

# Revista **CENTRA** de Ciencias Sociales

**CENTRA Journal of Social Sciences**

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The **Andalusian Studies Center Public Foundation** -CENTRA-, attached to the Consejería de la Presidencia, Interior, Diálogo Social y Simplificación Administrativa of the Junta de Andalucía, is a scientific and cultural institution that already has a history of more than twenty years, and which has as its foundational objectives the promotion of scientific research and the generation of knowledge about the social, economic and cultural reality of Andalusia.

In accordance with these purposes and its nature, **CENTRA** has created ex novo in 2021 a line of scientific publications in the field of social sciences, in accordance with the universalist canons of scientific communication, made up of three book collections (Actualidad, Biblioteca de Investigación y Enfoques) and the CENTRA Journal of Social Sciences.

The **ACTUALIDAD** collection addresses issues of relevance and interest in the contemporary Andalusian social and political reality linked to the broader context of Spanish society, the European Union and, in short, global dynamics. It is characterized by a determined orientation to present empirical evidence of the phenomena considered, linking the data provided to its theoretical and explanatory analysis.

Even though it is a collection linked to the scientific community and research in the social sciences, it is also conceived under the broadest idea of dissemination for an audience that is not an expert in the topics covered. The collection, which has been published without interruption since 2005, is now structured according to a selection process for original manuscripts in accordance with universalist criteria of scientific quality and anonymous evaluation by academic peers external to CENTRA. It is available in digital format and is accessible by free download from the website of the Center for Andalusian Studies.

The newly created **BIBLIOTECA DE INVESTIGACIÓN** collection is made up of monographic research papers from different areas of knowledge in the social sciences. It therefore has the objective of publishing the results of exhaustive investigations in accordance with the standardized criteria of communication. In this way, this collection also allows those doctoral theses in the field of social sciences that meet these criteria to be published in it and that they are presented in a format compatible with editorial standards and the established length.

The **ENFOQUES** collection, also created ex novo, is aimed at bringing together under the same volume the academic results of seminars, scientific conferences, etc., that are the consequence of some academic initiative for research or debate whose result implies a collective work directed by an editor. or editors. This group nature does not imply any reduction in the commitment to the quality and scientific nature of the collection, since the generation and validation of scientific knowledge is a joint and community process that, as the frontiers of the social sciences have advanced, is becoming more and more necessary. However, this collective nature of the works published here does require scrupulous work by the editor or editors who coordinate the initiative, supervise the work of the different contributions, evaluate their substantive results, and integrate them into the unitary whole that the publication implies. final published manuscript.

Finally, and likewise newly created, the CENTRA Journal of Social Sciences is a semi-annual scientific publication for all areas of this field of scientific knowledge that is published in Spanish and English in electronic format, freely accessible and downloadable, and in Spanish in paper support. The journal has a miscellaneous nature for the social sciences as a whole that does not exclude the possibility of publishing debate sections and specific numbers of a monographic nature that, in any case, will be governed by the same canons of universalism and anonymous evaluation of scientific communication. than the rest of the texts presented. The journal is open to unpublished texts, written with the utmost scientific rigor, coming from the broad scientific community, both nationally and internationally.

In order to provide content to all this new initiative of scientific publications, and scrupulously guarantee the principles of scientific communication, there is an interdisciplinary Editorial Board made up of prestigious professors from universities and national and international research organizations.



**ARTICLES**  
ARTÍCULOS



**ARTICLES/ARTÍCULOS**

# The Rationality of Conspiracy Theories: An Approach based on Max Weber and Raymond Boudon

La racionalidad de las teorías conspirativas: una aproximación  
a partir de Max Weber y Raymond Boudon

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## ABSTRACT

Conspiracy theories tend to be perceived as irrational ideological phenomena with the potential to produce harmful effects on those societies in which they are disseminated. This perception, reinforced by the visibility of those historical examples in which discrimination against minorities and even genocide have been legitimised, conditions their sociological analysis and limits their explanatory potential when founded on a presumption of irrationality. This article, in contrast, defends an approach based on a presumption of rationality, broadly interpreted by combining instrumental and value rationality. Such a rational choice approach enables a more thorough understanding of the phenomenon and with it, potentially a more solid basis for intervention with respect to the regulatory objectives that the theory does not renounce. This article presents the two main currents in sociological research of conspiracy theories and shows how both could be reconciled by means of a rational approach that, unlike Pareto's restricted vision of rationality, is based on the views of Weber and Boudon, exploring their applicability to empirical studies that associate conspiracy theories with partisanship and religiosity.

**KEYWORDS:** Conspiracy theories; rational choice; cognitive rationality; Max Weber; Raymond Boudon

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## RESUMEN

Las teorías conspirativas suelen ser percibidas como fenómenos ideológicos irracionales con potencial para producir efectos perniciosos en las sociedades donde se propagan. Esta percepción, reforzada por la visibilidad de los ejemplos históricos en que han legitimado la discriminación de minorías o incluso el genocidio, condiciona el análisis sociológico de las mismas y limita su potencial explicativo cuando parte de una presunción de irracionalidad. Este artículo defiende, por el contrario, una aproximación que parte de una presunción de racionalidad, concebida en un sentido amplio en el que se conjugan la racionalidad instrumental y la racionalidad valorativa. Un enfoque de elección racional así planteado permite una comprensión más completa del fenómeno y, con ella, potencialmente una base más sólida para intervenir respecto a los objetivos normativos a los que no renuncia. El artículo presenta las dos corrientes principales en el estudio sociológico de las teorías conspirativas y muestra cómo ambas podrían conciliarse por medio de un enfoque racional que, frente a la visión restringida de la racionalidad de Pareto, se base en las de Weber y Boudon, explorando su aplicabilidad a trabajos empíricos que relacionan teorías conspirativas con partidismo y religiosidad.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Teorías conspirativas; elección racional; racionalidad cognitiva; Max Weber; Raymond Boudon

“... for the madman (like the determinist) generally sees too much cause in everything [...]. Indeed, the common phrase for insanity is in this respect a misleading one. The madman is not the man who has lost his reason. The madman is the man who has lost everything except his reason.”

G. K. Chesterton (1986[1908]: 221–222).

The vernacular use of terms such as “conspiranoia” and “conspiranoid” in everyday conversations and on social networks, in the media and even, at times, in academic settings speaks volumes about the common perception of conspiracy theories and those who believe in them. Qualified as such, conspiracy theory appears as a pathological phenomenon, similar to mental illness when not directly identified with it (Leveaux et al., 2022), and therefore, opposed to the domain of rationality.

The proliferation of conspiracy theories during the COVID-19 pandemic, many linked to misgivings about the vaccines (see, for example, Ullah et al., 2021, and Pummerer et al., 2022) or resistance to complying with the rules (Freeman et al., 2022), has probably intensified this assumption of irrationality, since believers are characterised as being opposed to science, which is, in turn, the epitome of rationality, and resistant to the codes that regulate public life. This appears to justify their prompt exclusion from public discussion, describing them as “flat-earthers”, while also tending to explain their adhesion to conspiracy theories, conjuring up mainly emotional causal dynamics that are often related to a range of embarrassing superstitions and preconceptions (Reichstadt, 2019).

Different voices from philosophy (Coady, 2012; Dentith, 2014) and sociology (Husting and Orr, 2007) have criticised its effective use as a tool to exclude certain stances from

conversation, discrediting them in a meta-discursive strategy that avoids having to seriously address the content and the plausible criticisms that may be embedded in them. Chomsky (2004) considers the term a sort of academic four-letter word, closer to insult than rational argument, but from a position of alleged rational superiority. By assuming the irrationality of those who defend such theories, any attempt of rational justification for rejection, the relevance of which is considered self-evident, is dismissed as unnecessary.

The challenges in the sociology of conspiracy theories are necessarily linked to the value connotations that surround the term. There are plausible normative reasons for setting aside the automatic disqualification of conspiracy beliefs at least while they are object of sociological analysis. Moreover, it makes sense to study how and why they fluctuate over time, as well as the different social contexts, the demarcations between conspiracy theories and knowledge (or, simply put, legitimate assumptions), which can only be done from a systematic agnosticism that is prevalent, at least, throughout the research process.

This indicates that there are also epistemological reasons for temporarily suspending the condemnation of conspiracy theory in order to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, as the default attribution of a series of original sins, starting with the presumption of irrationality, effectively limits the fruitfulness of the analysis, resulting in either mechanistic explanations (for example, when the theories are considered to be injected into an entirely defenceless and manipulable population), or the rejection of any kind of explanation (when considering that, by categorising the phenomenon as irrational, nothing more can be said about it).

Some contemporary approaches, following Coady (2012) or Goertzel (1994), are inhibited in relation to the value of truth in conspiracy theories and are limited to characterising them through their content, which suggests the existence of hidden operations by powerful agents. At times, this can be adjusted to the facts, as the large number of real conspiracies in history shows; however, the hypothetical correct answers do not relieve conspiracy theories of the stigma branding them epistemologically damaged goods. Firstly, because drawing true conclusions through incorrect reasoning is entirely feasible; therefore, the fact that there are, effectively, conspiracies and cases in which a conspiracy theory may be the explanation most suited to reality does not necessarily validate the process used to reach it. Secondly, because, despite the neutrality of the definition—often the object of interest for empirical research—there are still certain shortcomings associated with conspiracy theories; for example, Wood, Douglas and Sutton (2012) who, following their perfectly aseptic definition, note that they are explanations that are particularly resistant to refutation, and explore their potential to create monological belief systems from contradictory theories. In other words, although all conspiracy theories are contemplated within the term independently of their truth or falsehood, or the soundness of the logic that underpins them, cases and dynamics are often studied that are

closer to the old valuation definitions (to take another example, the processes of “falling down the rabbit hole”, minor in relation to the majority of people who give certain credit to conspiracy theories, in Sutton and Douglas, 2022).

This study aims to contribute to the understanding of conspiracy theories from the vantage point of sociological theory by outlining an approach to them from the assumption of their necessary rationality, which we believe may help clarify, among other things, the relationship between “reasonable” conspiracy theories that come under the neutral definitions of the term and seemingly more irrational conspiracy that, understandably, tends to be the focus of research efforts as a pressing social problem. The rational choice approach outlined here, following Max Weber and Raymond Boudon, produces suppositions assuming that people have reasons for their actions and beliefs, and asking what they are in each case. These reasons are not universally valid, nor would an all-knowing observer deem them adequate, but rather they respond to specific contexts in which they acquire meaning.

Given the generalised perception of conspiracy theories as collective deliriums and of those who believe in them as victims of epistemic alienation, this proposal could seem a boutade or attempt to force a counter-intuitive view to play at provocation. It is not intended to be either. It is motivated by the conviction that, without exhausting a phenomenon that demands multiple perspectives to illustrate its different dimensions, it may give rise to more detailed and qualified explanations and interpretations, and that it is important to aspire to such explanations if, effectively, there is concern about the harmful effects that the most expeditiously pathologising views attribute, not without reason, to conspiracy theories. Therefore, we do not assume it to be a definitive approach to conspiracy theories, but rather a necessary approach.

To defend this perspective, this article will first offer a brief review of the two main traditions that are portrayed with respect to the normative issue in the academic study of conspiracy theories. This is followed by an explanation of how a rational choice approach can bring both positions closer and what the main assumptions would be, before finally offering some examples that illustrate how empirical research on conspiracy theories can benefit from its application.

## 1. Two Currents in the Academic Study of Conspiracy Theories

In one of the foundational pieces of both the academic study of conspiracy and its stigmatisation at the grassroots level, Hofstadter (1965: 29) defines conspiracy theories as political narratives that steer those who believe in them towards a peculiar mentality from which a gigantic conspiracy is perceived as the driving force behind historic events. In his view, it is, unequivocally, an intrinsically harmful disease that spreads paranoia through incorrect arguments. Despite said

emphatic disqualification and the explicit relationship with paranoia, Hofstadter (1965: 36) understands that conspiracy theories are also explanations that are “if not wholly rational, at least intensely rationalistic” as they “subsume all reality under one all-encompassing and consistent theory”. What he terms a “paranoid style” is not so much distinguished by the absence of demonstrable facts to rely on as by the imaginative leap he makes, based on a complex cherry-picking exercise and arbitrary linking of the facts thus selected, and through which he arrives at theories that are biased from the outset.

This dual nature of conspiracy theories, already recognised in this seminal reference and that is still influential today, has given rise to two major currents of research, later interpreted in synthesis as a product of dilemma inherent in the object: the so-called realist/symbolist divide (Rogin, 1987) or cultural/classical divide (Nefes, 2014). One such current of research is based on the conception of conspiracy theories as political diseases, comprising a paranoid and value-based perspective that necessarily leads to the distortion of reality, and through it, to discrimination, fanaticism and, often, violence (Pipes, 1997; Sunstein and Vermeule, 2009; Aaronovitch, 2009; Cohn, 2010; Ben-Itto, 2020).

In general, this position argues—for example, Byford (2015)—that it is possible to distinguish conspiracy theories from other ways of approaching knowledge of reality by a distinctive explanation style that is flawed at its very origin by fundamental shortfalls. This makes them dangerous as they result in monological belief systems and involve a slippery slope risk, where the acceptance of a conspiracy theory would increase the likelihood of accepting many others (Goertzel, 1994; Swami and Furnham, 2012; Swami et al., 2013), which is consistent with the perception of those who believe in conspiracy theories as “conspiranoid”, having fallen down the rabbit hole to an alternative reality that separates them from the rest of society, isolating them in a small marginal community together with other misguided people who have strayed from common sense. This latter dynamic, as Sutton and Douglas observe (2022), is, in fact, minority among those who subscribe to conspiracy beliefs.

The second current is largely in explicit opposition to the first as it considers the merely pathological view of the phenomenon both inadequate and counter-productive, both in cognitive and normative terms. The basis on which they rest is the rational dimension identified by Hofstadter, which manifests itself in examining how people try, by means of conspiracy theories, to provide reasonable explanations for the circumstances in which they find themselves and the events and processes that take place (Melley, 2000; Knight, 2000; Birchall, 2006; Bratich, 2008; Harambam and Aupers, 2021).

It is characteristic of this perspective to consider conspiracy theory somewhat similar to “social science for laypeople”, which develops in parallel to the institutionalisation of sociology, responds to similar issues and offers rival explanations (Boltanski, 2012; Nefes and Romero-Reche, 2020). Thus, Knight (2000) considers these theories “vernacular epistemologies”, the aim of which is to clarify social reality, while Locke

(2009) upholds that the phenomenon is specifically modern (coinciding with Byford, 2015) and that is an attempt to assign moral responsibility to individuals and groups with regard to human suffering, the problematic reality that is to be explained. However, despite rejecting the pathologising of conspiracy theories, this current does not entirely disregard the biases presented, associated with identifiable value-based positions.

For Fenster (1999), a thorough approach to the phenomenon requires transcending the opposition between the perspective that views them as paranoid narratives skewed by a powerful value load and that which perceives them as a rational, yet distorted, way of knowing. Therefore, he himself criticises the extremely pathological views while examining the symbolic dimension and value load of conspiracy theories.

Rational choice theory could be a viable solution for overcoming the division between the two traditions, as it allows for the analysis of the subjective, specific and localised reasons behind people making use of marginal beliefs. In line with Coleman (1990: 17–18), the theoretical approach of social sciences must seek a notion of the action that rationalises it from the point of view of the actor, which will enable them to understand social organisation based on the individual actions that shape it. If, from a common-sense point of view as well as from some sociological perspectives, we assume certain actions and beliefs to be entirely irrational, it is because we have not yet been able to see them from the actors' point of view, from which they are rational. Expressly searching for the rational dimension of conspiracy theories that the majority tend to consider irrational can contribute to identifying their structure of plausibility and their relationship with other theories and beliefs that have not been stigmatised.

## 2. Cognitive Rationality and Conspiracy Theories

There are various reasons why conspiracy theories tend to be thought of as irrational. Firstly, because, as anyone who shares the consensus of common sense is expected to perceive, they do not correspond to reality. Also because, given the apparent evidence of their falsehood, we understand that there are no good reasons to believe in them: those who end up embracing them have allowed themselves to be fooled by bogus arguments or have abandoned their emotions, overlooking reason, or making use of it only to subsequently justify prior convictions. Finally, because, to the extent that beliefs and perception of reality guide our action, it will be inconsistent with said reality due to it being based on false representations. Examples include the behaviour of people who believe in conspiracy theories about COVID-19 who are more reluctant than others when it comes to vaccination or social distancing measures, but more receptive to alternative therapies without scientific basis (Bierwiazzonek, Gundersen and Kunst, 2022); and the behaviour of those who do not respect democratic norms because they believe in conspiracy theories about the manipulation of elections (Albertson and Kimberley, 2020).



There are, therefore, two levels: that of action, widely discussed in social science by Weber, Pareto and Parsons, among others, and that of statements about reality. As defined by Boudon and Borricaud (2004: 479), a statement or set of statements is rational “if it is consistent with the knowledge (in the scientific sense of the term) available on the subject, or in line with the canons of ‘scientific spirit’”. They note, however, that when weighing up cognitive rationality, or lack of it, in myths and beliefs, it makes sense to use the perspective of action theory and understand them as responses to interaction systems (Boudon and Borricaud, 2004: 485).

In Weber, an explicit source of inspiration for Boudon, at least four types of rationality can be identified: formal, theoretical, practical and substantive rationality. Formal rationality clearly appears in law and the economy and is related to the adaptation of measures for purposes through universally applicable rules. Theoretical rationality, on the other hand, is geared towards understanding reality in a consistent way through abstract cognitive processes. As Kalberg observed (1980), these two types of rationality are not seen the most consistently or directly in the everyday actions of people, who tend to base themselves more on practical and substantive rationalities when making decisions. Practical rationalism is “every way of life that views and judges worldly activity in relation to *the individual’s* interests” (Weber, 2001 [1905]: 112), and is often behind the motivation for instrumental social actions. Substantive or value rationality is related to the adaptation of values that are considered important in different social contexts.

Weberian distinctions have served as the basis for subsequent rational approaches, that instead of limiting the analysis to instrumental rationality (*Zweckrationalität*), also contemplate value rationality (*Wertrationalität*). This is, especially, the case of Boudon’s cognitive action theory (2003, 2008), which considers adaptation to both purposes and values in people’s decision-making processes. These, Boudon upholds (2003), are not only limited to calculating the most efficient means to achieve predetermined ends, but require that actions maintain a minimum coherence with the values that they consider important and that give them meaning.

On the other hand, a narrow conception of rationality confines it solely to the instrumental aspect, as Pareto does (1964 [1916]: 81–83) in his distinction between logical and illogical actions, whereby only the former make use of the appropriate means to pursue their aims, not just from the point of view of the agent, but also, importantly, from the point of view of those who have the necessary knowledge to value such consistency.

The contrast with Pareto’s model is not irrelevant; Boudon considers his work particularly fruitful for the study of ideological phenomena, more so than Marx (Boudon, 1998) and, at the same time, he highlights it as an example of the excessively restricted interpretation of rationality (Boudon, 2000) that results in more limited analyses than those permitted by Weberian theory. However, his

typology of illogical actions (Pareto, 1964 [1916]: 82) according to the existence or not of a logical purpose in subjective and objective terms suggests a path towards Weber's approach: it is precisely the categories of illogical action that have a subjective logical purpose, whether objective (fourth category) or not (second category), which enables them to consider reasons from the actor's point of view, although they do not meet the rationality criteria of economic behaviour.

The concept of residues and derivations, where the former are the emotional motivations for the action and the latter, the justifications that are constructed to produce an appearance of rationality, seems to leave the understanding of the actions outside the scope of sociology, since the residues are not detectable and operate as invisible forces that must be taken for granted underneath the actions themselves, as an irrefutable claim of principle. Some of these residues can be translated into Weberian terms, such as the category relating to the "integrity of the individual and his dependencies" (Pareto, 1964 [1916]: 731), which could be associated with Weber's practical rationalism. However, for the purpose of studying conspiracy theories, it is more relevant that the idea of derivation as rationalisation from residues is more conducive to the analysis of ideas, beliefs and theories (of conspiracy or not) from a perspective of rationality similar to the Weberian perspective. Regardless of how Pareto regards these rationalisations, their persuasive effects are necessarily conditioned by the contexts and systems of action where they unfold.

This is Boudon's proposal. Derivations, that is, ideological phenomena, have both practical functions, legitimising the purposes or means of the action, and cognitive functions, filling the inevitable gaps in the actors' knowledge of the natural and, especially, the social world (Boudon, 1998: 222). However, the cognitive functions are also related to the action, since the need to supplement knowledge frequently depends on the requirements of the action. If one tries to explain why someone upholds a theory or belief to the detriment of other alternatives, Boudon's hypothesis is that he does so because "it seems to him the most adequate and useful way of expressing the meaning" of his situation (Boudon and Borricaud, 2004: 486). In terms of theory of action:

A belief, a myth, a 'theory' always represent interpretations that have been developed or, as the case may be, accepted by social actors depending on their situation as they perceive or interpret it. These interpretations provide them with effective guides for acting. In this sense, they can be said to be 'rational', although they may seem 'irrational' to the hasty or involved observer (Boudon and Borricaud, 2004: 486).

Understood as such, myths, beliefs and theories, ideological phenomena in general, cannot be entirely explained by residues and deep emotional impulses. These could explain the existence of certain cognitive interest, but cannot alone account for the content of the responses sought for those cognitive interests, that is, collective beliefs (Boudon, 2000: 187).

### 3. Rational Dimensions of Conspiracy Theory

Assuming that conspiracy theories are not completely irrational, neither in their own right nor due to the diversity of relationships that they can establish with multiple belief systems, there are different levels at which their rationality can be contemplated for sociological analysis. The first is of a fundamental nature and is a condition of possibility for sociological analysis itself and must therefore be accepted even from the narrowest views of rationality. It means considering that, independently of how irrational conspiracy theories may be, it is possible to elaborate rational narratives about them. In the most extreme case, as an example of a particularly narrow conception of rationality, a model similar to the one Pareto advocated for illogical actions would be appropriate (Boudon, 2000: 166–169), postulating emotional forces that were externally imperceptible but whose influence could explain people's irrational behaviour beyond their own rationalisations.

We can contemplate a second level that, without entering into the content of the theories and the hypothetical rational elements that they might present internally, is interested in the more or less strategic rationality of their *use*. This approach could also be accepted from a narrow view of instrumental rationality in line with Pareto, as it would involve analysing how rational agents make use of irrational beliefs to successfully achieve their goals. For example, the belief in the efficacy of homoeopathic “medicines” beyond the placebo effect would not be rational; however, using said belief and promoting it to make a profit selling said “medicines” would be. The same goes for the belief in conspiracy theories, insofar as they can be used as a tool to achieve certain ends desired by those who promote them, such as, for example, to strengthen cohesion after an electoral defeat (Uscinski and Parent, 2014).

