

Political Participation of Older People in Europe

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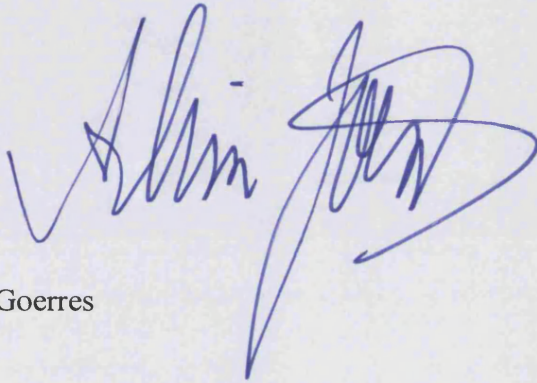
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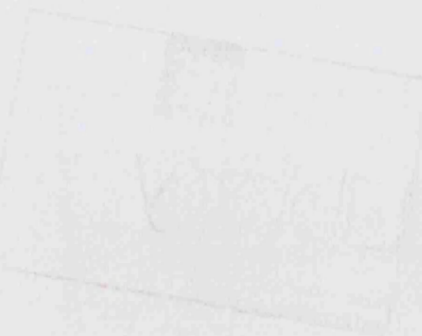
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I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis is mine alone.



Achim Goerres

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Abstract

This thesis answers two questions: to what extent do older people in Europe differ from younger people in terms of their participation in politics, and why? It tests an age-centred model of political participation that is theoretically supported by prior knowledge about political-psychological thinking processes and the social behaviour of older people. The empirical innovation lies in a combination of quantitative survey analysis and the qualitative analysis of interviews with older people. The evidence comes from 21 European countries that were in the European Social Survey 2002/3, from British and West German national surveys of the post-war era and from interviews with older English protesters. The thesis focuses on voting participation, party choice and non-institutionalised political participation outside of organisations.

Older people participate differently from younger people in politics because they have a different endowment of resources and motivation as well as of opportunities and exposure to mobilisation. This fact is due to a mixture of cohort effects, which are linked to the specific generation that the individuals are members of, and life cycle effects, which are grounded on varying social circumstances across the life cycle. Furthermore, older people benefit from a larger pool of political experience and possess a greater commitment to comply with social norms of political behaviour. Their political preferences are primarily shaped by their generational membership, whereas life cycle variations in political preferences are minor.

There is also exploratory evidence that older people suffer from social stereotypes about their role in participatory politics. They internalise societal images about older people, one of which is that they should be passive in some forms of participation, such as protest activities. Thus, their participation level is lower than that of younger people even when all other age-related effects are held constant.

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coded survey data sets, STATA do files and interview notes.

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List of Abbreviations

AT	Austria
BE	Belgium
BES	British Election Studies
CDU/CSU	Christian-Democratic Union/ Christian-Social Union
CH	Switzerland
CZ	Czech Republic
DDP	German Democratic Party (1918-1930)
DE (E)	East Germany
DE (W)	West Germany
DK	Denmark
DVP	German People's Party (1918-1933)
ES	Spain
ESS	European Social Survey 2002/3, version 5, round 1
FDP	Free Democratic Party
FI	Finland
FR	France
GB	Great Britain
GR	Greece
HU	Hungary
IE	Ireland
IT	Italy
Lib Dems	Liberal Democrats
LU	Luxembourg
NL	Netherlands
NO	Norway
NSDAP	National-Socialist German Workers' Party (1920-1945)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PL	Poland
PT	Portugal
SE	Sweden
SI	Slovenia
SPD	Social-Democratic Party of Germany
UKIP	United Kingdom Independence Party
VdK	Association of Organised Social Interests Germany (Sozialverband VdK Deutschland e.V.)

1 Introduction

One of the most fundamental social changes occurring in contemporary European democracies is the growing number of senior citizens. It is worthwhile to ask how this demographic shift could affect politics and public policy. There are several ways in which one might expect the increasing presence of the elderly to have a political impact. One of them is the political participation of older people themselves.

Being older involves many different things that might also affect political behaviour: for example, relative to younger people, seniors have more life experience, other generational experiences, such as the memory of World War II, or are at a different position in the life cycle, such as being retired. In this thesis, I attempt a comprehensive analysis of political participation of the elderly in Europe and seek to answer the following questions: to what extent and why do older people in Europe participate differently from younger people in politics? The evidence comes from 21 European countries¹ that were part of the European Social Survey in 2002, from British and West German national surveys of the post-war era and from interviews with older English protesters.

The vast majority of European countries, which are experiencing the most pronounced development of population ageing in the world, have by now adopted some form of political system that is based on the belief that the citizenry should rule itself by means of mass participation. Citizens ought to express their political preferences by voting for representative bodies in regular and fair elections, by giving support to parties and candidates, by demonstrating, and by pursuing other

¹ Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany (West/East), Great Britain, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland.

legal activities within the political system. This belief is supported by normative arguments. It is claimed that without regular political participation a democratic system becomes hollow and inefficient because it cannot take up the political preferences of its citizens; and secondly, it becomes illegitimate because its elites lack popular support to govern the *demos*.

Older people above 60 make up the largest and fastest growing social group of the European *demos*. If we accept that political participation is important for the political process of a liberal democracy and that older people are a fast growing group in many European democracies, we also need to recognise that it is a valid empirical project to analyse the political participation of this social group. If older people participate in politics in ways different to younger fellow citizens, this can lead to a permanent change in the participatory political process of ageing democracies. If older people pursue other interests than those of younger citizens in their participation, we will also witness different policy outcomes in ageing democracies than in countries with a small proportion of older people. This is because in the former, older people and their views will have a stronger impact than younger age groups and their views.

This thesis is an attempt to draw on insights from political psychology and social gerontology in order to amend existing models of political participation. The aim is to generate and test an age-centred model of political participation that is theoretically supported by our prior knowledge about political-psychological thinking processes and the social behaviour of older people as individuals. The empirical innovation lies in a combination of quantitative survey analysis and the qualitative analysis of interviews with older people. In general, this thesis makes a

contribution to the still largely neglected research field of 'political gerontology' where questions of old age, ageing and politics are researched.

Older people participate differently from younger people in politics because they have a different endowment of resources and motivation as well as opportunities and exposure to mobilisation. This fact is due to a mixture of cohort effects, which are linked to the specific generation that the individuals are members of, and life cycle effects, which are grounded on varying social circumstances across the life cycle. Furthermore, older people benefit from a larger pool of political experience and possess a greater commitment to comply with social norms of behaviour. Their political preferences are primarily shaped by their generational membership whereas life cycle variations in political preferences are minor. Older people today still suffer from social stereotypes about their role in participatory politics. Although their endowment of resources to participate in politics has increased over the last decades, older people still seem to participate less in politics than younger people. This is because they have internalised images about older people, one of which is that they should be passive in politics.

This introduction operationalises the research question by defining the group of older people and the scope of political participation that I am going to investigate. In addition, I will give an overview of the theoretical model and four types of age-related effects that are the main conceptual tool of the empirical analysis. Moreover, I will explain why I chose to study European countries comparatively. Finally, I will lay out the structure of the dissertation.

1.1 Who are 'older people'?

'Elderly', 'seniors', 'senior citizens', 'older people', 'the aged' – there is a multiplicity of terms for older citizens in everyday English. However, older people rarely identify themselves as being old and do not agree on the labels given to them by others (see Walker and Maltby 1997: 17-18). Thus, attempts by social scientists to use terms of self-identification in survey research have largely failed.

Technically speaking, the elderly are the most advanced in terms of *chronological age*, which is the number of years we have lived. Chronological age is only a proxy variable for many other characteristics and does not have a simple social meaning (Jennings and Markus 1988: 308). Chronological age is not even objective in biological terms. Ageing theorists have therefore introduced the measure of *biologic age*. It is measured by objective standard biomarkers and describes how far a person has advanced towards the maximum human life span. In addition, chronological age is not culture-free because it depends on the developmental circumstances of the overall society one lives in. One year in a pre-industrial society like the Amazonian Yanomami culture is not the same as in post-industrial Europe (Albert and Cattell 1994: 19-26). Therefore, this study only looks at societies that are similar in their stage of socio-economic development, in order that chronological age can mean something comparable in social and cultural terms. If we only take post-industrial societies in Europe, chronological age as a pure number assures us that one year of age is roughly the same for everybody in terms of biologic life span.

Whereas the maximum life span of about 110 years has been stable for the last 100,000 years, average life expectancy at birth has steadily risen with the socio-economic development of societies (Albert and Cattell 1994: 26-27). The average life expectancy in the 21 European countries under investigation is quite similar in

global comparison (see table 1-1). For men the estimated average lay at 74.7 years and for women at 80.8 in 2000-2005 (United Nations 2004). The group mean in these countries is above the world mean of 67.9 (women) and 63.4 (men). Life expectancy is in fact a direct indicator of socio-economic development or modernisation as the cause of death in more advanced societies has largely shifted away from external causes (such as infectious diseases) to internal causes (senescent deterioration) (Avramov and Maskova 2003).

Table 1-1: Average life expectancy at birth in 21 European and some selected countries from around the globe 2000-5

	Women	Men
World Minimum: Zambia	32.1	32.7
World Average	67.9	63.4
Hungary	76.0	67.7
Poland	78.0	69.8
Czech Republic	78.7	72.1
Denmark	79.1	74.2
Ireland	79.6	74.4
Portugal	79.6	72.6
Slovenia	79.8	72.6
United Kingdom	80.7	75.7
Average 21 European countries	80.8	74.7
Greece	80.9	75.7
Netherlands	81.0	75.6
Germany	81.2	75.2
Luxembourg	81.4	75.1
Austria	81.5	75.4
Finland	81.5	74.4
Norway	81.9	76.0
Belgium	81.9	75.7
Italy	81.9	75.5
Switzerland	82.3	75.9
Sweden	82.6	77.6
France	82.8	75.2
Spain	82.8	75.9
World Maximum: Japan	85.1	77.9

Life expectancy at birth is a proxy for life expectancy at 60, which is not available cross-nationally. Source: United Nations (2004).

As a working definition in this dissertation, I will use 60 as an arbitrary (but conventional) cut-off point to separate seniors from non-seniors. Alternative cut-off points of chronological age that are used in social sciences are 50, 55 or 65 (see Walker and Maltby 1997; Walker and Naegle 1999). 60 is in the middle of those and approximates the mean retirement age in Europe, making it an important social division point. Instead of a chronological age cut-off point, one could use the category of retired versus non-retired. But this poses the problem that being retired

can mean many things that vary across countries due to policy regimes and traditions, such as: being voluntarily retired, being unable to work and at the same time above a certain age threshold, or having been forced to retire early. Also, some women who belong to older generations have not necessarily been members of the employed workforce, making the category of retirement misleading for them. Cut-off points of chronological age have the advantage that in countries with similar socio-economic development status, members of the categories are biologically similar. All fixed cut-off points carry a potential risk as they tend to blind the researcher from transitional changes related to a certain life stage that are not linked to one specific date. I will keep this general shortcoming in mind when using the cut-off point of 60.

With regard to language, I will use the terms ‘elderly’, ‘older people’, ‘seniors’ and ‘senior citizens’ interchangeably meaning people who turned 60 or older at their last birthday. Terminology of social groups in public discourse is often a matter of fashion and of what is considered to be ‘politically correct’ during a certain period. In 2006, my experience of official British government and NGO publications seems to suggest that these four terms are currently *en vogue* as neutral terms for older people without any ageist connotations.

As I define older people as those aged 60 and older, I identify the comparison category of the ‘non-older people’ as those who are 59 and younger and will term them ‘younger people’. Semantically speaking, this usage is correct as the term ‘younger’ is always relative. In this thesis, I prefer to employ the term ‘younger’ over the very technical term ‘non-older’. Sometimes when it is conceptually appropriate, I will make specific comparisons between older (60+), middle-aged (30-59) and young people (<30). In those instances, I will state clearly which chronological age I am

referring to. In general however, I compare 'older people' aged 60 or above with 'younger people' aged 59 and younger.

This thesis seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of political participation of the elderly in Europe. Therefore, it is helpful to look at some major changes in the social position of senior citizens in Europe that affect their political behaviour. First of all, senior citizens today are on average much better off in socio-economic terms than they used to be. The present senior cohort in Europe is better educated, has more income and has occupied higher-prestige jobs than earlier generations. This is mainly due to overall economic progress and development after World War II. In particular the post-war baby-boomer generation, those born between 1945 and 1955 and who are currently crossing the 60 years threshold, is much better off than earlier generations in many advanced industrial democracies (see for example for Finland, Germany and the United Kingdom *Geschäftsstelle Seniorenwirtschaft* 2004; Huber and Skidmore 2003; Kunz 2005).

Secondly, today's older people in Europe find themselves in a social environment that has changed to a great extent with respect to the relationship between seniors and their families. Whereas the tradition in European societies was to take care of parents in a three-generation household, the trend has gone towards older people living separately from their family members, either on their own or in retirement homes (Tomassini et al. 2004). This can be attributed to a broad process of individualisation, which is accompanying the process of societal modernisation (Fuchs and Klingemann 1995b: 11). The more modern a society, i.e. the more advanced a society in socio-economic development, the more the elderly have lost their prestigious status as a group defined by their higher age (Cowgill and Holmes 1972). The process of changing living arrangements is far from uniform across all

European societies (for instance Southern European countries show a higher likelihood of care giving for the elderly within the family household), but the long-term general trend is indisputable (Tomassini et al. 2004). As a consequence, senior interests are less taken care of within the family because the elderly increasingly tend to live and organise their lives individually. This social development could potentially have two different consequences for older people's political behaviour. The lack of interest representation through the family could lead to more senior participation in politics today as seniors might want to compensate for the loss of influence via the family. But it could also lead to a transitional lack of participation, as social roles and self-perception about older people's roles in politics change slowly. Thus, older people in Europe might still have the pre-conception that their interests will be taken care of by others as used to be the case, meaning that they might not become active in politics.

A third point that concerns the elderly as a group is the reconstruction of European welfare states. European democracies began to experience increasing strains on their state budgets after the two oil crises in the 1970s because of negative economic growth, growing mass unemployment and high inflation. Social welfare systems that were based on particular assumptions about societies – like lifelong permanent employment, short life spans after retirement and the care-giving social net of the family – are being reviewed. The elderly have become a major target of reforming efforts and a change in political discourse. Older people receive expensive welfare benefits like public pensions, long-term care and medical treatment. As a consequence of rocketing costs, a general trend started to develop with OECD countries moving away from public pension provision towards a privatisation of pension arrangements (Disney and Johnson 2001; Walker 1999: 9-10). Seen from a

political perspective, the attempt to deprive the elderly of welfare resources, like public pensions and medical care, can have mobilising effects on individuals to defend existing welfare provisions through political activity (see for the USA Campbell 2003a; Pratt 1976).

1.2 What do we consider to be ‘political participation’?

Political science research into political participation revolves around three issues: (1) definitions of the scope of the universe of political participation; (2) how the universe of political participation is structured from within; (3) what determines political participation of any particular form (models of political participation). I will discuss the first two points in this section and the third point in the theoretical chapter 3, when I will present my own age-centred model of political participation.

What constitutes political participation is a question that needs to be answered with regard to the underlying interest of the researcher. The answer depends on the researcher’s normative and conceptual approach. In my case, I am interested in the potential influence of demographic ageing on politics and public policy through the individual participation of older people. I limit the analysis to liberal democracies that give room for *voluntary* participation. I am not concerned with political actions that are forced upon the individual, such as in totalitarian systems, because free and voluntary political actions follow a different logic than involuntary behaviour. Neither will I occupy myself with paid political activities, such as those of public affairs professionals or paid party employees, because their motivational structures can also be assumed to be different. Bearing Max Weber’s differentiation between politics as *Beruf* and *Berufung* in mind (see Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995: 39), I am disregarding the *Beruf* sphere of political participation. There might be influences of demographic ageing on the world of

professional political participants, such as the activities of old age interest groups, but they stand outside the scope of this thesis.

My analysis is furthermore concerned with the individual level, i.e. with political actions of individuals. This perspective is juxtaposed to one which focuses on social movements, parties and interest groups, and how these organisations impact on the policy-making process. Such an analysis could, for instance, have focused on the behaviour of senior interest groups.

Finally, I am interested in individual voluntary political participation that is intended to influence political outcomes, to change existing institutional arrangements of the political process or to influence the selection of political personnel who take decisions thereupon (see Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995: chap. 2 for a similar definition). Thus, I constrain the analysis to the impact of participation on public policies and public institutions. This limitation is normatively based on a conception of democracy as a procedure to aggregate preferences, solve conflicts and legitimate decisions. I could, of course, take alternative approaches. One of which would be to adapt a minimalist conception of democracy (see for example Schumpeter 1965 [1943]) and only analyse voting as a form of participation as has been done often in the past (see for a critique Leighly 1995). I could also broaden the definition of political participation so as to include political actions that are ceremonial, such as waving a flag, or being attentive to politics, e.g. following political discussions on TV. This latter definition would be appropriate if I stressed the societal aspects of democracy, i.e. political participation as part of a process that creates solidarity, a common bond and democratic culture. This would be the conception of democracy as a 'way of living' (Barber 1983). I do not doubt that attention to politics or ceremonial political actions have some kind of impact. But

given my focus on policy outcomes, I will concentrate on the core modes of political participation.

Political scientists used to conceptualise political participation as a one-dimensional phenomenon. The dimension consisted of an ordinal ordering of different forms of political participation, ordered from least to most difficult (Milbrath and Goel 1977: 11). Sidney Verba and Norman Nie (1972) were the first to structure political participation as a multi-dimensional phenomenon (though not with orthogonal dimensions) involving different modes of activities, a finding that was later corroborated by factor analyses in various countries (Verba, Nie, and Kim 1978: 46-56).

There are numerous ways in which scholars have classified various political activities (for example Kaase 1992; Schmidt 1995): whether the activity is embedded in the constitution or other legal texts, whether it is aggressive or non-aggressive, legal or illegal, conventional (meaning actions that are targeted at the public electoral process and have a high degree of public legitimacy) or unconventional, and electoral or non-electoral. Another way of structuring the universe of political participation is to differentiate the amount of information that is conveyed by the activity and how much and what kind of resources are needed (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). For example, petitions transmit very specific political preferences, and signing them requires few resources.

In general, it is common empirical practice to analyse summative modes of political participation (see Parry, Moyser, and Day 1992; Pattie, Seyd, and Whiteley 2004; Verba, Nie, and Kim 1978). This conceptual reduction seems to pose no problem when studying one country at one point in time, and is still doable when studying a handful of countries. However, I am looking at 21 countries in a cross-

sectional way, at two of them across time and am comparing older people with younger people. Thus, the stability of any summative modes would need to be shown for every country at every point in time and for each group. This poses some serious practical problems and is likely to end in incongruent summative modes. Therefore, I decided on the analysis of individual political actions.

In the empirical analysis, I am adopting a cautious approach. I will start by casting a wide net over all forms of political participation to see where older people are different from younger people. In doing so, I can ensure that I recognise all potential compensatory behaviours that may be displayed. It would be misleading to limit the analysis prematurely because older people might compensate for lower levels participation in one form of participation through higher participation levels in another form. In an a priori limited analysis, this compensatory behaviour could be overlooked, a limitation that would weigh strongly when one considers that the whole universe of participation is open to everybody in a liberal democracy. For example, older people might not protest in the streets, but be very active in writing letters to politicians to express their discontent. The underlying assumption of this approach is that, if there are no differences in participatory levels between older and younger people, then the causal mechanisms behind them are the same for each age group; moreover, they are comparable to the ones that I am analysing and so do not need separate investigation.

The thesis focuses on two modes of participation: voting and ‘non-institutionalised’ participation outside of organisations, like signing a petition (Kaase 1999). As I will demonstrate, these are the two areas of participation in which older people are consistently more (voting) or less (participation outside of organisations) likely to engage than younger people across Europe. These two forms of

participation are the most common forms of participation and thus belong in the realm of mass participation, rather than ‘high-intensity participation’ (Whiteley and Seyd 2002b), which is much rarer and describes activities inside of parties or other political organisations. Voting is the most fundamental form of mass participation. It is the minimal requirement for the legitimacy of representative government. Participation outside of organisations (contacting a public official or politician, signing a petition, demonstrating, wearing a badge, boycotting or buying a product for political reasons) mostly entails non-electoral activities. These activities have lost their unconventionality, which had been attributed to them when they arose as mass phenomena in the 1960s. Groups like parties, trade unions or voluntary organisations can be responsible for the preparation of, for example, street demonstrations. But the participatory act as such does not require long-term institutional commitment by the participant.

In sum, I define voluntary political participation as all individual political actions intended to influence public policy, to change institutional structures of the decision-making process or to affect the selection of personnel taking decisions thereupon. The empirical analysis will deal with single political actions and not summative indexes. Within this universe of political participation, I make a distinction between institutionalised participation within and non-institutionalised participation outside of organisations.

1.3 A framework to study the political participation of older people

This section sketches the main characteristics of my theoretical model that I will explain in greater detail in chapter 3: its theoretical tradition, main causal factors and crucial assumptions. The aim of this dissertation is not to produce a full-fledged model of the various forms of political participation. Instead, I will put forward a

model that concentrates on the impact of age-related effects on political participation. Some factors of political participation do not explain differences between older and younger citizens. For example, recent political science research has demonstrated the importance of genes for political preferences that can be consequential for political behaviour (Alford, Funk, and Hibbing 2005). *Ceteris paribus*, genetic material can be expected to vary as much within age groups as between age groups and can therefore be neglected for this dissertation. Thus, I will only analyse factors that I expect to be different between age groups on the basis of my model and the existing literature.

The theoretical model of this dissertation stands in the tradition of the Civic Voluntarism Model of Verba and colleagues (1995). However, as the next section will show, I am supplanting the general political participation model with concepts from political psychology and social gerontology that have not been used in this context before. I am going to analyse voting and participation outside of organisations in a framework of resources and incentives. As part of my model, I assume that a political action is the result of a decision on the form and the content of political participation after a cost-benefit calculation. The decision to engage in a certain form of political participation takes intrinsic and extrinsic factors into consideration.

Intrinsic factors from within the individual include resources and motivation. This reflects the fact that political actions are contingent on attitudinal predisposition and on the resources needed to commit a particular political activity. We do not participate in politics when we are not able to or when we do not want to. Citizens are motivated not only by their personal material interest, but also by altruistic motivations or the expressive benefits of taking part in a political action.

Extrinsic factors that influence the calculation are the opportunities that one has to participate as well as mobilisation factors. For example, citizens in rural areas have more difficulties demonstrating in the streets, as street marches usually take place in bigger towns or cities. Mobilisation by friends, families and organisations that one is a member of can decrease one's costs of participation and increase the benefits that one can gain (for instance, through social gratification when we act according to the valued expectations of other individuals). Intrinsic and extrinsic factors have simultaneous influence on the individual. Both kinds of factors can facilitate or hinder the probability of committing a certain type of political action.

In addition to intrinsic and extrinsic factors, the decision-making process that leads to a political action and guides the individual during the performance of that action is characterised by the limited rationality of the individual. This assumption derives from the acknowledgement that in order to deal with our complex environment, we take cognitive short-cuts, such as drawing on our own past experience – through schemas and heuristics – to shorten the decision-making process. This procedural characteristic lowers the perceived costs of a political action because the individual can assess all possible options more quickly by using these short-cuts.

Finally, the individual tries to maximise personal outcome according to political preferences. Individuals have certain political preferences about policy outcomes that are shaped by the social context that they are in. Thus, individuals in similar social situations may share political preferences. For example, retired people have a common interest in the maintenance of pension payment levels. But preferences can also be shared by individuals due to shared socialisation experiences at a young age. For example, as I will demonstrate, first-time German voters during

the era of Konrad Adenauer tended to develop strong preferences for the Christian-Democrats, which they maintained throughout their lifetimes.

1.4 Age-related effects on political participation

This section summarises the four main age-related effects that can influence political behaviour and that represent the main conceptual framework of the thesis. A detailed discussion will follow in chapter 3. It is helpful to see age differences in political behaviour as the sum of four different types of effects: political generation, shared social characteristic cohort, life cycle and individual ageing. Together, these effects give the answer to the following question: why should an older person behave differently in politics from a younger person? This conceptualisation extends the conventional discussion of age effects in order to get a better understanding of underlying causal mechanisms. Traditionally, differences between age groups are being explained by the classification of age-period-cohort effects and their interactions. A period effect is the impact of the context during which a survey was conducted that affects all respondents (and – standing on its own - is thus not helpful to explain differences between age group at a certain point in time). A cohort effect is shared by a group of people born during a certain period and comes up in surveys at different points in time (either in panels or in repeated cross-sectional surveys). An age effect is shared by the group of people who are in the same age group. It can also be measured at different points in time. My definitions of the ‘political generation’ and ‘shared social characteristic cohort’ effects fall into the category of ‘cohort effects’. My ‘life cycle’ and ‘individual ageing’ effects must be placed into the category of ‘age effects’.

A ‘political generation effect’ stems from the shared experience by a group that was born during a certain period. Cohort membership is important because the

early period of our adulthood is so decisive in terms of political socialisation. We are much more open to political influences between 15 and 30 (the ‘impressionable years’) than between 50 and 65. This early political socialisation leaves an imprint in citizens’ heads as it shapes our early political preferences. Since socialisation influences stem from political circumstances at the time of young adulthood, such as differences between parties in catching first-time voters, political preferences differ between cohorts. This cohort effect is based on the shared historical, *political* experience of a cohort, not the *social* experience that is captured by the shared social characteristic cohort effect.

Allow me to introduce two exemplary people to whom I will come back throughout the thesis. One is 75 years old and called Adam, the other 35 years and called Henrietta. The elderly Adam was born in 1931 and experienced political socialisation between about 1946 and 1961. The younger Henrietta was born in 1971 and socialised between 1986 and 2001. For example, with regard to street demonstrations, a West German Adam would not have seen many of them during his early socialisation period. In contrast, a West German Henrietta would have heard about many street demonstrations in the media and maybe even seen some in the streets on a regular basis, such as the anti-nuclear, peace and other demonstrations. These differences in early experience are engrained in the early preferences concerning political participation and are likely to shape later behaviour.

The ‘shared social characteristic cohort effect’ stems from the varying probabilities of attaining certain social characteristic between cohorts. De-unionisation and changes in the class structure and educational composition of the population affect generations differently and must thus be taken into account. These generational changes tend to go in one direction only when the period under

investigation is just a few decades. Education is the most important case of a shared social characteristic cohort effect. The probability of Henrietta having finished secondary school is much higher than Adam's because they grew up in different times, the elderly Adam before the mass expansion of secondary and higher education. Higher formal education stimulates higher levels of political participation. Educated individuals also tend to have a better understanding of the political process and live in social contexts in which political participation is valued more strongly. These generational changes are correlates of long-term social changes, such as economic development. This uni-directional development separates this effect from the political generation effect, the influence of which can be different even between two decades. Political generation effects capture the effects of political history at youth rather than those of macro social changes.

'Life cycle effects' on political behaviour derive from changes of our social situation over the life course. Each life cycle stage like youth, adolescence, middle and old age puts the individual into social contexts with rather different demands on them. For example, young adults often struggle to succeed in their professional lives, are occupied with starting a family and with securing their family's income. Older people can suffer from deteriorating health, have settled down in a certain area and do not usually need to support children anymore. These different social stages are contexts that create differences in political interests as much as in available resources to participate in politics. Health for instance deteriorates with age due to the combined effects of the accumulation of unhealthy lifestyles and the physical effects of ageing. Physical ability can be important for various forms of political participation. Adam is more likely to suffer from physical constraints than Henrietta and thus in this context less likely to participate in politics. This age effect is rooted

in the social experience associated with (and often constructed around) a certain age. It is thus dependent on the social and cultural circumstances.

As a final age effect of political behaviour, 'individual ageing' can entail two universal human mechanisms that can affect the likelihood of political participation: accumulation of past experience and growing adherence to social norms. First, past participation experiences influence the future probability of participation. If you learn that something brings some kind of gratification to you that outweighs your costs, you will do it again. If something does not give you enough gratification, you will not do it again. Over a lifetime, our repository of situations that we know (and also believe we know) grows steadily. The older we are, the more likely we are to 'know the show'. Drawing on our own experience is one type of cognitive short-cut. Adam can fall back, for instance, on many more elections than Henrietta and can use that experience to cast the vote again. Issues, candidates and the procedure of voting are more familiar to him than to Henrietta giving him lower costs to perform that political action. Secondly, growing adherence to social norms as we age is the result of a complex transmission process between a social norm and our individual behaviour. At the level of the individual, we are motivated to behave in a certain way by our own subjective norm. The subjective norm is our perception of the social norm in our personal environment. This subjective norm is the sum of social pressure and gratification that we expect to receive from people who we know. Thus, it plays an integral part of any cost-benefit calculation of political action. The social gratification that one receives increases the benefit of one's action. As we age, the perception of the social norm changes because we are more and more likely to have followed societal rules in the past and identify with the society that produces the social norm. Adam has held many social roles in his life – maybe as father,

employee, grand-father, retiree, etc. – and has been subjected to many social expectations. Thus, the social norms of that society have become increasingly part of Adam's personal, subjective norm. For example, as voting represents a social norm in liberal democracies, the older Adam feels more obliged to comply with that norm than the younger Henrietta. This age-related effect is psychological in nature and exists independently from social contexts.

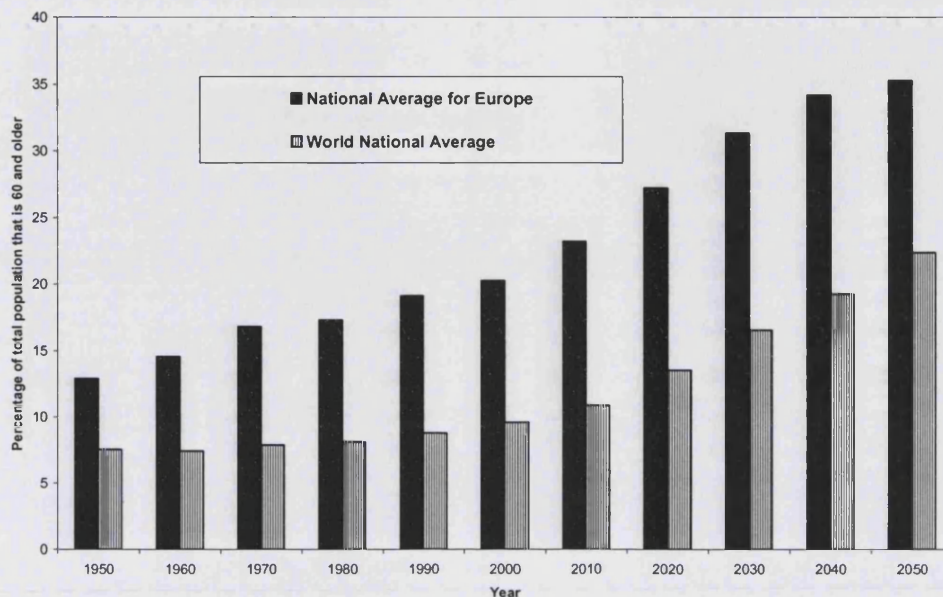
1.5 Analysing European countries

This study uses data from European liberal democracies in the post-war era. There are three different sources of evidence: cross-sectional survey data from 2002 in 21 countries, longitudinal survey data from Britain (1958-2001) and West Germany (1961-2002) and material from interviews that I led with older English protesters in 2005.

The European Social Survey 2002/3 contains 21 countries that are similar (1) in their socio-economic development, (2) in the relative size of the proportion of older people and (3) in the dominant social perception of the life course. They are different, however, with regard to their political history. With the countries being at a similar stage of the socio-economic development, we can ensure that the biological meaning of chronological age is similar as I explained in section 1.2. Figure 1-1 looks at the proportion of citizens aged 60 and older in the European countries in comparison to the world mean from a longitudinal point of view. These countries were already 'older' in 1950 in terms of the proportion of the population that is 60 or older. Since then, the figures for Europe and the world have risen and are projected to rise even more. Europe rose from 12.9 % in 1950 to 20.3 % in 2000. It is projected to rise to about 36.3 % in 2050. That means the percentage will have tripled by 2050 compared to 1950. The world average rose from 7.6 % in 1950 to 9.6 % in 2000 and

is forecast to rise to 22.4 % in 2050, which also represents three times the percentage of 1950.

Figure 1-1: The percentage of older people in Europe in comparison to the world 1950 - 2050

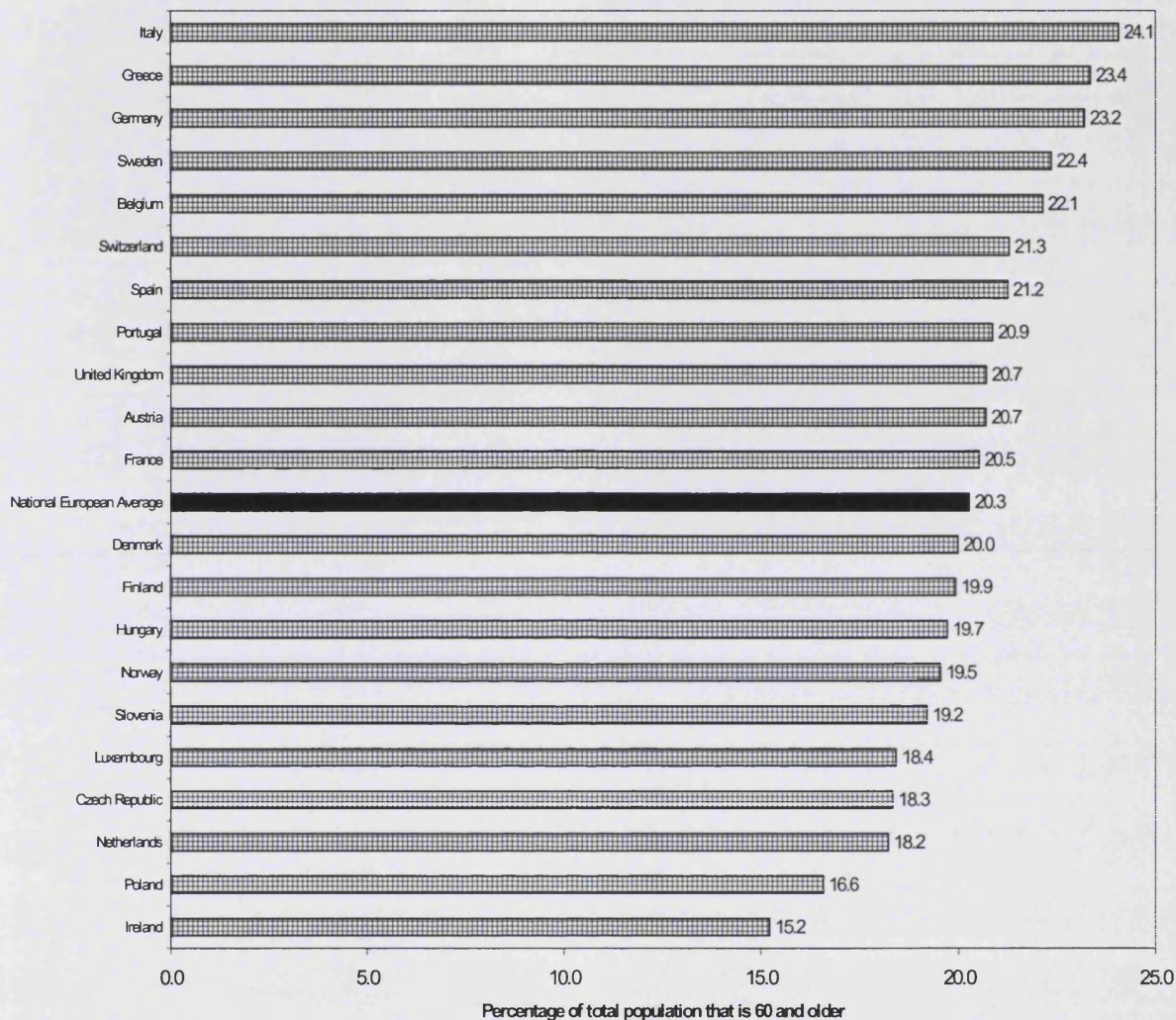


Numbers before 2000 are estimates, after 2000 average projections, Europe includes 21 countries, source: UN Common Database (2004).

These demographic shifts are realistically inevitable, no matter how strong the attempts to attract more young immigrants and increase national reproduction rates. The elderly of the next decades are already born. The numerical proportion of older people is and will be much higher than it used to be a few decades ago. Thereby Europe is the part of the world where the proportion of the elderly as part of the populace is largest and thus the demographic change most pronounced (Mc Pherson 1998: 110). That means that in all European countries the elderly are of increasing political importance through their sheer numerical size. This is an argument that has already started to surface in politics. The European Union platform for old age interest groups AGE, for example, greeted the new EU member states on their web site stressing that now 150 out of 450 million EU inhabitants are above 50 (AGE 2004).

Within the Group of the 21 European Countries there is little variance as figure 1-2 shows.

Figure 1-2: The percentage of national populations aged 60 and older in 21 European countries in 2000



Europe includes 21 countries that are in the European Social Survey, source: UN Common Database (2004).

The proportion of people 60 years old and older ranges from 15.2 % in Ireland to 24.1 % in Italy. Thus the 21 countries under closer scrutiny are very similar in demographic terms if one considers that most countries in the world are well below the minimum in Ireland. The world minimum lies at 3.0 % in Kuwait, the

maximum at 25.5 % in Japan and the mean at 9.9 % (United Nations Common Database 2004).

The European cultural notion portrays the life course as a linear progression from death to birth. It puts emphasis on the individuality of everybody. Furthermore, ageing is discussed in medico-scientific terms. The 'objective' markers of health play a dominant role. By consequence, the chronological age of a person is given great importance in Western ageing discourse (Wilson 2000: 27). So we can expect a similar pattern of life cycle stages across Europe in the countries under investigation. One illustrative contrasting example to the European experience might be the Hindu image of a 'cyclical life plan', according to which older people are expected to hand over resources to the young. In turn, their needs in this life are taken care of, and they can prepare for death and reincarnation (Albert and Cattell 1994: 64-65). The similarity of the social life cycle across Europe is important since we expect life cycle effects to impact upon political participation. For example, if the presence of grand-children in the household affects an individual's resources that are needed for participation, e.g. less free time, this effect should be similar across Europe as the occurrence of three generation households is comparable.

In addition to these similarities, these 21 European democracies differ in their political history after World War II. Each country has seen a differing chronological sequence of governments, policy regimes and economic development. Looking at such a range of countries, similar in their socio-economic development, demographic composition and social perception of the life course, but dissimilar in their political history, opens new opportunities for research. On the one hand, we can carve out universal aspects like the individual ageing effect that must exist in all countries. On the other, we can also look how different country-experiences, via the socialisation

experience, can influence differences between age groups. Thus for instance, totalitarian experience for senior citizens at a young age can have a lasting impact on their political behaviour across their life span. We can use this variation in political history while holding life cycle and ageing effects constant.

Alternatively to this set-up, one could have chosen a classic most-dissimilar design. One could have selected democracies that are extremely diverse in the age compositions, are at different stages of their socio-economic development and have different conceptions of the social life course. This design, which has for instance been used in Nie et al. (1974), would allow one to look at universal aspects of old age, such as the ageing effects. However, it would not have allowed me to separate conceptual life cycle and cohort effects at the same time, and get a sense of their relative strength vis-à-vis each other.

- Besides the comparative, cross-sectional analysis of 21 European countries, I also use evidence from two other sources. Out of the 21 European countries, I selected Britain and West Germany for a longitudinal analysis of party choice. The reasons for this lie in the availability of long series of national surveys and the different structures of party competition and electoral systems within the two countries. For example, if the life cycle affects voting, for instance if the tendency to vote for the incumbent increases with growing age, such effects should be visible in different countries if the underlying mechanism, like status-quo conservatism, is independent of the country studied. I will show that similar voting choice effects persist, despite differences in party system characteristics.

Finally, I interviewed older English protesters who were active on the Council Tax issue in 2004/5. The protests were temporally close to the European Social Survey from 2002, so that findings from the European Social Survey should

be applicable to these protesters as well. Britain also has a historical tradition of pensioners' protests and – as I will demonstrate – represents an extreme case of old age culture where the general attitudes towards older people are comparatively positive. According to the logic of the crucial case study (Eckstein 1975), the discovery of old age stereotypes even in these circumstances gives some confidence that they should exist in other contexts as well.

1.6 Research question, thesis structure and main findings

This thesis addresses the following questions:

To what extent and why do older people in Europe participate differently from younger people in politics?

This question asks for a comparison between older and younger people at the individual level. Differences in preferences and in the endowment of resources, motivations, opportunities and mobilisation are expected to account for differences in participatory behaviour.

To trace these differences will be the primary objective of the thesis. Once the hypotheses are tested and findings established, we face the challenge of discussing the implications of the empirical findings on the political system. It is a challenge because the impact of political participation can be manifold and diffuse. If senior citizens are more likely to vote and to vote for one particular party, the effects on politics in terms of the stronger vote-winning of that party are quite clear. Voting shows little about the preferences of the voters, but puts a lot of pressure on political elites to assess policy decisions in the light of electoral repercussions. However, if seniors are less likely to protest in the streets, this finding does not directly tell us anything about the possible repercussions. In general, the link between protests and

the established political process is less clear. Mass participation in private associations and organisations is generally believed to reveal a lot about the preferences of the political participants, but its impact is also contingent on many other factors (see for example Hill and Matsubayashi 2005). Because of all these difficulties, we need to draw on argumentative reasoning about the nature of a specific type of political action (with the help of prior knowledge from the literature), as well as empirical evidence about its determinants in order to assess the impact of the political participation of older people.

The thesis provides original research into explaining old age participation in several ways. Firstly, the research design is comparative: internationally in a cross-sectional manner and across time in two countries. No study to date deals with older people's political behaviour from a comparative perspective. Secondly, I approach political participation from a holistic point-of-view, looking at the whole universe of senior participation based on my conceptual definition, and not at a sub-set of political actions. Thirdly, I use newly collected data. I have put together various election study data for time series analysis in new data sets and have conducted a series of qualitative interviews. Fourthly, I combine quantitative and qualitative analyses in a mixed approach thereby acknowledging the merits and limitations of each.

The main theoretical contribution of this thesis is to the empirical, comparative literature on political participation. I have tried to develop further some existing concepts and approaches, and adapt them to the question of old age participation. Most importantly, my findings stress the importance of sociological and psychological determinants of political participation in explaining the differences between younger and older people.

The thesis is divided into ten chapters. Chapter 2 is the literature review where I critically assess the existing literature with regard to my research question. In chapter 3, I put forward a theoretical framework of resources and incentives as conditions of political participation that can be empirically tested. In the methodological chapter 4, I support the combination of several approaches: a large N cross-sectional analysis in many countries, single-country studies from a longitudinal perspective and a qualitative case study. Chapter 5 looks at all forms of political participation in 21 European countries in the European Social Survey 2002. I compare the group of 60+ with those 59 and younger, and argue for the focus on voting and non-institutionalised participation outside of organisations, having confirmed some other known findings, like the greater occurrence of party membership among older cohorts in some countries.

As chapter 6 shows, older people in Europe are more likely to vote because of a combination of psychological and sociological factors experienced through individual ageing. As we age, we habituate voting and become more deeply entangled in the social fabric of a liberal democracy. Thus, we are increasingly exposed to the social norm of voting and feel growing gratification from it. Furthermore, social factors like the duration of residence or the lack of living with a mobilising partner are the most important determinants for the difference between younger and older citizens. Political factors like politicisation or generational factors like educational differences do not play a major role.²

In chapter 7, I focus on the content of the voting decision by looking at longitudinal data for party choice in Britain and West Germany. The findings suggest

² Parts of this chapter were published as a journal article (Goerres forthcoming [2006]).

that older people vote differently from younger people in terms of party choice. This difference depends on a complex interplay of the characteristics of the party system and a combination of generational and life cycle factors. In more de-aligned party systems, older people tend to vote for the incumbent party as a means to avert unforeseen changes. In more aligned systems, older people vote differently because of their generational membership: on average, their party choice mirrors the party fortunes of their young adulthood. Furthermore, in more proportional electoral systems, older people tend to vote more for established, large or governmental parties.

Chapter 8 presents an analysis of non-institutionalised participation in Europe. I find that some forms of participation outside of organisations, like contacting a politician, do not show any residual differences between age groups once all measurable differences between older and younger people are controlled for. By contrast, other forms, like signing a petition or protesting, show strong residual differences. This explanatory gap can be partially closed by measuring the old age culture of each country through various proxies in the form of public attitudes about motivations for helping older people: the more old age friendly a country is (i.e. the more the average citizen is willing to do something for older people), the more older people are likely to participate, *ceteris paribus*, and the smaller is the gap between older and younger people as to these forms of participation.

Chapter 9 is a further exploration of the experience of protest-related activities at old age. I use evidence from 22 interviews that I led with older English protesters who took part in the Council Tax protests in 2004/5. The findings suggest that the images and self-perceptions of both old age and the roles of older people are

an important impact factor in the cost-benefit calculation that an older person conducts when deciding whether to participate.

In chapter 10, I conclude the dissertation by putting the findings in comparison with each other, discussing the limits of the investigation, suggesting avenues for future research and relating the findings to the broader debate about the implications of population ageing.

2 Existing Research on Political Participation of Older People

This chapter gives a critical overview of those existing studies that put forward the elderly as a study group or give age as a substantive variable. Surprisingly little has been written in the area of senior political activism. As early as the 1970s, Neal Cutler (1977) demanded the opening of a new research agenda to study the elderly and politics: political gerontology. Especially in the USA, research into senior citizens found strong advocates among increasingly powerful old age interest groups, such as the American Association for Retired People. Demographic changes across the world, and in particular in Europe, have made Cutler's demand for political science research into older people's political behaviour even more pressing, because their influence on the political process, both in terms of its input and output, could be immense.

In general, we can detect three strands in the literature, all of which attempted it deficiently to explain political participation at old age comprehensively. (1) Some studies focus on the elderly and politics in a general sense, so that political behaviour is only studied as a side issue. These studies are often carried out by social gerontologists from an interdisciplinary point-of-view. Their discussions of older people's political behaviour are mostly insufficient from a political science perspective. Findings are descriptive and not put into the context with political science frameworks and literature. (2) Political scientists have studied age (either as life cycle, ageing and/or generational aspects) as one influential factor of political behaviour. These approaches often lack a holistic view by not looking at a variety of modes of political participation. (3) A small but growing body of literature studies the elderly from a rigorous political science perspective. Problems mostly lie in their

single-country focus on the USA or Canada. These analyses have not been carried out from a comparative point-of-view, let alone with a European focus.

2.1 Social gerontology and political participation

The gerontological strand sees politics as a wider aspect of society. The most prominent sociological theory about senior social participation suggests the 'disengagement thesis'. Seniors disengage themselves from society, so the thesis goes, once they leave the workforce as much as society retreats from its older members (Cumming and Henry 1961). Overall, the theory does not hold up to empirical tests in the political realm - mostly concerning voting participation, but also campaign activity (Glenn 1969; Rollenhagen 1982). Norval Glenn and Michael Grimes (1968) refined the disengagement theory. Becoming a senior, they argue, might be accompanied by selective withdrawal, i.e. senior citizens withdraw from some spheres of society and remain active in others, politics being among the latter.

Another sociological approach is continuity theory, which claims that seniors just continue doing what they learnt when they were younger (Atchley 1989; Tirrito 2003: 123-4). Middle-aged and older individuals make 'adaptive choices' to maintain and preserve their personal psychological and social structures. They do so in order to support and reinforce their own self-image. This hypothesis has not been tested empirically with regard to political participation. This theory resembles the discussion within political science of lasting influence of political socialisation at youth, to which I shall return.

Social gerontologists take some interest in the development of old age interest groups and their political power, especially in the USA, Britain and Canada (Gifford 1990; Pratt 1976, 1993; Vincent, Patterson, and Wale 2001). Social gerontologists, however, have rarely researched mass political participation. The few attempts that

do exist lack concise political science approaches (Kohli and Künemund 2001; Schaal 1984; Vincent 1999; Walker 1999). However, the work being done by social gerontologists is extremely important for our endeavour. This is because it provides us with theoretical hypotheses that are based on the influence of social ageing on political participation. Moreover, we can test these hypotheses in a rigorous political science framework.

2.2 Age as an independent variable

The second strand of literature is firmly embedded in political science. One can make a distinction between the study of political attitudes and values as antecedents of behaviour, and the study of single modes of political participation.

Generational value change

The only available long-term panel study (spanning 50 years) predicts that political-ideological attitudes are very stable through the ageing process, although they are far from monolithic. Attitudes acquired at a young age are usually maintained, although specific personal later experiences can change them (Alwin, Cohen, and Newcomb 1991). Thus, family experiences at a young age form us and crystallise over our life times, which has also been confirmed qualitatively in biographical studies (such as Thomas 1991).

Whereas the process of attitude formation seems to be the same for all cohorts, the content of early socialisation is not. One prominent body of writing emphasises long-term generational value change from materialism to postmaterialism: older people show a more materialist predisposition because they were socialised at times when basic material needs had not been satisfied (Abramson 1989; Abramson and Inglehart 1987; Inglehart 1971, 1990). A recent study looks at

the generational changes on the libertarian-authoritarian divide. Elderly Britons, the study claims, are more authoritarian because they were socialised before the elite-level libertarian change towards libertarianism in the 1970s (Tilley 2005). Different values might thus lead to different political interests and even different forms of preferred participation among older people today. Also, older people in the future might have values unlike older people today as they belong to another generation.

Party identification

Party identification is a major concept in the sociological and psychological school of voting research and has been refined and tested in numerous countries (Butler and Stokes 1983 [1974]; Campbell et al. 1960; Cassel 1999; Claggett 1981; Converse 1969, 1976; Glenn and Hefner 1972; Gluchowski 1983; Markus 1983; Niemi et al. 1985). The bulk of the evidence suggests that we acquire the direction of party identification at a young age, most importantly through family influences. According to the Michigan School, the intensity of our party identification grows over our lifetimes because we perceive the political world through the schematic lenses of our identification, so that new information only reinforces this frame. Recent cohorts develop less strong party identification at a young age compared to precedent cohorts (possibly as a correlate of de-alignment).³ However, other studies that used panel data from various decades demonstrated that party identification of earlier generations might not have been as strong as had been suggested previously (Clarke, Stewart, and Whiteley 2001). Thus, with respect to the intensity of party identification, older people as members of an

³ According to the alternative view of Morris P. Fiorina (1981), party identification is just the sum of past evaluations of a given party that is updated at every election. This view, however, is less relevant for the differences between younger and older voters.

older cohort might not have been that much different when they were young from younger people today.

Another hypothesis about age and party identification, which remains untested, can be derived from Samuel Barnes (1989). Older people are more inclined to vote for parties that are large and/or regularly part of government. These parties can leave a repetitious impression on ageing voters over their lifetimes by being members of government or the leading opposition (and the greater media coverage that goes along with it). As we age, we develop a stronger large-party bias. Smaller parties are consequently at a disadvantage among older voters because their sustainable legacy in ageing voters' minds is less well established.

Overall, older people are different from younger people because (a) they have overall a stronger party identification that might favour large parties and (b) they might have been socialised in a party system that differed from the present one and distribution of party preferences among the elderly might thus be different from that of younger cohorts.

Conservatism

Growing conservatism with age (first put forward by Crittenden 1962; Glenn 1974) is another prominent hypothesis that exists in three different variations: (1) voters become economically more conservative as they age because they accumulate more material goods that they want to preserve, i.e. older people want lower taxes (Binstock and Quadagno 2001); alternatively, research on welfare benefits (Campbell 2003b) would suggest that older people favour 'big state' policy positions that they are likely to benefit from, i.e. older people want higher taxes that fund welfare programmes for them; (2) older people favour the status quo, to which they have adapted, because they want to minimise the insecurity of any changes

(Williamson et al. 1982, ch.5). This could be the result of biological processes, such as the decay of brain tissue that leads to resistance to change and cautiousness (Glenn 1974: 180); (3) older people become more authoritarian in their political attitudes (see Danigelis and Cutler 1991; Tilley 2005).

Campbell and Strate (1981: 591) looked at various definitions of conservatism and concluded that older US Americans 'are very much in the mainstream of American opinion' and not generally more conservative. Whereas the early findings of more pro-Republican voting in the 1960s were refuted as cohort effects in the 1970s (Campbell 1971; Cutler 1977), more recent empirical studies have used more elaborate statistical techniques to separate cohort and life cycle effects. These studies found small tendencies to favour the conservative Tories in Britain or the Christian-democrats in Germany on top of generational effects (Falter and Gehring 1998; Gehring 1994; Rattinger 1992; Tilley 2002, 2003). However, this effect was measured as being much smaller than generational variations. Furthermore, the effect is sensitive to research methodology used to overcome the statistical identification problem with age, period and cohort.⁴ In addition, favouring conservative parties does not reveal the reason for this preference, given that there are several contending notions about ageing and conservatism.

Older people might be more conservative in the sense that new ideas or values have not been part of their set of values that they have grown up with. If society has moved in some direction, the senior population might on average possess a different ideological position (Williamson et al. 1982: chap. 5). US evidence that seemed to show growing authoritarianism among older people was re-assessed as a

⁴ For example, cohort effects can always be due to an interaction between ageing and period effects; see chapter 4.

cohort effect, as the attitudes in these issue domains generally shifted towards the progressive side (Danigelis and Cutler 1991). James Tilley (2005) comes to a similar conclusion looking at British data.

Examples of elderly cohorts being more progressive in economic terms would be today's Cuba where the elderly have been socialised in the early Cuban Revolution, and Sweden where younger cohorts are less enthusiastic about the Social-Democratic values that inspired their grandparents' generation in the 1930s and 40s (Williamson et al. 1982: 112-3).

Voting participation

Differences between age groups regarding actual political behaviour rather than attitudinal predisposition have been most thoroughly investigated in relation to voting participation. There are two recurrent themes. One is generational difference in the inclination to vote. Cohorts that were affected by the lowering of the voting age when they were young show a relatively lower turnout probability than precedent or subsequent cohorts. The newly enfranchised group of 18-20 year olds at the time, as with women in the first elections when they gained universal franchise, did not vote with the same probability as the already enfranchised 21+ group. This lower likelihood of voting is maintained in relative terms throughout the life course (Franklin 2004). More generally speaking, socialisation at a young age has an influence on the individual pre-disposition to vote. Mark Franklin's research is rigorously comparative across countries and gives strong evidence for this line of reasoning. Today's elderly can be more likely to vote because they did not share the experience of the lowering of the voting age from 21 to 18, which occurred in most countries in the 1960s and affected cohorts that are younger than 60 today. This point-of-view reflects some of the notions of the sociological continuity theory that I

outlined above. It states that older people just continue doing what they learnt at a younger age. Further cohort explanations of turnout based on the same logic are referred to in the literature to explain overall decline of turnout, for example in Canada (Blais et al. 2004).

The second major explanation for differences between age groups in terms of turnout is life experience. The first to suggest the importance of life experience for voting participation was John Crittenden (1963) who undertook a cohort analysis of party identification and turnout, which had been suggested in *The American Voter* (Campbell et al. 1960). Raymond Wolfinger and Stephen Rosenstone (1980) established the finding of the higher likelihood of older voters to vote, once demographic variables have been controlled for, with US census data. They also found an interaction effect between age and education, which they explained with the function of life experience. Thus, not only does formal education impact on voting participation, but also the accumulation of life experience as one ages.

Other authors suggested that the accumulation of various resources like political knowledge over the lifetime increases the likelihood of voting (Jankowski 2000; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Strate et al. 1989). Franklin (2004) also proposed the importance of habituation over the life time. The more often we vote, he claims, the higher the likelihood to do so next time. Older people go to the polls more often because they have more past experience than younger voters. The explanation of life experience, however, tends to be ad-hoc in nature in order to make sense of the recurring, robust empirical findings of a positive coefficient of age. The underlying causal mechanism for that coefficient has not yet been rigorously tested in the way the research design of the existing studies has been set up.

Party choice

There are only a few descriptive studies that look at the voting behaviour of older people. These attempts were not able to make rigorous statements about the determinants of older voters' behaviour, but just reported and described cross-tabulated survey data (Bürklin 1987; Stadie 1986; Vincent, Patterson, and Wale 2001).

David Butler and Donald Stokes (1983 [1974]) showed that young people are susceptible to political forces during their impressionable years, i.e. when they first go and vote. The dominance of a party leaves its mark on the youngest cohort of new voters. Over the lifetime, this impression is strengthened through growing identification with that party (see the section on party identification above). These voters perceive all upcoming political events through the glasses of their party identification. Thus, at old age the cohort as a whole can potentially be different from younger cohorts that do not share the same socialisation experience. For example, Warren Miller and Merrill Shanks (1996) demonstrated the pro-Democratic tendency among the American New Deal generation that was young in the early 1930s.

In more general terms, sociologists and historians speak about 'political generations', referring to a cohort that is collectively shaped due to a specific set of political experiences that separates them from preceding and subsequent cohorts. This school of research goes back to Karl Mannheim (1997 [1928]). Although the concept is not without its problems (Braungart and Braungart 1986; Spitzer 1973), the membership of a political generation can impact on electoral preferences. For example, David Butler and Donald Stokes (1983 [1974]: 232) identified the 'pre-1885 cohort', 'pre-1900 cohort', 'pre-1918 cohort', 'inter-war cohort', the '1945 cohort', the '1951-66 cohort' and the 'post-1966 cohort' in their study of the British

General elections of 1964-74 with regard to party preferences. Another generational hypothesis deriving from the value change that I described above demands that older cohorts are less inclined to vote for New Politics parties like the Green parties, because they represent postmaterialist values that are less common among generations born before World War II (Inglehart 1990; Klein and Arzheimer 1997; Kohler 1998).

Richard Rose and Ian McAllister (1990) refined the Butler and Stokes model. In a hierarchical model, they added a series of lifetime experiences to early socialisation that shape voters' loyalties to parties. They rejected the thesis that early socialisation is frozen in the voters' minds by comparing different cohorts for 1964 and 1987. However, they did not use multivariate regression techniques to control for annual swings. Annual swings could affect cohorts differently, as the political events and issues of each election might be more relevant for one cohort than for another. To some extent, the two authors combined the generational explanation with the process of life experience. According to them, older voters differ in their voting behaviour from younger voters in the extent to which they could build up an allegiance.

There have been some attempts to separate the generational experience of the cohort from life cycle changes with regard to party choice. It seems plausible that changes over the life cycle can change personal interest, which in turn can lead to a different party preference. Hans Rattinger (1994) analysed West German election ballots (1953-1990) for about 3-4 % of the population. The ballots were marked as to age group and gender. He found, for example, that ageing made male voters less likely to vote for the Christian-democrats until they were aged 35, but after that age chances of voting CDU increased again. This finding has been confirmed again with

German election studies (Falter and Gehring 1998; Gehring 1994). However, Rattinger is only able to come up with some ad-hoc explanations for the life cycle difference. This inductive approach is not rooted deeply in any theoretically sound explanations and would need re-testing, which is difficult given the uniqueness of his data source.

Another life cycle hypothesis would be that smaller or non-governmental parties are less likely to be voted for among older people because ageing voters cannot as easily build up a party allegiance over the lifetime. This might be due to the fact that the media tend to report more about larger or governmental parties (see the section about party identification before).

Finally, it is interesting to note that there is no analysis of the choice for 'grey parties' yet, i.e. parties that are labelled and set up to appeal to senior citizens. These parties appear in many countries. Pensioners' parties could represent the organisational attempt to campaign on older people's interests. These parties should benefit from an ageing electorate if older voters vote for old age interests first.

Non-institutionalised participation outside of organisations

There has been almost no direct assessment of the differences between age groups regarding participation outside of institutions. Michael Delli Carpini (1986) looked at the impact of US American socialisation in the 1960s on a range of political attitudes and political participation. For participation outside of institutions, he found a generational, but no life cycle or ageing effects. A German study described the differences in preferences for various participatory modes (among which are the non-institutionalised ones) between age groups in the 1980s (Bürklin 1987: 118-19). It is young voters (younger than 35) who are described as preferring the participation outside of the established channels.

In contrast, there has been some interest in some antecedents of non-electoral participation, such as political trust. These authors argued that there is a generational change in attitudes towards the institutions of representative government that could explain the differences between age groups in these attitudes. Relatively recent research looks at changes in the political processes, e.g. political support and trust (Dalton 2004; Norris 1999). Assessing the consequences of the decline of the aggregate levels of support and trust in the last years, these authors analysed effects on political participation, such as protesting. Russell Dalton (2004) found some modest generational differences in the political trust in government. He evaluated four US American cohorts (pre-1910, 1910-29, 1930-49, post-1950) and found that there was an increase in trust in political institutions, followed by a decline. Thus, today older cohorts are more trustful than younger ones. He detected similar patterns for Australia, Britain, Canada, Finland and Germany. Since he also argued that less political trust can lead to more political protest, he implicitly presented a generational explanation for why older people today protest less.

Another generational explanation is societal modernisation that leads to both a change of political values toward postmaterialism, and new participation demands. New generations favour non-institutionalised over institutionalised participation (Fuchs and Klingemann 1995b; Topf 1995b, c). This hypothesis can be confirmed by looking at aggregate changes over time, but without looking at differences in age groups by controlling specifically for other variables. From this perspective, the elderly have consistently become more active in non-electoral participation over the last 30 years (Topf 1995b). Other authors spoke therefore of a 'normalisation of protesters':

‘The protest level depends less on their age, gender...than on the context of the mobilisation’ (see also Norris, Walgrave, and Van Aelst 2005; Van Aelst and Walgrave 2001: 481).

These generational explanations stand in juxtaposition to the earlier *Political Action* study. Its authors put forward a life cycle explanation for why younger people in their 1974 data were engaging more in non-institutionalised forms of participation:

‘Young people enjoy the physical vigor, the freedom from day-to-day responsibilities of career and family, and have the time to participate in the pursuit of the energetic kinds of political activity implied by high protest potential. Protest potential is therefore held to be primarily an outcome of the *joie de vivre* of youth itself’ (Barnes, Kaase, and others 1979: 101).

The generational explanations imply that the elderly participate differently from younger people only because of generational differences that shrink over the decades. The life cycle explanation, in contrast, associates the intrinsic characteristics of younger people (like their elite-challenging predisposition and impatience) with their high protest potential. Older people are less active in protest activities, because they lack these traits.

Party membership

Accounts of party structures and organisations suggest that older people are more likely to be party members in a country when the young are not as attracted to the parties of the time. German parties were good at attracting young cohorts in the 1970s and got worse in later decades. As a consequence, party members are more likely to be older in Germany today. Britain’s biggest parties were unsuccessful in attracting young cohorts since the Thatcher era (see Scarrow 1996; Seyd and Whiteley 1992: 32; Whiteley and Seyd 2002a; Whiteley, Seyd, and Richardson 1994: 43). Age group differences in party membership are the result of present or past fortunes of parties to attract voters. Young party members who once attracted to the party usually remain in it. Thus, party membership in most European countries (with

the notable exception of Spain) declined over the last decades (see Mair and van Biezen 2001; Scarrow 2000) and led to a higher likelihood of older people being party members today.

The fortunes of parties can also go the other way. For example in Germany, the Netherlands and France, Green parties emerged at the beginning of the 1980s and attracted young party members, meaning that older people are less likely to be green party members today (Kitschelt 1990). Green parties often represent 'new' postmaterialist values. We can see this generational shift as a consequence of generational value change that I have already touched upon.

2.3 Comprehensive analyses of older people's political behaviour

The last strand of the literature is the smallest of the three. It includes research that deals with older people's political participation directly from a political science point of view. Richard Jennings and Gregory Markus (1988) analysed individual-level change of political participation with a three-wave panel study that covered 17 years of the later life span (starting at the age of parents whose children were at high school). Ageing individuals in their sample showed an overall decline in all participation other than voting. They compared changes within their panel with overall changes of the national population and found that two thirds of the changes are due to the historical circumstances of the times, and one third to ageing factors like the decline of internal political efficacy. The only form of political participation that remained constant over time was voting. They attribute this rigidity of voting to early habituation. This study is one of the few long-term panel studies. We cannot be sure, however, to what extent the findings are particular to the cohort and period Jennings and Marcus studied. In addition, the sample was biased towards the

respondents with higher socio-economic status. Other long-term studies find the imprecision of the personal recall (Himmelweit, Humphreys, and Jaeger 1985).

Andrea Campbell (2003a; 2003b) analysed the political behaviour of recipients of social security in the US (state pension and old age health benefits) who are normally 65 and older. She found that threats to their welfare tradition can mobilise older people. Older people are mobilised into political participation of all kinds even if their socio-economic status does not give them the initial resources. However, she only took an interest in older people as welfare recipients, not as being different in age from other groups.

2.4 Summary

All in all, the three strands of literature provide us with a flurry of hypotheses and piecemeal evidence. There are four classes of explanation that recur: (1) long-term generational changes make the elderly different from younger cohorts e.g. with regard to postmaterialist values; (2) generational experiences at a young age, which can go up and down as far as participation levels are concerned, make cohorts different from earlier and later ones; (3) life cycle changes in attitudes and interests make older people different from younger people in their political behaviour; and (4) ageing gives the elderly life experience and time to habituate political behaviour to an extent that younger people do not share. The evidence is mixed, however, on all these accounts.

No study has yet tried to answer to what extent older people participate differently from others in politics in an integrated analysis. In the introduction, I have argued that demographic changes make it more and more important to analyse older people's political behaviour in comparison to other age groups. After all, this social change could alter the political process itself and the political outcomes of it. I will

now put forward a theoretical model for analysis that I will test in 21-22 European countries in a cross-sectional manner and in two European countries in a longitudinal one.

3 An Age-centred Model of Political Participation

This chapter presents a testable model to explain differences in political participation between age groups. For illustration purposes, I introduced the 75 year old Adam and the 35 year old Henrietta in chapter 1. Instead of trying to explain the entire political behaviours of Adam or Henrietta, we only ask why their behaviour is different because of their age difference. Thus, we will not take a particular interest in the fact that Henrietta might belong to an ethnic minority and Adam to the ethnic majority. This (socially constructed) difference could shape their political behaviour, but would not be a derivative of their age difference.

