuo que implican una baja inversión de recursos, (2) actividades orientadas hacia el individuo que implican una alta inversión de recursos, y (3) actividades orientadas socialmente que, por naturaleza, tienden a implicar una alta inversión de recursos. Las actividades de ocio son un buen ejemplo del primer tipo de actividades. En este caso, el entretenimiento personal es la principal motivación y tener tiempo libre es el único requisito para llevarlas a cabo. El segundo tipo de actividad se orienta también hacia el individuo, pero implica una mayor inversión de recursos. Dentro de este tipo de actividad entrarían, por ejemplo, las actividades relacionadas con el aprendizaje, tales como la participación en programas educativos para personas mayores. Finalmente, el tercer tipo de actividad tiene una orientación social y generalmente requiere una alta inversión de recursos. Este sería el caso de las actividades productivas, que pueden llevarse a cabo en el entorno de la familia (tales como las actividades de cuidado) o en el entorno comunitario (como el voluntariado).

Resulta relevante explorar, entonces, si el hecho de realizar otras actividades de envejecimiento activo se relaciona o no con la participación en actividades políticas y, si es así, cuál es el efecto (complementario o competitivo) que tienen estas actividades en la participación política. Así mismo, resulta relevante explorar si este efecto varía según el tipo de actividad que se considere. Hasta donde sabemos, sin embargo, ningún estudio ha explorado estas interacciones.

El siguiente apartado aborda un segundo grupo de teorías explicativas de la participación política que centran su análisis en el nivel individual. Abordaremos las teorías que explican la participación política a partir de determinadas características de personalidad.

### **2.3 FACTORES DE PERSONALIDAD**

Este conjunto de teorías se orientan a identificar las características de personalidad que diferencian a aquellos que participan en actividades políticas de aquellos no lo hacen (Duncan, 2012). Los estudios realizados desde esta perspectiva se podrían clasificar teniendo en cuenta la propuesta de McAdams (e.g. McAdams & Olson, 2010; McAdams, 2006) de distinguir tres niveles de desarrollo de la personalidad: la persona como actor (rasgos de personalidad), la persona como agente (adaptaciones características) y la persona como autor (identidad narrativa).

Respecto al primer nivel, se ha relacionado el activismo político con diferentes medidas de personalidad (para una revisión consúltese Duncan, 2012). Así, se han encontrado relaciones positivas entre diferentes tipos de activismo político y medidas de personalidad como la apertura a la experiencia (Curtin, Stewart, & Duncan, 2010), el optimismo (Galvin & Herzog, 1998; Greenberg & Schneider, 1997) o la necesidad de evaluar (Bizer et al., 2004). Por el contrario, se ha relacionado negativamente con el autoritarismo (Duncan, Peterson, & Winter, 1997), aunque la relación podría ser positiva en el caso de ciertos tipos de activismo, como la participación en movimientos antiabortistas (Peterson, Smirles, & Wentworth, 1997).

En relación a las adaptaciones características, se han encontrado relaciones positivas entre el activismo político y la saliencia política personal (*“personal political salience”*), constructo propuesto para evaluar el grado de relación entre los eventos políticos y la identidad individual, y definido como la tendencia a asignar significados personales a los eventos sociales y políticos (e.g. Duncan & Stewart, 2007; Duncan, 1999). Por otro lado, un constructo que ha sido ampliamente investigado en relación al activismo es la eficacia política (para una revisión véase Duncan, 2012). En este sentido, las personas que creen que sus acciones tendrán una influencia real y efectiva sobre los procesos políticos serían más propensas a implicarse en actividades políticas.

Se ha propuesto también que la participación política puede ser entendida como una actividad generativa (Hart, McAdams, Hirsch,

& Bauer, 2001; Peterson & Duncan, 1999). La aplicación de este concepto en la vejez, como se verá a continuación, podría ser particularmente prometedora para entender qué significa envejecer satisfactoriamente y cuáles son los beneficios tanto sociales como personales que se derivan de la participación. Sin embargo, la aplicación sistemática del concepto de generatividad a la comprensión de la participación política en la etapa de la vejez ha sido prácticamente inexistente (Villar & Serrat, 2014). En el siguiente apartado abordamos este aspecto.

### **2.3.1 Participación política y generatividad en la vejez**

De acuerdo con el modelo eriksoniano (Erikson, 1963, 1982), el ciclo vital puede ser dividido en ocho etapas, cada una de ellas caracterizada por una crisis evolutiva que se expresa a través de una polaridad básica. La tarea central de cada etapa puede ser resuelta por el individuo de manera más o menos satisfactoria, dependiendo este resultado –en gran parte- de la resolución satisfactoria de las etapas previas del desarrollo. La propuesta eriksoniana es, en esencia, evolutiva. De acuerdo con este autor, los individuos adquieren progresivamente una mayor madurez a medida que superan una serie típica de crisis vitales.

En la adultez los individuos se enfrentan a la crisis de la generatividad vs el estancamiento. Erikson (1963) describió a la generatividad como “el interés por establecer y guiar a las generaciones siguientes” (p. 267). Durante esta etapa, los adultos son llamados a promover el

desarrollo y bienestar de las siguientes generaciones y, en última instancia, a dejar un legado que les sobreviva. De acuerdo con Erikson, Erikson, y Kivnick (1986), la clave de la generatividad es “vincular a cada generación con aquella que le dio vida y con aquella de cuya vida es responsable” (p. 73).

Erikson señaló que el interés por la generatividad tenía su origen tanto en necesidades internas como en fuerzas sociales externas y que constituía una expectativa social cuando las personas alcanzaban la adultez. Los adultos sanos, que han consolidado su identidad durante la adolescencia (quinta etapa) y han desarrollado relaciones de intimidad duraderas durante los primeros años de la vida adulta (sexta etapa), se enfrentan en la etapa media de la vida al desafío de regenerar el ciclo vital mediante el cuidado y la dirección de aquellos que les sucederán. En este sentido, Erikson concebía a la generatividad como una forma de trascender la propia mortalidad. La resolución satisfactoria de la crisis de la generatividad prepara al individuo para la última etapa, la de la integridad, que consiste en hacer un balance de la propia vida, sentir que ésta ha sido plena y significativa, y aceptar entonces la propia muerte.

De acuerdo con Erikson (1963), tener y criar hijos podría ser considerada la forma prototípica de expresar la generatividad. Sin embargo, la generatividad no está restringida al ámbito de la familia sino que puede ser expresada también a nivel social y comunitario. Así, la generatividad incluye un amplio rango de actividades, tales como enseñar y guiar a las generaciones más jóvenes, producir bienes



o servicios, o comprometerse con causas cívicas, políticas o religiosas. A través de la generatividad, los adultos contribuyen a la mejora y mantenimiento del contexto en el que viven, refuerzan las instituciones, enriquecen los vínculos y redes sociales, y aseguran de esta manera la continuidad entre las generaciones (Villar, 2012b).

Tras la publicación de la obra de Erikson, el concepto de generatividad cayó en el olvido en la literatura científica durante al menos dos décadas. Kotre (1984) fue el primer autor que redescubrió el concepto eriksoniano, definiendo a la generatividad como el “deseo de invertir la propia vida en formas de vida y trabajo que sobrevivirán a uno mismo” (p. 10). La generatividad es definida por Kotre como una motivación a la vez instintiva y psicosocial, y que busca a su vez producir tanto resultados biológicos como culturales. De acuerdo con su propuesta, la generatividad no se limita a crear algo que sobreviva a uno mismo, sino que también comporta cuidar de los productos de nuestros actos creativos.

Kotre distinguió cuatro tipos de generatividad: biológica, parental, técnica y cultural. La generatividad biológica puede ser definida como el hecho mismo de concebir, de generar vida. Está relacionada entonces con tener hijos y cuidarlos. La generatividad parental se expresa en todas las actividades que tienen que ver con criar a los hijos e iniciarlos en las tradiciones familiares (Kotre, 1984). El tercer tipo de generatividad, llamada técnica, tiene que ver con transmitir habilidades y competencias a aquellos que tienen una posición más desventajada. Finalmente, la generatividad cultural se relaciona con

el interés por transmitir ideas e instrumentos culturales a las siguientes generaciones. Adicionalmente, Kotre diferenció también entre la generatividad comunal, que implica criar y cuidar a otros y establecer vínculos, y la generatividad agéntica, relacionada con la expansión y fortalecimiento del sí mismo a través del liderazgo, la productividad o los actos creativos. Aunque los cuatro tipos de generatividad antes descritos se pueden expresar tanto de un modo agéntico como comunal, dependiendo del énfasis relativo que se ponga en uno mismo o en el objeto de la generatividad, la auténtica expresión de la generatividad deriva de un balance adecuado entre ambas tendencias.

Sin embargo, quizá el mayor avance respecto a nuestra comprensión del concepto de generatividad ha sido la obra de Dan McAdams, quien propuso un marco teórico para explicar por qué los individuos comienzan a actuar de forma generativa durante la adultez (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992; McAdams, 2001). Para McAdams, la generatividad comienza con una demanda cultural. Todas las sociedades humanas piden a sus componentes más experimentados que se responsabilicen por los miembros jóvenes e inexpertos. En este sentido, los individuos adultos son llamados a asumir la guía y dirección de las generaciones más jóvenes, en calidad de padres, mentores, maestros, líderes o voluntarios. Esta demanda cultural es normativa y graduada según la edad. Según McAdams y de St. Aubin (1992), cuando los adultos llegan a los 30 y 40 años, aquellos que no son capaces o no quieren contribuir y asumir la responsabilidad por

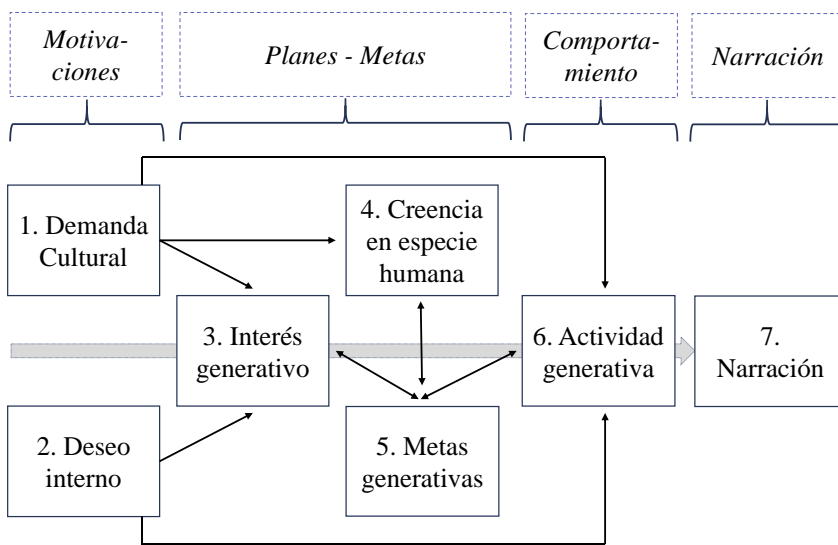
la siguiente generación “son considerados como ‘fuera del tiempo’ y contrarios al ‘reloj social’” (p. 1004).

Sin embargo, las expectativas sociales por sí mismas no son suficientes para despertar en los adultos un interés generativo. Una segunda fuerza motivacional es el deseo interno, generalmente experimentado durante la adultez, de actuar de forma generativa. McAdams y de St. Aubin (1992) identificaron dos tipos de deseo: el deseo de inmortalidad simbólica (de dejar un legado que desafíe a la muerte y sobreviva al sí mismo) y el deseo de ser necesitado por otros (mediante la crianza y el cuidado de otras personas).

La interacción entre la demanda cultural y el deseo interno da lugar a un interés consciente por la siguiente generación. Cuando llegan a la adultez, los individuos comienzan a considerar que ha llegado el momento apropiado para devolver algo a la sociedad y promover el desarrollo de las futuras generaciones. Junto a estos tres elementos también interactúa la creencia en la bondad y dignidad de la especie humana. Según McAdams y St. Aubin (1992) “creer en la especie humana es depositar confianza en el avance y mejora de la vida con el paso de las generaciones [...] Cuando no existe esa creencia, el individuo adulto puede encontrar dificultades para comprometerse seriamente en acciones generativas” (p. 1006).

Esta creencia ayudaría a los adultos a comprometerse y responsabilizarse por las siguientes generaciones, estableciendo planes y metas para actuar de manera generativa. Idealmente, la

generatividad se expresa en acciones dirigidas a crear (nuevas cosas y personas), mantener (aquellas cosas y personas que son dignas de ser preservadas) y ofrecer (transmitir cosas y personas a las siguientes generaciones) (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992). El último componente de la generatividad es la narración generativa, la historia personal que el individuo construye sobre sus esfuerzos generativos y que luego incorpora en su guión autobiográfico. En la figura 2.2 se ofrece un esquema de las siete dimensiones de la generatividad de acuerdo con el modelo de McAdams.



**Figura 2.2:** Dimensiones de la generatividad en el modelo de McAdams (adaptado de McAdams y de St. Aubin, 1992).

Aunque la teoría de Erikson, y las aportaciones posteriores de McAdams, restringían la generatividad a la etapa media de la vida, se ha argumentado que la generatividad podría ser más saliente durante ese período pero estar presente, en cierto grado, a lo largo de

todo el ciclo vital. En este sentido, el modelo eriksoniano clásico, que vincula determinados intereses vitales con períodos cronológicos específicos, ha sido criticado por ser demasiado rígido y demasiado simple (Villar, 2012b). En el caso de la generatividad, esto significa que los intereses y comportamientos generativos pueden aparecer durante la adultez temprana (e.g. Pratt, Norris, Hebblethwaite, & Arnold, 2008) y, especialmente, que pueden persistir más allá de la etapa media de la vida.

Existen al menos tres fundamentos para ampliar el concepto de la generatividad a la vejez. En primer lugar, desde un punto de vista demográfico, el perfil de las personas mayores ha cambiado sustancialmente desde la época en que Erikson escribió su obra. Tal y como se explicó en el Capítulo I, las generaciones actuales de personas mayores tienen un nivel educativo más alto y gozan de buenos niveles de salud durante más tiempo. Es probable entonces que muchas de ellas deseen –y tengan la posibilidad de– seguir contribuyendo a sus familias y comunidades.

En segundo lugar, desde un punto de vista teórico, el mismo Erikson sugirió que la generatividad en la vejez (“*grand-generativity*”) puede emerger y remplazar a la generatividad en la adultez a medida que los individuos se hacen mayores. Este concepto hace referencia al compromiso de los mayores con la promoción y desarrollo de las futuras generaciones, actuando como padres, abuelos, amigos, mentores, etc.

Finalmente, desde un punto de vista empírico, el concepto de generatividad en la vejez ha recibido un apoyo considerable, tanto en estudios que comparan transversalmente grupos de edad (e.g. Sheldon & Kasser, 2001) como en estudios en que las personas evalúan retrospectivamente diferentes momentos de su vida (e.g. Miner-Rubino, Winter, & Stewart, 2004), e incluso en estudios longitudinales (Einolf, 2014).

Además, el concepto de generatividad en la vejez resulta particularmente prometedor como indicador del envejecimiento satisfactorio (Kruse & Schmitt, 2012; Schoklitsch & Baumann, 2012). Su aplicación al ámbito gerontológico podría proporcionar una visión más completa y más compleja de lo que significa envejecer satisfactoriamente, y podría constituir la clave para entender el crecimiento y consecución de una mayor madurez durante las últimas décadas de la vida (Villar, 2012b). Hasta el momento, se han estudiado algunos ámbitos en los que las personas mayores actúan de manera generativa, como el cuidado y la educación de los nietos (Hebblethwaite & Norris, 2011; Materne & Luszcz, 2010; Thiele & Whelan, 2008; Villar, Celdrán, & Triadó, 2012), el liderazgo en el trabajo (Zacher, Rosing, Henning, & Frese, 2011) o la participación en actividades de voluntariado (Narushima, 2005; Son & Wilson, 2011; Urrutia, Cornachione, Moisset de Espanés, Ferragut, & Guzmán, 2009; Warburton & Gooch, 2007).

Sin embargo, la investigación sobre la participación política como una actividad generativa ha sido escasa. Algunos estudios previos

han relacionado el interés generativo con el activismo político en muestras de jóvenes y adultos (Cole & Stewart, 1996; Hart et al., 2001; Peterson & Duncan, 1999; Peterson & Klohnen, 1995; Peterson et al., 1997; Peterson & Stewart, 1996; Stewart & Goldsteinberg, 1990) y se ha argumentado también que la participación cívica de los mayores estaría relacionada con la expresión de la generatividad (Kleiber & Nimrod, 2008; Warburton, McLaughlin, & Pinsker, 2006). Sin embargo, la aplicación sistemática del concepto de generatividad a la comprensión de la participación política en la etapa de la vejez ha sido prácticamente inexistente (Villar & Serrat, 2014).

## **2.4 MOTIVACIONES Y BARRERAS PARA LA PARTICIPACIÓN POLÍTICA**

Los modelos explicativos de la participación política que hemos revisado hasta ahora relacionan determinadas características individuales (como los recursos socio-económicos o las características de personalidad) con la participación en actividades políticas. Sin embargo, una cosa es explorar los factores individuales que incrementan o disminuyen las probabilidades de que determinados colectivos se impliquen en la actividad política y, otra muy diferente, preguntarse por las motivaciones de los individuos para participar o las barreras que perciben para hacer efectiva esta participación. Las teorías que se revisan a continuación se han centrado en estudiar un conjunto de actitudes y orientaciones respecto

a la participación en la vida pública que condicionan el comportamiento político de los individuos.

Estos modelos intentan dar respuesta, en mayor o menor medida, al denominado problema del gorrón (*“free rider”*), que proviene de la aplicación de la teoría de la elección racional al caso de la acción colectiva. Según esta teoría, los individuos son actores racionales que buscan minimizar los costes y maximizar las ganancias a través de sus acciones. De acuerdo con este enfoque, entonces, los individuos sólo participan en acciones colectivas cuando prevén que los beneficios de participar excederán los costes que significa hacerlo (Scott, 2000). Sin embargo, cuando lo que está en juego son bienes públicos -es decir, bienes cuyo disfrute no puede negarse al individuo, independientemente de su contribución- los actores pueden optar por no cooperar y beneficiarse de la acción que emprenden otros. El hecho de que los costes de la acción colectiva sean siempre individuales pero sus beneficios -en cambio- sean siempre colectivos, es la clave para entender el problema del gorrón (Mayer, 2014). Tal y como afirma Scott (2000):

¿Por qué alguien va a afiliarse a un sindicato si sabe que recibirá igualmente los aumentos salariales que se negocien? Los actores racionales no tienen ningún incentivo individual para apoyar la acción colectiva. Los individuos calculan que el coste de afiliarse es alto y que su participación puede no tener ningún efecto significativo en la capacidad de negociación de la organización [...] Esto lleva a una paradoja: si cada miembro potencial realiza este mismo cálculo, como la



teoría de la elección racional establece, entonces nadie se afiliaría a un sindicato. (p. 132)

Los problemas que genera la aplicación de la teoría de la elección racional al caso de la acción colectiva han sugerido la necesidad de introducir explicaciones complementarias. Así, por ejemplo, se ha propuesto que los individuos que deciden cooperar se beneficiarían de incentivos selectivos o, incluso, que las acciones altruistas tendrían un componente egoísta, ya que los individuos derivarían una satisfacción personal de ayudar a otros (para una discusión en detalle consúltese e.g. Mayer, 2014; Scott, 2000). Más allá de la validez de estos argumentos e incluso de la pertinencia de seguir aplicando la teoría de la elección racional a la acción colectiva, el debate generado alrededor de la misma ha puesto de relieve la necesidad de comprender cuáles son las motivaciones que llevan a los individuos a participar en la actividad política y cuáles son las barreras que les impiden hacerlo. A continuación, nos centraremos en estos dos aspectos.

#### **2.4.1 Motivaciones para la participación política**

La cuestión de por qué algunas personas deciden participar en política mientras que otros deciden no hacerlo ha ocupado a los científicos sociales durante décadas. En particular, la literatura sobre movimientos sociales ha prestado considerable atención a esta cuestión (para una revisión véase Duncan, 2012; van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013). Así conceptos tales como los de privación

relativa (e.g. van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008), eficacia percibida (e.g. Klandermans, 1984; van Zomeren et al., 2008), identidad social (e.g. Simon & Klandermans, 2001; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) o disponibilidad biográfica (McAdam, 1986) han supuesto un avance significativo en nuestra comprensión de por qué los individuos participan en política.

Sin embargo, la investigación sobre las motivaciones de las personas mayores para participar en actividades políticas ha sido escasa. Además, una cosa es preguntarse por los factores que explican por qué algunos individuos participan y otros no y, otra muy diferente, explorar las motivaciones que refieren aquéllos que participan para explicar su implicación. En este sentido, la mayoría de estudios han privilegiado un enfoque cuantitativo, basado muchas veces en datos secundarios, por lo que se sabe muy poco sobre los significados que los activistas mayores atribuyen a su actividad política.

Hasta la fecha no se han realizado estudios específicos sobre las motivaciones de las personas mayores para participar en organizaciones políticas. Por este motivo, a continuación se revisa la literatura existente respecto a las motivaciones de los mayores para participar en otros tipos de actividades cívicas. En primer lugar, se comenta de manera breve la literatura existente sobre actividades de voluntariado. En segundo lugar, se revisa de forma un poco más detallada los estudios que han abordado otras modalidades de participación política.

Como en otros aspectos de la participación cívica, los estudios sobre voluntariado han dominado ampliamente la investigación sobre las motivaciones para participar en actividades cívicas. En dos revisiones teóricas sobre este tema publicadas recientemente (Petriwskyj & Warburton, 2007; Principi, Chiatti, Lamura, & Frerichs, 2012), se encontró que las motivaciones de los mayores para implicarse en actividades de voluntariado eran diversas y podían tener una orientación básica de tipo altruista o egoísta. En el primer caso, el énfasis estaría puesto en la mejora de algún aspecto de la sociedad, en el segundo, en la búsqueda de un beneficio personal a través de la participación. Algunas de las motivaciones más frecuentemente halladas para participar en actividades de voluntariado fueron ayudar a otros, relacionarse socialmente, influir positivamente en la comunidad o sociedad, utilizar habilidades y competencias adquiridas, aprender y recibir nuevos estímulos intelectuales o sentirse bien con uno mismo (Petriwskyj & Warburton, 2007; Principi et al., 2012).

Aunque no se han realizado estudios específicos sobre las motivaciones de las personas mayores para participar en organizaciones políticas, algunos investigadores han explorado las motivaciones para participar en otros tipos de actividad política, como la participación en acciones de protesta, en movimientos sociales organizados y en foros locales e iniciativas de gobernanza local.

Respecto a la participación en protestas, Fox y Quinn (2012) encontraron que la percepción de injusticias y el deseo de dejar un legado fueron dos de los motivos más frecuentemente mencionados por un grupo de activistas irlandeses para participar en una serie de manifestaciones contra cambios en el acceso a la tarjeta sanitaria. Goerres (2009), por su parte, señaló que la defensa del interés propio fue la principal motivación para unirse a las protestas contra las subidas de impuestos a la propiedad que se produjeron en el Reino Unido en el año 2004.

Con respecto a las motivaciones para participar en movimientos sociales organizados, se encontró que el deseo de desafiar estereotipos respecto a las mujeres mayores, de actuar en beneficio de las generaciones futuras y la movilización contra injusticias sociales y ambientales (Narushima, 2004; Sawchuk, 2009), eran importantes motivaciones para unirse al movimiento de mujeres mayores llamado Abuelas Furiosas (*“Raging Grannies”*). En un estudio reciente llevado a cabo en España con un movimiento social organizado que incluye también a hombres mayores, los Iaios Flauta, se encontró que la lucha contra la injusticia y la pérdida de beneficios asociados con el estado de bienestar fueron los motivos más frecuentemente mencionados para participar (Blanche-Tarragó & Fernández-Ardèvol, 2014).

Por último, en relación con los estudios sobre la participación en foros locales e iniciativas de gobernanza local, Petriwskyj, Warburton, Everingham y Cuthill (2014) destacaron que las

motivaciones para participar en iniciativas de gobernanza local podían ser de tipo personal (como el deseo de ser escuchado o informado) o comunitario (como experimentar un sentimiento de responsabilidad o deber cívico). Por su parte, Barnes, Harrison y Murray (2011) encontraron que las motivaciones para participar en foros ciudadanos cubrían un amplio espectro: desde un sentimiento de injusticia social y el deseo de cambiar el mundo, a la necesidad de mantenerse activo, hacer amigos y combatir el aislamiento.

En resumen, las motivaciones de las personas mayores para participar en actividades cívicas y políticas son diversas y persiguen tanto beneficios comunitarios como personales. En la tabla 2.1 se ofrece un resumen de la literatura previa clasificando las motivaciones según su orientación (comunitaria o personal).

Aunque del resumen de la literatura se desprende que ha habido cierta investigación sobre las motivaciones para participar, esta evidencia podría no ser aplicable al caso de la participación en organizaciones políticas, un tipo específico de actividad política que aún no ha sido explorado en la literatura.

Por otro lado, tal y como se ha mencionado en el Capítulo I, las personas mayores constituyen un colectivo diverso, que agrupa a personas con diferentes identidades, experiencias, necesidades, circunstancias y preferencias (Barnes & Newman, 2003). Esta diversidad, por lo tanto, podría tener un impacto en las motivaciones para participar (Petriwskyj et al., 2014).

Tabla 2.1 Motivaciones comunitarias y personales para implicarse en actividades cívicas. Revisión de la literatura.

Motivaciones	
<b>Comunitarias</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Ayudar a otros</i> (Fox &amp; Quinn, 2012; Petriwskyj &amp; Warburton, 2007; Principi et al., 2012)</li> <li>• <i>Percepción de injusticias</i> (Barnes et al., 2011; Blanche-Tarragó &amp; Fernández-Ardèvol, 2014; Fox &amp; Quinn, 2012; Narushima, 2004; Sawchuk, 2009)</li> <li>• <i>Beneficiar a las próximas generaciones / deseo de dejar un legado</i> (Blanche-Tarragó &amp; Fernández-Ardèvol, 2014; Narushima, 2004; Principi et al., 2012; Sawchuk, 2009)</li> <li>• <i>Deseo de influir positivamente en la comunidad o sociedad</i> (Fox &amp; Quinn, 2012; Narushima, 2004; Petriwskyj et al., 2014; Petriwskyj &amp; Warburton, 2007; Principi et al., 2012)</li> <li>• <i>Pérdida de beneficios asociados al estado de bienestar</i> (Blanche-Tarragó &amp; Fernández-Ardèvol, 2014)</li> <li>• <i>Sentimiento de responsabilidad o deber cívico</i> (Petriwskyj et al., 2014; Principi et al., 2012)</li> <li>• <i>Desafiar estereotipos respecto a las mujeres mayores</i> (Narushima, 2004; Sawchuk, 2009)</li> <li>• <i>Desafiar estereotipos respecto a las personas mayores</i> (Blanche-Tarragó &amp; Fernández-Ardèvol, 2014)</li> </ul>

Tabla 2.1 Continuación.

Motivaciones	
<b>Personales</b>	
•	<i>Intereses personales / Objetivos personales</i> (Campbell, 2003; Goerres, 2009; Principi et al., 2012)
•	<i>Deseo de ser escuchado o informado</i> (Petriwskyj et al., 2014)
•	<i>Mantenerse activo/ productivo</i> (Barnes et al., 2011; Principi et al., 2012)
•	<i>Beneficios sociales / Hacer amigos</i> (Barnes et al., 2011; Petriwskyj & Warburton, 2007; Principi et al., 2012)
•	<i>Combatir el aislamiento</i> (Barnes et al., 2011)
•	<i>Deseo de aprender y recibir nuevos estímulos intelectuales</i> (Petriwskyj et al., 2014; Principi et al., 2012)
•	<i>Utilizar habilidades y conocimientos ya adquiridos</i> (Petriwskyj & Warburton, 2007; Principi et al., 2012)
•	<i>Sentirse bien / Sentirse útil / Mantener autoestima</i> (Petriwskyj & Warburton, 2007; Principi et al., 2012)
•	<i>Crecimiento personal</i> (Principi et al., 2012)
•	<i>Deseo de reconocimiento</i> (Principi et al., 2012)

Además, el tipo de organización y las características de la participación podrían ser también variables relevantes, ya que dependiendo de sus objetivos y alcance, una determinada organización puede atraer o repeler a personas con razones específicas para participar.