Nonetheless, there are two relevant nuances that should be highlighted with regard to the strategic use of conspiracy theories. Admitting that this use exists and analysing it does not imply regarding those who apply it as completely cynical: conspiracy theories can be used rationally as a means to achieve desired ends, in terms of an instrumental rationality perfectly admissible for Pareto and, at the same time, they can be believed in to a certain extent, or even entirely. This can be illustrated with the historic example of the dictator Francisco Franco, who used the Jewish–Masonic–Bolshevik conspiracy theory to justify the coup against the Second Spanish Republic and the subsequent repression following his victory in the Spanish Civil War (Preston, 2021), without detracting from the authenticity of his genuine and continuing concern for the Freemasons (Ferrer Benuimeli, 1982; Southworth, 2002).

On the other hand, the strategic use perspective exposes us to a risk that does not necessarily follow from the assumption of cynicism of rational agents, but is tempting to fall into when its Machiavellian characterisation is exacerbated. Overestimating the capacity of those who strategically use conspiracy theories can lead to explanations that are, in themselves, conspiratorial. A fundamental principle of methodological individualism defended by Popper (1984: 93) for social science, and which is precisely opposed by the conspiracy theory of society, is the study of

the unintended consequences of the action. Conspiracy theories are, in his opinion, incorrect explanations because they overstate the ability of certain actors to produce the realities they desire; hence, they seek to explain any event as a direct result of the will of a very powerful person. The methodological caution that dictates avoiding a direct connection between willpower and social reality must also apply to the sociological study of conspiracy theories, especially in the face of hypodermic views that tend to consider them as pathogens that are injected into a population devoid of agency.

The third and fourth level address rationality from the perspective of coherence, internally in one case and externally in the other. Limiting rationality to internal coherence, independently of how far removed conspiracy theory is from external reality, justifies their criticism as fundamentally unscientific or even anti-scientific intellectual products as irrefutable (Byford, 2015). An outright fable can be irreproachably coherent with itself and shield itself, by means of requests of principle, against any contrast with the outside. However, even in such a case, and admitting that the original premise is fundamentally wrong, a logical construction is built on it based on reasons that are unlikely to be fallacious in their entirety, nor do the majority have to be so. Or, at least, not in a proportion greater than that which is found in other theories.

External coherence refers to their relationship to other beliefs, perceptions and ideas held by those who believe in them and, filtered by these beliefs, perceptions and ideas, to the reality they purport to account for. Once again, the fundamentally incorrect or fallacious nature of conspiracy theory does not preclude a rational development of its consequences beyond the theory itself. Moreover, the incontestability that they are usually reproached for manifests itself in regular operations of adaptation to events in an external reality to which they are not usually impervious (Brotherton, 2015; Butter, 2020). As Boudon (2000: 198) observes about Pareto's derivations, the fact that some justifications are more convincing than others implies that these cannot be entirely arbitrary and that, in fact, some are objectively sounder than others. The believers in such and such a conspiracy theory can uphold different ideas that do not perfectly fit with each other, or that are even contradictory and consistent with regard to a deeper belief that justifies them (Wood, Douglas and Sutton, 2012); however, exactly the same occurs with non-believers.

It is also worth contemplating, as Popper indicated, the coherence of the believers' actions with the conspiracy theories they subscribe to, enabling the subjective meaning of these actions to be interpreted and then connected to their unintended effects on a macro-sociological level, in a model explicitly inspired by Weber (Popper, 1984: 97). This latter level of rationality touches on what Boudon (1990: 373) termed "reason with lower case 'r'" which he developed from the subjective rationality of Herbert Simon, crucial to his judgement for the analysis of a very wide variety of social phenomena, but, in particular, those related to beliefs. Highlighting Weber and Popper as rational explanation models that tend to be categorised as irrational from a common-sense point

of view, he observes that this shows a pronounced tendency to overuse “irrational” explanations, for which reason it should come as no surprise that “human sciences that give too narrow a definition of rationality do not work any better than common sense” (Boudon, 1990: 379). Contrary to Pareto, who labels actions inspired by religious beliefs as illogical because they do not meet the criteria of instrumental rationality (Boudon, 2000: 165), Weber’s sociology of religion, when he analyses issues such as that of theodicy (Weber, 1993[1922]: 412–417), emphasises the rational and ordered nature of religious beliefs and the functioning of the notion of providence as rationalisation. Recalling the parallels that Popper found between religion and conspiracy theories, these could also be considered a frequently secularised form of theodicy, that also often shows traits of Masonic Eschatology (Weber, 1993[1922]: 413). An eloquent contemporary example is the conspiracy theory known as QAnon, which posits an apocalyptic struggle between the forces of good and evil, with former President Donald Trump as the undisputed messianic figure who will flush out the nation’s enemies (Rothschild, 2021).

Pareto’s distinction between the logical and illogical required observers other than the agent himself to have the necessary knowledge to properly assess the adaptation between means and ends. However, if it is admitted that this crucial perspective will always be situated in a context that will necessarily impose constraints, rationality itself will also depend on the context unless an impossible absolute perspective, free of all context, can be identified. In the face of such an absolute ambition, analytical approaches that attend to people’s contextual and subjective reasons do not necessarily lead to relativism, perhaps more justified by a strictly instrumental rationality that cannot contribute anything to the discussion about purposes, but rather make more complete and rational views of social reality possible.

Approaching conspiracy theories from the perspective of rational choice, therefore, is not reduced to observing the strategic use that pragmatic actors make of them, already present in common-sense perceptions that understand the phenomenon as a process of manipulation of irrational masses by cynical propagandists, but rather can contemplate in its analysis the different levels of rationality detailed previously. Therefore, it must build its perspective on previous proposals to combine practical and subjective rationalities in the analysis of social action. One example is that of Woods (2001), who examines how the two come together dynamically in what he terms value-intuitive rational action. It shows how people qualify, reinforce or revise their moral understanding of the world through instrumental rationality.

Despite Boudon’s negative assessment of his sociology (2004: 216–217), it is possible to pick up elements of Erving Goffman’s conception of social action, which assumes a similar interrelationship between instrumental rationality and value-oriented rationality when analysing people’s representation of morality in the well-known passage where he refers to actors as “merchants of morality” (Goffman, 1959: 162). Such dramatic manoeuvres also highlight the ambivalence

of the action, between the cynicism of the strategic manipulation of impressions and the conviction in relation to the values being staged, which could very well be others.

Boudon's cognitive theory of action (2003), as highlighted previously, aims to overcome the restricted view of the cost-benefit calculation by incorporating value rationality (1996: 146–147). He takes into account the influence of values and norms on individual action (Boudon, 1996, 2001, 2003, 2008), and from there on their aggregation into collective patterns, without considering the actors as “cultural idiots”. Hence the particular relevance of this perspective for the analysis of ideas and beliefs considered irrational, such as conspiracy theories.

By looking further into the interrelationship between the two forms of rationality, and relying on the accumulated empirical evidence, a rational choice theory of conspiracy theories should work as an analytically fruitful framework for a wide range of empirical approaches, without the need to commit exclusively to certain technical solutions. By avoiding a priori generalisations, which have limited the explanatory power of previous approaches to the phenomenon, and by considering the specificity of the contexts instead of claiming to enunciate universally valid laws, it must be able to account for the emergence of specific conspiracy theories, their dissemination, their acceptance by people located in identifiable social coordinates, and their relationship with the actions of these people.

Considering normative rationality in dynamic relation to instrumental rationality implies understanding the context not just as a playing field where the actors make moves that are exclusively designed to maximise their gains, nor as a set of monolithic structures that rigidly determine the action. In effect, people are not “cultural idiots”, but their creative action develops in the context of cultural codes that, among other things, modulate the desirability of the ends that the *homo economicus* must pursue, and the acceptability of the means that could be used to achieve them. Naturally, however, these codes, and the context itself, are not eternal or unchangeable, nor are they self-generated: they are the dynamic result of the human action they condition (Coleman, 1990).

From this perspective, which connects the micro and macro levels, it is possible to take into account the effective diversity of the phenomenon, already explicit in Popper's definitions (1984, 2002): in different situations, and therefore in different systems of action, conspiracy theories relate to different social and ideological phenomena, establish different relationships with the mainstream and produce different effects. The latter, also from a normative point of view: Coady (2012) reproaches Popper for stigmatising conspiracy theories; however, he recognises that in specific circumstances and at specific times, conspiracy theory of priestly deception has had beneficial effects, even in the short term.

Empirically, a rational choice approach of these characteristics is applicable to a wide variety of research designs, provided that they analytically distinguish

the involved forms of rationality and, where appropriate, the variables that they can be associated with. From classic quantitative research by means of a survey, which attempts to determine, for example, the likelihood of subscribing to the conspiracy theories being investigated in terms of variables that can be related to practical and value rationalities, to qualitative approaches that analyse how the rationalisation of beliefs is articulated in the narrative by appealing to interests and values.

#### 4. Incomplete Explanations: Partisanship and Religiosity in Conspiracy Theories

There are two variables that crop up consistently in sociological research on conspiracy theories that could largely correspond to the forms of rationality that we consider necessary for a comprehensive rational choice approach: partisanship and religiosity. We understand the former as being close to instrumental rationality insofar as, beyond ideological considerations and their associated values, there is an intense identification with a group whose benefit is considered an end in itself. In short, it is a matter of doing, or believing, what is in the party's interest. As far as religiosity is concerned, value rationality is manifested in it, insofar as faith entails a scale of values whose defence can come to take precedence over one's own personal interests, thus displacing practical rationality in decision-making (and, therefore, also in the adoption of beliefs).

Partisanship appears in association with belief in conspiracy theories in a wide range of recent research (Abertson and Kimberley, 2020; Enders, Smallpage and Lupton, 2020; van der Linden, Panagopoulos, Azevedo and Jost, 2021), all of which show a clear relationship between belief in conspiracy theories and identification with specific political parties. Likewise, other studies show a clear influence of religiosity (Mancosu, Vassallo and Vezzoni, 2017), or related values (mainly, anti-Semitism; Nyhan and Zeitzoff, 2018).

Of course, none of this research claims to have isolated the causal factor that exclusively and comprehensively explains the belief in conspiracy theories, and in this sense, the explanations offered are necessarily as incomplete as any others (including those that may be proposed from the rational choice approach argued here). What is significant is that they often record phenomena or tendencies that seem unrelated or even contradictory to the identified factors. For example, Enders and Smallpage (2018) note that as much as partisanship is unequivocally relevant to the belief in conspiracy theories, there are other factors that are conducive to conspiracy beliefs, even when they are directly contrary to people's partisan interests. Furthermore, they note that these factors do not seem to produce similar effects in those who identify with different parties (in this case, what works for Republicans does not work for Democrats, even if it leads them to believe in conspiracy theories involving Republican Party figures).

In such cases, a value rationality approach could complement the instrumental rationality approach, as values (for example, related to religion) that may be more common among people who identify as Republican may come into play.

Other studies showing the combined effect of partisanship and values in the belief of conspiracy theories support this possibility: for example, in the case of the theories about Barack Obama's birthplace (Pasek et al., 2015), or the distrust of the authorities (van der Linden, Panagopoulos, Azevedo, and Jost, 2021). In a similar vein, Prooijen and Jostmann (2013) have shown how people's perception of the morality of the authorities is related to the way in which conspiracy theories are seen. The ultimate beliefs that, in the case of each individual believer, underpin the entire structure of conspiracy theories, at times contradictory to the nature of the hard core of Lakatos' research programmes (Clarke, 2007), are often related to deeply held values or intensely felt valuations.

If one were to restrict him or herself to instrumental rationality, a rational choice analysis would not consider the context beyond the incentive structure of conspiracy theorists who, even for analytical purposes, should be regarded as fundamentally cynical. This approach would allow us to explain, to a certain extent, the action of those who disseminate conspiracy theories by virtue of identifiable practical interests, and would, in that respect, produce predictive hypotheses that could be tested. However, a substantial part of the phenomenon, concerning people who genuinely believe in them even when doing so does not directly correspond to their practical interests, would remain an unknown. To resolve it within the restricted model would mean either postulating motivations of instrumental rationality undetectable by empirical research and, likely, falling into tautological circularity, or postulating the existence of extensive irrational mechanisms, such as Pareto's residues, that are also undetectable but the existence of which manifests itself in actions and ideas that could not be rationally explained otherwise. Furthermore, it would be difficult to account for the manifest diversity of the phenomenon and its relationships with other ideological and social phenomena, unless it were simply denied.

## 5. Conclusions

Over the course of the previous pages we have tried to sketch the broad outlines of a possible rational choice approach that aims, on the one hand, to integrate the two main strands in the academic literature on conspiracy theories and, on the other, to signal a direction to clarify some of the unknowns of current empirical research.

With regard to the first question, we argue that a view of cognitive rationality as postulated by Boudon bridges the gap between the pathological view of conspiracy theories (the effects of which can, and often do, have an outright pathological character) and those closer to the ideal of value neutrality, also when they incorporate in the concept any theory that postulates a conspiracy regardless of its truth value or logical soundness. The possible explanation for all of them can be traced back to



the reasons people find for believing them within specific contexts and systems of action, where practical interests and value preferences, not always compatible with the demands of theoretical rationality, are combined.

In terms of the second question, and assuming the risk of cherry-picking, which is difficult to avoid when it comes to illustrating a theoretical proposal, the gaps and occasional inconsistencies found in the research on the relationships of partisanship, on the one hand, and religiosity, on the other, with the belief in conspiracy theories make plausible a perspective that considers both the instrumental rationality associated with one and the value rationality manifested in the other.

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ARTICLES/ARTÍCULOS

# School Bullying and Social Skills: An Empirical Research Study in Axarquía, Malaga in 2021

El acoso escolar y las habilidades sociales: una investigación empírica en la Axarquía malagueña en 2021

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyse the relationship between school bullying and social skills by means of a survey of 506 pupils at several secondary schools located in the region of Axarquía (Malaga, Spain). First, we examined the role of onlookers in a bullying scene. Likewise, we studied the potential victims, bullies, types and frequencies of this phenomenon. Second, we investigated how the likelihood of being an onlooker, victim or bully varies across the level of fourteen social skills. The conclusion was that the higher the level of social skills, the lower the likelihood of being a victim or a bully. Furthermore, onlookers were found to have a higher level of social skills than the victims and bullies, although bullies scored higher on a very significant social skill: manipulation.

**KEYWORDS:** bullying; interpersonal skills; onlooker; victim; bully.

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## RESUMEN

Esta investigación trata de analizar la relación entre el acoso escolar y las habilidades sociales a través de una encuesta realizada a 506 alumnos de varios institutos de la Axarquía malagueña (Málaga, España). En primer lugar, se ha abordado el papel de los espectadores en una escena de acoso escolar. De manera análoga, se ha estudiado a las posibles víctimas, acosadores, tipos y frecuencias de este fenómeno. En segundo lugar, se ha estudiado cómo varía la probabilidad de ser espectador, víctima y acosador a través del nivel de catorce habilidades sociales. Como conclusión, se ha verificado que, a mayor nivel de habilidades sociales, menor probabilidad de ser víctima o acosador. Además, se ha comprobado que los espectadores tienen un nivel mayor de habilidades sociales que las víctimas y que los acosadores, aunque los acosadores puntúan mejor en una habilidad social muy importante: la manipulación.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** maltrato escolar; habilidades interpersonales; espectador; víctima; acosador.

## 1. Introduction

School bullying is a phenomenon with multiple causes, where the intention of one or several pupils is to harm another. Furthermore, the latter is subjected to repeated aggressions over time and is unable to defend him- or herself alone, due to the imbalance of power in relation to the bullies (Olweus, 2013). It is a transverse phenomenon that occurs in all those countries where it has been studied, as well as in virtually all educational centres, irrespective of age, gender, ethnicity, social or financial standing, among others. It is important to differentiate an isolated incident of aggression between classmates from a case of bullying, given that they are two specific yet different forms of crime.

Bullying was first studied in the second half of the last century and today, the problem continues to be downplayed or justified, and in some cases, the intervention is insufficient (Díaz-Aguado et al., 2013). However, we are witnessing a stage of sensitisation and awareness-raising on this issue, in which even local, regional and national legislators in Spain are encouraging schools to implement specific bullying prevention programmes.

The victims tend to be younger than the bullies and are physically or psychologically weaker. They are shy and have negative self-perception, poor self-esteem and a low level of assertiveness (Puértolas and Montiel, 2017). In this regard, there are usually two types of victims: passive victims and provocative victims. Not responding to bullying is characteristic of passive victims, who are anxious, insecure and feel sad. Provocative victims, on the other hand, do react to bullying, as they are more impulsive and their cognitive processes enable them to respond to this phenomenon, even resorting to violence. The latter type of victim is associated with hyperactive and emotionally unstable pupils (Olweus, 2014). Authors such as González-García and Campoy-Torrente (2016) defend the idea that there is a type of victim who is an aggressor, that is, who assumes both bullying roles in their life for multiple reasons such as fitting into a friend group.



Generally speaking, bullies tend to come from a negative family environment and have little communication with their parents. Furthermore, they do not have academic goals and have difficulty concentrating and solving problems collaboratively (De la Plaza and González, 2019). They also tend to be accompanied by pupils who support them and who, directly or indirectly, help them maintain the cycle of violence in bullying (Cano-Echeverri and Vargas-González, 2018). The onlookers know the bullies, victims, scenarios in which bullying takes place and the seriousness of the aggressions. They are key figures as their presence and response to a bullying scenario can increase or decrease the intensity and frequency of said scenario (Díaz-Aguado et al., 2013). In this respect, Avilés (2004) determines three types of bullies: Indifferent bullies, who do not help the victim, guilt-ridden bullies, who do not do anything for fear of the possible consequences, and amoral bullies, who help or encourage the bully to achieve his or her aim.

As for the consequences of bullying, the loss of educational quality in the school centre stands out, which may have a negative effect on pupils' academic performance (De la Plaza y González, 2019). Both the victims and the bullies and onlookers are at risk of suffering from a psychopathology, personality disorder or psychosocial imbalance (Puértolas and Montiel, 2017). These consequences can arise in both infancy and adolescence and may even extend into adulthood if intervention is not timely. In traditional face-to-face bullying, victims experience aggression during the school day and in after-school hours and may suffer from so-called Sunday-night syndrome, which involves feeling anxious or afraid on realising that it is nearly time to return to the classroom and see the bullies in person. In contrast, victims of cyberbullying have to endure abuse twenty-four hours a day (González-García and Campoy-Torrente, 2016). In relation to the victims, it is also worth highlighting the feeling of guilt, stress and anger, somatisation, nightmares, difficulty concentrating, tiredness, injuries, physical and psychological consequences, loneliness, moving school centre (Ballesteros, Pérez, Díaz and Toledano, 2018), and so on. The most extreme consequences are addictions, self-harming behaviours, ideation and suicidal behaviours (Puértolas and Montiel, 2017). On the other hand, the typical consequences for bullies may include dissociation with the educational centre, school failure, the need to feel accepted by others, as well as low self-esteem (Cañas-Pardo, 2017). In this regard, Loeber (1982) concluded that 10% of juvenile delinquents had bullying problems at school before the age of 10. The main consequences for onlookers are related to the loss of the sense of justice and understanding, as they may even normalise violence as a method to resolve interpersonal conflicts (De la Plaza and González, 2019).

Bullying may be triggered by multiple personal, family and school factors, as well as by the media (Enríquez and Garzón, 2015). One of the theories that best describes this is Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory (1987). According to this author, individuals acquire cognitive processes, principles and values through the interaction of four independent systems in the form of concentric circles. According to the author, the first of these is the microsystem, comprising the family, school centre and

peer group. This is nested in the mesosystem, which is where the aforementioned groups come into contact. This system is, in turn, included in the exosystem, which represents the space where the individual lives. Finally, the macrosystem encompasses the exosystem, as well as the society's cultural, normative and historic elements. According to this theory, school bullying is the result of the integration of the individual's protective and risk factors that are found in each of these systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1987).

Now that we have explained the concept of bullying and the roles and consequences and outlined a relevant explanatory theory, we will now focus on social skills. McFall (1992) defines these skills as "specific behaviours that allow a person to be deemed socially competent by others in a social task" (p. 12). They are the fruit of learning (Chávez and Aragón, 2017), with assertiveness and empathy being two of the most important social skills to be acquired and improved (Smith and Low, 2013).

The initial thought may be that school bullying and social skills are not related. However, Sutton et al. (1999) uphold that bullies have more social skills than victims and onlookers, and that they can use these skills to manipulate others in order to secure their loyalty and obedience, ascertain how to inflict more harm or avoid being caught. Nevertheless, Crick and Dodge (1994) assert that victims have more social skills than bullies given that the development of these skills cannot be associated with behaviours that are not pro-social (Arsenio and Lemerise, 2001). There are authors who are in the middle ground. For example, Arsenio and Lemerise (2001) concur with Crick and Dodge (1994) in that children try to acquire social skills in order to be accepted by others; however, they also agree with Sutton et al. (1999) in that bullies leverage their social skills to achieve their objectives, even if they are not pro-social.

Lastly, some recent studies on school bullying should be mentioned. In the PISA report (Spanish Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, 2019), the conclusion drawn was that the mean for bullying was 23% in the seventy-nine participating countries. The countries with the highest percentage of bullying were Latvia, Bulgaria, Romania, Colombia, Mexico and New Zealand, with approximately 33%. The mean for school bullying in Spain was 17%. Countries with a lower mean included the Netherlands (12%) and South Korea (9%). In Spain, the Save The Children report (2018) highlights that 82% of the sample had been an onlooker of bullying in the past year, 52% had been a victim, and 25%, a bully. In this regard, there are studies that associate bullying with social skills. For example, authors such as Mendoza and Maldonado (2017) or Gómez-Ortiz et al. (2019) have concluded that social skills are associated with bullying and that victims lack these skills, unlike bullies, who use them to do wrong. Conversely, Caravita et al. (2010) demonstrated that victimisation is not associated with social skills.

This research has a twofold objective. On the one hand, it aims to compare the level of fourteen social skills among the potential onlookers, bullies and victims of bullying of this study in order to ascertain whether there is a relationship between bullying and social skills; and, on the other, it will analyse bullying and the types and frequencies of this phenomenon, as well as the role of onlookers in a bullying scene. This study

departs from the hypothesis that onlookers have more social skills than victims and bullies, given that social skills are considered to be a protective factor in avoiding or preventing bullying.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants

This research includes a sample of 506 pupils, 262 boys and 244 girls from the third year of compulsory secondary education (pupils aged 14–15) to the last school year (pupils aged 17–18) in two public schools in the region of Axarquía (Málaga, Spain). The sample is non-probabilistic for convenience and the margin of error is 3.11% with a 95% confidence level, such that  $p=q=0.5$ .

### 2.2. Instrument

A questionnaire on school bullying and social skills was designed and used for the purpose of this study. This questionnaire was inspired by other very relevant and specific questionnaires on bullying such as that by Brighi et al. (2012) and Ortega et al. (1995), on the one hand, and on social skills such as that by Goldstein (1978) and Caballo et al. (2017), on the other. The questionnaire consists of the following parts:

1. Introduction: here, the definition of school bullying is given so that all the pupils have the same understanding of the concept.
2. Socio-demographic variables: gender and academic year.
3. Group of onlookers: to find out how they respond to a bullying situation, and if they know of pupils who have taken on a dual role (victim and bully).
4. Group of victims and group of bullies: to identify the types and frequencies of bullying experienced/committed.
5. Group of social skills to evaluate the level of the following social skills: active listening, communication, gratitude, initiative, asking for help, speaking in public, manipulation, apologising, assertiveness, empathy, showing interest, helping, finding collaborative solutions, and defending one's own rights. Each skill is scored from one to four. One indicates a zero level; two, a low level; three is associated with an average level; and four, with a high level.