Firstly, I will start with basic assumptions about human nature and how it affects the origins of political preferences and decision-making. Secondly, I will present a general, resource-based model of political participation that is in the tradition of Verba and his colleagues (1995), and demonstrate how my model relates to other models of political participation. Thirdly, I will discuss in detail the four main age-related effects that I expect to play a role in political participation: political generation, shared social characteristic cohort, life cycle and individual ageing. Fourthly, I will merge my model with the four types of effects to create an age-centred model of political participation. Fifthly, I will further aggregate the model from the individual to the macro level to include explanations for between-country differences that are derived from the nature of the age-related effects. The final section six will then summarise the model's hypotheses that will be tested in the empirical chapters.

3.1 Assumptions about human nature

The research question asks to what extent and why older people participate differently from younger people in politics. A theoretical model to investigate this question must start at the level of the individual. An analysis of the ‘group’ of older people would be prone to failure because as Christine Day (1990) showed for the USA, older people are a very heterogeneous group with various potential division lines, such as class, race, gender and others. When looking at the level of the individual, we need some notion about the motivation of individuals to act politically and the characteristics of their decision-making process that leads to political action.

I will make four starting assumptions that I will discuss in detail: (1) individuals in post-industrial democracies have relative freedom to decide because their basic needs are satisfied; (2) individuals are motivated by personal material and expressive benefits; (3) individuals share political preferences because they are in the same social situation, i.e. preferences can be similarly structured across individuals because they are in the same social context. Individuals also share political preferences because they experienced similar political socialisation during early adulthood; (4) individuals make a cost-benefit calculation when deciding to commit a political action and when performing one; they are constraint therein by limited rationality. In other words, the assessment of a situation depends on cognitive short-cuts to simplify complex reality.

This thesis has a limited scope because it concentrates on political individuals in a post-industrial (high levels of socio-economic development), liberal-democratic context and does not claim to infer about other contexts. Living in a post-industrial liberal democracy makes it – generally speaking – possible for individuals to take many decisions relatively freely compared to individuals in other regions of the

world, or compared to individuals in other times in history. The room for individual political manoeuvre in such a context is comparatively large. This is not only due to the fact that political liberties are available, but also because more basic human needs⁵ like hunger and safety are by and large satisfied in post-industrial societies, meaning that a political action can follow the pursuit of other-than-survival needs. In non-democratic countries or in countries at other stages of socio-economic development, individuals are driven by the same desire to maximise their personal outcome. But this desire does not matter for politics because the scope of their decisions in politics is so small. For instance, a person working 14 hours a day to secure enough bread for her family is unlikely to have much choice concerning political participation, because the concerns for survival are more pressing than those regarding political activities. Although it would be possible to integrate constraints like this into the model, I prefer to limit the scope of my model to cover post-industrial democracies only. Thus, individuals - on average - can be assumed to have a reasonable chance of a free decision that is not limited by the exigencies of everyday survival.

Within the context of relative personal freedom in political decision-making, I assume that citizens try to maximise their personal outcome according to their personal preferences. What can structure those preferences? The interests or motivations that are most easy to measure are material, like financial resources that are unequivocally grounded in egoistic selfishness. Most economic theorists reject as non-parsimonious the notion that we can be motivated by the pursuit of more general goods, like the expression of allegiance to the political system, or the expression of solidarity with a certain group involving no personal material gain. However,

⁵ See for the theory of hierarchical needs (Maslow 1987).

individual political participation is one area of political science where the ‘hard’ economic approach does not suffice. Pure material interests can, for example, neither explain the motivation to vote nor the motivation to protest (see Blais 2000; Dowding 2005; Green and Shapiro 1994: chap. 4; Opp 1996; Sanders et al. 2004). As Jon Elster (1990: 45) noted about the importance of non-selfish reasons to explain social behaviour and the inadequacy of the economic approach: ‘Sometimes the world is messy, and the most parsimonious explanation is wrong.’

Thus, I settle for a wider definition: individuals can be motivated by personal material interest as well as expressive benefits to take part in a political action. Expressive benefits include all those benefits that the individual gains from the process of participation. This can be the pleasure of participation, the feeling of doing the right thing or the personal satisfaction received from doing something in line with felt grievances regardless of the actual outcome (Chong 1991: 74-80). Expressive benefits are particularly important with regard to social norms that give individuals gratification from complying with a social standard in their social situation. Compliance with a social norm gives immediate expressive benefit, just by taking part in a socially desirable action.⁶

A third assumption is the origin of our political preferences, which sets this theoretical model further apart from economic theory. The economic approach

⁶ There might also be some long-term material benefits from compliance with social norms. For example, a local shop-keeper who visibly goes to the voting booth will have an interest in maintaining a good reputation as a political citizen because people who see him vote might be the customers of the next day. Dennis Chong (1991) calls this kind of political behaviour ‘socially instrumental’. For this dissertation, it is primarily of relevance to allow for interests that are not selfish. The distinction between selfish and altruistic behaviour is an unsolved one (Mansbridge 1990a) and poses serious problems because very often selfish reasons and altruistic reasons are intermingled. If one is to disentangle the root of the motivation within many social actions, both kinds of motivation are often at hand at the same time. Also, altruistic behaviour tends not to be proven as such. Instead, researchers show empirically that an action is non-selfish by demonstrating that individuals act against their own material interest, so that the altruistic category is in danger of being the left-over category of narrowly defined self-interest (Mansbridge 1990b).

usually cannot say anything or little about the nature of preference formation. They are assumed to be exogenous to the model. Gary Becker (1986: 110) wrote:

‘Since economists generally have little to contribute ... to the understanding of how preferences are formed, preferences are assumed not to change substantially over time, nor to be very different between wealthy and poor persons, or even between persons in different societies and cultures.’

The existing literature on older people suggests that socialisation and its impact on preferences are important to explain differences between generations (see for example Vincent 2005). To exclude that process from the analysis would seem to be inadequate. We would disregard our prior knowledge about the topic. Besides sharing common human traits of decision-making and an incentive system that includes material as well as expressive benefits, groups of individuals can also share political interests. Individuals share certain political preferences because of two reasons. Firstly, they are in similar social situations. This is the idea behind sociological studies of party voting behaviour where, for example, voters of the same social class, reinforced by their political elites, will perceive their personal interest through the lenses of their social group membership (Butler and Stokes 1983 [1974]; Evans 1999). Someone’s social experience at time t_m will shape the preferences (and the decisions) of that individual at the same point t_m . In this context, political actors such as parties can play a crucial role in shaping individual political preferences (see Dunleavy 1991: chap. 5). It is, for example, very plausible that older people share political preferences due to their social situation of receiving state pensions, of care-giving or receiving (mostly to/from partners), or of grand-parenthood.

Secondly, individuals are not equally receptive at all times for their preferences to be shaped by their social situation. The political socialisation literature (Allen Renshon 1977; Dawson and Prewitt 1968; Hyman 1959; Jennings and Markus

1984) suggests that we are much more open to be socialised when we are younger, i.e. about 15 to 30 years of age, than when we are older. Therefore, social situations at a younger age are important in giving us a first set of political preferences; the social experience at time t_1 will still shape the individual's preferences at point t_{1+n} even if the nature of the social experience has changed between the two points in time.

As a consequence, at any point t_m an individual can be under conflicting pressures. She might need to reconcile the earliest political preferences stimulated at time t_1 and the 'ideal' preferences of time t_m . These latter preferences would have been stimulated by the hypothetical social experience solely at point t_m (if the individual had been thrown into that situation without prior history). For example, someone from a rich family might grow up in a social situation where high income taxation is seen as a nuisance. This is because the members of that person's social situation, family, friends, and colleagues, are likely to have high incomes and keep lamenting about the high income taxes that they pay. Let us assume that the individual internalises this policy preference, as the literature on early political socialisation proposes. However, the social situation of that individual can then change. Once retired for example, that person's material benefits might be served better by high levels of free public services that are financed by high income taxation. This would be because that person will not pay (or pay much less) income tax and can benefit fully from free public services. Having been socialised into believing that high income taxation is bad, however, that person will need to come to terms with the conflicting pressures when she commits a political action. The individual takes into consideration whether she cares about some other individuals,

like her children, who might be affected by the levels of taxation and give way to the pressures accordingly.

If there are no links between a person and individuals in other socio-economic circumstances, the likelihood is higher that the person will develop political preferences that are a reflection of her personal, material considerations. An example of a situation where older people's personal material interests prevail over altruistic concerns is US American high school spending, which is determined locally. US school districts with elderly populations that recently migrated to them, for instance in Florida, have less high school spending than districts with long-standing elderly populations (Berkman and Plutzer 2004). This finding could be put down to the lack of local, intergenerational ties that are needed to create policy preferences in favour of young age groups.

The social situation can not only shape political preferences, but also influence an individual's social identity. The current social situation can then create an awareness of other people being in the same social situation and other people *not* being in that social situation. If there is a common concept to unite individuals in the same social situation, they can share a social identity (see Hogg and Abrams 2003). Social categories of old age that could determine social identities could, for example, be pensioners, care-givers/care-receivers or old age itself.

The final assumption is that individuals make cost-benefit calculations in order to maximise their outcome according to their preferences. The individual perceives a certain scope of possible actions and chooses among those. Thereby, 'limited rationality' (March 1986) restricts human beings. Individuals tend to simplify decision problems because of the difficulties of anticipating or considering all alternatives and information. We do so via various cognitive short-cuts.

We start by looking for familiarity. Thus, we look into our own past for experience. If we consider the new situation to be like one that we have already experienced and in which we have taken a decision that we still perceive to have been successful, we will take the same decision again. Cognitive psychologists successfully employ the concept of heuristics to explain how individuals can take a decision in a complex environment. One of the most important ones is the availability heuristic (Tversky and Kahnemann 1974). It postulates that a judgement on, for example, unknown proportions or frequencies is guided by the ease with which the individual can recall similar instances from her personal experience. Thus, experience plays an important role to deal with uncertainty. The easier the individual can retrieve instances from personal experience, the easier a decision under uncertainty can be taken. It is a robust empirical finding that prior knowledge facilitates the process of encoding the new information of the present situation, and thus makes a decision easier (Fischer and Johnson 1986: 63). If the search in our own experience in a political context does not give us any cues, we simplify the situation by further cognitive short-cuts: we get recommendations from sources we trust, or try to apply partisan and ideological schemata, i.e. reference systems that help us to process the new piece of information on the basis of organised prior knowledge (Lau 2003).

This assumption about heuristics and the prior knowledge of the decision-making process is relevant to this thesis: as I will show, older people rely systematically more on their past experience and on their recall as a heuristic short-cut than younger people (Kennedy and Mather forthcoming). They are therefore in a position to discard irrelevant information more quickly through the use of experiential schema (Tentori et al. 2001). Summed up, older people find it easier to

come to a decision in the social world, all other things being equal, because they have a richer set of schema and personal experience to draw upon in order to deal with the complexity and uncertainty of the real world.

In sum, I assume that individuals in an advanced post-industrial democracy can act politically with a certain degree of freedom because their basic needs are satisfied. When doing so, individuals maximise their personal outcome according to their preferences. The benefits of political action that can be accumulated for the personal outcome can be material as well as expressive. Individuals can share preferences with other people in a similar social situation. Preferences at any point in time are a combination of 'ideal' preferences stipulated by the social situation of the time and earlier preferences. These can conflict with each other, so that individuals need to take other people's personal outcomes into consideration. When taking the decision to act in the political sphere, individuals commit a cost-benefit analysis under the restriction of limited rationality, meaning that they look for cognitive short-cuts, such as their own past experience, to deal with the complex, social reality. The following section will describe the next theoretical level, from the intrinsic dynamics of the individual to political participation in the outside world.

3.2 A modified resource-based perspective on political participation

Empirical studies of political participation usually try to generate new models that are better than previous ones. Testing rival models is desirable in order to assess the relative explanatory power of each. In statistical terms, the aim is to get an R^2 that is as large as possible with as few degrees of freedom as possible, relative to other available models.

In contrast to empirical tests of general models of political participation, I want to assess the relative differences of two groups, older people versus younger

people, with regard to political participation. As I have shown in chapter 2, this has not been attempted in a comprehensive manner, so that a relative assessment of rival models is not a straightforward exercise. It seems therefore advisable to learn from the existing models of political participation in order to create a first full age-centred model of political participation. With that knowledge we can build a model that allows us to test how many of the various social and psychological differences between younger and older people impact on participation levels, which does not pose a technical problem due to a large data set. I will do so by starting from the Civic Voluntarism model (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995), which is one of the most comprehensive models that has recently been put forward, and add some modifications to it. Alternatively, I could have set up a test of seemingly rival models. For example, I could have constructed a test of a 'life cycle model' that predicts that older people of all generations become similar versus a 'generational model' that predicts that all generations are similar, no matter what their current age is. However, prior evidence suggests that both models can explain part of reality and are not contradicting each other. Testing rival theories only makes sense if they are mutually exclusive in their underlying causal narrative. If we assume that causality means A increases the probability of B (Gerring 2005), both life cycle and generational models can be true at the same time.

There are only a limited number of general models of political participation. Most scholars reduce their interest to one political mode, most frequently voting participation (for example Franklin 1996, 2004; Franklin, van der Eijk, and Oppenhuis 1996; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980) and protest activities (for example Eisinger 1973; Marsh 1977; Opp 1989, 1992, 1996, 2004; Opp and Finkel 2001; Sanders et al. 2004; Van Aelst and Walgrave 2001). Historically, there are two

schools of general models of political participation. The first school is based on the traditions of rational choice and collective action. Its scholars are pre-occupied with the collective action problem that political participants face. This problem was outlined by Mancur Olson (1971 [1965]) who argued that there is a high incentive for individuals to free-ride on the efforts of others to secure public goods. These researchers try to model the various types of incentives directly, rather than the social location or other personal characteristics of the participants (Finkel and Muller 1998; Finkel, Muller, and Opp 1989; Lüdemann 2001; see also Whiteley 1995).⁷ For example, Steven Finkel et al. (1998) made a distinction between selective benefits and collective interests. The former are benefits that are only accessible to those who participate, such as entertainment from political action. The latter are a combination of one's individual interest in the goal of action and one's perception of individual and collective efficacy.

The second school, the resource-based approach, is founded in work by Verba and colleagues. Each new model built upon earlier models of that tradition, incorporating most of their variables and adding new ones. The basic socio-economic status model (Verba and Nie 1972; Verba, Nie, and Kim 1978) started from the postulation that one's social position in society was a main determinant of one's political attitudes and resources, and thus finally of one's political behaviour. The Political Action Study (Barnes, Kaase, and others 1979), which was the first explicit comparative model including unconventional participation, added values, satisfaction and trust to the social location. The next step was to give explicit attention to group membership and its effect on resources and mobilisation. Also, scholars introduced

⁷ Steven Finkel and colleagues mainly test their models on protest activities, but the gist of their models is that it should apply to any collective political action.

explicit measures of the current context – the current opportunity structures – and the mobilising efforts of elites (Conway 1991; Parry, Moyser, and Day 1992; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). The importance of social networks, groups and trust is also stressed by social capital scholars (La Due Lake and Huckfeldt 1999; Putnam 2000; Teorell 2003) who hold that high levels of trust and involvement in social networks raises the levels of political participation. In contrast to the other resource-based models, the social capital approach has its primary focus on broader society rather than on the individual.

All these models of the second tradition share the assumption that political behaviour is not only defined by narrow instrumental and material interests, but also other kinds of non-selfish benefits. The Civic Voluntarism Model is the culmination point of this series of cumulative research in the area of political participation models. I have chosen the Civic Voluntarism Model as a starting point because it is a comprehensive model that tries to explain all kinds of political participation. The authors (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995: chap. 2) used a definition of political participation that is very similar to the one that I apply in this thesis. With the assumptions in mind that I made on sources of motivation in 3.1, it would not have been advisable to start from a narrow rational choice model. However, I maintain some of the characteristics of the rational choice approach, such as the assumption of the cost-benefit calculations of the individual. Generally speaking, the latest findings on political participation suggest that an integrated approach of the two traditions can be a fruitful way forward (Pattie, Seyd, and Whiteley 2004; Sanders et al. 2004; Whiteley 1995; Whiteley and Seyd 2002b).

The Civic Voluntarism Model starts with the simple question of why citizens do *not* participate in politics. Verba et al. give three different answers: they cannot

because they lack necessary resources, do not want to because they lack the psychological engagement in politics, or finally, because nobody asks, meaning that people are not in the networks that recruit people to participate in politics (Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995: 271). Resources are reduced to only include time, skills and money, those resources that the authors perceive to be most open to measurement.

My theoretical model contains three modifications of the Civic Voluntarism Model. In this thesis, Verba et al.'s model would not suffice to explain the differences between age groups with regard to political participation. As the next chapter will show, it is low-intensity forms of participation, i.e. those that are characterised by low levels of necessary resources, where there are perceptible and systematic differences between age groups. Verba and colleagues started from the assumption that the broad universe of political action can be structured according to the necessary levels of resources. For example, party activism is much more demanding in terms of time and civic skills than voting is. However, the political activities that will be the main focus of the thesis (voting and non-institutionalised participation) do not differ a lot in the amount of necessary resources. One needs some degree of physical ability, little time and few skills to each. But the two forms of participation differ as to the kind of driving motivation. For voting, this motivation might lie in a sense of duty, expression of allegiance or habituation. For non-institutionalised participation, the motivation might lie in frustration with party politics or the desire to express oneself more individually compared to, for example, voting. Thus, it seems advisable – as a first modification – not to omit motivations from the model.

A second modification of the Civic Voluntarism model is to give up the differentiation between motivation and resources, even though this differentiation makes sense from a social-psychological point-of-view. First one needs to be motivated to consider doing something, and then one makes one's action contingent on the availability of necessary resources. But it is doubtful whether this sequence actually matters. The sequence can definitely not be empirically shown with cross-sectional data. Another point is the difficulty in typifying a certain social characteristic as resource or motivation. Take for example political interest. Political interest is – as intuition suggests – a strong predictor of political behaviour.⁸ Is political interest a resource or motivation? It is certainly motivation because the higher one's political interest, the more one knows the importance of political participation for a sustainable democratic political system. But also, the higher one's political interest, the higher one's (subjective) understanding of the political dynamics. Therefore, one finds it easier to vote or engage in non-institutionalised forms of participation as one can judge the consequences better. This makes political interest also part of one's resources (and would fall into the category of skills according to Verba et al.).

As a third modification, I suggest maintaining the category of mobilisation to which I add opportunities. 'Nobody asked' a person to participate can be quite an important explanation for a lack of participation. Politics (and even more so participatory politics) has a low priority in most people's lives. This is more important for non-institutionalised forms of participation because – in contrast to voting – the particular context can provide or not provide opportunities for

⁸ Political interest and participation are probably reinforcing each other rather than one causing the other. But this does not matter for my argument here.

protesting, signing a petition and preparing a badge to wear. Summed up, it is meaningful for our task to differentiate between factors of participation that are resources and motivation on one side (intrinsic to the individual), and opportunities and mobilisation on the other (extrinsic to the individual).

So far, the model specifications have been general, and the model could still be used as a general framework to explain political participation. I will now introduce in depth four types of age-related effects on political behaviour that I will then merge with the general model.

3.3 Age-related effects on political behaviour

Why should an older person behave differently in politics from a younger person? It is helpful to see age differences in political behaviour as the sum of four different types of effects that can be found in various contexts in the social science literature.

(1) A ‘political generation effect’ stands for the political socialisation experience of a certain generation at young adulthood; (2) the ‘shared social characteristic cohort effect’ describes the social experience of a particular generation that is due to macro social changes; (3) ‘life cycle effects’ stem from the insight that our social life course can be separated into different sociological life stages; (4) the ‘individual ageing effect’ represents the accumulation of experiences, the habituation of certain behaviour patterns throughout our lives and the growing compliance with social norms. These four age-related effects are a refinement of the statistical effects of age, cohort and period that are often used in the quantitative literature (see also section 4.4 for a methodological discussion). A period effect is the impact of the context during which a survey was conducted that affects all respondents. A cohort effect is shared by a group of people born during a certain period and comes up in surveys at different points in time (either in panels or in repeated cross-sectional

surveys). An age effect is shared by the group of people who are in the same age group. It can also be measured at different points in time. The age-cohort-period literature is rooted in disentangling a methodological problem of perfect multicollinearity between these three effects. My suggested four effects, in contrast, are conceptualised to capture certain causal chains rather than just dealing with statistical techniques. In terms of the terminology of age-cohort-period, my first two effects represent sub-types of cohort effects. My third and fourth effects belong to the group of age effects.

Political generation effects

A ‘political generation effect’ stems from the shared experience by a group that was born during a certain period (Mannheim 1997 [1928]). Cohort membership is important because the early period of our adulthood is so decisive in terms of political socialisation. We are much more open to political influences between 15 and 30 (the ‘impressionable years’) than between 50 and 65 (see Dawson and Prewitt 1968; Hyman 1959; Sears and Levy 2003). This early political socialisation leaves an imprint in citizens’ heads as it shapes our early political preferences. Since socialisation influences stem from political circumstances at the time of young adulthood, such as differences between parties in catching first-time voters, political preferences differ between cohorts.

Allow me to remind you of the two exemplary citizens that I introduced in chapter 1. One is 75 years old and called Adam, the other 35 years and called Henrietta. The elderly Adam was born in 1931 and experienced political socialisation between about 1946 and 1961. The younger Henrietta was born in 1971 and socialised between 1986 and 2001. For example, with regard to street demonstrations, a West German Adam would not have seen many of them during his

early socialisation period. In contrast, a West German Henrietta would have heard about many street demonstrations in the media or maybe participated in some, such as the anti-nuclear, peace and other demonstrations in the last 1980s. These differences in early experience are engrained in the early preferences for political participation and likely to shape later behaviour.

Although political attitudes that are acquired in early political life are not monolithic, they are very stable over a lifespan (Alwin, Cohen, and Newcomb 1991). These preferences can affect the content of political participation as much as the participatory mode. For example, citizens who experience a strong occurrence of protests at a young age, like the 1968 generation in some countries like West Germany, should be more participatory than other generations in later life. In Britain, citizens that came of political age during the Thatcher and Blair eras tended to be disenchanted with formal conventional politics and will carry part of this disenchantment through their lives (Clarke et al. 2004; Henn, Weinstein, and Wring 2002; Russell, Johnston, and Pattie 1992).

Shared social characteristic cohort effects

The 'shared social characteristic cohort effect' stems from the varying probabilities that cohorts have of attaining a certain social characteristic. Whereas I introduce a new label for this age-related effect to separate it clearly from the others, the underlying notion is not new. For instance in research of long-term partisan de-alignment (see for example Mueller 1999; Pappi and Mnich 1992), long-term social changes that affect generations differently are taken into account, such as de-unionisation, changes in class or educational composition of the population. These generational changes tend to go in one direction only when the period under investigation is only a few decades. For example, after World War II there was –

broadly speaking – a decline, not an increase in religious practice in Western Europe. These effects are correlates of long-term social changes, such as economic development. The uni-directional development separates these effects from political generation effects, the influence of which can be different even between two decades. Political generation effects capture the effects of political history at youth rather than macro social changes.

Education is the most important case of a shared social characteristic cohort effect. The probability of Henrietta having finished secondary school is much higher than Adam's because they grew up in different times: the elderly Adam grew up before the mass expansion of secondary and higher education. Higher formal education stimulate higher levels of political participation. Individuals tend to have a better understanding of the political process and live in social contexts in which participation is valued more strongly (Leighly 1995).

Life cycle effects

'Life cycle effects' on political behaviour derive from changes in our social situation over the life course. Each life cycle stage like youth, adolescence, middle and old age puts the individual into social contexts with rather different demands on them as individuals. The life cycle stages stand for certain societal roles the individual is taking, such as spouse, parent, employee, or retiree (Steckenrider and Cutler 1989). The notion of a social life cycle finds wide application in political science (Plutzer 2002; Stoker and Jennings 1995) and other social sciences: in economics with regard to spending and saving patterns (Börsch-Supan and Stahl 1991) and in sociology with regard to well-being, gender experiences and other questions (Moen 1996; O'Rand 1996).

Social roles associated with the life cycle are not the same for all individuals. Instead, the social experience carries a certain likelihood of being shaped by particular experiences. Therefore, these effects can only have a probabilistic character. For example, young adults struggle to succeed in their professional lives and are occupied with founding a family and securing their family's income. Older people suffer from deteriorating health, have settled down in a certain area and do not need to support children anymore. These different social stages are contexts that create differences in political interests as much as in available resources to participate in politics. Health, for instance, deteriorates with age due to the combined effects of the accumulation of unhealthy lifestyles and the physical effects of ageing. Physical ability can be important for various forms of political participation. Political interests that vary across the life cycle could, for instance, be the demand for certain policy programmes. Parents with young children might have a stronger interest in schools and nurseries than parents with older children.

The social construction of the life cycle is much more stable across time than cohort effects. However, it is imaginable that across long periods of time, such as a century, changes in the stages of the social life course do occur. For instance, due to a steady increase in life expectancy and increasing usage of methods of birth control, child-bearing is nowadays often consciously restricted to a small number of years in advanced industrial societies.

Life cycle and cohort effects can also be confounded. Take income for example. Income is on average lower for all the elderly of different generations compared to younger age groups. This is due to the fact that pensions are always below average earnings – a clear life cycle aspect. But at the same time, the income of the elderly goes up relative to earlier elderly cohorts because recent retirees have

accumulated more wealth and higher pension entitlements during their lives. This allows them to benefit from higher income at old age – a cohort aspect.

In the group of life cycle effects, it is important to consider that the stage of the life cycle can influence the social identity of the individual. Psychological studies of middle-aged to very old participants showed that there are systematic differences in what defines the self across the life course. For example, very old people, i.e. 85 years and older, tend to describe themselves more homogeneously via their external physical constraints. The young-old, i.e. 70-85 year olds with better health status, showed a more multi-faced description of their selves (Dittmann-Kohli 2005: 287). Those individuals who describe themselves as old do so combined with a sense of loss in comparison to their reference groups, due to widowhood or ill health. Generally speaking, the age identity of a person is strongly linked to the social roles she fulfils at that given moment (Logan, Ward, and Spitze 1992).

Out of that *social* age identity, it is imaginable that a *political* age identity could develop. Senior age could be the fundament of a political group consciousness (Miller et al. 1981). A political age identity would be a special form of a life cycle effect because of its self-conscious nature. A senior person can actually perceive herself to belong to the group of the elderly and see shared senior interests as a common goal and motivating factor (e.g. senior education, pensions, social care). Senior interest groups are likely to play a role in stimulating this kind of political identity and consecutive political action. For example, older people who identify with the Gray Panthers in the USA are more likely to take group-related political action than those who do not (Simon et al. quoted in Huddy 2003: 526). A political identity based on old age or some sub-group of it would thus become a type of cognitive short-cut to assess politics. The cost-benefit calculation of whether and

how to participate in politics would take into account the interest of other members of the group.

Our present day and age might be a time at which the elderly are more likely to identify with their fellow seniors. Old age might be more important to political identities in times of pension reforms, for this is when the group of the elderly as recipients of pensions has its greatest salience. During times of economic difficulty, attacks on economic benefits are likely to strengthen the group consciousness, which could be shown with regard to Social Security, the state pension after 65, and Medicare, free public health provisions after 65, in the USA (Day 1990: 39).

Individuals can be motivated by the fact that they are doing something for other members of the same group with whom they have a common bond of identity. A collective identity becomes politically relevant, for example in the context of social movements, if an antagonism between the social movement and another group develops. This happens under the condition that 'collectively defined grievances that produce a "we" feeling and causal attributions that denote a "they" which is held responsible for the collective grievances are needed for transferring ingroup-outgroup dynamics into political conflict' (Klandermans 1997: 41). For example, it is plausible to hypothesise that pensioners, as a sub-group of older people, might build up a common political identity by creating the image of the other 'them' as equalling the government that is not protecting their real income.

In contrast, there are also reasons to expect that senior age identity is not strong enough to develop into a political identity. Old age identity is inherently transitional in juxtaposition to, for instance, ethnic identities that are by and large stable. After all, the most senior members of the old age category are naturally most likely to die soon. Furthermore, group identification of old age is prone to cross-

pressures from other identities like class, religion, ethnicity or gender. Since these other identities are much 'older' in terms of an individual life course, old age identity has to fight its way through the long-held identities:

'Though an individual of a certain age is likely to associate intimately with people of the same age and be influenced by these associations, common age is not the focus of their relationship. It is not considered the reason for association, nor is there a sense of unity with unknown individuals of the same age in other parts of the country' (Campbell et al. 1960: 473).

In sum, we can expect the position in the life cycle to play a role in the resources and motivation of individuals to act in politics. The position in the life cycle can lead the individual to have certain political interests linked to it, and can even create a political identity based on age that can be another motivating factor to participate in politics.

Individual ageing effect

As a final age-related effect of political behaviour, 'individual ageing' can entail two universal human mechanisms that can affect the likelihood of political participation: accumulation of past experience and growing adherence to social norms. First, past participation experiences influence the future probability of participation. It is widely acknowledged that the repetition of the same behaviour leads to an increasing probability of performing that behaviour again (see for a review Ajzen 2002). If you learn that something brings some kind of gratification to you that outweighs your costs, you will do it again. If something does not give you enough gratification, you will not do it again. Over a lifetime, our repertoire of situations that we know (and also believe we know) grows steadily. The older we are, the more likely we are to 'know the show'. Drawing on our own experience is one type of cognitive short-cut to deal with the constraints of limited rationality (see Lau 2003). Habituation in

political behaviour has been studied with regard to voting participation (Franklin 2004; Gerber, Green, and Shachar 2003).

Secondly, growing adherence to social norms as we age is the result of a complex transmission process between a social norm and our individual behaviour. A social norm affects us differently depending on our social context. At the level of the individual, we are motivated to behave in a certain way by our own subjective norm. The subjective norm is our perception of the social norm in our personal environment. This subjective norm is the sum of social pressure and gratification that we expect to receive from people who we know (Ajzen 1991; Ajzen and Fishbein 1980; Fishbein and Ajzen 1975). Thus, it plays an integral part in any individual's cost-benefit calculation regarding political action. The social gratification that one receives for doing something increases the benefit of one's action.

Empirical studies of tax compliance show a positive relationship between age and tax compliance, i.e. the older an individual is, the more likely she is to pay taxes regularly (Mason and Calvin 1978; Tittle 1980; Wenzel 2002). Tax compliance is often seen as an example of individual behaviour being driven by social norms rather than self-interest. This is because the risk of being detected is minimal and the personal gain from cheating is immense. However, this systematic finding has not yet been translated into studies of political behaviour.

Since voting is a widespread social norm in a liberal democracy, many people are likely to subscribe to the view that we ought to vote. As we age, the more we become part of a society through widening social networks, interactions and social role-taking, and the higher the number of people is in our environment whom we believe to hold that view. As we get older, we can count more people who we think might want us to vote.

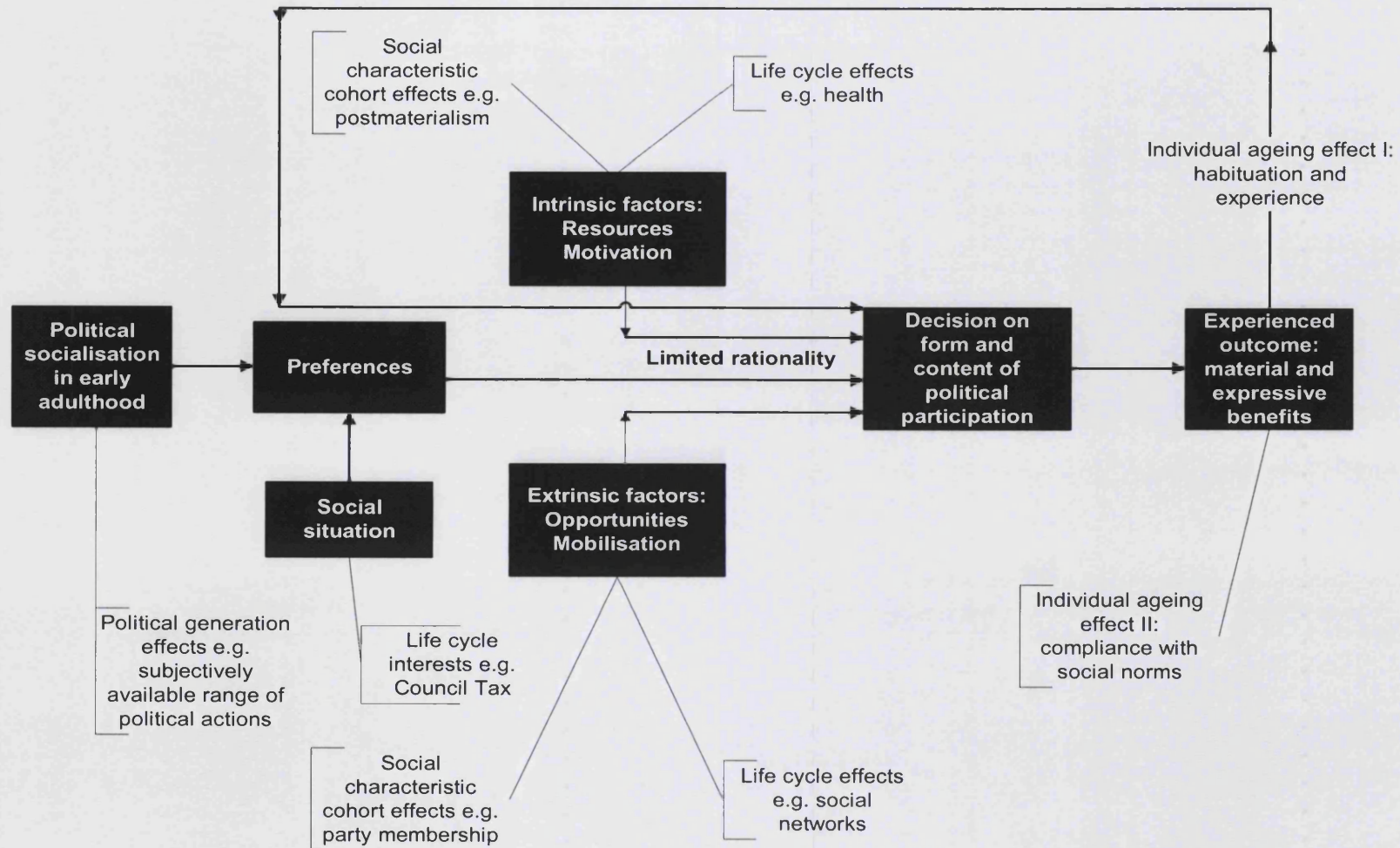
This is, of course, a probabilistic statement. It is possible to live in a social context where few people vote, meaning that one cannot see anyone go to the booth or feel social gratification by voting and then talking about it (although one would still be exposed to the voting norm in the media). However, as we age, we are unlikely to feel increasing social pressure *not* to vote. Non-voters do not care about voting. They do not hold that we ought *not* to vote. In other words, getting older in such a social context implies getting to know a growing number of people who do not care about voting and some people who do maintain that voting is desirable. Thus over a lifetime, the subjective norm to vote is likely to increase even in these extreme circumstances because the non-voters in this environment will not affect our subjective norm, whereas the few voters will.

In summary, I differentiate between four different types of age-related effects that influence political behaviour and that I will test in the empirical chapters. The political generation effect makes older people different from younger people as their political preferences were shaped in a certain historical context that varied from what younger people experienced. The shared social characteristic cohort effect gives credit to the fact that cohorts attain social characteristics that are important for political participation with varying probabilities. These probabilities differ due to macro social changes, such as the expansion of mass education. The life cycle effect stems from differences in interests, identities, motivation and resources over the social life cycle. The individual ageing effect is grounded on two psychological processes: the older individuals are, the more they habituate social behaviour, and the more they are likely to adhere to social norms.

3.4 The development of an age-centred model of political participation

We can now bring together the general conceptualisation of age-related effects on political behaviour and our adapted resource-based model of political participation to design an age-centred model of political participation (see figure 3-1). In order to remain accessible, this synthesis will not yet look at differences between countries – I will discuss them in the next section.

Figure 3-1: Age-centred model of political participation



The graph contains two major elements. The black boxes and causal arrows represent a general model of political participation that is independent from the age-specific research questions and results from my explanations in section 3.2. Individuals have political preferences at any point in time. These preferences are a result of their early political socialisation and the social situation they find themselves in. When considering an act of political participation, individuals maximise their personal outcome that can be constituted of material and expressive benefits. During this maximisation process, they are restricted by their limited rationality, which prevents them from comparing all possible outcomes. The experienced outcome of a decision to participate feeds back into the next decision-making process where it can serve as a heuristic short-cut for the individual. The decision on the form and content of political participation is contingent on a set of intrinsic factors (resources and motivation) and extrinsic factors (opportunities and mobilisation).

The annotations with intermittent lines demonstrate where the four different age-related effects come into the model that I explained in section 3.3. They are part of the general model of political participation. I have indicated some examples for illustration.

Political generation: older people normally⁹ belong to a different political generation than younger people. This has an effect on their preferences for the range of participatory activities that they perceive to be subjectively available. Although older people are free to protest in the street, they are less inclined to do so as it was not common during their impressionable years. As political generations share a

⁹ It is theoretically conceivable that one political generation stretches over 40 years or so, so that older and younger people belong to the same political generation.

certain pool of political experiences, they are likely to share some political preferences. These political preferences could make their participation content different from younger people. For example in West Germany, the generation that was young during the Social-Democratic era of Willi Brandt (1969-1974) and Helmut Schmidt (1974-1982) should be distinctly more pro-SPD than its preceding generation. This is because the party managed to catch the young electors of the time after decades of CDU/CSU dominance.

Shared social characteristic cohort: a cohort shares the average probability of attaining a certain social characteristic that is higher or lower for other generations. For instance, more recent cohorts have a higher likelihood to be postmaterialist as they grew up during times of economic prosperity. This has an effect on their motivation to participate as self-fulfilment ranks higher in their personal value system. Also, the content of participation is affected. For example, caring for the environment is more widespread among postmaterialists. Mobilisation factors also vary between cohorts. For example, membership of trade unions or political parties is more common among older cohorts in some countries, such as Britain. This is due to a decrease of the fortunes of these organisations among members of more recent cohorts.

Life cycle: older people are at a different stage of their social life cycle, which influences their resources/motivation and their mobilisation/opportunities. For example, decreasing physical fitness lowers the available resources of individuals to participate in politics. Decline in social networks due to dying friends and the lack of replacement with new acquaintances (Wagner, Schütze, and Lang 1999) leads to individuals having less mobilisation to participate by friends in various networks. The life cycle also shapes our preferences due to specific interests associated with a

certain life cycle stage. An example of an issue of relevance to pensioners would be the Council Tax in Britain. It is a local property tax that weighs heavily on those pensioners with a small fixed income living in expensive properties.

Individual ageing: this complex learning process affects future decisions to participate as more experience means lesser costs to do something. It also influences the decision as to which mode of participation to take, as the experience can teach us to do or not to do something again (effect I). In addition, it also makes older people more likely to adhere to social norms. This is because the expressive benefit they gain is higher due to the fact that they are more strongly connected to that society through networks, social roles and experience (effect II). Before I summarise the testable hypotheses of this model, I will discuss the implications of the model for inter-country variations.

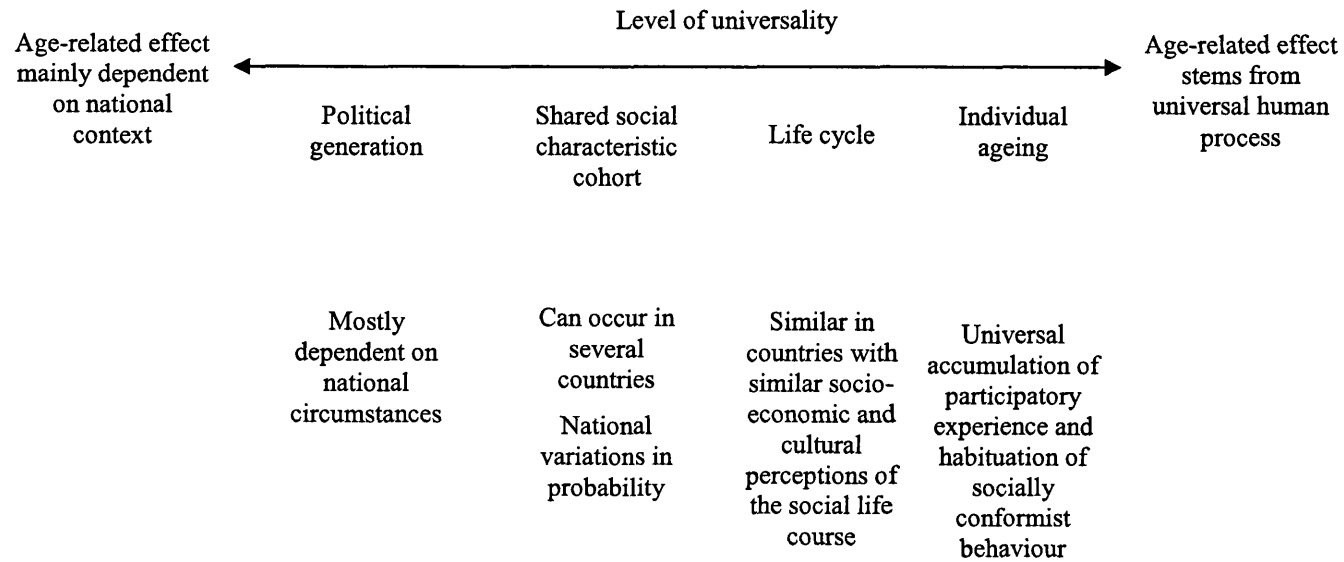
3.5 The model-implicit expectations for variations between European countries

So far we have only looked at differences between seniors and younger age groups at the individual level. However, depending on the nature of the age-related effects, we can expect differences between countries to play a role. The four types of age-related effects differ in their level of universality (see figure 3-2). Empirically, we can use some of the variations between countries as additional independent variables to explain differences between age groups in individual countries. I will discuss the operationalisation of this notion in chapter 4, which covers methods.

Political generation effects are due to varying period effects when a cohort is impressionable in early adulthood. These effects are strongly shaped by the political history that a cohort experiences. There are a few historical events and processes that can potentially determine generational experiences at a young age across national

borders, and which have an effect on the decision to participate and which create similar lasting influences at a later age. Examples might be the experience of the World Wars or the fall of totalitarian regimes. For instance, the experience of a totalitarian system with its lack of participatory opportunities at young adulthood influences attitudes towards participation in later life. To that extent, the participatory predisposition of a Polish older person should be similar to that of a Slovenian older person. By and large, however, political generation effects should vary between countries and should be due to national circumstances. This is especially true with regard to electoral preferences, as the experience of parties is national in character.

Figure 3-2: Different types of age-related effects and their level of universality



If cohorts differ in the probability of attaining a certain social characteristic, this difference is largely due to broad societal processes that tend to go in one direction (in the periods under study) only. For example, many sociologists such as Bryan Wilson (1966) claim that socio-economic development and declining religiosity are correlates of modernisation. Older cohorts are more likely to have lower degrees of formal education and be more religious. The differences between cohorts can vary across countries, but is likely to be qualitatively similar between countries, because European societies follow comparable socio-economic trajectories. For example, the difference in religiosity between older and younger age groups is larger in Spain than in Germany. This is because in Spain the older generations are strongly religious and younger generations less so whereas in Germany, there is only a modest generational difference, because older generations are already less religious than their fellow generational members in Spain.

Life cycle effects depend on the cultural perception of the life course. This perception is very similar across Europe. Thus, the social demands and expectations, resources and identities vary similarly across the life cycle. So if life cycle factors play a role in political participation, they should do so in a similar way across Europe. This is not to say that there are no differences between European countries as to the social position of older people. Indeed, one of the findings will be that there are differences in the 'old age culture' of a country, which determine the activity levels of older people. But overall the social projection of the life cycle is similar across Europe.

Individual ageing is the sum of accumulating life experience as well as the habituation of certain patterns of political behaviour. These two are genuinely human processes that should be the same in all countries regardless of cultural context.

3.6 Hypotheses

This section summarises the main hypotheses that we can derive from the theoretical framework in this chapter and the findings in the literature in chapter 2. It spells them out in specific terms that will be tested in the empirical chapters with evidence from 21 European countries in 2002, Britain and West Germany across the post-war era and further explored in interviews that I led in 2005 with English Council Tax protesters.

Political generation hypotheses

H1: Older people are more likely to direct their organisational engagement towards political parties and are less likely to direct it towards single-issue organisations than younger people.

H2: Older cohorts are less likely to commit non-institutionalised forms of participation than more recent cohorts.

H3: The lack of experience of a free, liberal democracy at young adulthood decreases the likelihood of non-institutionalised participation.

If political socialisation at young adulthood matters for citizens' attitudes and behaviour in later life, older people should show a pattern of political behaviour that is different from more recent cohorts. This pattern should also be to some degree predictable from

the knowledge of the political history of the country during the period when they were young adults.

The composition of the participatory process has changed in the last few decades in Western Europe. Conventional forms of organisational participation, such as through parties and trade unions, has declined in favour of a rise in single-issue activities and social movements (Dalton 2004; Norris 1999, 2002). If socialisation at young adulthood matters to determine the repository of political actions, the composition of repository should vary between cohorts. Older people – as members of older generations – should still mirror the ‘fashion’ of political, organisational engagement of the times when they were young adults and most open to political impressions. Younger adults develop not only political preferences with regard to political issues, but also with regard to the feasible trajectories of political participation. Thus, older generations in most European democracies should prefer parties over other organisations and have a lesser interest in using non-institutionalised forms of participation, compared to younger generations. In addition, in recently democratised countries, the lack of experience of other than voting activities should make older citizens less likely to participate in other than voting activities.

H4: Older people belong to a cohort that shares party preferences that are stable across time.

Party fortunes vary across time. If a party is particularly successful during a certain period, it predominantly captures the young voters of the time. If voters are more susceptible to developing their party preferences at young adulthood and maintain these, various electoral political generations must be detectable. An older voter therefore

differs from the younger as to her membership to another 'electoral' political generation. As much as political history is uneven, so is the sequence of political generations that shared a common electoral socialisation experience. These cohorts are likely to be of unequal size. Drawing from knowledge about the historical-political circumstances, party fortunes and election results during the early elections in the life of a cohort, one can make predictions about the attraction of a particular party to a specific cohort relative to the preceding cohort. For example, in 1969 the German government leadership changed from the Christian-Democrats to the Social-Democrats who introduced a flurry of new policy ideas that historians said influenced the young generation of the time. Thus, the political generation that first went to the polls in 1969 and subsequently can be expected to be more pro-SPD than the cohort who first voted under the Christian-Democrat Konrad Adenauer. I will present the detailed predictions of the proposition H4 in chapter 7.

Shared social characteristic cohort and life cycle hypothesis

H5: Older people differ on predictors of political participation from younger people. They are less endowed with or less likely to have: education, religiosity, postmaterialist attitudes, income, trade union membership, a bigger town/city to live in, number of children living in the same household, (self-)employment, health, political efficacy, social networks, living with partner.

They are more endowed with or more likely to have: duration of residence, pension as a main source of income, political trust, political satisfaction, general satisfaction, right-leniency (not in post-communist countries), party identification, party membership, sense of duty to vote, political interest, usage of political information.

The theoretical framework portrays political participation as an action based on an assessment of intrinsic factors (resources and motivation) and extrinsic factors (mobilisation and opportunities). Older people differ systematically on a whole range of these factors that are rooted in life cycle and/or cohort differences. It would be desirable not only to check cross-sectional relationships, but also to follow cohorts through time. I am unable to do so due to limitations in my primary data. However, I will make use of a large pool of secondary sources to categorise the effects as cohort or life cycle effects.

If predictors of participation vary between cohorts, older people can have different participatory levels as members of a different cohort. Mostly, these social characteristics make older cohorts less likely to participate. For instance, nowadays lower levels of formal education give older cohorts less resources to understand the political process. Since the underlying process is similar across countries, we should see similar differences between the participatory levels of age groups.

If predictors of participation in politics vary along the social life cycle, so will the participatory levels of the average senior citizen in comparison to younger people. For example, older people are on average less physically able than younger people due to the accumulation of unhealthy life styles and physical ageing. There are other examples that work in contrast to this. For example, the longer a person has lived in a certain area, the higher her motivation to participate in politics. This is because she possesses more knowledge of local issues that are of political relevance. I will describe the theoretical justification for each predictor in chapters 6 and 8.

Shared social characteristic cohort hypothesis

H6: Older voters have a different endowment of social characteristics that are predictors of party choice. In West Germany, they are less well educated and more religious. Thus, they are less likely to vote for the FDP and the Greens than younger voters.

In party systems in which the social characteristic of voters define their voting decision, a decline or rise in the availability of social characteristics across cohorts can make older cohorts differ in their party choice. The socialisation effects of that cohort characteristic will have a lasting influence. The decline in religiosity and rise in education favours the FDP and Greens in West Germany. This is because these social characteristics summarise a particular socialisation into a party preference, often conveyed through parents (see Butler and Stokes 1983 [1974]). This prediction is different from the socialisation experience in political generations that is due to the historical ups and downs in party fortunes.¹⁰ The CDU/CSU and SPD cannot be expected to benefit or suffer unambiguously from the change in social composition because a decline in religiosity is conducive whereas the rise in education is disadvantageous for the SPD vote (and vice versa for the CDU/CSU vote).

Life cycle hypotheses

H7: Senior parties become successful in countries with growing proportions of older people.

¹⁰ I will not test the analogous implication for Britain. There, a stronger process of de-alignment than in West Germany accompanied the rise in education, so that education as one proxy for class became a less strong predictor for party choice in general. Thus, the different social composition of older cohorts mattered less. Also, the British data is not as suitable for over-time comparisons due to the limited equivalence of variables.

If older people define their political preferences through their old age, they should vote for parties that explicitly represent these interests. I will look at the fortunes of senior parties across Europe that define themselves as representing old age interests.

Competing hypotheses

H8a: Economic conservatism - Older people are more likely to vote for the most economically conservative party. Older people are less likely to vote for the least economically conservative party.

H8b: Pro-state-spending - Older people are more likely to vote for the least economically conservative party. Older people are less likely to vote for the most economically conservative party.

The social situation puts pressure on the individual to change her policy preferences in such a way that the material interests of that individual are best served. But what are these material interests on average among older people? There are two conflicting notions in the literature. One says that older people have more to preserve and thus want to give less to the state. They should support parties that favour a lean state with little taxes. The other says that older people want as many free public services as possible, and thus a strong state that raises a lot of tax money and diverts it towards them. As parties can be ordered along a spectrum, the most extremely positioned parties at both ends should make preferences by older people visible. For example, if older voters vote in a way that is more economically conservative than younger voters, the most economically conservative party should have an edge among older voters and be less popular among younger voters.

H9: Older people are more likely to vote for the incumbent.

One of the psychological changes across the life cycle is a growing concern for security or a growing aversion towards risk (Deakin et al. 2004; Williamson et al. 1982). Older people become conservative in their being reluctant to change. By voting for the incumbent, an older voter can minimise the impact of potential unforeseen changes. When voting for the incumbent, they can easily use their assessment of the incumbent's performance. If they vote for the challengers, they can just rely on the projected performance of the challenger. Parties in government also have an incentive to obfuscate the costs of policies that they want to implement in order to lose as few votes as possible and gain as much resources from specialised interests as possible (Magee, Brock, and Young 1989). If older people have a higher preference for less insecurity, they should find it easier to vote for the incumbent.

Individual ageing hypotheses

Habituation

H10: Ceteris paribus, older people are more likely to vote than younger people. In the cross-sectional analysis with pooled data from all European countries, the residual variation between age groups (from young to old) follows a concave curve in contrast to the single country analyses.

Older people find voting easier due to their past experience of voting and politics. The methodological idea behind this hypothesis is that cross-sectional data can be ‘cleaned’ of political generation effects if the data comes from countries that are very different in their political history. This means that political generation effects will cancel each other out. The habituation effect should be visible in a pooled analysis as a smooth learning curve because all country-specific distortion will be taken out and only the universal ageing effect will be present. In a single-country analysis, the ageing effect will, in contrast, continue being tinged by political generation effects.

H11: Older voters are more likely to vote for larger parties or smaller parties that are regularly part of government.

Older people accumulate deeper party schema about larger parties. Larger parties and smaller parties that are regularly part of the government have more influence on the public through the media and leave more of an impact on electors’ minds. As individuals update their partisan schemas at every election, these repetitious impressions lead to more detailed schemas of these kinds of parties among older voters. For younger voters,

in contrast, the party schemas are less distorted in favour of larger parties due to the lack of accumulative experience of this bias in the public sphere.

Compliance with social norms

H12a: The higher the average turnout in a country, the smaller the gap is between the voting probability of older and younger people, ceteris paribus.

H12b: The higher the formal education and expressed sense of duty to vote, the smaller the gap is between the voting probability of older and younger people, ceteris paribus.

H12c: Among citizens with high education and low sense of duty to vote, older people do not have a higher voting probability than younger people, ceteris paribus.

If a certain form of political participation is an established social norm, older people are more likely to use it because their own bond with that society is stronger than that of younger people. Older people are on average more exposed to the social norms of the society than younger people, as they have taken more social roles in that society (e.g. employee, parent, uncle/aunt, neighbour etc) with these roles meaning exposure to a given set of expectations. Thus, they have a larger social gratification to gain from complying with that social norm than younger people. The average turnout in a country is a proxy for the strength of that voting norm. If such a norm is high, younger voters already have a high incentive to comply with it. Thus, there is little to gain in terms of increasing voting participation across the lifetime. Also, formal education raises the level of cognitive engagement for politics (Dalton 2002). Political information can be processed more easily by the more educated, and more educated citizens are generally more aware and critical of political events. If voters express a high level of a personal,

subjective norm to vote and are also cognitively engaged, there should be no effect from growing older as the level of compliance is already very high. However, if the expressed norm is low and individuals are also cognitively engaged, there should be no systematic relationship between age and voting participation because the individuals know what voting is about and have a low sense of the social norm. This means that growing entanglement with society through ageing should not have an effect.

From a methodological point-of-view, it would be desirable to make predictions about the relative strength of each hypothesis. As the model is set up in probabilistic rather than deterministic terms, some of the hypotheses could be equally true in the sense that they change the probabilities of committing a political action. For example, the life cycle and generational predictions about party choice could be equally true in terms of changing the probability of voting for a particular party. Unfortunately, I am not able to make these predictions from the theory because most of the predicted effects are complimentary rather than mutually exclusive. Therefore, it could be that all effects are equally important. It is one of the contributions of this thesis to make a first estimate as to the relative importance of each perspective, but strictly methodologically speaking these judgements about relative power are exploratory.

Assessing the model

When would the model not be a good description of reality? I tried to present a set of hypotheses that are falsifiable. I did so under the assumption that a general age-centred model of political participation to explain differences between age groups in advanced

industrial democracies is possible. However, since I do not engage in a comparison of rival models, I need to be able to assess the model that I put forward.

There are two general aspects of the model open to falsifiability that stem from the fact that I am comparing two social groups in terms of their political behaviour. To illustrate the point, one can say that my hypothesised effects have two causal arrows. First, there is a causal relationship for the correlation of a particular characteristic between age groups. Then, there is a second causal relationship between that characteristic and political participation. The model would need alteration if any one of these arrows did not withstand empirical testing.

I would be wrong (a) if predictors of political participation (preferences, resources/motivation or opportunities/mobilisation exposure) do not vary between age groups as the theory predicts. For example, I expected higher levels of political trust in conventional political institutions among older cohorts, a strong negative predictor of protest behaviour. The theory predicts that early socialisation determines political preferences that are stable into later life and can only be altered by experiences of social situations that are a correlate of a person's age. I will, however, find no systematic variations between age groups as to political trust. Thus, the cohort variation that is part of the model expectations could not be demonstrated with empirical evidence.

I would be wrong (b) if a theoretically predicted impact factor of political participation that varies between age groups is not systematically related with political participation. For example, co-habiting with a partner does not have a mobilising effect for non-institutionalised forms of participation – an effect that I had been expecting.

More generally, the model would be wrong if one kind of age-related effects did not matter altogether, e.g. if cohort differences had no or only a negligible impact, but life cycle and individual ageing effects would have. Cohort effects are rooted in differences in socialisation as young adults. If they did not matter, socialisation would not play a role in explaining differences in political behaviour between age groups. The differences between age groups would only lie in sociological and psychological processes associated with the social life cycle and individual ageing. Along the same lines, the model would also be a bad description of reality if no life cycle or individual ageing effects mattered.

Generally speaking, all four kinds of age-related effects play a vital role in explaining reality. As I will demonstrate, the model needs to be refined with regard to the macro context. The structural macro context seems to determine under which circumstances generational or life cycle effects are more important for party choice. I also find some predictors of political participation to be irrelevant, so they can be omitted in a new model.

3.7 Summary

I assume that human beings try to maximise their personal outcome, which consists of benefits that can be personal material as well as expressive. In advanced post-industrial democracies, high welfare standards and relatively high standards of living allow citizens to experience a certain degree of freedom to be active or inactive in politics because their basic needs are satisfied. Political preferences are the same across individuals because they are in a similar social situation, or because they have experienced similar, early political socialisation that has a sustainable impact in later

life. Individuals make a cost-benefit calculation during which they can only make use of limited rationality and will resort to cognitive short-cuts to deal with complex political reality.

Political participation is an action based on a decision on the mode and content of that action. Individuals consider the motivation and resources they have, and the mobilisation and opportunities factors they face, in order to make the cost-benefit calculation. Older people can be different from younger people (a) because they belong to a different political generation that has got collectively differently shaped political preferences. These preferences can affect the choice and content of political participation, (b) because they have a different set of resources/motivation and mobilisation/opportunities compared to younger people. These differences arise from the social circumstances of the stage of the life cycle or the varying degrees of exposure to certain social characteristics across cohorts, (c) because older people have more participatory experience to go back to and are more likely to adhere to social norms. This is because older people are more deeply embedded in the social context that holds these norms.

4 Research Methods

In the empirical analysis, I will use a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. This chapter presents the general methodological approach and the strengths and weaknesses of the methods. Firstly, I will review the problems with and the methodological demands of studying age-related effects. Secondly, I will discuss the reasons for doing a comparative study of contemporary European democracies (section 4.2), and choosing Great Britain and West Germany for a longitudinal analysis (section 4.3). Thirdly, I will review the details of the quantitative (section 4.4) and qualitative methods (section 4.5).

4.1 Research design in the absence of 'ideal' data

The empirical investigation into the differences of political behaviour between age groups is hampered by the lack of well-suited data. In an ideal world, the researcher should have access to long-term panel data that covers at least two decades. This kind of panel data could ensure that the long-term effects of ageing on the individual level, such as the hypothesised impact of habituation, could be directly measured, because we could follow the intra-individual change over time. Unfortunately, there is almost no panel data like this available. To my knowledge, there are the British Household Panel Study (15 years) and the West German Socio-Economic Panel (20 years). But both cover relatively few acts of political participation. It would also be necessary not only to have one long-term panel study, but also several of them in different countries and during different periods. This would ensure that measured ageing effects are not due to an interaction between cohort and period effects. The ageing effects should be similar in all

panel studies if they are grounded on psychological processes. The effects of ageing that are measured in one panel survey could be idiosyncratic to the cohorts that are being followed through time and the specific period effects of the time. For example, if I had data for someone born in 1920 that was collected in 1970 and 1990, I could demonstrate how that individual changes as she ages. But is this change of the individual due to ageing or due to the fact that those born in 1920 respond in a certain way to the political circumstances in 1970 and 1990? One panel study alone cannot give me the answer.

The few panel data sets that are available (Alwin, Cohen, and Newcomb 1991; Jennings and Markus 1988; Sears and Funk 1999) suffer from additional problems. They tend to over-represent higher socio-economic backgrounds, as these respondents are more likely to be re-interviewed. In addition, respondents are generally biased in their own answers as they remember what they answered last time rather than giving answers as if they heard the question for the first time. Long-term panel studies that are representative are very expensive and obviously time-consuming. I do not see any possibilities of concerting efforts to co-ordinate long-term panel studies internationally, which is probably due to the short-term horizon that researchers have in terms of having to publish as quickly as possible. Therefore, it does not seem to be useful to wait for better data before analysing age-related effects on political participation given the improbability of these data sets being put together and the pressing demographic development. In the absence of well-suited data, I have to use less straightforward techniques to make sense of the various kinds of age-related effects.

4.2 Reasons for studying Europe

There are four reasons for concentrating on Europe: stage of socio-economic development, demographic profile, historical diversity and the culture of life cycle. In the theoretical model, I assumed that post-industrial democracies are similar in terms of giving individuals a certain scope of freedom in political decisions. This is because in these countries the basic needs of individuals are satisfied. The 21 European countries are similar to the extent that they have welfare states that can guarantee all citizens a minimum standard of living. This characteristic satisfies the condition of giving citizens some scope for political decisions.

As mentioned in the introduction, the countries under investigation are most similar with regard to average life expectancy and the proportion of older people. Thereby, we can ensure that (a) one year of lifetime has the same social meaning and (b) any macro influences of demographic pressures on political actors are held constant across these countries. Because the demographic weight of older people is very high in global comparison, it is also desirable to analyse the political behaviour of older people, as they make up such a large proportion of society in European countries.

As much as these European countries are similar to their demographic profile, they are they dissimilar in terms of democratic-historical experience. The democratic experiences of, for example, Poland, Sweden, Italy and Spain are very different, so that generational differences within countries vary to a large extent. As a consequence, it is much easier for us to study age-related effects that are not peculiar to a particular country, but that are similar across countries.

Finally, the culture of the life cycle is similar across Europe. The social and cultural perception of the life course is the same in Western countries. I already described the reasons for this assumption in chapter 1.

4.3 Choosing Great Britain and West Germany as country case studies

I will analyse Britain and West Germany in chapters 6 and 7 to study voting behaviour and in chapter 9 will undertake a qualitative analysis of older Council Tax protesters in England. In addition, I use Britain as an example for a descriptive longitudinal analysis of turnout in chapter 6. Studying party choice in Great Britain and West Germany has practical and theoretical reasons behind it. Firstly, both countries have a long tradition of high quality surveys that can be used in a pooled analysis, and I will talk more about the data in the next section.

Secondly, the two party systems are very dissimilar with regard to over time changes with respect to the main parties. Since 1945, Britain had a party system that was dominated by two major parties, the Conservatives and Labour (Norris 1997), which regularly alternated in single-party government. While the patterns of government formation were relatively stable since World War II, there have been two major changes. One is the increase of the voting share of the Liberals/Social-democratic party/Liberal Democrats (the Liberals henceforth) since the 1970s; the other is the emergence of regionalist parties from Scotland and Wales.¹¹ West Germany was a two and a half party system for three decades, in which two ideological blocs (the Social-democrats [SPD] and the Christian-democrats [CDU/CSU]) and one pivotal party, the liberal FDP,

¹¹ Northern Ireland is excluded from the analysis because of its different party system.

dominated voting choice. From 1980s onwards, the party system changed as the Greens entered the *Bundestag*.¹²

Thirdly, the main sociological dimensions of party competition are different. British party competition is dominated by one dimension, namely the socio-economic since class is the only salient political cleavage between the major political parties (Siaroff 2000: 17). However, there are two dimensions in German national politics. One is the classical left-right socio-economic dimension. The second dimension is religion where one end can be termed secular and the other religious.

Parties can be ordered in one or two-dimensional spaces. However, over time, they can shift their ideological stance. These shifts can sometimes be so radical that one party overtakes another on a given dimension. In Britain, the Tories were always more conservative than Labour. Therefore, given a choice of these two parties, the Conservatives were always the more conservative option. The Liberals shift their relative position over the years on the left-right continuum. This is due to the decline, fusion with the Social-Democratic Party and the re-positioning of the Liberals over the last 50 years. In the 1950s, the Liberals were to the right of the Conservatives, in the 1960s and since 1997 they are to the left of Labour (Budge 1999: 5).

In West Germany, the picture is more complicated because of its two-dimensional nature. Socio-economically, the FDP is the most conservative party, followed by the Christian-democrats, the SPD and finally the Greens from the 1980s

¹² The post-communist Socialists (PDS) did not play a role for West Germany before 2005.

onwards. On the religious dimension, the CDU/CSU is more towards the religious end of the axis whereas the others are secular parties (Siaroff 2000: 17).

Fourthly, de-alignment, the process through which social characteristics lose their explanatory power for voting, affected both countries differently. Britain is thought to be more advanced than Germany today and has started earlier with the de-alignment process (Franklin 1992). The question of de-alignment is crucially important in the study of generational effects. If de-alignment takes place, socialisation effects at youth should become less important because social characteristics and early electoral experiences wane in importance. Instead, candidate evaluation, issue position and mobilisation strategies gain in influence for the voting choice.

Finally, the two countries have different electoral systems. Britain uses the first-past-the-post system with a low degree of proportionality, while Germany uses a mixture of first-past-the-post and proportional representation with a high degree of proportionality. As I will demonstrate in chapter 7, the unique combination of different paces of de-alignment and stable electoral systems allow us to put forward new findings with regard to the macro factors of the party system.

England was further chosen as a country context to study the protesters of the Council Tax protests in 2004/5. The reason for the study is the temporal closeness of the protests to the time the European Social Survey was conducted. Thus, the characteristics of the British population that we can infer from the Survey must be relatively similar to the population in 2004 and 2005 when the interviewees took part in the Council Tax protests. The British context also represents characteristics of a crucial case study (Eckstein 1975). Britain has a history of old age protests (Thane 2000) and a generally

high level of political participation. Also – as I will demonstrate – the indicators for old age culture for Britain show that the average citizen values older people relatively high. Thus, conditions for older people being active in politics are very good in Britain. The findings about images around old age and passivity in politics – despite the good conditions – suggest that we should expect even stronger images elsewhere where there are less favourable context conditions for older people to participate in politics.