Aunque no se han realizado estudios sobre la influencia de las características individuales u organizacionales en las motivaciones de las personas mayores para participar en organizaciones políticas, algunos estudios sobre otros tipos de participación cívica han abordado esta cuestión. Así, se ha demostrado que el tipo de organización y ciertas características sociodemográficas, como la edad, el sexo, el estado civil, el nivel educativo y el nivel de ingresos de los voluntarios, así como también la cantidad de horas que invertían en la actividad, se asociaban con determinadas motivaciones para hacer de voluntario (e.g. Celdrán & Villar, 2007; Okun, Barr, & Herzog, 1998; Okun & Schultz, 2003; Principi, Schippers, Naegelé, Di Rosa, & Lamura, 2016). Por otro lado, Harré, Tepevac y Bullen (2009) hallaron que la propia valoración de la eficacia personal jugaba un rol central en las motivaciones de los activistas políticos. Por lo tanto, la naturaleza de la actividad y de la persona que la realiza son dimensiones que se deben considerar a la hora de explorar las motivaciones de las personas mayores para participar en actividades políticas. Hasta el momento, sin embargo, ningún estudio ha abordado esta cuestión.



Finalmente, exceptuando el estudio realizado por Blanche-Tarragó y Fernández-Ardèvol (2014), no ha habido prácticamente investigación centrada en nuestro contexto socio-cultural.

#### **2.4.2 Barreras para la participación política**

Si la investigación sobre las motivaciones de las personas mayores para participar en actividades políticas ha sido escasa, los estudios sobre barreras han sido aún menos frecuentes. Sin embargo, conocer los obstáculos que enfrentan las personas mayores para participar en actividades políticas resulta esencial. Contar con este conocimiento permitiría generar políticas dirigidas a mejorar el reclutamiento y la retención de activistas mayores y, por lo tanto, ayudaría a maximizar los beneficios y a minimizar los costes asociados con la participación, no sólo para los individuos sino también para las organizaciones de las que forman parte (Gonzales et al., 2015; Warburton, Paynter, & Petriwskyj, 2007).

Al igual que en el caso de las motivaciones, existe poca investigación respecto a las barreras que enfrentan las personas mayores para participar en actividades políticas. Sin embargo, contamos con algunos estudios centrados en otros tipos de actividades cívicas, particularmente en actividades de voluntariado. Estos estudios identificaron una serie de barreras para el reclutamiento y la retención de los mayores. El modelo del voluntarismo cívico (Verba et al., 1995), que se ha reseñado en el apartado 2.2, proporciona un marco conceptual útil para comprender estas barreras. La aplicación de este

modelo al caso de la participación cívica de los mayores permite identificar tres tipos principales de barreras: las relacionadas con los recursos, las relacionadas con las motivaciones y las relacionadas con las oportunidades. En la tabla 2.2 se ofrece un resumen de las barreras identificadas en la literatura teniendo en cuenta esta clasificación.

Siguiendo el modelo propuesto por Verba et al. (1995), las barreras relacionadas con los recursos hacen referencia a la falta de recursos individuales que se consideran necesarios para la participación, como la salud, las habilidades cívicas, los ingresos o el tiempo disponible. Este es el tipo de barrera más frecuentemente identificado en la literatura previa. Por su parte, las barreras relacionadas con las motivaciones incluyen factores como el desinterés, la desilusión o el descontento con la política o el temor a que la participación sea demasiado exigente en términos de inversión de recursos personales. Finalmente, las barreras relacionadas con las oportunidades están relacionadas con los aspectos socio-culturales u organizacionales que pueden actuar como impedimentos para la participación de las personas mayores. Así, las actitudes discriminatorias contra las personas mayores, la falta de información sobre las oportunidades para participar o los conflictos y problemas de gestión de las organizaciones, han sido identificados como posibles obstáculos para la participación de las personas mayores.

Tabla 2.2. Barreras para la participación cívica de las personas mayores relacionadas con los recursos, las motivaciones y las oportunidades. Revisión de la literatura.

Tipo de barrera	
<b>Recursos</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Salud e impedimentos físicos</i> (Balandin, Llewellyn, Dew, Ballin, &amp; Schneider, 2006; Davis, Crothers, Grant, Young, &amp; Smith, 2012; Gele &amp; Harsløf, 2012; Gould, 2007; Hayden, Boaz, &amp; Taylor, 1999; Hutchinson &amp; Wexler, 2007; Kruse &amp; Schmitt, 2015; Martinez, Crooks, Kim, &amp; Tanner, 2011; Petriwskyj &amp; Warburton, 2007; Tang, Morrow-Howell, &amp; Choi, 2010; Vegeris, Barnes, Campbell-Barr, Mackinnon, &amp; Taylor, 2007).</li> <li>• <i>Accesibilidad</i> (G. Adler et al., 2007; Balandin et al., 2006; Chau, 2007; Davis et al., 2012; Dewar, Jones, &amp; O'May, 2004; Gould, 2007; Kruse &amp; Schmitt, 2015; Love, 2004; Martinez et al., 2011; Petriwskyj, Warburton, Everingham, &amp; Cuthill, 2012; Postle, Wright, &amp; Beresford, 2005; Principi et al., 2012; Reed, Cook, Bolter, &amp; Douglas, 2006; Vegeris et al., 2007).</li> <li>• <i>Falta de tiempo por dedicación a tareas de cuidado</i> (Postle et al., 2005; Tang et al., 2010; Vegeris et al., 2007).</li> <li>• <i>Falta de tiempo por dedicación a la actividad laboral</i> (Balandin et al., 2006; Davis et al., 2012; Petriwskyj &amp; Warburton, 2007; Tang et al., 2010).</li> <li>• <i>Responsabilidades familiares</i> (Davis et al., 2012; Martinez et al., 2011; Petriwskyj &amp; Warburton, 2007).</li> </ul>

Tabla 2.2. Continuación.

<b>Tipo de barrera</b>	
<b>Recursos</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Falta de tiempo (en general)</i> (Balandin et al., 2006; Gould, 2007; Love, 2004; Martinez et al., 2011; Petriwskyj &amp; Warburton, 2007; Postle et al., 2005; Vegeris et al., 2007; Warburton et al., 2007).</li> <li>• <i>Problemas económicos</i> (G. Adler et al., 2007; Davis et al., 2012; Gould, 2007; Hayden et al., 1999; Love, 2004; Postle et al., 2005; Reed et al., 2006; Vegeris et al., 2007; Warburton et al., 2007).</li> <li>• <i>Ausencia de habilidades cívicas</i> (Gould, 2007; Reed et al., 2006; Vegeris et al., 2007).</li> <li>• <i>Poca confianza en las propias capacidades o baja autoestima</i> (Chau, 2007; Gould, 2007; Kruse &amp; Schmitt, 2015; Petriwskyj et al., 2012; Petriwskyj &amp; Warburton, 2007; Principi et al., 2012).</li> <li>• <i>Barreras lingüísticas</i> (Chau, 2007; Gele &amp; Harsløf, 2012; Gould, 2007; Postle et al., 2005; Vegeris et al., 2007).</li> </ul>
<b>Motivaciones</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Falta de interés</i> (Gould, 2007; Kruse &amp; Schmitt, 2015; Martinez et al., 2011; Petriwskyj et al., 2012; Warburton et al., 2007).</li> <li>• <i>Desilusión, desafección o bajas expectativas respecto a la participación</i> (Dewar et al., 2004; Hayden et al., 1999; Postle et al., 2005).</li> <li>• <i>Falta de confianza en las organizaciones y procesos participativos</i> (Gele &amp; Harsløf, 2012; Hayden et al., 1999; Petriwskyj et al., 2012).</li> </ul>

Tabla 2.2. Continuación.

Tipo de barrera	
<b>Motivaciones</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Miedo de que la participación demande demasiado tiempo o no desear verse atado o quemado como resultado de la misma</i> (Martinez et al., 2011; Petrowskyj &amp; Warburton, 2007; Principi et al., 2012).</li> </ul>
<b>Oportunidades</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Actitudes edadistas</i> (Dewar et al., 2004; Hutchinson &amp; Wexler, 2007; Kruse &amp; Schmitt, 2015; Principi et al., 2012; Warburton et al., 2007).</li> <li>• <i>Discriminación basada en el género, el hecho de ser inmigrante o de tener una discapacidad</i> (Balandin et al., 2006; Chau, 2007; Hutchinson &amp; Wexler, 2007).</li> <li>• <i>Percepción de tokenismo</i> (Chau, 2007; Vegeris et al., 2007).</li> <li>• <i>Falta de oportunidades para la participación</i> (Davis et al., 2012; Martinez et al., 2011; Principi et al., 2012).</li> <li>• <i>Ausencia de información sobre las oportunidades para participar</i> (Davis et al., 2012; Gele &amp; Harsløf, 2012; Gould, 2007; Vegeris et al., 2007).</li> <li>• <i>Problemas organizacionales como mala gestión, ausencia de flexibilidad o poco apoyo a los voluntarios</i> (Balandin et al., 2006; Dewar et al., 2004; Tang et al., 2010; Vegeris et al., 2007; Warburton et al., 2007).</li> </ul>

Más allá de esta evidencia, y de igual manera que en el caso de las motivaciones, sabemos poco sobre las barreras que enfrentan las personas mayores que participan en organizaciones políticas. En este sentido, la mayor parte de la investigación previa sobre barreras no ha distinguido entre las diferentes actividades incluidas bajo el concepto de participación cívica, por lo que se conoce poco sobre las barreras que podrían ser específicas a diferentes tipos de participación. Aunque algunos estudios se han centrado en modalidades más concretas de participación cívica, como el voluntariado (e.g. Warburton et al., 2007), la participación en iniciativas de gobernanza local (e.g. Petriwskyj et al., 2012), la participación en la planificación de políticas comunitarias (e.g. Chau, 2007) o la implicación en movimientos sociales organizados (e.g. Hutchinson & Wexler, 2007), la investigación sobre las barreras para la participación de los mayores en organizaciones políticas ha sido prácticamente inexistente.

Por otro lado, la mayoría de estudios se han realizado con muestras de personas que no participaban en actividades cívicas (e.g. Gele & Harsløf, 2012) o con muestras en las que no se distinguía entre participantes y no participantes (e.g. Postle et al., 2005). Por lo tanto, estos estudios se han centrado sobre todo en las barreras que enfrentan las personas mayores para comenzar a participar, esto es, las barreras para el reclutamiento. Sin embargo, sabemos muy poco sobre las barreras que enfrentan aquéllos que ya están participando para continuar haciéndolo, es decir, las barreras para la retención.

Además, aunque se ha sugerido que algunas características individuales como la edad, la salud o la raza (e.g. Gele & Harsløf, 2012; Kruse & Schmitt, 2015; Petriwskyj et al., 2012) podrían asociarse con determinados tipos de barrera, estas relaciones no han sido exploradas sistemáticamente. A este respecto, Celdrán y Villar (2007), en un estudio con voluntarios mayores, encontraron que el tipo de organización y algunas características individuales como la edad y los ingresos, tenían una influencia significativa en la percepción que los voluntarios tenían de las dificultades relacionadas con la participación. Por otro lado, Tang, Morrow-Howell y Choi (2010) encontraron que los ingresos, la edad y ciertas características de los programas de voluntariado, como el tipo de actividad o la duración de la participación, afectaban la retención de los voluntarios mayores. Finalmente, Harré et al. (2009) hallaron que la percepción de la propia eficacia política desempeñaba un rol clave en las motivaciones de los activistas para continuar comprometidos. Sin embargo, las posibles asociaciones entre los tipos de barrera, las características sociodemográficas y participativas y el tipo de organización, no han sido exploradas aún en el caso de la participación en organizaciones políticas. Por otro lado, no contamos con estudios centrados en nuestro contexto socio-cultural.

## CAPÍTULO III: OBJETIVOS

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### ÍNDICE DEL CAPÍTULO

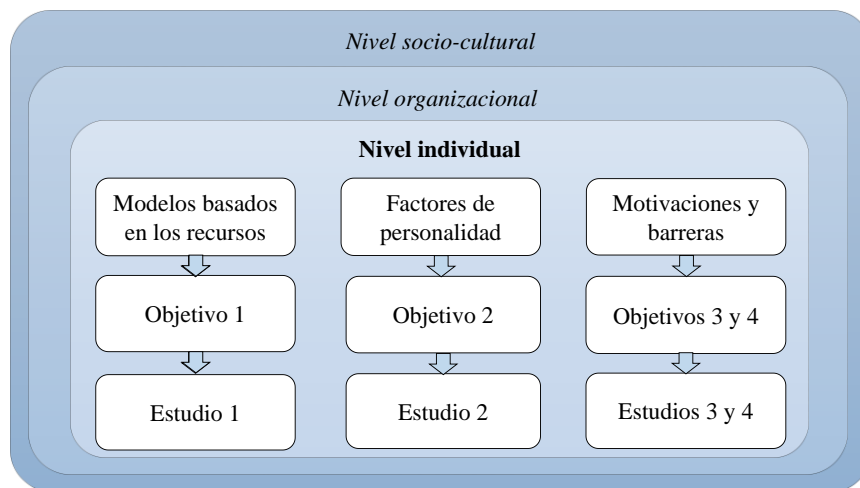
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### 3.1 OBJETIVO GENERAL

Esta tesis tiene como objetivo general realizar una aproximación multidimensional al fenómeno de la participación de las personas mayores en organizaciones políticas, explorando para ello diferentes modelos explicativos centrados en el nivel individual de análisis. Este objetivo general se operacionaliza en una serie de objetivos específicos, cada uno de ellos relacionado con uno de los modelos explicativos de la participación política desarrollados en el Capítulo II: las teorías basadas en los recursos, las centradas en los factores de personalidad y las que abordan las motivaciones y barreras para participar en actividades políticas. En el gráfico 3.1 se relaciona el marco conceptual utilizado en esta tesis con los objetivos de investigación y los estudios que forman parte del compendio.



**Figura 3.1:** Niveles explicativos de la participación política, modelos explicativos centrados en el nivel individual, objetivos y estudios que forman parte de esta tesis.

## **3.2 OBJETIVOS ESPECÍFICOS**

**Objetivo 1:** *Analizar los factores asociados con la participación de las personas mayores en organizaciones políticas.*

1.1 Analizar el rol de los recursos socio-económicos (educación e ingresos) en la participación en organizaciones políticas.

1.2 Analizar la relevancia de participar en otras actividades de envejecimiento activo (actividades de ocio, de aprendizaje y actividades productivas) en la participación en organizaciones políticas.

**Objetivo 2:** *Analizar la relación entre la participación en organizaciones políticas y la generatividad en la vejez.*

2.1. Analizar la relación entre la participación en organizaciones políticas y diferentes dimensiones de la generatividad (intereses generativos, metas generativas y demandas culturales).

**Objetivo 3:** *Explorar las motivaciones de las personas mayores para participar en organizaciones políticas.*

3.1. Explorar la posible asociación de las motivaciones para participar con el perfil sociodemográfico, las características de la participación y el tipo de organización política.

**Objetivo 4:** *Explorar las barreras para la retención de las personas mayores en organizaciones políticas.*

4.1. Explorar la posible asociación de las barreras para la retención con el perfil sociodemográfico, las características de la participación y el tipo de organización política.

### **3.3 ESTUDIOS DEL COMPENDIO**

Con el objetivo de dar respuesta a estos objetivos de investigación, se llevaron a cabo un total de cuatro estudios empíricos. A continuación se presenta la relación de cada uno de los estudios que forman parte del compendio con los objetivos de la tesis. Se menciona también el factor de impacto de las revistas en el Journal Citation Reports (edición 2014).

**Objetivo 1:** *Analizar los factores asociados con la participación de las personas mayores en organizaciones políticas.*

**Serrat, R., Villar, F., & Celdrán, M. (2015).** Factors associated with Spanish older people's membership in political organizations: The role of active-aging activities. *European Journal of Ageing, 12*(3), 239-247. DOI: 10.1007/s10433-015-0341-4 (Impact factor 2014 = **1.338**; 14/32 (Q2) Gerontology).

**Objetivo 2:** *Analizar la relación entre la participación en organizaciones políticas y la generatividad en la vejez.*

**Serrat, R.,** Villar, F., Warburton, J., & Petriwskyj, A. (under review).  
Generativity and political participation in old age: A mixed method study of Spanish elders involved in political organisations.

**Objetivo 3:** *Explorar las motivaciones de las personas mayores para participar en organizaciones políticas.*

**Serrat, R. & Villar, F.** (under review). Older people's motivations to engage in political organizations: Evidence from a Catalan study.

**Objetivo 4:** *Explorar las barreras para la retención de las personas mayores en organizaciones políticas.*

**Serrat, R.,** Petriwskyj, A., Villar, F., & Warburton, J. (in press).  
Barriers to the retention of older participants in political organisations: Evidence from Spain. *Ageing & Society*. DOI: 10.1017/S0144686X15001361 (Impact factor 2014 = **1.338**; 15/32 (Q2) Gerontology).

## CAPÍTULO IV: RESULTADOS

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## 4.1 ESTUDIO 1

**Serrat, R., Villar, F., & Celdrán, M. (2015).** Factors associated with Spanish older people's membership in political organizations: The role of active-aging activities. *European Journal of Ageing, 12*(3), 239-247. DOI: 10.1007/s10433-015-0341-4 (Impact factor 2014 = **1.338**; 14/32 (Q2) Gerontology).

### **Resumen:**

Este estudio explora la participación de las personas mayores en organizaciones políticas mediante el análisis de datos procedentes de la Encuesta sobre Personas Mayores 2010, realizada por el IMSERSO. Los objetivos fueron describir la extensión de este tipo de participación política entre los españoles mayores de 65 años y analizar los factores que se asocian al mismo. Los resultados muestran que algo menos del 7% de la muestra pertenecía a una organización política.

Para analizar los factores asociados con esta participación, se llevaron a cabo una serie de análisis multivariados, incluyendo los recursos socio-económicos y la participación en otras actividades de envejecimiento activo (participación en actividades de ocio, educativas y productivas) como variables predictoras. El nivel educativo, las actividades de ocio, las actividades de aprendizaje y sólo el voluntariado en el caso de las actividades productivas, se asociaron con una mayor probabilidad de participar en



organizaciones políticas. Los resultados apoyan parcialmente el modelo de los recursos socio-económicos y sugieren que participar en actividades de ocio, educativas y de voluntariado podría tener un efecto potenciador sobre la participación en organizaciones políticas.

Factors associated with Spanish older people's membership in political organizations: The role of active-aging activities.

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RUNNING HEAD: Older people's membership in political organizations

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## Abstract

This study explores older people's membership in political organizations by using data from the Survey on Older People 2010, carried out by Spain's National Institute for Older People and Social Services. The objectives were to describe the extent of this kind of participation among Spaniards aged 65 and over, and to analyze the factors that are associated with it. Results show that only slightly less than 7% of the sample belonged to a political organization.

To analyze the factors related to this membership, a set of models of multivariate analyses were run, including socioeconomic resources and participation in other types of active aging activity (participation in leisure, learning, and productive activities). Educational level, leisure activities, learning activities, and only volunteering in the case of productive activities, were found to be associated with membership in political organizations. Results provide partial support for the socioeconomic resources model and suggest that engagement in leisure activities, learning activities, and volunteering might have an enhancing effect on membership in political organizations.

Key words: political participation, community involvement, party membership, active aging

## **Introduction**

The new generations of elders are changing what we know about old age. They are more likely to be better educated and have better health, greater financial resources, and a longer life expectancy than their predecessors. In addition, many of them are keen to contribute to family and community, showing that old age can also be a time to engage or remain engaged in meaningful roles. Understanding and promoting the involvement of older people in productive activities has been placed on the agenda of researchers and policymakers in recent decades (Hinterlong and Williamson 2006). In this respect, the World Health Organization (WHO 2002) has coined the term “active aging” to highlight not only the ability to keep physically active in later life but also the possibility of staying involved in social, economic, cultural, spiritual and civic affairs.

Despite the growing influence of the concept of active aging in social policy and research, however, there is still little consensus regarding its definition (Boudiny and Mortelmans 2011; Perales et al 2014). Studies of the concept tend to cover just one of its dimensions, applying either an economic-oriented approach focused on extending working lives, or a health-oriented approach focused on physical activity (Boudiny, 2013). Among the many problems that such one-dimensional definitions imply (discussed in detail elsewhere, see Holstein and Minkler 2003; Ranzijn 2010), perhaps the most important are that they fail “to acknowledge the heterogeneous nature of older people” (Foster and Walker 2013, p. 4) and that they neglect

other activities beyond work and physical activity that are meaningful and contribute to older people's well-being, such as leisure activities, learning activities, or civic engagement (Boudiny 2013). With regard to the latter of these two points, one kind of activity that has not been analyzed in depth within the context of active aging is political participation.

The present study, which seeks to fill this gap, is aimed at exploring older people's membership in political organizations by using data from a Spanish representative sample. Our objectives are to describe the extent of this kind of political participation in Spain and to identify the factors that are associated with such membership. Specifically, we will test which role active aging activities might have on membership in political organizations.

### *Political participation and aging*

Political participation in older age has usually been studied within the wider framework of civic engagement, a concept for which, to date, there seem to be no single, widely agreed-upon meaning (Adler and Goggin 2005). Although some scholars have restricted the definition of civic engagement to specific actions such as community service or political involvement, others (for instance Putnam 2000), have used the term quite broadly to refer to the wide range of activities that create social capital. As a consequence, in recent years there has been a growing awareness of the importance of accurately distinguishing

among the different activities classified under the concept of civic engagement (Berger, 2009).

Two distinct spheres within this concept have been identified (Adler and Goggin 2005; Berger, 2009; McBride, Sherraden, and Pritzker 2006): social participation and political participation. The former refers to actions that primarily connect individuals to others, while the latter involves actions that are mainly oriented toward influencing political outcomes. Thus, political participation can be defined as "... the individual, non-professional, and voluntary participation in activities that aim, directly or indirectly, at influencing political outcomes, changing the institutional premises for politics or affecting the selection of personnel or their choices" (Nygard and Jakobsson 2013a, p. 67).

Despite the importance of political participation in sustaining and improving representative democracies, especially in the current context of aging populations, research on this topic is still at an early stage (Nygard and Jakobsson 2013a). At least three aspects are in need of further development. First, most previous research on political participation has focused on a single activity, namely voting (Binstock 2000; Strate et al. 1989), or on a combination of a few types of political activity, such as voting, attending meetings and contacting politicians (Nygard and Jakobsson 2013a, 2013b; Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1995). So far, however, there has been little discussion of other political activities, such as older people's membership in political organizations. This type of activity is

particularly interesting since it is likely to be more stable across time than other types of political involvement (Verba et al. 1995).

Second, most research on older people's political participation comes from English-speaking countries. However, the experience of old age may differ according to country and may have different consequences for political participation (Goerres 2009). The case of Spain is particularly interesting in this respect. Spanish elders lived most of their childhood and youth under a dictatorship which banned any kind of political expression. It was a time of severe limitations of liberties and rights, followed by a smooth transition to democracy which allowed the re-emergence and legalization of political organizations. Comparatively, elders are still the cohort with the lowest levels of political engagement in Spain. Although Spaniards aged 65 and older have voting turnout rates that are similar to those of younger generations (Centro Investigaciones Sociológicas 2011), they are less likely to take part in a demonstration or a strike, to sign a petition (IMSERSO 2008), or to be members of a political association (Morales 2003). Moreover, in the last General Election in November 2011, persons aged 65 and older constituted 23.2% of the population entitled to vote (Instituto Nacional de Estadística 2011). This means that, if mobilized, they could represent a significant lobby for influencing politics and current social policies.

Third, although some studies have analyzed the relationships and mutual influences between different forms of political participation, the possible trade-off between political participation and other forms



of active aging activity, such as leisure, learning, or productive activities has not been examined. The present study aims to fill this gap.

### *Membership in political organizations and active aging activities*

When it comes to the question as to why older people participate in politics, most previous research has focused on the individual resources that foster political participation (Nygard and Jakobsson 2013a). For example, in their study of political participation, Verba and Nie (1972) showed that participation, in a broad sense, was related to socioeconomic status. People with a higher level of resources such as income, education or occupational status were more likely to engage in political activities. In the same vein, the classic resources model of civic voluntarism (Verba et al. 1995) states that political participation could be explained as a function of mobilizing factors, such as higher education, greater civic skills or more extensive social networks. In the present study, we test the relevance of education and income in the case of an institutionally channeled political activity, specifically, older people's membership in political organizations.

Education has a strong effect on a wide range of political activities. People with a higher educational level are more likely to vote (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980), to attend meetings and volunteer for a candidate (Burr, Caro, and Moorhead 2002), and to contact a politician, appeal against a decision, write a letter to the press, or

boycott a product or company (Nygard and Jakobsson 2013b). Melo and Stockemer (2014) argue that the ability to think critically and understand complex political scenarios, something that is fostered by the level of educational attainment, underlies the higher likelihood of participating in politics.

Income, too, is related to political participation. Wealthier people are more likely to engage in many forms of political activity. The previous literature has found that they are more likely to donate money (Burr et al. 2002), be affiliated with a political organization, contact public officials, make campaign contributions, or do campaign work (Verba et al. 1995). Having adequate financial resources facilitates the development of civic skills and social capital, which in turn may increase the likelihood of political participation (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba, 2001; Melo and Stockemer, 2014).

In addition to the role of socioeconomic resources, other factors may be associated with membership in political organizations as well. As explained earlier, belonging to a political organization could require a more stable level of commitment than other kinds of political activity. Thus, people who participate in this form of political activity may not only need a high level of civic skills (Verba et al. 1995), but also require a considerable amount of time (Burr et al. 2002). With respect to the allocation of time and effort, other activities could either compete with or complement political participation. For instance, being involved in other active aging activities could divert the time and effort that are needed to be engaged in political

organizations. On the contrary, participating in other activities could potentially provide social supports and institutional ties, as well as generating interest that could facilitate joining political organizations.

Although there is thus far no study examining this issue in relation to older people's political participation, there are some related inquiries that focus on volunteering. For example, it has been found that employed adults tend to have higher rates of volunteering than the unemployed or retirees (Choi 2003), and that volunteering also seems to be fostered by caregiving (Burr, Choi, Mutchler, and Caro 2005). These findings suggest that such activities may complement each other rather than compete with one another. Therefore, it is relevant to explore whether or not the fact of engaging in other activities is related to older people's membership in political organizations – and, if so, what seems to be the effect (enhancing or detrimental) on membership in political organizations.

In this respect, the issue of type of activity might be especially relevant, although it has rarely been studied (Burr, Mutchler, and Caro 2007). Older people who maintain an “active” lifestyle usually engage in a broad range of activities. However, not all the activities labeled as “active” have the same characteristics. Older people's participation includes a number of activities which might require differing investments of resources and might be pursued in response to different motivations. Such dimensions could be a key to learning

whether being involved in certain activity increases or undermines the likelihood of belonging to political organizations.

In this vein, Manell (1993) argued that activities can be classified according to the level of effort required to undertake them, that is, as high- or low-investment activities. In their analysis of social participation, Bukov, Mass, and Lampert (2003) proposed, among other dimensions, that social activities may be classified as self-oriented activities (when the individual receives resources from the social environment) or socially-oriented activities (when the individual contributes resources to the social environment). Taking these dimensions into account, it is possible to identify three different types of active aging activities: (1) self-oriented activities involving low investment, (2) self-oriented activities involving high investment, and (3) socially oriented activities which, by nature, tend to involve a high investment. Leisure activities are a good example of the first type. In this case, personal enjoyment is the main motivation, and free time is the only requirement to undertake them. The second kind of activity is also self-oriented, but involves a higher investment of effort. This is the case with learning activities, such as participating in educational programs for older adults. Finally, the third type of activity is oriented to other people and generally requires a high investment of effort. This is the case with productive activities, which can be limited to the micro-level of family relationships (such as taking care of relatives) or extended to the social level (such as volunteering). Leisure, learning, and productive activities have been considered as part of the active aging model in previous studies (e.g.

Bass and Caro 2001; Boulton-Lewis 2006; Boudiny and Mortelmans 2011). In the current study we explore the relevance of undertaking leisure, learning, and productive activities for older people's membership in political organizations.

### **Objectives and hypotheses**

The objectives of this study were to describe the extent of older people's membership in political organizations and to analyze the factors associated with such involvement. First, we tested a model based on socioeconomic resources, including income and education. Next, we added to that model the co-occurrence of different types of active aging activity (participation in leisure, learning, and productive activities) in order to find out whether the inclusion of these variables increased the predictive value of the model.

Two hypotheses arose from the consideration of the theoretical framework:

- Higher levels of socioeconomic resources (education and income) will be associated with a higher likelihood of membership in political organizations.
- If other active aging activities have a detrimental effect on membership of political organization, they will tend to diminish the likelihood of being a member of a political organization. This negative association will be stronger in the case of high investment activities (e.g. learning or productive activities) than of low investment activities (e.g. leisure). On

the other hand, if active aging activities are mutually reinforcing, participation in leisure, learning or productive activities would be expected to be associated with a higher likelihood of being a member of political organizations.