### 2.3. Procedure

After designing the questionnaire, several adolescents took part in a pilot test to confirm whether they understood the questions in the questionnaire, and to ascertain the length of time taken to complete it. We then went to the two public schools in Malaga (the sampling location) so that the pupils in the third and fourth years of compulsory secondary education (pupils aged 14–15 and 15–16, respectively) and in the final two years (aged 16–17 and 17–18, respectively) could participate. Before handing out the questionnaire, we explained the definition of bullying given in the introduction of this article so that all the pupils departed from the same basis. We also informed the pupils that the questionnaire was entirely anonymous, and we asked that they be as transparent as possible.

During this procedure, we did not encounter any difficulty or resistance when accessing the educational centres. The directors of both schools were contacted by telephone and offered a brief explanation of the project's objectives and the data collection method. They took an interest in this research work from the start, as thanks to the study, they would discover the state of bullying in their centre with a view to improving their strategies to prevent the phenomenon. Subsequently, they were given more information in a face-to-face interview. During the fieldwork, both of the directors and all the teaching staff were collaborative. This helped to create a more positive atmosphere in the sampling place, enabling the active participation of the pupils who, as well as responding to the questionnaire, were very sensitised to this issue. Some of the pupils even asked questions about this phenomenon, as well as sharing their personal experiences and concerns.

### 2.4. Data Analysis

The data obtained through the fieldwork was included in a PSPP file to analyse the frequencies of each variable studied. Contingency tables, descriptions and a bivariate correlation analysis were also included to see how bullying is related to social skills, gender and the academic year of the sample. Table 1 shows the dependent and independent variables.

## 3. Results

Following the data analysis, a relationship was found between social skills and school bullying. However, before looking at this relationship in depth, we will present the study results of the potential onlookers, victims and bullies. The word “potential” must be emphasised as in order to demonstrate it, an individual, specific and multidisciplinary analysis of each pupil is required to avoid exaggerating this phenomenon.

**Table 1**

*Dependent and independent research variables.*

Dependent variables
1. Onlookers
2. Victims
3. Bullies
Independent variables
1. Active listening
2. Communication
3. Gratitude
4. Initiative
5. Asking for help
6. Speaking in public
7. Manipulation
8. Apologising
9. Assertiveness
10. Empathy
11. Showing interest
12. Helping
13. Finding collaborative solutions
14. Defending one's own rights
15. Gender
16. Academic year

Source: own research.

### 3.1. Onlookers

57.3% of the sample have witnessed bullying at school in the past year. Likewise, this study has ascertained how onlookers acted in the scenario: 70% helped the victim, 18.3% did nothing, while 2.4% encouraged the bully, and 1.7% of onlookers helped the bully achieve their aim, either through physical or verbal violence or isolation, becoming an accomplice.

Table 2 shows how the onlookers helped the victim. Firstly, it is worth highlighting that 41.4% spoke to the bully to mediate the situation; 39.9% removed the victim from the scene of bullying and led them to a safe place; 37.9% asked for help from a teacher and 37.4%, from a classmate; and 23.2% mentioned the case of bullying to the management team. 11.8% of onlookers, however, claim to have helped the victim by threatening the bully, and 2.5%, by physically attacking them. In other words, there are onlookers who use violence as a means to end the victim's suffering.

**Table 2***Way in which onlookers helped the victim.*

Form of assistance	Percentage of onlookers who used this method
Speaking to the bully	41.4%
Taking the victim to a safe place	39.9%
Speaking to a teacher	37.9%
Speaking to a classmate about the issue	37.4%
Speaking to the management team	23.2%
Threatening the bully	11.8%
Physically assaulting the bully	2.5%

Source: own research.

Lastly, the onlookers were asked whether they knew of any classmate who had taken on a dual role in school bullying (victim and bully). 34.8% answered yes. Of this group of onlookers, it is worth noting that 37.5% believe that their classmate took on this role to take revenge for the harm inflicted on them; 31.3%, to belong to a friend group; 17.7%, as a means for the bullies to not bully them again; 5.2%, that they were forced by the bullies; and 3.1%, that the parents of the classmate forced them to take on that role.

### 3.2. Victims

50.4% of the sample may have been a victim of school bullying in the past year. First, it must be highlighted that, independently of the frequency of victimisation, 69.4% of these potential victims have had rumours spread about them; 69.2%, have experienced verbal bullying; 52.5%, isolation; 47.4%, physical bullying; 37.2%, threats; and 33.7%, attacks on property.

Table 3 details the types and frequencies of bullying experienced by the victims. The most relevant data are as follows: 35.2% have had rumours spread about them at some point; 15.4%, on more than one occasion; and 19.4%, often. Furthermore, it is worth highlighting that 46.2% have experienced verbal bullying at some point; 11.5%, on more than one occasion; and 11.5%, often. Accordingly, 28.6% have experienced isolation at some point; 10.9%, on more than one occasion; and 14.5%, often. Emphasis must be placed on the fact that the majority of the types of bullying are not repeated frequently, particularly the most serious kinds, such as physical bullying. In other words, the types of bullying that victims experience most frequently are verbal bullying, isolation and the spreading of rumours.

**Table 3**

*Types and frequencies of bullying from the victims' point of view.*

Type of school bullying	Never	Once	Twice or more	Often
Physical bullying	52.6%	37.2%	4.7%	5.5%
Verbal bullying	30.8%	46.2%	11.5%	11.5%
Isolation	46.0%	28.6%	10.9%	14.5%
Spreading of rumours	30.0%	35.2%	15.4%	19.4%
Threats	62.5%	26.1%	4.7%	6.7%
Attacks against property	65.5%	25.7%	5.2%	3.6%

Source: own research.

### 3.3. Bullies

20% of the sample may have been a bully in the past year given that these young people claim to have behaved in various ways that are typical of bullying. They revealed their behaviour in the questionnaire: 76.2% verbally bullied; 54.4% isolated the victim; 52% physically bullied; 43% threatened a classmate; 20% attacked the victim's property; and 17.8% spread rumours about the victim.

Table 4 shows the types and frequencies of bullying carried out by the bullies. 60.6% have verbally bullied at some point and 12.1% have done so often; 33% have made threats at some point and 8% have done so often; while the majority of types of school bullying have occurred occasionally, at some point. For example, 47.5% have isolated the victim with this frequency. This is followed by: 42.4% who have committed physically bullying; 14% who have attacked the victim's property in some way; and 12.1% who have spread rumours with this frequency. In other words, the most common types of bullying that the bullies resorted to were verbal bullying, isolation and physical bullying. However, the majority of these types of bullying have taken place occasionally, except for verbal bullying and threats.

**Table 4**

*Types and frequencies of bullying from the bullies' point of view.*

Type of school bullying	Never	Once	Twice or more	Often
Physical bullying	48.0%	42.2%	6.9%	2.9%
Verbal bullying	22.2%	60.6%	5.1%	12.1%
Isolation	44.4%	47.5%	2.0%	6.1%
Spreading of rumours	81.8%	12.1%	2.1%	4.0%
Threats	57.0%	33.0%	2.0%	8.0%
Attacks against property	81.0%	14.0%	0.0%	5.0%

Source: own research.

### 3.4. School Bullying and Gender

Girls have been found to be onlookers and victims more frequently than boys, and that they bully less than their male counterparts. 59.8% of girls in the sample have been onlookers compared to 55% of boys. Furthermore, 55.3% of girls were found to be potential victims of bullying compared to 45.8% of boys. In this regard, it is important to highlight the statistically significant relationship between the variables bully and gender, with 24.4% of boys being shown to be potential bullies compared to 15.2% of girls.

### 3.5. School Bullying and Academic Year

The higher the academic year, the higher the percentage of onlookers and the lower the percentage of both potential victims and bullies. Firstly, the percentage of onlookers is 49.7% among pupils aged 14–15, increasing to 69.6% among pupils aged 17–18. In contrast, the percentage of victims is 53% among pupils aged 14–15, decreasing to 41.8% among pupils aged 17–18. Furthermore, a statistically significant relationship was found between the academic year and bullies. This ranges from 21.2% among pupils aged 14–15 to 12.7% among those aged 17–18.

### 3.6. Social Skills and School Bullying

A relationship was found between the level of social skills and bullying, with minor exceptions. In general, the higher the level of social skills, the less likely the pupil is to be either a victim or a bully. Likewise, it proves relevant that onlookers have a higher level of social skills, followed by victims; however, there are some exceptions that will be analysed in detail in this section.

#### 3.6.1. *Active Listening*

A higher level of active listening is associated with a lower likelihood of being an onlooker, victim or bully. First, 66.7% of the pupils who lack this skill have been an onlooker, compared to 58.7% who have a high level of active listening. In this respect, 77.8% of victims lack this skill, a percentage that decreases to 49.6% among those with a high level. Lastly, a statistically significant relationship was identified between active listening and being a bully, and in reference to the above, this percentage of bullies ranges from 66.7% who lack this skill to 19.9% of pupils who have a high level of active listening.

#### 3.6.2. *Communication*

A pupil with a higher level of communication is more likely to be a victim. On the contrary, there is an inverse relationship between communication and bullies, while onlookers remain more or less constant in all levels of this social skill. That said, the group with the highest percentage of onlookers is the group with an average level



(57.5%). Furthermore, a statistically significant relationship was found between communication and being both a victim and a bully. The percentage of victims ranges from 45.2% who lack this skill to 65.8% who have a high level of communication. In contrast, the percentage of bullies ranges from 35.5% who lack these skills to 21.1% who have a high level.

### 3.6.3. *Gratitude*

Young people with a low level of gratitude are more likely to be victims and bullies, while onlookers remain constant in all levels of gratitude. In this vein, a statistically significant relationship was found between gratitude and being both a victim and a bully. 60.7% of victims score a low level in this skill, a percentage that falls to approximately 50% in the remaining levels, with the percentage remaining more or less constant. In terms of the bullies, 18.8% who lack this skill have bullied. This percentage of bullies increases to 42.9% among those with a low level, while in the higher levels, the percentage once again falls to 23.7% in the average level and to 16.1% in the high level of gratitude.

### 3.6.4. *Initiative*

A higher level of initiative is associated with a higher percentage of onlookers and victims. However, there is a lower percentage of bullies. Likewise, a statistically significant relationship was identified between initiative and being an onlooker, a victim and a bully, respectively. Firstly, the percentage of onlookers increases from 53.43% who lack this skill to 63.8% among those who have a high level. Similarly, the percentage of victims ranges from 46.5% who lack this skill to 51% who have a high level of initiative. The opposite occurs with the percentage of bullies, which decreases from 30.2% in the group who lack this skill to 19.8% among those with a high level.

### 3.6.5. *Asking for help*

The more skilled pupils are at asking for help, the less likely they are to be a victim of school bullying, while not possessing this skill and having a high level are associated with a higher likelihood of being a bully. The level of this skill, however, does not appear to be associated with being an onlooker. However, the group with a higher percentage of onlookers has a low level in terms of asking for help (63.9%). On the other hand, a statistically significant relationship was found between asking for help and being both a victim and a bully. The percentage of victims is 66.7% in the group that lacks this skill, decreasing to 46% in the group with a high skill level in terms of asking for help. Lastly, 26.2% of the pupils who lack this skill have bullied in the last year. This is followed by 18.8% who have a low level and 18.2% who have an average level. This percentage of bullies once again increases to 24.1% in the high level.

### 3.6.6. *Speaking in public*

A pupil who is more skilled at speaking in public is more likely to be an onlooker or bully, and less likely to be a victim. Likewise, a statistically significant relationship was found between speaking in public and being an onlooker, a victim and a bully, respectively. The percentage of onlookers ranges from 52.8% who lack this skill to 68.8% of pupils who have a high level. On the other hand, the percentage of victims ranges from 53.6% who lack this skill to 47.1% who have a high level. In contrast, the percentage of bullies increases from 17.9% who lack this skill to 25% who have a high level.

### 3.6.7. *Manipulation*

A higher level of manipulation is associated with a higher percentage of bullies and not possessing this skill or having a high level is associated with a higher percentage of victims, while the percentage of onlookers remains constant in all levels of manipulation. Average and high levels, however, have a higher percentage of onlookers (approximately 58%). A statistically significant relationship has been found between manipulation and being both a victim and a bully. 53.6% who lack this skill have been a victim of school bullying in the past year. This percentage decreases slightly in the low and average groups, but increases considerably to 64% among the group of young people who have a high level of manipulation. Furthermore, the percentage of bullies increases from 15.5% who lack manipulation skills to 30% in the group with a high level and who have bullied.

### 3.6.8. *Apologising*

Being more skilled at apologising was found to be associated with a lower percentage of victims and bullies, although none of the bullies admit to lacking this skill, while the percentage of onlookers remains constant across the different levels, with the zero level having the highest percentage of onlookers (60%). Furthermore, a statistically significant relationship was found between apologising and being both a victim and a bully. 80% of the sample who lack this social skill has experienced bullying in the past year. This percentage falls to 47% in the group of young people who score highly in apologising. Lastly, the percentage of bullies ranges from 44.8% of pupils who have a low level to 16.8% of young people with a high level.

### 3.6.9. *Assertiveness*

Pupils with a higher level of assertiveness are less likely to be a victim or bully. A pupil with a low level of assertiveness is more likely to be an onlooker (53.4%) compared to 48% of the group who lack this skill; 53.8% who had an average level; and 58.3% who had a high level of assertiveness. On the other hand, a statistically significant relationship was found between assertiveness and being a victim and

this social skill and being a bully. 64% of the non-assertive respondents have been a victim of school bullying in the past year. This percentage decreases to 48% in the group of young people with a high level of assertiveness. In this respect, the percentage of bullies ranges from 32% who lack this skill to 16.7% who have a high level of assertiveness.

### *3.6.10. Empathy*

As the level of empathy increases, the likelihood of being either a victim or bully decreases, while the percentage of onlookers is approximately 60% in the different levels of this social skill. However, this percentage decreases to 49.5% in the average level. Furthermore, a statistically significant relationship was found between empathy and being both a victim and a bully. The percentage of victims ranges from 60% of pupils who lack empathy to 48.2% who have a high level. In line with the above, the percentage of bullies decreases from 42.9% with a low level to 17.3% of pupils with a high level of empathy.

### *3.6.11. Showing Interest*

The higher the level of this skill, the less likely pupils are to be a bully and the more likely they are to be an onlooker. In contrast, those young people who lack the skills to show interest and those who have a high level are more likely to be victims. The percentage of onlookers ranges from 53% who lack this skill to 60.5% who score highly. In this respect, a statistically significant relationship was found between this skill and being a victim and showing interest and being a bully. The percentage of victims is higher in the group that lacks this skill (53.8%) and in the group that scores highly (52.4%). On the other hand, the percentage of bullies ranges from 46.2% who lack this skill to 19.8% who score highly.

### *3.6.12. Helping*

A higher level of this skill was found to be associated with a lower likelihood of being a victim and school bully, while those pupils who lack this skill and those with a high level are more likely to be onlookers. Specifically, we are talking about 62.5% and 60.3%, respectively, compared to 52.6% with a low level or 50.7% with an average level. A statistically significant relationship was found between this skill and being a victim and helping and being a bully. Interestingly, 73.7% of pupils who are not very skilled at helping others have been a victim of school bullying in the past year, while in the remaining levels, the percentage of victims has stayed constant, at around 50%. Lastly, the percentage of bullies decreases from 50% who lack this skill to 18.9% who score highly.

### 3.6.13. Finding Collaborative Solutions

As the ability to find collaborative solutions increases, the likelihood of being a victim and bully decreases. However, the percentage of onlookers remains constant at all levels, although it increases slightly in the high level, reaching 59%. A statistically significant relationship was found between finding collaborative solutions and being a victim and between this skill and being a bully. The percentage of pupils who are not as skilled at finding collaborative solutions and who have been a victim is 72.3% compared to 47% of the group that scored highly on this skill. Likewise, the percentage of bullies decreases from 29.4% who lack this skill to 14.5% who scored highly.

### 3.6.14. Defending One's Own Rights

Young people who have not developed this skill are more likely to be onlookers and bullies, while a higher level of this skill is associated with a lower likelihood of being a victim of school bullying. Likewise, a statistically significant relationship was found between defending rights and being both a victim and a bully. 46% of the sample who are not very skilled at defending their rights have been an onlooker, compared to 57% and 60% of the remaining groups. In contrast, 60% of pupils who are incapable of defending their rights have been a victim of school bullying compared to 50.2% who have a high capacity level to defend their rights. Lastly, 27% who have a low level of this skill have been a bully with respect to the rest of the groups that have a percentage of approximately 20%.

Table 5 shows the mean of each social skill of the potential onlookers, victims and bullies of this study. In general, the onlookers score more highly across all the social skills, except for manipulation, which is the skill that bullies score most highly on. The only social skill where victims stand out with respect to onlookers and bullies is associated with communication. However, victims score higher than bullies across all the social skills, except for manipulation as stated previously and other skills such as asking for help and speaking in public. Furthermore, Table 5 also shows the standard deviation of the onlookers, victims and bullies in each social skill. The data are not very disperse, with the largest dispersion seen in skills relating to initiative, asking for help, speaking in public and manipulation, which, in turn, are some of the skills that both the onlookers and the victims and bullies scored worse on.

**Table 5**

*Mean and standard deviation of the social skills of onlookers, victims and bullies.*

Social skill	Onlookers		Victims		Bullies	
	$\bar{x}$	S	$\bar{x}$	S	$\bar{x}$	S
Active listening	3.78	0.67	3.72	0.72	3.55	0.88
Communication	2.86	0.91	2.87	0.88	2.63	0.92
Gratitude	3.62	0.82	3.58	0.83	3.40	0.87
Initiative	3.03	1.00	2.99	1.00	2.82	1.05
Asking for help	2.81	0.98	2.74	1.01	2.78	1.00
Speaking in public	2.77	1.06	2.62	1.06	2.70	1.02
Manipulation	2.49	1.05	2.48	1.06	2.60	1.01
Apologising	3.62	0.75	3.51	0.82	3.45	0.74
Assertiveness	3.42	0.87	3.32	0.93	3.17	0.96
Empathy	3.76	0.67	3.69	0.71	3.57	0.73
Showing interest	3.47	0.82	3.44	0.82	3.31	0.94
Helping	3.66	0.70	3.62	0.72	3.49	0.83
Finding collaborative solutions	3.38	0.82	3.27	0.86	3.14	0.84
Defending rights	3.35	0.89	3.26	0.90	3.19	0.89

Source: own research.

On the other hand, it is worth noting that the Pearson correlation test was used in this research study to ascertain whether there are significant relationships between the variables. In general, it should be highlighted that despite there being statistically significant relationships, the correlations, in general, are low, as the values range between 0.10 and 0.20.

First, the social skills that predict being a bully are communication, own initiative and the capacity to speak in public, underscoring a negative correlation between communication and being an onlooker. In terms of the victims, there was an association with assertiveness, apologising and finding collaborative solutions. Lastly, social skills such as assertiveness, empathy, finding collaborative solutions, active listening, apologising, showing gratitude, helping, communication, showing interest, defending rights and initiative are correlated with being an onlooker.

## 4. Discussion

On the basis of the analysis and the presentation of the study results, it is evident that school bullying is more than a merely descriptive social phenomenon given that social skills have been confirmed to be an influential factor. The most relevant results are those that explain how the likelihood of being a potential onlooker, victim and

bully varies across the level of social skills, and those that compare the level of social skills of each role in bullying. Emphasis must be placed on the term “potential” as stated previously so as not to exaggerate this phenomenon.

However, the aim of this study also consisted of explaining bullying in a more comprehensive way in order to hear the versions of all the participants given that this study departs from the basis that the role of onlookers is very important, as their action or inaction may have an impact on bullying. 57.3% of the sample was shown to be an onlooker in the past year. 70% of onlookers tried to help the victim, while 18% did nothing and approximately 4% cooperated with the bullies in some way. These results partly coincide with the three types of onlookers described by Avilés (2004). The percentage of onlookers who did not help the victim is significant, as it is comprised of pupils who took part in bullying in a negative way, exposing the victim even more. With regard to this aspect, the code of silence should be noted. This is an unwritten code whereby onlookers decide not to speak out for fear of the possible reprisals in a case of bullying or isolated violence, causing these phenomena to continue and/or propagate (Díaz-Aguado et al., 2013). In this sense, the age of the sample cannot be disregarded: adolescents who need the support of their peers to build their self-esteem and who, therefore, decide not to speak out or to support the bullies so as to feel accepted by others or to avoid being socially pressured by the bullies and their accomplices, and to avoid being isolated or victimised. Nevertheless, this study has revealed a new type of onlooker: the helper. This role enables victims to be removed from those environments in which they are unable to defend themselves and can be empowered so that they learn to avoid potential revictimisation, while leaving the bully alone, not giving them reason or incentives to continue pursuing their aim. In future research, it would be interesting to compare the level of social skills of those onlookers who helped the victim with those who did not in order to establish whether those onlookers who helped score higher than those who watched from the sidelines or cooperated with the bully.

The most common types of help given by the onlookers were taking the victim to a safe place and speaking to the bully, to a teacher or to a classmate. However, the percentage of onlookers who have used violence as a mechanism to help the victim is worrying, bringing to mind some neutralisation techniques, such as the denial of responsibility (Sykes and Matza, 1957).

Similarly, in line with González-García and Campoy-Torrente (2016), this study confirmed the existence of pupils, in this case, 34.8%, who know of a classmate who has taken on a dual role with regard to bullying, that is, who has been both a victim and aggressor. From the point of view of the onlookers, the main reason for their classmates changing role was mainly to take revenge for the damage inflicted on them or to belong to a friend group. In future research, potential victims and bullies could be asked directly if they have taken on this dual role in life, and the possible consequences and precipitating factors could be studied.

50.4% of the sample have been a potential victim of school bullying in the past year. The most frequent types of bullying were the spreading of rumours, verbal bullying and isolation. In terms of the frequency of victimisation, the majority of the types of bullying happened “on occasion”, except for the three aforementioned types that were experienced more frequently. From another angle, 20% of the sample have been shown to be a potential bully in the past year. The most common types of bullying were verbal bullying, isolation and physical bullying. The first two types are most frequent, and as is the case with the victims, the rest of the types usually happen from time to time, on occasion. Girls are also found to be onlookers and victims more frequently than boys, while boys are found to bully more. Likewise, the percentage of potential victims and bullies is found to decrease as the academic year increases, while the percentage of onlookers increases. In this vein, statistically significant relationships have been identified between bullies and both gender and the academic year. In future research, the range of types of school bullying could be broadened, and behaviours typical of cyberbullying could be included, such as posting content on social media without consent or identity theft, in order to get a clearer snapshot of this phenomenon. Furthermore, the way in which the socio-demographic and socio-economic variables affect school bullying should also be studied to detect possible risk and protective factors.