4.4 Research methods I: quantitative analysis

Large parts of this thesis (chapters 6 – 8) rely on multivariate regression techniques. The large-N statistical analysis allows for rigorous testing of hypotheses. It can test several factors at the same time and assess the relative importance of each one of them. The use of high quality samples allows statistical inference on the underlying population, the citizenry aged 18 and older in 21 European countries. The techniques are very reliable as each (properly trained) researcher would come to the same results. Replication is easily possible.

However, there are also some underlying assumptions that go hand in hand with these statistical techniques. (1) The unit of analysis is the individual, and the basic determinants of behaviour are the same for all individuals. The danger of this assumption is to see citizens as atomised individuals who behave according to internal characteristics or outside forces, very often without any reference to their wider social context (see Dunleavy 1996). (2) All characteristics can be measured by categorical, ordinal or interval scales. So the social experience of having friends, for instance, in a given network is assumed to be consistent across individuals and can be reliably measured and quantified.

In order to countervail some of the disadvantages of individual-level analysis, the second case study uses semi-structured interviews with protesters in order to understand their personal experiences that are not open to standardised survey questions. I will describe these methods in section 4.5.

Data

In chapters 5, 6 and 8, I will use the European Social Survey (version 5, round 1). It is a broad survey that has been co-ordinated between European countries. The data became public in January 2004 and is freely accessible on the internet.¹³ The sampling period covers spring 2002. There are 21 European countries in the survey: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Slovenia, Sweden, and Switzerland. If necessary from a theoretical point-of-view (e.g. to control for differences in totalitarian socialisation), I will split Germany in East and West for the sample to consist of 22 countries. The survey is cross-sectional only, i.e. we only have data from one point in time albeit in a multitude of countries.¹⁴ The countries cover a whole range of cultural regions, welfare systems and democratic experiences. All countries are functioning liberal democracies that have had regular elections and changes in government by democratic means.

Overall, the European Social Survey has superb sampling properties. They differ by country depending on the availability of population frames. For instance, the Danish sample uses simple random sampling, the Austrian three-stage stratified probability

¹³ At <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org>.

¹⁴ The second round became available in autumn 2005.

sampling, or the Czech Republic two-stage stratified probability sampling. The research team adopted a flexible approach where they wanted to get the best probability sampling design that is available in each country. This depends on the experience of the sampling experts in each country. The target response rate was a minimum of 70 %, which was reached in most countries. Interviews were carried out face-to-face, and at no point were substitution or quota sampling allowed.

In chapter 7, I will look at party choice in West Germany and Britain across time. To that end, I will use national election studies (the British Election Studies 1964-2001, the German Election Studies 1961-1998) and monthly surveys (Gallup 1958 and 1959 and Politbarometer 1977-2002). In the case of the British Election Studies, I created a new accumulated data set where I put together data from each survey year for repeated cross-sectional time series. For West Germany, I use the already accumulated Politbarometer. In addition, I run single-year models for control purposes. These data sets can be obtained from the British and German data archive in Essex or Cologne respectively.

Weighting

The European Social Survey disposes of two weights that can be used to adjust for uneven selection probabilities and differences in the population size of countries. The clustering techniques bring in design effects of varying sizes that are not equal to one and that change the reliability of confidence intervals. When analysing single countries, I will use the design weight *dweight*. When analysing all countries together, I will use a combination of the design weight (*dweight*) and the population weight (*pweight*), either

by using a product of both (in chapter 6) or defining the appropriate weight for the respective level in the multi-level analysis (chapter 8).

I do not use any weights in the cross-sectional time series analysis. This simplification is reasonable, however, since we are only using various measures of age (political generation and age group) and gender, so that we just assume that the differences in selection probability and non-response are randomly distributed between age groups across time.

The problem of confounded cohort, age and period effects

Quantitative survey analysis of age-related effects on political behaviour is confronted with three different confounded effects: cohort, life cycle and period effects. Cohort effects are shared by those citizens that were born around the same time and thus form a cohort. Statistical life cycle effects affect those who have the same age. Period effects subsume all those effects that stem from the point of time of data collection. This last effect is strictly speaking not conceptually related to age, but can impinge on age-related effects. Period, life cycle and cohort effects are always perfectly multicollinear in a cross-sectional survey (see for a review Glenn 1976). If you take, for example, German elections in 1998 and 2002 and compare the behaviour of 70 year olds in each election, one cannot say whether their behaviours stem from the fact that they are 70 year olds, or a combination of cohort effects of those born in 1928 or 1932 and period effects of 1998 and 2002 affecting only these cohorts (a two-way interaction effect). One of the three effects can always be exchanged by the interaction of two other confounding effects. In order to tackle these technical difficulties, the thesis makes use of two different statistical techniques that I am now going to discuss.

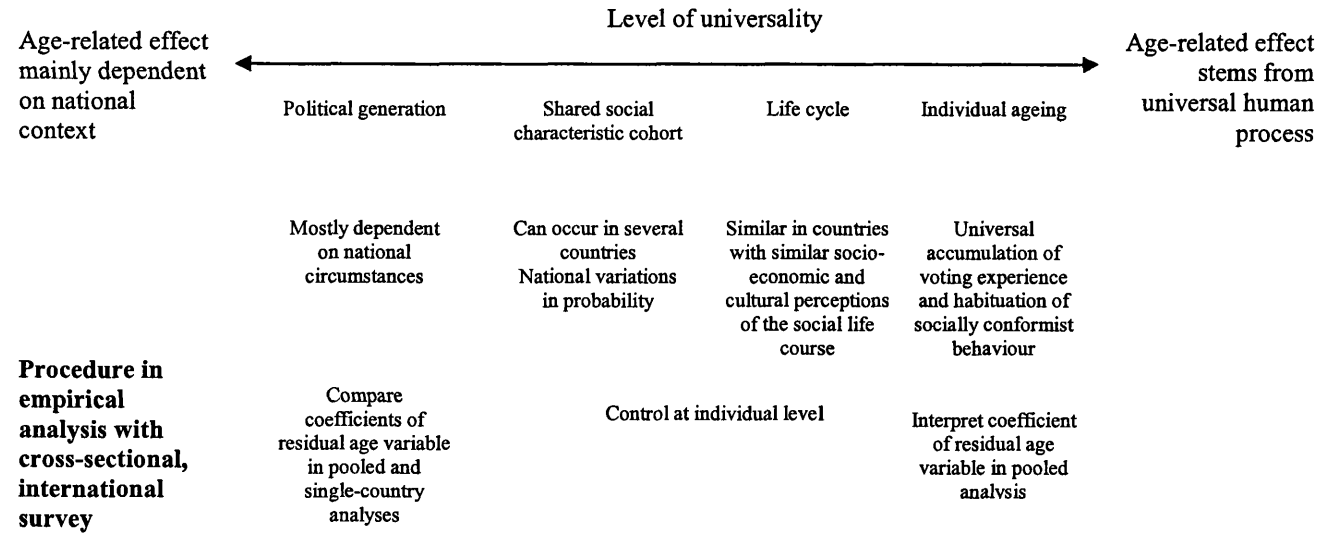
Studying age effects with international cross-sectional data

A little used technique is the analysis of internationally cross-sectional data to study age-related effects (see for example De Graaf 1999; Rubenson et al. 2004). The first reasoning in this direction was put forward in an article by Nie, Verba and Kim with regard to age and political participation:

‘The nature and timing of major political events vary from country to country. If we find uniformity in the relationship between political activities and age across these nations [Austria, Britain, India, Nigeria United States], it is unlikely that such uniformity was produced by uniform generational experiences. It is far more likely that such uniformity reflects the uniform impact of aging’ (Nie, Verba, and Kim 1974: 322).

Social scientists usually agree that chronological age as such does not have any causal implications for social behaviour. However, chronological age can serve as a proxy for social age (i.e. someone’s position in the life cycle and ageing experience) and as a proxy for cohort experience. This approach tries to strip chronological age of its underlying importance as a proxy and then interpret the coefficient of the residual age variable.

Figure 4-1: Different types of age-related effects, their level of universality and empirical procedure for analysis



It starts from some theoretical hypotheses about the nature of age-related effects – whether age-related effects are specific to a country or more universal (see figure 4-1). The conceptual differentiation between different types of age-related effects can then be brought together with the theory that guides model selection. This involves a model of voting participation in one chapter and a model of non-institutionalised participation in the other. In contrast, conventional techniques such as national cross-sectional time series or panel studies are often – because of data limitations – bound to restrict themselves to stating the existence of life cycle or cohort effects and post-hoc explanations of these variations. By taking on recent advances in sociology and social gerontology, the study of a comprehensive, international survey can benefit from a host of conceptually meaningful variables. The intention is not to build a full model of the phenomenon in question, but one that focuses on the differences between age groups. In statistical terms, it builds a multivariate regression model in which the dependent variable (e.g. a yes/no – dichotomy of political action) represents the object of study and the independent variables stand for various cohort (e.g. religiosity or education), life cycle (e.g. retirement or free time) and individual ageing effects that we can expect from our underlying model. In contrast to other methods, this technique does not allow an empirical test about the origin of the nature of age-related variables. It derives the assessment from the literature. So the researcher does not test whether education is a generational or life cycle effect, but relies on the literature. From then on, the nature of the age-related variable is being treated as a well-grounded assumption.

This technique needs a comprehensive data set. The European Social Survey allows us to control for many age-related effects in a meaningful way. For example, the numbers of children in a household is a good proxy to what extent a young or

middle aged person has time to pursue political actions at that age. We can thus distil effects associated from a certain chronological age via control variables. For that procedure, the European Social Survey is superior to the World Values Survey that would also have been available.

The idea now is to control for as many age-related effects as possible at the individual level, i.e. through individual-level independent variables. Guided by hypotheses about potential effects, the researcher is able to include cohort and life cycle effects with diverse proxies in the comprehensive data set. Thereby, the coefficient of the residual age variable still captures the meaning of individual ageing and political generation effects. We now need a procedure to disentangle the universal individual ageing effect from national political generation effects.

The 21 or 22 countries in the European Social Survey are very different as to their democratic experience. They range from recently democratised post-Communist countries to established democracies like Britain. If you pool diverse countries together, political generation effects should not distort the residual effect of age anymore because they cancel each other out. This means that we can interpret the coefficient of residual age as the individual ageing effect with confidence. Imagine the group of 50 to 60 year olds in 2002. If we look at the group from West Germany, they experienced the 1968 student revolution when they were about 15-25. Their Spanish counterpart of the same age in 2002 experienced the last decade of totalitarian Franco regime. The Czechs underwent the experience of a regime going hard-line after the Prague Spring events. Similarly, 19 other cohort experiences exist that we cannot capture separately in other variables. However, all cohorts across the diversity of these countries should show the individual ageing effect because it is a universal human feature. If the individual ageing effect has an impact on the

phenomenon in question, it will thus become visible in the pooled analysis. National political generation distortions thus add up to a kind of random noise in the pooled analysis.

This approach has limits in four aspects. Firstly, we cannot study political generation effects. Therefore, this technique is not employed for voting choice where political generations are important. In that context, we will use repeated cross-sectional time series analysis. However, one can combine the findings from the international cross-sectional study of many countries with those of the longitudinal analysis of one country, as I will do in chapter 6.

By the same token, we cannot make any predictions about the impact of national political generation effects in our model. This would require us to go back to individual countries, and we would be confronted with confounded generational and ageing effects. However, political generation effects are also least amenable to generalisation and can best be studied with regard to a single country – as we do in chapters 6 and 7 where we look at political generations in Britain and West Germany.

The third limit of this approach is that interaction effects between period effects and cohort or life cycle effects cannot be modelled. Period effects cannot be captured at all because all respondents are exposed to the same period effect. Any interaction term between age groups and period cannot be traced. Thus, the implicit assumption of such an analysis is that period effects do not interact with life cycle or cohort effects.

Despite these disadvantages, the major merit of this approach is that different kinds of age-related effects can be analysed in a conceptually meaningful manner. Instead of stating the presence of life cycle or generational effects, we can, for

instance, talk about the relative effects of retirement or raising children (life cycle) vis-à-vis education and political ideology (cohort differences), all of which are causes of variation across age groups.

Studying age-related effects with time series of cross-sectional data

In the chapter on party choice (chapter 7), I will use time series of accumulated cross-sectional data. This is a conventional technique to study generational and ageing effects in one country. Because of the easy availability of these data sets, this design is probably the most common form to study age-related effects in political science (see for example Blais et al. 2004; Clarke et al. 2004; Falter and Gehring 1998; Gehring 1994; Gluchowski 1983; Klingemann 1998; Rattinger 1998).

A national cross-sectional survey asks respondents in one country at one point in time with the sole intention of inferring about the characteristics of the population at that moment. If the researcher can establish equivalence between items across time, e.g. through the same question wording, one can combine these cross-sectional studies into a time series. Each study allows generalisation about the national population at each point in time. Over time, we are not able to follow intra-individual, but are able to follow aggregate change.

This design does not allow us to look at ageing effects at the level of the individual, but does allow for good estimates of arguably general effects, like growing status-quo conservatism. In addition, we are still trapped with confounding life cycle- cohort-period effects. Finally, international comparisons are only possible to a limited extent because of problems in the comparability of surveys in different countries.

4.5 Research methods II: qualitative analysis

Chapter 9 bases its findings on interviews that I led with older participants in the Council Tax protests. The objective was to gain a better understanding of the experience of older people who protest. These interviews were led by phone in November and December 2005 as older people are reported to show strong interviewer effects if the interviewer is younger, white and male (Wenger 2002), which matches my profile. The high level of mistrust from interviewees that I had to overcome when setting up the telephone interviews seemed to confirm that it would have been difficult to get agreement to face-to-face interviews. Some of the interviewees reported mobility problems and time-consuming commitments within their household, like caring for a spouse. These traits would also make face-to-face interviews outside of their homes unfeasible. In addition, face-to-face interviews in personal households increase variations in situational variables that make interview results more dependent on the physical context of the interview (Shuy 2002).

Since there was no population frame from which it might have been possible to draw a sample, I used convenience sampling, which does not allow us, from a strict point of view, to make inferences about the population of older protesters, or even all older protesters at these events. I contacted¹⁵ the main Isitfair organisation and all local groups that are connected to Isitfair according to the Isitfair website¹⁶, explaining my research and its non-commercial purpose. I also posted my project on the Isitfair internet news forum, asking for volunteers. I included two requirements in my request for co-operation: interview partners had to be 60 or older and had to have taken part in some of the protest activities that took place in 2004. I also stated that I

¹⁵ See Teske (1997) for a similar research approach towards political activists.

¹⁶ About half of the links were broken, however.

would be more interested in interviewing people (a) other than the high-level activists who, for example, run local groups and (b) who are from various places across the country.

The sample that I interviewed consisted of people who had been suggested by the main organisers as potentially willing to be interviewed and further recommendations by this first group. In total, I interviewed 22 older people between 15 November and 7 December 2005. The sample is very probably biased towards more active members of the protest groups, people who are generally politically interested and – as I will demonstrate in chapter 9 – tend to come from the middle or upper classes. However, representativeness is not the goal of these interviews as the experience of each interviewee is supposed to help us understand what political participation in the form of protest activities at old age is about. Also, one of the objectives was to learn about images of old age and politics. These protesters had been active in politics themselves and had experienced reactions in their environment that had let them to understand that they should be passive in politics. Or they expressed internalised self-images about passive old age and politics. Thus, other older people who are not as active are probably even more likely to have such self-images or experience such stereotypes in their environment.

The findings of that chapter are much more exploratory in nature than the other three quantitative large-N studies. The main goals of this exploration were to examine the self-perceptions of protesters as ‘older’ protesters, and to examine their own past as political activists. The interviews allowed us to see whether some of the findings of the large-N survey analysis were applicable for them as well. The qualitative evidence is to help to expand a causal narrative to better understand the

causal chain. But more importantly, the interviews were meant to put forward new, richer hypotheses about older people's protest behaviour.

4.6 Summary

I argue for the study of Europe as a region for comparative analysis because: (a) the liberal democracies under investigation guarantee its citizens a certain standard of living to satisfy their basic needs; (b) its demographic profile makes the proportion of older people in the citizenry roughly similar; (c) its historical diversity makes the experience of generations dissimilar across countries; and (d) its culture of life cycle that makes the social experience of ageing similar.

The dissertation uses the European Social Survey, national election studies and monthly poll surveys of Britain and West Germany, and analyses them with quantitative, multivariate regression techniques. These large-N studies will be accompanied by a qualitative chapter on older protesters who took part in the English Council Tax protests in 2004/5. The empirical analysis stretches over five chapters. Four of them (5-8) will directly test the twelve hypotheses that I put forward in chapter 3 (see table 4-1). The fifth (chapter 9) will further explore the findings of previous chapters to get a richer understanding of the quantitative results.

Table 4-1: Roadmap of the thesis – the hypotheses and the chapter location where they will be tested

Hypotheses	
Chapter 5: Exploration	H1: Older people are more likely to direct their organisational engagement towards political parties and are less likely to direct it towards single-issue organisations than younger people.
Chapter 6: Voting Participation	<p>H5: Older people differ on predictors of political participation from younger people.</p> <p>H10: Ceteris paribus, older people are more likely to vote than younger people. In the cross-sectional analysis with pooled data from all European countries, the residual variation between age groups (from young to old) follows a concave curve in contrast to the single country analyses.</p> <p>H12a: The higher the average turnout in a country, the smaller the gap is between the voting probability of older and younger people, ceteris paribus.</p> <p>H12b: The higher the formal education and expressed sense of duty to vote, the smaller the gap is between the voting probability of older and younger people, ceteris paribus.</p> <p>H12c: Among citizens with high education and low sense of duty to vote, older people do not have a higher voting probability than younger people, ceteris paribus.</p>
Chapter 7: Party Choice	<p>H4: Older people belong to a cohort that shares party preferences that are stable across time.</p> <p>H6: Older voters have a different endowment of social characteristics that are predictors of party choice. In West Germany, they are less well educated and more religious. Thus, they are less likely to vote for the FDP and the Greens than younger voters.</p> <p>H7: Senior parties become successful in countries with growing proportions of older people.</p> <p>H8a: Economic conservatism - Older people are more likely to vote for the most economically conservative party. Older people are less likely to vote for the least economically conservative party.</p> <p>H8b: Pro-state-spending - Older people are more likely to vote for the least economically conservative party. Older people are less likely to vote for the most economically conservative party.</p> <p>H9: Older people are more likely to vote for the incumbent.</p> <p>H11: Older voters are more likely to vote for larger parties or smaller parties that are regularly part of government.</p>
Chapter 8: Non- institutionalised Participation	<p>H2: Older cohorts are less likely to commit non-institutionalised forms of participation than more recent cohorts.</p> <p>H3: The lack of experience of a free, liberal democracy at young adulthood decreases the likelihood of non-institutionalised participation.</p> <p>H5: Older people differ on predictors of political participation from younger people.</p>

5 Exploration of Senior Political Participation in Europe

This chapter prepares the main empirical analysis of the dissertation. Firstly, I will cast a wide net over the universe of political participation in Europe with regard to differences between older and younger people. Secondly, I will isolate two areas of political behaviour for further investigation, voting and non-institutionalised individual participation. After this chapter, other political actions will not be further analysed because – as I will show - (a) they are inherently linked to younger age (e.g. trade union activities) or (b) there is no significant variation between age groups (e.g. party activism). In addition, I will test the first hypothesis about older people’s organisational involvement. Older people should be more likely to use political parties and less likely to use single-issue organisations than younger people. The general change in the participatory process away from parties towards single-issue organisations should have left generational traces.

Section 1 explains why we need to start the empirical analysis from a wide angle. Section 2 describes the range of political actions in the main data set. Section 3 presents the results of the comparison of age groups on 20 political actions in up to 22 countries, and argues for the concentration on voting participation and non-institutionalised forms of participation for the rest of the thesis.

5.1 The logic of a comprehensive empirical approach to political participation

I consider all those individual voluntary actions that are carried out to express one’s political views with the aim of influencing or changing public policy, political institutions or the selection of political personnel to be political participation. Political participation – even according to this definition – is still a vast universe that includes voting, being active in or being a member of an organisation, protesting and

other activities. Any forceful argument about senior participation must approach this universe without bias. Any reduction to fewer than all forms of participation in the empirical analysis must be argued for and not set up a priori. For example, mistakes that are often made include taking the reduced view of political participation as simply voting, or summing up all kinds of political participation in one index (Leighly 1995).

However, it is also necessary to keep the analysis manageable. This is an internationally comparative analysis. There are 20 measured acts of political participation in the European Social Survey that we will use. If we multiply this number by 22 countries, we can see that a comprehensive analysis of everything is next to impossible. It not only takes considerably more resources than a selected subset, it would also tire the reader through its inevitably repetitive nature. In order to justify the intensive analysis of some forms of participation, it is helpful to look at all of them – within our definition – first.

To an individual who wants to participate, all avenues of participation are open in a liberal democracy as far as liberties are concerned. Despite this openness, an individual can have preferences for one form of participation over another. If I only look at protest, for instance, and can show an increase in protesting behaviour from older to more recent cohorts, critics could ask whether older people do something else instead of protesting. Having started from a wide angle, I can answer such questions.

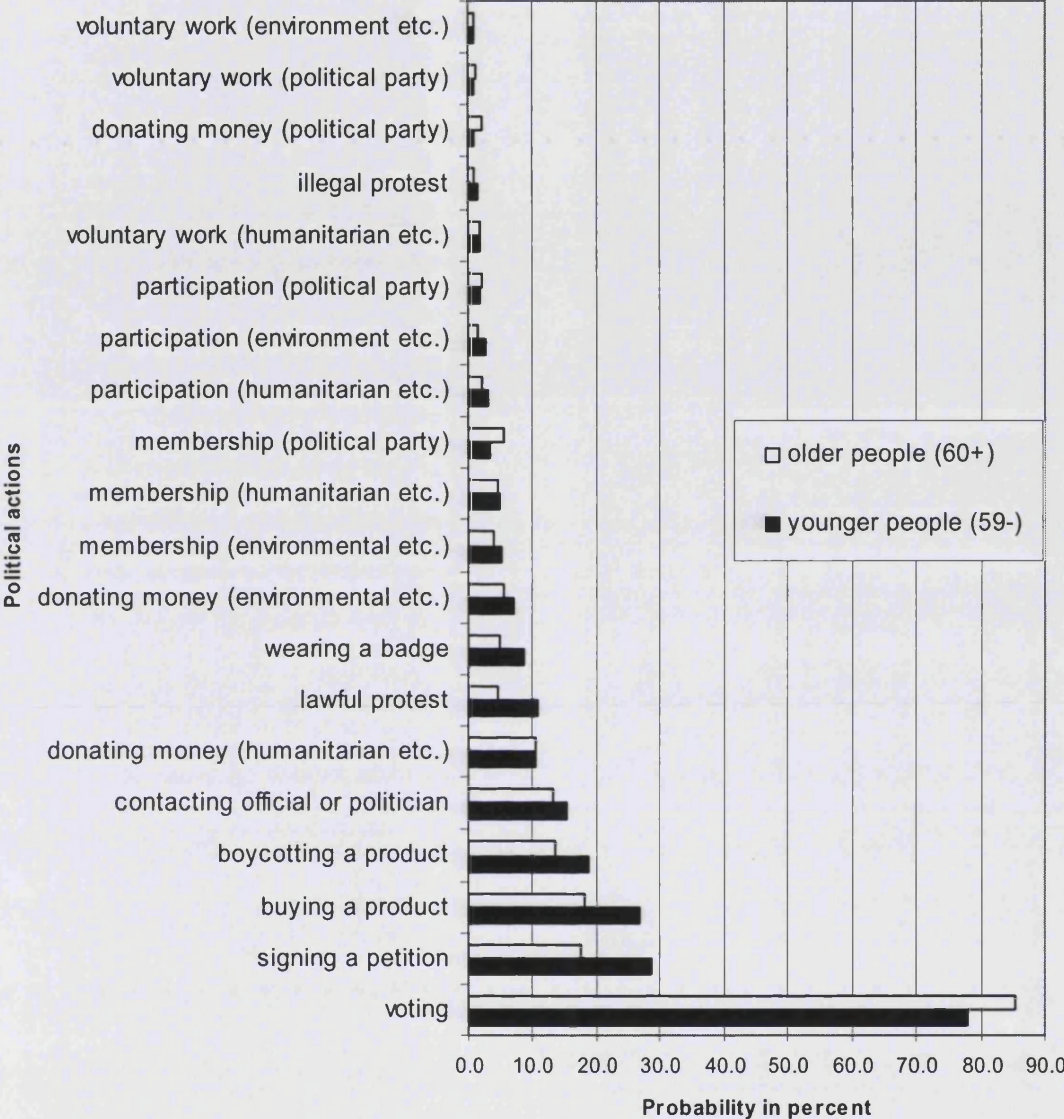
The underlying logic of approaching political participation comprehensively is that we need to find those activities where there are perceptible differences between younger and older people. In order to achieve this objective, we must start by looking at all political actions and then locate those with systematic differences.

This approach does not assume that older people are not active in any of the activities that show no differences. Older people are, for instance, active doing voluntary work in political parties. When we infer from a mass survey about this political action, however, there are only insignificant differences between older and younger people. Whenever the levels of participation of older and younger people are the same, an implicit assumption is that older people's levels of intrinsic and extrinsic factors are comparable to younger people's. Thus, we neglect the possibility of both groups having the same level of participation on the grounds of different causal models.

5.2 Types of political actions in the European Social Survey

In the European Social Survey, respondents aged 16 and older were asked in spring 2002 whether they had undertaken any political actions during the last twelve months and were then given a list of options. Figure 5-1 shows the average probabilities of older and younger people for each political action. Irrespective of age, voting is unsurprisingly the most common political activity. The most uncommon forms are those that need most resources, namely regular voluntary work for parties or single-issue organisations. We can already detect in this graph that older people are more likely to perform certain political actions than younger people, and less likely to commit others. Before the analysis of differences between age groups per country, I will explain the typology of the universe of political actions that we see in figure 5-1 with regard to the function of the various kinds of political participation:

Figure 5-1: Mean probabilities for two age groups for all political actions in 21 European countries in 2002



Weighted by design and demographic weights. Source: ESS. See text for exact types of single-issue organisations.

Voting: this is the fundament of any democracy and the minimal requirement for a vital liberal democracy. In the European Social Survey, respondents were asked whether they had voted in the last national parliamentary elections. Voting participation is the most common form of political participation. It thus warrants to be treated separately from other institutionally organised forms of participation. Voting conveys public preferences of the voters on parties or candidates and

therefore exercises pressure on governing elites. Voting reveals relatively little about the specific issue preferences of the electors.

Participation in political organisations: participation in organisations can have four different appearances: membership, donating money, participation in the activities of, and voluntary (i.e. regular) work for political organisations. There are three kinds of political organisations: political parties, single-issue organisations and trade union/ professional organisations. Parties have broad missions that are held together by one set of normative values. Issue-based political organisations have a much narrower concern. The European Social Survey included two types of single-issue organisations that have a political focus: environmental/peace or animal rights organisations, such as Greenpeace, and humanitarian/humanitarian aid or human rights organisations, such as Amnesty International. Trade unions and professional organisations make up a separate type of political organisation, as their remit is broader than single-issue organisations yet narrower than that of political parties. These organisations are, however, intrinsically linked to working life. Not all people who are 60 and older are retirees, but the vast majority of them are. The rate of economically active people between 60 and 64 tends to be much lower than the rates for younger age groups. On average, it stood at 29.4 % in the 21 European countries in 2002. The rate of economically active individuals aged 65 and older lay at an average of 5.1 % (ILO 2006). Since only a proportion of the economically active individuals are members of trade union or professional organisations, it should be clear that we can neglect these organisations as a significant channel of political participation for older people.

Non-institutionalised participation outside of organisations: some forms of political actions do not need long-term commitment and can be carried out quite

easily. The participant decides on an ad-hoc basis whether to take part or not. These forms of participation might be organised by institutions, but participants do not subscribe to any long-term commitment, be it for a narrow concern (issue-based organisations) or a broad concern (parties). For example, you can take part in a protest organised by a party against the invasion of Iraq. Doing this, you are far from subscribing to the overall interests and goals of that party. The European Social Survey covers the following political actions of this kind: wearing a badge, signing a petition, taking part in a legal demonstration, joining an illegal demonstration, buying or boycotting a product for ethical or political reasons, and contacting a public official or politician.

Some forms of political actions were not put forward in the survey such as wild strike, the use of force and other illegal activities (except for illegal demonstrations). These actions are missing for a good reason. In the survey, people were asked whether the respondents had done any of the political actions within the last twelve months. Since illegal actions are socially not desirable, respondents might feel obliged not to admit them even if they had carried them out. To make inferences about actions that are socially not desirable, it would have been necessary to ask respondents about their attitudes towards these kind of illegal actions to measure their action potential (see for example Barnes, Kaase, and others 1979; Sanders et al. 2004).¹⁷

¹⁷ An alternative data source to the European Social Survey could have been the World Values Survey series. Its primary investigators chose to measure action potential rather than actions and could have been useful to look at the illegal forms of participation. However, the European Social Survey is much more comprehensive in its measurements of age-related variables, such as questions about health, for instance. I will use the World Values series in chapter 8 to derive at some additional macro variables, but decided to exclude it for the primary analysis.

5.3 Empirical exploration

We start from the null hypothesis that older people are not different from younger people in any given mode of participation. Older people are defined as respondents who are 60 and older. Their average levels of participation will be compared to those of respondents 59 and younger. This approach sets itself apart from a holistic age approach that is interested in differences between age groups across the whole lifespan. Such an approach would need to distinguish between several age groups, such as teenagers, young adults, middle-aged, young-old and old-old groups of people. Here, we just want to establish whether there exists a significant difference between those aged 60+ and those aged 59-, and if so, what the direction of difference between the two groups is. Only if we find a difference between these two groups in several countries, will there be further exploration in this chapter and finally detailed analysis in the other empirical chapters.

Each form of participation has been coded one if respondents indicate to have done this action over the last 12 months and 0 if they say they have not. Missing cases or refusals are ignored (listwise deletion). The highest rate of missing cases exists by far for voting participation with 6.7 %. All other modes show missing cases of less than 1 %. I carried out a weighted comparison of means for older people versus non-older people with a significance threshold of 95 % for each country separately – depending on availability – in 20 or 22 countries. Summed up, 398 tests have been carried out.¹⁸

Table 5-1 summarises the results according to the encountered country patterns. I highlighted those cells that have a value higher than 50 %, meaning the

¹⁸ The proportion of older people is very similar in each country sample, meaning that a failure in significance is unlikely to come from an imbalance in the size of the age groups in the samples.

specific pattern has been found in more than half the countries. I separated the results into three sections. If older people were significantly more active in a majority of countries on a particular mode, it was listed in the first section. If they are less active in a majority of countries, the mode was put in the second section, and the others in the last one. Activities within each section have then been sorted according to the strength of the dominant pattern.

Table 5-1: Patterns of difference between older (60+) and younger people (59-) with regard to single political actions, 20-22 European countries in 2002

	Proportion of countries with respective pattern (adds to 100 %)		
	Older people more active	Older people not different	Older people less active
Been a party member	72%	28%	0%
Voted in parliamentary elections	68%	32%	0%
Signed a petition	0%	5%	95%
Bought a product for political, ethical or environmental reasons	0%	9%	91%
Boycotted a product for political, ethical or environmental reasons	0%	18%	82%
Taken part in a legal demonstration	0%	28%	72%
Worn a badge	0%	45%	55%
Contacted a public official or politician	0%	45%	55%
Done voluntary work environmental/peace/animal rights	0%	100%	0%
Done voluntary work party	10%	90%	0%
Taken part in illegal demonstration	0%	86%	14%
Participated in activities of political party	15%	85%	0%
Been a member of humanitarian or human rights group	0%	80%	20%
Participated in activities of humanitarian or human rights group	0%	80%	20%
Participated in activities of environmental/peace/animal rights groups	0%	80%	20%
Done voluntary work for humanitarian or human rights groups	0%	80%	20%
Donated to a political party	25%	75%	0%
Been a member of environmental/peace/animal rights groups	0%	70%	30%
Donated to humanitarian or human rights groups	0%	60%	40%
Donated to environmental/peace/animal rights groups	0%	55%	45%

Percentages indicate proportion of countries where there is the dominant pattern of the respective column, Bonferroni test¹⁹, significant at 0.05 level, weighted by design weight. Respondents were asked: 'In the last 12 months, have you done any of the following?', Source: ESS.

¹⁹ Other tests like eta or ANOVA lead to the same results.

The first striking finding is that each political action only shows one significant type of difference. In general, older people tend to be significantly more or less active on a given mode, but not both in different countries. In each row of the table (for each political action), we only find countries where there is no significant difference and countries with a significant difference in just one direction.

In the first section, there are two forms of participation, voting and party membership, in which older people are more likely to engage than younger people in most countries. In the case of party membership, 72 % of all countries show a significant higher occurrence of party membership among older people. In the case of voting, 68 % of countries have significantly more active older people.

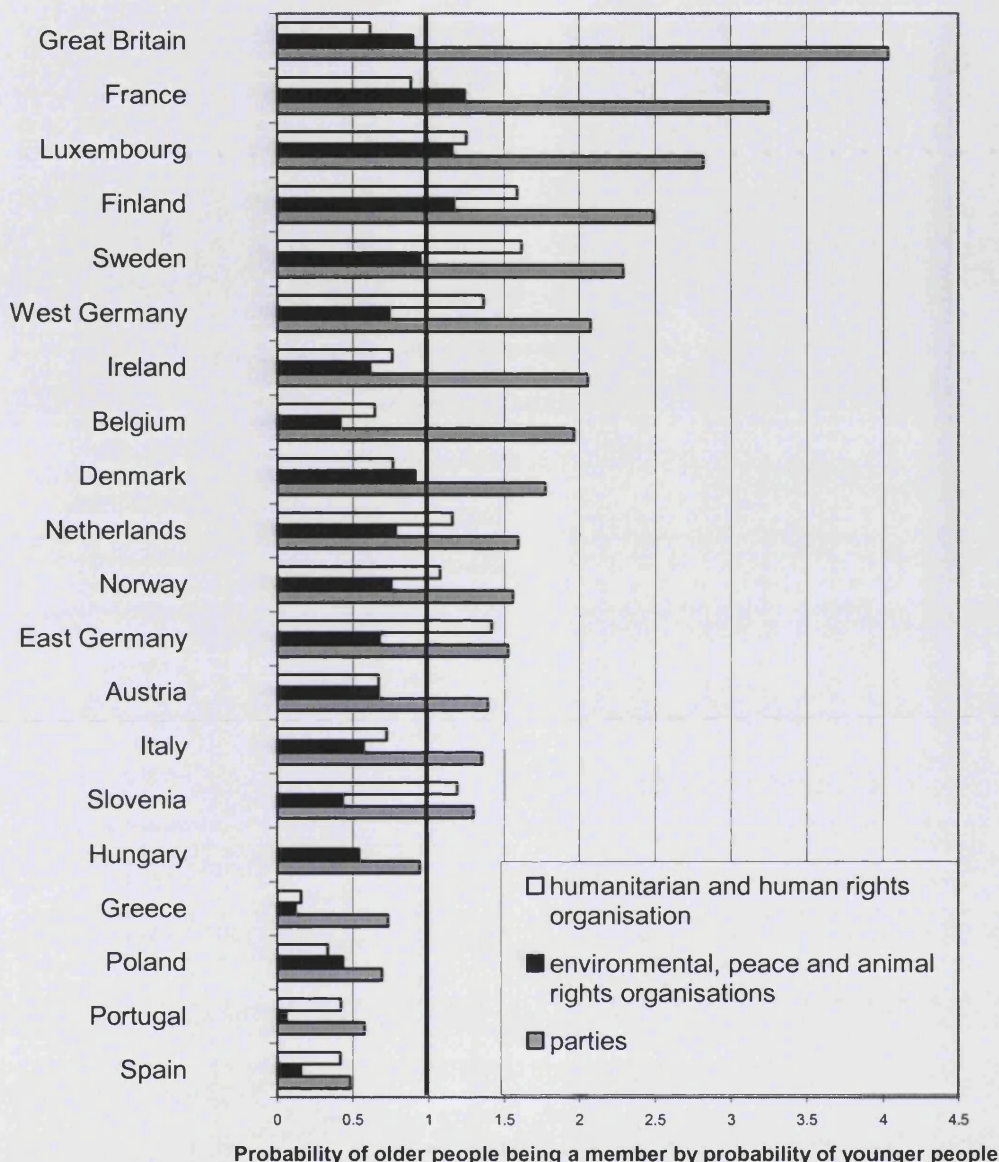
In the second section, there are six forms of participation for which older people are predominantly less active in the majority of countries: signing a petition, buying a product, boycotting a product, demonstrating legally and contacting a public official or politician. The number of countries with the dominant pattern stretches from 94 % in the case of signing a petition to 55 % in the case of contacting a public official or politician.

The longest section three is where older people are not different from younger people in the majority of countries. At the top of that section, we find voluntary work for a political issue organisation in the domains of environment, peace and animal rights. Towards the lower end of that section, there are some activities that show a consistent pattern of less active older people, albeit in a minority of countries: donations to and membership of political issue organisations. Older people are less active in donating to environmental/peace or animal rights organisations in 45 % of countries, and less likely to being members of these organisations in 30 % of countries.

Most of these findings conform with what we would expect from the literature. What is interesting to note is that high intensity participation like voluntary work does not show significant differences. Drawing inference from this mass population survey, I find no significant difference between younger and older people. It could be that in an over-sample of activists there would be systematic differences between older and younger people on these forms of participation. For example, in a survey of British Labour party members, Patrick Seyd and Paul Whiteley (1992: 99) showed that there were mild variations between age groups as to levels of activism within the British Labour party. Of those who are 66 and older, 49 % are fairly and very active as opposed to 47 % (aged 17-25), 62 % (aged 26-45) and 60 % (aged 46-65). In another survey of British Conservative party members (Whiteley, Seyd, and Richardson 1994: 106), 21 % of those aged 66 and older were fairly or very active as opposed to 39 % (aged 18-25), 26 % (aged 26-45) and 28 % (aged 46-65).

However, from the viewpoint of the population in the European Social Survey, differences are too small to be significant. Therefore, we will exclude these forms of high intensity participation (voluntary work and participation in parties, environmental/peace/animal rights, and humanitarian/human rights groups) from further analysis. Similarly, illegal demonstrations do not show any difference between the two groups that we could infer from the mass survey and these will be excluded as well.

Figure 5-2: Age ratios (older people's probability by younger people's) of memberships in political organisations, 20 European countries in 2002



Source: ESS. Data not available for the Czech Republic and Switzerland.

Moving down the last section in table 5-1, we find membership of and donations to various single issue organisations and parties. Their patterns together with party membership in the first section highlight an overall change in the political process that creates generational differences. This is what I put forward as hypothesis H1 (Dalton 2004; Norris 2002). Political parties across Europe are generally in decline in terms of mass membership across Europe, with some exceptions in post-

communist and Southern European countries like Spain (see figure 5-2). The ratio that is being used in the following figures is the probability of the older age group (60+) doing a certain political action divided by the probability of the younger age group (59-) committing that activity. Thus, a one signifies no difference between the two, a value above one relatively stronger activism among older people, and a value below one a relatively stronger activism among younger people.

The ratio of older people's probability of being a party member divided by the probability of younger people is above one in all countries except Hungary, Greece, Portugal and Spain. In contrast, the ratio of membership of environmental and similar organisations is below one in most countries. These findings confirm that there has been a general change in the political process in some countries with parties on the decline (Mair and van Biezen 2001). Therefore, political parties are relatively more popular among older people today. At the same time, single-issue organisations are on the rise and are thus more popular among younger people today (della Porta and Diani 1999). This finding confirms by and large our hypothesis H1. Older people tend to direct their organisational involvement (membership and donations) more to political parties than single-issue organisations in comparison to younger people. There remain significant country exceptions. Countries that were recently democratised in the 1970s and 1990s do not have parties with a membership structure that reflects past fortunes (and thus do not possess more older generation members). In line with our argument, past fortunes or lack thereof is reflected in generational patterns of party membership.

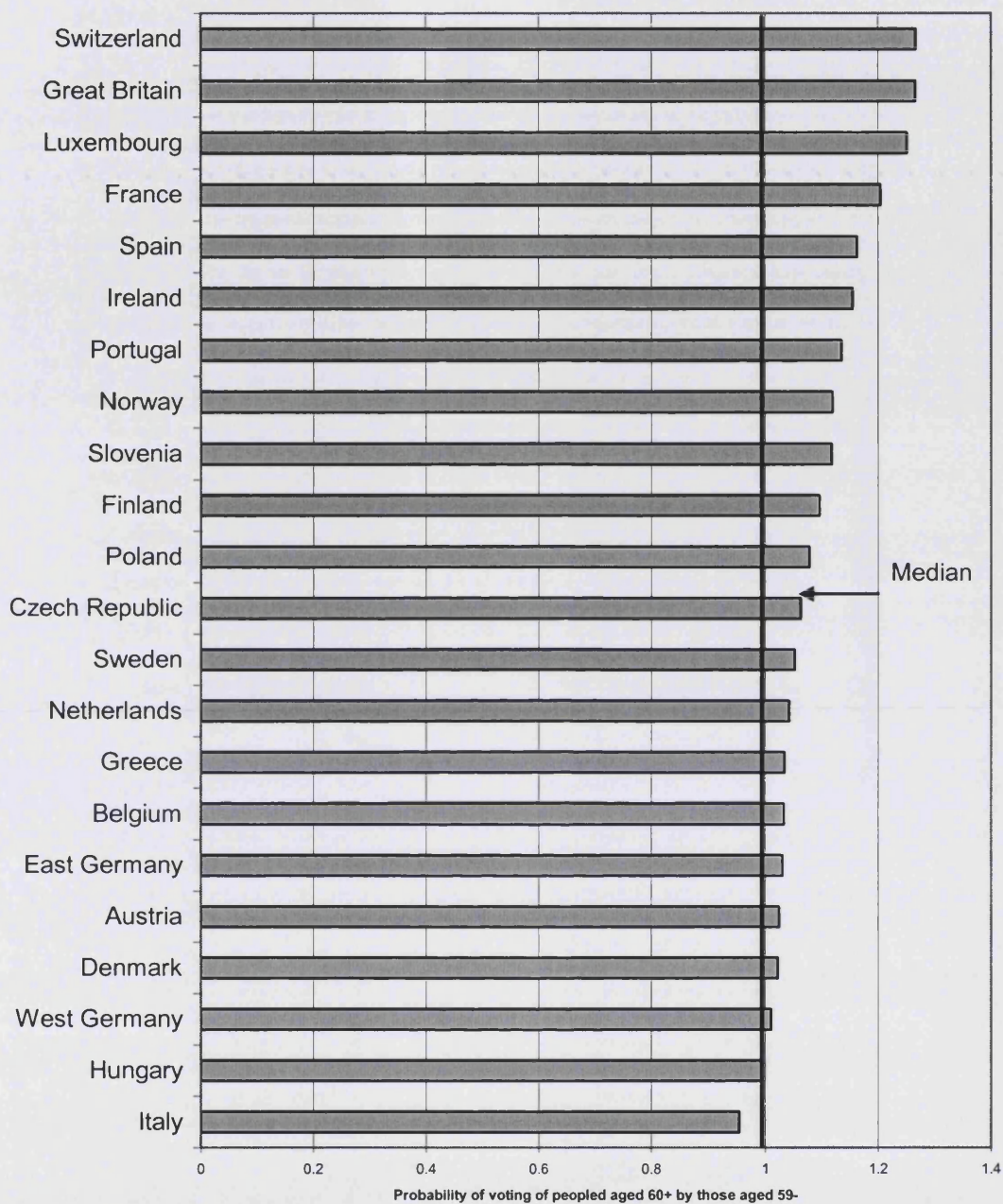
An interesting question concerns the extent to which the differences between older and younger people with regard to party membership, relate to the difference between the age groups with respect to membership of other political organisations.

One way of looking at it is the correlation coefficient between the age ratios of party membership on the one hand, and the age ratios of other memberships on the other. Recall that older people were mostly more likely to be party members than younger people (the age ratios were mostly above 1); thus, a *higher* age ratio of party membership means that older people are *even more* likely to be party members than younger people. For other memberships, the age ratios were below one as older people were generally less likely to be members than younger people. Thus, a *higher* age ratio means that the gap between age groups is *smaller*.

The correlation coefficient is 0.81 for party membership and membership of environmental, peace or animal rights organisations, and 0.46 for party membership and membership of humanitarian or human rights organisations. We can now say that the higher the difference is between older and younger people with regard to party membership in one country, the smaller the gap is between older and younger people with regard to membership of single-issue organisations. In other words, in countries where older people are much more likely to be party members, like France, their gap to younger people with regard to membership of single-issue organisations is in fact smaller. Some countries have more active senior citizens with regard to all kinds of political memberships than others, compared to younger people. That seems to suggest that – on top of the change in political process towards single issues – something makes older people more active in some European countries than in others *in general*. This phenomenon will be explored further in chapters 8 and 9 on non-institutionalised behaviour.²⁰

²⁰ Hypothetically, we should also see a similar ‘substitution’ of political organisations with regard to donations. However, donations to political parties have different kinds of limits across Europe and cannot easily be discussed cross-nationally.

Figure 5-3: Age ratios of voting participation, 22 European countries in 2002

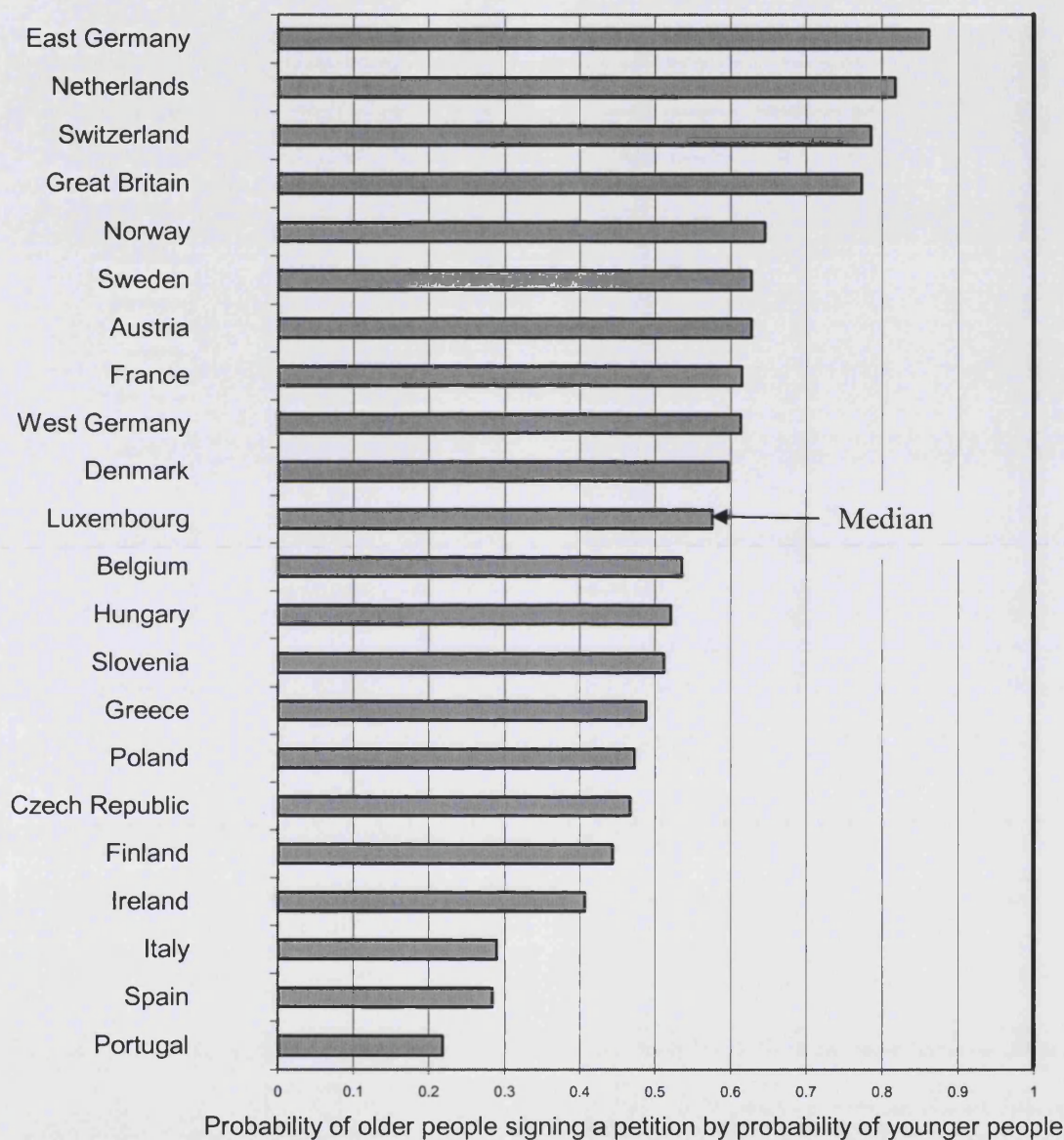


Source: ESS.

Figures 5-3 and 5-4 re-state the dominant patterns of more active older people in voting participation and less active older people in non-institutionalised participation. Apart from the generational changes in organisational involvement that I just discussed, these two modes show the only consistent patterns. Both forms of participation show a consistent pattern of older people's relative participatory levels,

and at the same time, variations across countries that we need to explain. In further analysis, it is therefore justifiable to concentrate on two kinds of political behaviour.

Figure 5-4: Age ratios of non-institutionalised political participation – the example of signing a petition



Source: ESS.

5.4 Summary

There are some important empirical findings that allow us to decide on the exclusion of political actions in the rest of the thesis. Firstly, trade unionism or involvement in professional organisations are intrinsically linked to one's period of employment.

Older people tend to be retired, meaning that they are overall much less likely to engage in any activities around these political organisations. Secondly, the most intense forms of participation, voluntary work and participation in events of political organisations, hardly show any variation between age groups. Thus, there is no difference that we need to explain. The elderly are as likely to engage in these forms of high-intensity participation as other age groups.

Thirdly, there was strong evidence to support the first hypothesis H1. It postulated that older people are more likely to direct their organisational involvement towards parties rather than single-issue organisations, compared to younger people. The cross-sectional evidence - including the deviant patterns for recently democratised countries – supports the argument in the literature that there is a general shift of participation away from parties towards issue-based organisations. The higher involvement of the elderly in parties in some countries is a cohort effect. The elderly are still members of parties because they joined them at a younger age and remained loyal to them. In countries where parties did not exist in the 1970s (like the post-communist countries, Spain, Portugal and Greece), this pattern simply cannot show. Cohorts in these countries, who could hypothetically have been attracted to parties when they were younger (and thus, when parties would have existed), are not more likely than younger people to be party members. This is in contrast to countries with parties who were successful at attracting individuals in earlier decades.

Fourthly, I identified two forms of participation that I will now analyse in greater detail: voting and non-institutionalised participation. Voting shows a very strong pattern of higher turnout among the elderly across countries. Non-institutionalised forms of participation show something like a mirror image in which

the elderly are less active than other age groups. These two forms of participation have two things in common: they require very few resources and no long-term commitment. The participants can take part in the political action or not and decide on doing so in an ad-hoc manner. The next chapters will provide a detailed analysis of the determinants that can account for the differences between younger and older people in these two modes.

6 Voting Participation in Europe²¹

'Those who want to further burden 20 million pensioners with pension cuts, must be brave enough to say this before the national election. Then, pensioners will know what to do when they are going to cast their vote.'

Walter Hirrlinger, president of the German pensioners' organisation VDK, in June 2005 in the run-up to the national election (VdK 2006).

'This election may very well be the first determined by the votes of the over 50s. There are 20 million people in the UK over the age of 50. Also, older people are more likely to vote.'

From the 2005 General Election manifesto of Age Concern England (Age Concern England 2006b).

In 2005, major old age charities in Germany and in the United Kingdom ran election campaigns in which they used the high voting participation and number of their constituents to exert political pressure on candidates and parties. Older people are generally believed to be more likely to vote. This chapter investigates the causal mechanism behind this higher likelihood. Recall from the theory chapter the major hypotheses predicting that older people's voting participation depends on their level of resources/motivation and opportunities/mobilisation. These can be different from younger people because (a) the elderly are at a different stage in their social life cycle, (b) they belong to a different political generation that shares a certain general attitude towards voting participation, (c) their generation shares a certain probability of having a social characteristic, and (d) the ageing process gives them more time to habituate and learn.

More specifically, the model predicts that intrinsic factors (motivation/resources) and external factors (mobilisation/opportunities) of political participation differ between age groups, either due to life cycle or cohort differences (hypothesis H5). Thus, levels of voting participation for older people will be lower or

²¹ Parts of this chapter have been published in an earlier version (Goerres forthcoming [2006]).

higher, depending on the nature of a specific factor and its predictable relationship with age. If I was wrong, we would not see the predicted correlation with age or we would not see the expected effect on turnout. Furthermore, the model assumes higher voting probability among older people, even if we control for all these intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Through a comparison of the results of the pooled and the individual country analyses we can detect a habituated learning pattern for the residual variation (hypothesis H10). This learning pattern also interacts with the average country turnout and the expressed levels of sense of duty and education, which conforms with our expectations about the growing compliance with social norms as we age (hypotheses H12a-c).

In this chapter, the empirical analysis consists of two stages. In a descriptive section, I will analyse the development of turnout in the example of Britain between 1964 and 2001. This longitudinal analysis allows us to follow a few selected cohorts through time and assess the plausibility of some age-related effects for that one context. It is not a rigorous test of any of the hypotheses, but it is indicative of how to interpret the results of the rest of the chapter. Then for the major part of the chapter, I will use the European Social Survey for a cross-sectional analysis. Firstly, I will test the hypothesised bivariate relationship between various resources/motivation and mobilisation factors and age.²² This exercise is to assess whether the association between cohort or life cycle and that particular predictor of voting participation exists and how substantial it is. Strictly speaking, I will only test whether a variable is age-related, rather than whether it is a cohort or life cycle effect. I will evaluate the

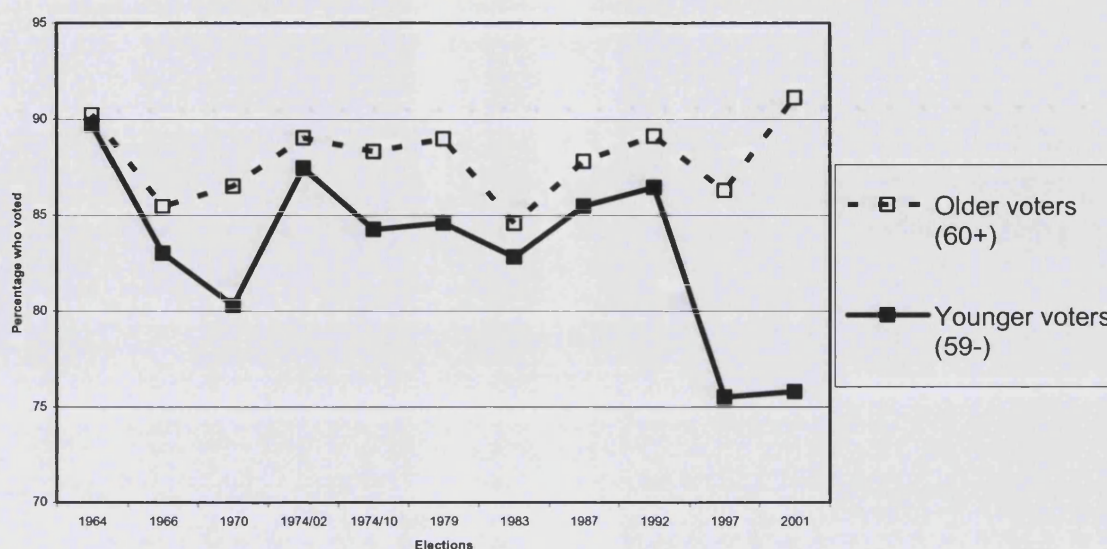
²² Opportunities to vote can be assumed to be constant for all in liberal democracies, as the option to vote should be available to everyone. More complicated registration procedures can impose additional hurdles, but in principle voting is open to all major citizens. Institutional variations in voting procedures, such as mandatory voting, will be dealt with separately.

nature of the age-related effects with the help of the literature. In a second step, I will build a multivariate regression model of voting participation using all the indicators that have been confirmed to be age-related. If my hypotheses are correct, these variables must thus show the confirmed relationship twice – once with age, and once with voting participation. Finally, I will look at the remaining effects of the residual age variable and compare the impact of those effects seen in the single-country models with the effect of that in the pooled analysis. Being stripped of all other meaning, these coefficients can only stand for the effects of political generations and individual ageing in single-country analyses. The pooled analysis can then be shown to stand only for individual ageing. This is because political generation effects from historically diverse countries add up to something like white noise in the pooled analysis.

The findings of the longitudinal analysis together with those of the international, cross-sectional analysis allow us to paint a much more complete picture about the determinants of voting participation among older people than we could with one method alone.

6.1 Voting participation across time: the example of Britain

Figure 6-1: Average turnout of two age groups in British General Elections 1964-2001



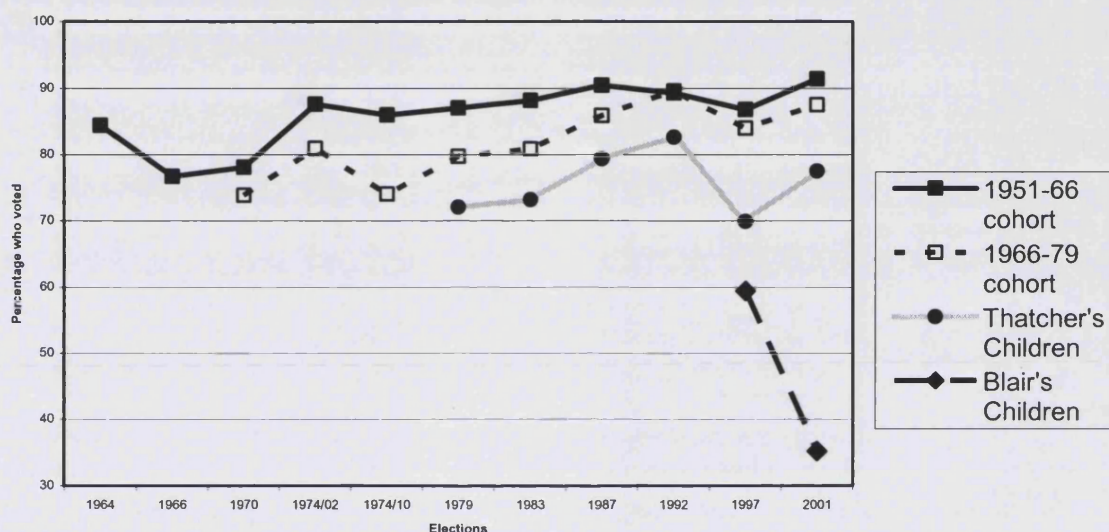
Source: Own calculation according to British election studies 1964-2001.

Figure 6-1 plots the mean probability of two age groups across all British elections between 1964 and 2001 (see also Clarke et al. 2004). The intermittent line reflects the likelihood of all those citizens aged 60 and older to go to the polls; the other line stands for all others, aged 59 and younger. In all eleven elections, older people were more likely to vote. However, the difference between the two changed significantly over time. In most years (1964, 1966, Feb 1974, 1983, 1987, 1992) the difference between the two was smaller than 3 %. It was larger at about 4 to 5 % in 1970, October 1974 and in 1979. In the last years (1997 and 2001), the difference increased dramatically to 10 to 15 %.

The fact that older people are more likely to vote in all British elections is a fascinating finding. Older people in the 1960s had been born under Queen Victoria or King Edward and had experienced the era of Liberal-Conservative co-operation and limited franchise when they had been young adults. Those older people were more likely to vote in the 1960s than the younger generations who had grown up

with full mass franchise and different political experiences at young adulthood, such as the rise of the Conservatives. The younger generation in the 1960s became the older generation in 1990s. Again, they differ a lot in terms of their political experiences from younger people. Still, older people in the 1990s were more likely to vote.

Figure 6-2: Average turnout of four political generations in Britain 1964-2001



Source: own calculation according to the British election study 1964-2001.

Figure 6-2 shows the voting probabilities of four cohorts across time. These cohorts are defined through the historical periods during which they were first allowed to vote (see the next chapter for a detailed discussion) and are thus ‘political generations’. The four generations are the only ones for which we have data for the time at which they first went to the polls. Two aspects are worth mentioning about the graphs. The four generations are distinctively different from each other in their average voting participation. The more recent the socialisation of each political generation, the lower its average voting participation is. In 1997 for example, the difference between Blair’s Children, born in 1975 or more recently, and the 1966-79 cohort, born between 1946 and 1956, was about 25 %. At the same time, the

difference in voting probabilities at the first eligible election between the two generations (1970 for the 1966-79 cohort and 1997 for Blair's Children) was also about 15 %. In other words, political generations differ in their initial voting participation at the first election and remain distinctive from each other in all subsequent elections. In addition, the two 'long' political generations about which we have data for most elections seem to grow in their likelihood of voting over the years. The 1951-66 cohort grows from a low of 75 % in 1966 to a high of 92 % in 2001. The 1966-79 cohort increases in likelihood from 73 % in 1970 to 88 % in 2001. This growth is all the more remarkable given that the overall turnout declined from 77.1 % in 1964 to 59.4 % in 2001 (Yonwin 2004: 17).

If cohort effects, such as the political generation effect that stipulates a lasting influence of early political socialisation, could alone explain the differences in turnout between older and younger people, we would not be able to see the growth in cohort voting participation of the same cohort across time. This growth cannot be due to period effects as the overall tendency was a *decline* in turnout. If, on the other hand, only life cycle or ageing hypotheses were true, we would not be able to see the fluctuations in the difference between younger and older voters over time. This is because it is reasonable to assume that life cycle or ageing forces are relatively stable over four decades. In sum, there seems to be a combination of life cycle and generational factors that explains differences between age groups across time.

The rest of the chapter will not concentrate on political generation explanations, for which it would be necessary to look at each country separately. Instead, I will use an innovative technique to undertake an analysis that does not allow an estimation of all generational effects, but does allow for an estimation of the

relative impact of many life cycle effects, as well as the causal mechanism behind ageing. This latter mechanism remains underdeveloped in the literature.

6.2 An international cross-sectional approach in a quasi-experimental setting

Recall from the methodological chapter the logic of the international cross-sectional analysis. The European Social Survey contains 21 European countries. Each country has a sample of at least 1,000 respondents that allow estimates for that country. In addition, questions have been put to respondents that are checked for equivalence across countries, for example through reliable translation. Each country sample contains members of different age groups. The set-up of 21 countries can now serve as a quasi-experimental setting because members of the same age groups in different countries share some predispositions and are different in others. I introduced two randomly drawn individuals, the older Adam and the younger Henrietta. The Finnish Adam and the British Adam experienced radically different political lives that varied in their experience of the party system, elections, salient campaigning issues and electoral systems. Their socialisation at a young age was as different as the period effects at the time of the survey. The same would be true for the younger Finnish Henrietta versus a British Henrietta. As we have 21 countries, the socialisation and period experiences vary widely across age groups.

At the same time, citizens of the 21 countries are assumed to be similar in the way they reach a decision about political participation. They make a calculation about costs and benefits (instrumental and expressive) and consider the resources/motivation on the one hand in the face of mobilisation factors on the other. The cost and benefit calculation is influenced by a mixture of political generation, shared social characteristic cohort, life cycle and individual ageing effects. When we

only look at differences in turnout between age groups at one point in time, the difference in average voting participation must be due to a combination of those four effects on the cost-benefit calculation. Adam might have a likely voting participation of 85 % in contrast to Henrietta who might just have 75 %. Both of them, however, follow the same decision-making procedure about whether to vote or not according to our assumptions.

I will illustrate the accumulative age effects on the cost-benefit calculation for the two. Adam might belong to a political generation that was socialised into having high esteem for voting as a duty, but has a bad knee due to his lifelong work as a manual labourer making it difficult to go to the booth. At the same time, he only has basic education that makes it harder for him to order a postal ballot. However, he has voted ten times already, knows the parties well and has some experience of similar political situations. Henrietta, in contrast, grew up during an era of disenchantment with electoral politics, has no health problems, but does have concern for public schools as she has three children. She also has a professional degree in the services sector that she completed after her A Levels. She has only voted three times in her life. This illustration shows that we need to measure all of these differences separately in order to explain the difference of 10 % between Adam's and Henrietta's likely voting participation. In the multivariate regression analysis, we can do so with the help of independent control variables.

The problem is, however, that not all of the hypothesised effects are directly measurable through survey questions. Differences in early socialisation (political generation effect) can only be partly measured via variables concerning political attitudes. Individual ageing, however, poses the biggest problem. Its hypothesised nature as norm-compliance and habituation is not amenable to asking respondents

questions. However, the quasi-experimental setting allows the interpretation of the coefficients of the residual age variable once all measurable age effects are controlled for. If all life cycle effects and shared social characteristic cohort effects are controlled directly, the coefficient of the residual age variable contains as yet unmeasured political generation effects and the individual ageing effects. In a single country cross-sectional study, the two types of effects remain confounded. In the pooled analysis however, the national political generation effects should cancel each other out. Furthermore, if the differences between age groups are captured via age dummies, the pooled analysis should show a smooth concave learning curve that represents the character of habituation (hypothesis H10). In addition, the nature of norm-compliance should vary according to the degree to which the social norm of voting is spread. Thus, I will compare the results across various groups of countries with different turnout levels and across respondents with varying levels of education and expressed sense of duty to vote (hypotheses H12a-c).

6.3 Independent variables: their bivariate relationship with age and predicted link to voting participation

As a first step, we must now decide which independent variables we should include. We must ask (a) where cohorts differ in their cost-benefit calculation of voting, and (b) how transitions over the life cycle affect the calculation. Although technically not necessary, we furthermore typify the variables according to the cohort/life cycle differentiation for ease of interpretation.²³ This classification exercise does not

²³ Technically, we do not need to make the life cycle and cohort categorisation because these independent variables mainly serve as control variables to isolate the individual ageing effect. However, these effects are well-researched, and the conceptual categorisation is a helpful tool to discuss the political implications, such as the fact that life cycle effects are more stable than cohort effects.

represent an empirical test, and from then on, I treat the classified nature of age-related effects as assumptions.