## **Materials and methods**

### **Participants**

The data for this study were obtained from the Survey on Older People 2010, which was carried out by Spain's National Institute for Older People and Social Services. This survey was designed to study the living conditions of older persons and was based on a nationally representative Spanish sample of 2.535 respondents. Participants were selected by simple random sampling using the telephone directory. The sample was also weighted by sex, age (four age groups: 65-69, 70-74, 75-79, 80 and over), autonomous community (17 Spanish regions), and location size (up to 5.000 inhabitants, 5.001 to 10.000 inhabitants, 10.001 to 20.000 inhabitants, 20.001 to 100.000 inhabitants, and 100.001 inhabitants or more) to ensure that the distribution of these variables in the final sample resembled their distribution in the Spanish population. Interviews were conducted by phone.

## Measures

Belonging to a political organization was the dependent variable and we used indicators of socioeconomic resources and indicators of three types of active aging activity (participation in leisure, learning, and productive activities) as predictive independent variables.

### *Outcome variable*

The dichotomous outcome variable was belonging to a political organization, defined as actual membership in a political organization, such as political parties or older people's associations with political aims. Participating in such political organizations was coded as 1, not participating as 0.

### *Socioeconomic resources*

Regarding socioeconomic resource variables, we used education and income. Education was grouped into three categories (incomplete primary education or less, primary education, secondary education or higher), and income into three categories ( $\leq 300$ , 301-900,  $\geq 901$  euros per month). Income levels were established according to the distribution of frequencies, grouping categories which were closer to the distribution tertiles.

### *Engagement in different types of active aging activity*

Participation in leisure activities was measured by means of three activity variables: attending shows, doing sports, and attending a recreational center for older adults at least once over the past week. Participation in learning activities was measured by one activity variable: attending courses at least once over the past week. Participation in productive activities was measured through three variables: taking care of a dependent person over the past two months, taking care regularly of grandchildren while their parents work, and participating regularly in any kind of volunteer activity. For every activity, participation was coded as 1, no participation as 0.

### *Control variables*

As in other studies on older people's political participation (e.g. Nygard & Jakobsson 2013a, 2013b; Kam, Cheung, Chan, & Leung 1999) gender and age were considered as control variables. Both were entered as dichotomous dummy variables. Age was grouped into two categories: 65-74, 75 and over.

### **Analytic strategy**

First, bivariate analyses were conducted to test the association between the dependent variable, membership in a political organization, and the respective independent variables. Second, a



successive series of multivariate analyses were run. In a first step, we tested a model based on socioeconomic resource variables, and then – in three steps – we added the indicators of engagement in different types of active aging activity (leisure, learning, and productive activities) in order to learn whether the inclusion of these variables increased the predictive value of the model.

## Results

Only 6.9% (n=176) of the sample belonged to a political organization. As noted, we carried out a series of bivariate analyses first to explore the relationship between this dependent variable and all the independent variables.

There were significantly more men than women among the older people who were members of a political organization ( $\chi^2 (1) = 6.61$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). Members were also more likely to be better educated ( $\chi^2 (2) = 39.58$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), and to have a higher income ( $\chi^2 (2) = 58.95$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ).

INSERT TABLE 1 AROUND HERE

As for engagement in other types of activity, older people who belonged to political organizations were more likely to participate in leisure activities. Specifically, they were more likely to have attended shows ( $\chi^2 (1) = 30.64$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), to have done sports ( $\chi^2 (1) = 9.01$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), or to have attended a recreational center for older adults ( $\chi^2$

(1) = 38.79;  $p < 0.001$ ). Members of political organizations were also more likely to participate in learning activities, defined as attending courses ( $\chi^2(1) = 17.21$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). In addition, they were more likely to participate in two kinds of productive activities: caring for grandchildren ( $\chi^2(1) = 4.07$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), and volunteering ( $\chi^2(1) = 4.63$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

In order to explore the relationships between these variables, a series of logistic regression analyses were run.

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

When only socioeconomic resource variables were entered into the regression, results showed two significant main associations. The odds of belonging to a political organization were twice as high for people with primary studies (odds ratio = 2.00,  $p < 0.01$ ) and more than twice as high for people with secondary studies (odds ratio = 2.40,  $p < 0.01$ ). No effects were found for income when education was considered as well.

When leisure activities were included in the model (model 2) the above effects were maintained and two other main relationships were found. The odds of belonging to a political organization were more than twice as high for people who had attended a recreational center for older adults (odds ratio = 2.16,  $p < 0.001$ ) than for those who had

not. Furthermore, people who had attended shows had an 84% higher odds of being members than people who had not attended (odds ratio = 1.84,  $p < 0.05$ ). The goodness of fit of the model, as indicated by Nagelkerke's pseudo  $R^2$ , increased from 0.061 to 0.091.

The inclusion of learning activities into the regression (model 3) added another significant main association. The odds of belonging to a political organization was more than twice as high for people who had attended courses (odds ratio = 2.23,  $p < 0.01$ ) than for those who had not. All the previous effects remained. The goodness of fit of model 3 was better than the one provided by model 2 (Nagelkerke's pseudo  $R^2$  increased from 0.091 to 0.102).

Finally, when productive activities were included in the regression (model 4), only volunteering showed a significant association with this kind of political participation. Thus, the odds of being a member of a political organization were almost twice as high for people who also volunteered (odds ratio = 1.80,  $p < 0.05$ ). Caring for dependents and caring for grandchildren did not have significant effect on the probability of belonging to a political organization. Although model 4 was the one that provided the best fit, Nagelkerke's pseudo  $R^2$  was just slightly higher than in model 3 (0.107 vs 0.102).

Since membership in a political organization could be considered a rare event (with a rate as low as 7% in our sample), we tested the robustness of the findings by following the suggestions described in King and Zeng (2001) and using King's software for treating rare

events in logistic regression, implemented in Stata 12. This procedure yielded exactly the same pattern of significant (and non-significant) statistical relationships that was described above.

## **Discussion**

The present study was designed to explore older people's membership in political organizations. Specifically, we were interested in addressing the following objectives. The first objective sought to determine the extent of Spanish older people's membership in political organizations. The second objective of the study was to ascertain the relevance of two models, one based on socioeconomic resources and the other adding the co-occurrence of different types of active aging activity, to predict this type of political behavior.

Regarding the first objective, a key result of this study is that only slightly less than 7% of Spanish people over 65 years old belonged to political organizations. This percentage contrasts with the around 15% of members reported by Morales (2003) among Spaniards from the dictatorship generation. However, it must be taken into account that differences in question wording and the inclusion of different political groups in the lists presented to participants make it difficult to compare results from different surveys (Morales 2002). Although our study does not explain why participation was so low, generational cohort effects could play an important role in this issue. As explained earlier, the current generation of Spanish older people belongs to the post-Spanish Civil War generation. They grew up in a dictatorship

that severely curtailed liberties and rights and banned any kind of political activity that was inconsistent with the official regime. Previous research has suggested that people who grew up in times of limited political participation might perceive less scope for political participation in later life (Goerres 2009), and this could be the case of Spanish elders. Unfortunately, the nature of the data analyzed in this study do not allow us to draw conclusions regarding this matter.

In relation to our second objective, ascertaining the relevance of two models to predict political participation, the following conclusions can be drawn. First, the results of this study provide partial support for the socioeconomic resources model (Verba and Nie 1972). In accordance to our first hypothesis, educational level had a strong effect on older people's membership in political organizations: the higher their educational attainment, the greater their likelihood of being involved in a political organization.

However, in contrast to what we hypothesized, income was not independently related to membership in political organizations. Although this variable was significantly associated with this kind of political participation at the bivariate level, it was not found to be significant in subsequent multivariate analyses. In other words, the connection between income and membership in political organizations may have been spurious and caused by the influence of education, which is discussed above. So, our data show that being involved in political organizations depends more on educational background than on income per se.

Another noteworthy result of our study comes from the second prediction tested. Our results show that participating in active aging activities (leisure, learning, and some productive activities) actually increased the likelihood of being a member of a political organization. That is, our data tend to support a mutually reinforcing model of active aging activities, rather than a competition model.

Regarding leisure activities, the increased odds could be attributed to the effect of social relationships on political participation. In this vein, richer interpersonal networks may be crucial to political recruitment and these networks are often enhanced through participation in social institutions. Verba et al. (1995) stated that social institutions play an important role in political engagement, serving as a site for exposure to political cues and as a locus for recruitment to political activity.

In relation to learning activities, our results suggest that older people who are involved in political organizations are not only better educated, but also more likely to undertake learning activities. Education enhances the development of civic skills, which in turn facilitate participation (Verba et al. 1995). Thus, this participation in learning activities may, in turn, encourage greater involvement in political organizations.

Such pattern of results provide support for the resources model of civic voluntarism (Verba et al. 1995), which states that political participation is a function of mobilizing factors, such as educational

opportunities, extensive social networks or institutional ties. Moreover, our results suggest that although social participation may not be political in itself, it can be a resource that fosters political participation (Berger 2009).

Finally, our results also show that, although active aging activities tend to reinforce participation in political organizations, not every activity contributes to the same degree. Specifically, among the productive activities, only volunteering increased the likelihood of being a member of political organizations. The fact that this effect did not hold in the case of care-related activities may suggest that productive activities might have different meanings at the macro-social level than at the micro level of family relationships. In this vein, we must mention that traditional family roles are still strongly present in the current generation of Spanish older people. Care-related tasks, such as looking after grandchildren while parents are at work, are frequent and intensive activities among Spanish elders (Hank and Buber 2009). Taking our results into account, almost half of all participants undertake one of the two care-related activities considered (caring for dependents and caring for grandchildren). Thus, it could be that these activities are not associated with other kinds of activities principally because they are widely prevalent among the Spanish population and might be perceived as “natural” and compulsory roles among Spanish elders.

The current study has a number of limitations which need to be taken into account when interpreting the results, and which should be

addressed in further research. Firstly, the Survey on Older People, which is a cross-sectional survey, does not allow us to differentiate the potential role of any cohort effect in the results. Longitudinal studies are needed to chart the development of political participation in the last decades of life and to distinguish between cohort and age-related effects. Secondly, the survey does not provide data regarding other kinds of institutionalized political activities (e.g. voting) and non-institutionalized political activities (e.g. signing a petition or boycotting). Consequently, our conclusions are limited solely to the specific type of political involvement studied, namely, membership in political organizations.

Thirdly, although membership in a political organization may require a deeper and more stable level of commitment than other types of political activities, the survey data available did not include measures of the intensity and frequency of this political participation or of the time devoted to it. Therefore, we cannot draw conclusions regarding the level of commitment of members of political organizations. Finally, given the cross sectional nature of the survey, the possibility of reverse causality cannot be over-ruled. That is, it might be the case that membership in political organizations lead to participation in the other activities considered, rather than vice-versa. Our suggestion of effects stem from theory. Their unequivocal empirical verification, however, requires additional research.

Despite these limitations, our research nevertheless contributes to the literature on older people's political participation by offering results



that were obtained from a nationally representative sample. This is an important contribution taking into account that research on older people's political participation is still at an early stage. Furthermore, the present inquiry explores a kind of political activity that has been largely underexplored in previous literature. Finally, our analysis provides new perspectives on the factors that are associated with membership in political organizations, and as such, proposes potential targets for policy and programmes, if the aim is to increase older people's political participation.

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Table 1. Comparative socioeconomic profile of members vs. non-members of political organizations (in percentages).

Variable	Members (n = 176)	Non- members (n = 2359)	Total (N=2535)
Gender ***			
Male	63.1	50.5	50.5
Female	36.9	49.5	49.5
Age **			
65-74	59.1	49.0	49.7
75 and over	40.9	51.0	50.3
Education level ***			
Incomplete primary	56.4	76.4	75.0
Primary education	21.5	14.7	15.2
Secondary or more	22.1	8.9	9.8
Income ***			
<=300 euros	11.9	16.8	16.5
300-900 euros	49.1	67.9	66.5
>900 euros	39.0	15.3	17.0

Note: p-values are based on the chi-square statistic. \*p < 0.05; \*\*p < 0.01; \*\*\*p < 0.001

Table 2. Comparative profile of members vs. non-members of political organizations (in percentages), based on the co-occurrence of different types of active-ageing activity.

Variable	Members (n = 176)	Non- members (n = 2359)	Total (N=2535)
<b>Leisure activities</b>			
Attending shows ***			
Yes	21.0	8.4	9.3
No	79.0	91.6	90.7
Doing sports **			
Yes	39.8	29.0	29.8
No	60.2	71.0	70.2
Attending a recreational center for older adults ***			
Yes	60.3	36.6	38.2
No	39.7	63.4	61.8
<b>Learning activities</b>			
Attending courses ***			
Yes	15.3	6.8	7.4
No	84.7	93.2	92.6
<b>Productive activities</b>			
Caring for dependents			
Yes	9.9	9.6	9.6
No	90.1	90.4	90.4
Caring for grandchildren *			
Yes	36.4	29.2	29.7
No	63.6	70.8	70.3
Volunteering *			
Yes	12.5	7.9	8.2
No	87.5	92.1	91.8

Note: p-values are based on the chi-square statistic. \*p < 0.05; \*\*p < 0.01; \*\*\*p < 0.001

Table 3. Variables associated with membership of political organizations: Hierarchical logistic regression.

Variable	<b>Model 1<sup>1</sup></b> <i>Odds Ratio</i> [95% CI]	<b>Model 2<sup>2</sup></b> <i>Odds Ratio</i> [95% CI]	<b>Model 3<sup>3</sup></b> <i>Odds Ratio</i> [95% CI]	<b>Model 4<sup>4</sup></b> <i>Odds Ratio</i> [95% CI]
Gender (Female = 0)				
Male	1.07 [0.72-1.61]	0.87 [0.57-1.33]	0.95 [0.62-1.45]	1.02 [0.66-1.58]
Age (65-74 = 0)				
75 and over	0.70 [0.49-1.01]	0.83 [0.55-1.23]	0.83 [0.55-1.24]	0.90 [0.59-1.37]
Education level (< primary = 0)				
Primary education	2.00** [1.28-3.12]	1.93** [1.23-3.02]	1.88** [1.20-2.94]	1.87** [1.19-2.94]
Secondary or more	2.40** [1.42-4.06]	2.18* [1.27-3.74]	2.09** [1.21-3.59]	2.01* [1.16-3.48]
Income (<= 300 euros = 0)				
301-900 euros	0.90 [0.51-1.60]	0.86 [0.48-1.55]	0.86 [0.48-1.55]	0.84 [0.46-1.51]
>900	1.71 [0.87-3.35]	1.74 [0.88-3.45]	1.82 [0.91-3.62]	1.79 [0.89-3.57]
Attending shows (No = 0)				
Yes		1.84* [1.15-2.96]	1.70* [1.05-2.76]	1.75* [1.08-2.84]
Doing sports (No = 0)				
Yes		1.06 [0.71-1.60]	1.00 [0.67-1.50]	0.98 [0.65-1.47]
Attending a recreational center (No = 0)				
Yes		2.16*** [1.49-3.12]	2.03*** [1.40-2.95]	2.05*** [1.41-2.97]
Attending courses (No = 0)				
Yes			2.23** [1.37-3.64]	2.04** [1.24-3.36]



Table 3. Cont.

Variable	Model 1 <sup>1</sup> <i>Odds Ratio</i> [95% CI]	Model 2 <sup>2</sup> <i>Odds Ratio</i> [95% CI]	Model 3 <sup>3</sup> <i>Odds Ratio</i> [95% CI]	Model 4 <sup>4</sup> <i>Odds Ratio</i> [95% CI]
Caring for dependents (No = 0) Yes				0.99 [0.54-1.82]
Caring for grandchildren (No = 0) Yes				1.16 [0.78-1.72]
Volunteering (No = 0) Yes				1.80* [1.04-3.11]
Model sum. Chi Square (df, p value)	49.94 (6, <.000)	75.42 (9, <.000)	84.63 (10, <.000)	89.11 (13, <.000)
Log likelihood	981.66	956.18	946.97	942.49
Nagelkerke	.061	.091	.102	.107

\*p < 0.5; \*\*p < 0.01; \*\*\*p < 0.001

<sup>1</sup>Model 1: Socioeconomic resources variables.

<sup>2</sup>Model 2: Socioeconomic resources variables + Leisure activities variables.

<sup>3</sup>Model 3: Socioeconomic resources variables + Leisure activities variables + Learning activities variables.

<sup>4</sup>Model 4: Socioeconomic resources variables + Leisure activities variables + Learning activities variables + Productive activities variables.

## 4.2 ESTUDIO 2

**Serrat, R., Villar, F., Warburton, J., & Petriwskyj, A.** (under review).

Generativity and political participation in old age: A mixed method study of Spanish elders involved in political organisations.

### **Resumen:**

Este estudio tiene dos objetivos. En primer lugar, explorar la relación entre generatividad y participación política, un aspecto poco estudiado de la participación cívica. En segundo lugar, mediante el análisis de diferentes dimensiones de la generatividad, este estudio pretende contribuir a la literatura teórica y metodológica sobre la generatividad como un concepto multidimensional relevante para el estudio de la vejez. Se aplicó un cuestionario que incluía tres medidas diferentes de generatividad –interés generativo, metas generativas y demandas culturales percibidas- con el objetivo de detectar diferencias en estas dimensiones del concepto entre un grupo de personas mayores implicadas en organizaciones políticas y un grupo de comparación.

Los resultados mostraron que los participantes de ambos grupos diferían en todas las dimensiones de la generatividad evaluadas. Los participantes en organizaciones políticas mostraron mayores puntuaciones en interés generativo, reportaron más metas generativas en el presente y futuro y percibieron más demandas culturales

generativas que los integrantes del grupo de comparación. Tomados en conjunto, nuestros resultados sugieren que la generatividad juega un rol central en la participación política en la vejez y, por otro lado, que una evaluación multidimensional de la generatividad contribuye a una mejor comprensión de este concepto.

Generativity and political participation in old age: A mixed method study of Spanish elders involved in political organisations.

Rodrigo Serrat <sup>a</sup>, Feliciano Villar <sup>b</sup>, Jeni Warburton <sup>c</sup>, & Andrea Petriwskyj <sup>d</sup>

RUNNING HEAD: Generativity and political participation

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## Abstract

This study has dual aims. First, it aims to explore the relationship between generativity and political participation, a neglected aspect of civic participation. Second, by using different dimensions of generativity in a mixed methods study, it also aims to contribute to the theoretical and methodological literature on generativity as a multi-dimensional concept relevant to later life. This Spanish study involved a large survey utilising three different measures of generativity - generative concern, generative goals, and perceived cultural demands - to look for differences between older people actively engaged in political organisations and a comparison group.

Results showed that older people from the two groups differed on all dimensions of generativity. Participants in political organisations showed significantly higher scores on generative concern, reported more generative goals in the present and future, and noted more perceived generative demands than comparison individuals. Overall, our findings suggest that generativity plays a key role in political engagement in later life, and, further, that our understanding of generativity in later life gains from a multidimensional assessment of the concept.

Key words: generativity, political participation, ageing, mixed-methods research.

## **Introduction**

Population ageing has led to an increasing interest in older people's civic participation. Research has focused on the potential of this participation to create economic and social benefits for the community (Neill et al. 2011) while positively impacting individuals' health and well-being (Anderson et al. 2014). To date, however, most studies on older people's civic participation have explored volunteering (for a review see Petriwskyj and Warburton 2007), with other types of civic activities, such as political participation, largely overlooked (Nygard and Jakobsson 2013a, 2013b).

Older citizens' inclusion in decision making processes is critical to the sustainability of democracies, particularly in the context of ageing populations. In Spain, where this study was conducted, the proportion of people aged 65 and over will almost double to nearly 40% over the next 35 years (Instituto de Mayores y Servicios Sociales 2014). This means that the over 65s will increasingly play a key role in the political arena, both as a focus of welfare policies and as a group whose voices need to be heard. Moreover, it can be expected that Boomers, by far the most educated, healthy, and wealthy cohort in Spanish history (Pérez et al. 2012), will claim more active roles in political decision making. These statistics echo those of many other countries both in Europe and elsewhere (e.g. United Nations 2013).

An emerging international literature has explored older people's political participation from multiple perspectives. For instance, some

studies have looked at motivations to participate (e.g. Barnes et al. 2011; Petriwskyj et al. 2014), barriers to participation (e.g. Petriwskyj et al. 2012; Postle et al. 2005), or socio-economic factors associated with political participation in later life (e.g. Nygard and Jakobsson 2013b; Serrat et al. 2015). However, there is very little research exploring the role that generativity might play in older people's political participation, despite the fact that generativity has been found to be a factor in regard to other civic activities such as volunteering (e.g. Son and Wilson 2011; Warburton and Gooch 2007).

We argue in this paper that Erikson's concept of generativity (1963, 1982) plays a key role in understanding political participation in later life. Older citizens' political activities contribute towards building and sustaining communities, and thus can be viewed as generative behaviours. We propose that generativity can be best understood by exploring political activities which imply individuals' long-term and active commitment, such as participation in political organisations, rather than transitory and low-investment political activities, such as voting or contacting representatives. Yet, these more intense political activities have gone largely underexplored in research. This study aims to address this gap by analysing the role of generativity in older people's active and ongoing commitment to political organisations.



### *Generativity in old age*

Erikson defined generativity as “the concern in establishing and guiding the next generation” (1963, p. 267), and proposed it as the main focus of the seventh stage in his life-span development theory. According to Erikson, middle-aged adults engage in activities aimed at promoting the development and well-being of succeeding generations and, ultimately, leaving a lasting legacy (Erikson 1963, 1982). Parenting could be considered the most typical way of expressing generativity, although it could also be expressed through activities such as teaching, caregiving, volunteering, or any other activity aimed at promoting and nurturing future generations. By engaging in generative behaviours, people contribute to families and communities while giving meaning to their lives and boosting their competencies, skills, and interests (Villar 2012).

Although originally conceived as the central task of middle-age, in his final writings Erikson extended generativity to old age and coined the concept of “grand-generativity” (Erikson et al. 1986), to highlight the many ways in which older adults engage in activities aimed at promoting younger generations. Indeed, some authors have argued that the application of the concept of generativity to older age could lead to a better understanding of what it means to age ‘successfully’ (Kruse and Schmitt 2012; Schoklitsch and Baumann 2012; Villar 2012). Previous research has explored the expression of generativity in later life through activities such as grandparenting (Hebblethwaite and Norris 2011; Materne and Luszcz 2010; Thiele and Whelan

2008; Villar et al. 2012), business ownership succession (Zacher et al. 2012), leadership (Zacher et al. 2011), or volunteering in non-profit organisations (Narushima 2005; Urrutia et al. 2009; Warburton and Gooch 2007).

To date, however, there is scant research on older people's political participation as a generative behaviour. Although this idea is not a new one, and some researchers have explored this relationship in undergraduate students and midlife adults (e.g. Hart et al. 2001; Peterson and Duncan 1999), research on older people has been virtually non-existent. Some authors have highlighted the link between the wider concept of "civic engagement" and generativity in old age (Kleiber and Nimrod 2008; Villar and Serrat 2014a; Warburton et al. 2006), but elders' political participation has not been systematically explored through the lens of generativity. To this end, the present study aims to explore older people's political participation, specifically participation through organisations, in relation to dimensions of generativity.

### *Generativity: A multidimensional concept*

Some scholars have argued that generativity should be conceived as a multidimensional concept rather than as a single entity (e.g. McAdams and de St. Aubin 1992). A range of dimensions have therefore been identified, however these have received variable attention in research. Generative concern has been by far the most studied dimension of generativity in the gerontological literature (e.g.

Einolf 2014; Gruenewald et al. 2012). Previous studies have shown that generative concern is positively associated with a range of generative behaviours (e.g. Penezić et al. 2008; Villar et al. 2013). Higher levels of generative concern have also been positively associated with volunteering (Son and Wilson 2011) and some measures of social responsibility to family and community (Rossi 2001). Nevertheless, there is currently no research that explores the relationship between generative concern and political participation, which this study aims to address.

There is a tendency in the research literature to focus somewhat exclusively on generative concern, and neglect other dimensions of the concept as outlined by key theorists McAdams and his colleagues (McAdams and de St. Aubin 1992; Mcadams et al. 1998). As Villar and Serrat (2014b) have argued, the popularity of short and ready-to-use scales, such as the Loyola Generativity Scale (McAdams and de St. Aubin 1992), has promoted a unidimensional approach to generativity where the concept is reduced to a personality trait, that is, a stable intra-individual disposition. This exclusive focus on generative concern limits our understanding of the concept in at least two ways.

First, generativity should be understood more as a process than as a state. As McAdams and de St. Aubin (1992) have argued, in order to behave generatively, concerns should be translated into commitments. Thus, individuals concerned about the well-being of succeeding generations must, at some point, make decisions and

establish goals for generative behaviour. Yet few studies have explored generative goals, an aspect which is also important at different stages of the life course. Thus, contrary to personality traits, which are unlikely to change with age (Ferguson 2010), goals are less stable and tend to change across the life-cycle (Heckhausen et al. 2010). For instance, McAdams et al. (1993) found that young, middle-aged, and older individuals showed significant differences on generative goals, with midlife and older adults scoring higher than younger individuals. This was also supported by Sheldon and Kasser (2001), who found that age was significantly positively associated with generative strivings. Miner-Rubino, Winter, and Steward (2004) came to the same conclusion by exploring adults' retrospective assessments of generativity at different stages of their life cycle. This suggests that generative goals may also be important in relation to political participation, particularly in later life.

Second, exploration of the different dimensions of generativity is likely to reveal a more complex picture, as generativity should be conceived more as a psychosocial concept than an intra-individual one (Villar 2012). McAdams, Hart, and Maruna (1998) have argued that culture has a strong influence both in the form and the timing of generative expression, and social expectations to contribute and take responsibility for younger generations are therefore important motivational sources for generative behaviours. Cultural demands could be particularly relevant when considering generativity in later life. As Cheng, Chan, and Chan (2008) have highlighted, the expression of generativity could be constrained by the norms and

opportunities to be generative dependent on older people's social and cultural environment.

The cultural dimension of generativity, however, has been largely underexplored in the western context with only a few studies emanating from the Asian context. These studies conducted in Hong Kong and Japan (Cheng 2009; Tabuchi and Miura 2015; Tabuchi et al. 2013) have shown that older people's perceived respect from younger generations not only impacted the development of generativity but also mediated the effect of generative actions on well-being. This suggests the need to explore further the relationship between perceived social expectations and engagement in generative behaviours, including political activities, in order to more fully understand generativity by older people in this context.

The intent of this paper is thus twofold. First, the study aims to contribute to the literature on generativity and political participation in older age by exploring older people's participation in political organisations, a type of generative behaviour that has been largely unexplored in previous research. Second, we aim to contribute to the theoretical and methodological literature on generativity by using an innovative mixed-method approach to explore different dimensions of generativity as a concept relevant to later life. The purpose of this approach was to provide a fuller and more nuanced understanding of generativity in older age than that offered in previous literature.

## **Objectives and hypotheses**

The aim of this study was to explore generativity in relation to older people's political participation by assessing different dimensions of the concept. The specific aim was to assess differences in generative concern, generative goals, and perceived cultural demands among a sample of older people participating in political organisations and a comparison group comprising those not involved in political activities. Three hypotheses arose from the consideration of the theoretical framework:

- Hypothesis 1: Older people participating in political organisation will show higher generative concern than the comparison group.
- Hypothesis 2: Older people participating in political organisations will report more generative goals than the comparison group.
- Hypothesis 3: Older people participating in political organisations will report more perceived generative cultural demands than the comparison group.

## **Methods**

### **Participants**

Data were collected from 182 participants recruited from two samples. The first sample consisted of 97 participants purposively

selected from two kinds of political organisations in Catalonia in Spain: political parties and trade unions (56 participants) and single-issue organisations (41 participants). Inclusion criteria for this sample comprised: 1) aged at least 65 years; 2) were a member of the board or committee within the organisation; 3) participated in the organisation for at least one year prior to data collection; and 4) devoted at least one hour per week to the organisation. The second sample, used as a comparison group, consisted of 85 participants involved in two university programmes for older people organised by the University of Barcelona (55 participants) and the University Ramon Llull (30 participants). Inclusion criteria for this second sample were: 1) aged at least 65 years; 2) not involved in political organisations at the time of data collection.

The total sample was composed of 182 participants between the ages of 65 and 86. Mean age was 69.7 ( $SD = 5.2$ ). The sample was reasonably balanced in terms of gender (53.9% were male and 46.1% were female). Regarding educational attainment, 19.2% reported primary studies or less, 40.7% secondary studies, and 40.1% university degrees. A majority of the participants were married (63.2%) and most of them were parents (85.7%) and grandparents (60.4%). Of those who were parents and grandparents, the mean number of children and grandchildren was 2.3 ( $SD = 1.0$ ) and 3.0 ( $SD = 2.4$ ) respectively. Full socio-demographic characteristics and differences between samples are shown in table 1.