Statistically significant relationships have been found between all the social skills and the independent variables related to being victims and bullies, and between onlookers and initiative and speaking in public. A higher level of social skills has been linked to an increase or decrease in the percentage of onlookers, victims and bullies. It should be highlighted that a higher level of social skills, such as active listening and assertiveness, is associated with a lower likelihood of being an onlooker, victim and bully. Along the same lines, a higher level of gratitude, empathy, help, apologising, finding collaborative solutions and defending one’s own rights is associated with a lower likelihood of being a victim and bully. However, a higher level of communication and initiative is associated with a higher likelihood of being a victim and a lower likelihood of being a bully. This brings to mind the provocative victim (Olweus, 2014). It is a very contradictory result with respect to that of speaking in public given that a higher level of this skill was found to be associated with a higher likelihood of being an onlooker and bully, while the likelihood of being a victim decreases. In contrast, it is interesting that at a higher level of the sample of interest, the percentage of onlookers increases and the percentage of bullies decreases, and that at a higher level in terms of asking for help, the pupil is less likely to be a victim. In future research, questions could be included to discover the characteristics of victims and bullies and to see whether they are associated with the level of social skills.

The research hypothesis has been verified as, generally speaking, the onlookers have a higher level of social skills than victims and bullies. Furthermore, the victims score higher than the bullies, except in speaking in public and in asking for help, where the bullies scored higher. Lastly, it should be highlighted that there is a social skill that bullies score higher on than onlookers and victims: manipulation. The results show that bullies and victims have a low level of social skills. This may result in the victims

not being able to defend themselves against the aggressions of their classmates, meaning that bullying in school is prolonged or that this lack of skills may lead to the bullies being incapable of realising the wrong in their actions, putting themselves in the victim's shoes and bringing an end to the situation. As for the onlookers, a low level of these skills may be associated with the onlookers not listening to the victim, not showing interest, or not helping or understanding them. Thus, this partially demonstrates the theory of Sutton et al. (1999); although bullies do not have a higher level of social skills than onlookers and victims, it has been proven that, overall, they score more highly on a key skill: manipulation, given that this skill is the perfect mechanism to gain the loyalty and obedience of their classmates and onlookers. However, the results of this study also partially demonstrate the theory of Crick and Dodge (1994), the basis of which lies in the fact that victims have a higher level of social skills than bullies given that those skills are associated with pro-social behaviours. However, it has been shown that there are social skills that bullies scored more highly on in comparison to victims and onlookers. In this sense, the intermediate theory developed by Arsenio and Lemerise (2001) has been confirmed, which coincides with Crick and Dodge (1994) in that people try to improve their social skills in order to be socially accepted. However, it also picks up on the idea in the theory by Sutton et al. (1999) that bullies make use of their social skills to achieve their objectives, irrespectively of whether or not these skills are socially accepted. For future research, it would be interesting to see the influence that other social skills, such as respect, have, and school bullying programmes based on social skills should be designed and evaluated to see whether they are effective in preventing and intervening in bullying.

## 5. Conclusions

This research has confirmed the relationship between school bullying and social skills by means of a sample of 506 pupils between the third year of compulsory Spanish secondary education (pupils aged 14–15) and the final year of school (pupils aged 17–18). Emphasis must be placed on the fact that this study mentions potential onlookers, victims and bullies, as in order to verify this, more complete, individual and specific studies would be needed that require more exhaustive research techniques.

This study has demonstrated that school bullying is associated with social skills. A lack of these social skills may be a potential risk factor for being a victim or bully, expect in the case of communication and initiative, associated with a higher likelihood of being a victim, and manipulation, related to a higher likelihood of being a bully. Onlookers have been shown to have a higher level of social skills, followed by victims and bullies, with the exception of manipulation, which the latter scored highest on.

With the results we are seeing, we must insist on learning social skills from a young age, so that children and adolescents acquire cognitive processes that enable them to display fewer antisocial and crime problems, and so that they can tackle daily conflicts in a positive manner. However, we cannot make the mistake of thinking that social skills are the only factor that influences school bullying. We must not forget that



we are faced with a social phenomenon with multiple causes in which both intra- and interpersonal variables come into play. Therefore, school bullying and its causes and consequences must be studied, both transversally and longitudinally, with representative samples. At the same time, school bullying prevention programmes based on social skills must be developed, implemented and evaluated periodically from a multidisciplinary approach.

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**ARTICLES/ARTÍCULOS**

# Immigration and the Public Economy: Prejudices, Myths and Misperceptions of the Spanish Case

Inmigración y economía pública: prejuicios, mitos y percepciones erróneas del caso español

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## ABSTRACT

It is twenty years since the beginning in Spain of an immigration cycle without precedent in the international migration scenario. After receiving more than six million new citizens continuously throughout a cycle of growth, crisis and economic recovery, the article makes an exhaustive analysis of the connection between immigration and the public economy in Spain. It analyses in detail the empirical evidence which makes it possible to disprove the usual prejudices, myths and misperceptions about immigration and the public economy. The analysis of a specific context such as that of Spain allows for a detailed quantification of the non-specific and aggregated findings shown in the literature on immigration and the public economy. The article shows evidence that refutes the so-called welfare magnet, accurately reveals the scant impact of immigration on public spending, quantifies the essential contribution to tax collection and rejects its negative net fiscal impact.

**KEYWORDS:** Migration Economics, International Migration, Public Economy and Migration, Spanish Immigration.

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## RESUMEN

Se cumplen veinte años del inicio en España de un ciclo de inmigración sin precedentes en el panorama migratorio internacional. Tras recibir más de 6 millones de nuevos ciudadanos de forma continuada a lo largo de un ciclo de crecimiento, crisis y recuperación económica, se analiza exhaustivamente la conexión entre la inmigración y la economía pública en España. Analiza en detalle la evidencia empírica que permite desmentir los prejuicios, mitos y percepciones erróneas habituales sobre la inmigración y la economía pública. El análisis de un contexto específico como el de España permite cuantificar con detalle los hallazgos inespecíficos y agregados que muestra la literatura sobre inmigración y economía pública. El artículo muestra evidencias que refutan el llamado imán del bienestar, revela con precisión el escaso impacto de la inmigración en el gasto público, cuantifica la imprescindible contribución a la recaudación de impuestos y rechaza su impacto fiscal neto negativo.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** migraciones económicas, migraciones internacionales, economía pública y migración, inmigración española.

## 1. Introduction

In just two decades, Spain, a country of forty-seven million people, has become the destination of more than eight million foreigners according to the OECD's international migration database, concentrating 8% of total foreign population inflows, only behind, in order of importance, the United States and Germany. This flow of immigrants is a peculiar phenomenon on the international scene, both in terms of the magnitude of the immigration flow and its speed: according to data from the National Statistics Institute (INE<sup>1</sup>) the stock of foreign-born population in 2019 accounts for 14% of the total, compared with only 3% of 1999.

The contribution of immigration to economic growth has been widely analysed with special attention to the insertion of migrants in the labour market. As far as the public economy is concerned, analyses have often considered immigration to be an essential issue, but even so, the true global impact of immigration on the public economy remains a matter of discussion. Benefits and costs associated with immigration in terms of public economy provide fertile ground for false debates supported by stereotypes that often are not shown by empirical data and analysis.

Twenty years after the beginning of immigration to Spain, the objective of this article is to systematically present the evidence regarding the impact of immigration on the public economy in Spain. The text will try to show reality based on the data, contrasting the observable reality with the prejudices or myths that populate the little informed debates.

## 2. Literature review

Frequently, the shape of a positive or negative attitude towards immigration stems from the perception of a threat, whether it is economic, cultural, social, ... As a personal and, to a certain extent, psychological process, the construction of this attitude is a mix of objective and subjective aspects. The "threat" is

constructed based on a wide range of perspectives, including personal ones (education, socio-economic level, degree of exposure or contact, religious/cultural conventions, etc.), the perception of the effect on the environment or sociotropic ones, the treatment of the issue in the media, etc. In short, it is a complex process in which a broad range of personal and collective conditioning factors mix and interact.

In this context, the effect of economic expectations (for the “group” or individually considered) has been a controversial issue in the literature (see Rincken, 2015). For Valentino et al. (2017), attitudes against or toward migrants can be divided in two groups: those concerned for the impact of competition in job and salaries of migrants’ accession, and those “who bear the costs of social welfare that newcomers demand”.

Their relationship could be analysed from different perspectives. Traditionally, authors speak of labour market competition as the main factor influencing the formation of negative attitudes towards immigration (see Hanson et al., 2007). While the reason for this process seems logical, it is also common to find nuances when other factors related to the degree of labour specialisation and the degree of vulnerability to the entry of newcomers are considered.” Wealthy citizens may oppose immigration most in places where an influx of low-skilled newcomers is likely to boost social welfare costs” (Facchini and Mayda, 2009; Hanson, Scheve, and Slaughter, 2007).

Specifically, the education level could play a relevant place in shaping these attitudes. Literature focus on two theories: (i) dissolution of ethnocentrism based in more intercultural integration coming from schooling (Shayo, 2009), and (ii) “education as cleavage”, considering that education produces more opportunities of lower unemployment risk, different life expectations, higher income... (Napier and Jost, 2009). Cavaille and Marshall (2018) found that each additional year of compulsory secondary education decreases the anti-immigration attitudes by using a comparative study in some European countries. They estimated that each additional year reduces between 8 to 18 percentage points the individuals declaring themselves as anti-immigrants.

Mayda (2006) affirms that the higher the educational level, the less adverse feelings towards immigration since they would not see it as a threat to their jobs. For others, such as Dustmann and Preston (2004), the greater hostility of those with a lower level of education would be determined not so much by a job threat, but by a question of racism. Malchow-Møllerab (2008) conclude that the former derives from economic self-interest and the latter from perceptions of the effects of immigration.

From a psychological perspective, Karinen et al. (2019) found an interesting point in the construction of individual attitudes towards migration based in the personal perception of the nature of each immigrant: migration considered as voluntary receives a lower support in terms of “deserving aid” than involuntary migration (due to wars, political persecution, socio-cultural rejection in the origin country...). Using

a survey to native Dutch born people, their conclusions are based on the perception of newcomers as “fortune seekers” or “bogus refugees.” A similar conclusion can be found in Bansak et al. (2016).

Poutvaara and Steinhhardt (2018) conduct an even more introspective analysis on what we could consider the latent psychological aspect of immigration opinion. These authors present as the main driver of immigration opinion the bitterness scale of each subject. The hypothesis that they confront is that to the extent that individuals do not feel that their personal worth is fully recognized, they will be especially critical of immigration.

Valentino et al. (2017) found an interesting role of the economic status of migrants as the main driver in attitudes toward migration. By using an original methodology (also based on a vignettes’ survey), they explore respondents’ reaction to the same person but changing some racial and/or ethnic attributes. They find that the “Competitive labour market assumption” would be the main driver that makes opinions about migration more or less favourable. On the other hand, they reject the called “Tax-burning hypothesis,” asserting that higher-skill workers would reject low-skill workers when they find that they would rise their taxes payment. Skin-tone or ethnical origins have just a little significance from the conclusions of this study. Only the Muslim origins could be slightly significant in the attitudes toward migration formation.

Several authors consider that growing up in an economic downturn context or living it during “impressionable years” (18-25 years) shapes the individual perception of less favoured more because of “bad luck” than because of deficient performance. Therefore, these generational cohorts are normally supporters of policies to alleviate this situation, even in the case of the people coming from other countries (see Giuliano and Spilimbergo, 2014; Alesina and Giuliano, 2011 or Bianchi, 2016).

Recently, Danielle et al. (2020) conducted an interesting experience by analysing the dramatic economic effects of COVID-19 crisis in Italy to assess the changes in the anti-immigrant sentiments of population by pre-conditioning their answers about the estimate of the economic crisis coming from this pandemic event. In this way, they claim to have a quasi-laboratory experiment where they can isolate two phenomena frequently included in literature about anti-immigrant sentiments: the natural origin of this crisis deactivates the potential migrants’ attribution and, the non-anticipated and cruelty of this crisis, produce unprecedented economic insecurity. From their findings, the economic situation emerges as a crucial issue shaping the attitudes towards migrants.

Cotofan et al. (2021) tested two hypotheses:

“(i) If recessions increase support for redistribution due to a universal increase in “compassion for the poor”, then we would expect support for immigration to increase as well, since immigration tends to reduce overall poverty or (ii) if, on the other hand, recessions increase support for redistribution out of self or group interest, then we predict that support for immigration will decrease, since lower immigration may reduce competition for jobs and benefits”.



They find robust evidence for the first hypothesis, highlighting this position among low-skilled workers, who may see migration as increased competition in times of scarcity.

From a different and complementary perspective, sociologists have often focused their findings by considering what they call “sociotropic concerns” (see for example Valentino et al., 2017). These authors find that “the notion that ‘person positivity’ could explain why respondents express more favourable views towards individual immigrants than towards immigration policies in general.”

In the same field of knowledge, “ethnocentrism” is worth noting. For Valentino et al. (2017), racial animosity could be the major driver in formation of attitudes (considering in this category issues such as cultural differences mainly in terms of religion).

Although it is not easy to measure, for Hatton (2020) a difference should be made between preference (level of migration that each one would like to have in his/her region) and salience (political importance as a political issue that each person considers). This author finds relevant evidence of differences between both concepts in the formation of attitudes.

In a recent study, Rodríguez and Rozo (2021) conducted a survey to Colombian’s natives dividing the sample in two halves: one of them pre-instructed about the economic effects of Covid19 crisis and the other one used as a control group. They found that the negative attitudes towards migration was significantly higher in the “treated group,” considering that it clearly shows the “salience aspect” in shaping these attitudes and reflecting the effect of a socioeconomic crisis in this process.

In short, we could conclude as we began this section. Attitudes towards immigration are the complex result of the perception (or not) of a threat. This may concern the personal economy (or that of your group), the preservation of the native culture, the personal perception of who deserves help and who does not. Personal conditions such as empathy, degree of bitterness, cultural level, etc. shape the attitude towards immigration of each person. Obviously, the way in which the subject is discussed in different contexts (friends, politics, press...) may act, in a certain way, as cooperative modulator of personal public opinion.

### 3. Welfare Magnet effect in Spain

Attempts to determine the causes of international migration and to separate the specific effect associated with the welfare state from other competing factors have been multiple. There is in fact a specific term “welfare magnet” for this effect which, in sum, would suggest that generous welfare states cause two effects, one quantitative (they tend to attract more migrants and also inhibit the return of those who are in a bad economic situation) and one qualitative (they tend to attract and retain those migrants who are low skilled and have low income potential as they are more likely to use the benefits of the system). Dozens of empirical analyses in many countries have tried to quantify how important the welfare state is as a factor in attracting migration (Borjas,

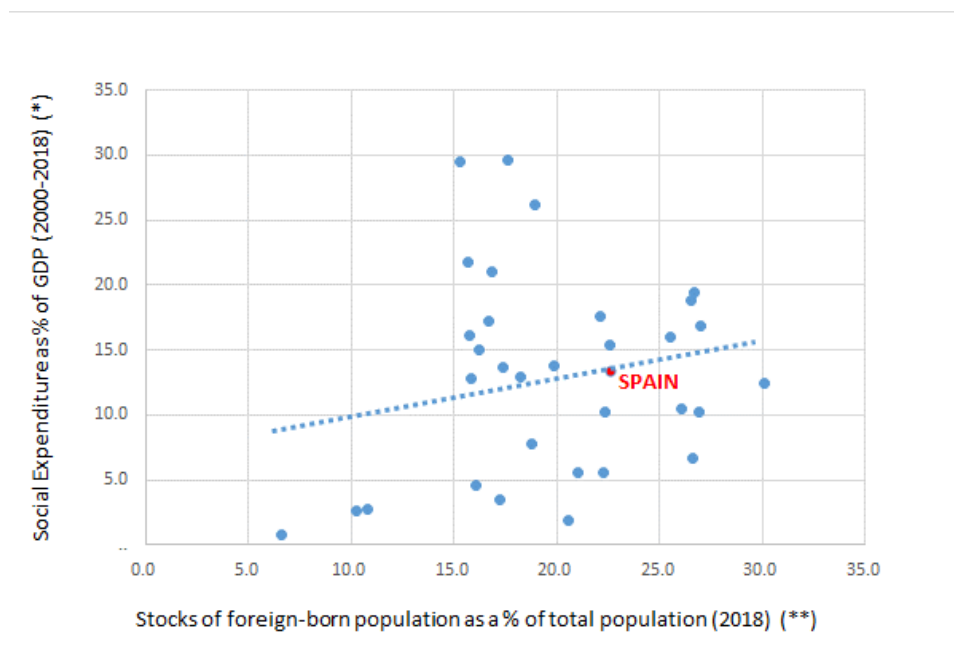
1999; Levine and Zimmerman, 1999; Enchautegui, 1997; De Giorgi and Pellizzari, 2006; McKin-nish, 2007; Giuliatti, C. and Wahba, J., 2013). As it is usually the case with a phenomenon as complex and multidimensional as migration, the results are in turn very heterogeneous and difficult to generalise. Although recent studies have shown some evidence of the welfare magnet in migration flows (Agersnap et al., 2019) or its composition (Razin and Wahba, 2015) in general terms it must be said that there is no clear and systematic evidence of such an effect.

Beyond the empirical evidence, it is reasonable to think that, when choosing their country of destination, migrants will tend to value positively the existence of a welfare state with broad coverage and free access to basic benefits (health, education or pensions, for example), especially in the case of low-skilled migrants with low expectations of future income. But at the same time, it can be assumed that the decision to migrate is due to a complex network of reasons of quite distinct kinds and, therefore, it is easy to sense that the welfare state is not the main factor in attracting migration. Figure 1 shows on the horizontal axis the average social expenditure (2000-2018) as a percentage of GDP in OECD countries, and on the vertical axis the percentage of the population born abroad. Each point represents a country and the dispersion around this “norm” is exceptionally large, although there is a slight direct connection between both variables (represented by the line through the country cloud). It is easy to find countries with social expenditure rates well above or below the OECD average and yet with hugely different percentages of foreign population, above or below what the “norm” would suggest.

Several factors inhibit the logic of the positive relationship between welfare state generosity and immigration. To begin with, the hypothesis of a positive connection between migration and welfare state generosity would presuppose that the migrant is well informed about benefits in one place or another and about the ease or otherwise of access to benefits. This is only true in those countries where there are already extensive migrant networks in place, which, where appropriate, function as sources of information for new migrants.

On the other hand, systems could be generously designed but inaccessible to immigrants. Some social protection systems are very generous, but they set limits on immigrants' access to the full range of public benefits and services. Although no restrictions are imposed on beneficiaries based on their origin, some benefits may require legal status, long term residence and/or formal employment so that potential welfare state benefits would function as secondary incentives, always conditioned by overriding objectives: the greater or lesser ease of finding a job and access to legal status. Likewise, it is common for many benefits, both for natives and immigrants, to be of a contributory nature (unemployment and certain pensions, for example) so that they could only be received by immigrants as benefits in the medium or long term.

**Figure 1**  
*Social Expenditure and Foreign Population in the OECD*



(\*) Average 2000-2018 (or latest data if the full range is not available) (OECD, 2020).

(\*\*) Data for 2018 (OECD, 2019a).

Source: Own elaboration based on OECD data (Japan, Korea and Russia excluded due to the lack of homogeneous data. Luxembourg has been deliberately excluded as distorting the whole).

In the case of Spain, there are several reasons to think that the so-called “welfare magnet” has *never existed*. As some public economy experts have pointed out on several occasions (Múñoz de Bustillo and Grande 2017), there are a number of powerful reasons to think that the Spanish welfare state has not been and is not a strong factor in attracting immigration.

To begin with, the dynamics of immigration evolution itself has not shown any relationship with the evolution of the welfare state in Spain. Immigration began abruptly, almost “suddenly”, and accelerated with the beginning of the 2000’s without any stimulating change in the quantity or quality of social spending. Over the last two decades, net migration has varied significantly, following a dynamic linked to the economic cycle and employment demand without, in this same period, any notable favourable changes in the framework of benefits of the Spanish welfare state.

Moreover, over the last few years, in the framework of the recent deep economic crisis, social policies in Spain have been subordinated to the logic of financial stability, austerity policies or growth. The unfavourable evolution of the indicators of poverty and social exclusion are evident in aggregate terms, but particularly intense among the immigrant population without a similar decrease in migratory pressure.

In fact, Spanish welfare state is considered to have wide coverage in services and benefits, but low or very low protective intensity (that is, of little effectiveness in combating forms of social exclusion). On the other hand, current trends show a clear process of deterioration, with a reduction in social spending on the most relevant social items (health, education, care for dependency) which have not yet recovered their pre-crisis levels (Lorenzo, 2014). In comparative terms, the level of social spending in the broadest sense (i.e. including health, education, culture, social benefits, housing, environment, defence and security) expressed as a % of GDP was 41% in 2018 (Eurostat, 2020a), clearly below the EU-28 average (46%) and very far from countries such as France (56%), Finland (55%), Belgium (52%) or Denmark (51)

In the specific case of access to welfare benefits by immigrants, the specificities are truly relevant and largely exclude those without regular residence status. Although census registration is a priori sufficient for access to health, education and some assistance programmes, the public benefits which protect against the main contingencies are contributory and are therefore associated with regular employment and contributions during a certain period. We should therefore consider the potential benefits of the social protection system to be secondary, at least when compared to the potential opportunity for regular employment and legal status. In this sense, the procedure of regularization, which requires accredited residence for a period of three years in an irregular situation, is *de facto* a restriction of access to the social protection system and therefore an inhibiting factor, if not a direct negative stimulus, for the selection of Spain as a migration destination.

#### 4. Immigration and use of public benefits and services

One of the key issues which, together with the labour market, concentrates most of the analysis regarding the economic impact of immigration is the use of public benefits and services. It is quite common to hear expressions such as “immigrants have the right to benefits that we Spaniards do not have”, “they take advantage of the benefits leaving Spaniards without them”, “they abuse the benefits” or “they should not have the right when they have not been in Spain paying contributions”.

This view became more evident during the recent economic crisis (2008-2013), fuelling positions in favour of limiting immigrants’ rights and showing opposition to adapting social programmes to the specific needs of groups of immigrant origin (Moreno and Bruquetas, 2011). Even if these are minority opinions, it is important to

stress that the perception that citizens have of the contribution or use of public benefits by immigrants is truly relevant when it comes to defining their overall assessment of immigration. Using data from the CIS' studies of attitudes to immigration for the years 2008, 2012 and 2017 (CIS 2008, 2012, 2017), we have conducted a multivariate regression to determine which specific attitudes to immigration affect overall opinion on immigration to a greater or lesser extent (Defensor del Pueblo, 2020). Once the basic characteristics of the surveyed person (age, social class and ideological position) have been controlled, the analysis shows that the impact of beliefs about immigration and the economy on overall opinion of immigration is over 40% and that the issues which carry most weight in the construction of this negative perception are precisely those relating to the abuse of certain benefits or the imbalance between what they contribute and what they receive.

One of the most widespread misconceptions is that many foreigners live on pensions and social benefits. This perception is wrong: foreigners do NOT live on pensions in Spain. Their main source of income comes from work even more than in the case of Spaniards.