Our theoretical framework predicts that cohorts might be different in terms of their preferences. This is because members of one cohort share the exposure to a common early political experience. This is what I call the political generation effect. It can be partially measured via attitude questions. For example, the sense of duty that is associated with voting can be a function of the early experience. Also, a cohort can be different because its members have a different level of endowment with regard to resources. For example, the lower level of educational attainment among older cohorts takes that resource away from those generations. Cohorts can also differ in mobilisation as older people are more likely to be party members in most countries, as I showed in chapter 5. These are shared social characteristic cohort effects and can be measured well via survey items. Life cycle variations can also be captured via survey variables. For example, older people have a richer endowment of resources because they have lived longer in a particular residence and are thus familiar with the problems of that area and are also more likely to be registered.

Table 6-1 lists the range of independent variables that I will now discuss in detail. Details about operationalisation, descriptives and correlations among them can be found in the appendices 11.1 and 11.2. According to the literature, two are pure cohort (namely social characteristic cohort) and seven are pure life cycle effects. For six variables, there is a mixed expectation (see next section). As a first empirical test, each variable has been tested as to whether it has the expected bivariate correlation with age. Each one of these variables correlates with age at least 0.10 in two or more countries. The break-up point of 0.10 is rather low. This is due to the fact that within age groups there are considerable variations as to these variables as well, meaning

that the relationship between age groups cannot be straightforward. In addition, some of these variables measure attitudinal predispositions as proxies, so that a lower threshold seems advisable.²⁴ One variable has been excluded after this test: political trust, which I expected to vary between cohorts according to the literature on the change of political process (Dalton 2004). It does not correlate significantly with age. Overall, however, the expected associations were confirmed, which represents the first test for hypothesis H5, that older people differ on predictors of political participation from younger people.

I will now discuss groups of independent variables in detail, starting with those that have a suppressing effect on the turnout for older people. A variable has a suppressing effect either because it is negatively related with age and positively with turnout (like education) or the other way round (like health).

²⁴ If I include all independent variables in the multivariate model no matter what their relationship with age, the findings of this chapter do not change significantly.

Table 6-1: Age-related independent variables: correlation with age and the expected association with voting participation

Independent variables	Overall correlation with age (Pearson's r)	Expected correlation with voting participation
<i>Cohort effects</i>		
Religiosity	0.20 **	+
Education	- 0.18**	+
<i>Cohort/ life cycle effects</i>		
Party identification	0.16**	+
Sense of duty to vote	0.15 **	+
Income	-0.13**	+
Political interest	0.08**	+
Trade union and party membership	0.03**	+
Gender (female)	N/a ^b	-
<i>Life cycle effects</i>		
Pension main source of income	0.67**	+
Duration of residence	0.54**	+
Number of minor children in household ^a	-0.47**	+
Subjective evaluation of health	-0.36**	+
Living with partner ^a	-0.26**	+
Friends in non-political networks	-0.09*	+
Internal political efficacy	-0.08**	+
External political efficacy	-0.07**	+

* Significant at 0.05, ** significant at 0.01 one-tailed, weighted by design and demographic weights, coding in the appendix, source: ESS.

a: these variables have a curvilinear relationship with age, correlations are for respondents 40 years and older.

b: demographers use the masculinity ratio to describe how many men there are per one hundred women in a particular age group. In 2000, the ratio was around 90 in European countries in the 60-64 age group and around 50 in the 80+ age group (Avramov and Maskova 2003: 51).

Suppressing Turnout

Education, income: the so-called 'standard model' of political participation postulates that higher socio-economic status has a positive impact on participation. Higher education enables citizens to have a better understanding of politics (for an overview see Leighly 1995). At the same time, they are more likely – because of occupation and income - to be in a social context where norms of participation

prevail. Higher income citizens also have a higher material stake in the system. The spread of mass education, however, is a relatively recent phenomenon. Thus, there is a clear generational decline in aggregate levels of education. Income declines with age, mirroring cohort and life cycle differences. Older generations do earn less, but all the elderly have less income as they retire, because pension levels are below working life wages.

Gender: entrenched understandings of traditional gender roles could interact with age since newer cohorts are less likely to hold them. Women in older generations might still have been socialised into social roles that prescribe political activity only in the shadow of their husbands (Welch 1977). Also, it is necessary to include gender because older age groups are comprised of more women because of their longer life expectancy.

Living with a partner, number of minor children in household, subjective evaluation of health: these are clear life cycle effects. To live together with a partner increases the chance of voting because the partner is another potential mobilising source (Pattie, Seyd, and Whiteley 2003). On the grounds of widowhood and divorce, this variable is negatively correlated with age for people who are 40 and older. Children enhance one's personal interest in public provision. A certain amount of physical fitness is needed to undertake even the minimal requirements of voting. Frailty increases with age (Gehring and Wagner 1999: 696-97) due to the accumulative effects of unhealthy lifestyles and the physical effects of ageing.²⁵

²⁵ One might question the validity of subjective self-evaluation of one's own health, but this evaluation is, first of all, highly correlated with objective health measures and secondly, this self-image is a powerful force by itself (see Bazargan, Kang, and Bazargan 1991: 183-4).

Friends in non-political networks: according to the disengagement thesis that I presented in chapter 2, the elderly are thought to show a decline in inter-personal activity as they disengage themselves from their social environment. This disengagement includes disengagement from the political sphere, meaning that levels of participation should drop. The retreat should be reflected in a decline in the number of social networks that are reported to include close friends. The social retreat would then not only affect the political sphere directly, but also decrease the possibility of individuals being mobilised in a non-political context, such as by friends. Social networks are considered to be important in making people participate in politics in general (Knoke 1990; Putnam 2000). Individuals gain expressive benefit from voting as they can talk, for example, with their friends about the experience.

Internal and external political efficacy: one strand of the social gerontological literature deals with problems of ageism in Western societies (see for example Wilson 2000: 161-62). Negative stereotypes of inactivity in the elderly reflect back on senior citizens and influence their self-image in a way that may make them feel less politically efficacious. The social situation of older people in general is shaped by the images that the environment has of them. As a result, internal and external political efficacies decrease, resulting in the political participation of older people being hampered. I will further explore these images in chapter 9.

Trade union and party membership: membership of a political organisation is a strong mobilising factor in voting because members are exposed to the activists' efforts to make them cast their vote in favour of the organisation. Some countries have experienced a decline in party and trade union membership, which would be

reflected in ageing membership profiles. Retirement leads to exit from trade unions in most countries (see chapter 5 and Mair and van Biezen 2001; Widfeldt 1995).

Boosting Turnout

Sense of duty to vote: in the survey, respondents have been asked to give an answer to the following question on an 11 point scale: ‘To be a good citizen, how important would you say it is for a person to vote in elections?’ This variable is helpful to catch some of the variation in the individually felt subjective norm to vote. According to our theoretical expectations of norm-compliance over a lifetime (hypotheses 12a-c), we can expect this item to show the features of a life cycle effect. Unfortunately, we must expect over-reporting of such a socially desirable trait, so the proxy loses its power. In addition, the decline of the sense of duty to vote as a cohort effect has been established in several country studies (Blais et al. 2004; Clarke et al. 2004).

Religiosity: secularisation makes newer cohorts less religious (see Wilson 1966). Religiosity seems to increase our felt obligation to comply with social norms and thus makes more religious citizens more likely to vote.

Duration of residence: this is considered to be one aspect of social connectedness. The longer one has been living in a certain area, the more likely one is to be socially settled. This means that one can pay attention to the increasingly familiar problems of that area that might need political solutions (Miller and Shanks 1996: 100-6).²⁶ One’s level of resources/motivation to vote is thereby increased.

Party identification: research into the decline of institutional forms of political participation holds that younger generations identify less with parties than

²⁶ There is also evidence at the ecological level that districts with high levels of residential mobility have lower turnout (Gimpel, Morris, and Armstrong 2004).

with other political groupings with a smaller scope of activity. On the other hand, the older a person is, the higher that individual's potential attachment to his or her party, as they have more time to grow attached. This could explain the higher level of party identification amongst older people (Butler and Stokes 1983 [1974]: 59-61; Converse 1976; Fuchs and Klingemann 1995a; Tilley 2003). Voters with lower levels of party identification feel less motivation to engage in a form of electoral politics where they lack the identification with an actor they might deem worth voting for.

Pension as a main source of income: to be dependent on public pensions could be a mobilising factor because politics can be important in determining the amount of income (see Campbell 2003a).

Political interest: the disengagement thesis hypothesises a decrease in political interest. But a competing hypothesis of 'selective withdrawal' demands that politics might be one of the few areas where the elderly decide to remain active. This view predicts a general social retreat among the elderly accompanied by the concentration on fewer subjects, including politics (Glenn and Grimes 1968). Political interest is thereby a strong predictor of political participation because it decreases information costs. Citizens who are politically interested do not view getting information about politics as a costly necessity, but draw some enjoyment from it. Younger cohorts, e.g. in Britain, show less interest in formal politics than older cohorts (Henn, Weinstein, and Wring 2002).

The following empirical investigation will show that not all of these variables are equally important when considered in a multivariate regression analysis. I will show that the pure life cycle effects of having lived in an area for longer (positive impact), living without a partner, and deteriorating health (negative impact) are the factors that have the strongest impact on an older person's likelihood of voting.

6.4 Results of the cross-sectional regression analysis

This cross-sectional analysis can be divided into three different steps. Firstly, I want to establish the relative impact of the independent variables in multivariate models (table 6-2, models 1-3). Secondly, I will demonstrate the universal presence of individual ageing by comparing the results of the pooled analysis with results from separate country regressions (figure 6-4). Thirdly, I will run several tests with subsamples (table 6-3) showing that: (a) the impact of the individual-level variables does not vary a lot depending on the macro country context (models 4a-c); (b) differences between age groups are bigger in low turnout countries; and (c) the causal mechanism behind the effect of individual ageing on voting participation is the habituation of socially conformist behaviour (models 5a-b).

I am using logistic regression models with country dummies for the analysis of several countries at the same time. We know from the analysis of electoral institutions that they affect the average probability of the eligible voter to go to the polls. By modelling country dummies as part of these models, I allow this average probability – in effect: the intercepts – to vary between countries. The dependent variable is a dichotomy of whether or not the respondent voted in the last national parliamentary election before spring 2002.

Table 6-2 shows a series of three regressions. Model 1 as a reference model only has age dummies as explanatory variables. Model 2 includes the full list of independent variables. There are some age-related effects that lose significance in the multivariate regression model: religiosity, gender, income, social networks, internal and external political efficacy, and pension as the main source of income. Model 3 introduces an interaction term between education and age. The last column in table 6-2 shows the difference in fitted probabilities between the minimum and at the

maximum of the independent variable when other effects are being held constant at their means in model 3. However, these calculations do not tell us enough about the differences between age groups because the model looks at all variance *within* as well as *between* age groups.

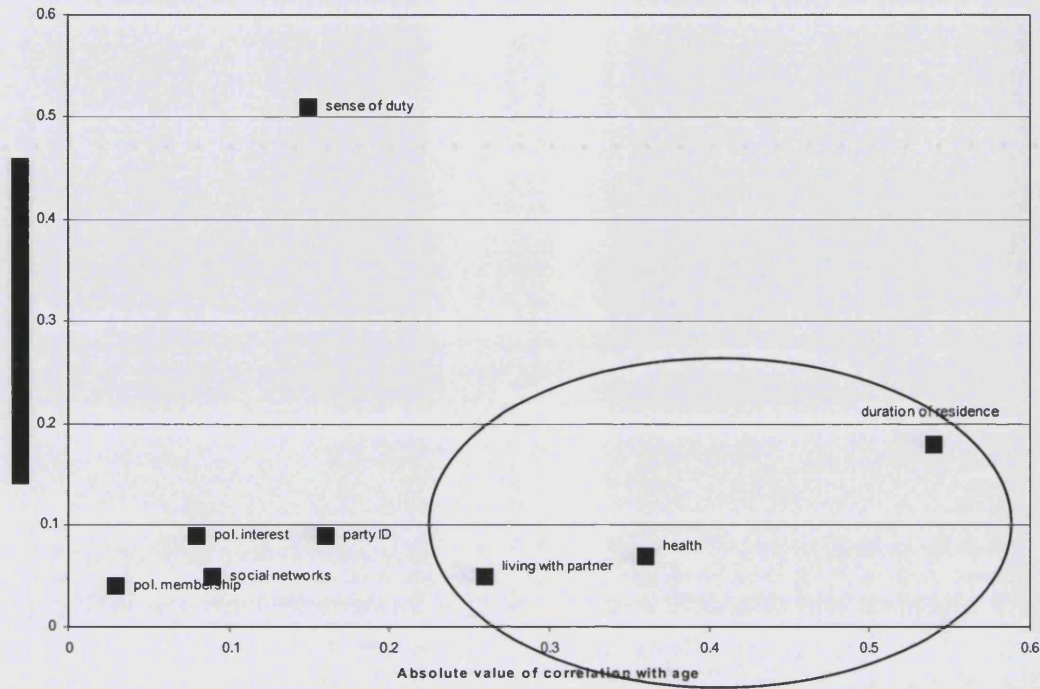
Table 6-2: Logistic regressions on vote participation in Europe, whole sample

	Dependent variable: vote participation						Δ in fitted probabilities between minimum and maximum
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		
	Coef.	Std. Err.	Coef.	Std. Err.	Coef.	Std. Err.	
<i>Constant</i>	0.08	0.07	-4.51***	0.20	-4.30***	0.20	
<i>Individual Ageing</i>							
Age dummies (29 and younger baseline)							
30-39	0.62***	0.06	0.44***	0.08	0.49***	0.09	0.05
40-49	1.15***	0.07	0.77***	0.09	0.82***	0.09	0.07
50-59	1.30***	0.07	0.88***	0.09	0.90***	0.09	0.08
60-69	1.41***	0.08	0.87***	0.12	0.87***	0.12	0.07
70-79	1.31***	0.09	0.93***	0.13	1.07***	0.15	0.08
80+	0.60***	0.12	0.34*	0.17	0.76***	0.20	0.06
<i>Cohort</i>							
Education			0.11***	0.02	0.27***	0.05	0.18
Religiosity			0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	
<i>Cohort/life cycle</i>							
Sense of duty to vote			0.29***	0.01	0.29***	0.01	0.51
Party identification			0.23***	0.02	0.23***	0.02	0.09
Political interest			0.27***	0.27	0.27***	0.04	0.09
Trade union and party membership			0.19*	0.19	0.19*	0.08	0.04
Female			-0.07	0.05	-0.06	0.05	
Income			0.03	0.01	0.03*	0.01	
<i>Life cycle</i>							
Duration of residence, logged			0.31***	0.03	0.31***	0.03	0.18
Subjective evaluation of health			0.13***	0.03	0.13***	0.03	0.07
Living with partner			0.42***	0.06	0.41***	0.06	0.05
Number of minor children in household			0.01	0.03	0.01	0.03	0.01
Friends in non-political networks, logged			0.19***	0.06	0.20***	0.06	0.05
Internal political efficacy, logged			0.04	0.03	0.04	0.03	
External political efficacy, logged			0.01	0.02	0.02	0.02	
Pension main source of income			0.08	0.10	0.06	0.10	
30-39 X education					-0.19**	0.06	-0.13
40-49 X education					-0.23***	0.07	-0.16
50-59 X education					-0.26***	0.07	-0.18
60-69 X education					-0.26***	0.07	-0.18
70-79 X education					-0.11	0.08	-0.07
80+ X education					0.09	0.12	-0.06
Valid N	34,303		33,976		33,976		
Log likelihood							
Pseudo R ²	0.081		0.250		0.252		

*** Significant at 0.001 level, ** at 0.01 level, Data: ESS.

Tested insignificant interaction terms: age X gender, pension X income. GB baseline with country dummies (unreported). Last model with centred education variable.

Figure 6-3: The impact of age-related independent variables on vote participation and their correlation with age



Living with partner and number of minor children for respondents aged 40 and older.

Figure 6-3 illustrates which variables are most important to explain the differences *between* age groups (apart from education which I will discuss separately). The horizontal axis shows the absolute value of the bivariate correlation of the independent variables with age. The vertical axis shows the impact as calculated by the difference in fitted probabilities. From this age-centred perspective, the variables that stand out as having a relatively high impact, as well as a stronger correlation with age, are the following: duration of residence, if someone is living with a partner, and subjective evaluation of health. Their distance to the other variables, more to the left, is relatively large. The closest variable from this group of four is party identification, to which I will come back in the discussion of the sub-samples. None of these four variables is as strong as the residual age variable, which – if it were on the graph – would be higher on the vertical and more to the right on the horizontal axis than any of the control variables.

There are some remarkable aspects concerning these three factors. For one, all of them are purely sociological and stand outside of the political process. It is the social context of the life cycle that matters rather than the political context to explain variation between age groups. All of these variables describe life cycle effects. The probability of living with a partner increases from youth to middle age and decreases thereafter. Duration of residence increases with age. Health worsens with age. Secondly, the impact of these factors on voting participation is arguably quite stable since they are embedded in a cultural conception of a social life course that is only subject to slow societal change. Finally, two of the three most important age-related effects make elderly people *less* likely to vote. This hints at the magnitude of the other effects that make older people more likely to vote, namely individual ageing and the duration of residence. In sum, hypothesis H5 that holds that older people differ on predictors of political participation from younger people has only partially been found evidence for with regard to voting participation; some variables (for example pension as a main source of income) that correlate systematically with age (see bivariate assessment above) show no impact in the multivariate regression analysis. Thus, the model could be made more parsimonious by dropping these variables for future testing.

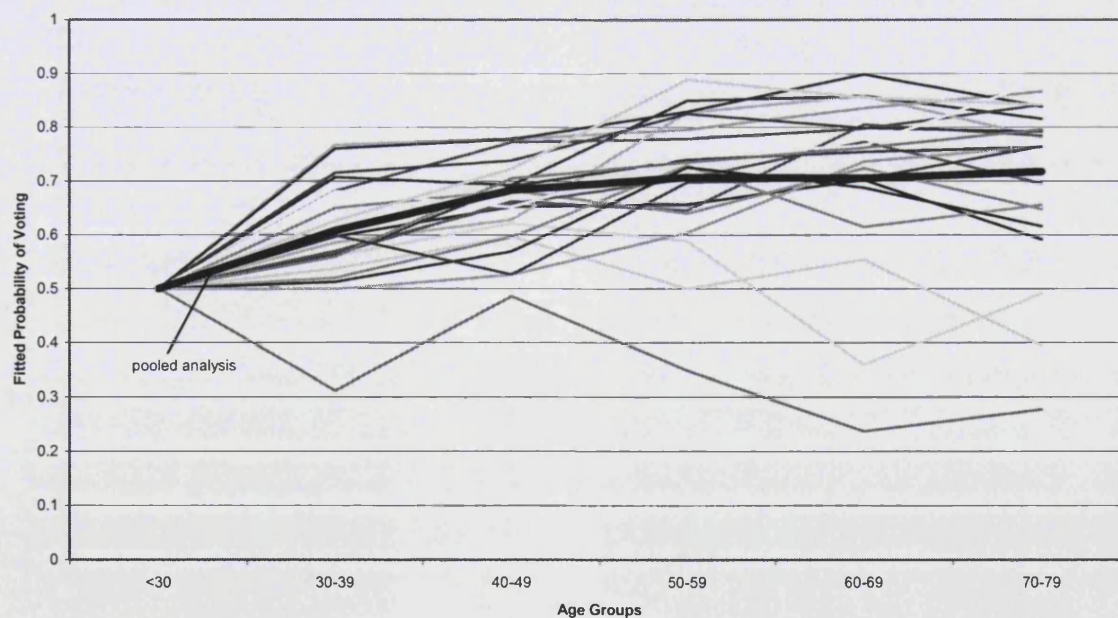
Model 3 in table 6-2 further introduces an interaction effect between education and age. This interaction was first shown by Raymond Wolfinger and Stephen Rosenstone (1980) with US census data and confirmed by Rosenstone and John Hansen (1993) with US election surveys.²⁷ The older the voters are, the smaller

²⁷ Jonathan Nagler (1991) raised the problems of artificial interaction effects in logistic regression that are due to the S-shaped probability curve. As a simple remedy to test whether the observed interaction effect between age and education is an artefact or real, I ran the same regression for all seven educational groups separately. The changes in the coefficient of the age dummies correspond to what

the gap is between different educational groups. Highly educated citizens generally show a higher likelihood of voting because they are more likely to understand the political process and live in a social context where norms of participation prevail. Over a lifetime, however, less educated people catch up with their more educated fellow citizens of the same age. This can be explained by the substituting effect of life experience for education. The learning effect through own past experience is stronger for people of lower educational backgrounds over a lifetime. Individuals with lower levels of education who are young cannot circumvent the constraint of limited rationality using the heuristic short-cuts of their own experience.

Let us now turn to the interpretation of the general curvilinear increase of voting participation in all educational groups when plotted against age.

Figure 6-4: Variation between age groups as to fitted voting probability after analysis for each country separately and for pooled sample



we would expect from the interaction effect. Therefore, this interaction term is not an artefact of the regression technique.

Figure 6-4 shows the results of 21 regressions, one per country (based on model 2). The horizontal axis shows the fitted probability for all other variables held constant except for age. As we can see, there is a lot of variation between countries. Most countries do show an increasing tendency to vote with age, but not all. The reason for the difference between countries lies in the cross-sectional nature of the data. If we look at, for example, the British 50-59 year olds and their likelihood of voting, this average probability is not only determined by individual ageing but also the cohort experience of those that have been born between 1942 and 1952. We can control for part of this cohort experience, namely the shared probability of attaining a social characteristic like education or religiosity, at the individual level. What we cannot control is the shared experience as a political generation that might make this age group different from others in Britain (and a group of unknown factors the influence of which we assume to be random). However, these political generation effects are determined by national political history. Therefore, the graphs of each country look very different. If we pool all respondents into one analysis, these political generation experiences cancel each other out. In the pooled analysis, they become a kind of white noise that does not affect the universal experience that all countries share: individual ageing. Other factors that are unknown and are captured in the residual age variation are assumed to be random and do not therefore influence the result when we pool the analysis.

The thick concave line represents the result from the pooled analysis. As hypothesised (hypothesis H10), we see a clearly increasing trend, which is increasing at decreasing rates. This is the typical form of a learning curve. I hypothesise that the causal mechanism behind this individual ageing effect is the habituation of socially

conformist behaviour. To lend evidence to this, we can split the sample in two different ways for two series of regressions as a second test.

The first division separates the countries according to their average parliamentary turnout 1945-2001 (according to IDEA 2002: 83-4).²⁸ The first group of low turnout countries consists of France, Hungary, Ireland, Luxembourg, Poland, Switzerland and the United Kingdom (51.4 % - 74.9 %). The medium-turnout countries are Finland, Germany, Greece, Norway, Spain, Slovenia (76.4 % - 80.8 %). The final groups of high turnout countries consist of Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal and Sweden (83.8 % – 92.0 %). Belgium has been excluded from the last group because of its system of compulsory voting with strong enforcement that leads to high turnout. The size of each sub-sample is between 10,700 and 11,000.

Higher average turnout is relevant in two ways. First of all, the norm of voting is more established in higher turnout countries since more people practice it. Secondly, comparative research suggests that turnout is higher when elections are held in a way in which the voter perceives a stronger instrumental incentive to vote (Franklin, van der Eijk, and Oppenhuis 1996).

²⁸ Vote to voting age population ratio.

Table 6-3: Logistic regressions on vote participation, sample split by average country turnout (model 4) and by sense of duty (model 5)

	Dependent variable: vote participation									
	Model 4a		Model 4b		Model 4c		Model 5a		Model 5b	
	low average turnout		medium average turnout		high average turnout		low sense of duty		high sense of duty	
	<i>France, Hungary, Ireland, Luxembourg, Poland, Switzerland, the United Kingdom</i>		<i>Finland, Germany, Greece, Norway, Spain, Slovenia</i>		<i>Austria, Czech Rep., Denmark, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden</i>					
	Great Britain baseline		Germany baseline		Austria baseline		Great Britain baseline		Great Britain baseline	
	Coef.	Rob. Std. Err.	Coef.	Rob. Std. Err.	Coef.	Rob. Std. Err.	Coef.	Rob. Std. Err.	Coef.	Rob. Std. Err.
Country dummies										
constant	-4.12***	0.28	-4.06***	0.32	-2.64***	0.47	-3.70***	0.45	-3.31***	0.26
<i>Individual ageing</i>										
Age dummies (29 and younger baseline)										
30-39	0.47***	0.13	0.70***	0.15	0.07	0.18	0.71	0.45	1.09***	0.23
40-49	0.84***	0.14	1.01***	0.16	0.36	0.19	1.38**	0.47	1.63***	0.23
50-59	1.02***	0.14	0.87***	0.18	0.41*	0.18	1.05*	0.47	1.89***	0.22
60-69	1.20***	0.19	0.60**	0.21	0.51	0.28	1.52**	0.49	1.83***	0.23
70-79	1.18***	0.22	1.02***	0.28	0.85**	0.29	0.64	0.50	1.75***	0.24
80+	0.99***	0.32	0.51	0.34	0.70	0.51	0.77	0.63	0.77*	0.31
<i>Cohort</i>										
Education	0.20***	0.06	0.41***	0.12	0.74***	0.14	0.32**	0.10	0.28***	0.05
Religiosity	0.03*	0.01	-0.02	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.07***	0.02	0.01	0.01
<i>Life cycle/cohort</i>										
Female	-0.03	0.08	-0.20*	0.10	0.10	0.11	0.06	0.12	-0.14*	0.06
Political interest	0.27***	0.06	0.29***	0.07	0.23**	0.08	0.38***	0.08	0.35***	0.04
Sense of duty to vote	0.30***	0.02	0.31***	0.02	0.29***	0.02	-	-	-	-
Income	0.01	0.02	0.08**	0.03	0.02	0.03	0.05	0.03	0.03	0.02
Party identification	0.17***	0.03	0.27***	0.04	0.33***	0.04	0.28***	0.05	0.27***	0.02
Trade union and party membership	0.21	0.13	0.19	0.13	0.13	0.16	-0.12	0.20	0.30***	0.08

	Model 4a low average turnout <i>France, Hungary, Ireland, Luxembourg, Poland, Switzerland, the United Kingdom</i>		Model 4b medium average turnout <i>Finland, Germany, Greece, Norway, Spain, Slovenia</i>		Model 4c high average turnout <i>Austria, Czech Rep., Denmark, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden</i>		Model 5a low sense of duty		Model 5b high sense of duty	
<i>Life cycle</i>										
Duration of residence, logged	0.29***	0.04	0.25***	0.05	0.46***	0.07	0.26***	0.07	0.31***	0.03
Ext. pol. efficacy, logged	-0.03	0.03	0.04	0.04	0.06	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.02	0.02
Int. pol. efficacy, logged	0.05	0.04	0.09*	0.05	-0.03	0.05	0.06	0.05	0.05	0.03
Pension main source of income	0.13	0.13	0.34	0.18	-0.48*	0.21	0.15	0.21	0.01	0.10
Living with partner	0.33***	0.09	0.54***	0.10	0.44***	0.13	0.51***	0.14	0.41***	0.06
Subj. evaluation of health	0.12*	0.05	0.25***	0.05	0.09	0.07	0.08	0.07	0.16***	0.03
Friends in non-political networks, logged	0.22*	0.09	0.24*	0.10	0.04	0.12	0.19	0.14	0.25***	0.06
Number of minor children in househ.	0.00	0.05	0.00	0.06	0.08	0.07	0.01	0.07	0.02	0.03
30-39 X education	-0.20*	0.08	-0.21	0.14	-0.50**	0.18	-0.24	0.14	-0.19**	0.07
40-49 X education	-0.19*	0.08	-0.40**	0.14	-0.48***	0.18	-0.39**	0.14	-0.24***	0.07
50-59 X education	-0.16	0.08	-0.41**	0.15	-0.71***	0.16	-0.36*	0.15	-0.26***	0.07
60-69 X education	-0.07	0.10	-0.59***	0.13	-0.59**	0.19	-0.63***	0.17	-0.21**	0.07
70-79 X education	-0.00	0.11	-0.45**	0.14	-0.32	0.20	-0.27	0.17	-0.07	0.09
80+ X education	0.16	0.15	-0.30**	0.18	-0.04	0.31	-0.35	0.27	0.15	0.13
Valid N	10,729		11,101		10,710		3,580		30,396	
Pseudo R ²	0.222		0.270		0.268		0.156		0.171	

*** Significant at 0.001 level, ** at 0.01 level, Data: ESS. All models include country dummies with differing baselines.

Table 6-3 shows the regressions (models 4a-c). Some of the small-impact coefficients change in significance somewhat. That should not concern us too much because their minor impact makes them more interesting as control, rather than substantive variables. It is important to note that no coefficient changes its sign apart from pension as a main source of income.²⁹ In models 4a-b, this variable is insignificant and carries positive coefficients. In model 4c, it is negative and significant at 0.05 level.

Two out of the three social characteristics that are so important in explaining variation between age groups (duration of residence, living with partner) show stable, significant coefficients. Subjective evaluation of health is not significant in the last model and only significant at 0.05 level in model 4a, but the coefficient remains positive throughout. All other coefficients with strong impacts remain quite similar. Party identification changes its coefficient depending on the country group. It becomes twice as high in the high turnout states in comparison to those with low turnout. This is not due to sampling error, which is relatively small for this independent variable. It could be that party identification is a stronger mobilising factor in countries in which perceived costs of voting are lower (higher turnout countries).

If we now turn to the coefficients of the age dummies, we can see that the overall curvilinear relationship is the same. However, compared to younger age groups, older age groups are the more likely to go to the polls, the lower the average turnout in that country. If one compares the coefficients line by line, one can see that they decrease from left to right in all instances except for the medium group in the 30-39 and 40-49

²⁹ Sampling error alone can explain quite a lot of variation just between different samples of the same population and does not need to hint at systematic differences between the country groups.

categories. Thus, all other things being equal, an older citizen differs more from a younger in a country like Britain or Poland (low turnout) than in Denmark or Austria (high turnout). This lends support to our hypothesis 12a.

This can be explained by the fact that in a country with low turnout, there is less social pressure to conform for all age groups. Thus, a young person in those countries feels less incentive to conform to the voting norm. Over a lifetime however, a person learns to conform more and more as s/he becomes part of a social context that values that norm. Starting from a lower level at a younger age, there is more room for the habituating process towards the top.

The interaction effect between education and the age dummies also seems to depend to some extent on the average level of turnout in a country. The higher the average level, the stronger is the increase in the coefficients. Substantially, this means that the hypothesised replacement of the function of formal education by life experience is stronger, the more widespread the social norm of voting is. It makes sense that the learning process associated with experience has a stronger effect in countries where the social phenomenon that is the content of learning is more prevalent.

Another test for the nature of the habituation process is to split the sample into two groups according to their reported sense of duty to vote. The group with a low sense of duty are those respondents with a score 0-4, and the group with a high sense of duty are those with a score 5-10.³⁰ The sample with the lower sense of duty consists of about

³⁰ In general, we can expect bias in terms of respondents over-reporting their sense of duty because it is a socially desirable trait. It is reasonable to assume, however, that this bias does not differ between age groups (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995: appendix B).

3,600 respondents, the other of about 30,400. Naturally, standard errors are about half the size in the larger sample compared to the smaller. In general, for those with the low sense of duty the coefficients of the explanatory variables are equal or a bit higher than in the group with the higher sense. This can be explained by the fact that mobilising factors have a stronger impact on those who feel a lower civic duty to vote.

Figure 6-5: Variation between age groups as to fitted voting probability, high sense of duty to vote

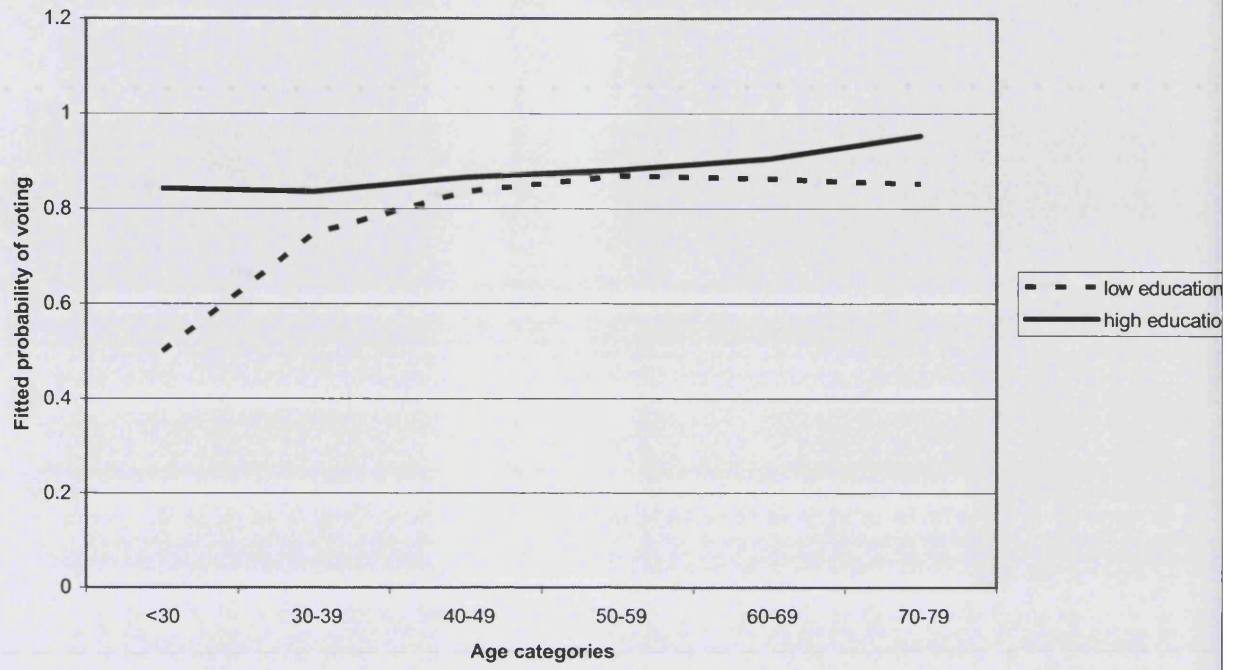
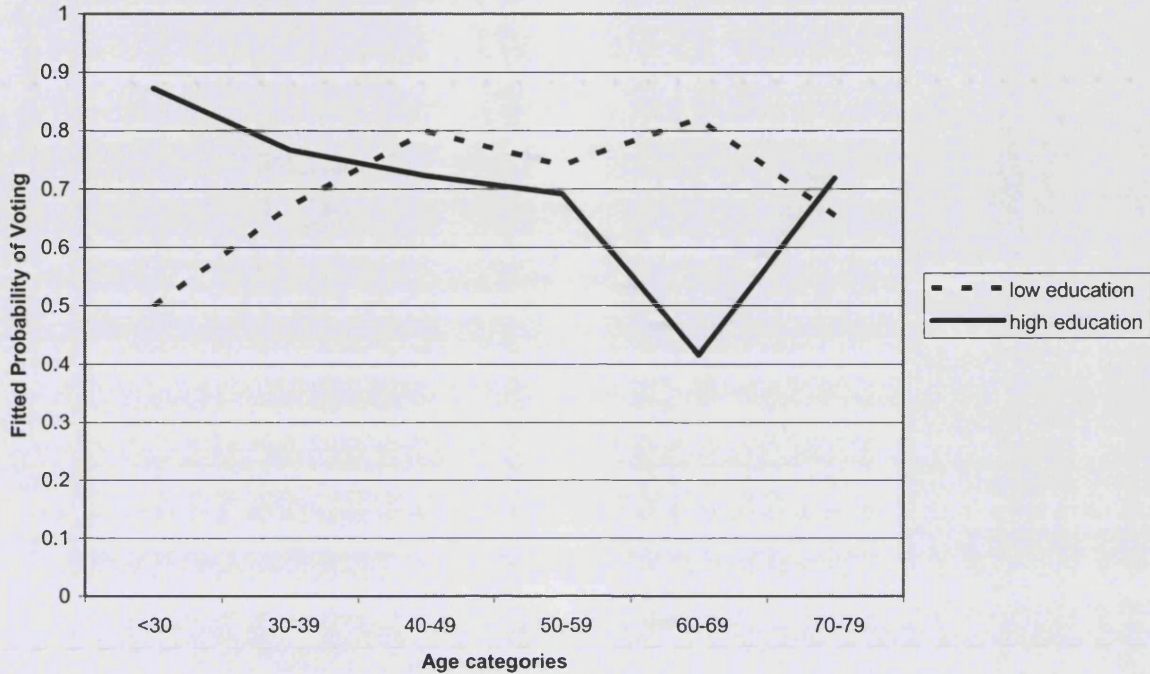


Figure 6-6: Variation between age groups as to fitted voting probability, low sense of duty to vote



Figures 6-5 and 6-6 show the relationship between age, education and the fitted probability of voting, all other things being equal, for the two sub-groups. Not surprisingly, those who feel a high sense of duty have a higher probability of voting in general, in comparison to their counterparts of the same age and educational background. If we now look at figure 6-5 for those with a high sense of duty and high formal education, there is almost no variation between age groups. This is the graphic embodiment of the ceiling of habituation. Those who feel a high sense of duty at a young age have a high incentive to vote when they are also more highly educated. This is because they have an understanding of the political process and are cognitively engaged (Dalton 1984). Thus, life experience cannot lead to more habituation in this group of voters, because these individuals are likely to vote in every election. For those

with low educational backgrounds and a high sense of duty, life experience substitutes for understanding the political process by education. These findings confirm our hypothesis H12b. Figure 6-6, in contrast, paints a different picture for those with a low sense of duty. Here, high educational background does not equate with high participation. The relationship across age groups is not positive and does not look similar to the individual ageing effect. This stems from the fact that those people who are highly educated, and are thus prone to have a greater understanding of the political process, do not habituate voting across their life time because they do not perceive it as a civic duty. Thus, it would be inconsistent for them to conform to a kind of behaviour that they do not deem desirable. This finding confirms hypothesis H12c. For those with low educational backgrounds, there is still some residual effect – although not a clean learning curve - of life experience teaching them the norm. It might be that the less educated are more open to social pressure because they are not cognitively mobilised to resist the habituation of a norm they do not agree with. All in all, however, this habituation pattern is much less pronounced in comparison to the other patterns we have seen.

6.5 Discussion and summary

If we now combine the findings from the British case and the analysis of the European Social Survey, we can see that there is strong evidence for all four types of age-related effects being present to explain the difference in voting participation between older and younger people.

Firstly, there is a case to be made for the presence of habituation as a consequence of individual ageing (confirmed hypothesis H10). The learning curve that

arose in the pooled analysis in comparison to single-country regressions gives evidence to this causal process. My causal narrative is that the cognitive short-cuts of past experience are important for ageing voters as it decreases their costs of voting. Their past experience allows easier decision in the light of limited rationality. This past experience is so important that it can replace the function of formal education over the lifetime. Familiarity with the voting situation and similar political constellations in previous elections make it easier for older voters to take the decision to vote. The finding of habituation of voting also finds evidence in recently conducted experimental studies (Gerber, Green, and Shachar 2003; Green and Shachar 2000).

In addition, the increasing tendency to vote is higher, the more widespread the social norm of voting is, i.e. the higher the average voting turnout is in a country (confirmed hypothesis H12a). This increase with age only manifests itself if voters are still open to an increase in their personally felt obligation to vote; among those with a high sense of duty, habituation with age hardly takes place anymore (confirmed hypothesis 12b), because the subjective norm to vote is already very high at a young age. In the group of voters with a low sense of duty and high cognitive mobilisation (high education), no increase in voting participation across age groups is visible (confirmed hypothesis H12c) as voters understand the process and do not accept the social norm.

Are there any alternative explanations for the increasing voting probability of ageing voters? Since we needed to make assumptions about the unknown factors that are captured in the residual variation besides political generation effects from each country, it could be that this assumption is violated and that we omitted a systematic factor. Possibly, the older we are, the more we have at stake in a political system. In that case, it

would not be social norms that drive us, but personal material interest. The older we are, the more we possess and more dependent on (or used to) public provisions we become. This would be a different version of the hypothesis that older people should vote for big-spending parties. Thus, we would lose more, if we did not exert our right to vote. This explanation is implausible because our vote contributes infinitesimally little to the outcome. If this explanation was true, the differences between countries should also not be the way they are. Economic interests that grow alongside ageing should not depend on the average turnout of the country. Thus, the systematic pattern that age differences are biggest in low turnout countries would remain unexplained. Also, direct measures of material interest like income and pension income would not be insignificant.

Another hypothesis could attribute the rise in turnout with age to an all-encompassing generational difference in the acknowledgement of voting as an important function of democracy. This notion is shared more by older people and less shared by younger persons (because they might see other forms of participation as more effective). This explanation is highly unlikely. Why should the elderly in Ireland share the same sense of the usefulness in voting as older Poles? Both groups have had very different experiences of democracy. Therefore, finding an all-overriding generational effect in so many countries is improbable.

Secondly, sociological life cycle factors are stronger than shared social characteristic cohort variables to explain differences between age groups. We have seen evidence for predictors of voting participation to be systematically correlated with age, and have seen these predictors having an impact on voting participation. The social and cultural construction of our life course sets the scene for a higher likelihood among older

people to vote. Most importantly, the tendency to move houses less in later life makes older people more likely to have lived in a certain area for longer and therefore gives them an edge in knowing the problems of the area. The suppressing factors of being likely to live alone or being less able-bodied reduces the voting probability of older people.

Thirdly, shared social characteristic cohort effects play a subordinate role. Education loses its importance, the older the voter is. The highest ranking predictor in terms of influence on the dependent variable is party identification, which also has a life cycle root to it. Other 'mixed' age-related effects play an even less important role. Overall, not all predictors of political participation that are age-related maintain an impact in the multivariate regression analysis, meaning that hypothesis H5 is only partially confirmed with regard to voting participation.

Fourthly, cohort effects are definitely present to explain the difference between older and younger voters, as the British data analysis has shown (although we have not subjected this finding to a substantial test). Today's younger people, Blair's Children, show a smaller likelihood of voting in their early life cycle elections than the other three generations at the same age. The 'zigzag' lines in figure 6-4 of the European analysis demonstrate that the political generation differences can be quite substantial and erase parts of the individual ageing effect.

However, there has to be a caveat in the interpretations. I did not test the nature of the age-related effects empirically, i.e. I did not test whether duration of residence, for example, is a life cycle effect or a shared social characteristic cohort effect, but only

assessed this origin through the literature. So, although well-grounded in the literature, one has to be aware of these limitations.

It is impossible to assess statistically the relative weight of each type of age-related effect for a concrete country. It is all the more difficult since the effects depend on the country context of past political history or the intensity of the social norm of voting. The proof of the habituation mechanism required us to create a ‘meta’- electorate of European voters with random noise political generation and period effects. However, if we remember the omnipresence of older people being more likely to vote – across time for Britain and across space for the 21 European countries (see figure 5-3 in chapter 5) – it seems that the effects that are stable across time between generations (life cycle and individual ageing) are stronger.

If we accept this notion for the moment, it seems as if the campaigns of old age interests groups, as I reported them at the beginning of the chapter, are well-grounded in the underlying causal mechanisms of older people’s higher likelihood of voting. The nature of human decision-making as much as the sociological foundations of the life cycle stands outside of the political process. They cannot be changed, or at least not very easily. Older people are thus likely to maintain their relative higher voting probability compared to younger citizens, in the near future.

7 Party Choice in Britain and West Germany

‘...Campaigners [in the 2005 British General Election] recognise that the search for the grey vote is more complex than simply handing out money. Both the age and experience of older voters do not make them mere "what's in it for me?" consumer voters.’

Michael White (2005), political editor of the *Guardian*, in March 2005

In the run-up to the 2005 British General Election, there was a bidding war between the major political parties. Each one promised to allocate material hand-outs to pensioners: through either a discount or change in the Council Tax system (see chapter 9), more heating fuel money or higher pensions. Ignited by the campaigns of old age interest groups, all parties wooed the grey vote. Party campaigners were told that older people are more likely to switch their vote and must thus be won over. As the political editor of the *Guardian* above observed, this competition for the grey vote turned out to be very difficult because pure self-interest seemed not to be the only concern for older voters, with other factors remaining in the dark. The level of attention directed towards older voters increased significantly in the last few years. Still in the 1997 campaign, Peter Mandelson told an old age interest group lobbyist that Labour would not present New Labour in any way to appeal to older people because they would not change their vote (Vincent, Patterson, and Wale 2001: 74).

This chapter sheds some light on the matter from a more general angle: to what extent do older voters cast their vote differently? Answering this question also represents an attempt to analyse the *content* of a political participation decision rather than just the determinants of the action itself. To that end, I will look at two countries, Britain and West Germany, across several decades of time. This is a limited analysis as it only looks

at two countries; however, the technical necessity of accumulating cross-sectional surveys to disentangle the statistical differences between age and cohort effects makes the analysis even of these two countries complex.

Each one of the four groups of hypotheses that guide the analysis of this PhD dissertation are testable with regard to party choice. The political generation hypothesis H4 predicts that older people's behaviour is shaped by circumstances during their young adulthood. They share preferences across individuals because of common historical experiences with regard to parties. A party's fortunes among young voters vary across time. The hypothesis stipulates that voters in early adulthood are more susceptible to the impressions that parties leave on them. They are likely to retain their preferences for the party that impresses them most. Thus, if the hypothesis was correct, we should be able to predict a party's fortune among a certain cohort through our knowledge of the historical electoral circumstances of the period during which the cohort was in young adulthood. If I am right, we should be able to detect stable preferences in party choice with identifiable cohorts – political generations – across time. We should be able to predict the popularity of a certain party within a political generation relative to the preceding political generation. We can thus infer how older people who are members of a particular cohort differ from younger generations (hypothesis H4).

The shared social characteristic cohort hypothesis H6 entails that a cohort shares a certain probability to be exposed to a social characteristic. This can then influence the decision to participate politically in later life because, for example, motivations are different from other cohorts. The generational changes in social background, such as education or religiosity, can shape party fortunes among various cohorts. Thus, on top of

the fixed political generation effect based on early socialisation, we should find effects of religiosity and education in the vote for the FDP and Greens that makes younger cohorts more likely to vote for them (hypothesis H6). We would expect similar social compositional effects for British cohorts, but because we face a more limited data set, we cannot test the analogous hypothesis for Britain.

There are four testable life cycle hypotheses in this chapter. Two of them are competing notions of growing conservatism with age.³¹ The accumulation of material resources over the life cycle could make older voters more likely to vote economically conservative as they have more material resources they want to preserve. The most extreme parties in economic policy terms should therefore show life cycle variations in the expected direction. In other words, older people should be more likely to vote for the most economically conservative party (FDP, Tories) and less likely to vote for the most economically progressive party (SPD, Labour) (hypothesis H8a). A competing hypothesis (H8b) predicts exactly the opposite. As older people are more dependent on public provisions, they should vote for the more economically progressive parties that favour a big state in terms of spending.

As another notion of conservatism, older people could become more conservative in the sense that they are reluctant to change and want to preserve the status quo and should thus be more likely to vote for the incumbent party. Opposition parties would thus be seen among older voters as less predictable in what they want to change (hypothesis H9). A final testable life cycle notion in this chapter is that older citizens

³¹ A third notion is growing authoritarianism with age that has recently been successfully rejected and will not be further considered here (see chapter 2).

vote according to 'grey interests', i.e. for parties that set out to protect the material interests of older people. The social situation of retirement can shape the preferences of voters at that age, especially with regard to material provisions, such as pensions, social care and certain taxes. This notion can be tested at the aggregate level through a review of the success of senior parties (hypothesis H7). This is because ageing democracies should witness an increasing success of senior parties.

Lastly, the individual ageing hypotheses postulate that older voters learn from their experience and use this experience as a cognitive short-cut to make a decision. This leads to the testable proposition H11 that larger parties, or smaller parties that are regularly part of the government, have more of an edge among voters the older voters are. This is because these parties are more likely to leave impressions on them over their lifetimes— through the media and through their policies.

I proceed in this chapter in the following steps. Firstly, I will look at the electoral fortunes of grey parties that are specifically set up to address older voters' interests. Secondly, I will describe the over time variations of differences between older and younger voters and political generations in Britain and West Germany. This is to show that neither pure life cycle, nor cohort explanations alone fit the data well. Thirdly, I will run various regressions to test the hypotheses together.

The results suggest the following: all of the four groups of hypotheses find some evidence, but not without further refinement. Thus, some hypotheses are only partially confirmed, and I suggest new refined hypotheses for further research. Growing economic conservatism as much as growing interest in state-spending with higher age can be refuted. The poor showing of grey parties also suggests that only a small minority

of older people can vote for them. Moreover, some parties can leave a more prominent impression on electors through repeated government participation or their relatively constant electoral size. They seem to be more successful with older voters in electoral systems with proportional representation as they can repeatedly impress ageing voters. Furthermore, political generations matter if the party system is characterised by stronger alignment. Political impressions at political youth leave an impression that is carried through our lifetimes, but even more so if the overall volatility is low. This is because the strength of generational socialisation is one observable implication of the state of alignment. Finally, older people tend to be more status-quo conservative, voting for the incumbent party as a means to minimise the impact of unforeseen changes.

7.1 Voting for old age interests: the failure of grey parties

A grey party signals that its main target group are older people through its name, such as Grey Panthers, the Greys, or 55+. Hypothesis H7 holds that senior parties become successful in countries with sizeable and growing proportions of older voters. Older people might cast their vote for a party who represents special material interests associated with their higher age, most importantly health, care and pensions. These are expensive policies that need a high amount of re-distribution. It is remarkable that many European parties show the candidacy of grey parties. Indeed, there are few countries in which there is not one.

Older people's parties appear in two disguises: with the label 'pensioners' or that of 'older people'. Most of these parties are electorally unsuccessful. Even in the Netherlands, the country with the lowest electoral threshold in the world, pensioners' parties could not gain more than six seats in one election (see table 7-1). The two

successful exceptions are the Slovenian party that has been a member of the ruling coalition with one ministry (defence) since 1996, and the Luxemburgish party. The party in Luxembourg started out as a single-issue party that campaigned for equal pension treatment of public and private workers, but has seriously broadened its appeal and is now a right-wing party where senior interests are no longer the main campaigning issue (Wort.lu 2005). Thus, the hypothesis is false that senior parties become more successful in ageing democracies, because there is no visible trend of growing popularity.

Table 7-1: The electoral fortunes of grey parties in selected countries across Europe since 1980

Party Name	Country	Best Electoral Result
Action Committee for Democracy and Pensions Justice	Luxembourg	9.9 % (national election 2004)
Pensioners Party	Finland	4.2 % (national election 1987)
Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia	Slovenia	4.1 % (national election in 2004), member of the ruling coalition since 1996
Older people's party, Union 55+, General Older People's Union	Netherlands	3.6 % (AOV in 1994 national election), 0.9 % (U55+ in 1994 national election)
Pensioners' Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina	Bosnia-Herzegovina	1.4 % (2002 national elections)
Pensioners Party	Italy	1.1 % (2004 European elections)
Pensioners Party	Norway	0.5 % (2005 parliamentary elections), 1.5 % (2005 municipal elections)
Grey Panthers/the Greys, 50+	Germany	0.5 % (1994 national elections)
Swedish Senior Citizen Interest Party	Sweden	Some regional and local representation
The Pensioners Party	England/Wales, Scotland	No representation

Sources: www.electionworld.org, Mackie and Rose (1990), various party websites.

It is interesting to note that grey parties started to emerge in the 1980s. Two explanations might account for this temporal incidence. In the aftermath of oil crises and

recessions, welfare state programmes were being reconsidered across Europe. Older people, as the beneficiaries of some of these programmes, became the target of cutbacks as the whole political discourse around old age changed (Walker 1999). Also, the onset of de-alignment in some European countries had opened opportunities for new parties (Franklin, Mackie, and Valen 1992).

The generally bad fortune of grey parties might be a problem of supply rather than demand. In a Eurobarometer Survey in 1992, 10 to 20 % of older respondents in EU member states indicated that they thought that a party for older people would be good idea (Walker and Maltby 1997). In the accompanying senior boost survey in which older people (60+) had been asked, 22 % said that they would join a political party for older people (EB2242, own calculations).

We cannot refute the notion that older people vote according to their senior material interests if senior interests are best captured by mainstream parties. In many countries, there is no senior party of significant size that can even enter parliament. Senior parties might not only face the challenges that all small parties in general have to tackle, such as electoral thresholds. They might also be unsuccessful because major parties take up policies for senior citizens in order to garner support from this large pool of voters. Thereby, older voters could want to vote according to senior interests, but there would not be one 'best senior party'. Established parties might converge on these 'best senior' positions. One could compare this notion with the middle class vote. In post-industrial societies, the middle class tends to comprise the majority of voters. Thus, no party can afford *not* to propose policies that benefit the middle class. In democracies with many older people, no party can afford *not* to be senior-friendly. We would expect

an even stronger party interest in older people's policies as all voters aspire to become old. Unlike a social class, the frontiers of old age as a policy group are open to everyone.

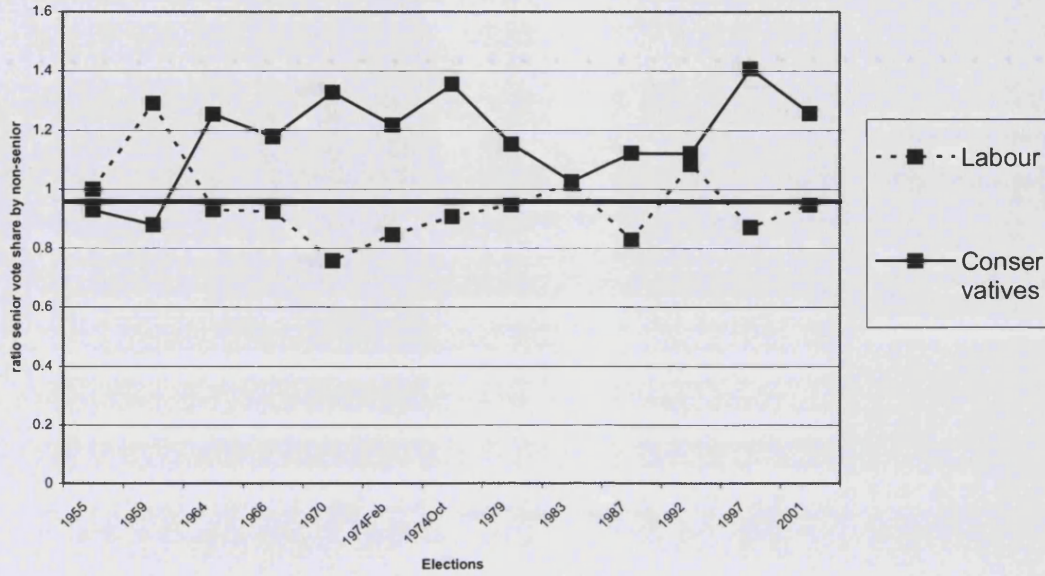
In the next sections, I will now look in detail at all the other hypotheses for Britain and West Germany. Similar to chapter 6, I will first look at the differences between age groups and political generations across time. Then, I will conduct a joint hypotheses test in multivariate regressions in section 7.3.

7.2 Descriptive analysis for age groups and political generations

Variations between age groups

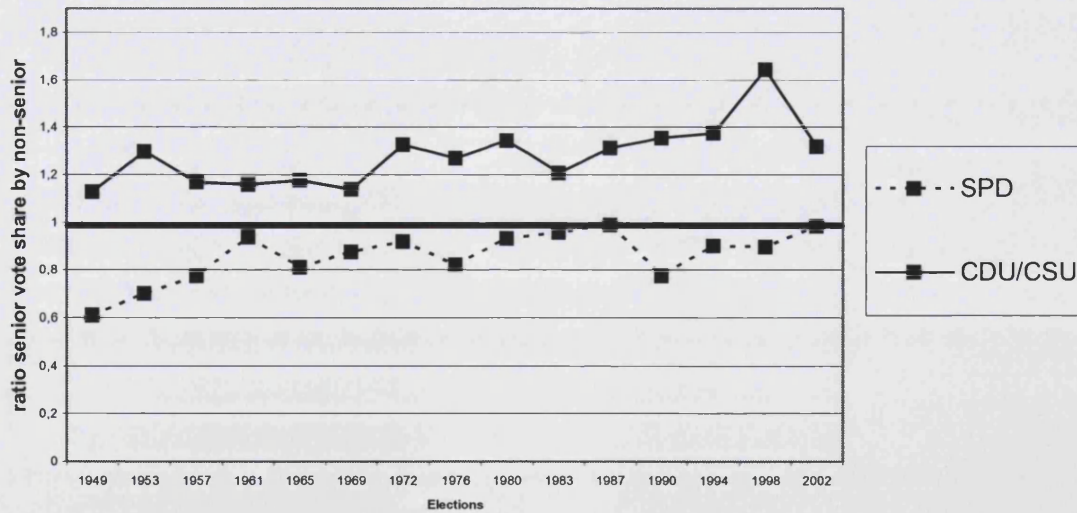
Figures 7-1 to 7-4 show the ratio of the proportion of voters aged 60 and older divided by the proportion of voters aged 59 and younger that vote for a certain party from a longitudinal perspective. If the ratio is 1, it signifies that senior voters do not show a different voting pattern. If the ratio is higher than 1, older people were more likely to vote for that party than younger people, and vice versa for ratios below 1. We can only use observations where respondents have indicated whom they voted for. Non-responses or characteristics of non-voters are not included. I decided to look at the expressed voting choice rather than party identification. Voting choice is more comparable across time than party identification is, which according to the literature on de-alignment is weakening. Also, I am interested in the potential repercussions of voting *behaviour* rather than just the *attitude* towards a party, as I am mainly concerned with political outcomes.

Figure 7-1: British party ratios (vote share of voters aged 60 and older by vote share of those younger than 60) – Conservatives and Labour 1955 - 2001



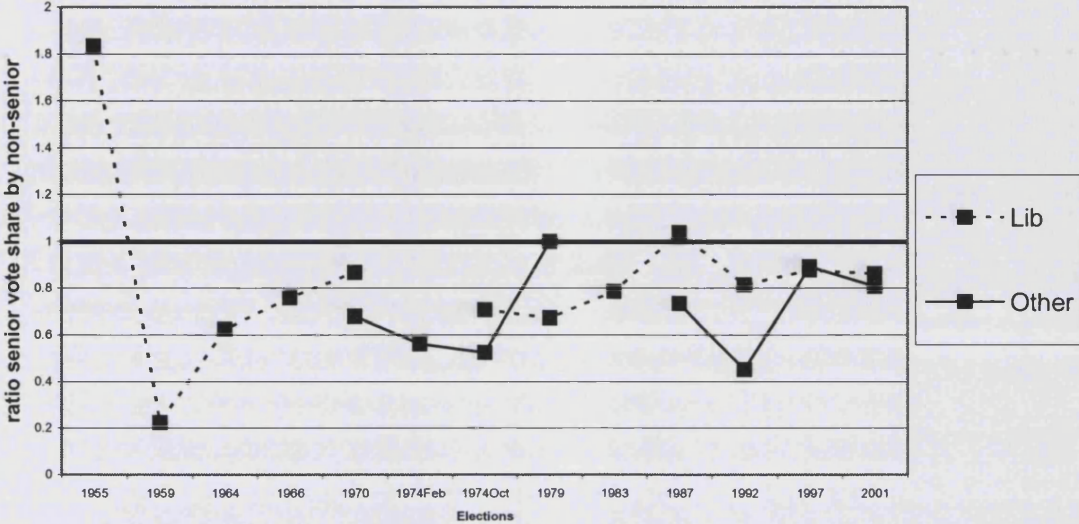
Source: own calculation according to British election studies 1964 to 2001 and Gallup polls 1958 and 1960.

Figure 7-2: West German party ratios (vote share of voters aged 60 and older by vote share of those younger than 60) – CDU/CSU and SPD 1949 - 2002



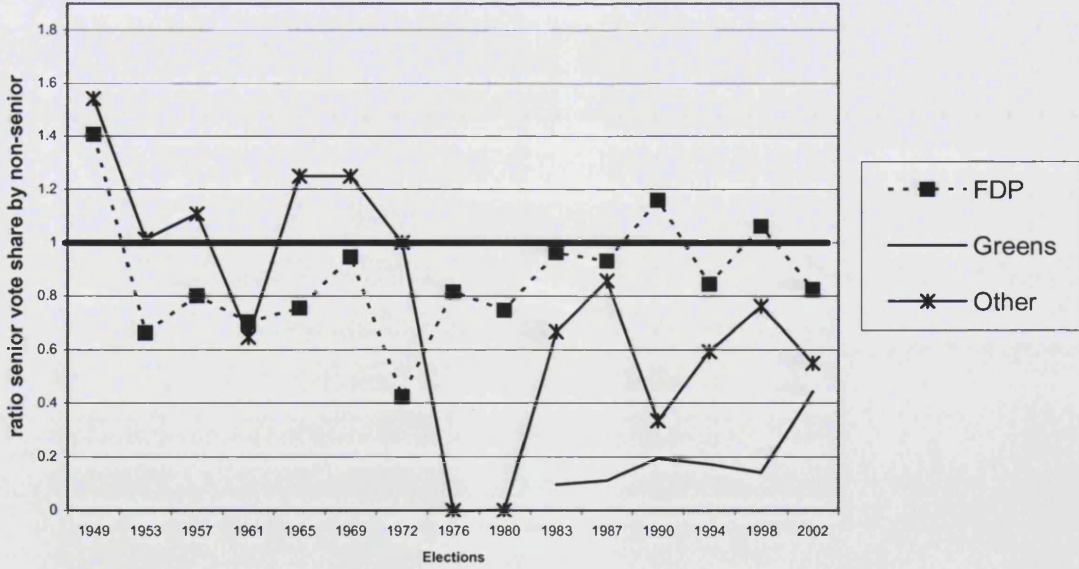
Source: own calculation according to German election studies 1961 to 1998 and Politbarometer 2002.

Figure 7-3: British party ratios (vote share of voters aged 60 and older by vote share of those younger than 60) – Liberals and other parties 1955 - 2001



Source: own calculation according to British election studies 1964 to 2001 and Gallup polls 1958 and 1960.

Figure 7-4: West German party ratios (vote share of voters aged 60 and older by vote share of those younger than 60) – FDP, Greens and other parties 1949 - 2002



Source: own calculation according to German election studies 1961 to 1998 and Politbarometer 2002.

In figure 7-1, the party ratio of the Conservatives is significantly above one in eleven out of 13 election years and below in the other two instances. That means that the Conservatives had an advantage in the group of 60+ voters in most elections. But the party ratio varies considerably between less than 0.9 and up to 1.4. The party ratio for Labour seems to mirror the Conservative age ratio in the opposite direction. It is below one in almost all instances where the Conservatives had the edge among older voters. Nonetheless, in three out of 13 years (1959, 1983, 1992) an older voter was more likely to vote for Labour than a younger voter.

In West Germany (figure 7-2), the Christian-Democrats were more likely to be voted for by older voters in all election years. However, the difference between older and younger voters varied between 10 % in 1949 and more than 60 % in 1998. The Social-Democratic party ratio lay below one in most, but not all elections. However, for them the differences between age groups are much smaller, compared to the CDU/CSU. The highest advantage for younger voters was in 1949 with 40 % and the smallest 0 in 1987.

At first sight, these two figures seem to support the growing economic conservatism hypothesis (H8a) and reject the competing hypothesis that suggests that older people become more likely to vote for a more progressive party that favours state spending (H8b). The more conservative party (Tories, CDU/CSU) is generally more favoured among older voters than the more progressive party (Labour, SPD). However, the strong variation seems to indicate that there are other forces at work as well. Election-specific factors could only explain this variation if they affected the two age

groups differently. For instance, a universal swing away from one party would affect both age groups equally and the age ratio would stay the same.

Figure 7-3 shows the party ratios for Liberals and other parties in Britain. Except for two years (1955, 1987) younger voters were more likely to vote for the Liberals or other parties than older people. In figure 7-4, the West German Liberals show a similar pattern: with the exceptions of 1949, 1990 and 1998, the FDP fared better among younger voters. The party ratios of other parties are constantly below one after 1976, but show a zigzag pattern before. From 1980, the Greens enter into the picture. They are heavily over-represented among younger voters, but with a decreasing trend. The finding that younger voters are more likely to vote for the small, (mostly) non-governmental parties, the Liberals, the Greens and others seems to lend support to the hypothesis that larger parties have an advantage among older voters (hypothesis H11).

Variations between political generations

The social science literature on political generations is confronted with a lack of findings about the factors that determine the emergence of political generations. We somehow know that generational differences exist. We are unclear, however, how to recognise when a new political generation evolves, why it evolves, and where the next generations starts (Braungart and Braungart, 1986). In addition, generations can be different on various dimensions; thus, there can be political, economic or social generations that do not necessarily coincide (see for a critical review Spitzer, 1973). Also, the lack of multiple sources of surveys across time brings up the question as to whether new generational explanations can still be fitted to data sources that have been used many times for similar explanations.

Nevertheless, there is some evidence with which we can discern distinct political generations in terms of political behaviour in West Germany and in Britain. We need to look at historical, electoral developments to hypothesise about the existence of political generations. The critical stage is the electoral context of the time at which voters first went to the polls. This has already been suggested by James Tilley (2002) with regard to party identification.