INSERT TABLE 1 AROUND HERE

## **Instruments**

Data were collected by means of a questionnaire designed by Authors 1 and 2. The questionnaire covered two sections. The first section comprised questions on age, gender, marital status (married / de facto married, widower, single, separated / divorced), number of children and grandchildren, education level (no studies, primary education, secondary education, university education), income ( $\leq 500$ , 501-1000, 1001-1500, 1501-2000,  $\geq 2001$  euros per month), and current participation in political organisations (Yes/No). Those who were currently engaged in political organisations were also asked about the type of organisation, the length of their involvement, and the weekly hours they provided. The second section of the questionnaire included measures on generativity, which are described below.

### *Generative concern*

The Spanish version (Villar et al. 2013) of the Loyola Generativity Scale (McAdams and de St. Aubin 1992) was used to assess generative concern. The instrument asks respondents to rate each of 20 items on a 4-point Likert scale ( $0 = \textit{never}$ ,  $1 = \textit{occasionally}$ ,  $2 = \textit{fairly often}$ , and  $3 = \textit{very often}$ ). Six of the 20 items are reverse worded, so their score was also inverted. The total score ranges from 0 to 60. Both the English and the Spanish version of the scale showed high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha coefficient were .83 and .89 respectively; McAdams and de St. Aubin 1992; Villar et al. 2013). In this study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .81. The



scale had also good convergent validity with other measures of generativity and an adequate test-retest reliability (McAdams et al. 1993).

### *Generative goals*

Following a similar procedure to the one used by McAdams et al. (1993) and others (e.g. Emmons 1991), generative commitments were assessed by means of a sentence completion instrument. The three stems used in this study made reference to personal goals in the past (“Among all the things that I have accomplished in life, the most important one is...”), the present (“At this stage of my life my major priority is...”), and the future (“In the upcoming years, I would like to...”).

### *Cultural demand*

Similarly, adapting the procedure used by McAdams et al. (1993) and others (e.g. Emmons 1991) to assess generative goals, participants’ perceptions of cultural demands were also assessed by means of a sentence completion instrument. The use of this technique allowed us to identify perceived cultural demands in participants’ own words rather than through a pre-determined set of responses. The stem used in this study was: “Society expects that older people...”.

## **Procedure**

Political organisations were identified through web searches and snowball technique and were approached by Author 1 and invited to take part in the study. Participant organisations and University programmes appointed a person to distribute the survey to members who agreed to participate and met the inclusion criteria established for each of the subsamples. Participation was voluntary and written informed consent was obtained from participants prior to data collection. Participants answered the survey at home and returned it to their organisation's nominated representative. Questionnaires were answered anonymously, and no personal information allowing identification was required. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Psychology of the University of Barcelona.

## **Analytic strategy**

### *Content analysis*

Content analysis was conducted on the answers to the incomplete sentences on cultural demand and generative goals in the past, present, and future, assigning a score of one to the answers in which generative content was present and zero to the answers in which generative content was absent. This analysis followed a multistage process and was conducted using ATLAS.ti 7 qualitative analysis software. Generative content was identified in answers by two

independent raters, categorised by type and domain (with reference to the types of generativity described in the literature; e.g. Kotre 1984; Rubinstein et al. 2014), and confirmed in a random sample of responses by a third researcher. The kappa reliability index was used to compare the categorisation of this third researcher with the original one. Values obtained for each incomplete sentence were .87, .93, .86, and .96, indicating a very good reliability (Landis and Koch 1977).

### *Statistical analyses*

To assess differences between the samples on cultural demand and generative goals in the past, present, and future, a series of chi-square analyses was carried out. In the case of generative goals, the creation of an index from the sum of generative goals in the past, present, and future also allowed a *t* test for independent samples. The same statistic was used to assess differences among samples on generative concern. Moreover, as there were significant differences among samples on age, education and income (see Table 1), these variables were controlled in subsequent analysis. Thus, in order to compare the two samples on generative goals and concern, a series of one-way between group analyses of covariance (ANCOVAs) were performed. Participation in political organisations was the independent variable, and the score on generative concern and generative goals respectively were the dependent variables. Participants' age, education level, and income were used as the covariates in these analyses.

All analyses were conducted in SPSS (v. 20). Missing data did not represent more than 5% of the data in any case, and were estimated using the Hot Deck Imputation method (Myers 2011). This method replaces missing values with the score of another participant who is randomly chosen among all participants who match the receptor in a set of variables predetermined by the researcher (Andridge and Little 2010).

## Results

Results are presented in three sections representing each of the three dimensions of generativity.

### *Generative concern*

A *t* test for independent samples was conducted to assess differences between samples on generative concern. The difference was statistically significant, with participants in political organisations showing higher scores on this measure ( $t(177) = 4.93, p = .000$ ). An ANCOVA was also carried out following the above mentioned procedure. The difference among samples on generative concern remained significant after controlling for socio-demographic differences, with participants in political organisations showing higher scores on generative concern than comparison individuals ( $F(1, 172) = 32.49, p = .000$ ).

### *Generative goals*

Answers to the incomplete sentences on goals in the past, present, and future were codified according to the presence or absence of generative goals. Responses in which generative content was present were further codified taking into account the domain in which generativity was expressed: biological/parental (e.g. "... having children"), familial (e.g. "... taking care of my long-lived parents"), relational (e.g. "... being useful to others"), political (e.g. "... standing up for the rights of workers"), or work-related (e.g. "... create and keep going a family business"). Table 2 provides a summary and examples of the categories created.

INSERT TABLE 2 AROUND HERE

To explore differences between the two samples, categories were analysed for the frequency with which they were mentioned by participants and chi-square tests were performed. The results for these analysis are presented in Table 3.

INSERT TABLE 3 AROUND HERE

Regarding goals in the past, there were no significant differences between samples in the likelihood of mentioning generative goals overall ( $X^2 = 1.34, n.s.$ ). However, within this category, generative goals related to the political domain were significantly more likely to

be reported by political participators than by comparison individuals ( $X^2 = 14.64, p < 0.000$ ).

Generative goals in the present were more likely to be mentioned by those in political organisations than by comparison individuals ( $X^2 = 19.75, p < 0.000$ ). Political participators were also more likely to mention generative goals in the relational domain ( $X^2 = 7.31, p < 0.007$ ) and the political domain ( $X^2 = 17.87, p < 0.000$ ) and less likely to mention non-generative goals ( $X^2 = 22.07, p < 0.000$ ) than comparison individuals.

With regard to generative goals in the future, participants in political organisations were more likely to mention generative goals overall ( $X^2 = 10.98, p < 0.001$ ), and generative goals related to the political domain ( $X^2 = 13.97, p < 0.000$ ), and less likely to mention non-generative goals ( $X^2 = 11.87, p < 0.001$ ) than individuals in the comparison group.

Overall, the percentages of self-reported generative goals in past, present, and future showed less pronounced changes in those involved in political organisations than in comparison individuals. Although both groups displayed a decrease in generative goals through the life cycle, this disengagement was more pronounced in the comparison group, particularly when comparing the percentage of self-reported generative goals in the past and in the present. The percentage of generative goals decreased from 57.6% to 11.8% in the comparison group and from 66% to 41.2% in the political

participants group. Moreover, in chi-square tests, the difference between self-reported generative goals in the past and the present was significant for the comparison group ( $X^2 = 4.86, p < 0.028$ ), but not significant for the political participants group ( $X^2 = 1.29, n.s.$ ).

Finally, an index was created from the sum of answers to the incomplete sentences on generative goals in the past, present, and future in order to conduct further analysis. An independent-samples *t* test was carried out to confirm the results from the chi-square tests. Results of the *t* test showed significant differences between groups on this measure, with participants in political organisations reporting more generative goals than comparison individuals ( $t(178) = 4.26, p = .001$ ). Results of an ANCOVA showed that the difference among samples on generative goals remained significant after adjusting for age, education, and income, with participants in political organisations reporting more generative goals than comparison individuals ( $F(1, 175) = 11.08, p = .000$ ).

### *Cultural demand*

Answers to the incomplete sentence on cultural demand were analysed for generative content. Two categories were created according to the presence or absence of perceived generative demands in participants' answers. The first category, named "perceived generative demands", was assigned to answers which related to generative content, such as taking care of future generations, contributing to family or community, or leaving a lasting

legacy. This content could be either general / non-specific (e.g. “... pass on experience”), or related to the civic domain (e.g. “... contribute to social well-being”) or the family domain (e.g. “... help children and grandchildren”). The second category (“non-generative demands”) was used when generative content was absent from participants’ answers. Table 4 provides a summary and examples of the categories created.

INSERT TABLE 4 AROUND HERE

To explore differences among samples, categories were analysed for the frequency with which they were mentioned by participants and chi-square tests were performed. The results for these analyses are presented in Table 5.

INSERT TABLE 5 AROUND HERE

In chi-square analysis, perceived generative demands were significantly more likely to be reported by those participating in political organisations than by those in the comparison group ( $X^2 = 6.75, p < 0.009$ ). Within this category, generative demands related to the civic domain were also significantly more likely to be reported by political participators than by comparison group individuals ( $X^2 = 4.25, p < 0.039$ ).

Finally, we carried out a further series of chi-square tests to establish whether the frequency of mentioning perceived generative demands



was influenced by participants' age (65-74 vs more than 75), educational level (primary studies or lower, secondary studies, or university studies) or income level ( $\leq 1500$ , 1501-2000,  $\geq 2001$  euros). None of these tests reached statistical significance.

## **Discussion**

The aim of this study was to explore generativity in relation to older people's political participation by assessing different dimensions of the concept of generativity. This study contributes to the literature in two ways. First, it shows that political participation, a form of participation that has tended to be neglected in prior generativity research, can be interpreted as an expression of generativity in later life. Second, it shows that a multidimensional assessment of generativity provides a better understanding of this concept than the single, trait-based approach often used in the literature.

Study findings correspond with previous research showing that generativity is not limited to middle-age and is relevant to understanding experiences of older age such as grandparenting (Hebblethwaite and Norris 2011; Materne and Luszcz 2010; Thiele and Whelan 2008; Villar et al. 2012) or volunteering in non-profit organisations (Narushima 2005; Urrutia et al. 2009; Warburton and Gooch 2007). Our study adds to this body of knowledge by showing that participation in political activities is also linked to the expression of generativity in later life.

These findings also contribute to our understanding of why older people commit to active participation within political organisations. Although there has been some research on elders' motivations to engage in political activities (e.g. Barnes et al. 2011; Petriwskyj et al. 2014), the role of generativity in older people's political participation has not previously been explored. Our study extends previous findings in samples of youth and midlife adults (Hart et al. 2001; Peterson and Duncan 1999) by showing that political participation in later life it is also linked to generativity. This is important since the generative framework applied to older age could lead to a better understanding of both the community and personal benefits associated with active participation (Villar 2012).

Results provide clear evidence regarding the three hypotheses for the study. In relation to the first hypothesis, results showed that older people participating in political organisations scored significantly higher on generative concern than the comparison group. These results correspond with findings from prior studies that showed a significant relationship between generative concern and a range of generative behaviours (Penezić et al. 2008; Villar et al. 2013), volunteering activities (Son and Wilson 2011), or different measures of social responsibility to family and community (Rossi 2001). Results of the present study show that generative concerns are also related to older people's involvement in political activities.

Hypothesis 2 suggested that participants in political organisations would report more generative goals than comparison individuals, and

this was partially supported by the results. Although those who were involved in political organisations reported more generative goals in the present and future than those in the comparison group, the difference was not significant for generative goals in the past. This finding, however, reflects previous research that showed that personal goals are less stable than personality traits and tend to change across the life-cycle (Heckhausen et al. 2010). While both those in political organisations and the comparison group showed decreasing generative goals through the life cycle, this disengagement was more pronounced for the comparison group. Thus the findings suggest that generative goals may not retain importance for all older people to the same degree. Further, the expression of generative goals related to the political realm was far more frequent among participants in political organisations than comparison individuals, a difference that was significant in self-reported goals in the past, present and future, suggesting that the type of generative goals held is important in the decision to become involved in political organisations.

Our third hypothesis, which stated that older people participating in political organisations would report more perceived generative cultural demands than the comparison group, was also supported by the data. As Schoklitsch and Baumann (2012) have argued, generativity not only needs a giver but also a receiver, and a “generative mismatch” could take place (McAdams et al. 1998) if generative efforts by older individuals are not socially encouraged. Indeed, it has been argued that age segregation in western societies

could impede generativity and, in particular, the development and maintenance of a generative society (Hagestad and Uhlenberg 2006), as older people could perceive that their wisdom and experiences are not always welcomed or appreciated (Schoklitsch and Baumann 2012). Overall these findings are supported by our data, which showed that those who engage in generative behaviour such as political participation were more likely to perceive social expectations to act in a generative way than the comparison group.

A major strength of this study is the use of a multidimensional approach to generativity, providing a more nuanced understanding of how older people express generativity through active participation within political organisations. Prior research has tended to focus solely on generative concern as a measure of generativity, yet McAdams and others (McAdams and de St. Aubin 1992; McAdams et al. 1998) advocate a broader model of generativity as a process and set of behaviours. In the present study, generative concerns were higher among the politically active group than the comparison group. Yet, as noted earlier, concerns need to be translated into commitments (McAdams & St Aubin, 1992). Participants in this study had translated their generative concerns into such action and this was evident in terms of their generative goals which were higher overall and specifically relating to the political sphere.

Furthermore, by exploring a third dimension of generativity, that of cultural demand, it is clear that this group of older people who are active in the political realm are clearer about their potential role in

the civic arena. Thus, there were significant differences between them and the comparison group in terms of their perceptions of the expected role of older people in participating in civic life and contributing to social well-being. This is an important active role in ageing societies, where older people are often said to be “role-less” (Warburton 2015), and contrasts with responses more commonly seen from the comparison group which suggest that society expects nothing from older people, that they care for themselves and fade away. These data suggest more positive attitudes related to generativity and the future from those who are politically involved.

Using this dimension of generativity adds a western approach to literature on generative cultural demands that has generally emanated from Asian countries with a stronger history of generational expectations and filial piety. The relationship of cultural demand with political participation is thus important both in our understanding of the ways in which perceived societal attitudes and expectations relate to political behaviour in later life, and more generally in demonstrating that it is not only internally held beliefs and goals that are important in older people’s generative behaviour, but also perceived social expectations. This may be of particular significance in understanding generativity in later life, which is a time that can be characterised by ageist assumptions and expectations such as those expressed by respondents in this study.

Although this study has produced some positive findings, it has a number of limitations, which mean that the results need to be

interpreted with caution. First, the data came from a purposively selected sample of participants, therefore the generalisability of findings is somewhat limited. Further studies involving a larger and more diverse sample of participants (including, for instance, older people involved in other kinds of generative activities) are necessary to confirm our results. Second, the study is correlational, and a direction of causality therefore cannot be determined. Whether political participation stems from generativity or vice versa cannot be established from the data presented here. Finally, some of the measures used in the study present limitations. Some of the items of the LGS (e.g. “If I were unable to have children of my own, I would like to adopt children”), for instance, may be problematic for older adults (Schoklitsch and Baumann 2011). The measure used to assess generative goals is also somewhat limited, as self-reported goals in the past and in the future may differ from actual goals. Further studies are now needed that use this multidimensional approach across other potentially generative behaviours, and that can be compared with these findings. Finally, other studies are needed that incorporate other dimensions of generativity not included here (e.g. McAdams’ inner desire or belief in the species; McAdams et al. 1998) as this will help to gain a fuller understanding of this important concept.

Despite these limitations, our study contributes to the literature showing that political participation is related to generativity in later life, and that our understanding of this concept gains from a multidimensional assessment which goes beyond the single, trait-based approach often used in the literature. This study has both

methodological and theoretical implications. This study contributes both to a deeper understanding of political participation in later life as a significant civic activity, and to a more nuanced understanding of generativity as it applies to older people. It is clear that not only is participation in political organisations an expression of generativity in later life, but that the importance of generativity to political participation in later life is more complex than simply holding generative concerns. Instead, generativity is also related to pursuing generative goals and societal and cultural expectations. These preliminary findings therefore suggest some fruitful pathways for further exploration of generativity in later life.

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Table 1. Percentages, means, standard deviations, and group differences on socio-demographic variables.

Variables	Political participants (n = 97)			Comparison (n = 85)			t values
	%	M	SD	%	M	SD	
Age (years)	-	70.9	6.1	-	67.6	3.5	4.53***
Gender							
Male	67.4	-	-	38.6	-	-	-
Female	32.6			61.4			
Marital status							
Married	67.0			59.5			
Widowed	14.4	-	-	11.9	-	-	-
Separated or divorced	11.3			11.9			
Single	7.2			16.7			
Children							
Yes	88.7	-	-	82.4	-	-	0.32
No	11.3	-	-	17.6	-	-	
Number	-	2.4	0.9	-	1.8	1.2	
Grandchildren							
Yes	61.9	-	-	58.8	-	-	0.51
No	38.1	-	-	41.2	-	-	
Number	-	3.2	2.1	-	1.7	2.3	

Table 1. Cont.

Variables	Political participators (n = 97)		Comparison (n = 85)		t values
	%	M	%	M	
Education Level					
No formal education	4.1		0.0		
Primary studies	25.8	-	7.1	-	4.13***
Secondary education	39.2		42.4		
University education	30.9		50.6		
Monthly household income					
≤ 500 euros	0.0		1.2		
501-1000 euros	12.4		2.4		
1001-1500 euros	27.8	-	18.1	-	2.89***
1501-2000	26.8		28.9		
≥ 2001 euros	33.0		49.4		

Significance levels: \*\*\*p < 0.001



Table 2. Categories created from the analysis of incomplete sentences on generative goals in past, present, and future.

Incomplete sentences	Examples
Past: <i>Among all the things that I have accomplished in life, the most important one is ...</i>	
Present: <i>At this stage of my life, my major priority is ...</i>	
Future: <i>In the coming years, I would like to ...</i>	
<b>Categories</b>	
<b>Generative goals</b>	
Biological / parental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>... <i>having children and grandchildren.</i></li> <li>... <i>raising a family.</i></li> </ul>
Familial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>... <i>taking care of my family.</i></li> <li>... <i>taking care of my long-lived parents.</i></li> </ul>
Relational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>... <i>be useful to others.</i></li> <li>... <i>help every person I've known needing help.</i></li> </ul>
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>... <i>leave the world a better place that I found it.</i></li> <li>... <i>stand up for the rights of workers.</i></li> </ul>
Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>... <i>teaching thousands of students during my work life.</i></li> <li>... <i>create and keep going a familiar business.</i></li> </ul>

Table 2. Cont.

Incomplete sentences	
Past: <i>Among all the things that I have accomplished in life, the most important one is...</i>	
Present: <i>At this stage of my life, my major priority is...</i>	
Future: <i>In the coming years, I would like to...</i>	
Categories	Examples
<b>Non-generative goals</b>	... <i>sharing my life with my partner.</i>
	... <i>overcome difficult life situations.</i>
	... <i>pursue university studies.</i>
	... <i>be in peace when my times comes.</i>

Table 3. Generative goals in the past, present, and future (by group, in percentages).

Categories	Past			Present			Future		
	Political participants (n = 97) †	Comparison (n = 85) †	$\chi^2$	Political participants (n = 97) †	Comparison (n = 85) †	$\chi^2$	Political participants (n = 97) †	Comparison (n = 85) †	$\chi^2$
<b>Generative goals</b>	66.0	57.6	1.34	41.2	11.8	19.75***	34.0	12.9	10.98***
Biological	30.9	35.3	0.39	0.0	0.0	-	0.0	0.0	-
Familial	11.3	16.5	1.01	12.4	8.2	0.83	6.2	3.5	0.68
Relational	8.2	5.9	0.38	13.4	2.4	7.31**	7.2	5.9	0.13
Political	18.6	1.2	14.64***	21.6	1.2	17.87***	24.7	4.7	13.97***
Work	6.2	4.7	0.19	0.0	0.0	-	0.0	0.0	-
<b>Non-generative goals</b>	30.9	42.4	2.56	56.7	88.2	22.07***	61.9	84.7	11.87***
<b>No response</b>	3.1	0.0	-	2.1	0.0	-	4.1	2.4	-

Note: \*p < 0.05; \*\*p < 0.01; \*\*\*p < 0.001

† The sum of subordinate category values may sometimes be greater than the corresponding superordinate category value because some participants' answers were coded into more than one category.

Table 4. Categories created from the analysis of the incomplete sentence relating to cultural demand.

Incomplete sentence	Examples
<i>Society expects that older people...</i>	
Categories	
<b>Perceived generative demands</b>	
General (non-specific)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>... <i>pass on their experience.</i></li> <li>... <i>share their wisdom.</i></li> </ul>
Civic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>... <i>collaborate and participate in civic life.</i></li> <li>... <i>contribute to social well-being.</i></li> </ul>
Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>... <i>look after grandchildren and provide for their children.</i></li> <li>... <i>help their children and grandchildren.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Non-generative demands</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>... <i>take care of themselves to maintain autonomy.</i></li> <li>... <i>they want us to die and leave them alone.</i></li> <li>... <i>nothing.</i></li> </ul>

Table 5. Perceived generative demands (by group, in percentages).

Categories	Political participants (n = 97) †	Comparison (n = 85) †	$\chi^2$
<b>Perceived generative demands</b>			
General (non-specific)	63.9	44.7	6.75**
Civic	44.3	30.6	3.63^
Family	15.5	5.9	4.25*
<b>Non-generative demands</b>	4.1	8.2	1.35
<b>Don't know</b>	28.9	38.9	2.02
<b>Don't answer</b>	1.0	3.5	-
	6.2	12.9	-

Significance levels: ^approaching significance; \*p < 0.05; \*\*p < 0.01

### 4.3 ESTUDIO 3

**Serrat, R. & Villar, F.** (under review). Older people's motivations to engage in political organizations: Evidence from a Catalan study.

#### **Resumen:**

Este estudio explora las motivaciones de las personas mayores para implicarse en organizaciones políticas y examina la asociación de estas motivaciones con las características sociodemográficas y de participación. La muestra consistió en 192 personas mayores de 65 años que eran miembros activos de tres tipos de organizaciones políticas. Sus respuestas a una pregunta abierta sobre sus motivaciones para participar en organizaciones políticas fueron sometidas a un análisis de contenido y se realizaron una serie de regresiones logísticas para analizar la asociación de las categorías resultantes con las variables independientes incluidas en el estudio.

Los resultados mostraron que las motivaciones para participar en organizaciones políticas estaban principalmente orientadas a generar cambios a nivel comunitario, aunque el alcance de los cambios deseados tendió a variar. Uno de cada seis participantes estaba motivado por intereses egoístas. Las motivaciones para participar se relacionaron con el contexto organizacional y con las características individuales de los participantes, sugiriendo que estos factores deben

ser considerados por las organizaciones políticas a la hora de desarrollar estrategias de reclutamiento y retención.

Older people's motivations to engage in political organizations:  
Evidence from a Catalan study.

Rodrigo Serrat <sup>a</sup> & Feliciano Villar <sup>b</sup>

RUNNING HEAD: Older people's motivations to engage in  
political organizations

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## Abstract

This study explored the motivations of Catalan older people to engage in political organizations, and examined the association of these motivations with sociodemographic and participatory characteristics. The sample consisted of 192 people aged 65 and over who were active members of three types of political organizations. Their answers to an open-ended question were content-analyzed and a series of binary logistic regressions were run to test the association of the resulting categories with the independent variables included in the study.

The results show that the motives for engaging in political organizations were mainly focused on introducing changes in the community, although the scope of the changes desired tended to vary. One in six participants was motivated by self-interest. Motives for participating were related to the organizational context and individual characteristics, suggesting that these factors should be considered by political organizations in developing recruitment and retention strategies.

Key words: political participation, motivation, political behavior, aging, mixed methodologies.

## **Introduction**

The demographic changes associated with population aging in western societies, along with the shift of emphasis from representative to participative democracy (Barnes et al. 2004), have increased the interest of social scientists in the political participation of older people. As a consequence, research in this area has gained momentum (e.g. Barnes et al. 2011; Campbell 2003; Goerres 2009; Melo and Stockemer 2014; Nygard and Jakobsson 2013a, 2013b; Petriwskyj et al. 2012, 2014).

Given the growth in the ‘gray’ vote and the high turnout rates among this sector of the population (Goerres 2007), there has been some speculation about the possible emergence of a new senior citizen bloc with a common political consciousness and a strong capacity for influencing policy-making processes, particularly in the area of old-age issues (see Schulz and Binstock 2006). However, others have argued that a birth cohort, which by its nature is highly diverse, is unlikely to become homogenized in terms of its political consciousness and behavior when reaching old age (Binstock 2006; Goerres 2009; Nygard and Jakobsson 2013b). Attempts to determine a political interest group on the basis of the single-identity category ‘older people’ are problematic (Barnes and Newman 2003) and are largely based on stereotypic images of older people as political beings (Vincent et al. 2001).

One way to shed light on the possible existence of a ‘gray’ political bloc with common interests and behavior is to tap into elders’ motivations for engaging and participating in politics (Petriwskyj et al. 2014). This is essential not only to appreciate the extent of their participatory diversity in political issues but also to generate tailored participatory approaches designed to include more senior citizens in policy-making processes. In this respect, establishing older people’s motivations for becoming involved in politics could help not only to improve the experience of those who already participate, but also to engage others who may not previously have shown interest.

Research into this matter to date has been limited, and most studies have focused on English-speaking countries. However, this evidence may have limited applicability in different contexts. Scholars such as Goerres (2009) have highlighted the importance of considering the socio-historical context while studying older people’s political participation. In this vein, today’s Spanish elders are an interesting case study. As members of the post-civil war generation, they were raised and lived in a highly repressive environment characterized by the suspension of liberties and rights and the prohibition of political organizations. Although the transition to democracy reversed this situation in the mid-1970s, the over 65s remain the least politically engaged cohort (Instituto de Mayores y Servicios Sociales 2008). With the growing population aging, however, this age group will increasingly represent a key group in the political arena, both as a focus of welfare policies and as a group whose voices need to be heard. In the specific case of Catalonia, where this study was

conducted, the proportion of the population aged over 65 and their levels of political engagement are similar to those in the rest of Spain; however, 9.1% of Catalan seniors are members of political organizations, compared with a figure of only 7% among elders in other regions of the country (Instituto de Mayores y Servicios Sociales 2010).

The objective of this paper is twofold. First, we want to shed light on the motivations of Catalan elders for engaging in political organizations. Second, we want to explore the possible association of these motivations with other variables such as the type of organization and sociodemographic and participatory variables.

### *Aging and political participation*

Research into why people participate in politics is complicated by the multidimensional nature of political participation, a concept which includes several forms of involvement. In spite of the many forms that political involvement can take, most studies on older people's participation have focused mostly on one activity, such as voting (e.g. Binstock 2000; Cheung et al. 2001; Strate et al. 1989), or on a combination of a few kinds of political activity, such as voting, attending meetings, signing petitions, demonstrating, or contacting politicians (Jirovec and Erich 1992; Melo and Stockemer 2014; Nygard and Jakobsson 2013a, 2013b). So far there has been little discussion of other types of participatory acts, such as older people's participation in political organizations.

Exploring this area is relevant for several reasons. First, engagement in political organizations requires a higher level of commitment in terms of time, civic skills, and even emotional investment than other political behaviors such as voting or donating money (Verba et al. 1995). Second, while non-institutionalized activities such as demonstrating or boycotting are transitory and do not require a long-term commitment (Goerres 2009), engagement in political organizations is more likely to be stable across time. Elders' motivations to engage with these organizations, therefore, may be unique and difficult to compare with those that prompt other types of political activity.

Existing research on older people's participation has mainly explored the factors associated with older people's political participation, such as socio-economic factors or participation in other activities (e.g. Nygard and Jakobsson 2013a, 2013b; Serrat et al. 2015), or has compared their participatory patterns to those of younger generations (e.g. Goerres 2009; Melo and Stockemer 2014; Quintelier 2007). However, few of these studies have addressed elders' motivations for engaging in political activity.

### *The motivations of older people for participating in politics*

Many scholars have addressed the question of why certain people participate in politics and others do not. The social movement literature in particular has paid considerable attention to this issue (for a review see Duncan 2012; van Stekelenburg and Klandermans

2013). Classical theories include relative deprivation or perceived injustices, defined as the perception of grievances which results from the comparison of one's current situation with a standard (e.g. van Zomeren et al. 2008). It has been argued, however, that grievances are not sufficient to explain political engagement, as many people may perceive grievances but relatively few of them are keen to protest (van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013).

The availability of resources such as higher education or income, therefore, has been proposed as a possible explanation of why some participate in politics while others do not (e.g. Verba et al. 1995) and has been successfully applied to older people's political participation (Nygard and Jakobsson 2013a, 2013b; Serrat et al. 2015). Likewise, what McAdam (1986) has called 'biographical availability', or "...the absence of personal constraints that may increase the costs and risks of movement participation" (p. 70), could condition the availability of a person for protest. Also, the mobilizing effect of greater social networks and institutional ties has been related to higher odds to engage in politics (e.g. Putnam et al. 1993; Verba et al. 1995). Klandermans (1997), for instance, has shown that people with acquaintances or friends who are already participating in social movements are more likely to become members than others.