Data from the INE's Household Budget Survey reveal that 60% of foreign households have employed labour as their main source of income compared to 44.7% of Spanish households (CES, 2019). Even excluding households with pensioners for a more appropriate comparison (the presence of foreigners over 65 years of age who are pensioners is extremely low), the proportion of foreign households whose main source of income is employed (65%) also exceeds that of Spanish households (64%). See table 1.

**Table 1**

*Source of Household Income by Nationality*

	Total Households		Households with a main breadwinner under 6	
	Spanish	Foreigners	Spanish	Foreigners
Self-employment	11%	13%	16%	14%
Employee work	45%	60%	64%	65%
SubTotal	56%	73%	80%	79%
Contributory pensions	37%	12%	12%	4%
Unemployment benefits	4%	8%	5%	8%
Other social benefits	1%	5%	2%	6%
Other sources of income	2%	3%	2%	3%

Source: CES (2019). Household Budget Survey, (INE)

Foreigners do not enjoy any preference in social security pensions and benefits, which does not formally discriminate, for or against, on the grounds of origin. Article 14.1 of the Law on the Rights and Freedoms of Foreigners in Spain and their Social Integration (LO 4/2000, 2000) states that resident foreigners have the right to access

Social Security benefits and services under the same conditions as Spaniards. In formal terms, the social security system is oriented towards the principle of universality. On this principle, the eligibility criteria for the various public social security benefits are based exclusively on certain “contributory” or residence criteria, which are the same for all potential beneficiaries; there can therefore be no formal discrimination, whether positive or negative, on grounds of origin.

In any case, if anything could be found, it is the existence of some restrictions for foreigners in the formulation or practical application of some formal eligibility criteria. For example, in the case of non-contributory benefits, the requirement for a minimum period of residence is a *de facto* restriction on access by foreigners. It should be recalled that access to a non-contributory retirement benefit is subject to a minimum residence of ten years in the national territory for all applicants and five years in the case of a disability pension. This rule therefore excludes foreigners who arrived less than a decade ago.

Furthermore, it should be remembered that the previously mentioned Law on Foreigners (LO 4/2000, 2000) states that to have access to the entire catalogue of social security and social services benefits it is necessary to have legal residence. A recent ruling by the Supreme Court (SC, 2019) explained that, in the case of foreigners, the census registration does not prove the years of legal residence required to qualify for the non-contributory retirement pension (while the same census registration is a valid document as proof of residence for Spanish nationals).

Another popular prejudice is that foreigners are entitled to contributory pensions even though they are “newcomers”. However, the reality is quite different: contributory pensions require the same contribution times for nationals and foreigners so that public expenditure on contributory pensions for foreigners is obviously very low. It should first be noted that in Spain 98% of expenditure on pensions (or 95% of the number of pensions) is of a contributory nature. Thus, the bulk of expenditure on social security benefits is subject to the beneficiary’s previous legal relationship with the social security system. In general terms, therefore, eligibility for and amount of a pension are determined by the worker’s employment history and the contributions made by the worker during the period under consideration for the purposes of the regulatory basis of the pension in question. This implies that the current weight of foreign beneficiaries in the volume of expenditure on contributory pensions is extremely low.

Table 2 illustrates the weight of foreigners in contributory expenditure, both in terms of the number of pensions and the volume of expenditure. The number of contributory pensions for foreigners was, at the end of 2019, 1.6% of the total, which represents 0.9% of average payroll expenditure, also including the EU residence regime and other international agreements. This small proportion is reasonable if we consider that 70% of expenditure is allocated to retirement pensions: the foreign population over the age of sixty-five is 3.6%, but in addition, obviously their period of residence is not long enough for many of them to be able to prove the minimum qualifying period or contribution.

**Table 2**

*Pensioners and Expenditure by Nationality on Social Security Contributive Benefits*

	Permanent Disability	Retirement	Widowhood	Orphanage	Family (other)	TOTAL Pensions
NUMBER OF PENSIONS (1)	962,035	6,089,294	2,366,788	340,106	43,156	9,801,379
Spanish	933,681	6,012,608	2,328,768	329,079	43,071	9,647,207
Foreigners	28,354	76,686	38,020	11,027	85	154,172
% Foreigners	2.9%	1.3%	1.6%	3.2%	0.2%	1.6%
TOTAL EXPENDITURE (2)	941,3	6,963.4	1,692.2	137,9	25,0	9,759.8
Spanish	920,8	6,922.1	1,672.3	135,4	24,9	9,675.5
Foreigners	20,5	41,3	19,9	2,5	0,1	84,3
% Foreigners	2.2%	0.6%	1.2%	1.8%	0.2%	0.9%

Source: Own elaboration from Social Security data (Estadiss database, Pension Statistics).

(1) December 2019.

(2) Thousands of Euros. Monthly average. Year 2019.

Nor do foreigners enjoy any relative advantage in receiving unemployment benefits which, again, are associated with previous employment and contribution history. In fact, about unemployment benefits, which are excluded from the previous section of contributory social security benefits, it should again be pointed out that their contribution level is a benefit whose duration and amount is once again linked to the beneficiary's work history as accredited in Spain, regardless of the worker's nationality. Foreign workers have no particular benefit in terms of receiving this benefit.

On the other hand, under the non-contributory scheme (social assistance benefit), foreign nationals must be legally resident in Spain and must again meet the requirements for all unemployed persons in similar circumstances. It is not possible to come to Spain and receive the social assistance allowance for the unemployed simply because you cannot find a job, since, on the one hand, the residence permit is generally linked to having a job and because, in addition, this allowance also requires having paid a minimum social security contribution for the contingency of unemployment. It should also be remembered that unemployment benefits for foreigners, even at the level of assistance, specifically exclude those who have worked under authorisations for cross-border workers, for seasonal activities and for students.

The relative weight of foreigners among the beneficiaries of unemployment benefits (10.9%) is lower than their weight among the unemployed; (18.1% in EPA terms or 12.6% in terms of registered unemployment). The coverage rate of the benefit is therefore ten points lower for foreigners (53%) than for Spaniards (63%) — see table 3 —.

**Table 3**  
*Unemployment figures and benefits by nationality*

	Foreigners	Spanish	TOTAL	%Foreigners
Active Population (EPA 2019 Q3)	3,011,200	20,077,500	23,088,700	13.0%
Unemployed (EPA 2019 Q3)	582,400	2,632,000	3,214,400	18.1%
Unemployment rate (EPA 2019 Q3)	19%	13%	14%	
Registered Unemployed SEPE <sup>(1)</sup>	403,848	2,794,336	3,198,184	12.6%
Beneficiaries of Unemp. Benefits <sup>(2)</sup>	213,442	1,750,658	1,964,100	10.9%
Aprox. Coverage Rate <sup>(3)</sup> (SEPE data based)	53%	63%	61%	
Aprox. Coverage Rate <sup>(3)</sup> (EPA data based)	37%	67%	61%	
Contributory type	126,074	743,826	869,900	14.5%
% over total	59%	42%	44%	
Social Assistance type <sup>(4)</sup>	87,368	1,006,832	1,094,200	8.0%
% over total	41%	58%	56%	

Source: Own elaboration from data of the National Institute of Statistics (INE) and Social Security (Estadiss data base, Pension Statistics).

<sup>(1)</sup> Public State Employment Service (SEPE). December 2019

<sup>(2)</sup> Pension Statistics. Social Security. November 2019.

<sup>(3)</sup> The exact coverage rate could be computed by subtracting from the unemployed those who do not have previous work experience.

<sup>(4)</sup> Excluding the employment activation program.

Contributory unemployment benefits, to the detriment of non-contributory benefits, are higher among foreigners (59%) than among Spaniards (42%). This difference could be due to two factors. On the one hand, some of the modalities that grant the right to the non-contributory benefit are aimed at workers over 45 or 52 years of age, something that, on average, is less common in the case of foreigners, given their greater relative youth. In addition, access to the non-contributory benefit is simpler and the duration of the benefit is longer if they have family responsibilities, which is more common among the Spanish population (10% of foreigners do not even live in a family home). The second factor could be that foreigners experience shorter periods of unemployment, so that they do not exhaust the contributory benefit that activates this form of assistance (data invoked about the differences between migrant and native population can be easily contrasted by using de Salary Structural Survey by INE, 2020).

Foreigners are also under-represented in non-contributory pensions, except for non-contributory retirement pensions. In addition to benefits of a contributory nature and unemployment benefits, there is also a wide range of non-contributory and assistance benefits. If we look at data in table 4 referring to the non-contributory disability and retirement benefits, two results seem evident.



**Table 4**

*Pensioners by Nationality in Non-contributory Social Security Benefits*

	Pensioners Totals	Pensioners Foreigners	% of Foreigners
Total Benefits	450,837	26,530	5.9%
Disability	193,174	8,868	4.6%
Retirement	200,532	16,439	8.2%
Disability Retirement	57,131	1,223	2.1%

Source: IMSERSO, 2018.

First, there is the over-representation of foreigners in the case of retirement pensions. In effect, the percentage of foreign pensioners (8%) exceeds the relative weight of the foreign population over 65 years of age, which is only 3.6%. However, this is far from illustrating a relative advantage for foreigners: let's remember that in this case we are talking about the Non-Contributory Pension modality, that is, the one that is activated only when the individual lacks sufficient resources for his subsistence in the legally established terms, and has never contributed or for long enough to reach the benefits of the contributory level.

Secondly, the relative weight of foreigners among disability pensioners is exceptionally low: only 4.6% of disability pensioners are foreigners, which is clearly below what would correspond to their relative population weight. In effect, considering the general age distribution of disability pensioners (IMSERSO, 2019), the weight of foreigners among these pensioners should be 10.6%, and yet it barely reaches 5%.

The average salary of Spanish workers is 56% higher than that of non-EU foreigners and the average income per person is 83% higher. The at-risk-of-poverty rate and the AROPE (At Risk of Poverty or Exclusion Index) rate should be double those of Spaniards and almost reach 50% of foreigners (EU or non-EU). It is sad to note that 1 in 2 foreigners are poor in Spain (see Salary Structure Survey, INE 2020).

Although a significant part of the higher poverty rate has to do with a higher unemployment rate of foreign workers, the rates of risk of poverty are also extremely high among the foreign population in work (in-work at-risk-of-poverty rate). According to Eurostat data, the at-risk-of-poverty rate among non-EU foreign workers reaches 32.3% in 2018 in Spain, the highest percentage in the Union only behind Bulgaria, and far behind the EU average of 17.4%. The OECD has also alerted Spain to this phenomenon in its recent report on the international migration outlook (OECD, 2019), noting that around 30 per cent of foreign-born workers were poor in 2017-18.

Immigrants do not monopolise the benefits of the Social Services and their over-representation is logically due to a situation of vulnerability which, on average, is also very marked. It is difficult to quantify the extent to which aid associated with social service activity is allocated to foreigners. The capillarity of these services network is

so fine and the benefits so varied and numerous that it is difficult to segment figures and associate them with a particular group in a consolidated manner.

Data on the use of Social Services collected in the Concerted Plan for Basic Social Services in Local Corporations (Ministry of Health, 2018) reveals that throughout the year the public network of Social Services Centres serves almost five and a half million users with a budget of nearly 1.8 billion euros. The detail of the profile of the users of the different services includes the attention of 505,135 immigrant users and 5,474 refugees and asylum seekers, which represents only 5.7% of the users.

Another classic anti-immigration prejudice is that immigrants misuse and abuse health services. This prejudice is perhaps one of the most widespread even among those who do not have overtly unfavourable attitudes to immigration. Data from the latest CIS study (CIS, 2019) shows that, for example, over 50% of respondents agree with the view that migrants abuse free health care.

However, ensuring universal access to health care is not only an ethical requirement, but also a measure of economic efficiency. The law guarantees the universal right to health protection and health care, under the same conditions, to all persons in Spain. The current regulatory framework is the origin of the prejudices that question the access of immigrants, in any situation, to the health system. The Royal Decree Law 7/2018 (RDL 7/2018, 2018) legally recovered the universality of the right to health protection and healthcare, linking it to residence in Spanish territory. The rule was intended to put an end to the restrictions established by the controversial Royal Decree-Law 16/2012 (RDL 16/2012, 2012) which, de facto, excluded from health care at public expense adults who were neither registered nor authorised to reside in Spain (except in a few exceptional situations); access to the National Health System is therefore a right linked to citizenship in its broadest sense.

The free access of undocumented immigrants to the national health system is, first, and reproducing the spirit of the Spanish law, an “ethical requirement”, as it intends to “protect those most vulnerable groups”. Secondly, the standard moves in the direction of international recommendations such as the World Health Organisation’s Health 2020 agenda or other important regional policy frameworks aimed at facilitating and supporting universal, sustainable, high quality, inclusive and equitable health systems. The Lisbon Conference (Health and Migration in the EU: Better Health for All in an Inclusive Society) stressed that preventive care and access to care for refugees and migrants should be understood as a human right; as an essential element of social, economic, and political development; and as a prerequisite for achieving public health and global health goals.

Moreover, unrestricted universal access contributes to the improvement of “the collective health of the entire population” as far as exclusion or marginalisation from access to the system makes it difficult to detect and treat diseases and can

represent a major public health risk. Consequently, this policy of inclusion ends up having favourable economic consequences. A recent study by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA 2015) in this regard, indicates that providing access to regular preventive health care to undocumented migrants would result in cost savings for health systems. Even when a simple model is used to estimate costs, the implications are clear: treating a condition only when it becomes an emergency not only jeopardizes a patient’s health, but also results in a greater financial burden on health systems.

Immigrants use public health services less, with average per capita expenditure far lower than that of Spaniards. Regarding the use of health services, diagnostic tests and the consumption of medicines, the data from the National Health Survey could not be clearer: foreigners make less use of consultations, diagnostic tests, and medicines.

**Table 5**

*Health: Frequency of use, diagnostic tests, and other indicators of use  
Comparison by Nationality*

INDICATOR	NATIONALITY	
	Spanish	Foreign
<b>COVERAGE</b>		
Public Health Coverage	99.27%	97.29%
<b>FREQUENCY OF USE</b>	Spanish	Foreign
Average number of visits to the family doctor or paediatrician in the last 4 weeks	1.28	1.24
Medical consultation in the last 12 months. %	87%	82%
Number of medical consultations in the last 12 months	7.4	6.1
Number of visits to the family doctor in the last 12 months	5.0	4.3
Number of specialist consultations in the last 12 months	2.4	1.7
Need for medical assistance not attended in the last 12 months	1.9	2.8
Doctor’s visit 4 months ago or less (% respondents)	36%	31%
<b>DIAGNOSTIC TESTS</b>	Spanish	Foreign
X-rays taken in the last 12 months	26.7%	24.4%
CT scan or scan performed in the last 12 months	9.1%	7.3%
Performed ultrasound in the last 12 months	16.6%	16.6%
Performed MRI in the last 12 months	9.2%	6.4%
<b>CONSUMPTION OF MEDICINES</b>	Spanish	Foreign
Consumption of prescription drugs in last 2 weeks (% surveyed)	61%	48%

Source: Spanish National Health Survey 2017. Ministry of Health.

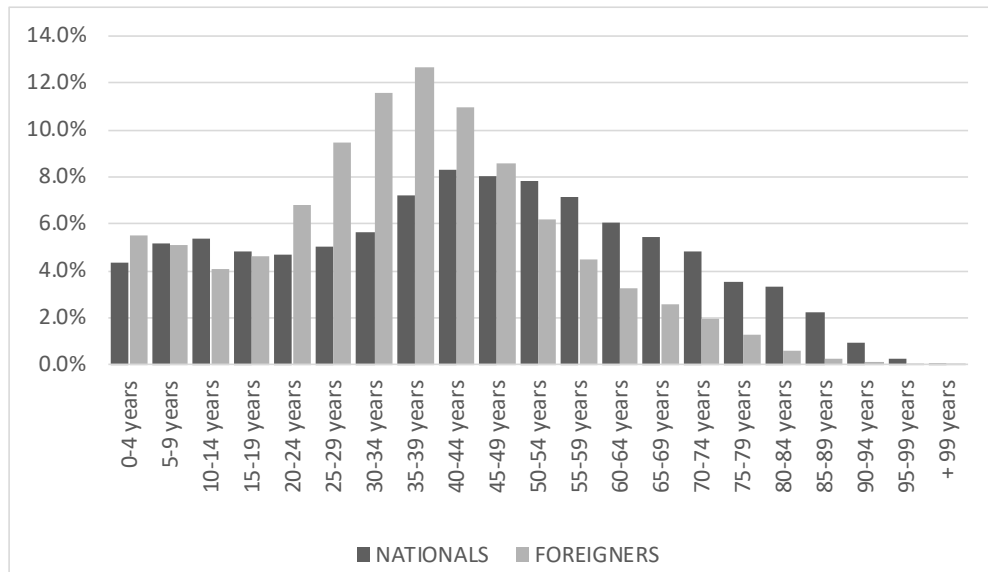
In general terms, age, living conditions and certain socio-economic differences explain notable differences in terms of the greater or lesser use of health services by the population and, therefore, of health expenditure.

In this sense, the lower average age of foreign residents in Spain is a fundamental factor that explains the lower frequency use and lower per capita expenditure of the foreign population (Múñoz de Bustillo y Antón, 2010). Many studies in this respect have pointed out that health expenditure, especially hospital expenditure, is in the form of a “J” when analysed by age: high during the first year of life, falling to a minimum between 5 and 14 years of age and then rising steadily thereafter. For example, (Aguado Alba et al., 2012) indicated that the median expenditure on primary care for the group up to 2 years of age was 410 euros, falling to 203 euros in the interval from 15 to 44 years and 1,255 euros for the population aged 75 years and over.

With these figures in mind, it should be noted that in our country, more than 50% of the foreign population is concentrated in the 25-44 age group, a group with a low rate of use of health resources, while this figure only reaches 30% for the national population. At the other extreme, for the age group over forty-five, the weight of the national population is much greater than that of the foreign population, 50% as opposed to 29%. In the case of the population over 65 years of age, much more associated with cases of chronic and dependent patients, the foreign population only represents 7% compared to 21% of the Spanish population.

## Figure 2

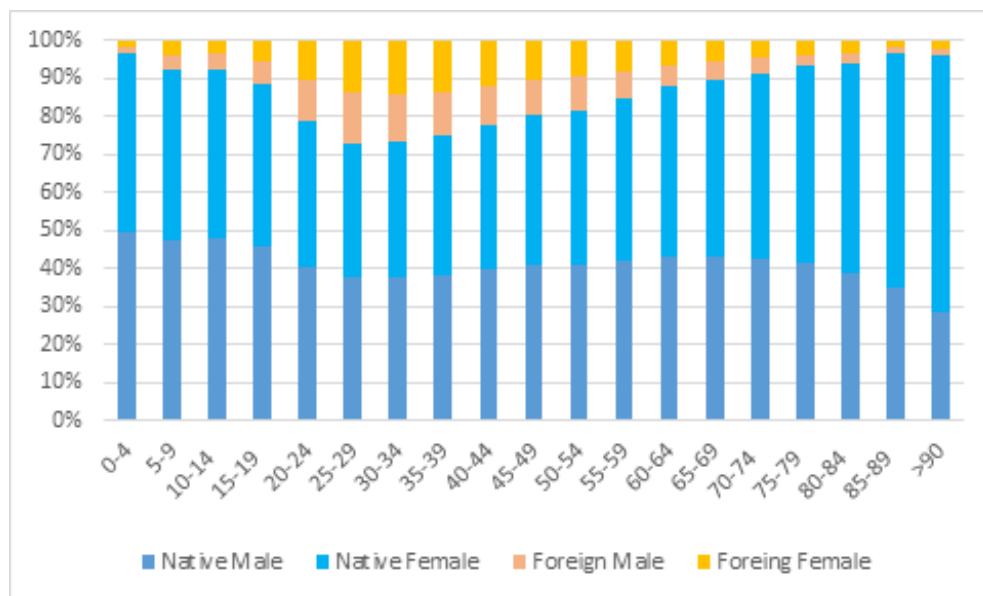
*Distribution by age of the Spanish and foreign population*



Source: Own elaboration from INE data (Main Population Series. Data for 2018).

**Figure 3**

*Distribution by age and gender of the Spanish and foreign population*



Source: Own elaboration from INE data (Main Population Series. Data for 2018).

According to a report by the working group on health expenditure analysis published by the Ministry of Finance (Ministry of Finance, 2007), the relative expenditure ratios for seven age groups are radically different. If we use only these coefficients and average the expenditure for the foreign and Spanish population, the per capita expenditure for public health care would be 38% higher for the Spanish population than for the foreign one (1,544 euros versus 1,115 euros). Some other studies have compared the health expenditure of both groups with a more elaborated methodology (Vicens, Mahía and Arce, 2006) but the results are similar given the significant differences in the age distribution and the relevance of this demographic factor.

Demographics also have other ways of impacting on health spending. For example, higher fertility among the immigrant population could be a factor in higher health expenditure associated with pregnancy, childbirth and first-year care of children. However, it seems easy to assume that the relative impact of this higher fertility on expenditure would not be relevant in aggregate terms and, in any case, the benefits of this higher fertility seem clear in other ways. On the other hand, although greater fertility is associated with greater expenditure, lower fertility is capable of generating comparable expenditure when it is associated with a delay in the age at which motherhood begins, as occurs in the case of Spanish women on average; indeed, this delay is associated with an increase in health expenditure given the increase in risks and complications related to pregnancy and childbirth (FGC, 2018).

**Table 6***Estimation of Public Per Capita Health Expenditure by Nationality*

	Coefficients of relative expen- diture	Relative Spending Estimated (€)	Weight Age groups SPANISH (Sum 100%)	Weight Age groups FOREIGNERS (Sum 100%)
0-4 years	1.03	1,442 €	4.3%	5.5%
5-14 years	0.43	606 €	10.5%	9.2%
15-44 years	0.55	765 €	35.7%	56.1%
45-54 years	0.90	1,265 €	15.9%	14.8%
55-64 years	1.29	1,808 €	13.2%	7.7%
65-74 years	2.18	3,043 €	10.2%	4.5%
Over 74 years	2.76	3,860 €	10.2%	2.2%
	Relative expenditure		1,544 €	1,115 €

Source: Own elaboration.

(€) Taking as an overall average basis an indicative figure of 1,500 €.

Socioeconomic level and quality of living conditions can significantly affect health expenditure and that both factors are not comparable, in average aggregate terms, between Spaniards and foreigners. The level of per capita income is in fact another factor which gives rise to differences which condition many aspects of health care and, as was seen in the section on the labour market, income and poverty conditions are significantly worse among the foreign population. Immigration thus becomes, in fact, a “risk factor” for poorer health. A recent report (WHO, 2018) indeed indicated that “migration and displacement are social determinants affecting the health of refugees and migrants” and the same report recognizes that migrants, especially refugees, may be more vulnerable to some diseases (such as infectious diseases) due to lack of or interrupted health care in the country of origin, exposure to infections and lack of care in transit, and poor living conditions in the country of destination.