Table 7-2: Political generations in post-war Britain

Name of political generation	Years of birth	Dates of first election	Distinct historical context At youth	Electoral predictions			
				Lab	Cons	Lib	Others
Victorian generation	1896 and earlier (men), 1887 and earlier (women)	Before 1918	Limited franchise, two party system Liberals and Conservatives, First World War	weak			Few votes since two-party system
Inter-War Cohort	1897 – 1914 (men), 1888 – 1914 (women)	1918– 1935	Conservative dominance, Labour party on the rise, Liberals on the decline	+	+	-	0
1945 Cohort	1915 – 1929	1945 – 1950	Great Depression, 2 nd World War, first majority Labour government after landslide, installation of modern welfare state	+	-	0	-
1951 – 1966 cohort	1930 – 1945	1955 – 1966	Conservative dominance, 2 nd Labour government under Wilson with landslide, Liberals close to oblivion	-	+	-	0
1966 – 1979 cohort	1946 – 1956	1970 – 1974	Alternating governments, strikes, revival of conservative values in society (Norris 1997), growing Liberals, more parties	-	-	+	+
Thatcher's Children	1957 – 1974	1979 – 1992	Conservative era, Thatcher, reforms of the welfare state	+	-	+	0
Blair's Children	1975 and younger	1997 – 2001	New Labour shifted towards the centre, Conservatives in disarray, Lib Dems gaining, devolution	-	0	+	+

Signs show expected change relative to the preceding generation.

Table 7-2 shows the expected political generations for Britain. Butler and Stokes (1983 [1974]) established the existence of the first four generations, and Russell et al. (1992) demonstrated the distinct political preferences of the young generation under Thatcher, which they called 'Thatcher's Children'. The other generations fill the gaps in between, and I have given historical explanations why each generation should be different. For instance, the generation that first went to the polls in 1945 and 1950 experienced the Labour landslide of 1945, the first Labour-led government and the establishment of the post-war welfare state. This historical experience should make this cohort as a whole more pro-Labour than the previous cohort that first voted in an era of Conservative dominance. I have made predictions for each generation and party, relative to the preceding generation.³²

³² With respect to party identification, Tilley (2002) has shown the existence of political generations according to party dominance at the time of socialisation. Clarke et al. (2004) showed the difference of the 'Thatcher generation' and 'Blair generation' from previous cohorts as to the civic duty to vote. They also identify the 1945 Cohort as the 'Post-war' generation, the 1951-66 Cohort as 'Macmillan' and the 1966-79 Cohort as 'Wilson/Callaghan' generation. Note, however, that my empirical analysis is not an empirical test of their differentiation because (a) I am using the same data, and (b) they look at turnout.

Table 7-3: Political generations in post-war West Germany

Name of political generation	Years of birth	Dates of first election	Distinct historical context At youth	Electoral predictions			
				SPD	CDU/CSU	FDP	Greens
Empire	1891 and earlier (men only)	Before 1918	Semi-authoritarian regime, only men allowed to vote, census franchise in state parliamentary elections	SPD is the only party that existed during time of early socialisation			
Weimar	1892 – 1914 (men) and younger (women)	1919 – 1933	Increasing polarisation of the party system, hyper inflation, world recession, SPD strongest party before the NSDAP came to power	-		Zentrum DVP/ DDP	Parties do not exist yet, but some predecessors do: Not known to them during time of early socialisation
Adenauer	1915 – 1945	1949 – 1966	Economic <i>Wirtschaftswunder</i> , consolidation of Christian Democrats as dominant party, FDP in government	0	+	+	
Brandt	1946 – 1962	1969 – 1980	Grand coalition, Social democrats in power for the first time since Weimar, new foreign policy towards East, student revolts, emergence of Green party	+	-	0	+
Kohl	1963 – 1976	1982 – 1994	2 nd era of CDU/CSU dominance anti-nuclear protests, unification, growing mass unemployment	-	+	-	+
Schröder	1977 and later	1998 – 2002	Green party in power	+	-	0	+

Signs show expected change relative to the preceding generation.

Table 7-3 summarises the expected political generations for West Germany.³³

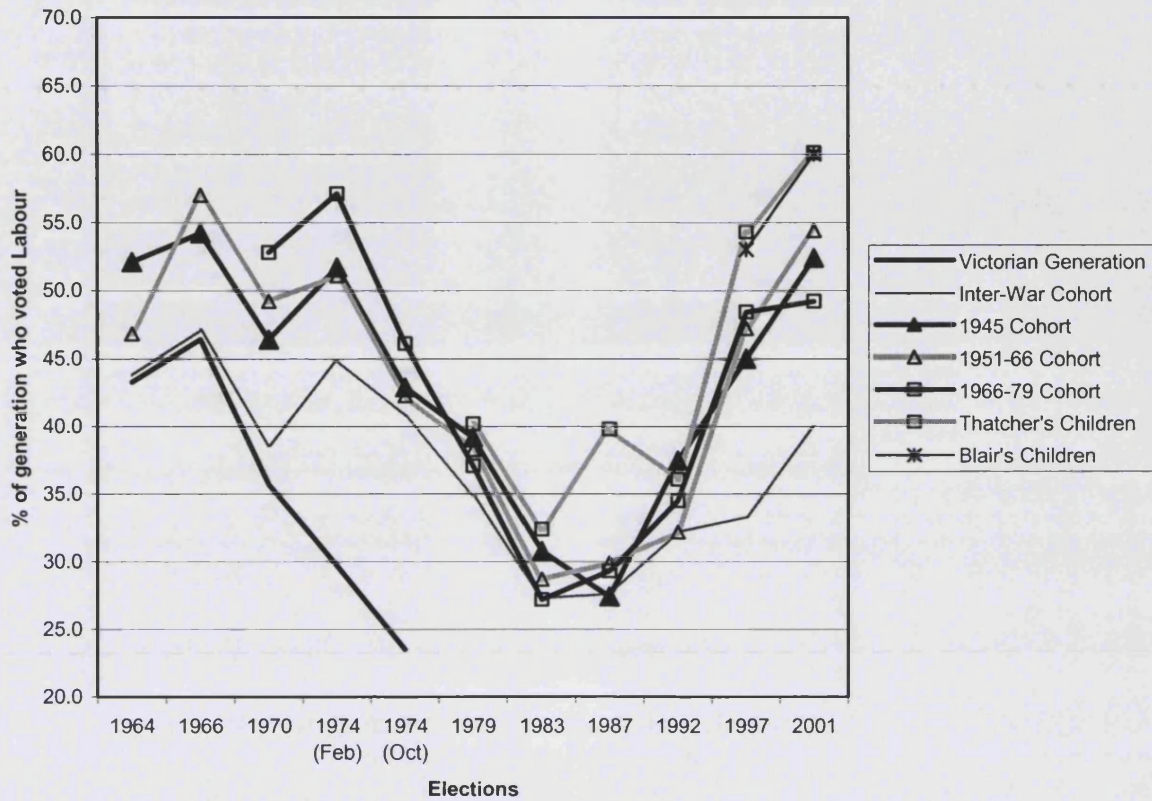
For instance, the largest political generation is the Adenauer Generation. Its members first went to free polls in early post-war Germany. It was the era of *Wirtschaftswunder* and a strong Christian-Democratic party that brought stability after the politically unsteady course of the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich. Thus, this generation should be more pro-CDU/CSU than its predecessor, the Weimar Generation. The latter only knew the smaller *Zentrum*, some of the personnel of which made up the post-war CDU. By contrast, the following Brandt Generation who first voted between 1969 and 1980 experienced the first post-war SPD-led governments, a radical change in foreign and inner-German policies. This generation should be more pro-SPD, compared to the Adenauer Generation.³⁴

I will now give a descriptive overview of the patterns of party support for political generations for the Social-Democratic and the conservative parties. Graphs for the liberal, green and other parties are available in the appendix 11.4.

³³ See Ulrich Herbert (2003) for the generations *Kriegsjugendgeneration* (born 1900 until 1910), which corresponds with my Weimar Generation, the *skeptische Generation* (born 1925 and 1935), which represents the second half of my Adenauer Generation and die *68er Generation* (born 1940-1949), which corresponds roughly with my Brandt Generation. Peter Merkl (1989) also suggests a typology of political generation of German leaders, depending on the historical-political experience at youth.

³⁴ The Nazi period (1933-45) is unlikely to play a role for party preference formation because there were no free elections. Also, any NSDAP preference could not be translated into a vote in the post-war period because all extreme right parties were forbidden.

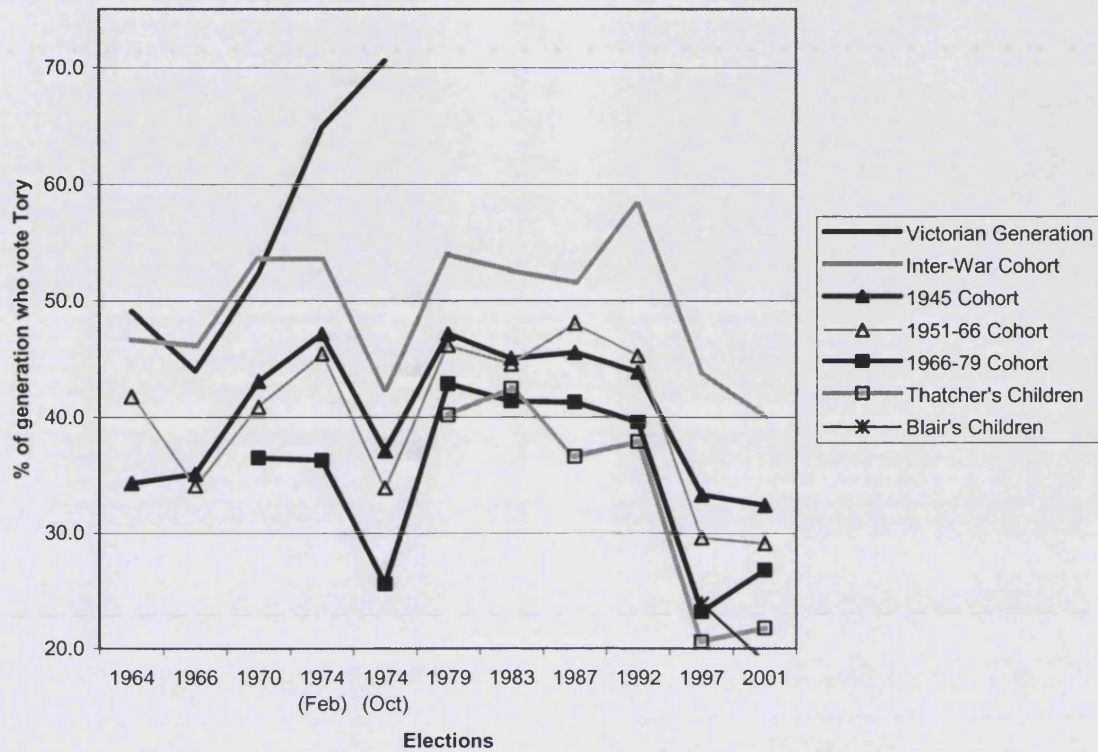
Figure 7-5: Proportion of political generations who voted Labour in British elections 1964-2001



Source: own calculation according to British election studies 1964 to 2001.

The picture of political generations and the Labour Party is mixed (figure 7-5). Until the mid-1970s, there appears to be a distinct relative position for each generation: while members of the Victorian Generation were least likely to vote Labour, the 1966-79 Cohort was most likely to vote Labour. The 1945 Cohort and the 1951-66 Cohort were in between, but did not differ a lot from each other. From 1979 onwards, however, generational differences seem to disappear. Thatcher's Children were most likely to vote Labour after 1979. The separation in those two periods might reflect the consequences of de-alignment through which long-term allegiances (and the two-party system of Labour and Conservatives) ceased to exist. I am going to return to this notion later on.

Figure 7-6: Proportion of political generations who voted Conservative in British elections 1964-2001



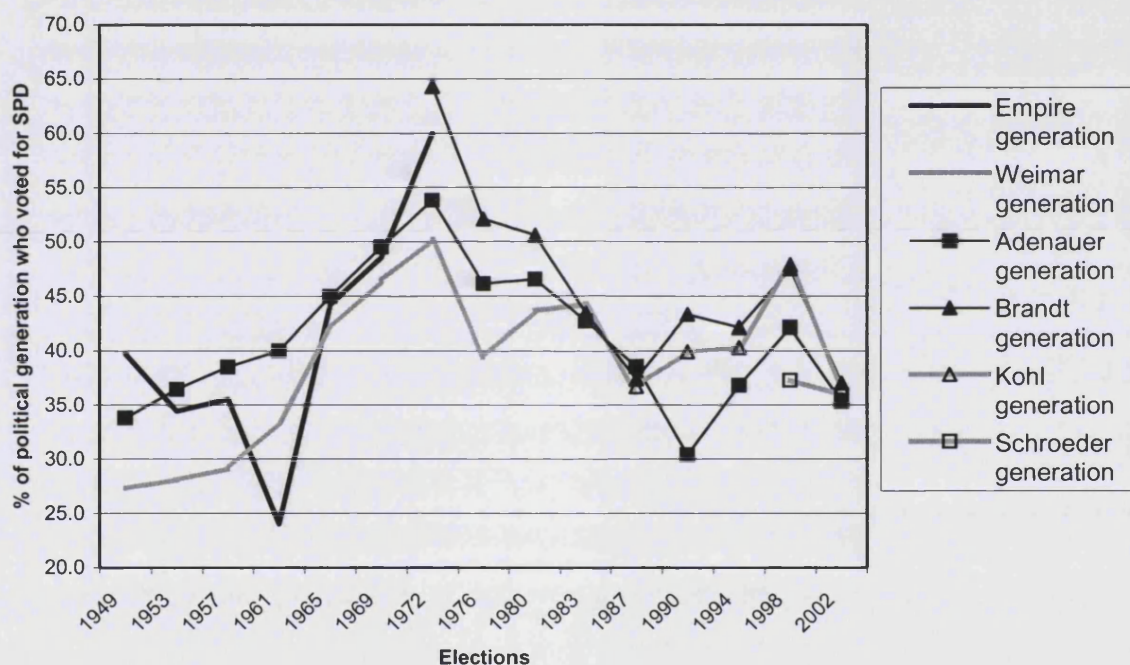
Source: own calculation according to British election studies 1964 to 2001.

For the Conservatives (figure 7-6), the pre-1979 period shows clear generational patterns. The Victorian Generation and Inter-War Cohort were most likely to vote Conservative, followed by the 1945 Cohort and 1951-66 Cohort, which were again too close to each other to represent distinct variations. The 1966-79 Cohort was least likely to vote Conservative. From 1979 onwards, the generational differences became relatively small, with the exception of the (then oldest) Inter-War Cohort which persisted to be the strongest pro-Conservative generation.

These generational variations together have implications for older voters: in the 1950s, older voters were largely pro-Conservative (and unlikely to vote Labour) because

they were members of the Victorian Generation who first went to the polls during the Liberal-Conservative two-party system. In the 1970s, the majority of older voters were more pro-Conservative (and less likely to vote Labour) than younger voters, because they were members of the Inter-War Cohort who first had gone to the polls of Conservative dominance. In the last elections of the series, however, older voters did not show a distinct generational difference any longer.

Figure 7-7: Proportion of political generations who voted SPD in German elections 1949 - 2002

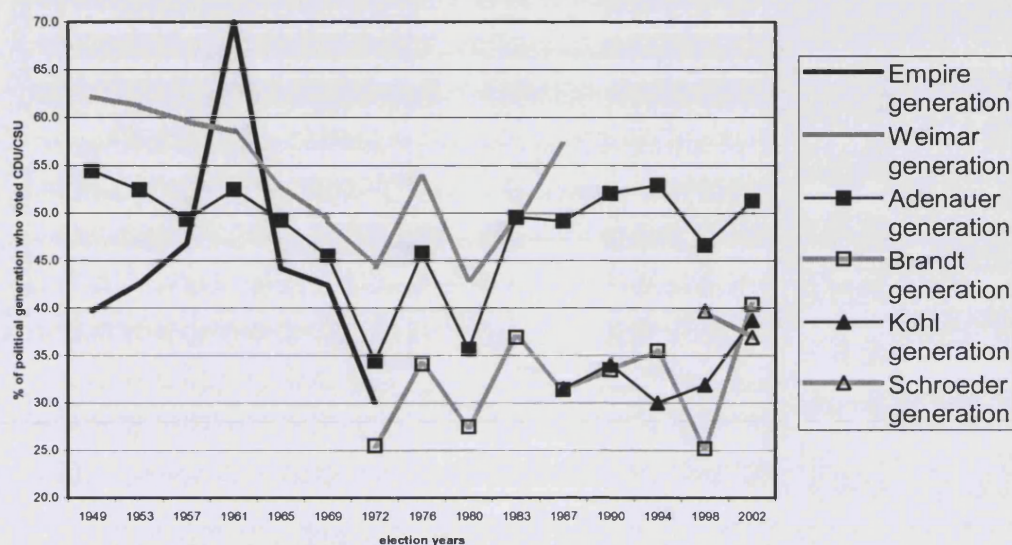


Source: own calculation according to German election studies 1961 to 1998 and Politbarometer 2002.

The German graphs for the Social-Democrats (figure 7-7) and Christian-Democrats (figure 7-8) do not show a potential de-alignment pattern as the British ones did for the Tories and Labour. With the exception of 1983, 1987 and 2002, we can detect some generational differences for the SPD. The earliest Empire Generation was more likely to vote SPD than its follower, the Weimar Generation, which had the lowest

likelihood of all. The Adenauer Generation was again more pro-SPD than the Weimar Generation that it followed. Overall, the Brandt Generation was most pro-SPD, whereas the Kohl Generation was somewhat in between.

Figure 7-8: Proportion of political generations who voted CDU/CSU in German elections 1949 - 2002



Source: own calculation according to German election studies 1961 to 1998 and Politbarometer 2002.

Like in Britain, the conservative party CDU/CSU shows clearer generational patterns. The Weimar Generation, most adversarial to the SPD, was most pro-CDU, followed by the Adenauer Generation. The preceding Empire Generation, with the exception of 1961, is up to 30 % less likely to vote CDU/CSU than the Weimar Generation. The difference between the Weimar Generation and the Brandt Generation was up to 20 %. Differences between Brandt, Kohl or Schröder generations were not apparent. For older people we can deduct an interesting picture. Right after World War II, older voters were – as members of the Empire Generation - less likely to vote CDU/CSU and more likely to vote SPD than middle-aged or younger voters. The reason

for this higher, relative popularity of the Social-Democrats among male voters who first voted in the Wilhelmine era might lie in the good fortunes of the party before 1918, and the lack of continuance of all other parties between the German Empire and the Federal Republic. The Social-Democrats were the only party that continued to exist for almost one hundred years (apart from the totalitarian time 1933-45 when it was forbidden and had to be organised underground). All other parties after 1949 represented new parties that had some predecessors, but did not have the organisational continuance of the SPD. In the 1970s, older voters from the Weimar Generation, who experienced the deterioration of the SPD as a ruling party in the Weimar Republic as young voters, were much more likely to vote CDU/CSU than the young Brandt Generation. In 2002, older people as members of the Adenauer Generation, who first voted in an era of Christian-Democratic dominance, were still more likely to vote for the Christian-Democrats and less likely to vote for the SPD.

This first descriptive tour has shown that life cycle and generational effects seem to tell part of the story. We have found evidence for the existence of some of the hypothesised political generations and have also seen that some hypothesised generations seem not to be different from adjacent ones. Thus, the differences between younger and older voters seem not to be stable, but the result of the relative contrast of different political generations. I will now test generational and age effects together in multivariate regression analysis.

7.3 Combined hypotheses-testing in multivariate regressions

I will first check the existence of the hypothesised generational effects by separating them from *any* kind of age effect. To that end, I will run a series of logistic regression

models where the dependent variable is voting for one specific party versus voting for all others. I will also establish the independence of variations from socio-economic factors by running single-election analyses with more socio-economic control variables. Finally, I will test the status-quo conservatism and larger parties' advantage hypotheses with a different set of dependent variables, i.e. incumbent versus opposition, and larger or governmental parties versus smaller parties.

Separating political generation effects from other age-related effects in party-by-party analysis

In order to estimate age as well as generational effects while controlling for period effects, we easily run into the problem of multicollinearity, i.e. independent variables can be predicted to a large degree by other independent variables. If I used year of birth, age and survey year as predictors, we would have perfect multicollinearity. This is because I can deduct the survey year if I know the respondent's age and year of birth and vice versa. Our first step is to acknowledge that we are interested in theoretically expected political generations that comprise a decade or more and are of unequal size. Moreover, I use three age dummies (young 18-29, middle-aged 30-59 and old 60+) to estimate the age effect.³⁵ Conceptually, I tried to select a division that makes sense in terms of the general social position of the voter. I have chosen the 60+ group as an approximation for older people who are likely to be retired. The young category between 18-29 roughly approximates the period before voters have settled down. The middle-

³⁵ The vif diagnostics are below 5 for all estimators. Also, the sample size is large, so that the decline in precision due to collinearity is tolerable.

aged category is the residual category between the two. Alternative categorisations (e.g. <35, 35-64, 65+) lead to similar results.

I split the British data in two time series 1964-1979 and 1979-2001. In terms of the predictive power of social class, 1974 can be seen as the first election of a de-aligned era (Clarke et al. 2004: 47-8), but the number of observations for 1964-1970 would make it difficult to estimate the generational effects. The year 1979 and the 1966-79 Cohort are overlapping baselines, meaning that we can indirectly compare differences across the split.

Table 7-4: Logistic regression models of party choice in Britain, 1964 – 1979 and 1979 – 2001

Dependent Variable: Voted in last parliamentary for one party versus voted for another

Period 1: 1964-1979				
	Labour	Cons	Liberal	Other
Valid N	9,420			
Pseudo R ²	0.011	0.017	0.028	0.070
Constant	-0.40*** (0.10)	-0.44*** (0.10)	-1.58*** (0.15)	-3.49*** (0.34)
Victorian	-0.71*** (0.20)	0.99*** (0.20)	-0.38 (0.34)	-1.46 (0.91)
Inter-War Cohort	-0.42** (0.14)	0.69*** (0.14)	-0.39 (0.23)	-1.23 (0.66)
1945 Cohort	-0.04 (0.11)	0.25* (0.11)	-0.25 (0.17)	-0.82* (0.38)
1951-66 Cohort	-0.06 (0.09)	0.24* (0.10)	-0.30* (0.15)	-0.18 (0.31)
1966-79 Cohort	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Young (18-29)	0.09 (0.09)	-0.09 (0.09)	-0.03 (0.14)	0.12 (0.31)
Middle-aged (30-59)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Old (60+)	0.18 (0.09)	-0.11 (0.09)	-0.26 (0.16)	0.44 (0.55)
Period 2: 1979-2001				
Valid N	15,970			
Pseudo R ²	0.026	0.025	0.020	0.071
Constant	-0.56*** (0.06)	-0.16** (0.06)	-1.76*** (0.08)	-3.89*** (0.21)
1945 Cohort	0.09 (0.06)	-0.04 (0.05)	0.03 (0.07)	-0.39* (0.16)
1951-66 Cohort	0.05 (0.05)	0.08 (0.04)	-0.17** (0.06)	-0.09 (0.11)
1966-79 Cohort	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Thatcher's Children	0.14* (0.06)	0.06 (0.06)	-0.29*** (0.08)	-0.09 (0.11)
Blair's Children	-0.08 (0.17)	0.37* (0.17)	-0.19 (0.21)	-0.72* (0.34)
Young (18-29)	0.12 (0.06)	-0.24*** (0.06)	0.17* (0.08)	0.22 (0.14)
Middle-aged (30-59)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Old (60+)	0.01 (0.05)	0.19*** (0.04)	-0.28*** (0.06)	-0.15 (0.12)

All models control for gender (male baseline) and election year (1977 baseline), standard errors in brackets; ***, **, * significant at 0.001, 0.01, 0.05, Data: BES.

In the first period, age did not matter for any of the parties (table 7-4). Once we control for the political generations, none of the age dummies is significant. This is an important finding. It refutes our economic conservatism hypothesis (H8a) and its competing explanation (H8b) for the period 1964-79. If the economic conservatism hypothesis, for example, held true, we should see significant variations between age groups whilst controlling for differences between political generations. By contrast, there are significant generational variations. Most generational differences can be seen for the two large parties, Labour and the Conservatives. Nine out of the 16 relative predictions that we made hold true (see black boxes in table 7-5). For this period, the political generation hypothesis (H4) that older people belong to a cohort with stable party preferences holds generally true, but this test also seemed to suffer from the difficulties of separating adequate political generations and making predictions. The generational differences tell a story of a steady decline of the Conservative party vote. For the Victorian Generation, the odds of voting Tory is higher by the factor 2.7 compared to the 1966-79 Cohort. Labour partly profited from this with increasing the odds from the Victorian Generation to the 1945 Cohort, where it stabilises at factor 2.0 compared to the Victorians. That means that in the early 1960s, the odds of voting Tory for an older voter (Victorian Generation) was 2.1 times higher than that of a young person (1951-66 Cohort). The odds of voting Tory for an older voter (Inter-War Cohort) in 1979 were 2.0 times higher than a young voter's (1966-1979 cohort) odds.

Table 7-5: Fit of political generational hypotheses in Britain

Period 1: 1964-79

	Lab	Con	Lib	Oth				
Inter-War Cohort	+	+	-	0	Period 2: 1979-2001			
1945 Cohort	+	-	0	-				
1951 – 1966 cohort	-	+	-	0	-	+	-	0
1966 – 1979 cohort	-	-	+	+	-	-	+	+
Thatcher’s Children					+	-	+	0
Blair’s Children					-	0	+	+

Black boxes signify confirmed expectation as to a predicted movement relative to the previous generations.

In the second period, there is less variation with regard to adjacent generations. Also, only in six out of 16 instances are our predictions right (see table 7-5). Even more revealing are the coefficients of the three generations that overlap in both periods (1945 Cohort, 1951-66 Cohort and 1966-79 Cohort). Relative to the baseline 1966-79, the two remaining overlapping generations look different for the two time periods with respect to the Tory vote. In the later period, they are not any different from the baseline generation. In addition, the generational differences are much smaller. The biggest generational difference is between Blair’s Children and the 1945 generation. The odds of the former to vote Tory is only 1.4 times than the odds of the latter. Overall, the strongest generational difference is between Blair’s Children and the 1966-79 Cohort, as the odds of voting Tory are 1.4 times higher for the latter. This is much smaller than the maximum difference for the first period, which was an odds factor of 2.7.

In contrast to the first period, we also have significant age effects. No matter what generation, older voters are more likely to vote Conservative. Older voters' odds of voting Tory are 1.5 times as high as for a young voter. In juxtaposition to that, young voters' odds are 1.6 times higher to vote Liberal than older voters'.

Table 7-6: Diagnostic single-election logistic regressions with socio-economic controls for Tory vote, Britain, 1964, 1983, 1997

		Dependent Variable: Voted in last parliamentary elections for Tories versus voted for another					
		1964		1983		1997	
Valid N		1,107		3,120		2,402	
Pseudo R ²		0.022	0.040	0.020	0.026	0.024	0.056
constant		-1.76***	-2.62	-1.88***	-2.32***	-1.79***	-2.75***
		(0.25)	(0.30)	(0.20)	(0.22)	(0.13)	(0.18)
Education		0.40***	0.50***	0.12***	0.19***	-0.06	0.01
quintiles		(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Income		0.11*	0.22***	0.48***	0.52***	0.29***	0.42***
quintiles		(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.04)	(0.04)
female		0.05	0.12	-0.01	-0.04	0.15	0.20*
		(0.12)	(0.13)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.10)	(0.10)
60 or older			0.85***		0.50***		1.10***
			(0.16)		(0.09)		(0.12)

Education and income have been re-calculated to quintiles. Data: BES.

Table 7-6 reports the result of another empirical test. The impact of the age and generational variables could be largely irrelevant next to other variables that capture the main dimension of party competition. The tendency among older voters to vote Conservative could also be due to the fact that Labour voters die earlier because they belong to social classes or the male gender that have a shorter average lifespan. I picked 1964, 1983 and 1997. In each election year, the Tories were in power. This diagnostic series shows that older people are more likely to vote for the Tories, even if education, income or gender are controlled for. Furthermore, the inclusion of the age dummies significantly increases the explanatory power of the model. Knowing whether a voter is 60+ or younger, adds to the understanding of the voting decision. The differences

between the coefficients finally hint at the fact that there are generational variations that make the difference in party choice between older and younger people unstable across time.³⁶

All in all, the British findings seem to suggest that after de-alignment, generational differences due to varying socialisation experiences at a young age matter less than they did before. Instead, we see smaller, but simultaneous generational and life cycle effects that are equally strong. From a perspective that focuses on differences between age groups, it looks as if the grown volatility of voters as members of generations has opened space for life cycle forces. If the degree of de-alignment played a role, we should see results for West Germany that are somewhere in the middle of the results between the early and the late British periods.

³⁶ The German data is better to the extent that measures for control variables are equivalent across time. I ran alternative British models with controls that I created myself, the equivalence of which might be doubted (see appendix 11.6) because, for example, question wording changed. The additional British models include trade union membership, religiosity, education and council house occupation. The results do not change much.

Table 7-7: Logistic regression models of party choice in West Germany 1977/1980 - 2002

	Dependent Variable: Voted in last parliamentary for one party versus voted for another				
	SPD	CDU/ CSU	FDP	Greens	Other
Valid N		242,409		225,460	242,409
Pseudo R ²	0.006	0.027	0.015	0.141	0.063
Constant	-0.31*** (0.02)	-0.07** (0.02)	-2.11*** (0.04)	-3.47*** (0.05)	-4.26*** (0.10)
Young (18-29)	-0.06*** (0.01)	-0.15*** (0.02)	0.10*** (0.03)	0.50*** (0.02)	0.22*** (0.04)
Middle-aged (30-59)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Old (60+)	-0.13*** (0.01)	0.26*** (0.01)	-0.14*** (0.03)	-0.59*** (0.04)	-0.06 (0.04)
Weimar Generation	-0.04* (0.02)	0.03 (0.02)	-0.16*** (0.04)	-0.81*** (0.10)	-0.14 (0.08)
Adenauer Generation	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Brandt Generation	0.15*** (0.01)	-0.47*** (0.01)	-0.04 (0.03)	1.29*** (0.03)	0.10** (0.04)
Kohl Generation	0.06** (0.02)	-0.45*** (0.02)	-0.18** (0.04)	1.20*** (0.04)	0.20*** (0.05)
Schröder Generation	-0.04 (0.04)	-0.20*** (0.04)	-0.11 (0.09)	0.85*** (0.07)	0.25* (0.10)
Female	0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.05** (0.02)	-0.23*** (0.02)	0.42*** (0.02)
The same models with controls for education and religiosity					
Valid N		215,795		199,911	215,795
Pseudo R ²	0.039	0.063	0.029	0.141	0.072
Constant	0.97*** (0.03)	-0.91*** (0.03)	-3.04*** (0.05)	-4.33*** (0.06)	-3.70*** (0.13)
Young (18-29)	-0.10*** (0.02)	-0.08*** (0.02)	0.02 (0.03)	0.42*** (0.03)	0.23*** (0.05)
Middle-aged (30-59)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Old (60+)	-0.10*** (0.02)	0.18*** (0.01)	-0.08** (0.03)	-0.47*** (0.05)	-0.05 (0.05)
Weimar Generation	0.00 (0.02)	0.00 (0.02)	-0.15*** (0.04)	-0.72*** (0.11)	-0.16 (0.09)
Adenauer Generation	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Brandt Generation	0.19*** (0.01)	-0.40*** (0.01)	-0.15*** (0.03)	1.07*** (0.03)	0.14*** (0.04)
Kohl Generation	0.14*** (0.02)	-0.38*** (0.02)	-0.32*** (0.05)	0.97*** (0.04)	0.24*** (0.06)
Schröder Generation	-0.08 (0.05)	-0.12* (0.05)	-0.08 (0.10)	0.71*** (0.08)	0.24* (0.11)
Education	-0.33*** (0.01)	0.06*** (0.01)	0.42*** (0.01)	0.58*** (0.01)	-0.24*** (0.02)
Religiosity	-0.26*** (0.00)	0.33*** (0.00)	-0.05*** (0.01)	-0.19*** (0.01)	-0.10*** (0.01)
Female	-0.06** (0.01)	0.12*** (0.01)	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.38*** (0.02)	0.41*** (0.03)

All models control for year (1977 baseline), standard errors in brackets, ***, **, * significant at 0.001, 0.01, 0.05, Data: Politbarometer.

The German data set contains about ten times as many observations as the British data. Therefore, I will use a confidence level of 99 % as a minimum instead of 95 %. The first series of models (see table 7-7) uses generation and age dummies with the controls of gender and year. The second series makes use of the additional controls of education (highest formal qualification) and religiosity (frequency of church attendance). These additional controls capture the main dimensions of competition in the German party system and differ between cohorts. With those included, we can see to what extent, according to the logic of the shared social characteristic cohort hypothesis H6, older generations are less likely to vote for the liberal FDP and the postmaterialist Greens because mean educational level was lower and religiosity higher. Education and religiosity are sociological predictors of party choice, where more education and less religiosity works in favour of these two parties.

Table 7-8: Fit of political generational hypotheses in West Germany

	SPD	CDU/ CSU	FDP	Greens
Adenauer	0	+	+	0
Brandt	+	-	0	+
Kohl	-	+	-	+
Schröder	+	-	0	+

Black boxes signify confirmed expectation as to a predicted movement relative to the previous generation.

We can test 16 predictions about the relative change of political generation with regard to their party preference vis-à-vis the preceding generation. Our expectations are

confirmed in nine out of 16 instances, which is more than with the British data over the same period, and is the same that confirmed for the early British period. Knowing the historical circumstances of the period when someone came of political age helps to predict that person's vote better in West Germany than in strongly de-aligned Britain. Our predictions were mostly wrong about the latest Schröder Generation, a finding that suggests that this generation is not well-defined, although it is also the smallest in terms of observations.

The introduction of education and religiosity hardly changes the relative position of generations, but makes discrepancies bigger. The results conform with our predictions for the FDP and the Greens. For example, the odds of voting FDP are the same for the Brandt and Adenauer generations in model 1. However, with controls for education and religiosity, the change in odds are 13 % lower for the Adenauer Generation. This means that the increasing education and decreasing religiosity (factors that are favourable to FDP or Green vote) within the Brandt Generation increased the popularity of the FDP and Greens. In the case of the FDP, this benefit from changing social composition slows a downward generational trend. For the Greens, it accelerates an upward generational trend. I did not put forward explicit expectations for the SPD or CDU/CSU because their benefits from social compositional changes are ambiguous. More education is good for the Christian-Democrats and bad for the SPD. Less religiosity, however, is bad for the Christian-Democrats and good for the SPD. The changes in the coefficients between the model with and the model without controls, demonstrate that the increase in educational levels rather than the decline in religiosity impacts more strongly on the two parties. As a result, among more recent cohorts, the SPD loses some predicted popularity and the

CDU/CSU gains. However, the effects are smaller than for the FDP and the Greens because the decrease in religiosity counterbalances the effect of education. For example, the change in the odds factor between the model with and without controls is 11 % for the Adenauer over the Brandt Generation with regard to the CDU/CSU vote.

Overall, the hypothesis H6 that older people vote differently because of a different endowment of social characteristics was confirmed with regard to the FDP and the Greens. An interesting additional finding is that the Greens were held in little favour in the earliest Weimar and Adenauer generations. They find most supporters in the Baby-boomer Brandt Generation. Then their electoral fortunes decline in the Kohl and Schröder generations. This is in tune with Inglehart's postmaterialism thesis (1971): economic downturns occurred just before the Kohl and Schröder eras when those generation members were still ineligible teenagers (in 1973 and in the early 1990s). The experiences of these downturns just before they came of political age explain why postmaterialist values are less common in these generations and why their members share a lower likelihood of voting Green, relative to the Brandt Generation whose members grew up during the German *Wirtschaftswunder*.

The generational variations (all other things being equal) mean that older voters in the late 1970s (Weimar Generation) were not different from the middle-aged Adenauer Generation with regard to SPD or CDU/CSU vote. However, their odds to vote FDP was smaller by the factor 0.9. In relation to the then-young Brandt Generation, they were less likely to vote SPD (factor 0.9) or FDP (factor 0.7) and more likely to vote CDU/CSU (factor 1.5). The then oldest generation's experience of the SPD and FDP (with different names) in Weimar and the breakdown of the Weimar Republic made

them less likely to vote for them, in comparison to the then-young generation. The latter associated SPD and FDP with the first Social-Democratic governments under the SPD chancellors Willi Brandt (1969-74) and Helmut Schmidt (1974-82) that existed during their time of early political socialisation.

25 years later in 2002, however, older voters consisted of members of the Adenauer Generation, the middle-aged belonged to the Brandt Generation and the young were the Kohl and Schröder Generation. Older voters are less/more likely to vote for the SPD/CDU-CSU compared to the young Kohl and Schröder generations, but less/more so than the Brandt Generation. Older voters favour the Greens much less than the following Brandt Generation and still less than the more recent Kohl or Schröder generations.

The coefficients of the age dummies in West Germany are significant overall in more instances than in Britain. The SPD shows a small, but significant variation between age groups where middle-aged voters' odds are about 1.1 times higher than the odds of young or old voters, a finding that we would not expect if the growing economic hypothesis (H8a) or its opposite competing hypothesis (H8b) were correct. This pattern runs counter to our expectations, as growing economic conservatism among ageing voters should show a decreasing tendency to vote for the SPD. Also, the FDP, the most economically conservative party, does not show any variations between age groups (at least not at a significance level of .01). The CDU/CSU, by contrast, shows a pattern by which odds to vote conservative increase with higher age. The odds of 60+ voters, regardless of generational membership, are 1.3 times the odds of a voter 29 and younger. The Greens also show, despite their strong generational variation, strong age effects. The odds of an older voter are 0.4 times the odds of a younger voter. Finally, other parties

are more popular among younger voters than among middle-aged or older voters, a finding that supports the larger parties advantage hypothesis (H11). As I will demonstrate, these residual age variations are due to the incumbency and larger parties advantage effects.

If we combine the life cycle and generational effects, we see that the CDU/CSU has been the main beneficiary among older voters from the interplay of those two kinds of factors. The odds of an older person voting for the Christian-Democrats at the end of the 1970s was 2.0 times higher because of the gap between Weimar and Brandt generations (factor 1.5) next to the life cycle advantage of higher age (factor 1.3). 25 years later, the odds of older voters were 1.7 times higher with a generational gap representing the factor 1.3, which is the average of the Kohl and Schröder generations, and the life cycle advantage of 1.3. In contrast, the Green Party suffers the biggest disadvantage among older voters today. A younger voter's odds of voting Green are 5.5 times higher than an older voter's, due to the factor 2.3 coming from generational difference and factor 2.4 coming from life cycle difference.

Table 7-9: Diagnostic single-election logistic regressions with socio-economic controls for CDU/CSU vote, West Germany, 1961, 1983 and 1998

	Dependent Variable: Voted in last parliamentary elections for CDU/CSU versus voted for another					
	1961		1983		1998	
Valid N	1,270		848		2,127	
Pseudo R ²	0.013	0.017	0.068	0.069	0.031	0.041
Constant	-0.08 (0.23)	-0.26 (0.24)	1.38*** (0.41)	-1.43*** (0.41)	-1.04*** (0.20)	-1.31*** (0.21)
Education quintiles	-0.20 (0.13)	-0.21 (0.13)	0.11 (0.16)	0.12 (0.16)	-0.12* (0.05)	-0.06 (0.06)
Income quintiles	0.04 (0.04)	0.07 (0.04)				
Religiosity quintiles			0.47*** (0.06)	0.46*** (0.06)	0.37*** (0.04)	0.34*** (0.04)
Female	0.45*** (0.12)	0.47*** (0.12)	0.15 (0.14)	0.14 (0.15)	-0.02 (0.09)	-0.04 (0.09)
60 or older		0.34* (0.14)		0.14 (0.17)		0.57*** (0.10)

Data: 1961 ZA0057, 1983, 1998..

Table 7-9 reports the diagnostic test for West Germany similar to the one for Britain, although we could already control for gender, education and religiosity in the German time series analysis. It shows single-year logistic regressions for 1961, 1983 and 1998 in which the conservative CDU/CSU was in power. Where available, the models controlled for gender, education, income and religiosity. For 1961 and 1998, the age coefficients are significant and add explanatory power to the model. In 1983, knowing whether someone was 60+ or younger did not matter to explain the voting decision. This is fully in accordance with the results of the time series analysis. In 1983, voters aged 59 and younger who belonged to the Adenauer, Brandt or Kohl generations were on average (including the life cycle difference) not different than the average voter older than 60 who belonged to the Adenauer or Weimar Generations and had a life cycle edge to vote CDU/CSU. This is because the strongly pro-CDU/CSU Adenauer Generation is split between old and middle-aged voters.

As the West German diagnostic test suggests, contemporary democracies can have variations between generations as well as between voters at different stages in the life cycle. This makes the differences between older and younger voters inherently unstable over time.

Overall, the party-by-party analyses of Britain and West Germany allowed us to test the generational hypotheses. It also has already given us some evidence on the nature of the life cycle hypotheses. Economic conservatism and its opposite, growing pro-spending voting with age, (H8a-b) can be ruled out as explanatory factors. This is because the most extreme parties in terms of economic stance do not show the variation between age groups that we would expect. For instance, neither the German FDP nor the Social-Democratic parties show a general advantage among older voters. That still leaves us to run decisive tests on the larger parties' advantage hypothesis H11 (that ageing voters develop a preference for larger parties due to skewed media coverage), and the status-quo conservatism hypothesis H9 (that older people tend to prefer the incumbent more than younger voters).

Testing the larger parties and status-quo conservatism hypotheses

Table 7-10 shows six regressions that test these two hypotheses. The first three test the individual ageing hypothesis that larger parties' have an advantage among ageing voters. For Britain, the dependent variable is coded 1 if the respondent voted for the Liberals or any other small party and 0 if she voted for Labour or the Tories. For Germany, the dependent variable is coded 1 if the respondent voted for the Greens or any of the very small parties and 0 if she voted for the SPD, CDU/CSU or the FDP, which all have had long reigns of governmental participation in German post-war history. Britain does not

show any age effects that change the likelihood of voting for a small party. Germany, by contrast, shows a decreasing likelihood of voting for the Greens or other parties among older people, in accordance to the larger parties' advantage hypothesis.

Table 7-10: Logistic regression models for Britain and West Germany, small party and incumbent vote

	Britain (1964-1979)	Britain (1979-2001)	Germany (1977- 2002)	Britain (1964- 1979)	Britain (1979- 2001)	Germany (1977- 2002)
	Liberals and others versus Labour, Tories	Liberals and others versus Labour, Tories	Green and others versus SPD, CDU/CSU, FDP	Incumbent versus opposition party		
Valid N	9,420	15,970	215,795	9,420	15,970	215,795
Pseudo R ²	0.061	0.011	0.122	0.006	0.023	0.010
Constant	-1.33*** (0.14)	-1.45*** (0.09)	-5.57*** (0.12)	-0.47*** (0.06)	-0.54*** (0.06)	-0.24 (0.03)
Year dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Age dummies						
Young	-0.01 (0.13)	0.11 (0.07)	0.28*** (0.02)	0.04 (0.06)	-0.20*** (0.05)	-0.20*** (0.01)
Middle-aged	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Old	-0.20 (0.15)	0.04 (0.08)	-0.21*** (0.03)	-0.02 (0.05)	0.20*** (0.04)	0.18*** (0.01)
Political generations						
Victorian	-0.58 (0.32)					
Inter-war	-0.54* (0.22)	-0.54*** (0.12)				
1945 Cohort	-0.40* (0.16)	-0.30*** (0.09)				
1951-66 Cohort	-0.32* (0.14)	-0.28*** (0.06)				
1966-79 Cohort	0.00	0.00				
Thatcher's children		-0.26*** (0.07)				
Blair's children		-0.31 (0.19)				
Weimar			-0.49*** (0.07)			
Adenauer			0.00			
Brandt			0.77*** (0.03)			
Kohl			0.54*** (0.04)			
Schröder			0.48*** (0.09)			
Controls						
Female	-0.11 (0.07)	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.14*** (0.02)	-0.06 (0.04)	0.05 (0.03)	0.00 (0.01)
Education			0.37*** (0.01)			0.06*** (0.01)
Religiosity			-0.17*** (0.01)			0.06*** (0.00)

Additional controls for election/survey year (baselines: 1977 for West Germany, 1979 for Britain), Data: BES, Politbarometer.

The results are not due to the overall changes of the party systems where more and more small parties have established themselves. This is captured in gradual cohort effects in the political generation dummies. Nor is the result due to the fact that the smaller party versus larger party dichotomy is actually measuring an incumbency effect. The correlation between the two is only modest at 0.29. The difference between the two countries cannot lie in de-alignment. For one, the generation dummies capture the growth in vote share among new, smaller parties. Secondly, if we were to order the three time periods/countries according to the strength of de-alignment, West Germany would fall in the middle. So neither the most aligned system in Britain (1964-1979), nor the most de-aligned system in Britain (1979-2001) shows the age advantage for bigger parties. The reason might lie in the difference in electoral systems. In Britain, voting for a smaller party does not make any sense in most constituencies because the candidate is not likely to win. Therefore, even if larger parties leave a stronger impression on older voters than on younger ones, younger electors might be as likely to vote for the latter as older voters. This is because there is generally no instrumental sense to vote for smaller parties in Britain. In Germany in contrast, there is a stronger incentive to vote for smaller parties, because the electoral system of proportional representation guarantees that no vote is 'wasted'. If this finding held generally true, party systems with low electoral threshold should show that younger people are more likely to vote for smaller parties that do not have a history of governmental participation. As to our hypothesis H11 about larger parties, we cannot accept it in its general form and must suggest these further refinements to be tested with new data.

The last three regressions finally show that there is a life cycle effect in the second British period and in the German case that makes older people more likely to vote for incumbent parties. In both instances, the conservative party has been in government for more points in time at the time of the election (four out of six times in Britain and 16 out of 26 times in West Germany). Therefore, the finding might be an artefact of a conservative party in power. However, similar results appear if the number of elections in which the conservative parties were in power are randomly reduced. In Germany, the FDP is also the longest serving party in power in that period, meaning that the dependent variable is even less likely to approximate the conservative party vote. Therefore, the findings on the conservative parties in both countries in the first round of regressions (see tables 7-4 and 7-7) stem from the fact that the conservative parties were in power, rather than the fact that they are the most ideologically conservative parties.

Older people favour the incumbent party over the opposition party. Unfortunately, it is difficult to test whether the amount of time a party is in power increases this tendency even more. The reason is that in the periods in question it was the conservative parties only that had longer periods of reign. Thus, we cannot compare a longer period of power for the Conservatives with the Social-Democratic parties. Nonetheless, at least with regard to the dichotomy of incumbent versus opposition, incumbent parties have an edge among older voters.

7.4 Summary

A mixture of macro factors and the combination of life cycle, individual ageing and generational effects explain the differences between younger and older voters. Economic conservatism (H8a) and its competing twin that older people vote for big-spending

parties (H8b) can be rejected as explanatory factors to explain older voters' choice. Changes in the social composition of cohorts influenced the likelihood of voting for the FDP and Greens in addition to the political generation effects due to early socialisation experience. This is a finding that confirms the shared social characteristic cohort hypothesis H6. Both parties benefited from the increase in formal education and decline in religiosity among more recent cohorts. The CDU/CSU and SPD were also affected, but less strongly due to the fact that declining religiosity and increasing education had opposing effects. Moreover, growing postmaterialism socialised younger cohorts into voting for New Politics parties, such as the Greens in West Germany. Older voters today are still less likely for these parties, although that can change in the near future as the generation born right after the war turns 60. Furthermore, the 'pure' senior interests being served by senior parties seem not to be an important factor at the moment, as the poor showing of grey parties demonstrates (rejected hypothesis H7).

Two life cycle hypotheses find conditional confirmation. The conditions can only be suggested here and need more research to test them. Older people seem to build up a stronger preference for larger or governmental parties over their lifetimes, relative to younger voters (partially confirmed hypothesis H11), but only if the electoral system is conducive to smaller parties, so that younger voters have an instrumental incentive to vote for them and set themselves apart from older voters. Thus, the British party system with its low degree of proportionality does not have these age effects: older people might be more likely to have a preference for the larger parties (Labour and Tories), but this effect does not show in their voting behaviour. Younger people, who in West

Germany are more likely to cast a vote for smaller and opposition parties, might not do so in Britain as the vote is likely to be ‘wasted’.

Older people are more status-quo conservative in their party vote. They are more likely to vote for the incumbent party, but only in a more de-aligned system that has a certain degree of electoral volatility (partially confirmed hypothesis H9). In a strongly aligned system like the early British period from 1964 until 1979, these effects are not apparent. This makes intuitive sense because that period was characterised by a lasting effect of early political socialisation, so that period effects like who is in government at the time of a later election do not come up. Voting for the incumbent means voting for something known or predictable. This does not mean that the incumbent makes smaller policy changes, but these changes appear to be more foreseeable than voting for the opposition party. Political generation effects are also present, but also seem to be a correlate of the state of alignment in the system. The more de-aligned a party system, the smaller the differences between socialisation experiences in early adulthood. This is because later volatility will even out, if not erase, these differences (partially confirmed hypothesis H4).

The analysis of this chapter was confined to ‘mean’ effects across a whole generation or age group. It is very plausible that generational effects differ, for instance, by social circumstances. The pro-CDU-CSU effect of the Adenauer Generation is likely to be less pronounced for someone who is from the traditionally Social-Democratic, Lutheran North of Germany. Also, further factors that we could not control for and that could potentially influence older voters differently from younger people are specific old age issues on the political agenda, such as public pensions.

To conclude, ageing democracies will change in terms of the electoral outcomes, but not in a lasting way. The fact that older voters prefer the incumbent in more de-aligned systems and larger parties in systems with a high degree of proportionality, changes the overall electoral process, but does not have predictable policy consequences.

8 Non-institutionalised Political Participation outside of Organisations in Europe

‘Young people enjoy the physical vigor, the freedom from day-to-day responsibilities of career and family, and have the *time* to participate in the pursuit of the energetic kinds of political activity implied by high protest potential. Protest potential is therefore held to be primarily an outcome of the *joie de vivre* of youth itself.’ (emphasis in the original Barnes, Kaase, and others 1979: 101)

We have seen in chapter 5 that – generally speaking – older people in Europe are less likely than younger people to commit political protest and other forms of participation outside of organisations. This chapter explains this difference between age groups. The Political Action Study in 1974, from which the quotation above is taken, was the first detailed study of what was then called ‘unconventional’ political participation. Protests were considered to be a domain of the young and associated with the energy and ‘wildness’ of younger people. In other words, the authors implicitly concluded that protest was something that older people were less likely to engage in because they had fewer of these characteristics.

The political process of participation has changed in Western Europe and the USA since the 1970s when the Political Action Study was carried out. Acts of non-electoral participation are much more common now than they were thirty years ago. Today’s older people, however, grew up before the end of the 1960s, a time that was often considered the period of the ‘participatory revolution’ (Kaase 1982) in European liberal democracies of the time. Older generations’ early political socialisation did not – generally speaking – include political actions of the non-electoral kind. If their early formed preferences withstood the general change of the political process in the following years, older people would still be less likely to commit these forms because

they did not experience them at youth, in contrast to younger people today (hypothesis H2). If this political generational explanation was true, we should also see variance across countries depending on whether a country experienced the long-term change of the political process. For example, the post-communist countries did not experience a gradual expansion of free non-electoral participation, but instead a sudden explosion with the advent of liberal democracy. The lack of experience of a free, liberal democracy at youth should make older people in some countries less likely to use non-institutionalised political participation (hypothesis H3). Furthermore, the theoretical model predicts that older people could have less resources/motivation or mobilisation/opportunities, which could explain lower participatory levels (hypothesis H5). This lower level of endowment could be due either to life cycle or shared social characteristic cohort effects.

I will cover four modes of participation outside of organisations within separate multivariate regression analyses (contacting a public official or politician, boycotting or buying a product for political or ethical reasons, signing a petition or wearing a badge, and protesting). None of these actions requires long-term commitment within an organisation. They can be performed regularly or irregularly and require relatively few resources.³⁷

The chapter shows that generational change (at least in Western Europe) made non-electoral forms of participation, which we must use as a proxy for non-

³⁷ As I explained in the introduction and the methodology chapter 4, it does not make sense to make more extensive summative index. Since I am comparing groups across and within countries, I would need to show the consistency of each index for each constellation of group and country.

institutionalised participation across time, more likely among older people, compared to older people in earlier decades. But these forms of participation still remain the domain of the young, compared to older fellow citizens today. Furthermore, differences between age groups with regard to two forms of political participation outside of organisations, namely contacting a public official or politician (mode 1) and buying/boycotting a product for political or ethical reasons (mode 2), can be fully explained with the help of individual-level variables. That means that the only factors that matter for these modes are life cycle or cohort effects that can be measured at the level of the individual. The residual age variable does not have an effect any longer.

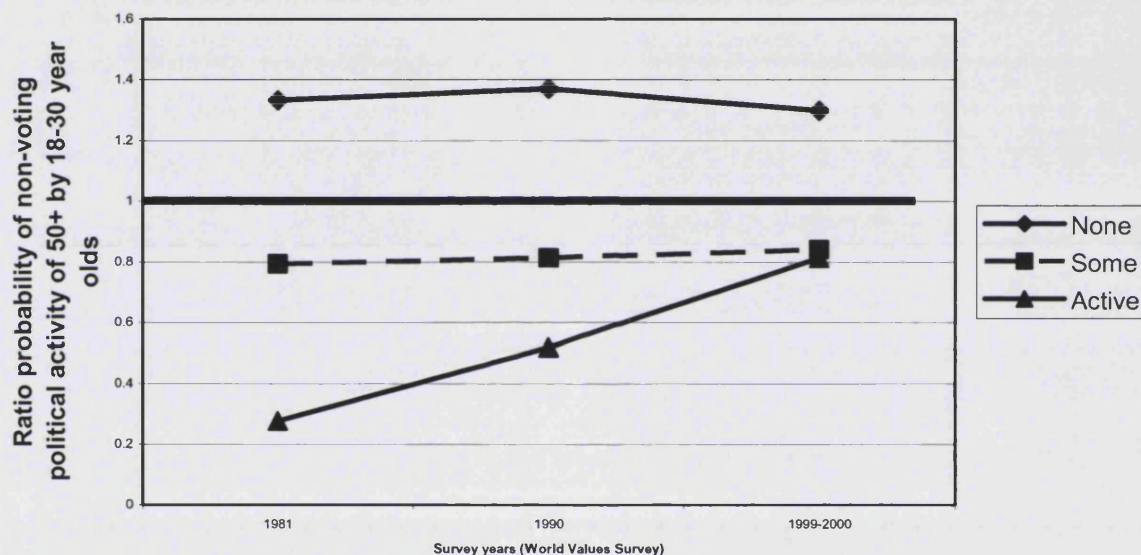
The two other modes, signing a petition/wearing a badge (mode 3) and protesting (mode 4), cannot be fully explained by resorting to individual-level variables. There remains a sizeable chunk of unexplained differences between age groups that is captured in the coefficient of the residual age variable. However, the magnitude of the variance explained by residual age varies by country. This variation can be accounted for by various indicators of the old age culture of the country. Countries that have a more positive image of older people show much less difference between age groups (*ceteris paribus*) than countries with a more negative image. The image of older people was measured by several indicators that asked respondents to rate reasons why they would do something for older people. Thus, the social perception of 'old age' and its role in politics reflects back on older people. I will explore this finding further in chapter 9.

I will develop the analysis in the following steps. Firstly, I will look at the over time trend concerning differences between age groups in order to examine the change in the political process and its generational implications. Secondly, I will introduce the four

dependent variables, the macro variables and the individual-level variables and run a series of multivariate regressions in section 3. I will then investigate the bivariate relationships of residual age coefficients of modes 3 and 4 and indicators of old age culture. Fourthly, I will discuss the political implications of the results.

8.1 *The over time trend in non-electoral participation in Western Europe*

Figure 8-1: Over time trend of non-electoral participation in Western Europe 1981-2000, probability of non-voting political activity of 50+ age group by that of 18-30 year olds



Source: Topf (1995: 70) and own calculations from the World Values Survey 1999/2000.

It is very difficult to analyse any over time trend as to differences between age groups. As we are interested in generational changes, surveys that are used for our analysis must have been carried out across at least two decades in order for us to be able to discern any noticeable trend. Topf (1995a: 70) put together various surveys looking at the ratio of participatory levels of 18-30 year olds divided by that of 50+ year olds. I have expanded parts of his data set (which includes the World Values Surveys 1981 and 1990) with data from the World Values Survey 1999-2000 (see figure 8-1). The data

looks at political actions other than voting and three levels of participation: none committed, one to two (some) committed, and three or more (active) committed. Each data point is the percentage of the 50+ age group who belong to the respective participation level divided by the percentage of the 18-30 age group who are at that participation level. Similarly to the figures in the last two chapters, a number of one means that there is no difference between the age groups; a number larger than one signifies that the older age group is more prominent; and a number smaller than one signifies that they are less active than the younger age group. The data must be treated with some caution. Respondents were asked whether they *ever* committed the political actions in question. This question wording is especially relevant because the ‘ever’ question gives older people an advantage over younger people, simply because they have lived longer. The data is for Western Europe only.³⁸

The trend started in 1981 with a state where younger people were definitely much more engaged in non-electoral acts of political participation than their older fellow citizens. The ratio for ‘none’ is clearly above one and the ratios for ‘some’ and ‘active’ are below one. For the most active, the greater participation of younger people is visible. In 1981, people aged 18-30 were four times as likely to have engaged in non-electoral forms of participation than the group aged 50 and older. This situation still resembled 1974 that had been described with the quotation at the beginning of the chapter.

For the ‘active group’ (three or more acts committed), the 50+ group were catching up over time, constantly decreasing the ratios from about 0.25 in 1981 (i.e.

³⁸ Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Belgium, Britain, Ireland, Netherlands, West Germany, France, Italy, and Spain.

younger people were four times as likely to be among the active group) to 0.8 in 1999. So in 1999/2000, the likelihood of the younger age group having committed several non-electoral acts of political participation is only 20 % higher than the older age group's. The middle level – with some activities – shows a fairly linear line at around 0.8 where there is hardly any change visible. The same seems to be the case for the non-active group where the ratio hovers around 1.3. Overall, the levels of participation have risen for these forms of participation for all age groups (Stolle, Hooghe, and Micheletti 2005: 248). If the ratio remains similar, it means that the rise for both groups has been roughly proportional.

In sum, there seems to be a generational change with regard to the very active group of people, where older people are catching up with younger people over time. This is a finding which we expect from the hypothesis H2. Still, there remains a youth bias. At no point in time have older people in Western Europe been as likely to engage in non-electoral participation at levels similar to younger people. Non-electoral participation remains a form of political action where younger people seem to maintain a comparative advantage. Probably the 'real' ratio measured through a question that is less likely to be biased by age groups might even show a relatively stronger popularity among younger individuals. This alternative question could have asked only about the preceding 12 months rather than whether respondents 'ever' committed that act. Having looked at the over time trend, the chapter will now turn to the cross-sectional analysis.

8.2 Dependent and independent variables: predictions and operationalisation

The dependent variables

The analysis will treat the four modes of participation separately. Each dependent variable can take the value 0 for not having committed the political action in question, or 1 for having committed it in the previous 12 months. Mode 1 is whether the citizen has contacted a public official or politician or not. Mode 2 summarises whether the respondent has bought and/or boycotted a product for political or ethical reasons. Mode 3 stands for having signed a petition and/or worn a badge. Mode 4 finally signifies whether the respondent has gone to a legal or illegal demonstration.

Macro-level independent variables

Differences between age groups vary between countries. Some of this variation can be explained by varying distribution of individual-level variables across countries. For instance, the educational gap between older and younger people is bigger in Poland than in Britain. Other differences between age groups can be explained by resorting to macro-level variables. There are three macro-level variables that we will employ in the statistical analysis and a fourth one later on.

1. *Average level of political participation per country*: this variable captures the average level of participation per country from the same survey, using a summative index of all single political actions that are elements of the four modes. Thus, it can take a minimum of 0 and a maximum of 7. As we shall see, the differences between age groups are dependent on the mean level of participation in

each country. The mean for this variable is 0.90, the minimum lies at 0.29 (Poland) and the maximum at 1.44 (Switzerland).

2. *Years since transition to democracy*: one of the differences between generations can be the length of experience of liberal democracy. In Britain, a 75 year old Adam and a 35 year old Henrietta differ in the time that they are consciously a member of a free political community that offers participatory opportunities. In Poland, in contrast, there is no difference between the two individuals. This is because the relatively recent transition to liberal democracy gives each the same amount of political experience. In addition, a democracy that has been established for a longer time is likely to show higher levels of political participation in general (Norris 2002: chap. 10; Roller and Wessels 1996). This variable takes the value of years that have passed since the first democratic election until the survey in 2002. The minimum value is 12 (for 2002 minus 1990) for post-communist countries like East Germany or Slovenia and a maximum of 80 for the established democracies like Britain or the Netherlands. The reason for this ceiling is that the experience of democracy is only of relevance within a natural lifespan, and the fact that mass participation was only readily available after the introduction of universal suffrage after World War I. Thus for example, the difference between Britain and Finland in terms of democratic experience is neglected.
3. *Regions*: this variable sorts the countries by European regions with Western Europe (Belgium, Britain, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, and Netherlands), Northern Europe (Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden), Central Europe (Austria, East Germany, Switzerland, and West Germany), Southern Europe

(Greece, Italy, Portugal, Slovenia, and Spain) and Eastern Europe (Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland). The reason behind this is the underlying cultural component. The Scandinavian countries are often believed to be more participatory, for instance due to higher levels of social capital (Norris 2002: chap. 8). This effect could interact with age.

4. *Old age culture (through four measures)*: whereas the previous three variables have been put forward in other comparative studies of political participation, old age culture is new. I use four variables that are derived from an analysis of the World Values Survey 1999/2000 and only cover 17 out of the 22 countries in our analysis. Social gerontologists hypothesise that there are cultural differences between countries in the way older people are valued. Sometimes, for example, it is maintained that Confucian societies like Japan or China have a high esteem for older people as they possess social and political power resources (Williamson et al. 1982: chaps. 2-3). According to the theoretical framework, we expect the social life cycle to matter. Stages of the life cycle, like old age, influence one's social identity. Factors that could potentially influence this culture are the perceived quality of welfare provisions for older people, or religious differences. These variables are highly exploratory in nature. There are no empirical investigations into this phenomenon to my knowledge. I used four items from the World Values Survey 1999/2000 (E168, E170-72):

'There are several reasons to do something to help the elderly people in your country. Please tell me for each of these reasons I am going to read out, if they apply to you or not. (very much, much, to a certain extent, not so much, not at all)

1. Because you feel you have a moral duty to help (MORALDUT).

2. Because it is the interest of society (INTSOC).
3. Because it is in your own interest (OWNINT).
4. To do something in return (RETURN).'

Each variables can take values between one (agreed very much) and 5 (agreed no at all). I calculated the mean values for 17 countries. Table 8-1 shows the descriptives for the four variables. I decided not to combine these four items into one variable because the principal survey investigators were not interested in old age culture, but differences between sociotropic and egoistic attitudes. To treat these four variables separately does not impose the assumptions of any of the data reduction techniques, such as principal component analysis.

Table 8-1: Descriptives of indicators of old age culture, 17 European countries in 1999/2000

Name of World Values Variables	Mean	Std. dev.	Min	Max
(3) MORALDUTY	2.05	0.19	1.71	2.43
(4) INTSOC	2.45	0.25	1.95	2.82
(5) OWNINT	2.87	0.45	2.30	4.16
(6) RETURN	1.87	0.43	1.87	3.75

Another variable that I first considered was the Human Development Index as a measurement of modernisation. Some social gerontologists (Cowgill and Holmes 1972) hypothesised that older people have a lower social standing (and therefore a different behaviour), the more a society has progressed in socio-economic terms. This is because older people are valued more in traditional societies within the framework of the family. However, the HDI variable correlates very highly with years since transition to democracy. Since years since transition to democracy had a better fit with the data, I kept it, bearing the correlation with HDI in mind for the interpretation. Democratic

practice is related to socio-economic development, and it is unclear whether the relationship is mutually reinforcing, or uni-directional.³⁹

³⁹ See for example of one causal link between economic development and democracy (Huber, Rueschemeyer, and Stephens 1993: 84): ‘...capitalist development transforms the class structure, enlarging the working and middle classes and facilitating their self-organisation, thus making it more difficult for elites to exclude them politically.’

The individual-level independent variables

Table 8-2: List of individual-level independent variables of models of non-institutionalised political participation

Independent Variables	Resource/ motivation (R) or mobilisation/ opportunities (O)	Theoretical reasoning for life cycle and cohort classification	Confirmed bivariate association with age
<i>Cohort</i>			
Education	R	The mass expansion of higher levels of education occurred only three to four decades ago.	0.18**
Postmaterialism	R	Post-war value change towards greater interest in self-actualisation.	0.16**
Religiosity	R	Societal process of secularisation in Europe since the 1960s	0.18**
Left-right self-placement (where higher values are further to the right)	R	Voters are socialised into ideology when they are young. The 'average' position can change over time.	0.17** or -0.14**
Size of town	O	Depending on the degree of urbanisation and path of industrial development, older cohorts can live in more rural regions.	Between -0.17** and 0.00
Experience of democracy before the age of 30	R	In some countries, older people differ from younger people in having not experienced a free democracy at youth (such as Spain). The lack of democratic experience during the early socialisation period can make adults subsequently less participatory.	-0.39** (-0.83** in some younger democracies)
<i>Life cycle</i>			
Gender	R	Men have a shorter average life span.	n/a
Internal political efficacy	R	Elderly people feel less inclined towards political activism because of internalised social stereotyping towards old age.	-0.08**
Living with partner	R	Divorce and widowhood occur more frequently at a higher age.	-0.26**
Number of minor children in household	R	Decreases with higher age.	-0.47**
Employment status, pension as main source of income	R	Older people are more likely to be retired.	0.67** (pension) -0.34** (employed) -0.04** (self- employed)
Subjective evaluation of health	R	Deteriorates with age.	-0.36**
Duration of residence, logged	R	The older you are, the longer you have lived in certain area.	0.54**
Social networks with friends	O	Elderly people have on average fewer social networks because they do not replace lost friends with new ones.	-0.09**
<i>Disputed (Life cycle and/or cohort)</i>			
Political satisfaction	R	The older we get, the lower our aspirations get and the easier we are satisfied. Newer cohorts, however, are less satisfied with formal politics.	Between -0.05* and 0.12** (political)
General satisfaction			between -0.14** and 0.09** (general)
Political interest, political information	R	Older people concentrate their interests on fewer areas. On average, politics is one of them. Newer cohorts show less interest in politics. Use of media to get political information follows the same reasoning.	0.08** (interest) 0.22** (information)
Income	R	The income of retirees is in general lower than that of the middle-aged. However, newer cohorts of seniors have accumulated increasingly higher pensions.	-0.15**
Membership of parties and trade unions	R	Older cohorts are more likely to be party and trade union members. In addition, the latter type of membership is tied to professional life	0.03**

* Significant at 0.05, ** significant at 0.01 one-tailed, weighted by design weight, coding in the appendix.