From a psychological point of view, perceived efficacy (e.g. Klandermans 1984; van Zomeren et al. 2008), defined as one's expectations regarding the effectiveness of a particular political action, has also been positively associated with participation in

protest activities (van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013). Other relevant theories include social identity (Tajfel and Turner 1979) and particularly the development of a politicized group identity (Simon and Klandermans 2001), which has been seen as essential to predict collective action (Duncan 2012). Also, generativity -or the desire to contribute to future generations and leave a legacy- as well as other personality variables, have been associated with political participation (Duncan 2012). Finally, the role of emotions in fostering political engagement has also recently been highlighted (for a review see van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013).

Although all these theoretical approaches have made significant contributions to our understanding of why people engage in politics, their application to older people political participation has been somewhat limited. Moreover, researchers have tended not to explore these motivations as expressed in the individuals' own terms – a focus that may shed important light on the variety of reasons that elders have for engaging in political behavior. Exceptions to this rule include some studies on older people's protest movements, social movement organizations (SMO), and local forums.

Fox and Quinn (2012), for instance, found that Irish older activists who participated in the 'medical card' protests of 2008 mentioned the perception of injustice and the desire to leave a legacy to the following generations as two important motives to get involved. Goerres (2009) showed that British older people engaged in the 2004



protests against rises in property taxes were motivated by a common self-interest against a policy threat.

As for SMO, studies of the Canadian ‘Raging Grannies’ found that the desire of acting on behalf of future generations (Narushima 2004; Sawchuk 2009), and mobilizing against social and environmental injustices (Hutchinson and Wexler 2007) were common reasons for joining the organization. In a recent study conducted in Spain of a similar SMO which also included older men, Blanche-Tarragó and Fernández-Ardèvol (2014) found that fighting against injustice and the loss of welfare benefits were the most frequently mentioned motives for participating.

Finally, regarding studies on local governance, Petriwskyj et al. (2014) highlighted that Australian elders’ motivations for participating were either self-focused (such as the desire to be heard or informed) or other-focused (such as the feeling of responsibility or civic duty). In their study of British older people’s forums, Barnes et al. (2011) found that elders’ motivations covered a wide spectrum: from a sense of social injustice and a desire to change the world to a desire to keep active, make friends, and combat isolation.

Summarizing, in relation to the first objective, from the review of the literature on social movements and political participation, we can expect that older people’s engagement with political organizations would be motivated by factors such as the perception of grievances, the absence of personal constraints, the mobilizing effect of social

networks, the development of a politicized group identity, or a concern for the well-being of future generations. Some of these motives appear also in the literature concerning older people's motivations to engage in other types of political activities. From the review of that body of research, we can also expect that motives to join political organizations among elders would be related either to the individual or to others, and may arise from a variety of specific issues or from idealistic individual dispositions.

As for our second objective, previous research on older people's motives for engaging in politics shows, therefore, that no common 'gray' motivation is likely to exist. As mentioned earlier "older people" is a group that has diverse identities, experiences, needs, circumstances and preferences (Barnes and Newman 2003), and this diversity can be related to their motives for participating in complex ways (Petriwskyj et al. 2014). The type of organization may also be a relevant variable when addressing older people's motivations to engage in politics since, depending on its aim or scope, an organization could attract or reject older people who have specific reasons to participate. Although there is hardly any research on the influence of individual or organizational characteristics on older people's motivations for participating in political organizations, several studies of other kinds of civic activities have explored this relationship. For instance, it has been shown that the type of organization and certain socio-demographic characteristics, such as volunteers' age, sex, marital status, education, income, or quantity of hours spent volunteering, were associated with specific motivations

to volunteer (e.g. Celdrán and Villar 2007; Okun and Schultz 2003; Okun et al. 1998; Principi et al. 2016). Moreover, Harré, Tepevac, and Bullen (2009) found that participants' perceived efficacy, described as a sense of personal effectiveness, played a key role in political activists' ongoing motivation. Therefore, the nature of the activity and the person undertaking it are both important dimensions to consider in our attempts to understand people's motivations. However, no previous study has recorded and compared older people's motives for participating in different political organizations. The present study also aims to fill this gap.

## **Methods**

### **Participants**

Participants were selected purposively from different political organizations in Catalonia (an autonomous region in the north-east of Spain). While there has been considerable debate around the definitions of political participation and political organization (e.g. Berger 2009; Ekman and Amnå 2012), this paper adopts the definition of political organizations proposed by Morales (2004) as "formally organized groups who seek collective goods [...] and which have as their main goal to influence political decision-making processes, either by trying to influence the selection of governmental personnel or their activities, include issues on the agenda or change the values and preferences which guide the decision-making process" (p. 24).

The sample consisted of 192 participants aged between 65 and 86 years old ( $M = 70.7$ ;  $SD = 5.6$ ). In all, 54.8% were men and 45.2% were women; 37.5% had primary studies or less, 32.8% had completed secondary education, and 29.7% were university graduates. They reported participating in their organization for between 1 and 66 years ( $M = 16.4$ ;  $SD = 15.1$ ), and devoting between 1 and 50 hours per week to this participation ( $M = 10.5$ ;  $SD = 10.1$ ).

Organizations were selected taking into account two factors: their level (national or local), and the scope of their aims (broad- or issue-focused). With these factors in mind, we selected the following types of organizations:

*Neighborhood associations* (local level / issue-focused): A total of 28 neighborhood associations from different socio-economic areas in Catalonia agreed to participate in the study. Ninety-five participants were recruited, all of them active members of the neighborhood association's board.

*Political parties and trade unions* (national level / broad-focused): Nine political parties and trade unions operating at national level agreed to participate in the study. Due to the high number of trade unionists who also belonged to a political party (a common situation in Spain) we decided to group participants from both types of organization. Fifty-six participants were recruited, all of them active members of their organizations.

*Single-issue organizations* (national level / issue-focused): Nine organizations active in one particular political issue agreed to participate in this study. Five of them were older people's organizations (one political party for pensioners, and four advocacy organizations defending older people's rights), two were organizations advocating the independence of Catalonia, one was an organization supporting people affected by the subprime mortgage crisis, one was a human's rights organization, and the last was a feminist organization. Forty-one participants were recruited, all of them active members of their organizations.

Table 1 shows the detailed distribution of the three subsamples according to subjects' sociodemographic and participatory characteristics.

INSERT TABLE I AROUND HERE

### **Instruments**

Data were obtained by means of a questionnaire designed by the authors of the study. The questionnaire consisted of standardized scales, incomplete sentences, and open-ended questions regarding political participation. A preliminary version was administered to six elders who participated in political organizations. Respondents indicated whether they understood the questions, and provided feedback as how to improve the questions' format and wording. Their suggestions were taken into account to construct the final version of

the questionnaire, but their responses were not included in the final sample.

### *Measures*

The questionnaire administered to participants included two sections. The first section covered sociodemographic information such as gender, marital status (four options: married or de facto married, widower, single, separated or divorced), education (four options: no studies, primary education, secondary education, university education), and income (five options:  $\leq 500$ , 501-1000, 1001-1500, 1501-2000,  $\geq 2001$  euros per month). The second section included information on participatory characteristics, such as motives for engaging, number of years participating, average hours dedicated per week, and internal political efficacy. To assess respondents' motives for engaging in political organizations, we used an open-ended question worded as follows: "*Please explain in a few words your reasons for participating in a political organization*". As a measure of internal political efficacy we used the question "*Do you believe that your participation will result in changes in policies?*" with three possible answers ('yes', 'no', 'I am not sure').

We designed the study to provide a multi-faceted analysis of motives for participating in political organisations. The use of an open-ended question to explore motives for participating allowed for these to be identified in the respondents' own words, rather than as a pre-determined set of responses. Given the lack of existing evidence

related to this context, we thought that was important to adopt an exploratory approach. However, we further analysed these open-ended responses through the quantification of responses and the use of logistic regression to explore the characteristics of the organisations and individuals that are associated with reporting these motives. This study therefore explores not only what motives for participating in political organisations are reported by older people but also how reporting of these motives relates to the individual and organisational context.

## **Procedure**

The authors of the study collected data between February and October 2014. The first author of this paper contacted various political organizations in Catalonia, and outlined the purpose of the study and the general procedure for data collection. Once the organizations agreed to take part, they appointed a person to distribute the questionnaires to all members who expressed willingness to participate and who could potentially meet the requirements. The questionnaire was distributed to 250 potential participants, of which 192 (76.8%) responded. Response rates among participants from the three kinds of political organizations considered in the study were similar. The inclusion criteria were: being aged 65 or over and playing an active role in the organization, which was defined as 1) being a member of the board or of a committee within the organization, 2) participation in the organization for at least one

year prior to data collection, and 3) devoting at least one hour per week to this participation.

These inclusion criteria, the purpose of the study and information about data collection, instructions to answer the survey, contacts details for the research team, confidentiality, and clear statements of the right to withdraw information at any time and to decline to answer any of the questions, were explained through an information sheet attached to the survey. Participants gave informed consent before filling in the questionnaire at home, and handed it in to the person responsible. We included in the final sample only questionnaires that were returned with a signed consent form. This process ensured that all questionnaires were anonymous with no identifying information collected.

In order to ensure anonymity through the course of data analysis, we assigned to each participant a code (e.g. PM69\_01/05). These codes appear at the end of each excerpt cited throughout this paper; the first letter indicates the participant's subsample (N stands for neighborhood association; P stands for political parties and trade unions; and I stands for single-issue organizations), the second letter indicates the participant's sex (M stands for man, W for woman) and the first number corresponds to the participant's age. A two digit number was randomly assigned to each organization and each participant; both numbers appear after the underscore, separated by a slash.



## **Data analysis**

We applied two different forms of data analysis, one for each of the two objectives of the study.

### *Content analysis*

To address the first objective of this study, we submitted participants' responses to a content analysis. Content analysis is particularly well suited to exploratory studies aiming to describe people's experience rather than to test theoretical frameworks. Apart from identifying different themes/categories in participants' responses, content analysis also indicates the frequencies of their occurrence (Vaismoradi et al. 2013). This point was relevant in our study, since one of its objectives was to explore the association between motivations and other variables such as the type of organization they choose to join.

The content analysis involved four steps. In the first step, the researchers became acquainted with the data by reading participants' answers and identifying ideas (or units of meaning) in each response. In the second step, these units of meaning were condensed into categories based on the repetition or similarity among threads of the meaning of key words or phrases contained in the unit (Krippendorff 2013). These categories were created with the help of ATLAS.ti 7 qualitative analysis software. The category system adopted a hierarchical structure, distinguishing between community-focused

motivations (with either an idealistic or a cause-specific focus) and self-focused motivations (either growth-oriented or self-protective). This step was conducted independently by the two authors of this paper to increase the reliability of the results. In the third step, the draft category systems obtained by each researcher were compared, and differences were discussed until a consensus was reached. Once the categories were defined, the two authors re-read participants' answers and assigned them to one category in their system. Disagreements were also discussed until consensus was reached. The final step involved a third researcher who had not participated in the previous process. He received 30% of participants' answers, randomly selected, as well as the final version of the category system including category definitions. The kappa reliability index was used to compare this new categorization with the original one. The value obtained (0.93) indicated that the reliability of the system was very good (Landis and Koch 1977).

### *Logistic regressions*

To address the second objective of this study, we ran a series of binary logistic regressions. These logistic regression analyses were not conducted to infer causality, but rather to identify characteristics that were uniquely associated with the likelihood of reporting a particular motive for participation. Once we created the categories and calculated their frequency, therefore, we conducted logistic regressions to test the association of these categories with other variables, such as the type of organization in which participants were

active. The four second-order categories that the researchers identified by means of the content analysis (idealistic and cause-specific community-focused motivations, and growth-oriented and self-protective self-focused motivations) were the dependent variables, and sociodemographic variables and indicators of the participatory characteristics were used as predictive independent variables.

*Outcome variables:* The dichotomous outcome variables were the four second-order categories identified by the analysis of participants' motivations. Mentioning the category was coded as 1, and not mentioning it as 0.

*Sociodemographic variables:* We used the following variables: gender, marital status, education, and income. Marital status was grouped into two categories (those who were married or de facto married and those who were widowers, single, or divorced). Education was grouped into three categories (primary education or less, secondary education and university education), and income into three categories ( $\leq 1000$ , 1001-1500, and  $\geq 1501$  euros per month). Education and income levels were established according to the distribution of frequencies, grouping categories which were closest to the distribution tertiles.

*Participatory characteristics:* we used the following variables: type of organization, number of years participating, average hours devoted

per week, and internal political efficacy. Internal political efficacy was grouped into two categories (yes, and no/I am not sure).

## **Ethical Considerations**

The Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Psychology of the University of Barcelona approved this study. The researchers provided participants, all volunteers, with a detailed explanation of the study, and all signed a consent form.

## **Results**

We will present the results of the study in two sections. The first section, which addresses the first objective of this research (related to motivations for engagement), presents the results of the content analysis. The second section, which addresses our second objective (related to associations between motivations and sociodemographic and other characteristics), examines the results of the logistic regressions.

### *Motivations for engaging in political organizations*

We divided participants' answers to the question "*Please explain in a few words your reasons for participating in a political organization*" into three first-order categories, which were further divided into subcategories. The first superordinate category comprised *community-focused accounts*, the second *self-focused*

*accounts*, while the third grouped responses which conveyed neither a community-focused nor a self-focused motivation. Nine participants (4.7%) did not answer the question.

## INSERT TABLE II AROUND HERE

Regarding the first superordinate category (community-focused accounts) most of the participants (134 participants; 69.8%) reported the desire to impact the decision-making processes and to effect change in their communities as the main motivation for engagement in a political organization. However, the scope of the desired changes varied: some participants expressed *idealistic* motivations, while others stated *cause-specific* motivations.

Idealistic responses were related to pursuing an abstract ideal through political activity. Sixty participants (31.3%) reported that values such as ‘justice’, ‘equality’, ‘solidarity’, or ‘democracy’ were the basis of their motivation to join a political organization:

*The fight for Freedom and Democracy; building a more long-lasting Social Democracy. PM66\_08/02*

*My desire for a fairer and more equal world. PM77\_08/03*

*Social conscience and sensitivity. The need to achieve justice and social equality. PM66\_01/02*

Some reported that pursuing these abstract ideals was a lifelong concern or even an innate feeling:

*I've always felt an innate concern about social injustice.*  
*PM81\_06/10*

In contrast to these idealistic motives, 74 participants (38.5%) expressed cause-specific reasons. This group of participants reported that they became involved with a political organization in order to stand up for a cause in which they believed. These participants' motives usually converged with the main objectives of the organizations in which they took part. The following excerpts, which correspond to people engaged with organizations advocating the independence of Catalonia, older people's rights, and women's issues respectively, are good examples of this:

*The hope to be able to decide democratically what I want for Catalonia, and having the chance to vote. IW65\_06/14*

*My retirement and my awareness of older people's problems.*  
*IM74\_02/02*

*Standing up for women's rights and dignity, against patriarchy and discrimination. IW66\_08/02*

This was also a common reason expressed by people participating in neighborhood associations:

*I like to see that my neighborhood is OK (with green areas, street lighting, etc.) and I am convinced that the residents must participate. NM67\_06/05*

*We live in a marginal neighborhood and we wanted to stand up for our rights, and also have our own neighborhood celebrations.*NW69\_01/02

With regard to the second superordinate category (self-focused accounts) one in six participants (31 participants; 16.2%) reported that their motive for taking part in a political organization was personal rather than civic. A further analysis identified that these self-interested motives were of two different types, either related to seeking personal growth (*growth-oriented* motivations), or to coping with moments of crisis and changes in life (*self-protective* motivations).

Growth-oriented motivations (mentioned by 13 participants; 6.8%) were expressed in responses which conveyed the idea that taking part in a political organization had a positive role in participants' lives and contributed to their personal well-being. Some participants mentioned that their participation was a way to stay active, feeling useful, or enriching themselves:

*Filling the days, participating and talking with other people, and feeling that you've done something useful for the society.*  
IM74\_03/02

*Keeping active and increasing social participation.*  
IW70\_05/05

*To grow and to enrich my experience.* IM68\_03/01

Some others reported that joining their organization was a way to compensate for their lack of education and to improve their personal skills:

*My education was limited and here I am, always learning new things and meeting lots of people. IW81\_05/02*

In contrast to these growth-oriented motivations, 18 participants (9.4%) mentioned self-protective reasons. They reported that involvement with a political organization was a way of coping with difficult life transitions or negative life events.

For instance, some participants noted that retirement or widowhood had been the starting point of their commitment to a political organization:

*It was because of my husband's death... I needed to put some meaning back into my life. NW69\_15/03*

*When I became widowed I needed an activity that took me out of the house to avoid being alone. PW66\_07/08*

*When I retired, I didn't want to stay at home and I looked for something useful to do in the neighborhood, to feel that I was alive. NW71\_15/04*

As well as life transitions, the occurrence of negative life events or feelings of depression or loneliness were also reasons to join a political organization:



*I was depressed and I needed to be with other people and do things. NW84\_03/05*

Finally, the third superordinate category identified by the analysis corresponded to answers involving neither a community-focused nor a self-focused motivation (18 participants; 9.4%). Seven participants (3.7%) said that they had just followed someone else's recommendation. As one respondent noted:

*I started participating after being asked to by a friend who was a regular member of the organization. NM65\_13/03*

#### *Associations between motivations and sociodemographic and participatory characteristics*

In order to explore interactions between motivations for participating and sociodemographic and participatory characteristics, we ran a series of logistic regression analyses using the four second-order categories as dependent variables.

INSERT TABLE III AROUND HERE

For the idealistic community-focused motivations, the results showed four significant main associations. The odds of mentioning this kind of motivation were five times higher for people who participated in political parties and trade unions (odds ratio = 5.06,  $p < 0.001$ ). These respondents were also significantly more likely to have completed secondary education (odds ratio = 2.71,  $p < 0.5$ ), to have participated

for longer in their organization (odds ratio = 1.04,  $p < 0.01$ ), and to devote more hours per week to it (odds ratio = 1.04,  $p < 0.5$ ). No relationships were found for gender, marital status, income, and internal political efficacy.

The consideration of cause-specific community-focused motivations resulted in three significant main associations. People who engaged in political organizations and trade unions were 96% less likely to mention this type of motivation for their participation (odds ratio = 0.04,  $p < 0.001$ ). They were also four times more likely to earn more than 1,501 euros per month (odds ratio = 4.30,  $p < 0.01$ ), and less likely to devote more hours per week to their participation (odds ratio = 0.94,  $p < 0.01$ ). The remaining variables were not significant.

Assessing growth-oriented motivations (the first kind of self-oriented motivations), the results showed only one significant main association. People who mentioned this motivation were 81% more likely to be female (odds ratio = 0.19,  $p < 0.05$ ). Finally, the consideration of self-protective motivations (the second kind of self-oriented motivation) resulted in four significant main associations. People mentioning self-protective motivations were 96% less likely to have participated in political parties and trade unions (odds ratio = 0.04,  $p < 0.05$ ). They were also twelve times more likely to be single, widowed or divorced (odds ratio = 12.27,  $p < 0.01$ ), to have been participating for fewer years in their organization (odds ratio = 0.92,  $p < 0.05$ ), and were 93% less likely to have a sense of political

efficacy (odds ratio = 0.07,  $p < 0.01$ ). No significant relationships were found for the remaining variables.

## **Discussion**

The present study had two objectives. Firstly, we sought to explore the motivations that lead elders to engage in political organizations. Secondly, we were interested in determining whether the type of organization and sociodemographic and participatory variables were related to the motives for participating.

As regards our first objective, the results from the qualitative data show that for most of our Catalan elders (69.8%) the motives for engaging in political organizations were focused on impacting decision making processes and effecting change in their communities. However, the scope of desired changes varied: although some expressed idealistic motives such as pursuing an abstract ideal through their political activity, others were driven by cause-specific motives such as standing up for a specific cause in which they believed. In contrast, one in six participants (16.2%) in our sample was motivated by self-interest rather than by a civic duty. These self-interested motivations were either growth-oriented, such as improving personal competences, or self-protective, such as coping with difficult life-transitions or negative life events.

These results echo some of the previous findings on motives for participation from the social movement and political participation

literatures. The community-focused motivations that we have found in our sample, for instance, are related to generativity (Duncan 2012), showing that the desire to contribute to and improve communities can still endure at this stage of the life-cycle. Also, whereas some of the idealistic motivations expressed by our participants (e.g. a concern for justice, social equality, or fairness) are consistent with the classical theories of perceived grievances (van Zomeren et al. 2008), the strong identification with the organization arising from the answers of those who stated cause-specific motivations could be considered as an expression of a politicized collective identity (Simon and Klandermans 2001). On the other hand, some of the self-focused motives we have found in this study (e.g. the desire to stay active or feel useful) may reflect an absence of personal constraints (McAdam 1986), which could have facilitated participants' engagement with political organizations. Finally, the fact that some participants stated that they had just followed someone else's recommendation, could be considered as evidence of the mobilizing effect of social networks on political participation (e.g. Putnam et al. 1993; Verba et al. 1995).

Overall, our findings are also consistent with those of other studies addressing older people's motivations to engage in protest movements, social movement organizations, and local forums. These results, for instance, are in agreement with those of Petriwskyj et al. (2014), who found that Australian elders' motivations for participating in local governance initiatives were either self-focused or other-focused. What is more, some of the community-focused

motivations (e.g. pursuing an abstract ideal through political activity) or the self-focused motivations (e.g. feeling useful or combating isolation) that we found in our study match those found by Barnes et al. (2011) and by Fox and Quinn (2012) in their studies addressing older people's participation in local forums and protest movements respectively. The results of those studies and our own suggest that no common motivation is likely to exist. As mentioned above, an age-based category such as the over 65 group encompasses as much diversity as any other age-based category (Vincent et al. 2001), and this diversity is reflected in their motivations for engaging in political organizations.

Building on this understanding about the motivations of Catalan elders for engaging in political organizations, our second objective therefore was the exploration of the possible association of these motivations with other variables such as socio-demographic and participatory characteristics. In this respect, we found clearly distinct patterns of motivation in people involved in the three types of political organizations considered in this study. While party members and trade-unionists were more likely to express idealistic community-focused motives, people participating in single-issue organizations and neighborhood associations were more likely to be driven by cause-specific community-focused motives. Moreover, people who belonged to neighborhood associations were more likely to report self-protective motives than those who participated in the other two types of political organizations.

There are several possible explanations for these results. In the case of cause-specific community-focused motivations there is a close match between the motives that individuals attribute to their engagement and the aims of the organization in which they choose to become involved. In some cases at least, when asked about their personal motives for participating in a political organization, subjects identified strongly with the organization's aims. As stated earlier, this may suggest the development of a politicized group identity among participants (Simon and Klandermans 2001). This tendency was quite frequent in the case of people who engaged with single-issue organizations, and it was also common among people who participated in neighborhood associations. In these cases therefore participants appeared to consider the particular organization they belong to when thinking about their motives to participate, rather than talking about motivation in an abstract, decontextualized way.

The case of self-protective motives deserves special consideration. The fact that this kind of motive was associated with participation in neighborhood associations could be explained to some extent by the greater proximity of these organizations to older people. Most Catalan elders spend many years living in the same neighborhood, and some of them develop strong ties with other neighbors as well as with local organizations. Therefore, it is not surprising that people seeking to cope with difficult life transitions through political involvement turn to organizations they know well and in which they may even have acquaintances. As explained above, social networks are important mobilizing factors for political participation (Verba et

al. 1995). Klandermans (1997), for instance, has shown that people with acquaintances or friends who are already participating in social movements are more likely to become members than others.

The consideration of other variables provides supplementary insights into older people's motives for engaging in political organizations. Whereas idealistic motives were related to a high commitment to the organization, both in terms of years participating and hours devoted, cause-specific motives were associated with a lower commitment in terms of hours. It may be that participants with a longer history of political activism and who devote more hours to it may acquire a wider political perspective which goes beyond standing up for a specific political cause. In this vein, it has been argued that continuous involvement in political action fosters the development of an 'activist' identity (e.g. Colby and Damon 1992; Kiecolt 2000). Unfortunately, the cross-sectional nature of our study does not allow us to draw conclusions on this matter.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that people driven by self-protective motives were more likely to be unmarried. This result is in line with previous research on volunteering which found significant associations between self-protective motives (defined as protecting the ego from negative aspects of the self or avoiding personal problems) and being widowed, divorced, or single (Okun et al. 1998; Principi et al. 2016). Participants' stating self-protective motives were also less likely to have been participating for long in their organization and to have a sense of political efficacy. This finding is

rather more difficult to explain. It may indicate a relationship between self-protective needs and a lower sense of empowerment or control over participation, but further research is needed to explore the issue in more detail.

The study presents certain limitations, which mean that the results need to be interpreted with caution. Firstly, the data come from a purposive sample of participants, and this limits the extent to which the results can be generalized. Further studies involving larger, more diverse samples of organizations (e.g. including other types of political organizations) are necessary in order to confirm our results. Secondly, given the limited amount of research with a focus similar to ours, studies providing data from other socio-political and geographical contexts would help to identify the potential influence of the context on participation. Thirdly, the study only addresses older people's motives to engage in political organizations. Future research comparing these motives to those that lead older people to participate in other kinds of political acts, such as low-investment or non-institutionalized activities, could provide a fuller picture of elders' motivations for participating in politics. Fourthly, although community-based motivations appeared to be prevalent in our sample, it must be taken into account that self-reports of why people choose to participate in political activities may be somewhat misleading; civic motivations tend to be over-reported, and self-interested justifications under-reported (Verba et al. 1995). Thus, self-interested motives may actually be more prevalent than suggested by our results. It is also important to bear in mind that our



study addresses motives for engaging with political organizations in a retrospective way; therefore, the motives reported may not coincide with the motives which actually led to this activity in the past. Finally, research using more quantitative-oriented data gathering methods, such as surveys constructed from the results of this and other qualitative studies, might allow the study of larger samples and more complex analyses regarding relationships between variables.

Despite these limitations, our study shows that motives for participating in political organizations are diverse, and relate to the organizational context and to individual characteristics. To our knowledge, no previous study has considered these associations; the motives for participating have been studied in a rather decontextualized way, without taking account of the specific organization in which this participation is expressed or some individual characteristics. Since different organizations may attract people with different motives for participating, our study provides new perspectives on older people's reasons for engaging in political organizations.

Differences in the prevalence of motivations according to the type of political organization and socio-demographic characteristics show that the context of participation and the person undertaking it are both important dimensions to consider in understanding motivations to participate. Organizations seeking a fuller understanding of what motivates people who are already participating, and of how they might recruit others who have not previously participated, need to

consider their own particular context and the characteristics of the individuals they commonly attract. Our study provides new perspectives on older people's motivations to engage in political organizations, and as such may help to generate tailored participatory approaches designed to improve the experience of those who are already participating, and to attract others who may not previously have participated.

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Table I. Comparative profile of older people engaged with political organizations (in percentages), by type of organization.

Variable	Neighborhood associations (n = 95)	Political parties and trade unions (n = 56)	Single issue organizations (n = 41)	Total (N = 192)
Gender**				
Male	41.9%	70.9%	62.5%	54.8%
Female	58.1%	29.1%	37.5%	45.2%
Marital status				
Married	65.3%	66.1%	68.2%	66.1%
Unmarried	34.7%	33.9%	31.8%	33.9%
Education level***				
Primary studies or less	45.3%	42.9%	12.2%	37.5%
Secondary education	26.3%	42.9%	34.1%	32.8%
University education	28.4%	14.2%	53.7%	29.7%
Income**				
≤ 1000 euros	29.8%	17.9%	4.9%	20.9%
1001-1500 euros	28.7%	32.1%	22.0%	28.3%
≥ 1501 euros	41.5%	50.0%	73.1%	50.8%

Table I. Cont.

Variable	Neighborhood associations (n = 95)	Political parties and trade unions (n = 56)	Single issue organizations (n = 41)	Total (N = 192)
Number of years participating**	14.7 (SD = 12.4)	25.0 (SD = 16.9)	8.4 (SD = 12.3)	16.4 (SD = 15.1)
Average hours devoted per week	8.7 (SD = 8.7)	13.3 (SD = 11.3)	10.6 (SD = 10.9)	10.5 (SD = 10.1)
Internal political efficacy				
No	54.7%	46.4%	56.1%	52.6%
Yes	45.3%	53.6%	43.9%	47.4%

Note: p-values are based on the chi-square statistic. \*p < 0.05; \*\*p < 0.01; \*\*\*p < 0.001

Table II. Responses to “Please explain in a few words your reasons for participating in a political organization”. In percentages, by type of organization.