## 5. Fiscal revenues and fiscal balance of immigration

Sometimes the economic debate on immigration is formulated around the concept of “fiscal balance” with the idea of “doing the math” on whether immigration “brings in” more than it “detracts”. After reviewing the chapter on expenditure, we will look at the revenue dimension and some of the evidence surrounding the concept of the “fiscal balance”.

First, it should be recalled that, in Spain, in terms of tax collection, there is no exception for foreigners residing in Spanish territory. The tax collection is essentially made up of social security contributions and collections of personal income tax, VAT, corporate tax, property tax and other minor taxes. None of these tax instruments provide, in the case of individuals, for any relevant exception in terms of nationality or country of birth of the taxable person.

As far as the taxation of individuals is concerned, there is no particularity that can be applied to a foreigner resident in our country. In terms of personal income tax (IRPF), the obligation to declare is established based on unique requirements that identify the “tax resident” and the taxation of business activity does not provide for any exceptions for foreigners.

The tax contribution migrants in terms of social security (taxation of labour) is notable given the high rate of activity and occupation of the group. It should be remembered that in Spain a large part of public revenue comes from the collection of social security contributions from workers and companies. The weight of social security contributions over total income is 33.8% in Spain, while in the OECD the average relative importance is 27%. In fact, although tax collection as a percentage of gross domestic product is at the OECD average (34%), social security contributions in Spain reach 11.6% of GDP, a percentage higher than the OECD average (9.4%) (see OECD, 2020).

With labour taxation being so important, the role of labour immigration from the point of view of fiscal revenue is remarkable. Although the proportion of foreign workers registered with the general social security system was barely 11 per cent at the end of 2019, they have contributed far more to the increase in new contributors since 2016, accounting for 27 per cent of new registrations in 2019.

The importance of foreigners in the self-employed regime is even clearer. Although the relative importance of affiliated workers in the self-employed regime is only 10.3% at the end of 2019, their contribution to affiliations’ growth has been spectacular since 2016. The impressive increase in the number of workers affiliated as self-employed deserves special attention, as the conditions for access or change of regime to this special regime are far from simple for non-EU applicants (who account for 52% of foreign affiliates registered in this special regime). One of the reasons for this increase has to do with the special situation of the many Venezuelan refugees and other Central American countries who have recently arrived in Spain in search of international protection: the number of Venezuelans registered in the self-employed regime has grown by 35% in 2019 and the increase has also been notable in the case of Colombia (16%) and Paraguay (14%). Although it is sometimes heard that registering as a self-employed person is a way of obtaining legal residence when there is no offer of work for others, the truth is that, as with Spanish workers, some foreigners may be forced to register as self-employed to work in “other people’s” businesses<sup>2</sup>.

It is common to hear that, in terms of balance, immigrants receive more than they contribute. It should be noted that the concept of “fiscal balance” of immigration distils a dangerous economic approach. Although the aim of this article has been to evaluate immigration from an economic, utilitarian perspective, the concept of the “fiscal balance” of immigration is even more crude. The term proposes to “balance” in purely economic terms, to “settle” a phenomenon whose pros and cons adopt multiple facets, making a “profit and loss” exercise essentially impossible.

The results reveal a neutral or slightly positive fiscal impact, although there are major difficulties in measuring the fiscal balance of immigration instantly. The OECD recently dedicated a whole section of its annual publication on migration (OECD, 2019) to the objective of analysing the fiscal impact of immigration and comparing it internationally and in Spain. The conclusions of the OECD report indicated that the fiscal contribution of immigration was only negative in several Eastern European countries with small immigrant populations, as well as in Germany, France, and Ireland. In the latter countries, except for Ireland, immigrant populations are relatively old and therefore over-represented among the population receiving pensions.

On the other hand, the OECD found (with data mostly from before the crisis) that in most countries the net fiscal position of immigrant households is below that of natives. However, this was not the case in several countries, particularly in southern Europe such as Italy, Greece, Spain, and Portugal, as well as in Ireland. In these countries, households with low-educated migrants have higher net contributions than comparable native households.

The net fiscal impact figure estimated for Spain by the OECD was 0.54% of GDP, significantly higher than the OECD average (positive and close to 0.30%). This figure is broadly in line with that of the above-mentioned report of the Economic Office of the President (0.55%).

The reason for the positive contribution is that, in all these countries, a large part of the resident migrant population is made up of recent (and young) migrant workers. Although the contribution via taxes is lower (a consequence of the lower relative level of income), their contribution via social security is relatively higher than their population weight (given the higher activity and employment rates) and some of the more important expenditures are also proportionally lower due to their relative youth (very low spending on pensions or low relative spending in terms of health benefits, for example).

One of the many difficulties associated with calculating the fiscal balance of immigration has to do with what we could call the accrual of costs and benefits. In this sense, “favourable” calculations illustrating a positive net contribution are conditioned by the relative youth of our immigrant population. Today’s immigration is young and therefore hardly involves any expenditure on pension or health benefits, for example.

However, it seems logical to think that in the medium and long term this reality will slowly adjust. In this respect, it seems sensible to think that a successful integration process will generate a convergence between the foreign and Spanish populations that will tend to homogenise the fiscal contribution between the two.



## 6. Conclusions

*None of the common prejudices about the effects of immigration on the public economy seem to be supported by the data.*

*In relation to the so-called welfare magnet there are several reasons to think that it has never existed. Spain is not a particularly interesting destination in the European framework if we judge the quality and accessibility of the social protection system. Immigration flows have remained extraordinarily strong even during the recent economic crisis, in a context of clear deterioration of the social protection framework, increased poverty and growing inequalities.*

*Regarding the impact of immigration on public expenditure and services, the analyses once again refute a wide range of unfounded prejudices. Foreigners do NOT live on pensions in Spain, do not enjoy any preference in social security pensions and benefits, they do not enjoy any relative advantage in receiving unemployment benefits or other contributory pensions and are also under-represented in most of the social – assistance (non-contributory) services. Immigrants do not monopolize the benefits of the Social Services and their over-representation in some chapters is logically due to a situation of vulnerability which, on average, is also very marked. Once again, it should be emphasized that, due to the nature of new admissions (mostly at ages with few health complications), the impact of these admissions on the use of health services is low.*

*In relation to the connection between public revenues and immigration, there is no exception for foreigners residing in Spanish territory. The contribution in terms of taxation is the same as that of nationals in similar income circumstances. The classic hoax, very widespread in Spain, that some foreign groups have any type of tax advantages has no authentic basis. The text also documents the interesting evidence that the tax contribution of immigration in terms of social security (taxation of labour) is notable given the high rate of activity and occupation of the group.*

## 7. Notes

- 1 “Instituto Nacional de Estadística”.
- 2 Data coming from the Labour Force Survey (EPA, INE, 2020).

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ARTICLES/ARTÍCULOS

# Andragogy: Combating Ageism (the 20th/21st-Century Generation as a Reference Model)

La andragogía: un límite al edadismo  
(la Generación Siglos 20/21, un modelo de referencia)

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## ABSTRACT

Despite having our feet firmly set in the 21st century, degrading stereotypes regarding age still persist, something which has given rise to the neologism “ageism”. Faced with this situation, there is a glaring need for a paradigm shift — starting with the institutions and legal norms — in order to reclaim the rights of and respect for the elderly. Educational programmes for both younger generations and those that are already in adulthood are required to allow experience and age to recover the importance they once held in our society. An andragogical drive is key to highlighting the importance of age, while discourse around the 20th/21st-century generation — those who have bridged the gap between two different centuries — could also prove to be thought-provoking.

**KEYWORDS:** age discrimination, andragogy, ageism, 20th/21st century generation.

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## RESUMEN

A pesar de encontrarnos en pleno siglo XXI, aún se mantienen los estereotipos vejatorios sobre la edad de los seres humanos que han dado lugar al neologismo «edadismo». Frente a esto se impone la necesidad de un cambio de paradigma, que se apoye en las instituciones y en las normas jurídicas, con el fin de poder reivindicar los derechos y el respeto a los mayores. En este sentido, se hacen necesarios proyectos de formación, tanto en las nuevas generaciones como en las generaciones adultas, con el fin de reivindicar la experiencia y la edad. Para lo cual se hace oportuno un esfuerzo andragógico con el propósito de visualizar la importancia de los años, e incluso nos ha parecido sugerente hablar de la Generación Siglos 20/21, con el propósito de unir a aquellas personas que hayan logrado vivir el puente entre estos dos siglos.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** discriminación por edad; andragogía; edadismo; generación Siglos 20/21.

## 1. The Classical Roots of Respect for the Elderly

One of the main issues affecting the elderly is the lack of a proper education framework to allow them to strengthen the experience and knowledge they have accumulated as a consequence of life's rigours. This insufficiency brings about models of micro-ageism wherein adults are accomplices in their own discrimination, which is then adopted by a society that eventually marginalises them, compounding the problem.

This creates the need to design legal provisions and educational methods that help strengthen the position of the elderly in society as a whole. In this sense, andragogy, and in particular andragogues, are the linchpin, boasting the power to lay the foundations for psychological strengthening which can combat the cognitive deterioration that comes with growing old.

In an outstanding piece of work published by Flavio de Jesús Castillo Silva (2018, p. 65), which analyses the origins of the term andragogy, we learn that Alexander Kapp first uttered the term in 1833 to describe the educational processes he saw in Plato's dialogues.

It is worth highlighting that Plato establishes a new order when talking about old age (Faramiñán, 2020a, p. 447–448). He places the elderly in a hierarchy; they are worthy of our respect and submission, and we should listen to and consult them. They occupy themselves with dialectic reasoning (something not recommended for the young), with their knowledge making them apt philosophers and politicians. Older people have virtues, such as wisdom, equanimity and dignity, which society in general should take advantage of. When quoting the poet Pindar, Plato tells us that: “‘Hope,’ he says, ‘cherishes the soul of him who lives in justice and holiness, and is the nurse of his age and the companion of his journey; —hope which is mightiest to sway the restless soul of man.’” (Plato, *Republic*, Book 1, Section 331a). He refutes the idea that the elderly are like children. The elderly must maintain an attitude that is coherent with the position that they have previously assumed. They are sensible and responsible, and they have more experience (manifested as knowledge and power) than the rest of us. Old age does not take away from them their ability to learn, as we see here, paraphrasing Solon: “I would fain grow old, learning many things,” however, adding “of the good only” (Plat, *Laches*, Section 188b).



In *Euthydemus*, he speaks of convincing his friends to learn to play the harp with him. Learning alongside youngsters is something attractive, and he comments that you must overcome the mockery that may accompany being willing to learn. Socrates applies this to the exercise of virtue, referencing Homer: “Modesty is not good for a needy man” (Plato, *Laches*, 201b). In *Parmenides*, old age constitutes a form of authority, as long as it is complemented by knowledge. Here we see Socrates learning from Zeno and Parmenides, the latter of whom is an old man. Plato often refers to Socrates as being young and impatient, however (Plato, *Parmenides*).

In his *Laws*, he speaks of how “every man, woman, or child ought to consider that the elder has the precedence of the younger in honour, both among the Gods and also among men who would live in security and happiness. Everyone shall reverence his elder in word and deed” (Plato, *Laws*, Book IX, Section 879c). And thus he sets up a kind of “social volunteership” that urges youngsters to look after the elderly. In this regard, in *Republic* he indicates that education must teach “when the young are to be silent before their elders; how they are to show respect to them by standing and making them sit.” Meanwhile, at the beginning of the dialogue, Cephalus says: “For let me tell you, that the more the pleasures of the body fade away, the greater to me is the pleasure and charm of conversation” (Plato, *Republic*, Book 1, Section 328d). Even so, age brings with it physical debilitation and a lack of these so-called pleasures of the body, though these are replaced with other desires, such as conversing with friends, taking us back to the art of dialectic reasoning. “And this is a question which I should like to ask of you who have arrived at that time which the poets call the ‘threshold of old age’: Is life harder towards the end, or what report do you give of it?” (Plato, *Republic*, Book 1, Section 328e). He answers that wealth is not the solution to all the problems posed by old age, and that money, just as with the pleasures of youth, only discovers its true value when seen as a roadmap that can guide us to personal happiness. “Now to this peace of mind the possession of wealth greatly contributes; and therefore I say that, setting one thing against another, of the many advantages which wealth has to give, to a man of sense this is in my opinion the greatest” (Plato, *Republic*, Book I, Section 331a). Furthermore, he suggests that those that have a noble spirit should rule over those who don’t (Plato, *Republic*, 681b and 690a). Meanwhile, in *Menexenus* he tells us that the State is responsible for caring for the elderly parents of the youngsters who have died for the city (Plato, *Menexenus*, pp. 420 et seq.).

This provides the elderly with a ripe opportunity to come to grips with their own inevitable death. In Socrates’ *Apology*, he tells us that: “For I do nothing but go about persuading you all, old and young alike, not to take thought for your persons and your properties, but first and chiefly to care about the greatest improvement of the soul. I tell you that virtue is not given by money, but that from virtue comes money and every other good of man, public as well as private” (Plato, *Apology*, pp. 201 et seq.).

These reflections which were uttered over 2,500 years ago are proof that the question of age is a recurring issue, one whose key ideas we must revisit and rehash to prevent them from being lost to the annals of time. Here I have deliberately selected a range of warnings issued by Plato regarding old age in order to best summarise the suppositions on which Alexander Kapp supported his ideas, being the first person to pioneer the use of the term andragogy, based upon the idea of adult learning he found in Plato’s dialogues.

Later, Malcolm Shepherd Knowles would refer to andragogy as a “set of core adult learning principles,” a methodology aimed at “all adult learning situations” (Knowles, 2006, p. 3), just as the aim of pedagogy is to educate youngsters. Castillo Silva stresses that in the case of pedagogy, “there is a teaching process and therefore the education is directed, unlike in andragogy” (Castillo Silva, 2018, p. 65), before going on to come up with a series of factors that are fundamental to adult learning, following in the footsteps of Eduard Lindeman<sup>1</sup>. In this regard, he points to the fact that adults are motivated to learn and to expand their knowledge when they know that this learning will satisfy certain needs or interests, and that the proposed learning must be focused on questions about life itself in order for the adults to be able to use their life experiences to aid their learning while, above all, it is vital for the teaching to not suppress the students’ need for the learning process to be self-directed.

We mustn’t forget the analyses carried out from a sociological point of view that remind us that human rights are defined as a legal and axiological system that represents the fundamental values of human beings (Villasmil and Chirinos, 2016, 197), which implies that the elderly deserve special consideration and that the rest of the population should treat them with greater respect. On the other hand, Sandra Huenchuan (2009, p. 27) claims that we need to gain a greater understanding of the rights of older people, stating that there is a need for more clarifying legally binding documents, such as has already been achieved with other social groups, in particular women, children and those with disabilities.

All of this indicates that, from a sociological viewpoint, ageing must be understood as a concept that goes far beyond the person as a being with solely psychic or biological features; instead, the opposite should apply: emphasis should be placed on the social collective, where social policies guarantee the rights of the elderly as citizens, allowing them to enjoy their environment and a social organisation that is adapted to their specific needs (Bazo, 2011:23).

In summary, all this serves as proof of the need to ensure the participation of the elderly in society (Alemán et al., 2013) and in the management of the social services system, guaranteeing them the right of free association as users of this system, with the implication and rights that this entails.

## 2. The Light and Dark of Andragogy

It is worth noting that both the terms pedagogy and andragogy have their fair share of critics, as indicated by Iluminada Sánchez Domenech (2015, pp. 10–11) in her doctoral thesis, building on the work of Mohring (Mohring, 1989, cited in Sanchez Domenech, 2015, p. 11). Here she claims that both terms are etymologically incorrect given that, although pedagogy derives from the Greek ‘*país*’, meaning ‘child,’ since antiquity pedagogy has also been used to refer to education in general, with no particular reference to the students’ age. The author proposes ‘*teleios*’ instead of ‘*áner*’, which is the Greek word from which we derive the English ‘adult’. As such, she argues that andragogy could be replaced with ‘*teleiagogy*’, with this being a term that

encompasses adults of both sexes. Aside from the fact that the terminology is less than harmonious, as can be seen, let's take a moment to consider the common usage of the terms pedagogy and andragogy: the former is used to talk about children and adolescents and the latter about adults and the elderly. This makes it easier for us to understand the concepts and practices of them both, setting aside their etymologies for now.

Now we can reflect on the differences between the methodology used by pedagogues and that used by andragogues, where we see that the former insists more on directed learning during the opening stages of our lives, while the latter is more focused on a participative learning process which should last for our entire lifetime. Remember that in andragogy the adult involved shoulders much more responsibility, with self-evaluation being at the core of the process, given that we are talking about people with a wealth of experience and high intellectual maturity. We could also point out that pedagogy functions vertically between the teacher or pedagogue and the young student, whereas in andragogy there is a horizontal exchange between the andragogue and the adult. The first case centres on authority and direction in order to lay the foundations for a child's life, while in the second case guidance and self-realisation based on the adult's needs are what are important.

If adult education is to last a lifetime, the andragogue must take into account the different stages of one's life, which determine the way in which we deal with the passage of time and the method required for incentivising the adult, particularly once they reach an advanced age.

Adult education is a model that progressively reinforces the image of someone who has reached old age, both in the eyes of society as a whole and according to their own perception, which turns it into an important weapon for combating the age discrimination which has brought about the neologism ageism<sup>2</sup>. However, it is worth asking ourselves to what extent should the andragogical model meet formal and informal criteria? Perhaps a hybrid system would work best, in which the application of a formal or informal plan depends on the adult's own initiative and their willingness to sign up for regulated courses, such as at a centre for lifelong learning, which can be found at most universities, or for informal activities like a book club or volunteer work.

Continuing along this line of thought, Iluminada Sánchez Domenech suggests a "differentiated andragogy, alongside differentiated pedagogy, which would study the significant singularities of adults of different races and cultures, sexual preferences, etc., which in practice would come to fruition as what is known in pedagogy as 'attention to diversity'" (Sanchez Domenech, 2015, pp. 538–539). The author reminds us that the learning systems and principles of andragogy are not the same for a European as they are an African or an indigenous Amazonian, given that Westerners live in close communication with one another and are more affected by global issues that make us increasingly aware, something that could be called "interdependence of fate" (Sanchez Domenech, 2015, p. 539). This discourse is backed up by the work of Lewin and Beck, and it tells us that we are heading towards "task interdependence" in the framework of a global community (Lewin, 1935, and

Beck, 2002). This brings into the spotlight the need for an “empirical investigation into andragogy” (Sanchez Domenech, 2015, pp. 540), especially since andragogy still lacks a working definition. Such an investigation would require the participation of adult volunteers in learning experiences that are capable of creating a type of education that is intrinsically valuable, while ensuring that their satisfactions level can be measured, and without the goal of the adult education being to achieve specific skills, but instead simply being mere curiosity or the pleasure of participating.

As indicated by Ximena Romero Fuentes and Elisa Dulcey-Ruiz (2012), “faced with the silent and inexorable change of the ageing of the global population and with greater human longevity, the question arises: to what extent do these populational and individual changes coincide with the socio-cultural and political ones? It is paradoxical that the increase in life expectancy, which results in greater longevity, particularly in women, as well as the fact that more people are living for longer, is considered a danger, a threat, and not as an achievement and an opportunity.” The authors add that these circumstances are an “achievement and an opportunity to progress towards equity, equality, social justice and substantial improvement in quality of life; to think of how to better organise this life that is growing longer, by taking full advantage of a greater life expectancy, as well as of how to leverage the increase in adult population for the betterment of society as a whole.”

### 3. The Stigma of Ageism

In stark contrast to the efforts of adult education to improve the quality of life of the elderly, ageism<sup>3</sup> rears its ugly head as a factor of age-based discrimination, having become, according to the World Health Organization, the **third biggest cause of discrimination in the world after racism and sexism**. It is worth remembering that older people are being belittled in increasingly more sectors of society, and what we could call “old-age exclusion” is becoming a scourge which normalises ageist practices. This is something that we have all witnessed and bemoaned during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As can be seen, age-based discrimination can be compounded by other circumstances, such as a global pandemic, which has turned our lives upside down and compelled us to reflect upon the need to overhaul our civil ethics models. In fact, as Felipe Morente (2020) warned us with regard to the pandemic, “when faced with such unease, is there any hope of fostering a future that holds any possibility for hope?”, to which he answers, “yes, without a doubt. There is the hope of a world that bases itself on the ethics of civic virtues, [...] the ethics of responsible action, the ethics of duty, the ethics of excellent action and the ethics that can bring about universal happiness.” This is another of the pillars on which andragogy must support itself in order to seek out the common good in a way that does not cut off entire generations of human beings, but instead joins them together in global fellowship.

Therefore, we must be vigilant as age discrimination is exacerbated by other severe forms of inequality — whether due to gender, disability, health conditions, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, poverty or economic crises — that worsen the condition

of being elderly by accompanying it with an array of stigmas. António Guterres, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, has pointed out that “the majority of older people are women, who are more likely to enter this period of their lives in poverty and without access to healthcare.” For this reason, he urges that “policies must be targeted at meeting their needs” (Guterres, 2020).

The “More Intergenerationality, Less Ageism” public declaration (Macrosad Report, 2020), drawn up by the Mixed Commission of the Macrosad Chair for Intergenerational Studies at the University of Granada, stresses that “solid investigations have uncovered the international prevalence of ageism, especially against the elderly,” for which reason we must take into consideration that certain rules for behaviour have been established which affect certain age brackets, such as children and the elderly, based on arguments that were considered plausible before the pandemic. These are arguments that are commendable when trying to protect the health of older people, but we must be very careful with this kind of “categorisation,” as they can cause psychological harm and lead to age-based discrimination and stigmatisation that are without a doubt harmful.

The aforementioned public declaration claims that “age discrimination poses a significant risk to the psychological, behavioural and physiological health and well-being of the elderly” and insists that “elderly patients must be treated in the same conditions as the rest of the population.” It backs up this argument with the example that “it would be unacceptable to rule out treating a person sick with COVID-19 simply because they are too old,” something which actually occurred in some Central American countries (Faramiñán, 2020b, pp. 1–21).

Let’s take a look at the scope of ageism, then. The public declaration underlines three determining arguments: “ageism exists and it is very damaging,” given that it entails prejudices and negative stereotypes that account for a great deal of inequality and injustice; “age discrimination is unacceptable,” particularly so given the severe and unethical nature it takes on in the context of a pandemic, as occurred with Coronavirus in 2020 (when taking decisions regarding the application of intensive care, the declaration considers it unacceptable to rule out a COVID-19 patient for treatment simply because they are too old); and finally, “proper intergenerational contact reduces ageism” (Macrosad Report, 2020).

For this reason, it pleads that the time has come for proper education regarding the ageing process, combined with a sustained drive to boost intergenerational relationships both inside and outside of the family sphere, to be definitively introduced to public and private agendas and across all age groups.

As detailed by the HelpAge International España foundation,

“ageism and age-based discrimination are a reality in societies throughout the world. The elderly suffer from discrimination and their human rights are being violated in all settings — in the family, in the community and by institutions. This situation is widely tolerated and in some cases it may even be encouraged through the establishment of upper age limits to the exercise or enjoyment of certain rights. This occurs at a time when we are undergoing unprecedented demographic

ageing, meaning that the number of people in a situation of vulnerability, who are systematically discriminated against, is bound to increase.” It adds that, “despite the fact that international human rights laws apply to people of all ages, it’s very uncommon to see a particular reference to older people. As a result, the rights of the elderly are not being sufficiently protected by the human rights mechanisms, the international community, governments and civil society” (HelpAge International España, 2022).