Table 8-2 lists the variables that will be controlled for at the individual level. Most of them have been introduced in chapter 6 in the analysis of voting participation. Full operationalisation can be found in the appendices 11.1 and 11.2. The second column shows whether the factor needs to be considered on the resources/motivation or opportunities/mobilisation side. Each factor has been checked for bivariate relationships with age as a first test for hypothesis H5. Like in chapter 6, I do not specifically test the nature of the age-related age effect, but rely on the interpretation of the literature and treat the assessment as assumptions from then on. All bivariate relationships were confirmed, apart from the one between age and political trust. Some variables, like the two measures of satisfaction, varied across countries in their sign. But this was in line with expectations that they have a life cycle and a cohort root that can account for a total effect that is either positive or negative. The table also includes a short summary of why the factor is included. Because the reasoning as to why some factors have an influence on participation outside of organisations is similar to voting participation, I will not repeat them and refer the reader back to chapter 6. Here, I will only present some additional variables that I have not employed before.

Shared social characteristic cohort effects

Postmaterialism, left-right self-placement: non-institutionalised behaviour outside of organisations has been associated with left politics and more importantly with new left politics. Younger cohorts in post-industrial societies are thought to have been socialised into a new set of values that include the desire to express themselves and care about non-material public goods such as the environment (Inglehart 1971, 1990). Non-

institutionalised political behaviour is one way of expressing oneself individually. The attachment of certain cohorts to specific parties leads to a moderate correlation of age with left-right ideological position. Elderly people are not becoming more conservative in terms of shifting to the right on a socio-economic conflict dimension. Rather, they stay where they are when they were socialised at a young age (see chapter 7 for the cohort effects on party choice). However, society and party politics change. Thus, elderly people in post-communist countries position themselves more to the left as they grew up in an era of socialism, and the party system has now moved relatively to the right. In other countries, the elderly stand more to the right because the post-materialist, new left dimension of politics that became part of politics in many European countries is new to them.⁴⁰

Size of town: the size of town one lives in is a proxy for the amount of opportunities for non-institutionalised participation. Protest marches especially are more likely in larger places as the amount of publicity is likely to be higher. In some countries such as the Netherlands, older cohorts are more likely to live in more rural areas as newer cohorts moved to bigger cities due to available professional opportunities.

Disputed cohort and life cycle effects

There are again some variables for which life cycle and shared social characteristic cohort expectations exist.

⁴⁰ The elderly are not more moderate, i.e. they do not position themselves more to the middle of the left-right scale. I have checked this empirically with bivariate correlations between age and a transformed left-right scale. The left-right scale was transformed to span -5 to +5 and was then squared.

Political information: it is measured here via politically relevant media usage. Like political interest more generally, this is another side of the elderly's concentration on politics, which might go down for later cohorts as a correlate of growing political disenchantment. Access to political information is important to take a decision because more information decreases uncertainty.

General satisfaction, political satisfaction: frustration and dissatisfaction in both general and political terms are put forward as mobilising attitudes in theories of protest (Barnes, Kaase, and others 1979; Marsh 1977). General dissatisfaction in life could make citizens take risks by engaging in protest-related activities. Political dissatisfaction stems from dissatisfaction with political institutions, so that a lack of satisfaction propels institution-challenging behaviour. The older you are, the more satisfied you are on both dimensions, although the correlation is modest in most countries. Tentatively, I would assume that this age effect is a mixture of generational and life cycle effects. When being asked general questions on satisfaction, e.g. with regard to the quality of health service, older people above 50 onwards always tend to be more content than younger age groups. This is the case even if the objective markers, such as the waiting time and duration of stay in hospital, are not different. Thus, subjective standards ('aspiration' as it is called in social psychology) seem to be systematically different across age groups. It could be that our perceived standards decline with ageing. The older we are, the less we expect and the more easily we are content. This is plausible since more life experience teach us the limits of expectations.⁴¹

⁴¹ An example of this systematic finding can be found in a British quality assurance report (BMRB 1995). The aged report higher levels of satisfaction across Western nations. Research on this is still in its infancy.

Younger cohorts are less satisfied with the democracy in their country (see for Britain Henn, Weinstein, and Wring 2002). The correlation coefficients with age in table 8-2 varied between positive and negative numbers to confirm the double-rooted causation.

Life cycle effects

Number of minor children living in household: it is ambiguous to predict the impact on participation of having children. On the one hand, looking after them (as parents or grand-parents) can decrease the time budget (takes away resources of participation); on the other hand, however, it increases the interest that one takes in public provisions, such as nurseries, health centres and schools (motivational factors in engaging in political actions, especially on specific, local issues).

The four modes of non-institutionalised participation differ to some extent in the resources that they need, meaning that we can expect some independent variables to have no or smaller effect in some regressions than in others. For example, the size of town a person lives in is of importance for street demonstrations because they tend to take place in bigger towns or cities. In contrast, the place of residence can be expected to be negatively related to contacting a public official because residents of smaller towns are more likely to know the official or politician personally. Nevertheless, I will – out of practicality - keep the same set of variables throughout, because the high number of observations allows not to worry about using up degrees of freedom.

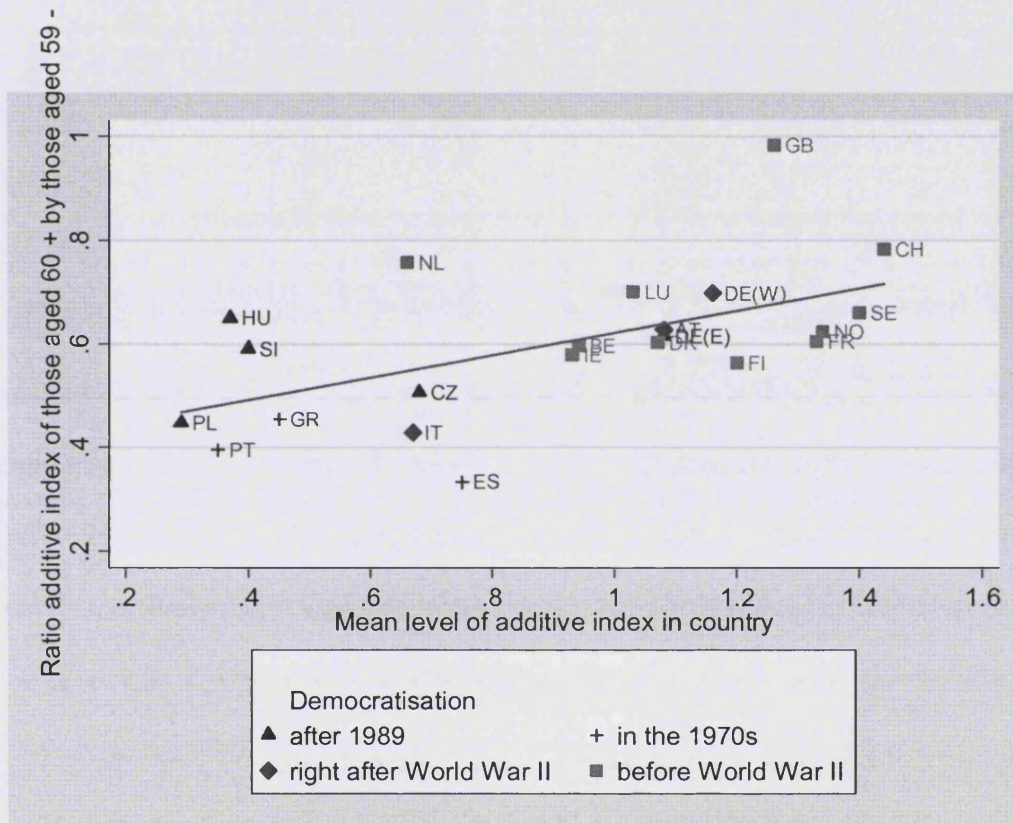
The relationship varies somewhat between more general and more specific domains. Besides the reasoning indicated in the main text, the higher age might just lead respondents to use the more extreme values of response scales (Herzog and Rodgers 1986).

8.3 Results of the cross-sectional analysis

Average levels of participation and the age ratio per country

Before the detailed multivariate analysis, an overview of simple differences between countries can be illuminating (see figure 8-2).

Figure 8-2: Bivariate relationship between average participation levels and age ratio per country



AT (Austria), BE (Belgium), CH (Switzerland), CZ (Czech Republic), DK (Denmark), DE(E) (East Germany), DE(W) (West Germany), ES (Spain), FI (Finland), FR (France), GB (Great Britain), GR (Greece), HU (Hungary), IE (Ireland), IT (Italy), LU (Luxembourg), NL (Netherlands), NO (Norway), PL (Poland), PT (Portugal), SE (Sweden), and SI (Slovenia).

The figure plots the average level of non-institutionalised participation outside of organisations per country on the horizontal axis, versus the ratio of participation of older people divided by that of younger people. There is a linear trend: the higher the participation level in a given country, the more active older people are vis-à-vis younger

fellow citizens. Since the age ratio is below one in all instances, this linear relationship also means that the more common participation outside of organisations in a country, the smaller the gap between older and younger people.

In Figure 8-2, I also marked countries according to the time of their democratisation. The oldest democracies (like Britain or France as boxes) and post-1945 democracies (like West Germany as diamonds) tend to be to the right (more general activity and more active older people). Younger democracies (like post-communist or post-1975 democracies like Spain) tend to be on the left. East Germany is a clear outlier from the post-communist countries and hardly differs from West Germany. Italy and the Netherlands are further to the left than their democratic age would predict. As far as the linear relationship is concerned, however, there is only one clear outlier, Great Britain. The senior activity in Britain is disproportionately high relative to its general activity level. This extraordinary activity level will be one reason why the next chapter looks at a case study of senior protest in Britain.

The relationship between average levels of participation, time since democratisation and the magnitude of the age ratio suggests a historical interpretation that is congruent with the previous over time finding that older people are catching up with younger people in Western Europe. Imagine a new liberal democracy that does not yet have any significant mass participation apart from voting. The first group to pick up participation outside of institutions are the young. The reason could be that social and political institutions' power positions tend to be taken by older people (Williamson et al. 1982: 135-7), so that participation outside of them could be an outlet for young people. As the democracy gets older, non-electoral forms of participation become more

widespread, which can also be a product of the growing socio-economic development, and older people start to catch up with younger people. This process of the catching-up of older people is strengthened by the fact that the generation that took up non-electoral participation when they were young gets older. At some point, there might no longer be any difference between younger and older people as to these forms of participation. This finding gives further evidence for the generational explanation that we also saw in the same countries (see section 8.1). It is primarily younger individuals who take up the growing popularity of political participation and carry it with them as they become older.

	Contacted a politician or public official		Bought or boycotted product for political or ethical reasons		Worn a badge and/or signed a petition		Taken part in a demonstration	
	Mode 1		Mode 2		Mode 3		Mode 4	
Valid N	30,664		30,568		30,728		30,728	
Log likelihood	-7476.27		-8198.22		-10513.02		-757.68	
Pseudo R ² according to (Snijders/Bokers 1999: 225-7)	0.224		0.286		0.263		0.310	
constant	-4.56***	0.50	-3.94***	0.95	-3.46***	0.76	-3.54**	1.26
<i>Macro factors</i>								
Years since transition to democracy	0.00	0.001	-0.00	0.004	-0.00	0.01	-0.01	0.01
Country average additive index participation outside of organisations	0.77***	0.23	2.16***	0.26	2.42***	0.28	2.58**	1.00
Regions (Western Europe baseline)								
Northern Europe	-0.23*	0.09	-0.12	0.15	-0.61***	0.12	-1.26	0.68
Central Europe	1.07***	0.17	0.41	0.27	0.43	0.24	1.37	0.80
Southern Europe	-0.16	0.09	-0.14	0.11	-0.71***	0.14	-0.74	0.58
Eastern Europe	1.37***	0.25	0.16	0.55	0.16	0.51	-0.43	0.93
Age	0.00	0.003	0.00	0.004	-0.01***	0.003	-0.02***	0.00
<i>Cohort effects</i>								
Education	0.09***	0.02	0.11***	0.03	0.06*	0.03	-0.03	0.04
Left-right scale	-0.02	0.01	-0.12***	0.02	-0.08***	0.02	-0.20***	0.04
Size of town	-0.17***	0.04	0.06	0.03	0.08*	0.03	0.21***	0.06
Postmaterialism	0.04	0.04	0.18***	0.04	0.15***	0.04	0.29***	0.05
Religiosity	0.02	0.02	0.00	0.007	0.01	0.01	-0.03**	0.01
Experience of democracy before 30	0.25	0.15	0.29	0.29	0.27	0.17	0.13	0.20
<i>Cohort/Life cycle effects</i>								
Political interest	0.38***	0.05	0.41***	0.03	0.31	0.02	0.55***	0.07
Political membership	0.43***	0.05	0.03	0.02	0.23***	0.05	0.42***	0.10
Political satisfaction	-0.02**	0.01	-0.05***	0.01	-0.01	0.01	-0.05***	0.01
Political information, logged	0.16*	0.07	0.09	0.09	0.13	0.07	0.12	0.13
Household income	0.03*	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.02	0.01	-0.04	0.03
General satisfaction	-0.02*	0.01	-0.01	0.01	-0.01	0.01	0.00	0.01
<i>Life cycle effects</i>								
Social networks, logged	0.78***	0.05	0.50***	0.03	0.67***	0.04	0.76***	0.07
Internal political efficacy	0.40***	0.04	0.19***	0.03	0.21***	0.02	0.11*	0.05
Female	0.03	0.06	-0.50***	0.05	-0.43***	0.05	-0.07	0.07
Employed	-0.12	0.08	0.01	0.09	0.01	0.05	-0.32***	0.10
Self-employed	0.33***	0.05	0.33**	0.12	0.17	0.09	-0.20	0.20
Duration of residence, logged	0.03	0.04	-0.13***	0.02	-0.04	0.04	0.03	0.05
Living with partner	0.10	0.07	0.04	0.07	-0.05	0.07	-0.26**	0.09
# of minor children in household	0.09**	0.03	-0.01	0.03	-0.02	0.02	-0.06	0.03
Health	-0.07*	0.03	0.00	0.03	-0.03	0.03	0.03	0.06
Pension main source of income	-0.15	0.11	-0.27*	0.11	-0.16	0.09	-0.37*	0.16
Sigma u	0.24	0.03	0.08	0.03	0.04	0.02	0.42	0.15
Intra-class correlation	0.07		0.02		0.01		0.13	

***significant with at 0.001 level, ** 0.01 level, * 0.05 level, tested insignificant interaction effects: age X gender, pension X income. Weighted by pweight at country and dweight at individual level.

Multivariate regression analysis

I use random-intercept logistic regression due to the binary outcome of the dependent variables and due to the residual systematic noise per country that the random effects can filter out. The four models include all macro variables (except the four measures of old age culture) and all individual-level variables. The summative index of participation levels per country is strongly significant with a positive sign in all four modes, but is less strong for contacting a public official. Years since transition to democracy has no effect for any mode, meaning that – if there is any difference between polities of varying democratic age – it is captured through the other macro and or individual level variables. Regional variations occur as well. Western and Central Europe tend to be the regions which are most conducive to these modes of participation, followed by Northern Europe, then Eastern, then Southern Europe. Buying or boycotting a product and protesting are not influenced at all by regional variations.

For modes 1 and 2, we see that the coefficients of the residual age variable are not significant and zero. That means that by including all the various cohort and life cycle individual variables, we could explain all the variance between age groups. This is an important finding; it means that accounting for all the resources/motivation, opportunities/mobilisation, and the macro country contexts, we can fully explain differences between age groups. At the individual level, the shared social characteristic cohort and life cycle hypothesis H5 is a sufficient explanation for these two modes when the macro differences between countries that are the same for all age groups are being controlled for.

Modes 3 and 4 in contrast still have strongly significant coefficients of residual age. In other words, the measured resources/motivation and motivation/opportunities are not enough to explain the differences in participatory levels. How big is the explanatory power of these residual age variables? In terms of changing the overall probability of doing one of the political actions, age does not play the most important role per se. But bear in mind that the model explains variance *between* as well as *within* age groups. We need to turn to differences between age groups to see how much variance residual age still explains.

I additionally ran models (see appendices 11.7 and 11.8) for modes 3 and 4 for different sub-samples divided by the average level of participation, and for country groups defined by years since transition to democracy. This was to see whether there is any interaction effect between age and these macro variables. The coefficients of the residual age variable hardly changed and remained significant in all instances but one (badge/petition for high level of participation). This means that there is still a level of robust variance between age groups to modes 3 and 4 that we cannot explain with the individual-level variables. Before looking at the magnitude of the coefficient of the residual age variable, I will assess which group of variables dominates the model so far.

Table 8-4: Overview of significant individual-level independent variables in models of participation outside of organisation

	Contact	Product	Petition/badge	Protest
<i>Cohort effects</i>				
Education	X	X		
Left-right scale		X	X	X
Size of town	X			X
Postmaterialism		X	X	X
<i>Cohort/Life cycle effects</i>				
Political interest	X	X		X
Political membership	X		X	X
Political satisfaction	X	X		X
<i>Life cycle effects</i>				
Social networks, logged	X	X	X	X
Internal political efficacy	X	X	X	
Female		X	X	
Employed				X
Self-employed	X	X		
Duration of residence, logged		X		
Living with partner				X
# of minor children in household	X			

X before black background signifies that the independent variable is at least significant at 0.01 level.

Table 8-4 sketches the variables that are significant at 0.01 level (which we should take given the high number of N). Significance does not mean substance. Some of these variables can have a systematic but small effect. However, just by looking at these rows, we can also say that neither life cycle, cohort nor the disputed effects seem to be dominant in terms of significance. We need to look at actual differences between age groups to assess the importance of these significant effects for our model.

Figure 8-3: Mode 1 (contact) - differences between 30-39 year olds and 70-79 year olds in Britain, Poland and Europe in 2002

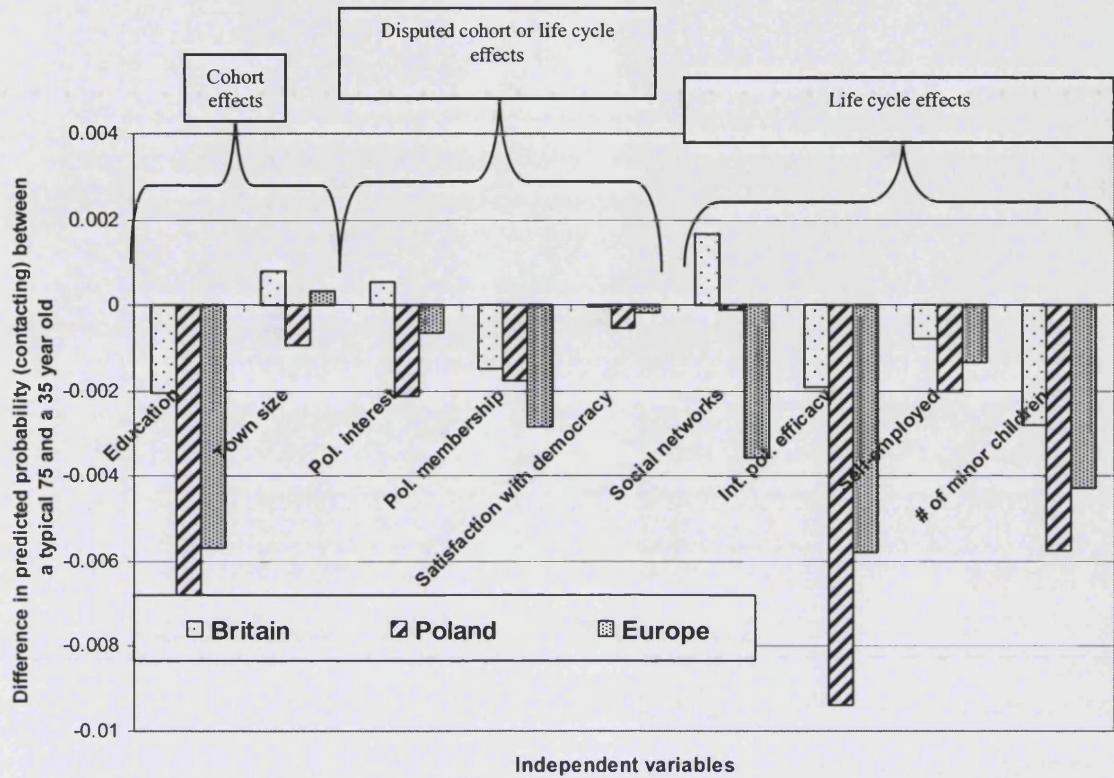
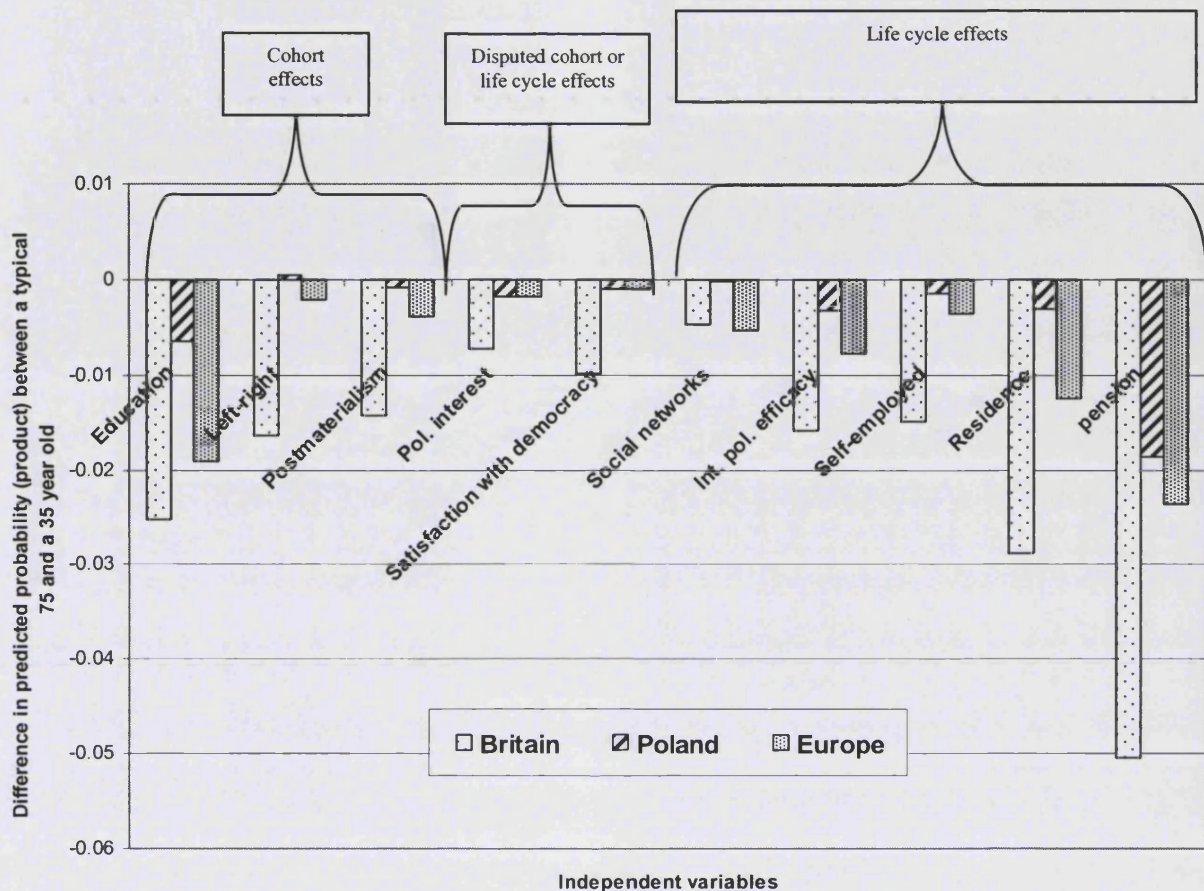


Figure 8-3 shows the differences in predicted probabilities between a person in her 30s (Henrietta) and a person in his 70s (Adam) for mode 1. The probabilities are broken down by independent variables and are compared for Europe in general, as well as for Britain and Poland. The latter were chosen as countries that are at the opposite end of the scales of the macro variables. Each column stands for the difference in predicted probability between a person in her 70s minus that of a person in her 30s. A column that lies below the zero line means that older people have a disadvantage on that variable. So for example, a -0.02 means that an Adam in his 70s is 2 % less likely to commit that form of participation than a Henrietta in her 30s because of their difference on that variable. For mode 1 (contacting a public official or politician), there are five major

factors (looking at Europe), all of which (education, internal political efficacy, self-employment, political membership and number of minor children in household) make older people less likely to contact a public official or politician. Generally, the column for Poland is smaller in size because participation in general is less common in Poland. Education is a difference that goes back to cohort differences. It is a resource that helps us to understand politics, and older people in both countries possess less of it because they belong to a generation that has not had access to the same educational possibilities as younger generations. Political membership is seen as a confounded life cycle and cohort effect in the literature (see chapter 6). The other three major impact variables are pure life cycle effects. Their sum makes up the biggest difference in any of the groups of age effects. Older people feel less motivated to contact an official because they feel less politically efficacious. This is due to the fact that they live in an ageist environment that projects its negative stereotypes on older people (to which I will come back). Being self-employed or having minor children gives younger people the motivation to take an interest in public issues. Since older people are not generally self-employed and do not usually have minor children, they miss out on this source of motivation. Finally, being less involved in social networks gives older people less exposure to mobilisation , and thus decreases their likelihood to contact an official on a given issue.

Figure 8-4: Mode 2 (product) - differences between 30-39 year olds and 70-79 year olds in Britain, Poland and Europe in 2002



The four life cycle effects are arguably more stable into the future than the generational effect of education. The latter effect will fade away as cohorts become replaced. The life cycle factors by contrast will continue to exist in the next decades. The disputed age effects do not play a large role in this age-centred model of contacting a public official.

Figure 8-4 shows the analogous diagram for buying or boycotting a product for political or ethical reasons. There are again four major factors, two of which are the same as with mode 1: education and internal political efficacy. A third factor is duration

of residence. Older people tend to have lived in an area longer and are thus more socially embedded. They know the area and its problems. It is imaginable that especially buying and boycotting of local produce is more prevalent because of this local embeddedness.

The fourth factor of tremendous importance for Britain is receiving a pension as a main source of income (although it is only significant at the 0.05 level).⁴² The direction of impact is also contrary to our expectations. We hypothesised that receiving a pension would enable older people to participate more in politics for two reasons: because they have more time; and also because, as recipients of public pensions, they have more of an interest in public policy. Pensioners are, however, *less* likely to buy or boycott a product. In the public discussion, pensioners are often portrayed as a group of people prone to political participation because they have time and a fixed income. Generally speaking, this relationship does not exist for modes 1 and 3. Mode 2 (and also to a smaller extent for mode 4) shows a relationship between pension and participation that is contrary to this widely held notion. In sum, buying or boycotting a product in Britain and Poland shows a combination of effects in which life cycle effects dominate over cohort or disputed effects.

⁴² Although pension and age are correlated, their simultaneous usage as independent variables does not pose any problems with multicollinearity.

Figure 8-5: Mode 3 (badge/petition) - differences between 30-39 year olds and 70-79 year olds in Britain, Poland and Europe in 2002

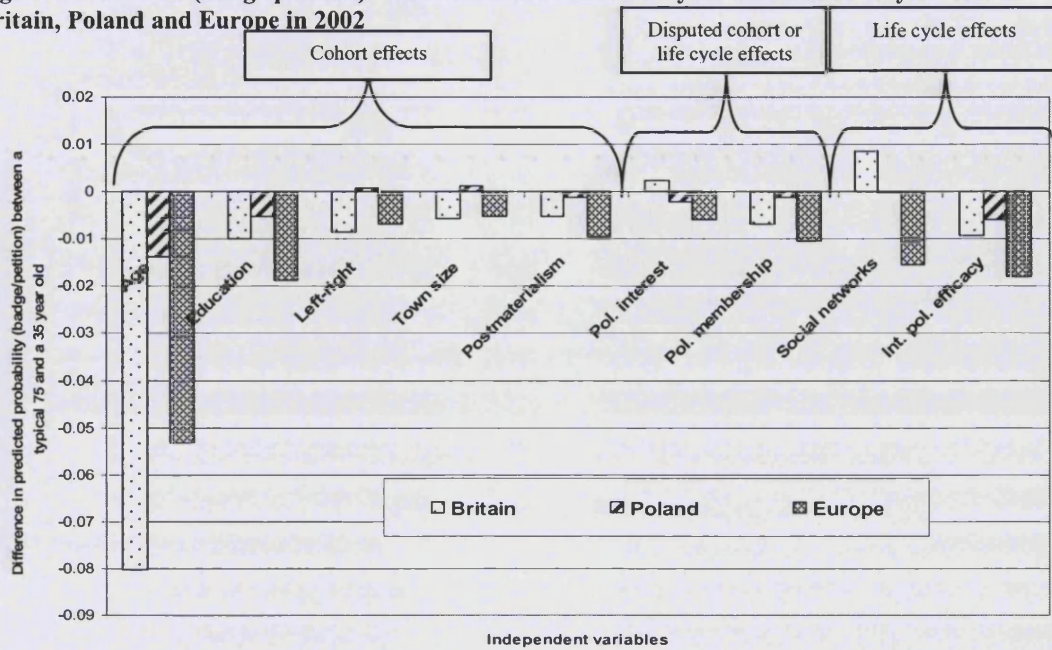


Figure 8-5 shows the differences in predicted probabilities for mode 3 (wearing a badge or signing a petition). Residual age is still in the picture and represents the biggest difference between older and younger people in Britain, Poland and Europe. All the other variables together have a bit more impact than age alone. A similarly large impact of age will be visible in the last mode in the next paragraph, and I will discuss the meaning of this effect later on. The magnitude of that effect in the residual age variable demonstrates that this effect is not only significant, but far from negligible. There are three other major effects besides residual age: education, internal political efficacy and social networks. All of their underlying causal chains have been discussed before.

Figure 8-6: Mode 4 (protest) - differences between 30-39 year olds and 70-79 year olds in Britain, Poland and Europe in 2002

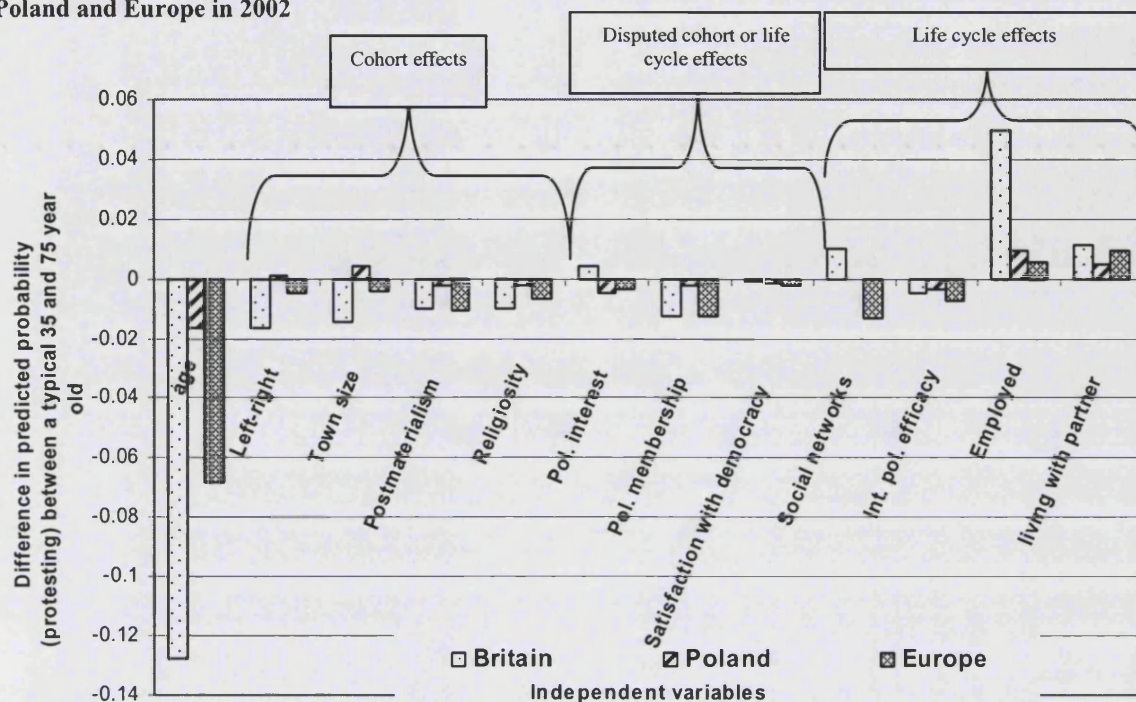


Figure 8-6 looks at the last mode (protest). This time, residual age is the most important predictor of difference between age groups. Only employment has an additional, large impact (at least for Great Britain). Older people benefit from the freedom from professional exigencies and from more leisure time, which acts as a resource for them to be more likely to engage in protests. This is a line of argumentation that became visible in many of the interviews that I led for the next chapter. Quite a few other factors have small to moderate influences on differences between age groups. Added together, they are roughly similar to the influence of residual age on protest. It is thus impossible to say which class of age effects is more important, because they explain a fair share of variance between age groups.

In general, the predictions proved to be sustainable for resources/motivation and opportunities/mobilisation that vary between age groups, either for life cycle or cohort reasons. Contrary to our hypothesis H3, I could not find any systematic effect of the experience of democracy at youth. What individuals experience at youth as to the 'quality' of the polity, does not find any evidence in this regard. Contrary to the findings of the macro cohort analysis at the beginning of this chapter (where we could see a generational catching-up), the directly measured experience of democracy does not have a lasting influence that could affect generations differently.

Explaining the source of the coefficient of residual age

Modes 1 and 2 showed no leftover effect of residual age, once all the other individual-level variables have been controlled. Differences between age groups in the 22 countries can be fully explained with respect to these variables that are theoretically and empirically linked to chronological age. However, for modes 3 and 4 the coefficients of residual age still have sizeable effects, the magnitude of which could only be matched by all other variables together. The size of this impact is stable as I tested sub-samples of countries. We can now further disaggregate the data to look at each country individually. Running separate regressions for 22 countries (see appendix 11.9 and 11.10), I get a set of 22 coefficients per mode. Some of these coefficients that result from single-country regressions, controlling for all the other variables, are not significant any more, although all have a negative sign. Each age coefficient stands for the slope of a graph that captures the differences between age groups once all the other effects are being controlled. The greater the negative number of such a coefficient, the bigger the gap

between more active younger people and older people. It is thus comparable to the age ratios that I used at the beginning of the chapter.

Figure 8-7: Badge/petition - bivariate relationship between mean level of participation and residual age coefficient after single-country analysis

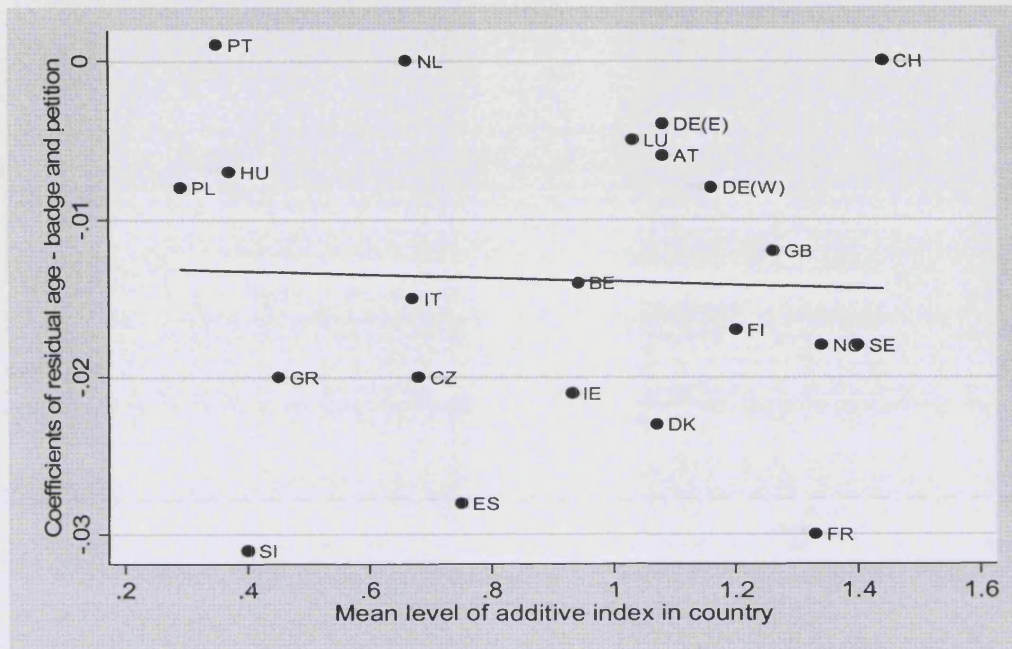
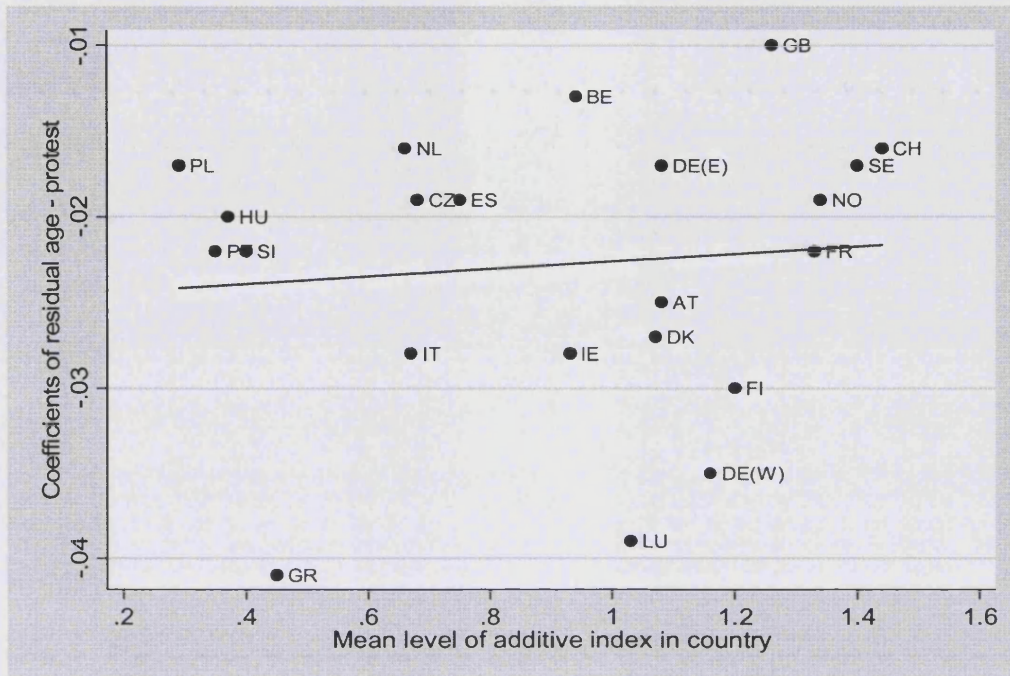


Figure 8-8: Protest - bivariate relationship between mean level of participation and residual age coefficient after single-country analysis



Figures 8-7 and 8-8 show the relationship between the mean level of participation and the residual age coefficients of modes 3 and 4. Clearly, the difference between age groups, once all the conceptual variables have removed part of the variance of the dependent variables, no longer depends on the average level of participation outside of organisations in a given country. Accounting for the individual-level variables took that relationship away.

Table 8-5: Correlation matrix between four measures of old age culture and residual age coefficients of modes 3 (signing a petition or wearing a badge) and mode 4 (protesting)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) residual age coefficients (protest) – mode 4	1.00				
(2) residual age coefficients (badge/petition) – mode 3	0.04	1.00			
(3) MORALDUTY	-0.20	-0.11	1.00		
(4) INTSOC	-0.46	-0.11	0.70	1.00	
(5) OWNINT	-0.31	-0.26	0.35	0.05	1.00
(6) RETURN	-0.60	-0.34	0.37	0.58	0.44

So far, we have not used the measures of old age culture in the model. Table 8-5 presents the correlations between the four measures and the two variables that represent the coefficients of residual age from the single country analysis once the other variables have been controlled for. As the first two columns show, all four measures of old age culture that I calculated from the World Values Survey are negatively correlated with the coefficients of residual age for modes 3 and 4. Figures 8-10 and 8-11 show the relationship in graphical terms for the variable RETURN that correlates highest with the coefficient of the residual age variables.

Mode 3 has a negative correlation coefficient of -0.34 with RETURN; mode 4 one of -0.60. RETURN captures the mean value of those answers that rated the interest of doing something for older people in return. The higher the RETURN value, the less likely respondents were to agree to that motivational factor. Given the correlational structure of all four measures of old age culture, we can conclude the following: the less older people are valued in a given society, the bigger the gap is between them and younger people as to these two modes of participation (*ceteris paribus*: under the controls of education, postmaterialism etc.). In other words, relative to younger people of the same country, older people in Poland where they are more valued are more active than in a country like Greece where older people are less valued. This is a surprising

finding because one could have expected that older people feel that they are being taken care of more in a society that values them highly, and so become more passive in politics. If this finding was corroborated in other research, we could state that older people with the same resources and opportunities as younger people will give most input in the political process (via wearing a badge, signing a petition and protesting) where they are highly thought of.

Figure 8-9: Badge and petition - bivariate relationship between RETURN and coefficients of residual age

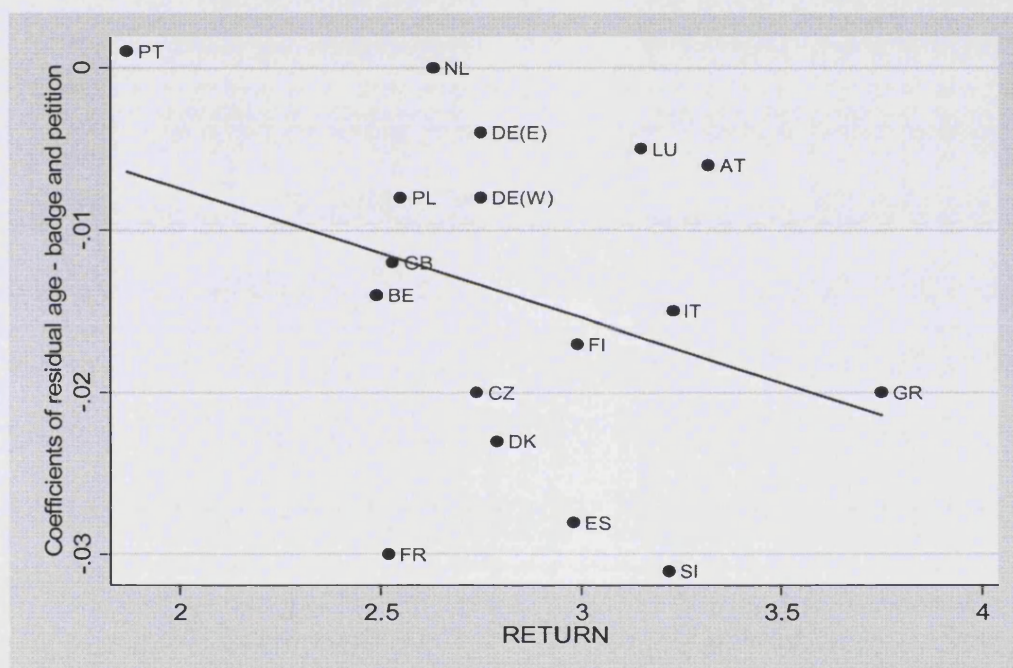
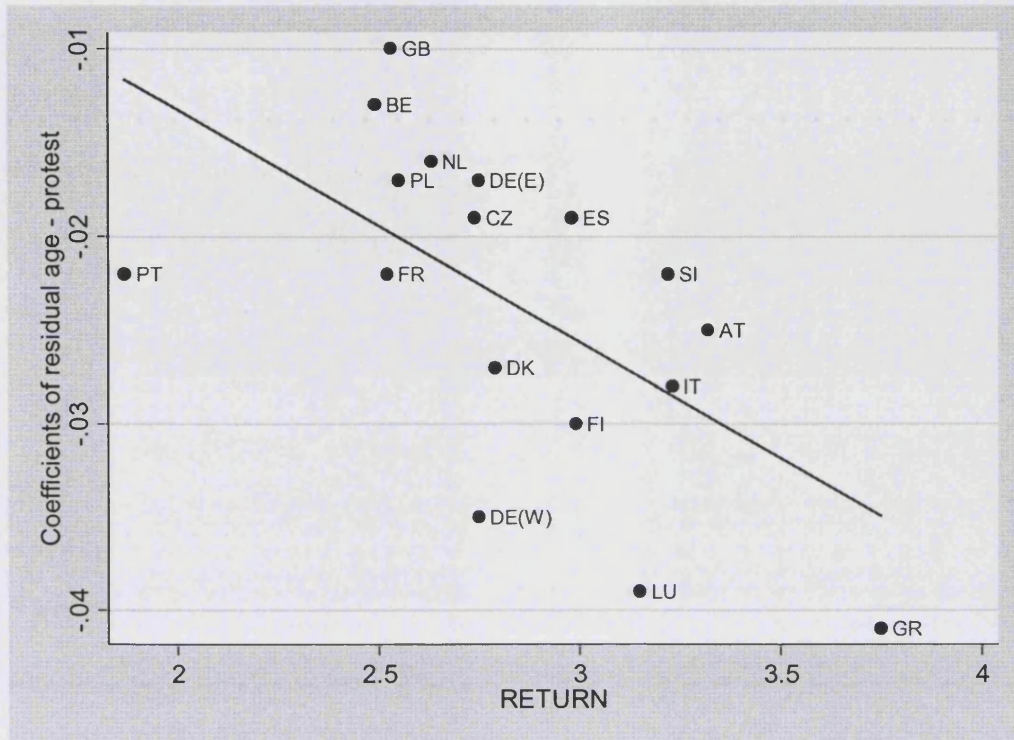


Figure 8-10: Protest - bivariate relationship between RETURN and coefficients of residual age



This analysis of country variation is only a ‘least worst’ option. Actually, the explanation of individual behaviour must take place at the individual level. Whether an older person feels valued as such, is a matter of individual perception rather than solely a macro difference between countries. In other words, a proper test must demonstrate the internalised belief at the individual level as well as its effect in activity levels. It is imaginable, too, that older people in certain circumstances, perhaps those who are rich in money, health and political interest, might be ‘immune’ to less senior-friendly country contexts. Also, it is likely that there is a causal link that we cannot measure through internal political efficacy, an independent variable that we included in the regression analysis. In addition, the correlation for petition/badge is quite low, so there might be

other macro factors that can also explain the variation of residual age coefficients. One could, for instance, hypothesise that the quality of welfare provisions from an old age perspective makes a difference as to whether older people are prone to protest or not.

The images that a society holds can reflect back on the self-identity of older people. The next chapter will explore this link even further. What I crudely measured here, was the outer image of older people, i.e. not the image that older people have of themselves in the first place. In a society that values older people less, older individuals might have the motivation to act politically, e.g. by protesting, but they might feel inadequate to do so as society's expectations do not conform with such actions. Older people's preferences as to the choice of a form of political participation would thus be determined by the social situation they find themselves in.

In the exploratory chapter 5, I showed that older people are generally more likely to be party members and more likely to be members of other political organisations, relative to younger citizens. The old age image of the society might be one partial explanation these modes of participation as well. More senior-friendly countries might not only have more active older people in joining demonstrations, signing a petition or wearing a badge, but also have more active older people in political organisations.

8.4 Political implications of the empirical findings

Older people participate less in politics outside of organisations. From a normative point of view, one might argue that equal participation is desirable. I will therefore discuss the results of each mode in turn, looking at the sources of why older people are less likely to perform that political action and the implications for the political process as a whole. At

this point, we have to remember that we are relying on the literature for the assessment of the nature of the independent variables. If these judgements are wrong, the following implications would need to be re-stated.

Mode 1: contacting a public official or politician

One contacts a public official or politician if there is a specific issue that one cares about and wants to have more information or see something done regarding that issue. Less participation by older people can mean that the specific interests of older people are less sought after because of the lack of pressure or inquiries from them. Older people use this form of political action less, mostly because they are less educated, feel less politically efficacious and have no minor children in their household whose interests they want to take care of. Differences in education are likely to vanish once all cohorts will have had the same exposure to mass education at all levels. The other factors are ingrained into the social life course. Although it can be changed, for instance, by a fight against negative stereotypes around politics and old age, these effects are arguably rather stable into the near future. If older people remain less likely to participate in this mode, their specific interests will feed inadequately into the policy process through participation.

Mode 2: buying or boycotting a product for political or ethical reasons

This mode differs from the other three with regard to the degree of specificity and visibility of the action. The political intention behind such an act is a broader statement of general support or lack of support for a producer or a producing country. Lower participation of older people is unlikely to make their interests less heard. However, life cycle effects are stronger than disputed or cohort effects for the contexts of Britain, Poland and Europe, meaning that this difference between age groups is likely to be more

stable into the future. Only if there will be less important cohort differences in the future, can we argue that older people remain less active on this mode.

Mode 3: signing a petition or wearing a badge

These political actions are now classic forms of political expression that are offered or encouraged by all organisations who want to influence public policy outside of the electoral process, or want to exert pressure on electoral actors. The high degree of unexplained variance captured by the residual age variable poses something of a puzzle. The propositions do not seem to explain the variance very well. Measures of old age culture can give a partial answer for the unexplained lower participation rate of older people. In societies that value older people more highly, the gap between younger and older people is much closer.

Mode 4: Protesting

This political action needs most resources in physical terms. The intention of protest can be broad as well as very specific. Again, there is a large amount of unexplained variance between age groups, but old age culture plays a stronger role in explaining it, compared to mode 3. If a country has a more positive image of older people, older people (*ceteris paribus*) will find it easier to close the gap vis-à-vis younger fellow citizens. Moreover, concluding from our analysis of the over time trend of non-electoral participation as a whole, we cannot ignore the fact that there remains a generational bias in the lower participation rate among older people.

Political protests can serve three functions: the organisers want to change policies, they want long-term access to the policy-making process, or they want to

change social values of the society (Rochon and Mazmanian 1993). Through the increasing protest of older people, the social values of society towards older people can be changed (and thereby decrease the negative stereotypes currently held about older people and politics). This objective of protest would actually lie outside of my definition of political participation, as the intention of protest would not be to change existing institutional structures or governmental policy.

Overall, the lower participation levels of older people outside of organisations stand in contrast to the levels of voting participation. Older people are more likely to vote due to a combination of life cycle and ageing factors. It is the electoral process that is dominated by older people's participation and the non-electoral process that is dominated by younger people.

8.5 Summary

Older people caught up with younger people as far as non-electoral participation at a high level is concerned. In 1981, older people were only 25 % as likely to be very active as younger people. In 1999, they were 80 % as likely. This conforms with the political generation hypothesis H2 that predicts that older cohorts are less likely to commit acts of non-institutionalised participation. However, the gap between cohorts is declining with respect to the group of active participants.

The level of overall participation outside of organisations correlates highly with the age ratio in each country: the higher the participatory level of a country, the smaller the gap between younger and older people. If we start introducing age-related variables, capturing shared social characteristic cohort and life cycle effects, this relationship

vanishes. Furthermore, measures of old age culture can explain how much passivity a national group of seniors have once the individual-level variables are controlled for (with regard to signing a petition/wearing a badge and protesting). The more older people are valued in a society, the more active older people (*ceteris paribus*) are in that society.

Among the groups of age-related variables, life cycle effects dominate the lower probability of contacting a public official or politician and the probability of boycotting or buying a product for ethical or political reasons. Signing a petition or wearing a badge, as well as protesting, show that half of the difference between age groups is explained by the residual age variable, the other half being explained by a mix of life cycle and cohort effects. Thus, the predicted life cycle and shared social characteristic cohort effects are mostly true. Older people do differ systematically on levels of endowment of predictors of non-institutionalised participation (ambiguous evidence for hypothesis H5). The experience of free democracy at youth did not play a role for any mode, so that this socialisation experience is only of no significance to explain differences between age groups.

Among the conceptual individual variables, three come up regularly. The first is education, a resource that the older generation has less of at its disposal. The second is internal political efficacy, a life cycle resource that makes it more difficult for older people to participate in politics because they have internalised negative societal images about old age. The final variable is employment status. It sometimes supports older people because they have more time to participate and less to be afraid of (such as not being employed and protesting). But it can make older people less likely to participate at

other times, because they have less personal interest in particular public affairs (such as not being self-employed and contacting a public official or politician). From a generational perspective, the gap is closing, but there remains a strong youth bias.

9 The Experience of Older Participants in the English Council Tax Protests in 2004/5

‘We [older people, AG] are becoming more protesting.’

Interviewee J, a 68 year old woman from the Southwest of England, in an interview with the author in November 2005

Non-institutionalised political participation outside of organisations is less common among older than among younger people. Within the English Council Tax protests in 2004/5, however, older people regularly and over some time engaged in various forms of protest behaviour. Therefore, these protesters represent unusual cases according to the model in the last chapter. Interviewing them promises to tell us more about older people’s experience of political protest and why they chose a form of political participation that is uncommon for their age group, but becoming more popular when we look across time. These cases are not necessarily deviant cases that we might be unable to predict. Indeed, we can gather from the interviews that these individuals are protesting because they are rich in resources and motivation, as well as highly mobilised.

This chapter is not an empirical test of an a priori derived hypothesis, but an inductive exploration to enrich the tested model. The findings of the interviews are much more exploratory in nature than the survey findings of the last chapter, mostly because representative sampling was not possible for the interviews. Therefore, the findings represent evidence for the interviewees rather than for a wider population. However, the interviews were carried out with the findings of the survey analysis in mind. That means that questions and structure of the interview are based on a theoretical framework that finds confirmations in the large-N study of the last chapter. From that perspective, the

interviews help us to understand the causal chains that make older people participate and also helps us to further explore resources that are difficult to measure in large-N surveys.

As part of this qualitative in-depth analysis, I will place particular emphasis on the idea of the old age culture of a country influencing participatory behaviour, which I have investigated quantitatively in chapter 8. The theory postulates that the social situation of an individual can shape her preferences both as to the content of participation, and also as to the choice of form of political participation. The social perception of the roles of older people in politics seems to discourage them from being active in non-institutionalised forms of political participation. There remained unexplained variance between older and younger people for mode 3 (signing a petition/wearing a badge) and mode 4 (protesting) in chapter 8. This gap could partially be explained by the old age culture of a country, a measure for which Britain lies more towards the end where older people are highly valued. In other words, Britain appears to be a society where negative images about older people and active political behaviour are not as widespread as in other countries.

By internalising images of politically passive older people, the preferences of older individuals change. The range of political actions they want to pursue narrows down. The importance of stereotypes and images of social groups prevalent in a society has been explored, for example, with regard to women's political participation that tends to be lower on some measures of political participation. One explanation is the internalisation of stereotypes of passivity (Welch 1977: 713). If older individuals are socialised into believing stereotypes about passive older people, this would then also lead to less participation.

In addition to the societal expectations, the last chapter has shown that older people in Britain, compared to younger people, are less likely to protest because they are on average more to the right of the political spectrum, less postmaterialist, more likely to live in rural areas, more religious, feel less internally politically efficacious and are less likely to be trade union/party members. Older people's likelihood to protest is increased by their greater political interest and the fact that they are rarely employed.

All of the interviewees – whose statements form the evidence of this chapter – were active in non-institutionalised forms of behaviour. Some of them were also actively organising the local groups or managing the daily affairs of 'Isitfair', a grassroots protest group that formed over the issue of Council Tax in 2003. Can the interviews tell us something more to enable us to understand protest activities in later life? The interviews cannot show us how the older protesters compare to younger ones because I only interviewed older people. However, I asked them several questions to reflect how their age mattered to their political involvement. I was especially interested to see whether these protesters experience any of the youth bias of protest and the generational trend that we detected in the analysis of the large-N survey. We saw in the over time trend in chapter 8 that older people caught up on measures of non-electoral participation, but also that there remained a sizeable gap between older and younger people.

I will discuss the interview findings around several themes by separating circumstances and factors that are unique to the Council Tax protests from more general results that should hold if tested in different contexts. There are some aspects about the Council Tax protests that are not surprising in the slightest. If you take away growing chunks of a fixed disposable income, individuals will be mobilised to do something

about it because their personal material outcome is diminished. If activists further see the system that is responsible for their shrinking share as unfair, the mobilisation potential is even higher. This is because the expressive benefit from the participatory act increases. When asked about their main motivation to become active, eight respondents indicated that they were personally put into difficulties because of the rises in Council Tax. 13 out of 22 described the whole system as unfair or unjust. Only four mentioned their dissatisfaction with the level of services, compared to the money they have to pay. We would expect similar motivation from younger people on a small income. But there are a range of factors and circumstances that make older people different from younger people and influence their protest behaviour, such as their richer political experience and images of old age.

The chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part (sections 1 – 3), I explain the background to the Council Tax protests, describe the sampling procedure and the social characteristics of the sample. In the second part (sections 4 – 9), I look at the factors of influence that the theoretical model suggests: resources/motivation at old age (history of political engagement, retirement, ill health, experience of ageism and stereotypes, and senior identity); mobilisation/opportunities at old age; and the generational change in protesting from the point-of-view of older people.

9.1 Explaining the case context

The Council Tax is a unique system of local finance in Britain (England, Wales and Scotland). It is the only tax that a local council can raise, but makes up only about 25 % of local budgets. Local authorities are not entirely free to set the tax, but sometimes face a cap given by national government. Council Tax has to be paid by the residents of a

property unit (which can be a whole house or just one flat in a house) to the local government authority. The amount of the Council Tax depends on the value of the property that was assessed in 1991 to belong to one out of eight or nine bands. If the occupants of the unit receive Council Tax benefit or are full-time students, they are totally or partially exempt from the tax. A person who is aged 65 or older and living on her/his own gets a discount of 25 %. The tax does not affect the poorest because they are exempt as recipients of welfare benefits. The tax burden per person is fixed regardless of income for those who do not receive Council Tax benefit. Thus, for those who have to pay, Council Tax is a de-facto regressive tax that places a heavier burden on those with a small fixed income, such as recipients of the state pension, and those who co-habit with a small number of people, such as couples or widowers.

This tax is unusual because its value base is the property and not income or residency. The value of the property is based on a valuation in 1991 and will be adjusted to the rises in value due to the property boom in the 1990s and early 2000s after the next General Election in 2009/2010 (in England and Scotland). In Wales, the revaluation took place in 2003 and led to a wide scale upgrade of properties moving up one band, which increased the tax burden for residents. Between 1993 and 2003, the average Council Tax in England rose 95 % while public pensions and prices (across Britain) only rose 30 % and earnings 50 %. The 2003 Council Tax increase in England of 13 % was the biggest ever seen (Help the Aged 2005: 4).

Since many interviewees made references to earlier finance systems, it is helpful to put the Council Tax into historical context. The present Council Tax system is a successor to the Community Charge, which was often called the poll tax and which was

in place between 1989 (Scotland)/ 1990 (England and Wales) and 1992. The Community Charge had followed a rates system which levied tax depending on the rental value of the property. The poll tax was a per-head tax, counting the residents of a property rather than being based on the property value. There was widespread opposition against the poll tax and its annual rises. It led to massive occurrences (estimated 18 million people) of non-payment in 1990. The protests culminated in violent street demonstrations (the 'poll tax riots'), the biggest of which was a rally of 200,000 protesters in London in March 1990. The governing Conservatives decided to abandon the Community Charge after Margaret Thatcher, a staunch supporter of the tax, resigned in late 1990.

The Council Tax protests under study here include all those activities that were committed in England from January 2004 to October 2005 to express discontent either with the rises in Council Tax or with the system as such. The activities include signing a petition, collecting signatures for a petition, writing letters to councillors and MPs, legal and illegal demonstrations and acts of civil disobedience such as withholding parts of one's Council Tax bill. Central, national occurrences of these Council Tax protests were two street marches in London, one at Trafalgar Square on 17 January 2004 and one on Whitehall on 2 October 2004. The January march attracted approximately 2,000 – 3,000 protesters, and its leaders gave a petition of about 40,000 signatures to No 10 Downing Street (Tapper 2004; Wills 2004). At the October rally, a few hundred protesters handed over another petition with 60,000 signatures (Danks 2004; Independent on Sunday 2004). Locally, a plethora of demonstrations took place, typically protests in front of county halls. There were also protests in Wales and Scotland, but they were not as widespread as in England and will be excluded from further analysis here.

Protests of older people are not a new phenomenon. Historically, England saw several periods of senior protests. Pension reforms were part of the public debate in the late 1930s, and the National Association of Old Age Pensions Associations was formed in 1938. It mobilised its members to demonstrate, to write petitions to ministers and to lobby members of Parliament (Blaikie in Thane 2000: 331-2). Pensioner organisations after World War II always used their members as a political leverage to make themselves heard in Westminster. The large national organisations declined, however, in the 1980s due to the increasing availability of local funding for local pensioners groups (Pratt 1993: 143). It is difficult to assess to what extent the protest activities of members made a difference in terms of impact. But it is clear that the organisation of pensioners to induce them into participation has a historical tradition.

The Council Tax protests are similar to these past senior protests as the main participants are pensioners. However, their main issue is not only of concern to older people, but affects people from all age groups. For example, those young families with low incomes who are not exempt are also heavily affected by rises in the Council Tax. In theoretical terms, pensioners share similar concerns about Council Tax with other groups due to a similar social situation (i.e., low level of income).

9.2 The Social profile of interviewees

The Council Tax protests were concerted by a group called 'Isitfair'. It is a campaigning organisation that claims to be non-partisan. It has numerous fully and partially affiliated local pensioners groups across England. Anecdotal evidence from the interviews suggests that there might be about 120 of them, varying significantly in size and activity levels. Isitfair is a loose organisation that does not have a membership system and

finances itself purely from donations. Local groups often started independently and joined the Isitfair campaign in late 2003.

As Isitfair does not have a full list of all individual members who were active in protest activities, there was no population frame from which to sample. Therefore, I decided for convenience sampling to try to reach a minimum number of 20 interviewees, who were as diverse as possible (as to residence and involvement in local group), by way of recommendation (snowball principle). Recall from chapter 4 that I contacted the main Isitfair organisation, and all local groups that are connected to Isitfair according to the Isitfair website, explaining my research and its non-commercial purpose. I also posted my project on the Isitfair internet news forum, asking for volunteers. The sample that I interviewed consisted of people who had been recommended by the main organisers as potentially willing to be interviewed and further recommendations by this first group. In total, I interviewed 22 older people between 15 November and 7 December 2005. The interview guide with a list of questions, briefing and de-briefing procedures can be found in the appendix 11.11. My original notes (anonymised) are on the data CD-Rom.

There are three potential major sources of bias in the sample compared to a representative one. Many interviewees were heavily involved in organising local groups, i.e. they showed high levels of participation; they were known to be willing to talk about their experiences by those who recommended them; and were personally known to local or even national group leaders. Finally, it is plausible to assume that the recommended individuals shared opinions with those who recommended them. However, the actual

opinions about Council Tax are only secondary in this chapter because the experience of political protest as such stands in the foreground.

All respondents were 60 and older. The minimum age was 60, the maximum 82 and the mean 72. Two respondents were between 60 and 65 years old, six between 66 and 70, eight between 71 and 75 and six between 76 and 82. Five respondents were women, 17 were men. Eight respondents left school at the age of 16 or younger; 12 at a higher age (two unknown). Two interviewees had graduated from university. Most respondents' last jobs were white-collar jobs. Two respondents worked in skilled, manual professions, one in a non-skilled manual position. Apart from one respondent who still engaged in freelance work, all respondents older than 64 were retired.

The places of residence of the respondents can be divided into three regions: the Southeast with four respondents (Surrey, West Sussex), the Southwest with 15 respondents (Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Somerset) and 'Other' with three respondents (Essex, London, Yorkshire). Of the retired interviewees, all but one received an occupational pension next to their state pension (unknown in two cases).

Overall, most interviewees are roughly in the Third Age that is commonly assumed to be between 50 and 75 (Walker and Maltby 1997: 17). It is this age group, the young-old, that is less likely to be frail, compared to the later Fourth Age, the old-old. Furthermore, the socio-economic profile suggests that the respondents are predominantly middle class: white collar, medium range of education and not poor. Geographically, the large number of interviewees from the Southwest and Southeast mirrors the high level of activities of local pensioners' groups in those regions. No doubt

this is down to the high rises in Council Tax in these areas, and their high population of older residents.

Table 9-1: Overview of English respondents by ID letter, gender, age and wider region

ID	Gender	Age
Southeast (Surrey, West Sussex)		
A	Male	71
B	Male	74
C	Male	74
D	Male	76
Southwest (Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Somerset)		
E	Male	60
F	Male	60
G	Female	67
H	Male	69
I	Female	70
J	Female	68
K	Female	70
L	Male	74
M	Male	71
N	Male	73
O	Male	72
P	Male	76
Q	Male	78
R	Female	77
S	Male	82
Other (Essex, London, Yorkshire)		
T	Male	68
U	Male	74
V	Male	76

Table 9-1 shows an overview of all respondents. In order to ensure anonymity, respondents are referred to by letters and their region of residence is very wide. Now I will discuss the interview findings around several themes by separating circumstances and factors that are unique to the Council Tax protests from more general findings that should hold if tested in different contexts.