Categories	Neighborhood associations (n = 95)	Political parties and trade unions (n = 56)	Single issue organizations (n = 41)	Total (N = 192)
<b>Community-focused accounts</b>				
Idealistic***	68.4	66.1	78.0	69.8
<i>Pursuing an abstract ideal</i>	17.9	60.7	22.0	31.3
Cause-specific***	17.9	60.7	22.0	31.3
<i>Standing up for a cause I believe in</i>	50.5	5.4	56.0	38.5
<b>Self-focused accounts*</b>	50.5	5.4	56.0	38.5
Growth-oriented	23.2	7.2	12.2	16.2
<i>Keeping myself busy / Feeling useful</i>	6.3	5.4	9.8	6.8
<i>Improving my personal competences</i>	4.2	3.6	4.9	4.2
Self-protective**	2.1	1.8	4.9	2.6
<i>Coping with a life transition</i>	16.8	1.8	2.4	9.4
<i>Overcoming loneliness / depression</i>	6.3	0.0	2.4	3.7
<b>Others</b>	10.5	1.8	0.0	5.7
On someone’s recommendation	6.3	17.9	4.8	9.4
Others	4.2	3.6	2.4	3.7
<b>Don’t answer</b>	2.1	14.3	2.4	5.7
	2.1	8.8	5.0	4.7

Note: p-values are based on the chi-square statistic. \*p < 0.05; \*\*p < 0.01; \*\*\*p < 0.001

Table III. Logistic regression models predicting motivations for participating in a political organization (N = 192).

Categories	Community-focused accounts		Self-focused accounts	
	Idealistic <i>OR</i> [95% <i>CI</i> ]	Cause-specific <i>OR</i> [95% <i>CI</i> ]	Growth-oriented <i>OR</i> [95% <i>CI</i> ]	Self-protective <i>OR</i> [95% <i>CI</i> ]
Gender (Female = 0)				
Male	1.41 [0.56-3.57]	1.82 [0.77-4.30]	0.19 [0.04-0.96]	0.31 [0.05-1.90]
Marital status (Married = 0)				
Unmarried	1.14 [0.47-2.79]	0.65 [0.28-1.53]	0.91 [0.24-3.51]	12.27** [2.31-65.10]
Education (Primary studies or less = 0)				
Secondary education	2.71* [1.06-6.92]	0.86 [0.33-2.27]	0.45 [0.09-2.19]	1.06 [0.18-6.13]
University education	2.49 [0.82-7.58]	0.71 [0.25-2.03]	0.28 [0.04-1.98]	0.80 [0.10-6.15]
Income ( $\leq$ 1000 euros = 0)				
1001-1500 euros	1.09 [0.36-3.31]	2.40 [0.81-7.07]	0.50 [0.10-2.63]	0.34 [0.06-1.82]
$\geq$ 1501 euros	0.60 [0.19-1.94]	4.30* [1.35-13.73]	0.70 [0.12-4.08]	0.20 [0.02-1.64]
Type of organization (Neighborhood A = 0)				
Political parties	5.06*** [2.09-12.30]	0.04*** [0.01-0.16]	1.43 [0.29-6.96]	0.04* [0.00-0.53]
Single issue organizations	1.31 [0.46-3.74]	0.85 [0.35-2.07]	4.91 [0.87-27.62]	0.09 [0.01-1.19]
Years participating	1.04** [1.01-1.07]	1.00 [0.97-1.03]	1.01 [0.96-1.06]	0.92* [0.85-0.99]
Hours devoted per week	1.04* [1.00-1.08]	0.94** [0.90-0.99]	0.97 [0.90-1.05]	1.04 [0.95-1.13]

Table III. Cont.

Categories	Community-focused accounts		Self-focused accounts	
	Idealistic <i>OR</i> [95% <i>CI</i> ]	Cause-specific <i>OR</i> [95% <i>CI</i> ]	Growth-oriented <i>OR</i> [95% <i>CI</i> ]	Self-protective <i>OR</i> [95% <i>CI</i> ]
Internal political efficacy (No = 0) Yes	1.25 [0.56-2.75]	1.66 [0.77-3.55]	1.21 [0.35-4.13]	0.07** [0.01-0.40]
Model sum. Chi Square (df, p value)	57.74 (11, <.000)	65.37 (11, <.000)	11,32 (11, <.417)	56.09 (11, <.000)
Log likelihood	176,95	182,93	83,07	62,39
Nagelkerke	.372	.401	.148	.552
N	192	192	192	192

\*p < 0.5; \*\*p < 0.01; \*\*\*p < 0.001

#### 4.4 ESTUDIO 4

**Serrat, R.,** Petriwskyj, A., Villar, F., & Warburton, J. (in press).  
Barriers to the retention of older participants in political organisations: Evidence from Spain. *Ageing & Society*. DOI: 10.1017/S0144686X15001361 (Impact factor 2014 = **1.338**; 15/32 (Q2) Gerontology).

##### **Resumen:**

Se ha argumentado que la participación cívica de las personas mayores representa beneficios para los individuos y más generalmente para la comunidad. Remover barreras para la participación resulta, por lo tanto, esencial. Sin embargo, la naturaleza multidimensional de la participación cívica, junto con los problemas que suscitan el reclutamiento y la retención, complican este objetivo. Este estudio explora las barreras para la permanencia de las personas mayores españolas en organizaciones políticas, un tipo de participación que ha recibido poca atención en la literatura. Un total de 192 personas de más de 65 años de edad y activamente implicadas en tres tipos de organizaciones políticas participaron en el estudio. Los participantes respondieron a una pregunta abierta referente a las barreras percibidas para continuar participando en sus organizaciones.

Los resultados muestran un amplio abanico de razones para desvincularse de las organizaciones políticas. Estas barreras comprenden tres categorías generales relacionadas con cambios en los recursos, las motivaciones o las oportunidades para participar. Las barreras relacionadas con los recursos fueron con diferencia el tipo de barrera más frecuentemente identificada. Tanto el tipo de organización como las características sociodemográficas y de participación tuvieron un impacto en las razones expresadas por los activistas mayores para dejar de participar en sus organizaciones. Los resultados sugieren la necesidad de una aproximación más matizada y multifacética a las barreras para la participación. En particular, el desarrollo de estrategias de retención por parte de las organizaciones políticas debería tener en cuenta tanto las características específicas de los individuos como las de la propia organización.

Barriers to the retention of older participants in political organisations: Evidence from Spain.

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RUNNING HEAD: Barriers to retention in political organisations

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## Abstract

It has been argued that older people's civic engagement has benefits for both individuals themselves and the community more broadly. Removing barriers to participation is, therefore, essential. However, the multidimensional nature of civic participation, as well as the different issues raised by recruitment and retention, complicate this. This study explores the barriers to retention of Spanish older people in political organisations, as one important type of participation that has received little attention in the literature to date. A total of 192 people aged 65 and over and actively engaged in three kinds of political organisations participated in this study. Participants answered an open-ended question regarding perceived barriers to continued involvement.

Results show a range of reasons for potential future disengagement from political organisations. These barriers fit into three overarching categories related to changes in means, motives, or the opportunity context for participation. Means-related barriers were by far the most frequently identified type of barrier. Both the type of organisation and some socio-demographic and participatory characteristics have an impact on the reasons respondents indicated they may potentially stop participating in future. Results suggest the necessity of a more nuanced and multifaceted approach to understanding barriers to participation. Particularly, the development of retention strategies by political organisations should take into account the specific characteristics of the individuals and organisations they are targeting.

Key words: political participation, barriers, political behaviour, ageing, retention.

## Introduction

Older people's participation in productive activities has often been regarded as a way to address some of the concerns associated with population ageing (Gonzales, Matz-Costa and Morrow-Howell 2015). In particular, civic participation has received considerable attention from gerontologists and policymakers for its potential to promote a so-called "win-win" scenario. Previous research has shown that older people's civic participation not only creates economic and social benefits for the community (Neill, Morrow-Howell and Wilson 2011), but also has a positive impact on elders' health and well-being (*e.g.* Anderson *et al.* 2014). Further, engagement in civic activities such as volunteering or political participation may be positively associated with current participation in other types of productive activities (Burr *et al.* 2005; Serrat, Villar and Celdrán 2015), or be a pathway for future engagement in them (Morrow-Howell *et al.* 2014).

The concept of civic participation, however, is a problematic one with little agreement on what activities are included under this label. While some scholars have used the concept to refer to specific activities such as formal volunteering (*e.g.* Cutler, Hendricks and O'Neill, 2011) or political participation (*e.g.* Burr, Caro and Moorhead, 2002), others (*e.g.* Putnam 2000) have proposed a broad definition of the term to include the large range of social and political activities that generate social capital. The multifaceted character of the concept of civic participation could certainly account for the lack

of consensus between researchers (Neill, Morrow-Howell and Wilson 2011). Indeed, it could be argued that the concept has been used with so many different meanings that it has lost much of its precision. As Berger (2009: 335) suggests, “the stakes go beyond mere semantics [...] when our words yield vague, amorphous conceptualizations rather than widely accessible concepts, we cannot easily study, operationalize or discuss the social and political phenomena that surround us”.

In an attempt to provide greater clarity, some authors have proposed to differentiate two main spheres within the concept (Adler and Goggin 2005; Berger 2009; McBride, Sherraden and Pritzker 2006): social participation and political participation. Social participation is related to actions that connect individuals to others, such as caregiving or volunteering, while political participation refers to actions aimed at influencing political outcomes. While there is a growing number of studies on older people’s social participation, particularly volunteering (*for a review see* Petriwskyj and Warburton 2007), research on political participation is still at an early stage (Nygard and Jakobsson 2013a, 2013b). Understanding and promoting older citizens’ engagement in political activities, however, is very important if we are to sustain and build representative democracies, particularly in the current context of ageing populations.

However, understanding how to promote the political participation of older citizens is further complicated by the multidimensional

nature of political participation itself. Verba, Scholzman and Brady (1995) classify political acts as low and high investment activities, taking into account the effort they require from the individual, and Kaase (1999) differentiates between institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation. Although previous studies have addressed older people's voting behaviour or a combination of a few types of transitory political activities, such as boycotting, demonstrating, contacting politicians or signing petitions (*e.g.* Binstock 2000; Kam *et al.* 1999; Melo and Stockemer 2014; Nygard and Jakobsson 2013*a*, 2013*b*), other types of political acts, such as high-investment and institutionally channelled activities, have gone largely unexplored. However, these kinds of activities are not necessarily comparable to other types of political behaviour because they require a higher level of effort from individuals (Verba, Scholzman and Brady 1995), and are more likely to be stable across time (Goerres 2009). It is these activities that are the focus of this article.

To date, the majority of literature focusing on older people's political participation has explored factors that predict participation (*e.g.* Nygard and Jakobsson 2013*a*, 2013*b*; Serrat, Villar and Celdrán 2015), or has compared their participatory characteristics to those of younger generations (*e.g.* Goerres 2009; Melo and Stockemer 2014; Quintelier 2007). Barriers to older people's engagement in political activities have been far less often the focus of research, in the same way as in the broader civic participation literature, particularly volunteering, which much more commonly focuses on motivation.

Yet understanding hindrances to older people's participation is essential to address recruitment and retention issues and consequently to maximize the benefits and minimize the costs associated with political participation. Further, this is critical not only for the individuals involved but also for their organisations (Gonzales, Matz-Costa and Morrow-Howell 2015; Warburton, Paynter and Petriwskyj 2007).

*Barriers to the recruitment and retention of older people by civic organisations*

Although there is very little evidence specifically relating to barriers to political participation, there are a few studies that have identified different types of barriers to recruitment and retention of older people in other aspects of civic participation. These can be explored using the civic voluntarism model (Verba, Scholzman and Brady 1995), which explains civic participation as a result of resources, psychological engagement, and recruitment networks. Table 1 utilises this framework to provide an overview of the barriers identified in previous studies of older people's civic activities, specifically means-related, motives-related, and opportunities context-related barriers.

INSERT TABLE 1 AROUND HERE

Following the model by Verba, Scholzman and Brady (1995), means-related barriers refer to the lack of individual resources that are

considered necessary for participation, such as health, civic skills, income, or available time. As noted in Table 1, this dimension is by far the most frequently identified type of barrier in existing literature. Motives-related barriers have to do with older people's unwillingness to participate or disengagement from participation, due to factors as lack of interest, disillusionment and disaffection, or a fear of a too demanding involvement. Finally, opportunity context-related barriers are related to socio-cultural and organisational factors that act as impediments to older people's civic participation. In this vein, ageist attitudes, lack of information about opportunities, or organisational problems, have been identified as impediments for participation (*see* Table 1).

Although research on barriers to older people's civic participation has been quite extensive, there are some aspects that need further development. First, most studies on barriers to older people's civic participation address a diversity of activities, without differentiating between them, and therefore disregarding the specific barriers that may arise when undertaking different types of activity (*e.g.* Davis *et al.* 2012; Kruse and Schmitt 2015). While some studies have focused on specific activities, such as formal volunteering (*e.g.* Warburton, Paynter and Petriwskyj 2007), engagement in local governance (*e.g.* Petriwskyj *et al.* 2012), participation in community policy and planning (*e.g.* Chau 2007), or involvement in social movement organisations or social action (*e.g.* Hutchinson and Wexler 2007), very limited research could be identified addressing barriers to participation in political organisations specifically. Yet there may be



specific barriers that are unique to this form of participation, and which are not comparable to other forms of participation.

Second, previous research on barriers to older people's civic participation has largely been carried out with samples of people not already participating in these activities (*e.g.* Gele and Harsløf 2012), or mixed samples of participants and non-participants (*e.g.* Postle, Wright and Beresford 2005). Therefore, previous findings have mainly addressed barriers that prevent older people from participation, that is, barriers to recruitment. Much less is known about barriers that could stop people from continued participation once they have started, that is, barriers to retention. This is particularly interesting when one considers the active members of the organisations, who may act as members of boards and committees, and as such, play a key role in helping organisations to achieve their goals while benefitting from remaining engaged in meaningful roles in later life. Evidence regarding what causes those members to cut down or even cease their active participation is essential if the aim is to extend the benefits of this productive activity for longer.

Third, some of the literature suggests that specific individual characteristics, such as age, disability, migrant or indigenous status (*e.g.* Gele and Harsløf 2012; Kruse and Schmitt 2015; Petriwskyj *et al.* 2012), or some organisational characteristics, such as ageist policies (Warburton, Paynter and Petriwskyj 2007), might be associated with the type of barriers that impede involvement. Again, while less is known about the influence of individual or

organisational characteristics on the barriers to continued involvement, there are some studies that explore this dimension. Celdrán and Villar (2007), for example, showed that the type of organisation and some socio-demographic characteristics, such as volunteers' age and income, had a significant influence on older volunteers' perceptions of drawbacks associated with participation. A study by Tang, Morrow-Howell and Choi (2010) found that income, health, and some characteristics of the volunteer program, such as the activity type or the duration of the involvement, were significant in predicting volunteers' turnover. Finally, Harré, Tepevac, and Bullen (2009), found that participants' perceived efficacy, described as a sense of personal effectiveness, played a key role in political activists' ongoing motivation. In view of these findings, it is reasonable to expect that these characteristics might also be important in understanding ongoing participation in political organisations, and provide more tailored evidence to assist organisations address the barriers to continued involvement.

Finally, most research to date has been carried out in English-speaking countries, and much less is known about barriers to participation in other geographical and cultural contexts. It has been argued, however, that patterns of political participation among older adults are highly dependent on the socio-historical context (Goerres 2009). The case of Spain, where this research was conducted, is particularly interesting. Spanish participants in this study lived a great part of their lives under Franco's dictatorship. They experienced severe limitations to their liberties and rights, and were

prohibited from any kind of political expression. This situation reversed in the mid-1970s, when the transition to democracy allowed and legalized political activities and organisations. People over 65 remain the cohort with the lowest levels of political engagement (Instituto de Mayores y Servicios Sociales 2008). Nevertheless, in the last general elections in November 2011, the over 65s accounted for 23% of the electorate (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas 2011) and, due to population aging, this percentage will continue to increase in the future. It is estimated that over the next 40 years the proportion of people aged over 65 will represent more than a third of the Spanish population (Instituto de Mayores y Servicios Sociales 2014). This means that the older age group will increasingly play a key role in the political scene, both as a central focus of government policies and as a crucial political grouping having a say in political affairs. To date, however, there is virtually no research exploring older people's political participation in the unique socio-political context of Spain. Results from other contexts such as the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom, where most research into civic participation is conducted, may have limited applicability to the Spanish context.

This study is focused on addressing a number of these gaps. The specific aims of the study are to explore the perceived barriers to retention among Spanish older people actively engaged in political organisations; and, further, to explore the possible association of these barriers with other variables such as the type of organisation, socio-demographic variables and participatory characteristics. In this way, the study seeks to identify not only what barriers are reported

by those participating in political organisations, but what individual and organisational factors may influence these barriers. This will provide a more nuanced understanding of the barriers experienced or perceived by older people to their continued participation than that offered in the existing literature.

## **Methods**

### **Participants**

The study was conducted by Authors 1 and 3 during 2014 in the autonomous Spanish region of Catalonia. Participants were recruited through political organisations. While there has been a considerable debate around the definitions of political participation and political organisations, this paper adopts the definition of political organisations proposed by Morales (2004: 24): “formally organized groups who seek collective goods [...] and which have as their main goal to influence political decision-making processes, either by trying to influence the selection of governmental personnel or their activities, include issues on the agenda or change the values and preferences which guide the decision-making process”.

Organisations in this study were selected from across Catalonia. Both the level (national vs local) and breadth (broad or single-issue) of focus were considered, resulting in selection of three types of organisations relevant in this context:

- A total of nine political parties and trade unions (combined as a high proportion of participants belonged to both types of organisation simultaneously), which operate at the national level and have a broad focus. Unlike single-issue organisations, which have a narrower set of concerns, political parties advocate and take a position across a wide range of issues, including, but not limited to, policies on health, education, work and retirement, and pensions;
- A total of 28 neighbourhood associations, which operate at the local level and are issue-focused. This type of organisation focuses its efforts on improving neighbourhoods through citizen involvement, and advocates for causes such as having better public services or new facilities in their neighbourhood. As these organisations are highly influenced by the specific local context in which they operate, we have included organisations from diverse socio-economic areas to ensure variability; and
- A total of nine single-issue organisations, which operate at the national level and focus their action on specific political issues. Five were focused on advocacy for older people's rights, two on independence for Catalonia, one on supporting people affected by the subprime mortgage crisis, one on human rights, and one on feminist issues.

The final sample included 192 participants from across these organisations: 56 from political parties or trade unions, 95 from neighbourhood associations, and 41 from single issue organisations.

Participants reported involvement in their organisations for between 1 and 50 hours per week ( $M = 10.5$ ;  $SD = 10.1$ ) and for a period of between 1 and 66 years ( $M = 16.4$ ;  $SD = 15.1$ ).

The participants ranged in age from 65 to 86 years ( $M = 70.7$ ;  $SD = 5.6$ ) and were reasonably evenly balanced in terms of gender (54.8% male and 45.2% female). The sample was also fairly evenly split in terms of educational attainment, with close to a third reporting primary studies (37.5%), secondary studies (32.8%) and university degrees (29.7%). Full socio-demographic characteristics of the sample are shown in Table 2.

INSERT TABLE 2 AROUND HERE

## **Instruments**

A questionnaire was designed by Authors 1 and 3 for the purposes of the study. After pilot testing with a sample of six older people participating in political organisations, the final version of the questionnaire was administered to a sample with no previous experience of the survey. The questionnaire included both closed and open-ended questions and incorporated standardized scales and purpose-designed items. The survey therefore contained a number of sections:

1. Socio-demographic items (gender, age, marital status, education, income and self-rated health);

2. Participatory characteristics (number of years participating and average hours spent participating per week);
3. Importance of participation (“On a scale where 1 means “not important at all” and 10 means “very important”, how important is it for you to participate in your organisation?”);
4. Internal political efficacy (“Do you believe that your participation will result in changes in policies?” with response categories ‘yes’, ‘no’, ‘I am not sure’); and
5. Barriers to continued or future participation (“If at some point in the future you decided to stop participating in your organisation, what could be the reason for this?”).

The study was designed to provide a multi-faceted analysis of barriers to continued participation in political organisations. An exploratory approach was utilised given the lack of existing evidence related to this context. Specifically, an open-ended question was included to enable barriers to continued participation to be identified using respondents’ own words rather than a pre-determined set of responses. The open-ended responses were analysed through the quantification of responses and the use of logistic regression to explore the reporting of these barriers according to the characteristics of both organisations and individuals. This study therefore explores not only what barriers to continued participation in political organisations are reported by older people – that is, barriers to retention – but also how reporting of these barriers relates to the individual and organisational context.

## **Procedure**

Political organisations were approached by the first author and invited to take part in the study via an email to identified organisations, followed up with a face to face meeting with the board members of the organisations during which study objectives and procedure for data collection were explained in detail. Organisations that agreed to participate designated a person responsible for distributing the survey to all members who could potentially meet the inclusion criteria and who expressed willingness to participate. To be eligible for participation in the survey, individuals were required to be 1) aged 65 or over, 2) a member of the board or a committee within the organisation, 3) having participated in the organisation for at least one year, and 4) devoting at least one hour per week to their involvement. These criteria were used to ensure that respondents were not simply members of organisations, but were actively involved in political activity through their organisations. These inclusion criteria, and the purpose of the study and information about data collection, instructions to answer the survey, contact details for the research team, confidentiality, and clear statements of the right to withdraw information at any time and to decline to answer any of the questions, were explained through an information sheet attached to the survey. Study participants completed an informed consent form before filling in the survey at home and returning it to the organisation's nominated representative for collection by the researchers. This process ensured that all questionnaires were anonymous with no identifying information collected. The study was



approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Psychology of the University of Barcelona.

## **Data analysis**

### *Content analysis*

First, responses to the open-ended questions underwent content analysis, with the particular purpose of identifying both the themes within responses but also their frequency (Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas 2013). A multiple step process of analysis was employed, with the help of ATLAS.ti 7 qualitative analysis software. The process involved inductive identification of areas of meaning within responses, creation of categories based on similarity of meaning by two independent raters, comparison of categories by the raters and consensus on category definition and re-assignment of responses to the established category system by both raters (Krippendorff 2013). A third rater then categorised a random selection of 30% of responses, with a kappa reliability index of 0.93 indicating very good reliability (Landis and Koch 1977). Three categories were identified through this analysis of barriers: means-related, motive-related and opportunity context-related barriers. These are discussed in detail later in the paper.

### *Logistic regression*

A series of binary logistic regression analyses was conducted to test the associations between the three categories identified in the content analysis and the type of organisation, socio-demographic variables, participatory characteristics, political efficacy and importance of participation. The dichotomous outcome variables were the three categories identified in the analysis of potential barriers (means, motives and opportunities), with mention of a theme included in that category coded as 1, and not mentioning a theme included in that category coded as 0. Variables used as independent variables in the analysis were gender (male; female), age, marital status (married or de facto; widowed, single or divorced), education (primary education or less; secondary education; university education), income ( $\leq 1000$ ; 1001-1500;  $\geq 1501$  euros per month), self-rated health (bad or regular; good), type of organisation (political party or trade union; neighbourhood association; single-issue), importance of participation, years participating and internal political efficacy (Yes; No or Not sure). Education and income were grouped according to the distribution of frequencies.

## **Results**

### *Content analysis*

Analysis of the perceived future barriers to continued participation in political organisations inductively identified three overarching

categories or themes: means-related, motive-related and opportunity context-related barriers. Some participants mentioned more than one type of barrier, so their answers were coded in more than one superordinate category. Within each of these categories, a number of subthemes were also identified.

### Means- related barriers

Resources across three key thematic areas - health, age, and time - were viewed as critical for respondents, who proposed that a change in these would influence their future commitment. Thus, for some participants, future age-related health problems would impact their ongoing involvement:

*In the first place, my age, and in the second, that my health doesn't allow me to continue. (Man, 81, Neighbourhood association)*

Age was also identified as a future concern by others:

*I have turned 80 this year and I need to start looking after myself a bit more. (Woman, 80, neighbourhood association)*

Further, some participants identified the need to take care of family as a higher priority which would affect their ability to give time to their organisation:

*If my children or my grandchildren need me. (Woman, 69, neighbourhood association)*

All of these were identified as decreasing the means or resources individuals have in terms of time, health or other age-related influences on their capacity for continued participation.

### Motive-related barriers

Three themes were identified which related to motives for continued participation. For some participants, ceasing their participation seemed unlikely unless they lost interest in the organisation or in contributing to its mission:

*It would be difficult to give up my participation in the short-middle term. If that happened, it would be for personal reasons (getting bored of participating) or considering that I have nothing to contribute. (Man, 70, Neighbourhood association)*

Others felt that they may stop participating in future if their priorities were to change and they wished to focus on other activities:

*The most likely would be to dedicate time to other activities. (Man, 74, Single-issue organisation)*

For some, achieving what they had set out to do through their participation was a potential reason to move on:

*The reason would be having achieved the goals of the organisation. (Man, 67, Single-issue organisation)*

Thus, participants were able to identify that a change in their motivation for any of these reasons would prevent them continuing in their roles.

### Opportunity context-related barriers

The context of participation was also important, with three further themes identified here. More specifically, this relates to externally-driven factors that may decrease opportunities to be active, or to contribute in the way the individual intended. For some respondents, for example, the continuation of the organisation's mission or philosophy was important to their own continued involvement:

*I think I would never give up... As far as the principles/ideals of the organisation remain the same. (Man, 66, Neighbourhood association)*

For others, it was the need for, or recognition of, their contribution that was important, suggesting that if they felt they were no longer necessary, or considered important, by the organisation, this may prompt them to move on:

*If my contribution became no longer socially recognised. (Man, 76, Neighbourhood association)*

*If the organisation did not require my contribution. (Man, 68,  
Political party/ trade union)*

In a related theme, some respondents felt that they may need to move on in order to allow others to take on their role and “renew” the board or committee:

*I don't know. The most likely would be to make room for other  
people. (Man, 66, Political party/ trade union)*

Each of these themes related in different ways to contextual changes or pressures that may influence their participation.

#### No intention to stop participating

It should also be noted that some respondents did not identify potential barriers, instead stating that they did not intend to ever stop participating in their organisation. For example, for one respondent the possibility of leaving their organisation was unimaginable:

*I do not consider that possibility. It would be such a strong  
reason that I cannot even imagine it. (Man, 81, Political party/  
trade union)*

Similarly, another reported that they identified too strongly with their participation to be able to stop:

*That is just not possible. You cannot get out of yourself. (Man, 65, Political party/ trade union)*

However, overall, there was a number of reasons identified by the respondents for potential future disengagement. These related to means or resources of different types, a change or decrease in motivations, and a change in the context such as the philosophical fit or need for their contribution.

In order to further explore patterns among these themes, each theme and overarching category were analysed for the frequency with which they were mentioned by respondents. Of particular interest was the potential relationship between the type of organisation to which participants belonged and the barriers they identified. Frequencies and chi-square values for the themes according to type of organisation are presented in Table 3.

INSERT TABLE 3 AROUND HERE

The most frequently mentioned type of barrier related to means or resources, reported by close to 70 per cent of respondents. In particular, potential health problems were mentioned by over 60 per cent of participants. Motive-related barriers were mentioned by over 15 per cent of respondents, and opportunity context-related barriers by 13 per cent. Chi-square tests showed significant differences between types of organisations in relation to the barriers identified. Means-related barriers were more likely to be mentioned by those in

neighbourhood associations ( $X^2 = 12.11, p < 0.01$ ). Further, within the motive-related barriers category, those belonging to single-issue organisations were more likely to identify having achieved the objectives of the organisation as a reason to stop participating ( $X^2 = 26.76, p < 0.001$ ).

### *Logistic regression*

Following the content analysis and analysis of frequency of responses, logistic regression analyses were conducted to test the association between the three categories identified in the content analysis and the type of organisation, socio-demographic variables, participatory characteristics, political efficacy and importance of participation. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 4. Analysis revealed a number of significant relationships. Those belonging to trade unions or political parties were significantly less likely than those in neighbourhood associations to identify means-related barriers to future participation ( $OR = 0.27, p < 0.01$ ). Those in single-issue organisations were even less likely to do so ( $OR = 0.20, p < 0.01$ ). Those in the middle income category, earning between 1001 and 1500 Euros per month, were almost six times more likely to identify motive-related barriers than those in the lower income category ( $OR = 5.83, p < 0.05$ ). The number of years participating in the organisation was associated with a decreased likelihood of identifying motive-related barriers ( $OR = 0.95, p < .05$ ). Participants were less likely to identify opportunity context-related barriers with increasing age ( $OR = 0.89, p < 0.05$ ). Finally,



those with a sense of internal political efficacy were also less likely to identify opportunity context-related barriers ( $OR = 0.29, p < .05$ ).