Together, the State Bureau for the Rights of Older People, GAROP and HelpAge International have been fighting for years on both a national and international level to introduce an international convention on the rights of older people and to establish a global legal framework that will: a) establish a definitive and universal position that age discrimination is morally and legally unacceptable; b) create a legally binding protective framework complete with accountability mechanisms; c) clarify governments’ responsibilities regarding the elderly; d) bring together already recognised laws that are currently provided for in other instruments and documents; e) correct the existing imbalance in the approach to the economic and social rights of older people by bringing together laws in a single, indivisible instrument; f) ensure that age-based discrimination and the rights of older people take their rightful place in the agendas of governments, donors and NGOs; g) boost comprehension and offset the multiple, complex forms of discrimination experienced by elderly men and women; h) establish a reference framework for the design and implementation of policies on demographic ageing that are based on rights, equity and social justice; i) provide a powerful tool for defending and educating older people; and j) enable those represented by these entities to claim their rights and bring about a shift in perception from older people as recipients of provisions and services to older people as holders of rights and responsibilities (HelpAge International España, 2022).

As María Dolores Fernández-Fígares points out in her article entitled ‘Harmful Ageism,’ published in *Ideal de Granada* newspaper, “the solution proposed for this problem has been known for a long time in gerontology scientific circles: intergenerational contact must not be lost. “The normal thing in a healthy society is for different generations to live in harmony and to enrich one another” (Fernández-Fígares, 2020)<sup>4</sup>.

## 4. Erasing Stereotypes

The WHO, in its Global Report on Ageism published in 2021, estimates that age-based stereotypes and prejudices have resulted in alarming models of discrimination against the elderly, building on a series of pre-determined beliefs that serve to justify ageism, and which have serious consequences for both physical and mental health. In addition, it is worth noting that these discriminatory and exclusionary attitudes don’t affect all people in the same way, given that they can be even more damaging when combined with contempt for someone’s gender, ethnicity, cultural level or lack of economic resources.

On the other hand, it is important to point out that unintentional or involuntary ageism also occurs as a consequence of stagnant models found in the conscience of the international community which directly affect the elderly, such as limitations and physical obstacles — a lack of ramps in steep areas or handrails on stairs — and the digital divide, as not everyone belongs to the digital generation, which puts up barriers preventing people from using social media or accessing their bank or other services via the internet. The biggest mistake is basing our opinions of the elderly on clichés associated with old age, such as dependence, fragility and physical and mental deterioration.

According to this WHO report on ageism, statistically speaking, it is estimated that one in every two people in the world has a discriminatory attitude when it comes to age, and the consequence of this behaviour leads to mental and physical problems in those commonly called old. To help with this issue, the WHO has joined forces with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), who are all committed to combating this affliction that negatively impacts human rights, and to carrying out periodic evaluations in order to eradicate what they have called “an insidious scourge on society” (WHO, *Ageism is a global challenge: UN*, 2021).

On the other hand, as already mentioned, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought about a worrying shift in age discrimination, with Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the WHO, indicating that “as countries build back better from the pandemic [...] our driving vision is a world for all ages, one in which age-based stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination do not limit our opportunities, health, well-being and dignity” (Global Report on Ageism, 2021).

It is alarming to see how ageism is silently seeping into institutions and different sectors of society, including public health (“a systematic review in 2020 showed that in 85% of 149 studies, age determined who received certain medical procedures or treatments”) and the media, with devastating consequences for the elderly: discrimination and a feeling of powerlessness, which in turn trigger isolation and loneliness and a worse quality of life. As a result, it is claimed that over six million cases of depression in the world are due to ageism, which, even among the elderly, leads to a higher rate of premature death. As stated by Natalia Kanem, Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund, “the pandemic has put into stark relief the vulnerabilities of older people, especially those most marginalized [sic], who often face overlapping discrimination and barriers — because they are poor, live with disabilities, are women living alone, or belong to minority groups” (WHO, *Ageism is a global challenge: UN*, 2021).

However, it is also worth noting that ageism doesn't just affect older people; it goes hand-in-hand with a social dysfunction between different generations. In the words of Michelle Bachelet, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, “we need to fight ageism head-on, as a deep-rooted human rights violation,” adding that “ageism harms everyone — old and young. But often, it is so widespread and

accepted — in our attitudes and in policies, laws and institutions — that we do not even recognize its detrimental effect on our dignity and rights” (WHO, *Ageism is a global challenge: UN*, 2021).

In this regard, the 2021 Report of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, Claudia Mahler, which was submitted to the Human Rights Council, is particularly enlightening. The report stresses the need to increase awareness of age discrimination and analyse its possible causes in order to combat and eradicate it. One of the pitfalls that must be overcome is that the legal instruments currently in place do not comprehensively cover older people in terms of legal capacity, quality of care, long-term care, palliative care, care for the victims of violence and abuse, the different means of recourse, independence and autonomy, and the right to a decent quality of life, particularly with regard to housing.

The report conceptualises the term ageism and reinforces the idea of this type of discrimination as a set of stereotypes that, combined with prejudices and discriminatory actions or practices based solely on a person’s chronological age, segregate the part of the population branded as old. Therefore, as a starting point to clearing up the concept, the term “elderly”, as used in 1995 by the United Nations General Assembly, was replaced with “older persons”, which fits in more coherently with the UN’s aims. Thanks to deeply rooted stereotypes, given that the term old person implies someone who is hobbled by some weakness as a result of their advanced age, the reality, however, is that anyone can suffer in life, regardless of age. In fact, the term ageism, which was coined by Robert Neil Butler, can be defined as the systemic discrimination of people due only to the fact that they are elderly, just as racism and sexism are types of discrimination based on skin colour and gender.

As we have mentioned, ageism has a negative influence in an intergenerational context, and the stereotypes associated with it apply generally to older people, which creates a significant divide between the young and the old, something that must be resolved as soon as possible given that if we fail to react in time, it will soon take root in the legal, medical, educational, political and social systems and directly affect people’s behaviour, prompting “widespread interpersonal ageism [that] perpetuates and legitimizes [sic] structural discrimination” (Mahler, 2021, point 25). This means that interiorised ageism leads to structural ageism as these stereotypes are instilled from an early age, which in turn results in distorted perceptions of older people. In addition, it is important to highlight that despite the growing attention being paid to active ageing policies and the recognition of older people as holders of rights, just like the rest of society, several barriers continue to be in place that prevent them from enjoying these rights, and these barriers were exacerbated, as already mentioned, during the COVID-19 pandemic (Faramiñán, 2020b and 2021c).



## 5. Institutional and Legislative Strength

Despite the growing importance of the idea of “healthy ageing”, which is no doubt underpinned by certain solid andragogical methods, institutional polices continue to apply and reproduce in the global conscious the untarnished image of the so-called “vital stages” into which life is so neatly divided: the early years, associated with learning; the adult years, associated with work; and old age, associated with retirement and inactivity. This is an inherently negative association given that an older person may well continue to learn (indeed they should) and work (if they so desire), and retirement could simply be seen as a change in activities, just not as a period of life that is synonymous with inactivity. The WHO’s Global Report on Ageism insists on the need to foster good intergenerational relations and to prevent youngsters from scorning the elderly, something which leads to undesired consequences that can be described as “self-directed ageism” (WHO, 2021), which is produced as a result of a lack of self-worth and self-esteem in adults.

In addition, the increase in life expectancy has put paid to the idea of old age as being a period of inactivity; now the opposite may be true: there is a dearth of opportunities and new options for work, both paid and unpaid. Remember that, from an anthropological point of view, age is a social construct which has varied over the centuries, with old age being considered from a wide range of perspectives depending on the historical context. During the 20th century, a person was considered old once they reached 70, while nowadays, in the 21st century, widespread healthy living is providing us with plenty of examples of older people in full physical and mental health at 90 years of age and even older.

On the other hand, as Mahler reveals in her report, “age as a social construct guides human rights discourse on ageing by underlining the agency, autonomy and independence of older persons instead of viewing them as unquestionably vulnerable and in need of protection” (Mahler, 2021, point 37). From this position we can see the importance of combating age discrimination so that the issue is reflected in the relevant legal framework and, in particular, in international human rights laws, and it is worth pointing out that there is still no out-and-out prohibition of this kind of age-based exclusion.

In the United Nations framework, only two instruments explicitly refer to age: the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, which in article 7 obliges States Parties to ensure “the rights provided for in the present Convention without distinction of any kind,” including age; and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, whose article 8 states that States Parties must agree to “combat stereotypes, prejudices and harmful practices relating to persons with disabilities, including those based on sex and age.”

Going back to Mahler’s report, point 40 tells us that “the lack of a clear prohibition of age discrimination may in part explain why, in international law or national law, differential treatment based on age can be considered as permissible discrimination”

(Mahler, 2021, point 40). This legal loophole in international human rights law must be reviewed by the specialists, with support from jurists and politicians, considering that as it currently stands, there is no clear and comprehensive prohibition of age discrimination.

The concept of discrimination, however, is generally described under international human rights law as “any distinction, exclusion or restriction that has the purpose or effect of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal basis with others, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in any field” (Mahler, 2021, point 38). Likewise, and as a way of closing this loophole, the term “in any field” could be understood to extend to age discrimination. In this regard, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights ruled that age discrimination can be considered a motive for exclusion and is prohibited by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR, 1995, Annex IV, point 11; and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 2010, Section IV, B 31) both in terms of age and sex. It is worrying that people continue to be discriminated against because of their age, people who are often also at the disadvantage of being without work, whether they are looking for work or are retraining or completing a tertiary education course, and that is without also focusing on the inequality that exists in the pension system simply as a result of one’s place of residence. To further compound this issue, we must take into consideration the impact of disability when combined with old age; the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities reminds us of the need to recognise that people with disabilities “enjoy legal capacity on an equal basis with others” (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2008, Article 12.2).

Returning once again to the Report of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, Claudia Mahler (2021), it’s interesting to see the progress made in this regard in regions such as Latin America, Africa and Europe. The Report indicates that, “while age is not explicitly listed as a prohibited ground [...] in the American Convention on Human Rights, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (in the Poblete Vilches and others v. Chile Judgement of 8 March 2018, paras. 125–143) has held that age is covered by the non-discrimination guarantees contained in that treaty” (Mahler, 2021, point 46). Also worthy of mention is the Inter-American Convention on Protecting the Human Rights of Older Persons, article 5 of which provides for the comprehensive protection of the rights of older people, while article 32 assertively manifests against structural ageism by considering it necessary to “adopt measures to achieve dissemination of, and to progressively educate the whole of society, [...] foster a positive attitude to old age [...] and avoid stereotypical images in relation to older persons<sup>5</sup>.” In a similar vein to these regional regulations, article 18 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights states that “the aged [...] shall also have the right to special measures of protection in keeping with their physical or moral needs,” with article 3 of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Older Persons in Africa proposing that signees “prohibit all forms of discrimination, [...] encourage the elimination of social and cultural stereotypes [and] take corrective measures.”

In Europe, the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms fails to explicitly mention age discrimination, and so too does the European Social Charter, even though the latter does refer to elderly people's right to social protection and calls on the Parties to fight against age discrimination and adopt suitable legal frameworks. On the other hand, the European Court of Human Rights has indicated that protecting the rights of the elderly should fall under the "other" category (ECHR Factsheet, *Elderly people and the European Convention on Human Rights*, 2019), backed up by the other treaties we have discussed.

It is worth pointing out the giant leap forward found in article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union which, in talking about non-discrimination, states that "any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited." This thought is echoed in the Treaty of Lisbon, with article 19, which refers to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, indicating that "the Council, acting unanimously in accordance with a special legislative procedure and after obtaining the consent of the European Parliament, may take appropriate action to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation."

Claudia Mahler categorically voices her displeasure with these provisions, however, writing that "overall, existing regional instruments have a limited ability to address ageism and age discrimination because of their insufficient ratification and limited regional coverage" (Mahler, 2021, point 50). She adds that, "furthermore, the regional treaties only partially address multiple and intersectional discrimination, and they lack specific obligations for States," which leads us to the need to foster a legislative effort to devise specific regulations to tackle this type of discrimination and overturn existing prejudices.

## 6. A Recurring Theme: "The 20th/21st-Century Generation", a Visualisation Project

The research published by Argentina's National Institute Against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism (INADI), which analyses age discrimination, proves very poignant and, in its attempt to overcome stereotypes and existing prejudices to reclaim the importance of old age, indicates that "we grow old from the minute we are born. The cycle of life is a constant evolution and old age — with its inherent features — is part of that evolution. We must understand that older people — beyond the perceptions and beliefs of society — have the same opportunity to grow, develop and learn, as well as to experience new things, just like those currently in other stages of life" (INADI, 2022).

For these reasons, I think it's time we start thinking of age and experience as an endorsement of knowledge and wisdom, which must be backed up by the deeds performed throughout the life of older people, and that once and for all we should reinvent the confusing and unjust criteria that cause ageism. My proposal is a new formula called "The 20th/21st-century generation" (Faramiñán, 2021d) involving people who have lived in the two centuries — and as such they have banked a great deal of experience — who wish to continue proving useful to society by actively and effectively connecting with the younger generations, who in turn can use this experience to help them when facing their own century, the 21st.

This aim of this intergenerational project, with the help of andragogues, is to: a) gather the testimonies of a large group of people who witnessed the changing of era, a temporal shift or, as we prefer to call it, a bridge between two centuries; b) harness the wealth of experience provided by a life of contrasts, a chiaroscuro that saw them overcome wars, economic crises and environmental disasters, that allowed them to build a family, raise children, grandchildren and even great-grandchildren; in sum, a life lived to the fullest; c) recruit those who, once they have brought their professional life to a close and reached retirement age, wish to keep active, in most cases by doing volunteer or unpaid work, with the satisfaction of helping younger generations being payment enough; d) find those who are willing to put all their effort into creating intergenerational ties in order to collaborate with younger generations and share with them their best asset: their experience; and e) share the sweet taste of knowledge, that tiny morsel they treasure in their heart and in their brain which stores the secret to their successes and failures.

All of these aspects make up a vital model, with its foundations set in two different centuries, in which enriching experiences and wisdom intertwine to the aid of youngsters, those who were unable to witness the transition from the 20th to the 21st century, and to help them see and understand the structural and paradigm shifts that this once-in-a-generation changing of the century brought about.

As the participants become increasingly aware of the importance of this project, which I call "the 20th/21st-century generation", it has the chance to become a difference-maker, a promoter of respect to which we can turn for knowledge, reflection and vital wisdom. Remember that such a generational event won't be repeated until the next change of century, meaning that this 20th/21st-century generation holds a uniqueness that we must promote and cherish.

Human beings grow old in pain and fearful of death, and as such they are generally not filled with joy. And as our society has become mobilised by wide-spread infection, fear has become a shadow that provokes unrest.

This is an opportunity not just for social and legislative progress, but also progress in terms of our thoughts. A particularly philosophical line of thought which takes on all of this knowledge and wisdom, something which is not just a great opportunity

for us, but also for the future generations who will reap the benefits of this exchange. At the end, the most important thing is finding out how we know what we know: we know because we learned from our life experiences, which provided us with the wisdom and ability to make our way through life's maze in one piece.

Now that we both know and understand, we have an even greater responsibility, and this vital process invigorates and strengthens us, as long as we are aware of it. If not, we will be letting this fundamental opportunity to evolve and to serve our society slip through our hands.

## 7. Notes

1 On page 65, Castillo Silva states that Lindeman “devises concepts of adult education and develops the idea of informal learning.” He was the first American to employ the term andragogy, using it in two of his works. On page 12, he also adds that “there are those who believe that the term ‘pedagogy’ should disappear and be replaced with Education Science.”

2 The neologism ageism was put forward in 1998 by Robert Neil Butler, a psychiatrist and gerontologist, to highlight the stigmatisation of elderly people. See Butler, 1998.

3 Ageism is a specific type of age discrimination which is provoked by any attitude, behaviour or institutional structure that harms or impedes a person or group of people from enjoying their rights, and whose determining factor is old age.

4 Also, in another article by the author in the same newspaper (January 26, 2022), entitled “Penuria digital”, she attacks the insensitivity of the banks that generate clear discrimination against those who are not digital natives, and praises the Eighty-year-old surgeon, Carlos San Juan, who, with his slogan “I’m older but not an idiot,” has managed to mobilize public opinion and the attention of the banks, for which the journalist adds: “in this scenario, we are going to need reaffirm our best human values, before we become heartless automatons.”

5 The Report suggests that it is necessary to determine the definition of old age, a very changeable criterion that can vary depending on the context or living conditions — in some cultures or places it may refer to people over 60 years of age, for example, though this is obviously not applicable to all societies.

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**ARTICLES/ARTÍCULOS**

# Impact of the Pandemic on the Perceived State of Health of the Working Population in Andalusia During Lockdown

Impacto de la pandemia en el estado de salud mental percibido de la población laboral andaluza durante el confinamiento

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## ABSTRACT

The study of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic is of interest to the global scientific community, especially the effects on the population's health. This article aims to analyse the impact of the pandemic on the perceived state of mental health of the working population in Andalusia. A quantitative analysis was performed using bivariate exploration and segmentation analysis, running the CHAID algorithm on the data from the "Social Survey 2020: Habits and Living Conditions of the Andalusian Population During the State of Alarm" conducted by the Institute of Statistics and Cartography of Andalusia (IECA, 2020). The main findings show that the deterioration of the Andalusian working population's mental health is closely related to the perceived loss of income and employment, with the groups that were already particularly vulnerable being the most affected, such as young people, employees in the service sector and women, who, regardless of their occupation, are more likely to have suffered depression during this period.

**KEYWORDS:** COVID-19; working population in Andalusia; mental health; loss of income; depression.

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## RESUMEN

El estudio de los efectos de la pandemia del COVID-19 en la salud de la población son objeto de interés de la comunidad científica a nivel mundial. En este artículo se analiza el impacto de la pandemia en la salud mental percibida de la población laboral andaluza. Se ha realizado un análisis cuantitativo mediante la exploración bivariante y el análisis de segmentación utilizando el algoritmo CHAID de los datos de la Encuesta Social 2020: Hábitos y condiciones de vida de la población andaluza durante el estado de alarma realizada por el Instituto de Estadística y Cartografía de Andalucía (IECA, 2020). Los principales resultados muestran que el empeoramiento de la salud mental de la población laboral andaluza está estrechamente relacionado con el riesgo percibido de pérdida de ingresos y empleo. Los grupos que ya eran especialmente vulnerables son los más afectados: jóvenes, empleados del sector servicios y las mujeres, siendo estas últimas presentan una mayor probabilidad de haber sentido depresión durante este periodo.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** COVID-19; población laboral andaluza; salud mental percibida; pérdida de ingresos; depresión.

## 1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on people's health globally. To reduce the impact, governments were forced to implement a series of containment measures based on the control of international and national mobility through border closures, stay-at-home orders and the cessation of economic activity. These measures had an asymmetrical effect on the whole population depending on socio-demographic, employment and financial characteristics, as several studies show (Ocaña et al., 2020; Fundación FOESSA, 2022).

In the case of the working population, the impact of the pandemic and the measures adopted by governments and the business community affected the degree to which workers were exposed to the virus, how they carried out their work activity and the risk of unemployment, temporary lay-off or cessation of activity, with the entailed loss of income. This combination of atypical circumstances that affect people's well-being has attracted great interest from the scientific community in discovering the impact on the population's mental health.

The aim of this article is to further our understanding of how the pandemic and the measures adopted by governments and businesses have impacted the perceived mental health of the Andalusian working population (hereinafter AWP), using the data from the "Social Survey 2020: Habits and Living Conditions of the Andalusian Population During the State of Alarm" conducted by the Institute of Statistics and Cartography of Andalusia (IECA, 2020) during the first months of stay-at-home orders in Spain.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

During lockdown in Spain, essential services continued to operate, such as healthcare, transport services and shops selling food products, with the workers in these sectors being the most exposed to the virus during this period. For the remaining sectors, in which in-person work activity was not permitted, businesses themselves took measures to adapt their work activity to telework. When the nature of the work activity did not allow for adaptation to telework, there was a cessation of the work activity; this particularly affected those people with lower incomes who, generally speaking, work in the services sector: tourism, hospitality, leisure, cleaning, commerce, transport, etc. (Ocaña et al., 2020). In the worst-case scenario, businesses turned to dismissal, which particularly affected temporary workers, young people, the self-employed and employees of small companies (Ocaña et al., 2020).

The combination of the direct consequences of the pandemic, felt, above all, by those most exposed to the virus, and the indirect consequences, derived from the measures adopted by governments that affected the working population's employment and financial situation, has had a negative impact on mental health (Bericat and Acosta, 2020; de Miquel et al., 2022), with the analysis of said impact arousing significant interest among the research community of various disciplines on an international level.

Workers in the sectors of health and commerce (essential businesses) were most exposed to the virus during lockdown. Some studies have found that the amount of sick leave has increased significantly among these workers, especially in the health sector, comprising 20% of the confirmed COVID-19 cases in Spain in March 2020 (Calvo-Bonacho et al., 2020). In addition to the higher risk of contracting the virus, excessive pressure, workload, uncertainty and overwork have contributed to the deterioration of the mental health of health sector workers, which was already worse than that of the rest of the population (Rodríguez-Rey et al., 2020).

The modus vivendi of those workers who were able to adapt their work activity to telework has not been particularly altered (Ocaña et al., 2020), as it enabled them to stay in employment during this period without risking exposure to the virus. Nevertheless, studies such as that by Sim (2020) point out that prolonged loneliness and a lack of interaction in the workspace inherent to this mode of work has affected the mental health of these people. Furthermore, the overload of communication through participation in multiple virtual meetings, as well as the feeling of being watched, has increased both the time that workers spend on their mobile phones and the incidence of depression (Mendonça et al., 2022).

Therefore, in this context of risk and uncertainty, staying in employment does not avoid the impact on mental health; rather, the obligation of going to work in the pandemic context (with the risk of loss of employment that not doing so would entail) negatively affects the psychosocial well-being of workers (Hernández-Rodríguez, 2020) who have carried out their work activity both in

person and remotely. However, it is the mental health of the most vulnerable population that has been particularly affected, as is the case of those people in a situation of precariousness who lack economic resources (Hernández-Rodríguez, 2020).

In addition to the implications for mental health linked to work conditions during the pandemic, studies prior to the pandemic point out that the perceived state of health does not appear to be linked to the state of health, but rather it is the socio-demographic characteristics and personality traits that are of greater significance in the subjective evaluation that people make of their health (Castro-Vázquez et al., 2006). In this regard, studies such as that by Rocha et al. (2010) point out that those people with poorer socio-economic conditions, as well as those who are unemployed or on leave of absence, have a worse state of mental health than the rest. In addition to this study, Di Blasi et al. (2021) point out that, even prior to lockdown, women had worse levels of depression and anxiety than men, an imbalance that continued during the early phase of the pandemic (Jaques-Aviñó et al., 2020).