9.3 Resources and motivation to protest at old age

Political engagement prior to Council Tax protests

One pool of resources that older people can draw upon is experience of the political actions in question. For example, prior knowledge of a street demonstration makes it easier to decide for or against it. This is because you know what it will be like, including the practicalities, like taking something to drink and to eat. In general, most (14) respondents had never demonstrated before the Council Tax street marches. Another five had demonstrated once before, some a few years, others a few decades before the Council Tax protests. These previous demonstrations included: the poll tax protests in 1990 (E), a demonstration for gay rights in 1980s (K, N), a demonstration against a development scheme in a nature reserve in the 1980s (L), and a trade union strike in the 1960s (U). The other four had been more regularly involved in demonstrations. Interviewee I had been a professional union official for a few years and had been active in protest politics during that time. Respondent S had first demonstrated against the British accession to the European Community at the beginning of the 1970s and had been active in the Referendum and UKIP parties since, also going to their street rallies. Respondent Q had started regular protests ten years ago, campaigning for the installation of a local council.

However, apart from two respondents, all had been involved in some kind of political participation other than street demonstrations or voting, before the Council Tax issue. Seven (B, E, H, L, Q, S, U) had been party members at some points in their lives. Not surprisingly, only the UKIP member was still a party member at the times of the protests. The protests – as they were portrayed in the press – were a reaction to disenchantment with the main political parties who were seen as responsible for the Council Tax system and its double-digit rises.

The most common form of participation, other than voting, had been contacting a public official or MP prior to the Council Tax protests. 18 respondents had engaged in some kind of political letter-writing prior to 2004. Three of those had written on the issue of Council Tax (D, F, S) before they joined the activities of the local group. I asked the respondents whether they had been active on any other issue since the beginning of their commitment on the Council Tax. 15 Interviewees reported no other political engagement. Two respondents (A, G) had participated in one-off actions on the issue of housing for older people and as a reaction to a party politician's public utterance that pensioners should sit back and wait to see what the government could do for them.⁴³ Four respondents (D, M, Q, S) were regularly engaged on other issues.

In sum, the reported experience of previous political engagement show that the interviewees predominantly belonged to the pool of politically interested citizens, who at a younger age had not been very active, but who demonstrated the occasional motivation and willingness to engage in political activity. So, learning from repeated experience

⁴³ Respondent G had watched a party politician make such a statement on TV. She publicly confronted that politician during a press conference with that statement.

along the logic of individual ageing proved to be important for voting participation, but is less important here. The lack of experience of street demonstrations can probably be explained with regard to the fact that protesting grew in popularity while the interviewees got older. It would have been unusual for them to have engaged in protest at a young age, as protests had been uncommon in the 1950s and early 1960s.

The onset of political activity varies, but is predominantly found from the age of 40 onwards. Four respondents (C, P, T, V) got active for the first time in the Council Tax protests. Another three (B, D, G) became active shortly before or after their retirement. Ten (A, E, F, K, L, N, O, Q, R, S) began their political engagement in their forties or fifties. Only four (I, J, M, U) reported a first political activity other than voting in their twenties or thirties. Some respondents showed uncertainty about actual dates, but were able to identify the decade of their lives by aligning the political events to their personal circumstances of the time. It could be, however, that these recollections are not equally correct and that events longer in the past, for instance, were systematically discounted. Nevertheless, most respondents mirror the image of an apolitical first half of life. The respondents gave their impression on the reasons for this when being asked about the impact of retirement (see next section).

In these interviews, it was clear that these older people could draw on a history of political interest and non-electoral participation when they became active on the issue of Council Tax. Even if most of them had been unfamiliar with street demonstrations, their personal experience of other political activities provided a potential resource for them.

Voting history

It is illuminating to look at the protesters' voting history, party identification and last voting decision at the last General Election in May 2005. This allows us to see to what extent their electoral experiences and behaviours are related to non-voting activities. All 22 interviewees had voted in that election. None of them voted for Labour, nine voted for the Lib Dems, eight for the Conservatives, one candidate for himself as he stood as an independent, and one for UKIIP (three interviewees did vote, but declined to disclose whom they had voted for). It is not surprising that none of these Council Tax protesters voted for Labour. Many respondents live in rural constituencies where the Labour candidate is often unlikely to win. In addition, the Council Tax protests are aimed at Labour that has been in power for a few years and is seen as complacent on the Council Tax issue by the protesters.

Very few interviewees had a strong sense of party identification: only three indicated a long-term preference for the Lib Dems, one for Conservative, one for Labour and one for UKIP. Some expressed their general dissatisfaction with all major political parties. For example, interviewee F would like to have seen 'none of the above' as an option on the ballot and told me that he had deliberately spoilt his ballot a few times in the past. Respondent N voted for what he called 'protest' parties, the Greens and UKIP, in local elections. Other respondents described their decision to vote for some of the main parties as a choice for the least evil rather than one out of conviction.

Some respondents also stated not to have voted in earlier elections, although the general picture was one of regular voting in this group. Many respondents switched votes many times in their lives. These pieces of evidence seem to suggest that these

protesters belong to the group of volatile rather than strongly identifying voters. Most of them are prepared to cast their vote differently at each election. The fact that some of the irregular voters had voted in the last election could be due to the mobilising factor of protest participation as well as the general tendency to vote among older people (see chapter 6). In line with the findings of chapter 7, these older interviewees in 2005 were not strongly captured by any early socialisation effects that we probably would have found if we had interviewed older people in the 1960s.

In the 2005 General Election, the three main political parties campaigned on different positions as to the future of Council Tax (see their respective election manifestoes Kimber 2006). Thus, it was like a natural experiment to see how the stance on this policy would influence the voting decision. Labour offered a one-off discount of £ 200 in 2005 for people over 65 who paid Council Tax. The Conservatives promised to halve the Council Tax permanently for people over 65. The Liberal Democrats promised to abolish the system of Council Tax altogether and to introduce a local income tax based on the ability to pay. That system would – according to the Liberal Democratic manifesto – make 8 out of 10 pensioners better off and free 6 million pensioners from paying anything at all. In contrast to Labour and the Conservatives, the abolition of the Council Tax system and its replacement was given more emphasis in the manifesto of the Lib Dems, putting the issue into the context of a strategy to have fairer taxes. The official standpoint of the Isitfair group, the umbrella organisation for many of the local protest groups, was that they welcomed the Lib Dems' suggestion, but would prefer a rise in general taxation to pay for local expenses (Isitfair 2005).

Since the main parties provided some choice on the (for this group at least) salient issue of Council Tax, I asked a few questions concerning the reasons of their choice for or against the Liberal Democrats. My intention was to see whether this group of protesters was prepared to cast their vote on this issue and thus to combine their protesting objectives with the objectives of their voting participation. Out of the nine Liberal Democratic voters, four (A, M, N, P) indicated that the proposed abolition of the Council Tax had been their major reason to vote for the Lib Dems. Another three (G, J, U) put the issue further down their list of voting issues, and two stated that this had not been an issue when they had taken their decision to vote for the Liberal Democrats. Within the group of voters who had not voted for the Liberal Democrats, two stated that they liked the Liberal-Democratic proposal on Council Tax, but did not like the party for other reasons, such as their pro-European stance (S) or their weak leader Charles Kennedy (T). Three (F, Q, V) had concerns about the suitability of the alternative system of local income tax, such as it not being transparent enough, or the administrative costs of it being too high (the latter being one of the reasons Isitfair puts officially forward against the proposal). One Conservative voter thought that the Lib Dems were too small to vote for and liked the Conservative proposal to scrap 50 % of the Council Tax bill for pensioners. The answers suggest that this group of pensioners is – on the whole - prepared to cast their vote on the issue of Council Tax. To some extent, this is not surprising because almost by definition, Council Tax protesters care immensely about Council Tax. This also means that the protesters are willing to use the path of party politics to advance their interests despite their apparent disenchantment with political parties.

In sum, the selected group of interviewees are not that much different from other voters in the country. They might be more sceptical and vote-switching than the average voter, but their choices are within the normal confines of the electoral process. It is reasonable to assume that the protest activities have educated these activists in terms of party positions on the Council Tax and related matters of local and national finance. Therefore, their voting behaviour has been influenced to be critical of all party proposals in General Elections. In contrast to younger voters, these people are disenchanted with all major parties because of a long-term memory. For example, one respondent assessed Labour with reference to the series of strikes in the 1970s under the Callaghan government. Even if one party did everything right from the perspective of these voters, such scepticism is likely to remain in the future. The deep disenchantment with political parties is definitely another motivational factor to seek to address the issue via the protest group.

Retirement

Retirement is a clear source of resources for older people making it easier for them to engage in acts of political participation. Retirement means more time to think about political issues, more time to become active on political issues, no (or less) responsibility to raise a family or earn money, and the freedom to express one's opinion without having to respect one's role as an employee. Also, the discrepancy between what respondents expected from retirement and their experienced reality in terms of material well-being seems to be an important motivational factor.

Retired respondents were asked to what extent retirement had made a difference on their ability to be politically active. Three interviewees (G, K, R) reported that there

was no difference. However, one of them was a housewife before she started drawing state pension. For another the lack of any occupational pension suggests that she did not have a full employment history. The third had a job that allowed her to work half-days from home. All other 15 respondents who were asked the question told me that retirement had given them more time. Some respondents noted a difference between having more time to think about issues that they had not been concerned about when still working, and having time to actually engage in activities that they are interested in, such as political actions. One interviewee (H) mentioned the stressful nature of his previous job and his personal inability to 'sit still'. He saw his high-level of engagement within the Council Tax protests as a means to keep himself busy. Another respondent (M) described the vacuum that retirement had left and explained that he sought to fill with his activity in the pensioners group.

Some respondents (C, U) stressed the nuisance that they felt having to become active on the issue of Council Tax; they would have preferred not to have had to get politically involved. One respondent (U) explained that his involvement on the issue of Council Tax prevented him from working on his wood work in his garage, a typical example of opportunity costs of political participation. Many respondents emphasised that retirement had freed them from responsibility in financial terms and, at a higher age, from the responsibility of raising a family. Respondent S summed this notion up by saying that younger people 'have ties that we [pensioners] don't have.'

Respondent J also told me that she felt not to have been in a position to be politically active while she had still been in employment because it would have caused problems in her job. By contrast in retirement, she felt she had nothing to lose. Some of

the interviewees had withheld parts of their Council Tax and only paid the outstanding sum in pennies once ordered by court. Typically, they delivered the pile of pennies to the local authority and tilted the bag over in the presence of press photographers. Interviewee S described the embarrassment that this spectacle caused to his spouse and children and highlighted at the same time that he was not afraid of these social repercussions any longer. The widespread willingness to commit civil disobedience, which is also the policy of Isitfair, seems to suggest that many of these pensioners take a position of 'nothing to lose', a position that suggests a low estimate of personal risk. The reason could be that older mobilised people are just less fearful of potential repercussions because they are no longer dependent, for example, on employers to make a living. Also, individuals can control their own actions, but not that of elected politicians, an explanation that would also account for this finding.

Respondent D described his motivation to protest from his disappointment with his financial situation. He had thought he would be comfortable in retirement and know his income for the rest of his life. But instead he felt that 'we [the pensioners] are being wronged every day.' He judged that pensioners just wanted their pension income and to live a quiet life. Respondent N said that in post-war Britain you had been expected to 'take your silver bloc' at the age of 65 and 'sit down'.

Respondent G thought that people who worked hard to accumulate their pension credits were treated unfairly because part of their pensions were taken away through Council Tax. According to interviewee Q, his generation was punished for being 'thrifty', as people on benefits were not affected by Council Tax. Respondent C described that since his retirement ten years ago his whole outlook on personal finances

had changed. The income was now fixed and costs could still vary: 'When you are retired, it is a different ball game.'

Respondent E said that he found it 'disgusting' that pensioners had to protest to secure their income. Respondent O held that he should not have to be in a position to protest and should not have to worry about where the money comes from. Respondent M raised the issue that retirement should allow people to stand back from the struggles of life, especially if they had been through World War II and experienced the post-war period of hardship. According to sociological studies, this experience of World War II typically shapes that British generation in many regards (see Vincent 2005).

Respondent G felt that the impingement of Council Tax on pensioner income was aggravated by the fact that older people find it difficult to take up a job to earn more money. Respondent L expressed along similar lines that ageism in employment made it more difficult for older people to raise extra cash, something that younger people could easily do.

Retirement plays an important role for these protesters. It not only gives them time to think and act, but it also frees them from job responsibility. The mismatch between their anticipated, financial retirement situation and the social situation they were actually experiencing caused widespread anger. They were expecting a time free from material worries, an expectation that was threatened by the Council Tax system. Thus, the theoretical framework might need to be refined. It is not the direct experience of a social situation that creates political preferences, but the comparison of expectations with the actual experience. This kind of discrepancy between what retirement feels like and what had been expected of it is likely to occur on various dimensions in the near

future for the current older generation. The British as well as other European welfare states are partially re-cast at the moment. Many welfare programmes have the pensioners' group as its main beneficiaries; the most widespread programmes are probably public pensions, social care and health care. If changes to these programmes affect pensioners in a way that they had not anticipated, this is likely to be as much a motivating factor as is the Council Tax. These findings also cast further light on the quantitative results. Employment was also seen as a factor not conducive to protesting in the street. Retirement is a social situation that is shared by many individuals. If they share expectations about it (and thus certain preferences, like the expectation not to worry about material endowment), they can also share similar disappointment. This can then motivate all of them to act together.

Ill health and the choice of political action

Ill health can – as I originally hypothesised – decrease the resources and motivation of older people to engage in political activities. It proved, however, to be insignificant in the quantitative analysis. In contrast to younger age groups, ill health is much more of a problem for older people due to the physical effects of ageing and the accumulative effects of unhealthy lifestyles. I was interested to see in what respect these older protesters or other people in their group were hampered by their health in engaging in political participation. The group of interviewees is probably relatively fit in comparison to an average group of British older people because one of the sampling requirements was engagement in street protests.

I asked the interviewees to compare their situation now with the situation their parents were in when they were older and whether they thought it was easier, more

difficult or not different for them today to engage in political protest. Respondent T noted that his generation today was living much longer and that his parents had already been old in their 50s. Other respondents judged along similar lines.

Although today's older people live longer and are healthy for longer, ill health plays a role. Several respondents reported that they had to give up going to a street march or group meetings because they were less mobile due to new, artificial hips or other health problems. However, they substituted their going out by concentrating on writing letters. This activity with low physical requirements was also expected from other older people who were not able to protest in the streets by respondents K, L and R. Some respondents also reported protesters in wheel chairs and crutches at street demonstrations who were being helped by others, so that physical disabilities were dealt with as much as possible. One group leader (Q) provides a monthly newsletter to cater for the needs of the housebound members of his group.

Respondents U and M who were very active in organising local groups told me how ill health can be a problem in recruiting enough older protesters who do not want to stand outside for long periods of time. Also, ill health is an inherent problem for older people's political organisations. If a leading volunteer has to stop activities due to ill health, the organisation suffers a sudden weakening disruption of its organisational life.

9.4 The experience of ageism and images about old age and protest

The last chapter showed that the culture of old age plays a limited but discernible role in discouraging older people from political participation. The more older people were on average valued in a society, the less residual variation between age groups there was for

protesting in the streets, signing a petition or wearing a badge, *ceteris paribus*. However, since all interviewees had been active, they were certainly not discouraged by ageist stereotypes, but might at least have experienced some of these pressures during their participation. We have already seen some images of old age in some of the perceptions of what retirement should look like, namely a role model of a politically passive older person who should live off the pension and keep quiet. I wanted to venture deeper into that territory and asked a series of five questions to capture any stereotypes that the respondents might feel or have been confronted with:

1. In the press coverage of the street demonstrations in London, journalists highlighted the higher age of protesters. They wrote with an undertone of surprise about the higher age of protesters; for example, they wrote about the ‘grey army that is marching’. Can you understand why they should be surprised?
2. Do you think it is unusual to protest at your age?
3. How did your friends, family and neighbours react when they heard about your protest involvement? Did younger people react differently?
4. FOR FIRST TIME PROTESTERS: When you were at the protests, did you feel awkward in any way because of your age?
5. Were there people who let you understand that you should not have marched in the streets because you are too old?

The last question, which is certainly the most direct one, only received negating answers. Respondent C, however, added that he looked very young, so that that might have been the reason why he had not received these kinds of comments. In other words, he expected these comments could come if someone looks ‘old’, which probably means

frail, sick or wrinkly. However, it could be that stereotypes are more subtle and seen as socially inappropriate to utter. Question 4 was also negated (when it was asked). Some respondents highlighted that the whole group of protesters had been older, so that there was a feeling of solidarity, to which I will come back.

The answers to question 3 concerned a whole variety of reactions by people in the immediate environment of the respondents. Most respondents reported a supportive environment and no differences in the reactions between younger and older people in their immediate environment. A few respondents (O, S) had encountered less interest among younger people.

Respondent R who was 77 years old and primarily engaged in letter-writing without regular group involvement reported that some of the other older people in her environment asked her: 'Why do you bother at your age?' They let her know that these activities were a waste of time. Whereas this is a point of criticism directed to the impact of letter writing to politicians and public officials, the addition of 'at your age' is very interesting. It suggests that – in some of her peers' opinions – she should even be less willing to use this form of participation because (a) she should know better at her age, (b) she should be aware of the limited lifespan that she still has, or (c) she should not be as active at her age. Respondent J reported that some younger people still in work were thankful because the pensioners were putting in the time that they did not have for a cause that they supported.

In answers to question 1 about the press coverage, some respondents (F, H, M, P) identified the way the press covered the marches as sensationalist journalism. Respondents H, F and P were even annoyed because of the way that the media

represented their marches and objectives because the Council Tax affected everybody and the marches also attracted some younger people. Others perceived the fact that it was older people who were of most interest to the public because this group had not been known to be protesting before (D, I, J, K, L, N, S). Protester K described how journalists thought that older people 'have lost it, but they actually haven't'. Respondent L emphasised that he thought pictures with older protesters sold well. In sum for that question 1, some respondents were aware of the fact that older protesters are more interesting to newspapers than younger protesters because (a) they are unlikely to protest and have been known not to be protesting so far, or (b) older people are perceived not to be in a position to protest. Question 2 asked the direct question of whether it was unusual to protest at the respondent's age.

The majority of respondents said that it was unusual, but gave rather different shades to their answers. Many described the overall change towards protest becoming more common. I will come back to these answers in section 9.7 about generational and life cycle changes. Here, I will only consider answers that allow us to draw conclusions about underlying images and stereotypes about older people and protest. Two respondents (M, O) said it was unusual because retirees should not be in a position where they have to protest. Interviewee K stressed that people at their age can often not be bothered about getting involved. Respondent A reported to have seen a 92 year-old female protester, the sight of whom he described as inspiring. The first two respondents emphasised a clash between their image of retirement and old age on the one hand and the protesting situation they were in on the other. In an ideal world, they as pensioners *ought not* to be protesting. Their underlying logic was founded on the perception that

retirees had earned their right *not* to protest through their hard effort in working life. As a consequence, protest was perceived as something like a last resort and not as a 'regular' political activity.

All in all, the interviews show the existence of some images about old age and politics. Some respondents had internalised these themselves, other respondents encountered them in their environment. Negative images about old age and protest imply that you should not engage in protest activities because: (a) you should know better about the unlikely impact of your engagement; (b) you should not waste the last part of your life with these activities; (c) you should generally not be as active politically; and (d) you should not be in a position where you have to protest. One protester described the inspiration that he drew from seeing a 90+ year old protester. This can be interpreted as a personal experience that defies internalised pre-conceptions about old age and passivity.

Obviously, the protesters were not held back by these images and stereotypes about old age and political behaviour. However, seen together with the quantitative findings from the last chapter, we can suggest that images about the social roles of older people might prevent them – on average – from participating in these non-institutionalised forms of political participation. The findings about expectations, stereotypes and images vis-à-vis politics and old age give substance to the quantitative measure of old age culture as well as to the importance of internal political efficacy that was measured in the last chapter. Given that Britain scored relatively low on the various measures of old age culture in chapter 8, negative stereotypes about old age and politics might be more de-capacitating for older people in other countries.

9.5 The lack of a common senior identity

A common identity is a powerful motivating force in group politics (Abrams and Hogg 2001; Miller et al. 1981). I was interested in whether the protesters had any feelings about a common senior or pensioner identity or whether they had any feeling of solidarity with their peers. The findings confirm the results of earlier studies (Day 1990): identity and solidarity are detectable with some individuals, but are not very common among the group of interviewees as a whole.

At different parts of the interview, I asked questions about the experience of marching together with a group of older people and whether the respondents felt motivation to engage in protest while knowing that there are other older people who are unable to participate because they are ill or do not have the minimal, monetary resources to be active. Experiencing the group event with many other, older people did create some feeling of a common bond for some, albeit in different variations, and not for all. For four respondents (B, C, D, Q), the age of the other protesters did not matter at all. For some, it was important to see that they were not alone in their protest and that there are other people who care about the same issues (I, O, R), rather than there were other people of the same age group. Interviewee A put emphasis on the common experience of a *first* street demonstration that many protesters shared, like an experience of political initiation. This experience is directly linked to that generation of older people because their cohort as a whole is less likely to have protested at a younger age.

Some respondents complained that there were so few young people at the demonstrations in London (F, M, P, V). By contrast, respondent S saw it as a driving

factor to be active on behalf of younger people who had to work. One respondent highlighted the satisfaction to have marched with younger people (I).

Two respondents mentioned feelings of solidarity with other pensioners (L, V) on the march. One respondent (K) said that it was important for them as older people to protest because ‘they [mainstream party politicians, AG] think, because we are old, we are not able to do these things and protest’. She would have liked to see even more older people on the marches. Respondent J argued along similar lines that it was important for older people to come together, not only on the issue of Council Tax, but also on others that Isitfair was looking into (e.g. pensions).

The majority of interviewees were not conscious about their own age or the age of the other pensioners. Only two hinted at the fact that their protest should actually concentrate on engaging a broad group of older people. The interest to gain support among *younger* people for their cause prevailed in a majority of respondents. One respondent described the support that older people, who are rich in time, could give to younger people. After all, younger people are similarly affected by the Council Tax, but do not have the time to protest. This is an interesting notion of inter-generational solidarity and stands in contrast to a political group identity that is based on an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ dichotomy.

Besides the potential solidarity with fellow older protesters, the interviewees could also experience feelings for the vulnerable sub-group of older people who are unable to engage in protest activities. The experiences of the interviewees can be classified into three groups. Eight respondents (F, H, K, O, L, N, R) said that knowing about this vulnerable group did not have any impact on their own behaviour. They

expressed feelings of sympathy and pity, but no feelings of responsibility. Four alluded to the substitution of protest in the streets by letter- writing that is open to anyone immobile and poor in resources. Respondent A described that some people used their age as an excuse not to become active. Respondent N also highlighted that some people in wheelchairs and with crutches made it to the protests nevertheless. Interviewee H expressed his admiration for disabled older people who joined them despite their disability.

The second group (B, C, T) drew motivation from the fact that they were themselves still physically active enough to engage in all kinds of protest activities, whilst knowing about other, vulnerable seniors.

The last group (E, G, I, J, M, P, Q, S, U) felt that the current system of Council Tax was especially unjust to this vulnerable group and felt responsibility to be active on their behalf. These protesters described their feelings towards vulnerable pensioners with reference to justice and responsibility. Furthermore, interviewee U thought that it was a good feeling to have this group of people behind them when protesting.

In sum, it would be hard to speak of a common identity of older people or pensioners among the group of respondents. Some of them draw some motivation from the knowledge of vulnerable other people in their situation. These other people are defined by illness and inability rather than by age or by the fact that they receive pensions.

9.6 Mobilisation and opportunities for older protesters

So far, we have dealt with resources and motivation for participation. But what does the mobilisation or opportunities side of the equation look like for these older protesters? The evidence of the interviews seems to suggest that local organisations that are run by retirees can mobilise other retirees into protest activities, by providing them with information, setting up transport facilities and by representing role models. In other words, older people can create further participation opportunities for other older people who might otherwise have found it difficult to engage in any kind of protest activities.

The respondents predominantly live in rural areas with patchy public transport. Most of them benefited from buses that had been organised by local groups of the Isitfair family. Others reported to have used their own car to attend local or London demonstrations. The organisation plays an important role to overcome the transport problem for these rural dwellers. This fact, as such, would not be different for younger protesters, although access to a motor vehicle is more widespread among younger people (Age Concern England 2006a).

However, a difference exists in the volunteer structure of the local Isitfair groups. Those respondents who are local group leaders were all retirees themselves. Furthermore, it is reasonable to assume that the whole Isitfair organisational structure rests on the shoulder of retired people. The pool of retirees who can potentially be active in local groups can increase the mobilisation potential for those older protesters who have difficulties in attending street rallies.

Many respondents had individually been active on the issue of Council Tax before they joined their local pensioners groups. As single individuals, they had not been

able to have much of an impact. Once the Isitfair campaign kicked off, most importantly through press coverage of the engagement of Christine Melsom, their national leader, the isolated individuals were able to get into contact with each other locally. They could then set up local support networks for those who lived away from where demonstrations took place, and for those who could not leave their homes, but could write letters. The pool of homebound older people can be used by local senior groups because they can provide them with the information they need in order to write effective letters to newspapers, MPs, and councils. Local groups can also co-ordinate the work of these 'isolated' individuals, so that a meta-community of older protesters arises.

A further mobilisation potential comes from the role models of local and national leaders who are older themselves. If we assume that images about older people being less active in politics can decrease the likelihood of some people to participate, the threshold will probably become lower if they see other older people being active. Respondent M, for example, spoke very fondly of Albert Venison, the 80 year old group leader of the Devon Pensioners Action Forum, and the achievement at his age that brought him two awards and an invitation to a reception at No 10 Downing Street. Another example is the admiration of respondent A for the 92 year old protester.

It is interesting to note that these examples were given from the area of protest politics. No respondent mentioned older career politicians as a motivating source. For example, some of the then-leading British party figures were 60 or older, such as Michael Howard or Sir Menzies Campbell (both born in 1941). A reason could be that these politicians aged while they were engaging in politics whereas the older protesters were old when they started that protest activity. The meaning of older role models and

senior group activities has not been captured in the general survey, but could if a specifically designed survey was carried out.

9.7 A new generation of protesting older people

We have seen in the last chapter that the gap between older and younger protesters is shrinking with regard to non-electoral participation. The last chapter has also shown that older people are less likely to protest, across all countries and controlling for all resources and mobilisation factors. I asked protesters: (a) whether they thought it was unusual to protest at their age; (b) how they felt that their own situation had changed over their lifetime as to protest opportunities; (c) to compare their situation now with the situation their parents had been in at the same age and; (d) to assess whether they thought that protesting had gotten easier, more difficult or had remained similar.

Most interviewees thought that they were in a better position today as older protesters than their parents when they had been at the same age.⁴⁴ There were four reasons given why their parents had been unlikely to protest at old age. Firstly, respondents O and U thought that there had been no need to protest back then. Respondent E maintained that it was Margaret Thatcher who was responsible for many things to protest about. Secondly, their parents' generation had had different attitudes. Their parents had been more deferential (A) or had had respect for authority (Q). Thirdly, their parents' generation were pre-occupied with re-building the country (M). Fourthly, demonstrations were very rare (P), or people beyond 40 were unlikely to take part in them (N).

⁴⁴ Some respondents seemingly had problems with differentiating between the time their parents had been old (in the 1970s) and their own youth at home with their parents (in the 1950s).

Most interviewees judged their own situation today to be more conducive to protest. Interviewee J summed this notion up by stating about her age group: 'We are becoming more protesting.' She described that older people are not afraid any longer and quoted the involvement of pensioners in the poll tax demonstrations. Protest had become 'part of political life today' (P). Interviewee K also thought that protesting was much more acceptable now. By contrast, respondent H held that the facilities to protest had remained the same, but that pensioners today are faced - for the first time – with the need to engage in protest. Interviewee C also thought that protest was easier, but that the impact of a single protest activity had become less because there were so many of them. The availability of groups for all kinds of political interests can ensure that there are channels of political participation for everybody's interests (L).

Some respondents (B, I, L) thought that protests were facilitated by the more widespread availability of free information and means of mass communication. These could ensure that older people can make each other aware of issues (I). Respondent M highlighted that the availability of more and freer TV channels as well as the citizen-friendly Freedom of Information Act 'raised the political temperature' that was conducive to political protest.

Moreover, older people have of a richer variety of resources at their disposition now, compared to their parents. They include: better health because of better medical treatment (K, L), longer lives (T, U) and more material resources like money or a car (S, U). Respondent T described that his parents had already been 'old' in their fifties, by which he probably meant frail.

Finally, there were three respondents who thought that protesting had partially become more difficult. They felt they lived in a more 'dirigiste' police state and were concerned about the freedom of political expression after the passage of anti-terror legislation and expanded police powers (D, F, T). Despite the changes towards making protests easier for older people, some respondents still held the belief that protesting remained unusual for older people.

Overall, the respondents reiterate the widely confirmed notion that protesting is becoming more common in contemporary liberal democracies. It is important to stress the impact of better means of mass communication for older people who live in isolated circumstances and might be homebound. The group of interviewees certainly confirm the generational trend towards more non-institutionalised participation. They indicated better means of transport and communication, and a change in the political process (protest activities generally more common) as reasons for this.

9.8 Political implications

The evidence seems to suggest the advent of a new generation of older people who feel motivated to engage in protest and have the resources and opportunities to do so. The nature of their resources suggests that there is potentially a whole new reservoir of older retirees who are ready to protest if necessary and have the time to think about and engage in politics. From a normative perspective, this development ought to be welcomed because it means that more older people are using non-electoral means of participation to make their voices heard.

One might hypothesise that the issues of their participation are likely to be local in nature as older people have lived in areas on average for much longer than other age groups. Interviewed group leaders told me that they had tried to mobilise political support against the Council Tax locally first and only went national when the impact was low on the local level. At the same time, England might be an example of an institutional context where this local political participation cannot easily be channelled into the political institutions of the polity. The localised group of older protesters exerted pressures on local authorities and counties on the issue of Council Tax, which were finally dependent on central government. Local government in England is weak in the sense that it does not autonomously have many resources at its disposal. Therefore, the protesters ended up taking the national stage at Trafalgar Square and other central locations to put pressure on central government. The centralised nature of the British polity might not be conducive to an effective channelling of senior grassroots movements who mobilise on local issues. Thus in more general terms, a conflict might arise between a growing potential pool of protesters in the form of older retirees and irresponsible local government in centralised unitary polities.

9.9 Summary

The qualitative interviews largely confirm the findings of the last quantitative chapter and cast more light on some additional resources/motivation and opportunities/mobilisation factors that are difficult to capture in large-N surveys. The experiences of the 22 interviewees bore out the generational change that is taking place through which older people become more likely to engage in protest activities. They also reported the still-existing gap between themselves and younger people.

Previously unmeasured resources for older people to participate are their prior political interest, their prior engagement within the electoral process and their prior engagement outside of the electoral process. The scope of these resources is much richer for older than for younger people. All respondents were politically interested (and active at least at low levels) before they became active on the issue of Council Tax. Most of them had a history of regular voting and vote-switching, a finding one could expect for politically interested British protesters who engage outside of political parties. In the 2005 General Election, Council Tax was an issue of consideration for some to cast their vote according to where parties stood on the issue.

Health – as found in the quantitative chapter – does not play a role for older people’s activities. They might use letter-writing to support their cause instead of street demonstrations. But ill health – in general – is not a factor for those who want to become involved.

Additionally, some of the respondents reported stereotypes or images about old retirement/old age and political passivity. The images, which they held themselves or had heard, revolved around the notion that older people have ‘earned’ a phase in their lives where they should not need to become active or they should have learnt that these forms of activities are not effective. These images and stereotypes confirm the cross-national findings that old age culture plays a role in determining the levels of participation at old age. The social situation of old age inflicts certain expectations and images on those individuals externally. Political protest appears to be an action that is not ‘appropriate’ for someone of a certain age.

In contrast to the social expectations, a common identity as a motivational source can hardly be detected. Answers diverged massively on these questions. Most interviewees did not feel solidarity with other older people per se, but put forward – if at all – a common cause (reform of Council Tax) or situation (reception of low pension income) as a feature of common identity. This finding mirrors the fact that older people are a very heterogeneous group that finds it hard to organise around old age as such. This is because other personal characteristics like income, class and place of residence divide the group of older people. Just the social situation of ‘being old’ is not enough to create an identity across older individuals, i.e. internally from the group perspective, and is insufficient to shape their political group consciousness.

There are two new factors of mobilisation that we have not found in the large survey yet. Older people, during a time of generational transition, when protest activities are still described as unusual, draw mobilisation potential from other older people who are already active. Additionally, emerging protest groups that are run by older people and focused on recruiting older people can also provide isolated older people, who might be without access to a motorised vehicle, with the information and meta-community to engage as members of a group. This can occur even though they might not physically see each other. This is a new phenomenon facilitated by means of communication being readily and cheaply available.

The political implications of such a growing generation of senior activity could be an increasing demand on the political system. Since older people tend to be embedded locally due to long duration of residence, the local level might be their first port of call. Since political systems differ in their level of responsiveness at the local

level, they might also differ in the way they can cope with growing local senior demands to respond to older people's needs.

10 Conclusions

This thesis has sought to answer two questions: to what extent and why do older people in Europe participate differently from younger people in politics? By introducing concepts from social psychology and social gerontology to theories of political behaviour, I synthesised an age-centred model of political participation. As part of this model, I identified four groups of age-related effects on political participation that have testable implications for Europe: (a) political generation effects that signify the importance of early political socialisation in later life; (b) shared social characteristic cohort effects that stand for the common exposure of cohorts in attaining certain social characteristics; (c) life cycle effects that describe the variations of resources, motivation, opportunities and interests along the life cycle; and (d) individual ageing effects that emphasise older people's potential to fall back on past experience when making a decision, and their tendency to comply with social norms.

Firstly, I will summarise the evidence for the hypotheses from which we set out. Secondly, I will assess the empirical validity of the age-centred model and will then suggest avenues for future research. Finally, I will discuss the implications of the empirical findings for an ageing Europe.

10.1 Summary of findings

An age-centred model of political participation

I defined political participation as all voluntary individual actions that are intended to influence or change public policy, the institutional structures of the political system or the selection of political personnel. I described older people as all citizens who are 60

and older. A political action is assumed to be the outcome of a decision on the content and the form of political participation. In liberal democracies, all forms of legal political actions are held to be open to everyone. The decision to participate is influenced by a particular decision-making process that makes the individual maximise her personal outcome based on personal preferences. The personal outcome of an individual is the sum of personal material as well as expressive benefits, which can include altruistic motivations.

The individual decision-making process is characterised by limited rationality. The social and political world is too complex for the individual to be able to process all information or to weigh all alternative potential outcomes. She therefore uses cognitive short-cuts in order to deal with this complexity. There are two devices available to an individual: first are schemas, i.e. reference systems that help her to process the new piece of information on the basis of organised prior knowledge; and secondly, the availability heuristic, a cognitive mechanism through which the individual can recall similar instances in her personal experience in order to assess political situations.

To consider participating in politics, the individual assesses her motivation and resources as intrinsic factors on the one hand, and the extrinsic factors of opportunities and mobilisation on the other. Individuals share certain preferences for a repository of political actions or political preferences for two reasons: firstly, they have experienced similar social situations during early adulthood when they are most impressionable in politics; and secondly, because they may find themselves in similar social situations that shape their preferences at a later age.

I conducted a basic assessment of differences between older and younger people and found that in 2002, older people in Europe did not differ systematically in a whole range of political activities. Most importantly, there was a lack of difference concerning the high-intensity forms of political participation, such as activism in parties or other political institutions. That means that for the largest part of the universe of political actions, older people's political participation is indistinguishable from younger people's. In contrast, the elderly demonstrated higher levels of participation for voting participation, party membership and donations. I also traced lower levels of older people's membership of and donations to single-issue organisations. In addition, I found lower probabilities among older people of them committing non-institutionalised political actions. These actions are committed outside of political organisations, and are characterised by low levels of necessary resources and no long-term institutional commitment.

The theoretical model suggests four major groups of age-related effects. None of them can claim unique explanatory importance. Tables 10-1 to 10-3 summarise the explicit hypotheses and their empirical validity. There are three categories. The first category labels hypotheses for which I found unambiguous evidence. The second marks hypotheses for which the evidence does not support the proposition as it stands, but suggests that the hypothesis is true in a constrained way and should hold in a reformulated form when tested against new evidence. For example, older people do tend to vote for larger parties, but this only shows in – as I suggest – electoral systems with high proportionality. I have not hypothesised these constraints at the onset of my research,

meaning that any generalisation must be proven with new research. The last category stands for propositions that are untenable in the light of the empirical evidence found..

Political generation hypotheses

Table 10-1: Summary of political generation hypotheses and their empirical validity

	Empirical evidence for or against propositions			Tested in chapter(s)
	Unambiguous evidence for	Evidence that asks for a refined hypothesis	No evidence	
H1: Older people are more likely to direct their organisational engagement towards political parties and are less likely to direct it towards single-issue organisations than younger people.	X			5
H2: Older cohorts are less likely to commit non-institutionalised forms of participation than more recent cohorts.	X			8
H3: The lack of experience of free, liberal democracy at young adulthood decreases the likelihood of non-institutionalised participation.			X	8
H4: Older people belong to a cohort that shares party preferences that are stable across time.		X		7

Older people share preferences about the repository and the content of political participation as members of a political generation that went through similar socialisation experiences at young adulthood. These preferences are not necessarily shared by younger people because the political context during their youth was different. The first piece of evidence for this general proposition came through the basic assessment in chapter 5 (see table 10-1). The change in the political participatory process away from parties and towards single-issue organisations is reflected in more common party membership and less common membership of single-issue organisations (and donation patterns along similar lines) among older relative to younger people. In those countries

where political parties in the past (for example, in the 1970s in West Germany) had managed to attract younger members and these parties had been less successful later on, party membership among older people was more common in 2002. This is because the young party members from back then had aged (unambiguous evidence for hypothesis H1).

In addition, the political generation hypotheses H2 finds evidence with regard to non-institutionalised participation. Whereas at the beginning of the 1980s, older people were only 20 % as likely as younger people to commit non-electoral forms of participation (a proxy we used for non-institutionalised participation), the gap narrowed to 80 % in 1999/2000. This is a result that we would expect from the recent rise in these forms of political participation. Today's older people thus lack the early experience of such participation, as the interviews with English Council Tax protesters also showed (unambiguous evidence for hypothesis H2).

However, the impact of early socialisation in terms of experiencing a liberal democracy could not be shown for any of the modes of non-institutionalised political participation (no evidence for H3). The experience per se is not a vital factor to define older people from younger people.

Finally, the differences between political generations, cohorts which are shaped by specific historical context in young adulthood, make older voters cast their vote differently from younger ones. This difference seems to be the stronger, the less de-aligned a party system is. Political generations play more of a role in an aligned party system like Britain between 1964 and 1979 than in the later decades that are characterised by less 'tribal voting'. Since both the approaches towards the de-alignment

process and towards political generations place emphasis on early socialisation, the correlation seems plausible and could be shown for Britain and West Germany. The evidence was ambiguous because I had not hypothesised about this macro factor concerning the state of de-alignment. Also, the division of cohorts into political generations according to known historical circumstances did not work equally well for all party choice predictions. Some political generations were not different from preceding generations as I had hypothesised (ambiguous evidence for hypothesis H4).

Overall, there is evidence for the importance of early political socialisation for type and content of political participation in later life. If the nature of the political participatory process remained as it is now for a few decades without change, these differences in socialisation effects between age groups would die out.

Shared social characteristic cohort and life cycle hypotheses

Table 10-2: Summary of shared social characteristic cohort and life cycle hypotheses and their empirical validity

	Empirical evidence for or against propositions			Tested in chapter(s)
	Unambiguous evidence for	Evidence that asks for a refined hypothesis	No evidence	
H5: Older people differ on predictors of political participation from younger people.		X		6, 8
H6: Older cohorts have a different endowment of social characteristics that are predictors of party choice.	X			7
H7: Senior parties become successful in countries with growing proportions of older people.			X	7
H8a: Economic conservatism - Older people are more likely to vote for the most economically conservative party. Older people are less likely to vote for the least economically conservative party.			X	7
H8b: Pro-state-spending - Older people are more likely to vote for the least economically conservative party. Older people are less likely to vote for the most economically conservative party.			X	7
H9: Older people are more likely to vote for the incumbent.		X		7

Older people have higher or lower levels of political participation because they belong to a cohort that has on average more or less resources/motivation or opportunities/mobilisation of a certain kind to participate. I showed cross-sectional correlations and assessed the nature of the variation (cohort or life cycle) with the help of the literature. Some variables became insignificant in the multivariate regression analysis (ambiguous evidence for hypothesis H5). Formal education was the most important of these cohort effects throughout the analysis. With regard to voting participation, older people are at a disadvantage because they have lower levels of

formal education. Formal education increases the understanding of the political system and exposes citizens to social circles where the norm of voting is more widespread. However, the older voters are, the less formal education plays a role. This is because experience of voting and politics can replace the function of education over the life time (see the later section about the individual ageing hypotheses).

For non-institutionalised participation, education is among the most important predictors of the differences between younger and older people in two out of four modes (contacting a public official or politician, buying or boycotting a product). This puts older people at a disadvantaged position. The other cohort effects that repeatedly make a difference are the size of town that individuals live in, postmaterialism and ideological left-right position. Older people lack the opportunities to protest by living in smaller places in most European countries. They are at an advantage, however, in terms of contacting a public official or politician because living in smaller places seems to reduce the distance felt to these official figures. Due to a long-term generational change towards greater postmaterialism and move to the left in most European countries – social changes that are conducive towards non-institutionalised participation – older generations which are less postmaterialist and more to the right are less likely to buy or boycott a product for political reasons, wear a petition or sign a badge and to protest. Other cohort effects play a subordinate role for non-institutionalised behaviour and voting participation, although their accumulative effect – mostly to decrease older people's participation levels – can be as large as that of other effects.

Another testable implication of a shared social characteristic cohort effect was the impact of the decline in religiosity and the rise in education across cohorts for the

party vote (unambiguous evidence for hypothesis H6). As I could demonstrate with regard to West Germany, lower education and higher religiosity among older cohorts decreases their chances of voting for those parties that tend to be voted for by social groups with higher education and less concern for religion, such as the German Liberals and the Greens.

In addition to their cohort experience, older people are at a different stage of the social life cycle. Old age differs from youth and middle-age, both in terms of societal expectations, and due to a potentially different set of material as well as expressive benefits. Old age also entails a different level of endowment of certain resources/motivation and opportunities/mobilisation to participate in politics. Besides, it means different political interests related to the life cycle, such as present public pension levels. Generally speaking (see table 10-2), the predictions about resources/motivation and opportunities/mobilisation were largely confirmed in a cross-sectional manner (ambiguous evidence for hypothesis H5).

Predictions about behaviour contingent on interests arising from old age were wrong (rejected hypotheses H7, H8a and H8b). There is no ideological tendency traceable on the economic dimension of party choice. Older people neither have a stronger tendency to vote for economically conservative, nor to vote for economically progressive parties. Also, the lack of successful senior parties in most countries (no evidence for hypothesis H7) that are campaigning on these old age issues suggests that not many older people vote for them. There is no trend visible of growing electoral popularity of senior parties in ageing democracies. I propose the following alternative answers: other interests seem to prevail in the voting choice, or the major parties are all

equally well-suited to serve senior interests, meaning that old age becomes a non-issue in terms of determining the decision.

In addition, I found partial evidence for one life cycle effect on party choice that does not necessarily have an ideological dimension (ambiguous evidence for hypothesis H9). Older voters tend to favour the incumbent over the opposition parties, a sign of growing status-quo conservatism. Older people want to avoid the occurrence of unforeseen changes. With incumbent parties, they have a sense of what those parties will implement in government. This effect was only visible, however, in the more de-aligned systems of the late British period 1979-2001 and West Germany where early political socialisation effects seem to be less important for electoral choice in later life.

In addition to their presence in party choice, life cycle effects on intrinsic and extrinsic factors increase the participation levels of older people as much as they can decrease them. For voting participation, older people find it easier to vote as they tend to have lived in an area for longer. This means that they have more knowledge about local issues. Their voting participation is decreased, however, by a lack of a cohabiting, mobilising partner and worse health.

For non-institutionalised behaviour, two life cycle effects repeatedly decrease the resources and mobilisation potential for older people. Lower internal political efficacy demonstrates that older people internalise the negative societal images about older people and politics. As the interviews with older English Council tax protesters revealed, even those who are active in participation are exposed to these images and partially believe in them. Retirement is portrayed as a stage in one's life where one should not need to worry about material resources, should just follow one's well-earned pleasures

and keep politically quiet. Additionally, older people suffer from being in fewer social networks, the members of which could mobilise them into participation. This decline in networks is due to the decease of friends and the lack of non-replacement with new friends for older people. Thus, older people have less exposure to the mobilisation efforts of friends, relative to younger people. Senior interest groups, like the English Council Tax group Isitfair play an important role in mobilising ‘socially isolated’ older individuals who might not be able to participate in politics because of physical limitations. The group can provide these older individuals with the incentive and information material to become politically active.

Other life cycle variables that are only of importance for some forms of non-institutionalised behaviour are: (a) the duration of residence which, like with voting participation, gives older people more motivation to participate in the mode of buying or boycotting a product for political reasons; (b) the low probability of caring for minors that makes older people less likely to contact officials or politicians; (c) the receipt of a pension that makes older people less likely to commit the mode of buying or boycotting a product; and (d) a lower likelihood of being employed which increases their willingness to protest because they – as the interviews with the Council Tax protesters demonstrate – are not concerned about the impact of protest activities on their professional lives. Also, the lower likelihood to be self-employed decreases the probability to contact a public official or politician or use product consumption as a form of political expression.

Chapter 9 explored the meaning of senior identity and senior solidarity for protest behaviour. The findings of these interviews mirrored the general tenet in the

literature that older people are too diverse a group to possess a group consciousness simply based on their life cycle experience of old age. Solidarity with other older people as a motivation to participate in politics similarly does not concern all older people. When it was expressed, only certain sub-groups such as vulnerable and frail fellow older citizens were identified as motivating older people's participation.

In sum, life cycle and shared social characteristic cohort effects played a role in voting participation, party choice and non-institutionalised participation. For none of these modes, could one leave out any of the two kinds of effects without seriously reducing the explanatory power of the model. However, the evidence was less clear in support of the hypotheses when compared to the political generation effects. Future models can be improved by including macro factors and by reducing the number of age-related variables.

Individual ageing hypotheses

Table 10-3: Summary of individual ageing hypotheses and their empirical validity

	Empirical evidence for or against propositions			Tested in chapter(s)
	Unambiguous evidence for	Evidence that asks for a refined hypothesis	No evidence	
<i>H10: Ceteris paribus, older people are more likely to vote than younger people. In the cross-sectional analysis with pooled data from all European countries, the residual variation between age groups (from young to old) follows a concave curve in contrast to the single country analyses.</i>	X			6
<i>H11: Older voters are more likely to vote for larger parties or smaller parties that are regularly part of government.</i>		X		7
<i>H12a: The higher the average turnout in a country, the smaller the gap is between the voting probability of older and younger people, ceteris paribus.</i>	X			6
<i>H12b: The higher the formal education and expressed sense of duty to vote, the smaller the gap is between the voting probability of older and younger people, ceteris paribus.</i>	X			6
<i>H12c: Among citizens with high education and low sense of duty to vote, older people do not have a higher voting probability than younger people, ceteris paribus.</i>	X			6

Older people find it easier to make a decision for participation as they have more past political experience that they can draw on, be it from their own behaviour or their past knowledge. As individuals age, they are more increasingly part of a society through networks and through their intensifying identification with that society. Thus, compliance with social norms becomes more rewarding for ageing individuals.

The strongest evidence for this group of hypotheses could be found with regard to voting participation (see table 10-3). Older people show a strong and consistent higher likelihood of voting across countries. They benefit from their own past experience that can also replace the function of formal education over the lifetime. The empirical

evidence revealed a clear learning curve that remained in a pooled analysis, compared to the zigzag residual differences in voting participation between age groups in individual countries (confirmed hypothesis H10). In addition, the social norm of voting is widespread. Voting in national elections is usually done by a majority of eligible citizens. The habituation of the socially conformist behaviour of voting is all the stronger, the lower the average of likelihood of voting in a country and the less educated the individuals are. The lower the average turnout in a country and the lower the formal education of a citizen, the lower is the starting probability of voting at a young age. This means that there is more room for habituation alongside the ageing process. In countries with high turnout rates and among citizens with high education, habituation is less important to increase the likelihood of voting (unambiguous evidence for hypotheses H12a-c).

Past experience through the ageing process can also have an impact on the content of the vote. Seemingly, in electoral systems with higher levels of proportionality such as Germany, parties that are smaller and rarely part of the government have fewer followers among older voters than younger voters (ambiguous evidence for hypothesis H11). Voters of all age groups have namely got little instrumental incentive to vote for smaller parties in disproportional electoral systems, like in Britain. Small parties can leave less of an impression than all larger or smaller, governmental parties. They can impress ageing voters less through the media and during election campaigns where they have fewer resources. Past experience of them is less developed, meaning such parties are at more a disadvantage the older voters are. Individual ageing displayed no discernible effect with regard to non-institutionalised participation. This is mainly due to

the fact that experience of these forms of participation is not as frequent and common as voting. Also, the generational gap that makes the older generation less likely to resort to these political actions prevented them on average from performing these activities before. Thus, many English Council Tax protesters went to protest for the first time in later life.

In sum, individual ageing proved to be very important to explain voting participation of older people where hypotheses were all correct. Also, mixed results suggest the importance of learning for the choice of larger parties among older voters in party systems with a high level of proportionality.

10.2 Model assessment: empirical validity, limitations, and potential avenues for future research

The empirical validity of the model

I used an adapted version of a resource-based model of political participation and brought it together with a conceptual framework about the nature of age-related effects. Overall, the model seems to have explained empirical reality well. Measures of goodness-of-fit were reasonable and most variables significant with the expected direction. Some hypotheses were only partially confirmed. Since it was the first model that has been suggested for a comparative study of political participation that investigates differences between age groups, it needs to be tested further against other models in the future.

The model is based on the psychological and economic traditions of political behaviour. The inclusion of sociological and psychological factors into this model proved to be necessary given the crucial impact of learning, habituation and norm-

compliance. The importance of socialisation and the nature of human decision-making through limited rationality are important processes of the model. Without these processes in the model, I would have been able to explain much less. Also, the linkage of individuals with other individuals concerning those preferences due to common social situations proved to be vital. For example, retirees share the higher preference for demonstrations. Employed people do not share this preference due to their concerns about the potential repercussions of political activities for their jobs. Furthermore, the analysis of images and the impact of internal political efficacy that gives older people the feeling that they are less able of participating in politics is a reminder of the importance of psychological thought processes. The weight of these social and psychological factors highlights a general necessity to keep models of political participation open to these non-political factors. At its core, political participation has its foundation in the social and psychological foundations of our social living.

There were some factors that I suggested as controlling factors that proved to be of little use. For example, political trust did not prove to be age-related. A more parsimonious model – if tested with a new data set – could leave those factors out, as the current analysis suggests that they are not important. There are two major refinements that future models need to address more closely: the role of structural macro factors and the conditions that determine which type of age-related effects are of stronger importance for a political action. Firstly, I only used macro differences between countries in order to control for some effects. This is because they could be of importance for differences between age groups, such as the socialisation experience of growing up in a liberal democracy. The analysis, and in particular the analysis of voting

behaviour, brought to light further inter-linkages between macro and individual factors, such as the state of de-alignment and the type of electoral system. These need to be addressed in future model-building. Secondly, my model could not predict which type of age-related effect would be important for which type of political action. It seems reasonable to assume the higher relevance of learning for the more frequent voting participation and choice in future models. The more frequent a form of political participation in general, the more likely we are to witness effects of habituation and norm-compliance.

Limitations of the empirical analysis

The empirical analysis conducted in this dissertation has its limitations. Most obviously, it can only make inferences about specific countries at certain points in time. However, the findings encourage testing of the model in other contexts as well, for example in other non-European states with 'European' traditions of the life cycle such as the USA, Canada or Australia. Secondly, the statistical analysis could only infer average effects for groups. Indeed, the first part of the empirical analyses in chapters 6 and 8 rests on a bivariate assessment of independent variables and age. Thus, older people are *on average* less educated than younger people are *on average*. This approach poses certain problems. For instance, when estimating political generation effects for party choice, I am only able to test the average difference of certain political generations vis-à-vis others. The pro-CDU lenience of the West German Adenauer generation is likely to be

less pronounced in regions that are traditionally strongly pro-SPD, such as the regions in the Lutheran North.⁴⁵

A third limitation concerns the type of political participation that I looked at. With regard to voting, I only analysed national parliamentary elections and only looked at parties. The picture might look rather different for local elections and more candidates-based assessments. For example, does the age or experience of candidates play a role in the voting behaviour of older people? It could be plausible that older voters find more trust in experienced candidates that they have known for some time. This would be another version of the status-quo conservatism that I demonstrated in my analysis of party choice. In addition, I only analysed non-voting forms of political participation from a very general point-of-view as far as content is concerned. I could not differentiate between signing a petition to oust the prime minister from office and signing it to support the installation of a local library. Anecdotal evidence from my interviews suggests that older people are more likely to care about local issues that are of immediate benefit or interest to them. 'Grand' or long-term issues seem to be less of interest to them. If this was true, some of the findings in my analysis could be strengthened, such as the large impact of the duration of residence, which makes older people more likely to vote and to contact a public official or politician.

⁴⁵ Interaction effects with age that could theoretically be included in the model run a high danger of multicollinearity. Indeed, the danger is very imminent already due to the age-cohort-period identification problem.

Avenues for future research

I propose that future research into the political participation of older people be carried out in quantitative and qualitative analyses. I will suggest two possibilities for each strand: firstly, future quantitative analysis should be based on surveys that boost people who are 50 and older. These surveys have rarely been carried out, such as the Eurobarometer in 1992 and 1999, and often only include few variables of interest to assess political participation. Boost surveys have the advantage that they allow one to make better estimates about smaller, but systematic differences within the group of older people. It is, for example, plausible that the decline in networks and the decline in political efficacy mostly affects a small sub-group of disadvantaged older people. Boost surveys could give more evidence to explore such questions about sub-groups of older people.

Secondly, secondary analysis of existing voting studies should look at local, national and European elections simultaneously to explore further the impact of macro factors on differences between younger and older people. For example, in British national elections we are unable to witness a generational trend to the benefit of a postmaterialist party, like the Greens, that would make older voters less likely to vote for them. This is most probably due to the effect of the electoral system which hinders smaller parties. By contrast, in European and local elections in Britain – with different electoral systems – the Green party does have some following, which could be structured by generational membership.

Thirdly, I suggest much more in-depth interviewing and focus group work with older people. Whereas sociologists and social psychologists are using these techniques

on a regular basis to increase their knowledge about older people, these research techniques are rarely used in political science. In particular, its combination with quantitative survey analysis seems to be a rewarding avenue for future research. For example, models can be tested using a mixed approach (Lieberman 2005).

Fourthly, a qualitative cross-national study seems to be another way of answering questions about old age culture and the political participation of older people. An interesting possibility would be a most similar research design with, for example, a European country and Japan. Both countries would be very similar in terms of their old age welfare state provisions and demographic composition, but would differ immensely in terms of their culture of old age. Asian countries in the Confucian cultural traditions tend to value older people very highly. For example, one could ask the question as to what extent the culture is reflected differently in the political behaviour of the older population.

10.3 Politics in ageing Europe – the political implications of the empirical findings

‘There’s an iceberg dead ahead. It’s called global aging, and it threatens to bankrupt the great powers. As the populations of the world’s leading economies age and shrink, we will face unprecedented political, economic, and moral challenges. But we are woefully unprepared. Now is the time to ring the alarm bell.’

Peter G. Peterson (1999: title page)

‘An ageing society is too often - and wrongly - seen solely in terms of increasing dependency [of older people]. But the reality is that, as older people become an ever more significant proportion of the population, society will increasingly depend upon the contribution they can make.’

The British Prime Minister Tony Blair in the 2005 Green Paper *Opportunity Age* (HM Government 2005: iv)

The dissertation started from the outlook that European democratic societies are ageing. Furthermore, I identified the political participatory process as an input factor into politics and policy decisions. Thus, the content and determinants of the political participation of older people become salient issues for political scientists. The general discussion about population ageing and the growing numbers of older people – be it in the social science literature or popular writing – is structured between two opposite poles. I am going to introduce these two extreme visions and discuss my evidence in the light of them.

At the one end, there is the ‘apocalyptic’ vision that is, for example, visible in the first quotation. Put simplistically, it entails that people aged 50 and older will soon be in the voting majority due to sheer numbers and high voting probability. This majority will be long-lasting. In democratic systems that are based on majority decisions, this group of older voters will then determine all policy outputs. It will do so to advance its material interests: generous pensions, low value-added tax, free social and health care for older people. It will exploit the shrinking younger workforce and deprive it of most resources and thus create a permanent antagonism between younger and older people at the detriment of social cohesion and at the risk of a ‘generation war’. In the near future, this group of older people will be dominated by the baby-boomers who have so far managed to change politics in their favour at every stage of their ageing process.

At the other end, there is the ‘optimistic’ vision put forward in the policy documents of national governments, such as the British one quoted above. It acknowledges the challenges of an ageing society, such as the urgency to adapt public pension systems. At the same time, however, it portrays the growing number of older

people as a resource and opportunity for the future. Societies will change their images of old age. Recent anti-discrimination legislation in European Union countries (following the Council Directive 2000/78/EC) that outlawed discrimination because of age can be seen as just such an attempt to fight these images and stereotypes. The new images of old age will be 'productive' or 'active ageing'. Older people will increasingly contribute to the labour force, will provide volunteer services to communities and generate intergenerational solidarity. Politically, an ageing society will remain the same because older people and younger people will learn about each other and not have political preferences that are far away from each other. In this view, the nature of political participation will not matter much because differences between age groups will be erased by growing knowledge about each other, as well as solidarity and interaction between age groups. Even if age groups show differences in behaviour, their interests will not vary. The participatory political process will benefit from a growing pool of older volunteers who try to influence policies not only for their own good, but the good of other generations. Ageing Europe is thus not doomed, but only entering a new era that needs social adaptation.

I will now assume for the moment that my empirical explanations are a good description of reality and that the causal mechanisms are stable into the next thirty years. I will discuss the implications of my findings within the two poles that I just described. I will particularly highlight two aspects: (1) how the nature of the age-related effects determines the stability of inter-age group differences in the future, i.e. how the participatory process will change due to the empirically identified, causal factors that

make older people different from younger people, and (2) what the likely impact of the findings is for the equality of age groups in the political process.

The results – on balance – give little support for the apocalyptic vision, and lend more credence to the optimistic one. But they also show that ‘grey democracies’ will in some respect be permanently changed.

The nature of age-related effects and its lasting consequences for future differences between age groups

The four age-related effects differ in their implications for ageing societies. One can make a distinction between on the one hand life cycle and individual ageing effects, the impact of which is relatively stable across time, and on the other hand political generation and shared social characteristic cohort effects, the impact of which depends on specific cohorts. I will argue that those findings that are mainly rooted in life cycle or individual ageing effects will be permanent characteristics of ageing democracies.

Life cycle and individual ageing effects make the differences between age groups independent of generations and thus stable across time. For example, retirement has a positive impact on political protest because retirees have the time to engage in protest and are no longer concerned about any repercussions of their protests on the sphere of employment. This effect is independent in its nature from specific generations. The effect on political behaviour today, all other things being equal, should be similar to the effect of retirement on political behaviour in ten years.

Generational effects, be it political generation or shared social characteristic cohort effects, are specific to generations that constitute certain age groups at a given time point. Therefore, differences between age groups are unstable across time. For

example, the baby-boomers in Germany belong to the Brandt Generation that is more pro-SPD and pro-Green than preceding generations. The impact of these generational preferences is visible in the political process as long as members of the Brandt Generation vote, but will be gone once its members die.

The process of demographic ageing, which we witness all over Europe, is a permanent social change of the population. If differences between age groups are stable across time, as are life cycle and individual ageing effects, ageing democracies will have enduringly changed. If the differences between age groups are unstable across time, ageing democracies will only experience changes insofar as a generation, when it is old, will have a strong influence due to its demographic weight. The importance of that generation will not linger. This is because a new generation will soon be old and carry the demographic power. Therefore, I will now discuss the findings on life cycle and individual ageing effects that will have a lasting impact in ageing democracies. In the next sub-section, I will assess the findings about generational differences as part of the discussion of equality between age groups in determining political outcomes.

In the near future, the voting process appears to be tilted permanently in favour of older voters. Life cycle and individual ageing dominate as causes that make older people more likely to vote. This argument is even further strengthened by the fact that life cycle and individual ageing are sociological and psychological factors that stand outside of the political process. They are embedded in the way we live our lives and the way we think, and are not easily amenable to influences by policy-makers. This finding supports one fundamental assumption of the apocalyptic vision. It is precisely the high

voting participation of older voters and the development of a permanent older people's majority that could allow for a permanent change of politics in favour of older people.

Another example of lasting change is the prevalence of status-quo conservatism among older voters in de-aligned party systems. The more volatile that voting in a party system is, the more older voters appear to be likely to vote for the incumbent. Policy implications of this finding are, however, ambiguous and do not support the apocalyptic vision. Incumbent governments can be radical policy-makers as much as overly cautious reformers. The tendency to vote for the incumbent does not imply a distortion of public policies in favour of older people. Also, I found some evidence in party systems with higher levels of proportionality of an increasing tendency for older people to vote for large parties or small parties that are regularly part of the government. Again, this tendency does not directly imply any policy consequences. But it does give established parties an advantage against newer or niche parties in ageing democracies.

Other political actions that are strongly influenced by life cycle factors are unlikely to have an impact on the political process. This is because life cycle factors decrease *and* increase the likelihood of older people participating, meaning that they balance each other out. For example, older people are more likely to buy or boycott a product for political reasons because they have lived in an area for longer, but less likely because they are connected less in social networks and feel politically less efficacious.

In sum, there will be some permanent changes of the voting process that does not, however, necessarily lead to an antagonism between old and young. Whereas the discussion has so far assessed the enduring changes of ageing democracies in the future

due to the nature of age-related effects, the next sub-section will deal with the implications of the findings as to the equality of age groups in the political process.

Age group equality in the political process

The voting power of older people is not yet stronger than that of younger people, although voters aged 60 and older are already outnumbering voters who are younger than 30. For example, in the United Kingdom (2004 estimates), there were 11.8 million voters aged 60 and older, but only 8.6 million voters younger than 30. Given the huge discrepancy in voting probability, the 2005 British General Election saw an estimated 8.7 million voters aged 60 and older, but only 3.7 million voters younger than 30.⁴⁶

Voting is a form of political participation that is less suitable for conveying preferences, but apt for exerting pressure on the elected elites. Notwithstanding the lack of evidence for life cycle influences on party choice – apart from status-quo conservatism and the advantage of larger parties in certain circumstances – the potential threat of older people as a voting bloc is massive. But what does this bloc tell political entrepreneurs who might want to offer policies to gain votes? Older people share very few broad interests, such as public pensions and social and health care provisions. At the same time, older people have allegiances towards younger age groups. They have children and grandchildren whom they want to live comfortably as well. Surveys, for example in Britain, show that older people are not very different from younger people as to the priorities of spending. In 1996, among people aged 66 and older, 57 % indicated health as a first

⁴⁶ Population estimates are from the ONS (2006). Turnout estimates are from MORI (2005). I averaged the 18-24 and 25-34 age group to get the mean likelihood for those younger as 30 (43 %). I did the same for the 55-64 age groups and the 65+ group for the older people's voting probability of 73 %. I further assume that 95 % of British residents were allowed to vote.

priority as opposed to 51 % among 18-29 year olds. For education, the numbers stood at 20 and 28 %. There is only a small life cycle effect in the direction of older people's material interest (Jarvis 1998).

The 'grey vote' is furthermore even more heterogeneous because education does not determine who votes among older voters. Education increasingly loses the more its importance to predict voting participation, the older voters are. Thus, higher educated individuals have a stronger share of the vote among younger than among older citizens. Education is the most important social marker in society that can influence class, income, status, life expectancy and health. Among younger voters, those with high formal education are more likely to vote. This shifts the pressure on elites to respond to the interests of those with higher education rather than those with lower education (which is essentially a middle class bias). For the group of older voters in contrast, education does not play a role for turnout. Thus, the pressure is on the political entrepreneurs to concentrate on those issues that are most common among all older people, not only those of the more educated. The 'undifferentiated' pressure of older voters of all socio-economic backgrounds means that old age interests must be defined even more narrowly – the lowest common denominator - by political elites. The strong voting power of older people does not speak with one voice, with socio-economic background playing less of a role in determining who votes among older people. These two findings about allegiances to younger age groups and the narrow definition of old age issues weakens the apocalyptic vision and gives credibility to the optimistic one. Older people are not 'greedy' self-materialist voters. They are heterogeneous, continue

to be divided by many factors and have very few, narrowly defined common interests that just form part of a bigger set of political interests.

However, old age issues – different from young age issues – are of interest to all voters as all citizens aspire to be old. Younger age issues, such as welfare provisions for children, are not of interest to everybody. Those who have no children, for instance, might care less about these issues, and children cannot vote. This fact stands against the prophecy that a generation war will develop, as all age groups share concern for old age issues. However, it still supports the notion of a public agenda tilted in favour of old age issues. The electoral agendas of ‘grey democracies’ are likely to include old age issues not because of a unified voting pattern of older people, but because of their latent numerical threat and the general interest of narrowly defined old age issues to all age groups. Although older people are very diverse and far from feeling a common political group consciousness, their main issues will probably be taken care of by political entrepreneurs. In contrast to the optimistic vision, I do expect a permanent presence of old age material interests on the public agenda in European democracies, but at the same time not an ‘us versus them’ antagonism between generations.

Whereas the voting process is likely to be tilted to some limited extent in favour of older people, other patterns of political participation show stronger generational trends and therefore have less predictable implications for the near future. At the moment, participation through membership of conventional political parties tends to be distorted towards older people due to a generational effect in many European democracies. The influence on political outcomes might, however, be limited as party activists rather than members influence the organisations most strongly. Party activists

are a group where older people are not more likely to be active (seen from the evidence of a mass survey).