INSERT TABLE 4 AROUND HERE

## **Discussion**

The aims of this study were to explore the perceived barriers to retention among older people engaged in political organisations; and to explore the possible association of these barriers with other variables such as the type of organisation, and socio-demographic variables and participatory characteristics. The study therefore focused on two aspects of political participation that have been researched little to date, and, furthermore, explored these in the under-researched but politically unique context of Spain. The study adopted an innovative approach using both qualitative and quantitative techniques in order to explore not only what perceived barriers to continued participation could be identified, but how these might relate to organisational context and individual characteristics.

There was a range of reasons identified by the respondents for potential future disengagement, relating to the availability of means or resources, a change or decrease in motivation, and a change in the opportunities available in the organisation. It is noteworthy that these themes reflect the categories identified in Verba, Scholzman and Brady's (1995) civic voluntarism model. While this model has not traditionally been used to explore barriers to continued participation

in civic activities, these findings suggest that it may have broader applicability and provide a useful framework to understand what causes people to cease participating.

Barriers related to a decrease in means to participate, including future health issues, age and time availability, match those identified by previous research addressing barriers to the recruitment of participants (*e.g.* Davis *et al.* 2012; Martinez *et al.* 2011; Vegeris *et al.* 2007). In addition, this kind of barrier has been identified in studies covering a diversity of civic activities (*e.g.* Martinez *et al.* 2011) or specific forms of it, such as engagement in local governance (*e.g.* Vegeris *et al.* 2007). Means-related barriers of this kind therefore could act as a common impediment both for the recruitment and the retention of older participants and may be not specific to any particular form of participation but rather a basic impediment that older people need to overcome to take part in civic life.

Regarding motives-related barriers, our results differ from previous findings which identified factors such as lack of interest in either the specific issues addressed by the organisation or participation more generally, distrust in politics, low expectations, and fear of a too demanding involvement as important motivational barriers (*e.g.* Gele and Harsløf 2012; Petriwskyj *et al.* 2012; Postle, Wright and Beresford 2005). Participants in our study, in contrast, highlighted reasons as losing interest in the organisation or in contributing to its mission, a change in priorities and a desire to focus on other activities, and having achieved what they had set out to do. This

contrast may be explained by the fact that most previous research has been carried out with samples of people not already participating in civic activities (*e.g.* Gele and Harsløf 2012) or mixed samples of participants and non-participants (*e.g.* Postle, Wright and Beresford 2005). These studies, therefore, addressed motivational barriers to recruitment which, as our results suggest, may not apply in the case of retention. Interestingly, studies addressing barriers to retention in other types of civic activities, such as social movements organisations (*e.g.* Hutchinson and Wexler 2007) or participation in community policy and planning (*e.g.* Chau 2007), did not report any barriers relating to participants' unwillingness to continue.

Similar differences may be seen among the opportunities context-related barriers. While previous research has identified such impediments as lack of opportunities or lack of information about available opportunities (*e.g.* Davis *et al.* 2012), ageist attitudes (*e.g.* Dewar, Jones and O'May 2004), or other forms of discrimination (particularly towards specific populations *e.g.* Balandin *et al.* 2006; Chau 2007), these factors were not identified in this study and indeed, may be less relevant for the case of retention. Moreover, some opportunities context-related barriers identified in samples made up of people already participating in civic activities, such as the perception of tokenism (*e.g.* Chau 2007; Vegeris *et al.* 2007), were not mentioned by our participants. Interestingly, experiencing organisational problems, a barrier that appeared to be important to volunteers (Warburton, Paynter and Petriwskyj 2007) and people engaged with local governance (Vegeris *et al.* 2007), was a barrier

also mentioned by our participants. However, in our sample this type of barrier reflected concerns related to the fit with the organisation if it changes its mission or philosophy, rather than practical issues, such as poor management or lack of flexibility. Finally, we identified two additional themes related to potential future barriers to participation: a perception that their contribution was no longer necessary, or considered important, and a perception that they should move on in order to allow others to take on their role and “renew” the board or committee. These factors all suggest a concern on the part of participants to maintain their usefulness as they age, perhaps providing some evidence of self-directed ageism.

When these qualitative data were quantified and descriptive analysis was undertaken, a number of patterns could be identified. Means-related barriers were the most frequently identified type of barrier, reported by more than two thirds of respondents. In particular, experiencing health problems was one of the strongest impediments for future participation among participants in this study. This may reflect a strong commitment to participation which means that changes outside of the individual’s control which may make it too difficult – including physically – to participate are the only foreseeable reasons to stop. Alternatively, however, this pattern may reflect a response bias such that only compelling and uncontrollable factors are seen as socially acceptable reasons to stop participating, or may be easier to articulate than motivational reasons. Motives-related barriers were mentioned by about one in six participants in the sample, with losing interest in the organisation or in contributing

to its mission the most commonly reported of these. Opportunity context-related barriers were least common, and were fairly evenly reported; however, undesirable changes in the organisation, reflecting issues of philosophical fit, were more commonly reported than the other barrier themes.

Chi-square analysis suggested that the type of organisation in which the respondents were involved was important for the barriers that were identified. Among the means related barriers, people belonging to neighbourhood associations more frequently identified health problems as a future impediment for participation. This may be a reflection of the particular nature of this kind of participation in Spain, which is highly local, entrenched in participants' daily life, and strongly linked to social networks and leisure. People participating in neighbourhood associations, therefore, may be more likely to see such compelling and less controllable reasons (e.g. health) to stop participating as the likely reason for themselves compared with those in other types of organisations. Among the motives related barriers, people belonging to single issue organisations more frequently mentioned achieving the objectives of the organisation as a potential reason to stop participating. This suggests that those who become involved with single-issue organisations may be focused on specific achievable outcomes, and may see their desired outcomes as likely to be reached, compared with those in other types of organisations. These findings suggest that even within the category of "political organisations", the type of organisation impacts on the reasons individuals may choose to stop

participating. Thus, in summary, the impact of these perceived barriers is much more nuanced than studies exploring participation as an overarching category have suggested. It is noteworthy that no significant differences between organisation types were found for opportunity context-related barriers. This may suggest that this type of barrier does not differ between organisations, or may be an artefact of the lower overall rate at which these barriers were identified.

Further analysis was conducted to explore in more detail the influence of the type of organisation, as well as the potential influence of individual characteristics, on the identification of barriers. A number of significant findings were identified in these logistic regression analyses. As suggested by the chi-square analysis, those belonging to neighbourhood associations were found to be more likely to identify a lack of means or resources as a barrier to continued participation than those in other organisations. The relationship between membership of single-issue organisations and motive-related barriers, however, was not found in the logistic regression analysis. This may suggest that other characteristics may have a stronger influence on the reporting of motive-related barriers. Analysis of barriers in relation to socio-demographic characteristics further suggest some important differences. For example, those who had participated in their organisation for longer were less likely to report motive-related barriers. It is possible that this reflects a reinforcing cycle of participation such that those who have spent more time participating are less likely to lose their willingness to continue to engage, perhaps perceiving the activity as an important

part of their identity. There is considerable evidence showing that continued engagement in social and political action fosters the development of an 'activist' identity (*e.g.* Colby and Damon 1992; Kiecolt 2000), and that role identity is an important factor predicting continued participation (*e.g.* Grube and Piliavin 2000). This then counters perceptions about ageing and inability to continue to participate usefully. There was also a relationship with income indicating that those on middle incomes were more likely to mention motives-related barriers than those on lower incomes. This finding is somewhat more difficult to explain; while this may indicate a relationship between income and a sense of empowerment or control over participation, further research is needed to explore this in more detail.

Barriers relating to the opportunity context of participation also differed by individual characteristics. For example, an increase in the age of the respondent was associated with decreased likelihood of reporting this type of barrier. It is possible that younger participants, closer to retirement, may be less sure about the continued opportunities to participate as they age, may expect that the organisation might cease to value their contribution in the future possibly due to their workforce experience, or see greater potential for the organisation to change over time in such a way as to become philosophically incompatible with their own beliefs. Older respondents, on the other hand, may have a more realistic view based on change over time. Further, those who felt that their participation had an impact on policy were less likely to report these context-

related barriers. It is reasonable to expect that those with a sense of political efficacy would feel empowered to participate, that their contribution was valued and important, and that it fits with the organisation's mission and values. These individuals may therefore be less likely to anticipate that this will change and that opportunities will cease to be available to them. Harré, Tepevac, and Bullen (2009), for instance, found that efficacy, described as a sense of personal effectiveness (including particular skills or a general sense of power), played a key role in political activists' ongoing motivation.

#### *Limitations of the study and implications for future research*

The study reported here was exploratory, and its design has some implications for interpretation of the findings, and for future research, which should be noted. In particular, the restriction to specific types of organisations within one specific cultural and geographic context limits the generalisability of the findings. Future studies involving other types of organisations or contexts would add useful comparative data. In particular, the ability to compare these data with findings relating to other types of civic organisations, controlling for differences such as a focus on retention and the socio-political influences of the context, would be valuable. Further, given the limited amount of research with a similar focus to the present study, research providing comparative data from other socio-political and geographic contexts would help to identify the potential influence of context on participation.



The purposive sample of participants also limits the generalisability of our findings. For instance, the use of gatekeepers to gain access to participants always implies a risk of bias (e.g. recruiting the most eager or positive members). Moreover, due to the difficulty of identifying elders who have dropped out from political organisations, our results are exclusively based on a cross-sectional sample of people who were actively involved in political organisations at the time of the survey. Further, their focus is on future-oriented barriers, which may differ from actual reasons for leaving. Thus, a longitudinal follow up study comparing those who have continued participating to those who have dropped out from their organisations may help to confirm our results and deepen our understanding of barriers to retention. Further studies may also address paths through participation that go beyond stopping altogether or remaining in active roles within the organisation (e.g. some people may choose to cut down their level of engagement or quit the organisation while retaining their membership).

### *Conclusions and policy implications*

While it is difficult to determine without additional studies whether the different findings identified here relate to the focus on retention of existing participants, the focus on political organisations, or the cultural context of Spain, it is clear that the reasons longer-term participants may choose to stop are more nuanced than suggested by the broad approach to civic participation often adopted in the literature. It is possible that political participation may be different

from other activities in this regard, or that issues for retention may be different from those for recruitment of new members. In either case, it is clear that a critical lens is essential when considering the applicability of evidence about participation to the development of retention strategies for these organisations. Strategies based on evidence relating to social welfare volunteering, for example, or relating to recruitment of organisational members more generally, may have little relevance to retention of active contributors to the political activities of organisations.

Other patterns identified highlight further complexity to be considered in these strategies. Differences in the prevalence of barriers according to the type of political organisation shows that the context of the organisation and its function are important factors in understanding why people choose to stay or go. Differences in barriers according to socio-demographic characteristics further suggest that in addition to the type of organisation, the individual's characteristics impact on the barriers they report. Understanding how to retain active members in the organisation's activities therefore requires organisations to have a nuanced understanding of their own particular context and the nature of their active older members. These findings have highlighted some important differences between organisations and between older individuals which organisations now need to consider in ensuring that long-standing active members are retained.

Therefore, organisations need to consider the characteristics of their members and the relationship these characteristics have to what they might need in order to stay active within the organisation. In particular, some of these findings highlight perceptions among some older people that they may no longer be useful as they age, suggesting they feel that they should be replaced by younger people or their health will not be good enough. These considerations all suggest that organisations need to minimise these potential barriers in order to ensure that older members are encouraged to feel that they can still contribute as they age. Diverse political organisations may also need to consider rewards or incentives that might help build retention of their particular members. In particular, the importance of feeling valued, feeling engaged with the philosophy or mission of the organisation and with the specific action they are undertaken were highlighted as important incentives. Overall, the influence of socio-demographic characteristics and the variation in perceived barriers that may therefore exist among members of a diverse organisation suggests that a multi-faceted approach to retention is required; that is, attention needs to be paid to the match between the type of organisation, the characteristics of their active members, and the potential barriers to retention faced by older people. Long-term commitment by active members is a valuable asset to all non-profit organisations, and building strategies for retention is a critical component for future organisational sustainability.

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Table 1. Means-related, motives-related, and opportunity context-related barriers to older people's civic participation: Overview of previous findings.

Type of barrier	Means
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health and physical factors (Balandin <i>et al.</i> 2006; Davis <i>et al.</i> 2012; Gele and Harsløf 2012; Gould 2007; Hayden, Boaz and Taylor 1999; Hutchinson and Wexler 2007; Kruse and Schmitt 2015; Martinez <i>et al.</i> 2011; Petriwskyj and Warburton 2007; Tang, Morrow-Howell and Choi 2010; Veageris <i>et al.</i> 2007).</li> <li>• Accessibility (Adler, Schwartz and Kuskowski 2007; Balandin <i>et al.</i> 2006; Chau 2007; Davis <i>et al.</i> 2012; Dewar, Jones and O'May 2004; Gould 2007; Kruse and Schmitt 2015; Love 2004; Martinez <i>et al.</i> 2011; Petriwskyj <i>et al.</i> 2012; Postle, Wright and Beresford 2005; Principi <i>et al.</i> 2012; Reed <i>et al.</i> 2006; Veageris <i>et al.</i> 2007).</li> <li>• Caring commitments (Postle, Wright and Beresford 2005; Tang, Morrow-Howell and Choi 2010; Veageris <i>et al.</i> 2007).</li> <li>• Work commitments (Balandin <i>et al.</i> 2006; Davis <i>et al.</i> 2012; Petriwskyj and Warburton 2007; Tang, Morrow-Howell and Choi 2010).</li> <li>• Family responsibilities (Davis <i>et al.</i> 2012; Martinez <i>et al.</i> 2011; Petriwskyj and Warburton 2007).</li> <li>• General lack of time (Balandin <i>et al.</i> 2006; Gould 2007; Love 2004; Martinez <i>et al.</i> 2011; Petriwskyj and Warburton 2007; Postle, Wright and Beresford 2005; Veageris <i>et al.</i> 2007; Warburton, Paynter and Petriwskyj 2007).</li> <li>• Financial issues (Adler, Schwartz and Kuskowski 2007; Davis <i>et al.</i> 2012; Gould 2007; Hayden, Boaz and Taylor 1999; Love 2004; Postle, Wright and Beresford 2005; Reed <i>et al.</i> 2006; Veageris <i>et al.</i> 2007; Warburton, Paynter and Petriwskyj 2007).</li> <li>• Lack of civic skills (Gould 2007; Reed <i>et al.</i> 2006; Veageris <i>et al.</i> 2007).</li> </ul>

Table 1. Cont.

<b>Type of barrier</b>	
<b>Means</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of self-confidence or self-worth (Chau 2007; Gould 2007; Kruse and Schmitt 2015; Petriwskyj and Warburton 2007; Petriwskyj <i>et al.</i> 2012; Principi <i>et al.</i> 2012).</li> <li>• Language barriers (Chau 2007; Gele and Harsløf 2012; Gould 2007; Postle, Wright and Beresford 2005; Vegeris <i>et al.</i> 2007).</li> </ul>
<b>Motives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of interest (Gould 2007; Kruse and Schmitt 2015; Martinez <i>et al.</i> 2011; Petriwskyj <i>et al.</i> 2012; Warburton, Paynter and Petriwskyj 2007).</li> <li>• Disillusionment and disaffection and low expectations regarding participation (Dewar, Jones and O'May 2004; Hayden, Boaz and Taylor 1999; Postle, Wright and Beresford 2005).</li> <li>• Lack of trust in organisations and participatory processes (Gele and Harsløf 2012; Hayden, Boaz and Taylor 1999; Petriwskyj <i>et al.</i> 2012).</li> <li>• Fear of finding involvement too demanding or the unwillingness to be tied down or burned out (Martinez <i>et al.</i> 2011; Petriwskyj and Warburton 2007; Principi <i>et al.</i> 2012).</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunity context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ageist attitudes (Dewar, Jones and O'May 2004; Hutchinson and Wexler 2007; Kruse and Schmitt 2015; Principi <i>et al.</i> 2012; Warburton, Paynter and Petriwskyj 2007).</li> <li>• Discrimination based on gender, migrant status, or disability status (Balandin <i>et al.</i> 2006; Chau 2007; Hutchinson and Wexler 2007).</li> <li>• Perception of tokenism (Chau 2007; Vegeris <i>et al.</i> 2007).</li> <li>• Lack of opportunities for participation (Davis <i>et al.</i> 2012; Martinez <i>et al.</i> 2011; Principi <i>et al.</i> 2012).</li> <li>• Lack of information about available opportunities (Davis <i>et al.</i> 2012; Gele and Harsløf 2012; Gould 2007; Vegeris <i>et al.</i> 2007).</li> </ul>

Table 1. Cont.

<b>Type of barrier</b>	
<b>Opportunity context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Organisational problems as poor management, lack of flexibility, or unsupportive attitudes (Balandin <i>et al.</i> 2006;</li><li>• Dewar, Jones and O'May 2004; Tang, Morrow-Howell and Choi 2010; Vegeris <i>et al.</i> 2007; Warburton, Paynter and Petrivskyj 2007).</li></ul>

Table 2. Comparative profile of older people engaged with political organisations, by type of organisation.

Variable	Neighbourhood associations (n = 95)	Political parties and trade unions (n = 56)	Single issue organisations (n = 41)	Total (N = 192)
Age	70.4 (SD = 5.1)	70.3 (SD = 5.7)	71.7 (SD = 6.5)	70.7 (SD = 5.6)
Gender**				
Male	41.9%	70.9%	62.5%	54.8%
Female	58.1%	29.1%	37.5%	45.2%
Marital status				
Married	65.3%	66.1%	68.3%	66.1%
Non married	34.7%	33.9%	31.7%	33.9%
Education level***				
Primary studies or less	45.3%	42.9%	12.2%	37.5%
Secondary education	26.3%	42.9%	34.1%	32.8%
University education	28.4%	14.3%	53.7%	29.7%
Income**				
≤ 1000 euros	29.8%	17.9%	4.9%	20.9%
1001-1500 euros	28.7%	32.1%	22.0%	28.3%
≥ 1501 euros	41.5%	50.0%	73.1%	50.8%
General self-rated health				
Bad	2.1%	3.6%	0.0%	2.1%
Regular	31.6%	26.8%	22.0%	28.1%
Good	66.3%	69.6%	78.0%	69.8%

Table 2. Cont.

Variable	Neighbourhood associations (n = 95)	Political parties and trade unions (n = 56)	Single issue organisations (n = 41)	Total (N = 192)
Importance of participation (1-10 scale)	8.2 ( <i>SD</i> = 1.7)	8.1 ( <i>SD</i> = 1.3)	8.5 ( <i>SD</i> = 1.3)	8.2 ( <i>SD</i> = 1.5)
Number of years participating**	14.7 ( <i>SD</i> = 12.4)	25.0 ( <i>SD</i> = 16.9)	8.4 ( <i>SD</i> = 12.3)	16.4 ( <i>SD</i> = 15.1)
Internal political efficacy				
No	54.7%	46.4%	56.1%	52.6%
Yes	45.3%	53.6%	43.9%	47.4%

Significance levels: \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$  ( $p$ -values are based on the chi-square statistic).

Not: *SD*: standard deviation.

Table 3. Responses to “If at some point in the future you decide to stop participating in your organisation, what could be the reason for this?” In percentages, by type of organisation.

Categories	Neighbour- hood associations (n = 95) †	Political parties / Trade unions (n = 56) †	Single issue organisations (n = 41) †	Total (N = 192) †
<b>Means (I can no longer participate...)**</b>	78.9	58.9	53.7	67.7
<i>Experiencing health problems**</i>	74.7	51.8	48.8	62.5
<i>Taking care of family</i>	16.8	5.4	7.3	11.5
<i>Becoming too old</i>	10.5	8.9	7.3	9.4
<b>Motives (I will no longer wish to participate...)</b>	10.5	16.1	24.4	15.1
<i>Losing motivation / feeling disappointed</i>	8.4	12.5	2.4	8.3
<i>Moving on to other things</i>	3.2	3.6	4.9	3.6
<i>Achieving the objectives of the organisation***</i>	0.0	0.0	17.1	3.6
<b>Opportunity context (Nobody will ask me to participate...)</b>	10.5	14.3	17.1	13.0
<i>Experiencing undesirable organisational changes</i>	6.3	3.6	7.3	5.7
<i>Realizing that my contribution is no longer necessary</i>	2.1	5.4	7.3	4.2
<i>Generational / organisational replacement</i>	3.2	5.4	2.5	3.6

Table 3. Cont.

Categories	Neighbour- hood associations (n = 95) †	Political parties / Trade unions (n = 56) †	Single issue organisations (n = 41) †	Total (N = 192) †
<b>I will never stop participating**</b>	1.1	12.5	2.4	4.7
<b>I don't know</b>	3.2	5.4	4.9	4.2
<b>Don't answer</b>	5.3	5.4	9.8	6.3

Significance levels: \*\*p < 0.01; \*\*\*p < 0.001 (p-values are based on the chi-square statistic).

† *The sum of subordinate category values may sometimes be greater than the corresponding superordinate category value because some participants' answers included more than one barrier and, therefore, were coded into more than one subordinate category. Similarly, one specific response may include means, motives, and opportunity context-related barriers.*

Table 4. Logistic regression models predicting barriers to participate in a political organisation (N = 192).

Categories	Type of barrier		
	Means OR [95% CI]	Motives OR [95% CI]	Opportunities OR [95% CI]
Gender (Female)			
Male	0.80 [0.34-1.86]	0.91 [0.30-2.73]	3.29 [0.98-11.06]
Age (years)	1.03 [0.96-1.11]	0.91 [0.82-1.01]	0.89* [0.80-1.00]
Marital status (Married)			
Not married	1.22 [0.53-2.82]	0.87 [0.28-2.73]	1.46 [0.44-4.91]
Education (Primary studies or less)			
Secondary education	1.54 [0.65-3.62]	0.72 [0.22-2.39]	0.50 [0.14-1.78]
University education	2.58 [0.88-7.53]	0.75 [0.18-3.04]	0.79 [0.20-3.17]
Income ( $\leq$ 1000 euros)			
1001-1500 euros	1.42 [0.50-4.00]	5.83* [1.05-32.38]	1.38 [0.29-6.52]
$\geq$ 1501 euros	1.12 [0.39-3.25]	1.89 [0.30-12.06]	1.51 [0.32-7.25]
Self-rated health (Bad/regular)			
Good	1.08 [0.50-2.33]	1.02 [0.34-3.07]	1.49 [0.49-4.57]
Type of organisation (Neighbourhood Association)			
Political parties and trade unions	0.27** [0.11-0.64]	2.89 [0.89-9.37]	0.73 [0.21-2.55]
Single issue organisations	0.20** [0.07-0.56]	3.28 [0.92-11.66]	2.13 [0.57-7.93]
Importance of participation <sup>1</sup>	1.08 [0.85-1.37]	0.85 [0.61-1.18]	0.94 [0.68-1.30]



Table 4. Cont.

Categories	Type of barrier		
	Means OR [95% CI]	Motives OR [95% CI]	Opportunities OR [95% CI]
Years participating	1.02 [0.99-1.05]	0.95* [0.91-1.00]	1.02 [0.98-1.06]
Internal political efficacy (No)			
Yes	0.61 [0.30-1.24]	1.18 [0.44-3.13]	0.29* [0.10-0.81]
Model sum. Chi Square (df, p value)	25.31 (13, <.021)	25.30 (13, <.021)	16.21 (13, <.238)
Log likelihood	205.45	127.52	121.90
Nagelkerke	.181	.228	.160

Significance levels: \*p < 0.05; \*\*p < 0.01

Notes: <sup>1</sup> Scale 1-10, higher scores indicate higher importance of participation. Ref.: reference category. df: degrees of freedom.

## CAPÍTULO V: DISCUSIÓN GENERAL

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## 5.1 DISCUSIÓN GENERAL

Las nuevas generaciones de personas mayores están desafiando muchos de los estereotipos de dependencia y pasividad que tradicionalmente se asociaban a la vejez. Al menos en los países desarrollados, estas cohortes gozan de un mayor nivel educativo, mejor salud y más recursos financieros que cualquiera de las cohortes precedentes (Pérez et al., 2012). Además, muchos mayores llevan una vida activa y continúan realizando importantes contribuciones a su entorno familiar y comunitario (e.g. Fernandez-Ballesteros et al., 2011; Villar & Serrat, 2014).

Estos cambios en el perfil socio-demográfico de los mayores han propiciado la aparición de un nuevo paradigma para el estudio de la vejez, que se ha concretado en conceptos como envejecimiento productivo (Bass et al., 1993), envejecimiento satisfactorio (Baltes & Baltes, 1993; Rowe & Kahn, 1987, 1997) o envejecimiento activo (WHO, 2002). A pesar de la naturaleza multidimensional de estos conceptos, que incluyen un amplio rango de actividades sociales, económicas, espirituales y cívicas, la literatura ha tendido a promover una aproximación unidimensional a los mismos, priorizando bien un enfoque economicista, centrado en la ampliación de la vida laboral, bien un enfoque médico, centrado en el mantenimiento de la actividad física (Boudiny, 2013).

Así, un fenómeno que ha recibido escasa atención en el marco del envejecimiento activo es la participación cívica de las personas

mayores. Esta participación podría ser considerada como un ejemplo paradigmático del buen envejecer (Villar & Serrat, 2014), no sólo por sus beneficios sociales y comunitarios (Neill, Morrow-Howell, & Wilson, 2011) sino también por su impacto en la salud y el bienestar de aquéllos que participan (Anderson et al., 2014). Sin embargo, tal y como vimos en el Capítulo I, el concepto de participación cívica ha estado marcado por una notable falta de consenso en su definición, lo que ha dificultado notablemente el avance de la investigación al respecto (Villar & Serrat, 2014).

Con el objetivo de lograr una mayor claridad conceptual, algunos autores (e.g. R. Adler & Goggin, 2005) han propuesto diferenciar dos componentes principales: la participación social y la participación política. La participación social engloba el conjunto de actividades que conectan a las personas entre sí, como el voluntariado o las actividades de cuidado. En cuanto a la participación política, se refiere a acciones que se orientan principalmente a influir en los procesos de toma de decisiones políticas, sea cual sea el nivel en el que se produzcan (Brady, 1999). Aunque existe un creciente número de investigaciones sobre la participación social de las personas mayores, y particularmente sobre el voluntariado (para una revisión véase Morrow-Howell, 2010), la investigación sobre la participación política de las personas mayores se encuentra aún en estado incipiente (Nygard & Jakobsson, 2013a).

La participación política debe ser considerada en sí misma como un fenómeno multidimensional, ya que agrupa una gran diversidad de

actividades (Huntington & Nelson, 1976). A pesar de las muchas formas que puede asumir esta participación, la mayoría de estudios se han centrado en una actividad, como la votación (e.g. Binstock, 2000; Cheung et al., 2001; Strate et al., 1989), o en una combinación de algunos tipos de actividad política (e.g. Jirovec & Erich, 1992; Melo & Stockemer, 2014; Nygard & Jakobsson, 2013a, 2013b). Sin embargo, ha habido muy poca investigación sobre otro tipo de actividades políticas, tales como la participación de las personas mayores en organizaciones políticas. Esta modalidad de participación es particularmente interesante, ya que requiere de una considerable inversión de tiempo, habilidades cívicas e incluso un mayor coste emocional que otro tipo de actividades políticas más frecuentemente estudiadas (Verba et al., 1995). Además, tiende a ser estable en el tiempo y a sostenerse de manera continuada a lo largo de la vida (Goerres, 2009).

Como todo fenómeno social complejo, la participación de los mayores en organizaciones políticas puede ser abordada desde múltiples perspectivas y niveles explicativos. Así, algunos autores han propuesto clasificar los modelos explicativos de la participación política según el nivel de análisis utilizado en las explicaciones (e.g. McBride et al., 2006; Norris, 2002). En el Capítulo II se describieron algunos ejemplos de teorías que se ubican en los niveles macro (socio-cultural) e intermedio (organizacional) de análisis y se desarrollaron extensamente los modelos centrados en el individuo.

Estos modelos, que constituyen el foco de la presente tesis, intentan explicar por qué individuos que comparten contextos socio-culturales y organizacionales similares muestran diferencias en sus niveles de participación. Los modelos explicativos centrados en el individuo se orientan, pues, a explorar los factores que afectan la participación política a nivel individual e intentan responder a preguntas como qué factores facilitan o impiden la participación, por qué algunos individuos participan más que otros o qué motiva a los individuos a participar y qué barreras encuentran para hacerlo.

El objetivo general de esta tesis fue realizar una aproximación multidimensional al fenómeno de la participación de las personas mayores en organizaciones políticas, explorando y analizando una serie de modelos explicativos de la participación política centrados en el individuo. En concreto, se utilizaron los modelos basados en los recursos, los centrados en los factores de personalidad, así como también los que abordan las motivaciones y barreras para participar en actividades políticas.

Este objetivo global se concretó en cuatro objetivos específicos relacionados con estos modelos: (1) analizar los factores asociados con la participación de las personas mayores en organizaciones políticas; (2) analizar la relación entre generatividad y participación en organizaciones políticas; (3) explorar las motivaciones de las personas mayores para participar en organizaciones políticas; y (4) explorar las barreras para la permanencia de las personas mayores en organizaciones políticas.

Con el fin de abordar estos objetivos, se llevaron a cabo un total de cuatro estudios empíricos. En el **Estudio 1** se analizó el efecto de los recursos socio-económicos y de la implicación en otras actividades de envejecimiento activo sobre la participación en organizaciones políticas. En el **Estudio 2** se analizó la relación entre esta modalidad de participación política y la generatividad en la vejez. En el **Estudio 3** se exploraron las motivaciones de las personas mayores para participar en organizaciones políticas. Por último, en el **Estudio 4** se exploraron las barreras que los mayores perciben para continuar implicados en estas organizaciones. A continuación se discuten y relacionan los hallazgos más importantes de estos estudios.

### **5.1.1 Estudio 1**

En el Estudio 1 exploramos uno de los modelos explicativos de la participación política que más desarrollo ha tenido en la literatura sobre este tema: el modelo basado en los recursos, descrito en el Capítulo II. Desde esta perspectiva se considera que la participación en actividades políticas requiere la inversión de diferentes tipos de recursos por parte del individuo, tales como tiempo, dinero o habilidades cívicas. Los recursos de los que el individuo dispone determinan el coste relativo de su actividad política y condicionan, por lo tanto, su predisposición a participar (Morales, 2004). La conclusión lógica de este modelo es que los ciudadanos que disponen de más recursos tienen más probabilidades de participar en actividades políticas (Verba et al., 1995).



Aunque el modelo de los recursos ha hallado un considerable sustento empírico en muestras de población general (e.g. Burns et al., 2001; Verba et al., 1995), su aplicación al colectivo de personas mayores ha resultado mucho más limitada (e.g. Cheung et al., 2001; Kam et al., 1999; Nygard & Jakobsson, 2013a, 2013b). Además, este modelo no ha sido probado empíricamente en el caso de actividades como la pertenencia a organizaciones políticas, un tipo de participación que –como vimos en el Capítulo I- presenta unas características propias. Este tipo de participación política podría requerir de una considerable inversión de tiempo y esfuerzo por parte del individuo (Burr et al., 2002). Resulta relevante, pues, explorar si el hecho de implicarse en otras actividades de envejecimiento activo se relaciona con la participación en organizaciones políticas y cuál es el efecto (complementario o competitivo) de estas actividades sobre la participación política.

Para dar respuesta a estas preguntas se planteó el Estudio 1, cuyo objetivo fue analizar los factores asociados con la participación de las personas mayores en organizaciones políticas. En concreto, nos interesaba analizar el rol de los recursos socio-económicos (educación e ingresos) y de la participación en otras actividades de envejecimiento activo (actividades de ocio, de aprendizaje o actividades productivas), en este tipo de participación política.

Los resultados del Estudio 1 proporcionaron apoyo empírico, aunque sólo parcial, al modelo de los recursos socio-económicos (Verba & Nie, 1972). De acuerdo con lo esperado, el nivel educativo tuvo un

efecto predictor sobre la participación en organizaciones políticas. Sin embargo, el nivel de ingresos no se asoció con esta modalidad de participación en los análisis multivariados. Respecto a la participación en otras actividades de envejecimiento activo, nuestros resultados apoyan la hipótesis de la complementariedad entre actividades. Así, participar en otras actividades de envejecimiento activo (como actividades de ocio, de aprendizaje o actividades de voluntariado), incrementaría las probabilidades de implicarse en organizaciones políticas.

Tomados en conjunto, los resultados del Estudio 1 son compatibles con el modelo del voluntarismo cívico (Verba et al., 1995), desarrollado en el Capítulo II. Según este modelo, la participación de las personas mayores en organizaciones políticas podría explicarse a partir de diferentes factores movilizadores, como mayores oportunidades educativas, redes sociales más extensas o vínculos institucionales diversos. Por un lado, las oportunidades educativas promoverían el desarrollo de habilidades cívicas, lo que a su vez, facilitaría la participación. Por otro lado, la participación social jugaría un importante rol en la participación política, facilitando la exposición y la movilización política de los individuos.

### **5.1.2 Estudio 2**

El Estudio 2 se enmarcó dentro de las teorías que se orientan a identificar las características de personalidad que diferencian a aquellos que participan en actividades políticas de aquellos que no lo

hacen (Duncan, 2012), desarrolladas en el Capítulo II. En concreto, analizamos el rol que desempeña la generatividad en la participación de las personas mayores en organizaciones políticas.

La generatividad puede ser definida como el interés y compromiso adulto por el bienestar de las generaciones futuras y puede ser expresada a través de actividades como tener y criar hijos, enseñar y guiar a las generaciones más jóvenes o cualquier otra actividad destinada a dejar un legado positivo en aquéllos que nos sucederán (Erikson, 1963, 1982; Kotre, 1984). Aunque la teoría de Erikson - y algunas aportaciones posteriores como las de McAdams (e.g. McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992; McAdams, 2001) - restringían la generatividad a la etapa media de la vida, se ha argumentado que la generatividad podría estar presente también en la vejez.

En este sentido, la participación política -como una actividad que contribuye al sostenimiento y mejora de la comunidad- podría ser considerada como una actividad generativa. Sin embargo, la investigación sobre la participación política desde la perspectiva de la generatividad ha sido escasa. Algunos estudios previos han relacionado el interés generativo con el activismo político en muestras de jóvenes y adultos (e.g. Hart et al., 2001; Peterson & Duncan, 1999) y se ha argumentado también que la participación cívica de los mayores estaría relacionada con la expresión de la generatividad (Kleiber & Nimrod, 2008; Warburton et al., 2006). Sin embargo, la aplicación sistemática del concepto de generatividad a la

comprensión de la participación política en la etapa de la vejez ha resultado prácticamente inexistente (Villar & Serrat, 2014).

El objetivo general del Estudio 2 fue explorar la relación entre generatividad y participación en organizaciones políticas. Como objetivo específico se propuso evaluar las diferencias en interés generativo, metas generativas, y demandas culturales percibidas entre una muestra de personas mayores implicadas en organizaciones políticas y un grupo de comparación que no realizaba esta actividad.

Los resultados del Estudio 2 mostraron que la participación en organizaciones políticas puede ser considerada como una expresión de la generatividad en la vejez. La muestra de personas mayores implicadas en organizaciones políticas obtuvo puntuaciones significativamente más altas en interés generativo que aquéllas otras que formaban parte del grupo de comparación. Respecto a las metas generativas, se encontraron diferencias significativas en las metas que hacían referencia al presente y al futuro, reportando los participantes en organizaciones políticas más metas generativas que el grupo de comparación. No obstante, no se encontraron diferencias significativas en las metas referentes al pasado. Finalmente, aquéllos que participaban en organizaciones políticas reportaron percibir más demandas culturales relativas a actuar generativamente que aquéllos que no realizaban esta actividad.

Analizados en conjunto los hallazgos del Estudio 2 sugieren no sólo que la participación en organizaciones políticas puede ser

considerada como una expresión de la generatividad en la vejez, sino también que el rol de la generatividad en esta actividad es más complejo que la simple expresión de intereses generativos. En este sentido, nuestro estudio demuestra que la expresión de la generatividad en la vejez está también relacionada con la puesta en marcha de metas generativas y se encuentra influenciada por la percepción que tiene el individuo de lo que socialmente se espera de él/ella. Este último punto es importante ya que demuestra que no sólo las creencias internas y las metas que se plantea el individuo son importantes para la puesta en marcha de actividades generativas en la vejez, sino también su percepción de las demandas sociales y culturales.

### **5.1.3 Estudio 3**

Tanto en el Estudio 1 como en el Estudio 2 se relacionaron ciertas características individuales con la participación en organizaciones políticas. En concreto, en el Estudio 1 se analizó el papel que desempeñan los recursos socio-económicos y la participación en actividades de envejecimiento activo en la participación política y en el Estudio 2 se relacionó la generatividad con la implicación en este tipo de participación política. Los Estudios 1 y 2 se encuadran, respectivamente, en dos de los modelos explicativos de la participación política desarrollados en el Capítulo II: las teorías basadas en los recursos y las centradas en los factores de personalidad.

Sin embargo, una cosa es explorar los factores individuales que incrementan o disminuyen las probabilidades de que determinados colectivos se impliquen en la actividad política y, otra muy diferente, analizar las motivaciones que los mismos individuos atribuyen a su participación o las barreras que perciben para participar. Los Estudios 3 y 4 se encuadran dentro de los modelos que se centran en estos aspectos, desarrollados en el Capítulo II, y tuvieron como objetivo explorar –desde el propio punto de vista de las personas implicadas– las motivaciones para participar en organizaciones políticas y las barreras para hacerlo.

En el Estudio 3 exploramos las motivaciones de las personas mayores para implicarse en organizaciones políticas. Aunque no contamos con estudios específicos sobre esta modalidad de participación política, la investigación previa ha explorado las motivaciones de los mayores para participar en otros tipos de actividad, como la participación en acciones de protesta (Fox & Quinn, 2012; Goerres, 2009), en movimientos sociales organizados (Blanche-Tarragó & Fernández-Ardèvol, 2014; Narushima, 2004; Sawchuk, 2009) o en foros locales e iniciativas de gobernanza local (Barnes et al., 2011; Petriwskyj et al., 2014). De los resultados de estos estudios se desprende que las motivaciones de los mayores para participar son diversas y persiguen tanto la búsqueda de beneficios comunitarios como personales.

Sin embargo, esta evidencia podría no ser aplicable al caso de la participación en organizaciones políticas, un tipo de actividad

política que –como vimos en el Capítulo 1- presenta características propias. Por otro lado, la diversidad de los mayores (Barnes & Newman, 2003) podría tener un impacto en sus motivaciones para participar (Petriwskyj et al., 2014). Además, el tipo de organización y las características de la participación podrían ser también variables relevantes, ya que dependiendo de sus objetivos y alcance, una determinada organización puede atraer o repeler a personas con razones específicas para participar. Hasta el momento, sin embargo, ningún estudio ha explorado sistemáticamente estas relaciones.

Para dar respuesta a estas preguntas se propuso el Estudio 3. Los objetivos de este estudio fueron explorar las motivaciones de las personas mayores para participar en organizaciones políticas y determinar si estas motivaciones se encontraban relacionadas con las variables sociodemográficas, el tipo de organización política o las características de la participación.

Los resultados del Estudio 3 mostraron que casi el 70% de los participantes estaban motivados por factores tales como influenciar los procesos de toma de decisiones o introducir cambios y mejoras en la comunidad. Sin embargo, la extensión deseada de estos cambios fue variable. Mientras algunos participantes expresaron motivaciones idealistas, otros manifestaron que participaban para defender una causa concreta en la que creían. Uno de cada seis participantes expresó motivaciones egoístas, en algunos casos relacionadas con el crecimiento personal y en otros con necesidades de autoprotección. Finalmente, los tipos de motivación identificados se relacionaron con

algunas características individuales y del contexto organizacional, tales como el género, el nivel educativo o el tipo de organización.

Tomados en conjunto, nuestros resultados son consistentes con los de algunos estudios previos sobre otros tipos de actividades políticas (Barnes et al., 2011; Petriwskyj et al., 2014) y confirman la idea de que las motivaciones de los mayores para implicarse en política son diversas. Por otro lado, nuestro estudio muestra que las motivaciones de los mayores para participar en organizaciones políticas se encuentran relacionadas con el contexto organizacional y con las características individuales de aquéllos que participan.

#### **5.1.4 Estudio 4**

En el Estudio 4 exploramos las barreras para la retención de las personas mayores en organizaciones políticas. Si la investigación sobre motivaciones ha sido escasa, los estudios sobre barreras son prácticamente inexistentes. Sin embargo, contamos con algunos estudios centrados en otros tipos de actividades cívicas, particularmente en actividades de voluntariado. La aplicación del modelo del voluntarismo cívico (Verba et al., 1995), desarrollado en el Capítulo II, permite clasificar las barreras para el reclutamiento y retención de los mayores en tres tipos principales: barreras relacionadas con los recursos (como la salud, las habilidades cívicas, los ingresos, o el tiempo disponible), barreras relacionadas con las motivaciones (como el desinterés, desilusión, o descontento con la política) y barreras relacionadas con las oportunidades (como la falta



de información sobre las oportunidades para participar o los conflictos o problemas de gestión de las organizaciones).

La evidencia disponible respecto a otras actividades cívicas, sin embargo, podría ser intransferible al caso de la participación en organizaciones políticas, un tipo de participación que –como vimos en el Capítulo I- presenta unas características propias. Además, aunque se ha sugerido que algunas características individuales como la edad, la salud o la raza (e.g. Gele & Harsløf, 2012; Kruse & Schmitt, 2015; Petriwskyj et al., 2012) podrían asociarse con la percepción de determinados tipos de barrera, las posibles asociaciones entre los tipos de barrera, las características sociodemográficas y participativas, y el tipo de organización no han sido exploradas sistemáticamente.

Los objetivos del Estudio 4 fueron explorar las barreras para la retención de las personas mayores en organizaciones políticas y determinar si estas barreras se encontraban relacionadas con las variables sociodemográficas, el tipo de organización política o las características de la participación.

Los resultados mostraron un amplio rango de razones para desvincularse de las organizaciones políticas. Las barreras halladas en nuestro estudio se relacionaron con las tres categorías que se desprendían de la aplicación del modelo de Verba et al. (1995) y se agruparon, por lo tanto, en barreras relacionadas con los recursos, barreras motivacionales o barreras relacionadas con las

oportunidades para participar. El primer tipo de barrera fue el más frecuentemente identificado en las respuestas de los participantes. Finalmente, tanto el tipo de organización como algunas características sociodemográficas y de participación, como la edad o la eficacia política interna, tuvieron un impacto en las razones expresadas por los activistas mayores para dejar de participar en sus organizaciones.

Tomados en conjunto, los resultados del Estudio 4 sugieren la necesidad de una aproximación más matizada y multifacética al estudio de las barreras para la participación. La evidencia disponible sobre las barreras para implicarse en actividades de voluntariado o sobre las barreras para el reclutamiento de nuevos miembros, por ejemplo, podría tener poca relevancia en el caso de la retención de los mayores en organizaciones políticas, un tipo de participación que –según nuestros resultados- enfrenta barreras que le son propias.

## **5.2 LIMITACIONES Y LÍNEAS FUTURAS DE INVESTIGACIÓN**

Más allá de las contribuciones de esta tesis a la comprensión de la participación de los mayores en organizaciones políticas, nuestra investigación presenta también algunas limitaciones que deben tenerse en cuenta a la hora de interpretar los resultados. Habiendo discutido las limitaciones particulares de cada estudio en los respectivos artículos, en este apartado se mencionan sólo las

limitaciones que afectan a la tesis en su conjunto y que deberían ser tenidas en cuenta en la realización de futuras investigaciones.

Sin duda, la principal limitación de la tesis está relacionada con la selección de la muestra, que limita la generalización de los resultados en al menos dos sentidos. En primer lugar, la muestra fue seleccionada de manera intencional. Se necesitan, por lo tanto, estudios con muestras más amplias de participantes para confirmar estos resultados. En segundo lugar, los datos analizados en este estudio provienen de un contexto socio-político y cultural muy específico, por lo que los resultados obtenidos no son extrapolables a otros contextos. En este sentido, la realización de estudios comparativos con datos provenientes de otros países u otras regiones de España permitiría analizar la posible influencia del contexto socio-político y cultural en los hallazgos aquí reseñados.

Por otro lado, esta tesis se centra en el análisis de un tipo específico de participación política, la participación en organizaciones políticas, por lo que hacen falta más estudios sobre otros tipos de participación cívica para determinar las posibles similitudes y diferencias entre las numerosas modalidades de participación que se agrupan bajo este concepto. Además, la selección de la muestra quedó limitada a algunos tipos específicos de organizaciones políticas. La realización de nuevos estudios que incluyan otros tipos de organizaciones que no fueron considerados en esta tesis permitiría extender y validar los resultados obtenidos.

Finalmente, este estudio es correlacional y las direcciones de causalidad que se han sugerido, por lo tanto, no pueden ser claramente establecidas. Los efectos reportados se derivan de la teoría; su confirmación empírica inequívoca, sin embargo, requiere de más investigación. La naturaleza transversal de nuestra investigación nos impide, además, aislar los posibles efectos de cohorte en los resultados obtenidos. En este sentido, la realización de futuros estudios de tipo longitudinal permitiría trazar el desarrollo de la participación política en la vejez y distinguir la influencia de los efectos de cohorte y de edad en los resultados.

### **5.3 IMPLICACIONES PRÁCTICAS**

A pesar de las limitaciones antes mencionadas, esta tesis tiene importantes implicaciones prácticas. Los resultados obtenidos pueden ser útiles a la hora de generar políticas sociales destinadas a promover la participación política de los mayores en general o de poner en marcha medidas destinadas a reclutar a nuevos miembros y a retener a aquéllos que ya participan por parte de las organizaciones políticas.

De acuerdo con los resultados del Estudio 1, el nivel educativo tiene un fuerte impacto en la participación de los mayores en organizaciones políticas: cuanto más alto es el nivel educativo del individuo, más altas son sus probabilidades de implicarse en este tipo de organizaciones. Los programas educativos tanto formales como

no formales, por lo tanto, pueden dotar a los mayores de nuevas competencias y habilidades que promuevan, a la vez, su implicación en la vida pública. En este sentido, las políticas orientadas a crear y mantener programas de aprendizaje y formación en la vejez podrían impactar, aunque de forma indirecta, en el compromiso político de los mayores.

Por otro lado, tanto la participación en actividades de aprendizaje como en actividades de ocio, así como también en tareas de voluntariado, se relacionó en nuestro estudio con una mayor probabilidad de pertenecer a organizaciones políticas. Tal y como argumenta Berger (2009), aunque la participación social no puede ser considerada como “política” en sí misma, constituye un recurso que promueve y facilita la implicación política. La participación en actividades sociales enriquece las redes sociales y vínculos institucionales de los individuos, incrementando las oportunidades de que se impliquen a nivel político. En este sentido, las organizaciones sociales podrían actuar como puntos de reclutamiento para la actividad política y deberían ser consideradas, por lo tanto, como potenciales dianas para el desarrollo de políticas y programas destinados a fomentar la implicación de los mayores.

Los resultados del Estudio 2 mostraron que no sólo el interés generativo y la puesta en marcha de metas generativas se relacionaban con la participación en organizaciones políticas, sino también la percepción que tiene el individuo de lo que socialmente se espera de él/ella. Tal y como argumentan Schoklitsch y Baumann

(2012), la generatividad no sólo necesita de un dador sino también de un receptor. Si los esfuerzos generativos de los mayores no son reconocidos socialmente, por lo tanto, podría producirse lo que McAdams denominó como “desajuste generativo” (“generative mismatch”; Mcadams, Hart, & Maruna, 1998). En este sentido, se ha argumentado que el edadismo podría dificultar la expresión de la generatividad en la vejez y, más generalmente, el desarrollo y mantenimiento de una sociedad generativa (Hagestad & Uhlenberg, 2006), ya que los mayores podrían inhibir su comportamiento generativo si perciben que su sabiduría y experiencias no son bienvenidas o apreciadas por las generaciones más jóvenes (Schoklitsch & Baumann, 2012). Los resultados del Estudio 2 apoyan estas hipótesis y sugieren la necesidad de políticas y programas destinados a combatir el edadismo en todas sus formas, y a poner en valor las importantes contribuciones que los mayores realizan a sus familias y comunidades. Promover una visión más positiva de los mayores y de sus contribuciones constituye, pues, otra vía para fomentar su participación política.

Los resultados de los Estudios 3 y 4 poseen importantes implicaciones para la puesta en marcha de estrategias de reclutamiento y retención de activistas mayores por parte de las organizaciones políticas. Del Estudio 3 se desprende que los mayores no muestran una motivación común para participar en este tipo de organizaciones. La diversidad del colectivo conformado por los mayores de 65 años tiene un impacto, según nuestros resultados, en las motivaciones que refieren para explicar su participación. El tipo

de organización en el que participan y algunas características de su participación, se asociaron también con determinados tipos de motivaciones. Tomados en conjunto, estos resultados sugieren que la persona que participa y el contexto en el que lo hace son dimensiones importantes a la hora de considerar sus motivaciones para participar. Estas características, por lo tanto, deben ser tenidas en cuenta por las organizaciones políticas a la hora de planificar estrategias de reclutamiento dirigidas al colectivo de personas mayores.

Similares implicaciones prácticas se pueden extraer del Estudio 4, en el que se hallaron asociaciones significativas entre las barreras para continuar participando en organizaciones políticas, algunas características sociodemográficas y de participación, y el tipo de organización. Los resultados de este estudio sugieren, por consiguiente, que el desarrollo de estrategias de retención por parte de las organizaciones políticas debería tener en cuenta tanto las características específicas de los individuos como las de la propia organización. En este sentido, la evidencia disponible sobre las barreras para implicarse en otro tipo de actividades cívicas o sobre las barreras para el reclutamiento de nuevos miembros, podría ser poco relevante en el caso de la retención de los mayores en organizaciones políticas, un tipo de participación que –según nuestros resultados- enfrenta barreras que le son propias.

Tomados en conjunto, los resultados de los Estudios 3 y 4 sugieren la necesidad de una aproximación multifacética al reclutamiento y retención de los mayores en actividades políticas. Nuestra

investigación sugiere que la puesta en marcha de medidas destinadas a retener a aquéllos que participan o a atraer a otros que quizá nunca hayan mostrado interés, debe considerar simultáneamente las particularidades del tipo de actividad cívica, las características propias de la organización y la diversidad propia del colectivo de personas mayores. El compromiso sostenido de los mayores es un valioso activo de las organizaciones políticas. Asegurar su implicación activa mediante la puesta en marcha de medidas adaptadas es un factor clave para la futura sostenibilidad organizacional.





## CAPÍTULO VI: CONCLUSIONES

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A continuación se resumen los principales hallazgos de la tesis en relación a cada uno de los objetivos planteados:

**Objetivo 1:** *Analizar los factores asociados con la participación de las personas mayores en organizaciones políticas.*

1.1. Analizar el rol de los recursos socio-económicos (educación e ingresos) en la participación en organizaciones políticas.

1.2. Analizar la relevancia de participar en otras actividades de envejecimiento activo (actividades de ocio, de aprendizaje y actividades productivas) en la participación en organizaciones políticas.

### Conclusiones

- ✓ El nivel educativo se asoció significativamente con una mayor probabilidad de participar en organizaciones políticas. El nivel de ingresos, sin embargo, no se asoció con la participación en los análisis multivariados.
- ✓ Las actividades de ocio, de aprendizaje y sólo el voluntariado en el caso de las actividades productivas, se asociaron significativamente con una mayor probabilidad de participar en organizaciones políticas.
- ✓ Estos resultados son compatibles con el modelo del voluntarismo cívico (Verba et al., 1995) y sugieren que la

participación de los mayores en organizaciones políticas podría ser explicada a partir de una serie de factores movilizados, como mayores oportunidades educativas, redes sociales más extensas y vínculos institucionales diversos.

**Objetivo 2:** *Analizar la relación entre la participación en organizaciones políticas y la generatividad en la vejez.*

2.1. Analizar la relación entre la participación en organizaciones políticas y diferentes dimensiones de la generatividad (intereses generativos, metas generativas y demandas culturales).

### **Conclusiones**

- ✓ El grupo de personas mayores implicadas en organizaciones políticas difirió del grupo de comparación en todas las dimensiones de la generatividad incluidas en el estudio.
- ✓ Los participantes en organizaciones políticas obtuvieron mayores puntuaciones en interés generativo, reportaron más metas generativas en el presente y futuro, y percibieron más demandas culturales generativas que los participantes en el grupo de comparación.
- ✓ Los resultados sugieren que la participación en organizaciones políticas puede ser considerada como una expresión de la generatividad en la vejez y que el rol de la generatividad en esta actividad no se limita a la expresión de intereses generativos. La participación en organizaciones políticas se encuentra

también relacionada con la puesta en marcha de metas generativas e influenciada por la percepción que tiene el individuo de lo que socialmente se espera de él/ella.

**Objetivo 3:** *Explorar las motivaciones de las personas mayores para participar en organizaciones políticas.*

3.1. Explorar la posible asociación de las motivaciones para participar con el perfil sociodemográfico, las características de la participación y el tipo de organización política.

### **Conclusiones**

- ✓ Casi el 70% de la muestra expresó motivaciones relacionadas con generar cambios a nivel comunitario. Sin embargo, el alcance de los cambios deseados tendió a variar. Mientras algunos participantes expresaron motivaciones idealistas, otros manifestaron que habían comenzado a participar para defender una causa específica en la que creían.
- ✓ Uno de cada seis participantes expresó motivaciones de tipo egoísta, en algunos casos relacionadas con el crecimiento personal y en otros con necesidades de autoprotección.
- ✓ Las motivaciones para participar se relacionaron con el contexto organizacional y con las características individuales de los participantes, sugiriendo que estos factores deben ser considerados por las organizaciones políticas a la hora de

desarrollar estrategias de reclutamiento dirigidas a activistas mayores.

**Objetivo 4:** *Explorar las barreras para la retención de las personas mayores en organizaciones políticas.*

4.1. Explorar la posible asociación de las barreras para la retención con el perfil sociodemográfico, las características de la participación y el tipo de organización política.

### **Conclusiones**

- ✓ Las barreras percibidas por los participantes se ajustaron a tres categorías generales relacionadas con cambios en los recursos, las motivaciones o las oportunidades para participar. El primer tipo de barrera fue el más frecuentemente identificado.
- ✓ Tanto el tipo de organización como las características sociodemográficas y de participación tuvieron un impacto en las razones expresadas por los mayores para dejar de participar en sus organizaciones.
- ✓ Los resultados sugieren la necesidad de una aproximación más matizada y multifacética a las barreras para la participación. En particular, el desarrollo de estrategias de retención por parte de las organizaciones políticas debería tener en cuenta tanto las características específicas de los individuos como las de propia organización.

## CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSIONS

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The main results of this dissertation for each research aim are summarized below:

***Objective 1:** To analyze the factors that are associated with older people's participation in political organizations.*

1.1. To analyze the role of socio-economic resources (education and income) on older people's participation in political organizations.

1.2. To analyze the relevance of being involved in active aging activities (participation in leisure, learning, and productive activities) on older people's participation in political organizations.

Conclusions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Educational level was significantly associated with higher odds of participation in political organizations. Income level, however, was not related to participation in multivariate analysis.</li><li>✓ Leisure activities, learning activities, and only volunteering in the case of productive activities, were associated with a higher likelihood of participation in political organizations.</li><li>✓ These results are compatible with the model of civic voluntarism (Verba et al., 1995), and suggest that older people's participation in political organizations could be explained as a function of mobilizing factors, such as greater</li></ul>

educational opportunities, extensive social networks or diversified institutional ties.

***Objective 2:** To analyze the relationship between participation in political organizations and generativity in older age.*

2.1. To analyze the relationship between participation in political organizations and different dimensions of generativity (generative concern, generative goals, and cultural demands).

### **Conclusions**

- ✓ Older people actively engaged in political organizations differed from comparison individuals in all dimensions of generativity included in the study.
- ✓ Participants in political organizations obtained higher scores on generative concern, reported more generative goals in the present and future, and noted more perceived generative demands than comparison individuals.
- ✓ Findings suggest that participation in political organizations could be considered as an expression of generativity in later life, and that the role of generativity on political participation is not limited to the expression of generative concerns. Instead, participation in political organizations is also related to pursuing generative goals, and influenced by the perception that the individual has about what is expected from him/her.

**Objective 3:** *To explore older people's motivations to participate in political organizations.*

3.1. To examine the association of these motivations with sociodemographic profile, participatory characteristics, and type of organization.

### **Conclusions**

- ✓ Almost 70% of the sample expressed motivations related to introduce changes in the community. However, the scope of the changes desired tended to vary. While some participants expressed idealistic motivations, others stated that they become involved in order to stand up for a cause in which they believed.
- ✓ One in six participants was motivated by self-interest, either related to personal growth or to self-protective needs.
- ✓ Motives for participating were related to the organizational context and participants' individual characteristics, suggesting that these factors should be considered by political organizations in developing recruitment strategies addressed to older activists.

**Objective 4:** *To explore the barriers to the retention of older participants in political organizations.*

4.1. To examine the association of these motivations with sociodemographic profile, participatory characteristics, and type of organization.



## Conclusions

- ✓ The barriers perceived by participants fit into three overarching categories related to changes in means, motives or the opportunity context for participation. The first type of barrier was the most frequently identified.
- ✓ Both the type of organization and some socio-demographic and participatory characteristics had an impact on the reasons respondents indicated they may potentially stop participating in future.
- ✓ Results suggest the necessity of a more nuanced and multi-faceted approach to understanding barriers to participation. Particularly, the development of retention strategies by political organizations should take into account the specific characteristics of the individuals and organizations they are targeting.

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