For single-issue organisations, there is an advantage among younger people who tend to be more likely to be members of them than older people in many European democracies. But similarly, the influence of pure members might not be bigger than that of the actual activists. Taking these two avenues – parties and single-issue organisations – together, we are currently witnessing a split of organised political participation in much of Europe. The channel of party participation is distorted towards older people, and that of single-issue organisations is tilted towards younger people. However, the evidence suggests that this difference is transitional. If the nature of the political process will have been stable for some decades, the oldest generation will have caught up with the most recent changes.

With regard to non-institutionalised forms of political participation, older people are still under-represented. Whereas the evidence suggests that the generational gap between age groups is closing, I also found evidence of the impact of old age culture on the modes of protest and signing a petition or wearing a badge. In those countries where citizens express on average a more senior-friendly position, older people are also more likely to engage in these forms of participation. This brings about an additional representational distortion. In countries where the elderly are valued more highly, older people have in addition to this higher, social appreciation more influence through non-institutionalised forms of participation. Thus, their relatively more positive position in society is even more strengthened by their own political actions through non-institutionalised channels. Non-institutionalised forms of participation are better for

conveying the preferences of the participants than they are for exerting pressure on elites. In the apocalyptic vision, antagonism against the elderly and stereotypes of old age will increase among younger people. But as the group of older people grows, older people's images of themselves in politics are less likely to be dominated by feelings of socially constructed, political inferiority. Thus, the effect of internalised negative images should vanish. In the optimistic vision, tackling stereotypes is of utmost importance to overcome any misconception and to create intergenerational solidarity. The interviews that I led also brought to light the dynamics of older people's volunteering activities. With more and more older people active in politics in the public domain, the role model function of these older activists has the potential to weaken commonly held stereotypes about old age and set free the volunteering potential of this group of the population. This is a development foreseen in the optimistic vision. Also, expanding old age political groups will provide a better infrastructure for future political volunteering activity at old age.

Finally, there remains participation through trade unions and professional organisations to be discussed. These organisations are mainly concerned with employment, but also with some retirement benefits that are strongly related to employment. Older people are at a disadvantage here as they tend not to be employed anymore. Like the interests of the unemployed who are outsiders in wage negotiations, the interests of older retirees are not within the remit of trade unions. However, the interest of currently working employees in their own old age provisions might provide for representation of retirees via the trade unions. According to the optimistic vision, the representational function of trade unions will change as more older workers re-enter or

stay in the labour force. In other words, if society changes its ageist notions about workers, so will the politics of trade unions in order to garner support among older workers.

In conclusion, my findings only support the main behaviourist aspect of the apocalyptic vision. Grey democracies will see a stable voting majority of older people due to dominant life cycle and individual ageing factors. Other findings give credibility to the optimistic vision. Older people are unlikely to tilt the political outcomes in their material favour. This is (a) because their interests are shaped by inter-generational allegiances, and (b) because their massive voting power only gives a vague picture of interests to political entrepreneurs, with socio-economic differences among older people not playing a major role in determining who votes. Differences in non-institutionalised behaviour and in preferences for conventional over single-issue organisations are not stable across time given that cohort effects are important determinants. As long as cohorts continue to differ in their preferences for channels of political participation, there will be differences between age groups at any point in time. Since political history in Europe is unlikely to be smooth and without major changes in the next thirty years, the input of older people relative to younger people through participation will be different in 2006 and 2036 due to varying socialisation effects. Trade unions, which are currently a little used channel for older people, will change their nature as more older workers stay in or re-enter the workforce. The explorative findings about negative images of older people in politics highlight the necessity for public awareness-raising in this field. The more older people become active, the more their role model function will de-construct images of older people being passive in politics.

We have now come full circle. We started out from the observation that European democracies are ageing and asked ourselves whether this could matter for politics and public policy through the political participation of older people. The multitude of evidence in this dissertation suggests that it does so in many ways. Demographic ageing in Europe is the most fundamental social change since the expansion of mass education at the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries. The latter ultimately led to increasing demands on reigning elites for more mass political participation and more elite responsiveness, and finally changed the world of politics. Ageing is also very likely to alter the political world, but in a gradual, non-dramatic way. There is no evidence for a permanent political conflict between older and younger people in Europe. However, the nature of the participatory process and its expected agenda will change.

11 Appendix

All STATA data sets, STATA do files, transcripts of telephone interviews are on a CD-Rom that accompanies this PhD dissertation. The original data sets are available from

- <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org> (European Social Survey)
- The UK Data Archive at the University of Essex (British Election Studies and British Gallup Polls)
- Zentralarchiv für Empirische Sozialforschung Cologne (German Election Studies, Politbarometer)
- <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org> (World Values Survey)

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11.1 Variables in models of voting participation and non-institutionalised participation (chapters 6, 8)

Table 11-1: Descriptives of variables used for models of voting participation and non-institutionalised participation: mean, minimum, maximum, standard deviation and description

Variable Name	Values	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Question wording in survey	Comments
Voting Participation	0 = No, 1 = Yes	0	1	0.80	0.4	B13: Some people don't vote nowadays for one reason or another. Did you vote in the last [country] national [This refers to the last election of a country's primary legislative assembly] election in [month/year]?	
Age dummies	0 = 18-29 (baseline), 1 = 30-39, 2 = 40-49, ..., 6 = 80+	0	6			In what year were you born?	Age calculated by 2002-answer
Duration of residence, logged		0	98	23.77	18.87	E28: How long have you lived in this area?	To overcome heteroscedasticity, natural logarithm of the original value
Education	0 = not completed primary education, 1 = Primary or first stage of basic education 2 = Lower secondary or second stage of basic 3 = Upper secondary 4 = Post secondary, non-tertiary 5 = First stage of tertiary 6 = Second stage of tertiary	0	6	2.86	1.47	What is the highest level of education you have achieved?	
External political efficacy, low value = low level of political efficacy logged		0	8.20	1.87	1.45	B5: Do you think that politicians in general care what people like you think? Hardly any politicians care what people like me think, very few care, some care, many care, most politicians care what people like me think	One factor Principal Component Solution: 80 % of variance explained. Pairwise deletion of missing data. Missing values replaced by mean.
						B6: Would you say that politicians are just interested in getting people's votes rather than people's opinions? Nearly all/most politicians are just interested in votes, some politicians are just interested in votes some aren't, most people are interested in people's opinions, nearly all politicians are interested in people's opinions	To overcome heteroscedasticity, natural logarithm of original values with minimum set to 1
Gender	0 = female, 1 = male	0	1	0.48		Coded by interviewer	

Income	1-12 Scale	1	12	6.1	2.51	If you add up the income from all sources, which letter (show card) describes your household's total net income? If you don't know the exact figure, please give an estimate. Use part of the card that you know best: weekly, monthly or annual income: scale 1-12	
Internal political efficacy, low value = low level of political efficacy logged		0	4.83	3.53	1.16	B2: How often does politics seem so complicated that you can't really understand what is going on? Never, seldom, occasionally, regularly, frequently B3: Do you think that you could take an active role in a group involved with political issues? Definitely not, probably not, not sure either way, probably, definitely B4: How difficult or easy do you find it to make your mind up about political issues? Very difficult, difficult, neither difficult, nor easy, easy, very easy	One factor Principal Component Solution: 57 % of variance explained. Pairwise deletion of missing data. Missing values replaced by mean. To overcome heteroscedasticity, natural logarithm of original values with minimum set to 1
Living with partner	0 = otherwise, 1 = yes	0	1	0.64	0.48	Original variable: partner	
Number of minor children in household		0	10	0.71	1.03	F3: In what year was she/he born [all current members of household]?	Added up number of people under the age of 18 living in household
Party identification	0 = not closer to any party, 1 = closer to one party, but not close at all, ... 4 = very close	0	4	1.33	1.49	B25a: Is there a particular party you feel closer to than any other party? B25c: How close do you feel to this party? Very close, quite close, not close, not close at all	
Pension main source of income		0	1	0.26	0.44	F29: Please consider the income of all household members and any income which may be received by the household as a whole. What is the main source of income in your household? Please use this card. Wages and salaries, income from self-employment or farming, pensions, unemployment/redundancy benefit/ any other social benefits or grants, income from investment, savings, insurance or property, income from other sources.	Coded 1 if pensions mentioned, 0 otherwise.
Political interest	0 = not interested at all,..., 3 = very interested	0	3	1.41	0.97	How interested would you say you are in politics? Are very interested, quite i., hardly i., not at all i.?	
Religiosity	0 = not religious at all, ..., 10 = very religious	0	10	4.97	2.95	C13: Regardless of whether you belong to a particular religion, how religious would you say you are? Please use this card.	

Social networks, logged	0 = none, ...	0	2.40	0.53	0.56	E1-12b: Do you have personal friends within this organisation? Sports club/club for outdoor activities, an organisation for cultural or hobby activities, a business, professional or farmer's organisation, a consumer or automobile organisation, an organisation for environmental protection, peace or animal rights, a religious or church organisation, an organisation for science, education, or teachers and parents, a social club for the young/the retired/elderly, women or friendly societies, any other voluntary organisation such as the ones I've just mentioned	Each organisation that was not a trade union, humanitarian aid, an organisation for human rights, minorities or immigrants, party was counted as one and added up To overcome heteroscedasticity, natural logarithm of (number +1)
Subjective evaluation of health	0 = very bad, 1= bad, 2= fair, 3 = good, 4 = very good	0	4	2.80	0.91	How is your health [physical and mental health] in general?	
Trade union and party membership	0 = no membership, 1 = membership of trade union or party, 2 = membership of party and trade union	0	2	0.27	0.49	E3, E9	
years since transition to democracy	2002 – year of first free parliamentary elections, maximum = 80	12	84	60.96	28.68		
Average non-institutionalised political participation per country		0.29	1.44	0.91	0.37	Seven political actions were summed up on the individual level; mean per country	
Employment status (employed, self-employed, not in paid work)		0	1	0.45 (empl) 0.09 (self-empl)	0.50 0.29	E29: Can I just check? Are you currently: Employed, self-employed, not in paid work, don't know	Employed and self-employed were coded to be two dummies
Left-right self-placement	0 = very leftist, ..., 10 = very rightist	0	10	5.05	2.13	B28: In politics people sometimes talk of "left" and "right" on this scale. Using this card, where would you place yourself where 0 means the left and 10 means the right.	
Number of children in household		0	10	0.71	1.03	F3: In what year was she/he born [all current members of household]?	Added up number of people under age of 18 living in household, took natural logarithm of value (+1)

political information logged	0 = no time at all, 1 = less than ½ hour, 2 = ½ hour to 1 hour, 3 = more than 1 hour, up to 1 1/2 hour, 4 = more than 2 hours, 5 = up to 2 ½ hours, 6 = more than 2 ½ hours, up to 3 hours, 7 = more than 3 hours, don't know	0	3.09	1.74	0.35	A2, A4, A6: And again on an average weekday, how much of your time watching television/listening to the radio/reading is spent watching/listening to/reading the news or programmes about politics and current affairs? Still use this card	Scores added up, took natural logarithm of value added by 1.
Post-materialism		-2	2	-0.04	0.52	Male and female respondents received separate self-completion sheets (GS1/GS2): Here we briefly describe each line that shows how much each person is or is not like you. E: It is important for her/him to live in safe surroundings. F: He/she likes surprises and is always looking for new things to do. He/she thinks it is important to do lots of different things in life. N: It is important to him/her that the government ensures his/her safety against all threats. He/she wants the state to be strong so it can defend its citizens. S: He/she strongly believes that people should care for nature. Looking after the environment is important to him/her. Very much like me, like me, somewhat like me, a little like me, not like me, not like me at all.	If respondents answered E or N (F or S) with not like me or not like me at all, they got a 0, otherwise -1 (+1). Then the scores were added up to span from -2 to +2. N/A for Hungary or Italy Missing values replaced by mean.
subjective religiosity	0 = not religious at all, 10 = very religious	0	10	4.97	2.95	C13: Regardless of whether you belong to a particular religion, how religious would you say you are? Please use this card	
size of town	1 = a farm of home in the countryside, 2 = a country village, 3 = a town or small village, 4 = the suburbs or outskirts of a big city, 5 = a big city	1	5	3.03	1.19	F5: which phrase on this card best describes the area where you live?	
Political satisfaction		0	20	9.90	4.20	B31: Now thinking about the [country] government, how satisfied are you with the way it is doing its job? Still use this card. B32: And on the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [country]? Still use this card.	Added up the two coded answers.

General satisfaction	0	20	11.69	3.88	B29: All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole nowadays? Please answer using this card, where 0 means extremely dissatisfied and 10 means extremely satisfied. B30: On the whole how satisfied are you with the present state of the economy in [country]? Still use this card.	Added up the two coded answers.
Experience of democracy before the age of 30	0	1	0.83	0.38	1 = if respondent has experienced liberal democracy before the age of 30, 0 otherwise	

11.2 Bivariate correlations independent variables (chapters 6, 8)

Table 11-2: Pearson's r bivariate correlations of variables used for models of voting participation and non-institutionalised participation

	1. age	2. transeas	3. avidprtout	4. edu	5. lrscale	6. townsize	7. postma_1	8. religion	9. ythdemexp	10. polint	11. polmem_1	12. satpol	13. logpolin
1. age	1												
2. Years since transition to democracy	-0.0202*	1											
3. mean index non-inst. participation	0.0043	0.6801*	1										
4. Education	-0.2057*	0.1738*	0.1970*	1									
5. Left-right scale	0.0658*	0.0132	-0.0245*	-0.0174*	1								
6. Size of town	-0.0421*	-0.1237*	-0.0548*	0.1568*	-0.0503*	1							
7. Postmaterialism	-0.1557*	0.0906*	0.0765*	0.1290*	-0.0402*	0.0431*	1						
8. Religiosity	0.1882*	-0.0935*	-0.1898*	-0.1541*	0.1742*	-0.0616*	-0.0722*	1					
9. Experience of democracy before the age of 30	-0.3893*	0.5181*	0.4761*	0.1850*	-0.0014	-0.0268*	0.1116*	-0.0869*	1				
10. Pol. interest	0.0814*	0.1240*	0.1515*	0.3192*	-0.0194*	0.0610*	0.0741*	-0.0301*	0.0639*	1			
11. Political membership	0.0156*	0.2357*	0.2320*	0.1670*	-0.0303*	-0.0403*	0.0411*	-0.0709*	0.1282*	0.1814*	1		
12. Pol. satisfaction	0.0105	0.2126*	0.1895*	0.0836*	0.0968*	-0.0108	0.012	0.0645*	0.1188*	0.1165*	0.1034*	1	
13. Pol. information, logged	0.2333*	0.0072	0.0224*	0.009	0.0121	0.0205*	-0.0128	0.0410*	-0.0405*	0.2320*	0.0545*	0.0331*	1
14. Household income	-0.1396*	0.4046*	0.4295*	0.3824*	0.0230*	0.0164*	0.1015*	-0.1331*	0.3474*	0.2233*	0.2159*	0.1865*	0.0097
15. General satisfaction	-0.0332*	0.3612*	0.2979*	0.1485*	0.0978*	-0.0547*	0.0518*	0.0088	0.2567*	0.1057*	0.1622*	0.5835*	0.0172*
16. Social networks, logged	-0.0281*	0.2767*	0.2913*	0.2607*	0.0122	-0.0667*	0.0868*	-0.0125	0.1917*	0.2334*	0.2299*	0.1058*	0.0514*
17. Internal pol. efficacy	-0.0632*	0.0507*	0.0920*	0.3610*	0.0049	0.1031*	0.1217*	-0.0815*	0.0858*	0.5404*	0.1772*	0.1036*	0.1258*
18. Gender	-0.0192*	0.0139*	0.0254*	0.0507*	0.0290*	-0.0154*	0.0264*	-0.1716*	0.0149*	0.1529*	0.0785*	0.0427*	0.0511*
19. Employed	-0.3111*	0.1319*	0.1358*	0.2695*	-0.0481*	0.0326*	0.0732*	-0.1462*	0.1878*	0.0590*	0.2601*	0.0301*	-0.0753*
20. Self-employed	-0.0036	-0.0530*	-0.0484*	0.0266*	0.0651*	-0.0579*	0.0260*	0.0284*	0.0172*	0.0504*	-0.0507*	-0.0061	0.0259*
21. Duration of residence, logged	0.4395*	-0.1837*	-0.1782*	-0.2401*	0.0470*	-0.1741*	-0.1189*	0.1235*	-0.3004*	-0.0519*	-0.0615*	-0.0656*	0.0765*
22. Living with partner	0.2094*	0.0114	0.0141*	0.0513*	0.0454*	-0.0660*	-0.0375*	0.0437*	-0.0552*	0.0897*	0.1116*	0.01	0.0959*
23. Number of minors in household	-0.0948*	-0.0214*	-0.0511*	0.0503*	0.0123	-0.0761*	-0.0085	0.0571*	0.0245*	-0.0082	0.0529*	-0.0222*	-0.0162*
24. Subjective evaluation of health	-0.3566*	0.1660*	0.1471*	0.2371*	0.0371*	0.0158*	0.1203*	-0.0654*	0.3188*	0.0674*	0.0857*	0.1555*	-0.0693*
25. Pension main source of income	0.6441*	-0.0863*	-0.0578*	-0.2403*	0.0359*	-0.012	-0.1305*	0.1465*	-0.3169*	0.0015	-0.1129*	-0.007	0.1435*
26. Strength of party identification	0.1561*	0.0428*	0.0565*	0.0755*	0.0051	0.0105	0.0096	0.0335*	-0.0182*	0.3262*	0.1766*	0.1181*	0.1195*

* = significant at .01 level.

	14. hinctot	15. stfec	16. lognet_1	17. inteff	18. sex	19. employed	20. selfempl	21. logarea	22. living	23. numchild	24. subheat	25. pension	26. partyclo
14. Household income	1												
15. General satisfaction	0.3199*	1											
16. Social networks, logged	0.2607*	0.1987*	1										
17. Internal pol. efficacy	0.2399*	0.1119*	0.2042*	1									
18. Gender	0.0701*	0.0299*	0.0771*	0.2309*	1								
19. Employed	0.2691*	0.0916*	0.0956*	0.1020*	0.0682*	1							
20. Self-employed	0.0368*	-0.0158*	0.0332*	0.0891*	0.1177*	-0.2963*	1						
21. Duration of residence, logged	-0.1874*	-0.0941*	-0.0383*	-0.0960*	0.0262*	-0.2117*	0.0458*	1					
22. Living with partner	0.1691*	0.0550*	0.0287*	0.0453*	0.0220*	0.0976*	0.0875*	0.0264*	1				
23. Number of minors in household	0.0701*	-0.0206*	0.0208*	0.0019	-0.0612*	0.1501*	0.0913*	-0.0310*	0.3756*	1			
24. Subjective evaluation of health	0.2572*	0.2996*	0.1377*	0.1569*	0.0663*	0.2186*	0.0578*	-0.1968*	-0.0135*	0.0636*	1		
25. Pension main source of income	-0.2506*	-0.0494*	-0.0699*	-0.1152*	-0.0281*	-0.4675*	-0.1396*	0.3208*	-0.0353*	-0.2744*	-0.3141*	1	
26. Strength of party identification	0.0771*	0.0768*	0.1360*	0.2536*	0.0659*	-0.0143*	0.0362*	0.0251*	0.0763*	-0.0165*	0.0039	0.0737*	1

* = significant at .01 level.

11.3 Models of voting participation: 21 single country regressions (chapter 6)

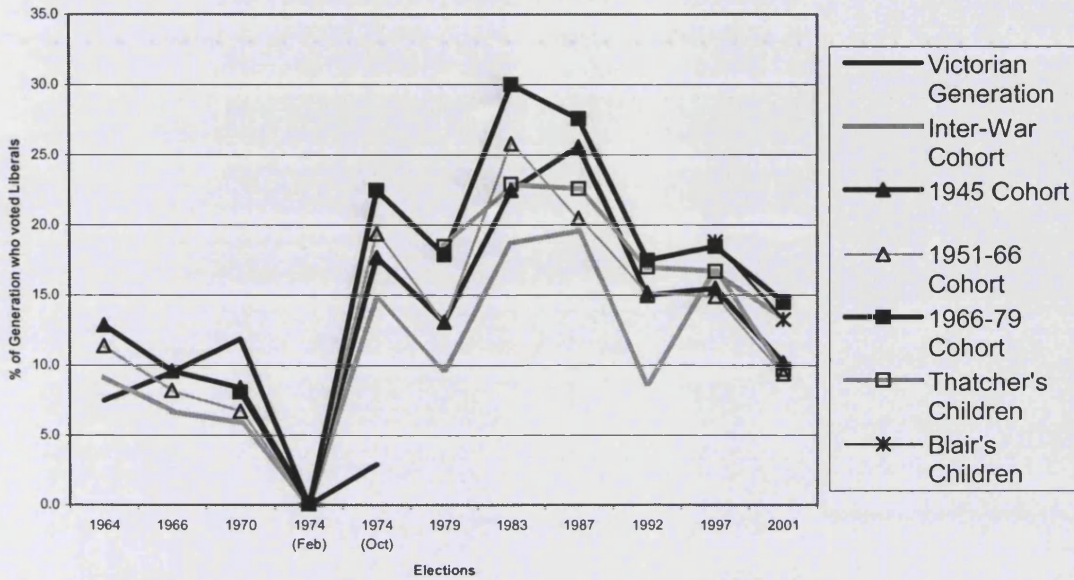
Table 11-3: Models of voting participation, single countries, 2002

	GB	AT	BE	CH	CZ	DE	DK	ES	FI	FR	GR	HU	IE	IT	LU	NL	NO	PL	PT	SE	SI
Pseudo R ²	0.266	0.276	0.159	0.303	0.273	0.304	0.280	0.271	0.254	0.268	0.201	0.245	0.258	0.264	0.214	0.235	0.279	0.156	0.278	0.256	0.196
Constant	3.50***	4.24***	2.39***	6.72***	5.02***	5.10***	3.56***	4.62***	3.97***	5.83***	3.10***	4.19***	4.53***	3.79***	3.98***	4.09***	7.38***	4.47***	5.56***	4.26***	3.34***
18-29 Baseline																					
30-39	0.39	0.15	0.88**	0.76**	-0.79*	0.25	0.35	1.19***	0.26	0.08	0.62**	0.54	1.16***	0.05	0.92***	0.84***	0.76**	0.24	0.52*	0	0.4
40-49	0.63**	0.39	0.81**	1.22***	-0.06	0.50*	0.53	1.26***	0.67**	0.39	0.76**	0.65*	1.25***	0.28	1.04***	0.81**	0.63*	0.87***	0.96***	0.11	0.11
50-59	0.65**	0	1.73***	1.26***	-0.63	0.36	1.57**	1.36***	0.60*	0.99**	0.57	0.87**	1.58***	0.97	1.55***	1.04***	1.09***	1.02***	2.08***	0.42	0.83**
60-69	0.86**	0.21	1.80***	1.37***	-1.17**	-0.58	1.80*	1.62***	1.42***	0.47	0.96*	1.22**	2.18***	0.79	1.38***	1.12**	1.18**	1.16***	1.78***	1.03*	0.87*
70-79	0.37	-0.43	1.48**	1.67***	-0.96*	-0.03	1.27	1.87***	1.29**	0.64	0.61	0.82*	1.65***	0.47	1.34**	1.17**	2.07***	1.36***	1.67***	1.17*	1.18**
80+	0.33	-1.32*	1.46*	1.41**	2.09***	-0.5	1.07	0.52	1	-0.5	-0.65	0.37	1.20*	0.07	0.42	1.59***	1.23*	0.85*	2.11**	0.28	2.65*
Education	0.09	0.24**	0.17*	0.06	0.31**	0.49***	0.1	0.06	0.13	0.03	0.09	0.38***	0.29***	0.47**	0.13*	0.23**	0.21**	0.26***	0.24**	0.18**	0.37***
Religiosity	0.05*	0.03	-0.02	0	0.05	-0.01	-0.15**	-0.02	0.01	0.02	0.04	0.01	0.04	0.03	-0.03	-0.09**	0.06	0.02	0.01	0.02	-0.04
Female	-0.18	-0.51**	-0.32	0.05	0	-0.47**	-0.23	0.06	0.01	0.04	0.23	-0.16	-0.07	0.3	-0.1	0.02	0.13	0.26*	0.03	-0.17	-0.11
Political interest	0.27**	0.61***	0.38**	0.67***	0.27*	0.34***	-0.06	0.03	0.16	0.16	0.06	0.26*	0.21*	-0.05	0.01	0.39***	0.24	0.29***	0.31**	0.34**	0.38***
sense of duty to vote	0.35***	0.23***	0.03	0.32***	0.31***	0.35***	0.43***	0.27***	0.39***	0.43***	0.11***	0.29***	0.26***	0.29***	0.16***	0.33***	0.43***	0.17***	0.26***	0.35***	0.21***
Income	-0.03	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.11**	0.01	0.08*	0.05	0.02	-0.04	-0.01	-0.04	0.03	0.01	0.04	0.09*	0.01	0.10*	0.05	0.03
Party identification	0.20***	0.26***	0.17*	0.30***	0.36***	0.18**	0.30**	0.45***	0.18**	0.09	0.22***	0.18***	0.07	0.50***	0.05	0.23***	0.06	0.20***	0.42***	0.24***	0.23**
Trade union and party membership	0.27	0.41*	0.47*			0.35	0.21	-0.02	0.23	-0.03	0.32	1.28*	0.49**	-0.21	0.61**	0.2	0.01	0.42	0.46	0.22	0.44*
duration of residence, logged	0.25***	0.42***	0.11	0.30***	0.37*	0.04	0.03	0.42***	0.13	0.39***	0.72***	0.08	0.42***	0.67***	0.61***	0.28***	0.30***	0.35***	0.33***	0.22*	0.14
External political efficacy, logged	-0.01	0.1	0.17*	0.04	0.08	0.04	0	-0.03	0.02	-0.14*	0.03	0.02	-0.06	0.02	-0.05	0.1	0.17	0.02	0.09	-0.07	0.02
Internal political efficacy, logged	-0.02	0.11	-0.06	0.19*	0.07	0.16	0.18	0.11	-0.01	0.1	0.07	0.09	0.01	-0.07	0.13	0.05	0.24**	0.06	0.03	0.11	0
Pension main source of income	0.16	0.65*	0.22	0.29	0.86**	1.01***	0.28	0.38	-0.57	0.81*	0.19	0.12	0.09	-1.02**	-0.03	-0.01	0.19	-0.15	0.07	-0.36	0.28
Living with partner	0.34*	0.59**	0.83***	0.40*	0.39*	0.31	0.52	0.60**	0.2	0.52**	0.80***	0.54**	0.52**	0.5	0.44*	0.22	0.48**	0.04	0.36*	0.57**	0.51*
Subjective evaluation of health	0	0.15	0.37**	0.13	0.19	0.18*	0.24	0.17	0.07	0.16	0.14	0.2	0.1	0.05	-0.09	0.08	0.1	0.16*	0.22*	0.16	0.02
Friends in non-political networks, logged	0.18	-0.01	0.26			0.29*	0.09	0.18	0.54***	0.70***	0.74*	-0.04	-0.01	0.08	0.33*	0.19	0.35*	0.08	0.09	0.08	0.32
Number of minor children in household	0.02	0.05	0	0.04	0.09	-0.07	0.45*	-0.04	-0.06	0.01	0.12	0.14	0.06	0.26	-0.07	-0.01	0.11	0.11	0.12	-0.08	0.21

***, **, * significant at 0.001, 0.01, 0.05, Data: ESS.

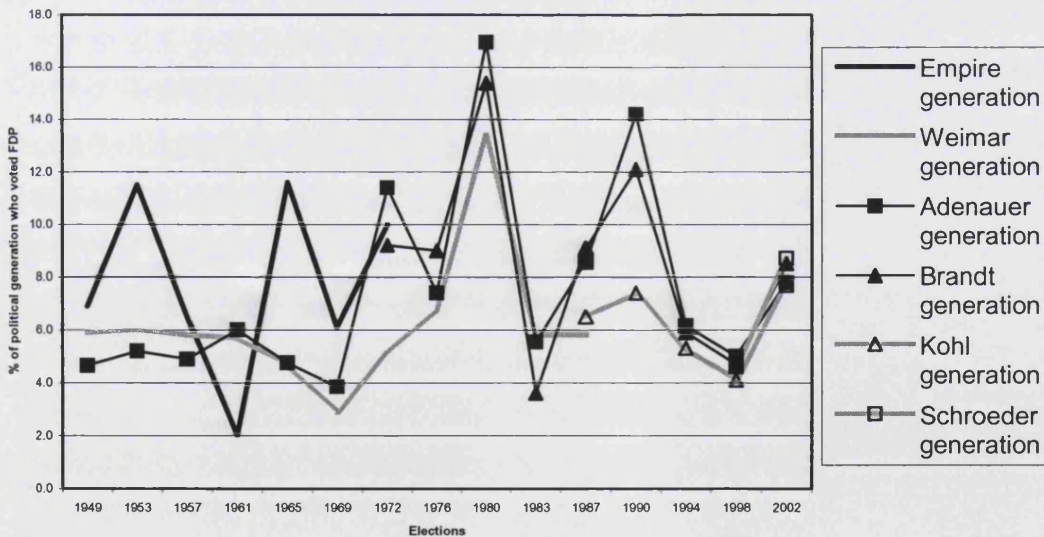
11.4 Graphs of political generations and party choice in Britain and West Germany: the Liberals, Greens and other parties (chapter 6)

Figure 11-1: Proportion of political generations who voted Liberal in British elections 1964-2001



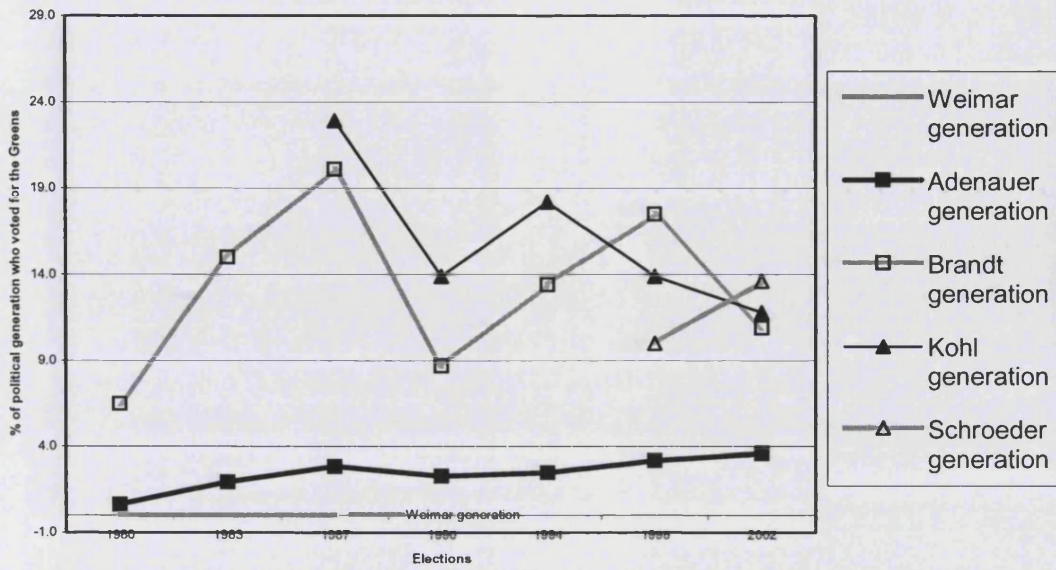
Source: own calculation according to British election studies 1964 to 2001, data defective for Feb 1974.

Figure 11-2: Proportion of political generations who voted for the FDP in German elections



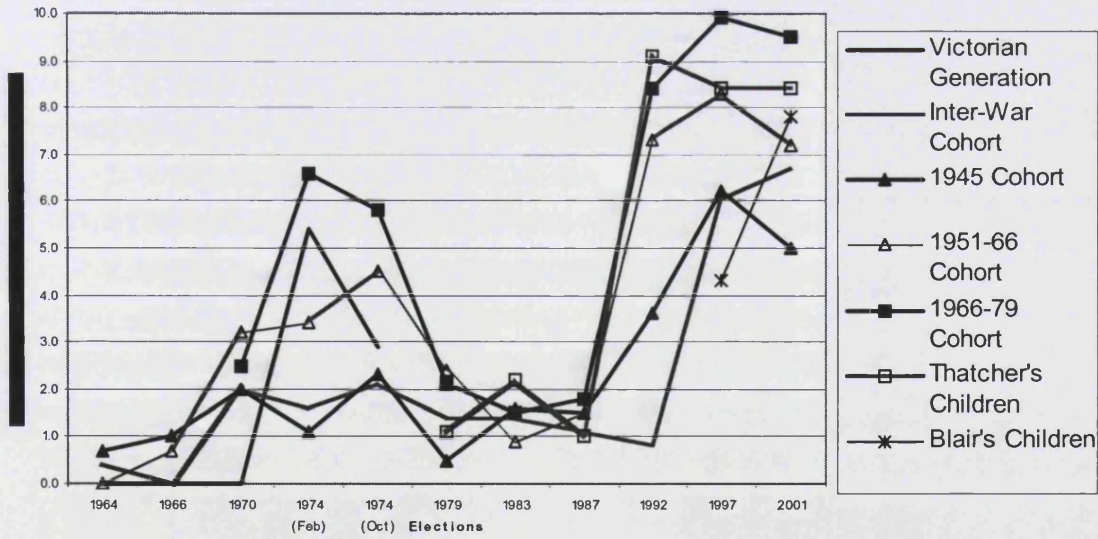
Source: own calculation according to German election studies 1961 to 1998 and Politbarometer 2002.

Figure 11-3: Proportion of political generations who voted for the Greens in German elections



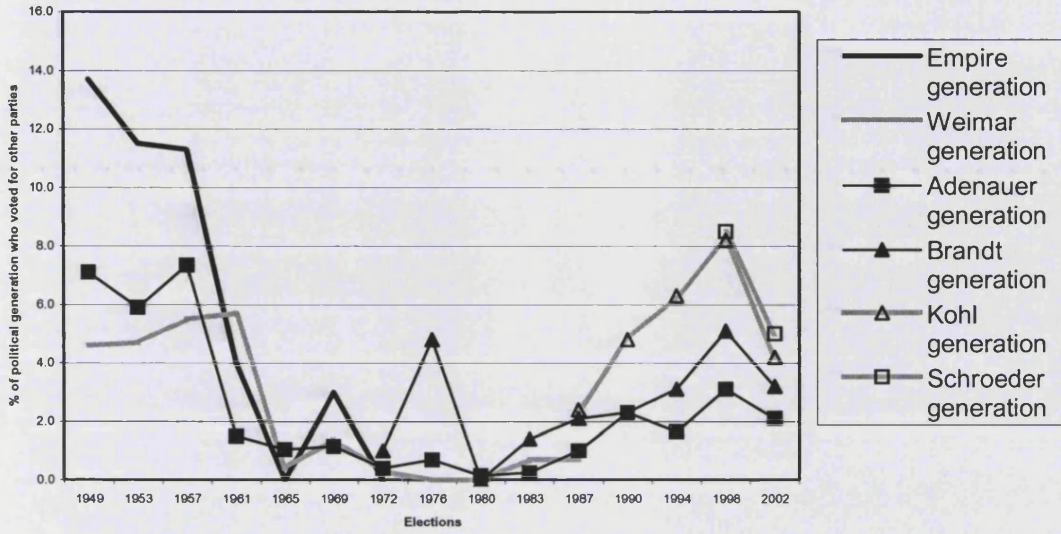
Source: own calculation according to German election studies 1961 to 1998 and Politbarometer 2002.

Figure 11-4: Proportion of political generations who voted for other parties in British elections 1964-2001



Source: own calculation according to British election studies 1964 to 2001.

Figure 11-5: Proportion of political generations who voted for other parties in German elections 1949-2002



Source: own calculation according to German election studies 1961 to 1998 and Politbarometer 2002.

11.5 Variables in pooled cross-sectional time series analysis (chapter 7)

Table 11-4: Descriptives of variables used for party choice models: mean, minimum, maximum, standard deviation and description

Variable Name	Survey question	Answer categories	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
<i>Politbarometer</i>						
Age (age categories)	Derived from v55 and v56	From 1988 respondents indicated age in 5 year categories	17	97	46.08	16.77
Education	Derived variable from V59 and V60	no school diploma or still at school, 1 at least basic diploma (Hauptschule), at least advanced diploma (Realschule), A Levels, University degree	1	5	2.63	0.83
incumbent	Respondent voted for the party in power		0	1	0.47	0.50
Religiosity (if respondent expressed denominational membership)	How often to you generally go to church?	Never, rarely, once a year, every now and then, almost every Sunday, every Sunday	0	5	2.31	1.49
Sex	Coded by the interviewer	Male, female	1	2	1.52	0.50
Smalvotefdp	Respondent voted for the Greens or another small party (not FDP)		0	1	0.11	0.31
Vote (if respondent expressed intention to vote)	(if there was a national election on Sunday) Which party would you vote for?	SPD, CDU/CSU, FDP, Greens, Other	1	5		
Year of birth	Derived from age		1881	1983	1943.8 1	18.44
<i>British Election Studies</i>						
Age, Year of birth	Various formulation like Would you say which year you are born in?		18	99	47.05	17.61
Inpower	Respondent voted for the party in power		0	1	0.40	0.49
Sex	Coded by the interviewer		1	2	1.53	0.50
Smalvote	Respondent voted for the Liberals or a small party		0	1	0.19	0.39
Vote (if respondent voted)	Which party did you vote for?	Labour, Conservatives, Liberals/Liberaldemocrats, Other	1	4		

11.6 Alternative party models for Britain with control variables (chapter 7)

Table 11-5: Logistic regressions, models of party choice in Britain 1964-1979 and 1979 – 2001 with more controls

Dependent Variable: Voted in last parliamentary election for one party versus voted for another

	Period 1: 1964-1979				Period 2: 1979-2001			
	Labour	Cons	Liberal	Other	Labour	Cons	Liberal	Other
Valid N	8,424	8,424	6,749	8,424	13,519	13,519	13,519	13,519
Pseudo R ²	0.118	0.100	0.037	0.083	0.08	0.074	0.032	0.074
Constant	-0.17 (0.15)	-0.43** (0.15)	-1.86*** (0.20)	-4.19*** (0.45)	-0.71*** (0.09)	0.22** (0.08)	-2.09*** (0.11)	-4.20*** (0.25)
Young (18-29)	0.17 (0.11)	-0.17 (0.11)	-0.03 (0.15)	0.21 (0.30)	0.06 (0.07)	-0.24*** (0.08)	0.24* (0.10)	0.26 (0.15)
Middle-aged (30-59)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Old (60+)	0.18 (0.11)	-0.06 (0.11)	-0.34* (0.17)	0.69 (0.60)	-0.02 (0.06)	0.12* (0.05)	-0.13 (0.07)	-0.06 (0.12)
Victorian	-0.71** (0.23)	0.91*** (0.22)	-0.24 (0.37)	-1.62 (0.97)				
Inter-War Cohort	-0.56*** (0.17)	0.74*** (0.17)	-0.18 (0.24)	-1.32 (0.73)				
1945 Cohort	-0.31* (0.13)	0.46*** (0.13)	-0.13 (0.18)	-0.65 (0.37)	-0.01 (0.07)	0.05 (0.06)	0.06 (0.07)	-0.52*** (0.16)
1951-66 Cohort	-0.17 (0.12)	0.30** (0.12)	-0.22 (0.16)	-0.04 (0.31)	0.03 (0.06)	0.05 (0.05)	-0.11 (0.07)	-0.09 (0.12)
1966-79 Cohort	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Thatcher's Children					0.19** (0.07)	0.08 (0.07)	-0.40*** (0.09)	-0.08 (0.13)
Blair's Children					0.23 (0.16)	0.05 (0.16)	-0.24 (0.20)	-0.44 (0.32)
Controls								
Education	-0.49*** (0.04)	0.32*** (0.03)	0.14*** (0.04)	0.16 (0.09)	-0.13*** (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	0.17*** (0.02)	-0.04 (0.03)
Religiosity	-0.05** (0.02)	0.03 (0.02)	0.05* (0.03)	0.00 (0.07)	-0.06*** (0.01)	0.03** (0.01)	0.01 (0.05)	0.05 (0.03)
Female	-0.18*** (0.05)	0.08 (0.05)	0.03 (0.08)	0.71*** (0.17)	-0.07 (0.04)	0.00 (0.04)	0.00 (0.05)	0.30*** (0.08)
Trade union member	1.04*** (0.06)	-0.98*** (0.06)	-0.23* (0.10)	0.11 (0.17)	0.44*** (0.05)	-0.54*** (0.05)	0.16** (0.06)	0.17 (0.10)
Council housing	1.09*** (0.05)	-1.09*** (0.06)	-0.42*** (0.10)	0.64*** (0.16)	1.28*** (0.06)	-1.32*** (0.06)	-0.34*** (0.07)	0.58*** (0.12)

All models control for gender (male baseline) and election year (1977 baseline), standard errors in brackets, ***, **, * significant at 0.001, 0.01, 0.05, weighting according to sample size per election. Data: BES.

Table 11-6: Additional controls for British models of party choice

Variable Name	Survey question	Answer categories	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Education	Age at which resp. finished school or full-time education	1=<16, 2= 16, 3 = 17, 4 = 18, 5>18, mean replaces missing values	1	5	1.94	1.19
Religiosity	How often respondent attended service	0 = never, 1= once a year, 2 = more than once a year, 3 = , 4= once a month 5 = several times a month, 6= more than once a week mean replaces missing values if no data in survey years	0	6	2.80	1.64
Council housing	Whether resp. lives in rented council house or flat	Mean replaces missing values	0	1	0.25	0.41
Trade union member	Whether resp. is currently member of trade union		0	1	0.25	0.40

Source: BES 1964-2001, some years do not have all items, replaced by mean. Question wording changed, for example, for education.

11.7 Models of participation outside of political organisations (chapter 8, mode 3 – petition and badge): various sub-samples

Table 11-7: Random-intercept logistic regressions, models of signing a petition or wearing a badge

	Old democracies Belgium, Britain, Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland	Post45 Democracies Austria, Italy, West Germany	Post75 Democracies Greece, Portugal, Spain	Post90 Democracies Czech Republic, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia	Low average part Greece, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia	Medium average part Belgium, Czech Rep., Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Spain,	High aver. part Austria, Britain, Denmark, East Germany, Finland, France, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, West Germany,
Constant	-0.78***	-0.84***	-1.13***	-1.23***	-2.96*	-1.04	-0.3
Age	-0.01**	-0.003	-0.03***	-0.02***	-0.02*	-0.02***	-0.01**
Pol. interest	0.05	0.12*	0.02	0.08*	0.03	0.14***	0.05
Education	-0.08***	-0.19***	0	0.04	0.03	-0.07**	-0.09***
Left-right scale	0.07	0.11***	0.13***	0.12*	0.09	0.14**	0.07
Size of town	0.13**	0.17***	0.3	0.16	0.16	0.32***	0.12**
Postmaterialism	0.01	0.03***	-0.04	0.01	-0.02	-0.01	0.02*
Religiosity	0.30***	0.28*	0.39***	0.46***	0.04	0.38	-0.55
Political membership	0.15***	0.41*	0.90**	0.42	0.54***	0.40***	0.28***
Political satisfaction	-0.01	0.01	0.01	-0.03	0.62	0.24	0.18**
Political information, logged	0.05	0.57***	0.29	0.19	-0.01	-0.02	-0.01
Household income	0.02	0.01	-0.04	0.02	0.29	-0.13	0.15
General satisfaction	-0.01	-0.01	-0.03**	-0.02	0	-0.03	0.03
Social networks, logged	0.66***	0.74***	0.71***	0.64***	-0.04	0	-0.01
Internal political efficacy	0.21***	0.09***	0.32***	0.36***	0.64***	0.73***	0.65***
Female	-0.48***	-0.32*	-0.38***	-0.33*	0.39***	0.19***	0.20***
Employed	0.06	-0.13***	0.1	-0.45	-0.37**	-0.36***	-0.45***
Self-employed	0.22	0.11	0.34	-0.4	-0.26	-0.15	0.06
Duration of residence, logged	-0.02	-0.20**	0.01	-0.02	-0.34	-0.02	0.27**
Living with partner	-0.05	0.13	-0.06	-0.09	-0.03	-0.03	-0.05
# of minor children in household	-0.01	-0.06	-0.13	0.12	-0.11	-0.03	-0.03
Health	-0.04	0.00	-0.02	0.11	-0.03	0.11*	-0.04
Pension as main source of income	-0.1	-0.61***	0.06	-0.08	0.15*	-0.05	-0.03

***, **, * significant at 0.001, 0.01, 0.05. Data: ESS. All models have been weighted with dweight (individual) and pweight (country level).

11.8 Models of participation outside of political organisations (chapter 8, mode 4 – protest): various sub-samples

Table 11-8: Random-intercept logistic regressions, models of protest

	Old democracies Belgium, Britain, Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland	Post45 Democracies Austria, Italy, West Germany	Post75 Democracies Greece, Portugal, Spain	Post90 Democracies Czech Republic, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia	Low average part Greece, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia	Medium average part Belgium, Czech Rep., Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Spain	High average part Austria, Britain, Denmark, East Germany, Finland, France, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, West Germany
Constant	-1.60**	-1.81	-1.64	-6.18***	-5.23***	-2.07**	-7.56***
Age	-0.02***	-0.02*	-0.05***	-0.02*	-0.02	-0.02*	-0.02***
Pol. interest	-0.05	0.03	0.09	-0.02	0	0.11***	-0.06
Education	-0.23***	-0.27*	-0.1	0.08	0.04	-0.1	-0.26***
Left-right scale	0.20**	0.36***	0.08	0.35***	0.33***	0.18***	0.25***
Size of town	0.27***	0.33***	0.45	0.33	0.3	0.25***	0.30***
Postmaterialism	-0.03**	-0.03***	-0.05	0.04	-0.02	-0.04	-0.03**
Religiosity	0.53***	0.50**	0.71	0.36*	0.34	0.16	5.91***
Political membership	0.27*	0.66***	0.9	0.97***	0.44***	0.36*	0.54***
Political satisfaction	-0.06**	-0.02	-0.05***	-0.11***	1.01***	0.53**	0.33**
Political information, logged	0.19	-0.23	0.67	0.48	-0.10***	-0.04	-0.05**
Household income	-0.01	-0.07	-0.1	-0.01	0.36	-0.15	0.11
General satisfaction	0	0	0	0.04	-0.01	-0.06	-0.02
Social networks, logged	0.88***	0.65***	0.57***	0.88***	0.02	0	0
Internal political efficacy	0.08*	0.04	0.23	0.28*	0.76***	0.62***	0.83***
Female	0	-0.09***	-0.18	0.22	0.27*	0.37**	0.06**
Employed	-0.28	-0.49***	-0.46**	0.41	0	-0.1	-0.02
Self-employed	-0.38*	-0.26	0.09	0.21	0	-0.26	-0.42**
Duration of residence, logged	0.05	-0.05	-0.01	-0.12	-0.19	-0.68	-0.34*
Living with partner	-0.37***	-0.12	0.47	-0.11	-0.01	0.16***	0.01
# of minor children in household	-0.06	-0.12***	-0.06	-0.02	-0.03	-0.28	-0.28**
Health	-0.07	0.32***	0.11	0.05	-0.09	-0.06	-0.08
Pension as main source of income	-0.52*	-0.60***	0.36	0.32	0.03	0.03	0.04

***, **, * significant at 0.001, 0.01, 0.05. Data: ESS. All models have been weighted with dweight (individual) and pweight (country level). Models 4 and 5 did not converge with the STATA GLLAMM procedure (version September 2006). They are weighted with pweight only under the XTLOGIT command.

11.9 Models of participation outside of pol. organisations (chapter 8, mode 3 petition/badge): 22 single-country regressions

Table 11-9: Single-country logistic regressions, models of signing a petition or wearing a badge

	AT	BE	CH	CZ	DE(W)	DE(E)	DK	ES	FI	FR	GB	GR	HU	IE	IT	LU	NL	NO	PL	PT	SE	SI
Pseudo R ²	0.088	0.131	0.077	0.131	0.119	0.062	0.080	0.213	0.122	0.149	0.086	0.183	0.190	0.120	0.223	0.102	0.109	0.065	0.136	0.269	0.101	0.151
Constant	-1.62**	-0.15	-1.13*	0.47	-1.87**	-0.16	-0.30	0.32	-1.45**	-0.17	-1.09*	-1.70	-8.35***	0.42	-2.72**	-0.48	-2.41***	0.25	-2.65**	-2.84*	0.83	-2.20*
Age	-0.01	-0.01*	0.00	-0.02*	-0.00	-0.01	-0.02***	-0.03***	-0.02**	-0.03***	-0.01*	-0.02*	-0.01	-0.02***	-0.02	-0.01	-0.00	-0.02***	-0.01	0.00	-0.02***	-0.03**
Pol. interest	0.21**	0.38***	0.30***	0.49***	0.25**	0.34**	0.08	0.48***	0.24**	0.28**	0.36***	0.35**	0.26	0.36***	0.71***	0.14	0.15	0.27***	0.38**	0.30*	0.35***	0.59***
Education	0.12*	0.12*	-0.01	0.21*	0.08	0.14	0.24***	0.09	0.01	0.11**	0.04	0.13	0.01	0.03	0.16	0.09	0.18***	0.05	0.15*	0.24**	-0.05	-0.05
Left-right scale	-0.10**	-0.05	-0.17***	-0.04	-0.18***	-0.12**	-0.09**	-0.08	-0.06	-0.12***	-0.06	-0.05	0.17**	-0.01	0.01	-0.09*	-0.15***	-0.08***	0.09*	-0.05	-0.04	-0.10
Size of town	0.02	0.18**	0.22***	-0.03	0.10	0.05	-0.03	0.13*	0.18***	0.14*	0.06	-0.03	0.22	0.04	0.09	-0.23**	0.03	-0.02	-0.00	-0.13	-0.07	0.20*
Postmaterialism	0.15	0.36**	0.28**	0.24	0.15	-0.12	-0.01	0.32*	0.30*	0.30**	0.18	0.17	0.03	0.04			0.39***	0.05	0.29	0.39	0.06	-0.15
Religiosity	0.03	-0.04	0.06**	0.01	0.03	-0.01	0.05	-0.03	0.03	-0.01	-0.01	-0.07	-0.03	-0.08**	-0.05	0.00	0.07**	-0.02	-0.06	-0.09	0.02	0.02
Political membership	0.18	0.11			0.55***	0.28	0.22	0.53*	0.21*	0.49*	0.10	1.05***	-0.21	0.37**	1.11***	0.30*	0.40***	0.00	0.37	1.45***	0.28**	0.83***
Political satisfaction	-0.04*	-0.01	0.02	-0.07*	0.02	-0.02	-0.01	-0.03	-0.01	-0.02	-0.02	-0.02	-0.07	-0.00	-0.11***	-0.06*	0.02	0.02	-0.00	0.03	-0.01	-0.04
Political information, logged	0.48*	-0.09	-0.05	-0.23	0.50*	-0.38	0.16	0.11	-0.15	0.12	0.50***	0.43	1.38***	-0.01	0.46	0.37	0.48*	-0.00	-0.08	-0.37	0.01	0.28
Household income	0.05	-0.03	0.07**	0.00	-0.00	0.02	0.03	0.01	0.05	0.09*	-0.00	-0.03	0.05	-0.01	-0.04	-0.03	-0.01	0.06*	-0.01	-0.00	0.00	0.07
General satisfaction	0.01	-0.02	-0.02	0.09*	-0.01	0.00	-0.01	-0.02	0.04	-0.02	-0.01	-0.00	0.03	-0.04	0.07	0.04	-0.03	-0.01	-0.06*	-0.01	-0.04	0.01
Social networks, logged	0.62***	0.78***			0.72***	0.37**	0.33**	0.87***	0.78***	0.71***	0.63***	1.08***	0.90***	0.71***	0.81***	0.45**	0.61***	0.60***	1.20***	0.37	0.71***	0.52**
Internal political efficacy	0.10	0.24**	0.23**	0.36**	0.11	0.11	0.26***	0.27**	0.33***	0.04	0.15*	0.12	0.58**	0.24**	0.13	0.30**	0.23**	0.18**	0.31**	0.63***	0.28***	0.20
Female	-0.14	-0.38**	-0.21	-0.56**	-0.34**	-0.15	-0.33*	-0.42*	-0.79***	-0.15	-0.47***	-0.32	-0.27	-0.36**	-0.41*	-0.37*	-0.45***	-0.31**	-0.38*	-0.38	-0.50***	-0.41
Employed	-0.04	-0.23	0.02	0.17	-0.12	0.01	0.06	-0.00	0.00	0.04	0.11	-0.25	0.30	-0.12	-0.07	0.36	-0.08	-0.22	-0.15	0.13	-0.00	-0.86**
Self-employed	0.24	-0.17	0.31	0.82*	0.25	0.05	-0.15	-0.38	0.06	0.61	-0.07	-0.05	-0.15	-0.42	-0.21	0.31	-0.06	-0.27	-0.81*	-0.01	0.65**	-2.17**
Duration of residence, logged	-0.07	-0.03	-0.06	-0.40*	-0.24***	-0.03	-0.06	0.03	-0.07	-0.04	0.03	-0.13	0.24	0.01	0.01	-0.03	0.02	0.01	-0.00	0.35*	-0.00	-0.13
Living with partner	-0.29*	0.04	-0.17	-0.09	0.23	-0.04	-0.32	-0.06	0.26	0.23	0.16	-0.04	-0.67*	0.19	-0.37	0.01	0.25	-0.01	-0.21	-0.14	-0.11	0.38
# of minor children in household	-0.07	0.12	0.04	0.16	-0.09	0.16	-0.08	-0.05	-0.07	0.05	0.07	-0.10	0.19	0.02	0.35**	-0.02	0.03	-0.07	0.13	-0.10	-0.12*	-0.09
Health	-0.11	-0.09	0.03	-0.21	0.09	-0.10	-0.07	-0.18	-0.01	-0.19*	-0.05	-0.05	0.23	-0.15	0.06	0.02	-0.09	-0.03	0.12	0.13	-0.04	0.22
Pension as main source of income	-0.31	-0.19	-0.26	-0.16	-0.56*	-0.13	0.12	-0.32	0.18	0.90***	0.03	0.26	0.83	0.00	0.02	-0.27	-0.35	-0.10	0.16	-0.16	-0.20	-0.56

***, **, * significant at 0.001, 0.01, 0.05. Data: ESS.

11.10 Models of participation outside of political organisations (chapter 8, mode 4 protest): 22 single-country regressions

Table 11-10: Single-country logistic regressions, models of protest

	AT	BE	CH	CZ	DE(W)	DE(E)	DK	ES	FI	FR	GB	GR	HU	IE	IT	LU	NL	NO	PL	PT	SE	SI
Pseudo R ²	0.240	0.137	0.121	0.168	0.1667	0.131	0.178	0.224	0.198	0.248	0.248	0.190	0.286	0.167	0.2947	0.128	0.093	0.109	0.155	0.279	0.1898	0.1644
Constant	-0.88	-1.77	-0.24	-2.85	-3.09***	-1.60	-0.60	-2.29**	-1.05	-0.89	-2.96**	0.01	-	-0.56	-1.01	-0.35	-3.51*	-1.25	-5.54**	-4.73**	-3.06**	-4.46**
													10.09**									
Age	-0.03**	-0.01	-0.02	-0.02	-0.02	-0.03***	-0.03*	-0.02*	-0.03	-0.02**	-0.01	-0.04***	-0.02	-0.03**	-0.05***	-0.04***	-0.01	-0.02*	-0.02	-0.02	-0.02	-0.02
Pol. interest	0.21	0.23	0.39**	0.38	0.52***	0.33*	0.43*	0.46***	0.61*	0.37**	0.68***	0.42**	0.78**	0.28	0.78***	0.23*	0.77**	0.30*	0.18	0.51*	0.93***	0.73**
Education	0.20**	0.11	-0.02	-0.11	-0.07	0.16	-0.12	0.16*	0.03	0.08	0.12	-0.03	0.15	-0.10	0.22	-0.06	-0.13	0.02	-0.08	0.05	-0.09	-0.05
Left-right scale	-0.32***	-0.16**	-0.22***	-0.05	-0.31***	-0.13*	-0.19***	-0.12*	-0.15	-0.24***	-0.03	-0.18***	0.22**	-0.18***	-0.07	-0.14**	-0.14*	-0.26***	0.09	0.04	-0.19***	0.05
Size of town	0.27***	0.26**	0.18*	0.29	0.34***	0.36***	0.18	0.13	0.28	0.21**	-0.01	0.16	0.54***	0.19*	0.19	-0.01	-0.05	0.22**	0.29	0.56***	0.48***	0.34
Postmaterialism	0.26	0.25	0.30*	0.56	0.20	0.21	0.12	0.55**	0.22	0.35*	0.46*	0.22	0.14	0.13			0.39	0.10	0.15	1.22**	0.17	0.14
Religiosity	-0.06*	-0.03	0.01	0.04	-0.01	-0.07	-0.02	0.00	-0.15*	-0.07*	-0.02	-0.06	0.06	-0.06	-0.01	0.01	0.07	-0.03	0.01	-0.11	-0.03	-0.04
Political membership	0.47**	0.56**			0.71***	0.44	-0.02	0.63**	-0.13	0.62**	0.58*	0.94***	-0.27	0.12	1.60***	0.32	0.31	0.28	1.43***	1.16***	0.45*	-0.12
Political satisfaction	-0.02	-0.05	-0.06*	-0.06	-0.01	-0.00	-0.07	-0.07*	-0.01	-0.02	-0.06	-0.04	-0.15**	-0.03	-0.11**	-0.03	-0.01	-0.06	-0.11	-0.06	-0.02	-0.05
Political information, logged	0.03	-0.50	-0.22	0.01	0.08	-0.39	0.30	0.09	-0.32	-0.16	0.05	0.25	1.16*	-0.31	-0.18	0.42	-0.15	0.20	0.62	-0.39	-0.35	-0.64
Household income	0.04	-0.02	0.01	-0.02	-0.06	0.02	-0.01	-0.03	0.03	0.07	-0.06	-0.05	0.04	0.04	0.02	-0.03	-0.07	-0.07	-0.05	0.04	-0.06	0.04
General satisfaction	-0.06*	-0.01	0.02	0.07	0.01	-0.00	0.06	0.05	-0.03	-0.03	-0.03	-0.00	0.08	-0.06	0.02	0.04	0.04	0.03	0.02	-0.10	-0.03	-0.04
Social networks, logged	0.52***	0.80***			0.64***	0.43*	0.75***	0.54***	0.85**	0.97***	0.79***	0.68**	0.50	0.48**	0.31	0.62***	0.60*	0.30*	1.21***	0.09	0.81***	1.06**
Internal political efficacy	0.18	0.32*	0.29*	0.49*	-0.07	0.30*	0.06	0.43***	0.44	0.12	0.11	0.16	0.25	0.53***	0.33*	0.16	0.15	0.15	0.19	0.63**	0.10	0.05
Female	-0.17	0.03	-0.10	0.46	-0.08	-0.13	-0.48*	0.21	-0.67	0.18	-0.54*	-0.08	0.10	0.19	0.13	0.39*	0.01	0.03	0.03	-0.03	0.29	0.54
Employed	-0.55*	0.04	-0.24	0.90	-0.31	-0.49*	-0.45	-0.59**	-0.18	0.05	-0.40	-0.08	0.28	-0.05	-0.54	-0.51*	-0.27	0.16	0.33	-0.52	-0.14	-0.74
Self-employed	-0.25	0.01	-0.08	1.08	0.05	-0.61	-0.91	-0.82*	-0.93	-0.00	-0.30	0.10	-0.23	0.23	-0.59	-0.02	-1.26	0.11	-0.35	-1.19	-0.10	-0.23
Duration of residence, logged	-0.14	0.22	-0.12	-0.39	0.01	0.08	-0.00	0.18	-0.17	-0.08	0.10	-0.08	0.21	0.05	-0.15	0.12	-0.04	0.02	-0.23	0.42*	0.19	0.37
Living with partner	-0.05	-0.16	-0.54*	-0.24	-0.12	-0.05	-0.54	-0.12	-0.04	-0.17	0.43	-0.15	-0.27	-0.36	-0.26	0.05	0.58	-0.09	0.07	0.21	-0.00	-0.13
# of minor children in household	-0.24*	-0.06	0.11	-0.00	-0.12	-0.07	0.10	-0.08	0.00	-0.03	-0.07	-0.07	-0.15	0.03	0.19	-0.23*	-0.12	0.08	-0.05	-0.28	-0.18	0.15
Health	0.14	-0.12	-0.04	0.00	0.39***	0.04	-0.19	0.13	-0.34	-0.00	-0.11	-0.15	-0.04	0.13	0.05	-0.09	-0.09	-0.09	0.10	0.28	-0.30*	0.05
Pension as main source of income	-0.82*	0.36	-0.48	-0.20	-0.68	-0.28	-1.69**	-0.22	-0.65	-0.15	-0.54	0.08	0.78	-0.41	0.15	-0.12	-0.15	-0.44	0.37	-0.11	-0.25	-1.66

***, **, * significant at 0.001, 0.01, 0.05. Data: ESS.

11.11 Interview guide (chapter 9)

Contacting procedure

Once a telephone number was obtained (see text), I phoned the person up. I explained who I was, where I got the number from and the academic, non-commercial nature of my project. Only one recommended person broke off the conversation at this point. I asked whether the information that the person was 60 or older and had been involved in the protest activities around Council Tax was correct. I further gave her my landline contact number and full name in order to allow that person to verify who I was. I pointed out the nature of the interview (per phone, at a time most convenient to the person, duration 30-45 minutes) and that all details would be kept secret, so that no one could track back where the information had come from. Some respondents were suspicious and wanted to check my phone number and homepage to see whether I was telling the truth. If no one answered the phone, I left a message with my number, name and the reason for the call asking for a call back. All respondents agreed to give an interview. I then made an appointment for the actual interview by phone.

When leading the actual interview, I always started by pointing out that

- All information was to be treated with confidentiality and that no names would be used in the research report;
- The purpose of the interview was to understand the personal experience of the Council Tax protest and that there was 'no right or wrong' in the answers. This should make the respondents at ease and not to worry about giving correct 'facts';
- The respondent could always choose not to answer a question if she felt uneasy about it;

- I was taking notes and that the interview would take about 30-45 minutes;
- The interviewee could always call me if she had further questions after the interview;
- She could ask questions before we would start.

Interview questions

The following list of questions gives an idea of the approximate order and type of questions that I asked. If a respondent started to talk about a certain topic that I intended to cover later, I would ask those questions immediately.

Warming Up

- What is the town or city called you live in?
- Which part of England is that?
- Where did you take part in the protests?
- One or several?
- To what extent are you involved with Is it Fair? or the local pensioners group?
- How did you hear about the protests? Were you asked by a friend or an organisation? Is it Fair?
- What is your personal position towards Council Tax?
- Did people that you knew beforehand join you in protesting? Were they 60 and older?
- How did you get to the protests?
- Did you do anything else besides protesting e.g. writing a letter to your councillor or MP?
- Did you sign a petition?
- Are you a supporter of any of the pensioners' organisations e.g. National Pensioners Convention?
- Have you been to any protests since, either against Council Tax or anything else?

Main part

- At the Council Tax protests, why did you want to protest at the time? PROBE
 - Personally affected
 - Anger about local politicians
 - Satisfaction with political parties
- Why did you want to express your views on the streets?
- The people you marched alongside in the protest – were they 60 or older as well?
- Do you think it was kind of nice to be with people of the same age group or was it not important to you?

- When you read the newspaper articles about the protests, the press often highlighted the higher age of protesters and seemed to be surprised. For instance they wrote about the 'grey army that is marching'. Can you understand why they should be surprised?
- Do you think it is unusual to protest at your age?
- How did your own friends, neighbours or family react when you protested? Were they surprised as well?
- What did younger people that you know say?
- (FOR FIRST TIME PROTESTERS) When you were at the protests, did you feel awkward in any way because of your age?
- Were there people who let you understand that you should *not* have marched in the street because you are too old? IF YES, Why – do you think – do some people say things like that?
- There are people at your age who are not able to march in the streets because they are ill, for instance. Do you have any feelings for them when you are protesting?

Political past

- Now I would like to ask you a few questions about your past. Have you protested before?
- When was the last time that you protested before those Council Tax protests?
- What was the occasion?
- Do you remember how old you were when you *first* protested?
- When you were younger, were you also active in politics in other ways? Did you ever contact your MP or councillor?
- Do you think it is now easier, more difficult or the same for you to be active in politics? Why?
- I would now like to ask you a few questions about your parents. Did you grow up with your parents? Were your parents political people, e.g. apart from voting, were they active in a party or in the trade union?
- Do you remember whether they ever protested in the streets or told you about it?
- When your parents were your age, do you remember whether they ever protested?
- Do you think it is more common among older people to protest now than it was 30 years ago? Why do you think that is?
- To what extent has retirement made a difference for you in terms of your political interest and activities?

Winding down – socio-economic background and voting

- Which year were you born in?
- Are you a member of a political party? Which one? IF NO, have you ever been? If YES, when did you join them
- Did you vote in the last elections?
- Which party did you vote for?

- Generally speaking, some people tend to prefer one party over another. Have you always supported that party?
- IF LIBDEM VOTER : What was the main reason why you voted for the Lib Dems? Was the suggested abolishment of the Council Tax a reason why you voted for the Lib Dems?
- If NO LIBDEM VOTER: the Liberal Democrats proposed to abolish Council Tax, why didn't you vote for them?
- How old were you when you left school?
- Did you go to university?
- Are you still working?
- What was the last job that you had?
- Do you receive a pension or pension credit? What kind of pensions do you receive?

Concluding

- Is there anything that you have not told me that you might want to add?
- Do you know anybody else who is 60 or older, took part in the demonstrations and who might be willing to be interviewed?

I have sent drafts of the chapter to all participants with the opportunity for them to ask for their individual capital letter, so that they can identify themselves.

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