To summarise, studies on the impact of the pandemic on the working population's mental health during the lockdown period show that, in addition to socio-demographic factors such as sex and age, the conditions in which the work activity was carried out and the uncertainty related to staying in or losing employment are key to understanding how the pandemic has affected the mental health of the working population.

The aim of this study is to analyse how the pandemic and the consequences of the measures taken by governments to curb it have affected the AWP according to their socio-demographic, employment and financial conditions. Thus, the following objectives are established:

Overall objective: to analyse the impact of the perceived mental health of the AWP according to their socio-demographic, employment and financial characteristics.

Specific objective 1: to study the relationship between the socio-demographic, employment and financial variables of the AWP and the subjective state of mental health during lockdown.

Specific objective 2: to analyse which variables are the best predictors for whether a person in the AWP felt depressed during lockdown.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Database and Sample

To achieve the proposed objectives, data from the “Social Survey 2020: Habits and Living Conditions of the Andalusian Population During the State of Alarm” conducted by the Institute of Statistics and Cartography of Andalusia (IECA) were used. A subsample (N=1,315) was used in which all the cases are people belonging to the AWP at the time the fieldwork was conducted (between 15 April and 29 May 2020), aged between 16 and 64 years old.

### 3.2. Analysis Techniques

To meet the first specific objective, a quantitative analysis was performed by bivariate exploration using contingency tables, enabling the socio-demographic, employment and financial characteristics of the AWP to be described in relation to the impact of the pandemic on their perceived state of mental health. A chi-square test was also performed to analyse the relationship between the dependent and independent variables, while calculating the adjusted standardised residuals enabled those categories that particularly present said relationship, if any, to be observed.

To meet the second specific objective, a segmentation analysis was performed using the CHAID (Chi-square Automatic Interaction Detection) algorithm, enabling the profiles of people in the AWP who felt depressed during lockdown to be detected, while also detecting those who did not feel depressed during the same period, according to their socio-demographic, employment and financial characteristics. It is the algorithm itself that determines, with a 95.5% confidence level, firstly, the grouping of the independent variable categories and, secondly, which variables are the best at predicting the feeling of depression (Escobar, 1998).

### 3.3. Dependent Variables

#### 3.3.1. *Comparative Perceived State of Mental Health*

It is a variable created from the variables “assessment of own current state of mental health” (during lockdown) and “assessment of own state of mental health twelve months ago”. In those cases in which current perceived mental health has a lower value than perceived mental health twelve months ago, it has been recoded as “deteriorates”; if the opposite is true, “improves”; and if the value remains the same, “no change”. For example, if perceived mental health twelve months ago was “excellent” and is now “good”, it is considered to have deteriorated.

**Table 1**

*Frequency distribution of the variables used in the construction of the dependent variable “comparative perceived state of mental health” \**

Mental health previously	F.	P.	C.P.	Mental health currently	F.	P.	C.P.
Excellent	217	16.53	16.53	Excellent	271	20.62	20.26
Very good	266	20.26	36.79	Very good	371	28.23	48.86
Good	639	48.44	85.22	Good	574	43.68	92.54
Average	167	12.72	97.94	Average	81	6.16	98.71
Poor	27	2.06	100.00	Poor	17	1.29	100.00

\*F: frequency; P: percentage; C.P.: cumulative percentage.

Source: own research based on IECA: Social Survey 2020. Habits and Living Conditions of the Andalusian Population During the State of Alarm.

This new variable enables us to distinguish those cases in which the perceived state of mental health has improved, deteriorated or remained the same in comparison with the period prior to the COVID-19 crisis.

**Table 2**

*Frequency distribution of the dependent variable “comparative state of mental health” \**

Comparative mental health	F.	P.	C.P.
Improves	83	6.32	6.32
Deteriorates	318	24.20	30.52
No change	913	69.48	100.00
Total	1,314	100.00	

\*F: frequency; P: percentage; C.P.: cumulative percentage.

Source: own research based on IECA: Social Survey 2020. Habits and Living Conditions of the Andalusian Population During the State of Alarm.

### 3.3.2. *Feeling of Depression in the Last Week*

It is a variable created from the “frequency with which people have felt depressed in the last week”\*

**Table 3**

*Frequency distribution of the variable “frequency with which people have felt depressed in the last week”*

Feeling of depression	F.	P.	C.P.
Never or almost never	718	54.60	54.60
At some point	522	39.70	94.30
A lot of the time	51	3.88	98.17
All or nearly all the time	24	1.83	100.00
Total	1,315	100.00	

\*F: frequency; P: percentage; C.P.: cumulative percentage.

Source: own research based on IECA: Social Survey 2020. Habits and Living Conditions of the Andalusian Population During the State of Alarm.

For this analysis, knowing the frequency of this feeling is not particularly relevant, but rather whether or not they experienced it. This variable has therefore been recoded into two categories, converting it into a dichotomous variable that distinguishes those subjects who did not feel depressed during lockdown from those who did, independently of the frequency of said feeling.

**Table 4**

*Recodification of the dependent variable “feeling of depression in the last week”*

New categories	Old categories
Has not felt depressed	Never or almost never
Has felt depressed	At some point, a lot of the time, all or nearly all of the time.

Source: own research.

**Table 5**

*Frequency distribution of the dependent variable “has felt depressed in the last week” □*

Feeling of depression	F.	P.	C.P.
Has not felt depressed	718	54.6	54.6
Has felt depressed	597	45.4	100.00
Total	1,315	100.00	

\*F: frequency; P: percentage; C.P.: cumulative percentage.

Source: own research based on IECA: Social Survey 2020. Habits and Living Conditions of the Andalusian Population During the State of Alarm.

### 3.4. Independent Variables

The independent variables in this study are divided into three groups: socio-demographic, employment and financial. Below are the basic descriptive statistics for the variables considered a priori within each group and their degree of association with the dependent variables.

**Table 6**

*Descriptive statistics and relationship between dependent and independent variables using chi-square test*

	Average	Observation	Standard Deviation
<b>Dependent variables</b>			
<i>Comparative mental health [1]</i>			
Improves	1,315	0.06	0.24
Deteriorates	1,315	0.24	0.43
No change	1,315	0.69	0.46
<i>Feeling of depression [2]</i>			
Has not felt depressed	1,315	0.55	0.50
Has felt depressed	1,315	0.45	0.50
<b>Independent Variables</b>			
<b>Group 1. Socio-demographic</b>			
<i>Sex [(1)***/(2)***]</i>			
Male	1,315	0.53	0.50
Female	1,315	0.47	0.50
<i>Age [(1)***/(2)*]</i>			
16-34	1,315	0.25	0.43
35-49	1,315	0.47	0.50
50-64	1,315	0.28	0.45
<i>Province [(1) - / (2) - ]</i>			
Almería	1,315	0.08	0.27
Cádiz	1,315	0.14	0.34
Córdoba	1,315	0.09	0.29
Granada	1,315	0.11	0.32
Huelva	1,315	0.06	0.24
Jaén	1,315	0.08	0.27
Malaga	1,315	0.18	0.38
Seville	1,315	0.26	0.44
<i>Size of municipality [(1) - / (2)*]</i>			
City	1,315	0.51	0.50
Intermediate density area	1,315	0.40	0.49
Rural area	1,315	0.09	0.29
<i>Country of birth [(1) - / (2) - ]</i>			
Spain	1,315	0.96	0.20
Other country	1,315	0.04	0.20
<i>Educational attainment [(1) - / (2) - ]</i>			
Primary education	1,315	0.06	0.23
Secondary education	1,315	0.50	0.50
Higher education	1,315	0.44	0.50



	Average	Observation	Standard Deviation
<b>Group 2. Employment</b>			
<i>Employment situation [(1)**/(2)**]**</i>			
Full-time employees	1,315	0.54	0.50
Employees in temporary lay-off	1,315	0.16	0.37
Part-time employees	1,315	0.12	0.32
Employers with employees	1,315	0.07	0.25
Entrepreneurs without employees, self-employed worker or cooperative member	1,315	0.11	0.31
<i>Occupation [(1)*/(2)**]**</i>			
Directors and managers	1,315	0.07	0.26
Scientific technicians and professionals and intellectuals	1,315	0.20	0.40
Technicians, support professionals	1,315	0.13	0.33
Accountancy, administrative and other office employees	1,315	0.09	0.28
Catering, personal, protection services and sales workers	1,315	0.20	0.40
Skilled agricultural, livestock, forestry and fishing sector workers	1,315	0.02	0.15
Workers qualified for manufacturing and construction	1,315	0.09	0.28
Installation and machinery operators and assemblers	1,315	0.07	0.25
Basic occupations	1,315	0.14	0.34
<i>Performance of the work activity [(1) - /(2)**]**</i>			
Has worked remotely	1,315	0.30	0.46
Has not worked remotely	1,315	0.45	0.50
Illness, holiday, leave of absence	1,315	0.06	0.24
Temporary layoff or cessation of activity	1,315	0.18	0.38
<i>Type of contract [(1) - /(2) - ]</i>			
Permanent contract	1,315	0.58	0.49
Temporary contract	1,315	0.24	0.42
Not hired (employers)	1,315	0.18	0.38
<i>Perceived risk of loss of employment [(1)*/(2)**]**</i>			
Highly or quite likely	1,315	0.29	0.45
Unlikely or not at all likely	1,315	0.54	0.50
Already out of work	1,315	0.12	0.32
Do not know, uncertainty	1,315	0.04	0.20
<b>Group 3. Financial</b>			
<i>Level of household income in February 2020 (€)[(1) - /(2)**]**</i>			
Less than 450	1,315	0.01	0.12
Between 451 and 900	1,315	0.10	0.30
Between 901 and 1,600	1,315	0.30	0.46
Between 1,601 and 2,500	1,315	0.25	0.44
Between 2,501 and 3,000	1,315	0.11	0.31
More than 3,000	1,315	0.16	0.37
<i>Ease/difficulty in making ends meet [(1)*/(2)**]**</i>			
Easy or very easy	1,315	0.71	0.45
Difficult or very difficult	1,315	0.27	0.44
<i>Delay in mortgage payment [(1) - /(2)**]**</i>			
Yes	1,315	0.02	0.15
No	1,315	0.98	0.15
<i>Delay in rent payment [(1)*/(2)**]**</i>			
Yes	1,315	0.02	0.15
No	1,315	0.98	0.15

	Average	Observation	Standard Deviation
<i>Delay in bill payment [(1) - /{2}*]</i>			
Yes	1,315	0.04	0.20
No	1,315	0.96	0.20
<i>Risk of loss of income [(1)***/{2}***]</i>			
Highly or quite likely	1,315	0.37	0.48
Unlikely or not at all likely	1,315	0.43	0.50
Already lost income	1,315	0.15	0.36
Do not know, uncertainty	1,315	0.03	0.19

Note 1: Significance level: \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \* $p < 0.05$ ; -  $p > 0.05$ .

Note 2: (1): in relation to the variable "comparative mental health"; (2): in relation to the variable "feeling of depression".

Note 3: In all cases, the minimum value is 0 and the maximum is 1.

Source: own research based on IECA: Social Survey 2020. Habits and Living Conditions of the Andalusian Population During the State of Alarm.

For both the analysis using contingency tables and the segmentation analysis, those independent variables that are significantly associated with each dependent variable will be used, with a 95% confidence level ( $p < 0.05$ ).

## 4. Analysis and Results

### 4.1. Comparative Perceived State of Mental Health

The independent variables that are included from now on are those that are significantly related to the variable "comparative state of mental health". It is therefore assumed that a relationship exists between both variables. The key to interpreting the relationship lies in the value of the adjusted standardised residuals (Adjusted Std. Res) that, for a 95% confidence level, must be greater than 1.98 (in absolute value). For example, if the value were negative and less than -1.98, it would mean that the frequency observed for said category was less than the expected frequency if the variable followed a normal distribution.

#### 4.1.1. Group 1. Socio-demographic Variables

In accordance with the reviewed literature, the perceived state of mental health of women can be seen to have deteriorated to a greater extent than that of men (Table 7). In fact, the values of the adjusted standardised residuals suggest that the number of women whose perceived mental health has deteriorated is greater than expected (5.5). In the case of men, a lower number was expected for those whose perceived mental health has remained the same (5.8).

With respect to age (Table 8), the intermediate age group can be seen to obtain results that differ significantly from what was expected. However, again in accordance with the literature, in the older age group, the majority of people's perceived state of mental health is seen to remain unchanged to a greater extent than expected (4.1).

The opposite occurs in the case of young people. Although the impact on perceived mental health of young people is seen to be ambivalent, there are more cases than expected both in the group of those whose mental health has deteriorated (2.0) and improved (2.4), although there are proportionally more cases in which perceived mental health has deteriorated.

**Table 7**  
*Perceived state of mental health by sex*

		Deteriorates	No change	Improves
Male	%	18.1	76.4	5.6
	Adjusted Std. Res.	-5.5	5.8	-1.2
Female	%	31.2	61.6	7.2
	Adjusted Std. Res.	5.5	-5.8	1.2

\*Adjusted Std. Res.: Adjusted standardised residual.

Source: own research based on IECA: Social Survey 2020. Habits and Living Conditions of the Andalusian Population During the State of Alarm.

**Table 8**  
*Perceived state of mental health by age\**

		Deteriorates	No change	Improves
16–34	%	28.3	62.6	9.1
	Adjusted Std. Res.	2.0	-3.1	2.4
35–49	%	25.5	68.2	6.3
	Adjusted Std. Res.	1.1	-0.9	-0.1
50–64	%	18.2	77.9	3.9
	Adjusted Std. Res.	-3.1	4.1	-2.3

\*Adjusted Std. Res.: Adjusted standardised residual.

Source: own research based on IECA: Social Survey 2020. Habits and Living Conditions of the Andalusian Population During the State of Alarm.

#### 4.1.2. Group 2. Employment Variables

Although the group of employers with employees (Table 9) has the highest proportion of people whose perceived state of mental health has deteriorated following lockdown (32.2%), it is in the group of part-time employees in which the proportion of workers whose perceived mental health has deteriorated is greater than expected (32.0%, 2.4). Entrepreneurs without employees, self-employed workers or members of cooperatives are those who fare best, as

the proportion of workers in this group whose perceived mental health has deteriorated is the lowest compared to the rest (14.0), and is also less than expected (-3.0), resulting in a large number of people in this group who have not experienced changes to their perceived state of mental health (80.4%).

These differences, in addition to reflecting the employment situations of each group at that time, can address the future prospects predicted according to the development of the consequences of the pandemic. This is the case of part-time employees, who in this sample are concentrated in the groups of workers in catering, personal, protection services and sales workers, and basic occupations. In this context, these two occupational groups (service sector and basic occupation workers) were particularly vulnerable. As well as being groups with particularly low salaries in comparison with the rest, the work forecasts, particularly in the hospitality industry, were not promising. At that time, the duration of the lockdown and the improvement of the health situation could not be predicted. Therefore, for the hospitality industry in Andalusia, where summer is the best season, the employment forecasts were not very clear at that time.

**Table 9**

*Perceived state of mental health by employment situation\**

		Deteriorates	No change	Improves
Full-time employee	%	22.7	70.9	6.4
	Adjusted Std. Res.	-1.4	1.2	0.2
Employee in temporary layoff	%	27.3	64.8	7.9
	Adjusted Std. Res.	1.2	-1.6	1.0
Part-time employee	%	32.0	62.7	5.2
	Adjusted Std. Res.	2.4	-1.9	-0.6
Employers with employees	%	32.2	63.2	4.6
	Adjusted Std. Res.	1.8	-1.3	-0.7
Entrepreneurs without employees, self-employed worker or cooperative member	%	14.0	80.4	5.6
	Adjusted Std. Res.	-3.0	3.0	-0.4

\*Adjusted Std. Res.: Adjusted standardised residual.

Source: own research based on IECA: Social Survey 2020. Habits and Living Conditions of the Andalusian Population During the State of Alarm.

It is therefore no surprise that the group of workers in catering, personal, protection services and sales workers (Table 10) has the highest proportion of workers whose perceived mental health has deteriorated (31.7%), also reaching a higher figure than expected (3.2). The group that appears to fare best is that of the installation and machinery operators and assemblers, as it is the group in which a higher percentage of the workers' perceived mental health improves. Furthermore, it is also the group in which, proportionally, less workers have

seen their subjective state of mental health deteriorate. However, these results must be regarded with caution, as the number of workers in the sample that make up this occupational group is not very high.

**Table 10**

*Perceived state of mental health by work occupation\**

		Deteriorates	No change	Improves
Directors and managers	%	23.7	74.2	2.1
	Adjusted Std. Res.	-0.1	1.1	-1.8
Scientific technicians and professionals and intellectuals	%	27.5	65.3	7.3
	Adjusted Std. Res.	1.4	-1.6	0.7
Technicians, support professionals	%	23.4	71.9	4.8
	Adjusted Std. Res.	-0.3	0.7	-0.9
Accountancy, administrative and other office employees	%	20.4	69.9	9.7
	Adjusted Std. Res.	-1.0	0.1	1.6
Catering, personal, protection services and sales workers	%	31.7	61.9	6.4
	Adjusted Std. Res.	3.2	-3.0	0.1
Skilled agricultural, livestock and fishing sector workers	%	16.1	74.2	9.7
	Adjusted Std. Res.	-1.1	0.6	0.8
Workers qualified for manufacturing and construction	%	18.6	73.5	8.0
	Adjusted Std. Res.	-1.5	1.0	0.7
Installation and machinery operators and assemblers	%	14.9	74.7	10.3
	Adjusted Std. Res.	-2.1	1.1	1.6
Basic occupations	%	21.5	75.7	2.8
	Adjusted Std. Res.	-0.9	1.9	-2.1

\*Adjusted Std. Res.: Adjusted standardised residual.

Source: own research based on IECA: Social Survey 2020. Habits and Living Conditions of the Andalusian Population During the State of Alarm.

The following table (Table 11) shows the impact on the perceived mental health of the AWP according to the perceived risk of unemployment. Those workers who have already lost their job are those who show the greatest degree of deterioration in their subjective mental health (31.0%), followed by those who think losing their job is very or quite likely (27.7%). The perceived mental health of those who perceive little or no risk of unemployment have remained more stable than would be expected (2.6), with the number of workers whose subjective mental health has deteriorated being less than expected (-2.7). However, those who did not know what stance to take in respect to this question (Do not know) are those who have experienced a lesser impact on their perceived mental health, since the perceived state of mental health of the people who make up this group is the same as before lockdown (78.0%).

**Table 11***Perceived state of mental health according to the perceived risk of loss of employment\**

		Deteriorates	No change	Improves
Highly/Quite likely	%	27.7	65.1	7.2
	Adjusted Std. Res.	1.9	-2.2	0.8
Unlikely/Not at all likely	%	21.2	72.4	6.3
	Adjusted Std. Res.	-2.7	2.6	-0.1
Already experienced loss of employment	%	31.0	63.2	5.8
	Adjusted Std. Res.	2.1	-1.8	-0.3
Do not know	%	18.6	78.0	3.4
	Adjusted Std. Res.	-1.0	1.5	-1.0

\*Adjusted Std. Res.: Adjusted standardised residual.

Source: own research based on IECA: Social Survey 2020. Habits and Living Conditions of the Andalusian Population During the State of Alarm.

#### 4.1.3. Group 3. Financial Variables

Of the variables associated with the financial situation, it is those variables related to the impact of the pandemic on the perceived mental health of the AWP that are linked to situations of payment difficulties as a result of lockdown and perceived risk of loss of income.

Although, proportionally, there are more people who struggle to make ends meet whose subjective mental health has deteriorated (25.4% compared to 23.7%), it is somewhat contradictory that it is this group that has a higher percentage of people whose perceived mental health has improved (9.0% compared to 5.4%). More than an ambivalent impact on the mental health of people who struggle to make ends meet, this could be due to a lesser impact than expected among those people who do not struggle to make ends meet.

**Table 12***Perceived state of mental health according to the ease/difficulty in making ends meet\**

		Deteriorates	No change	Improves
With ease	%	23.7	71.0	5.4
	Adjusted Std. Res.	-0.6	1.9	-2.4
With difficulty	%	25.4	65.6	9.0
	Adjusted Std. Res.	0.6	-1.9	2.4

\*Adjusted Std. Res.: Adjusted standardised residual.

Source: own research based on IECA: Social Survey 2020. Habits and Living Conditions of the Andalusian Population During the State of Alarm.

Paying rent late has had a negative impact on the subjective state of mental health of the AWP, with 45.2% experiencing a deterioration of their perceived mental health compared to 23.7% of those people who were not in arrears. However, as with

difficulty in making ends meet, the impact seems to have been ambivalent, as it is also the group in which, proportionally, more people have improved the perception of their state of mental health.

Not having problems affording payments or making ends meet has not implied an improvement in the subjective state of mental health, however it has done so in maintaining it. Thus, the impact on the perceived mental health of those people who have difficulty in making ends meet or paying their rent seems ambivalent. Although in the case of difficulty in making ends meet, it is not so clear, in the case of those people who have paid their rent on time, the deterioration of their mental health is evident.

**Table 13**

*Perceived state of mental health if rent payment is delayed\**

		Deteriorates	No change	Improves
No	%	23.7	70.1	6.2
	Adjusted Std. Res.	-2.8	3.0	-0.8
Yes	%	45.2	45.2	9.7
	Adjusted Std. Res.	2.8	-3.0	0.8

\*Adjusted Std. Res.: Adjusted standardised residual.

Source: own research based on IECA: Social Survey 2020. Habits and Living Conditions of the Andalusian Population During the State of Alarm.

The impact of the pandemic on perceived mental health seems more evident in the perceived risk of loss of income. In this case, among those people who have experienced loss of income, 38.3% have seen their mental health deteriorate, considerably more than expected (5.1), followed by those who believe said loss to be highly or quite likely (24.1%). It is also evident that perceiving the loss of income as unlikely or not at all likely, or having a certain lack of knowledge in this respect (Do not know), does not lead to an improvement in the subjective state of mental health, but rather in maintaining said state.

**Table 14**

*Perceived state of mental health according to the perceived risk of loss of income\**

		Deteriorates	No change	Improves
Highly/Quite likely	%	24.1	68.8	7.1
	Adjusted Std. Res.	-0.1	-0.4	0.9
Unlikely/Not at all likely	%	19.9	74.2	6.0
	Adjusted Std. Res.	-3.3	3.3	-0.5
Already experienced loss of income	%	38.3	56.7	5.0
	Adjusted Std. Res.	5.1	-4.2	-0.9
Do not know	%	18.8	72.9	8.3
	Adjusted Std. Res.	-0.9	0.5	0.6

\*Adjusted Std. Res.: Adjusted standardised residual.

Source: own research based on IECA: Social Survey 2020. Habits and Living Conditions of the Andalusian Population During the State of Alarm.

## 4.2. Feeling of depression

To address the second objective and determine which variables are better predictors of whether the AWP has felt depressed since lockdown started, segmentation analysis using the CHAID algorithm was used. This determines, with a 95.5% confidence level, the grouping of the categories of independent variables and the best predictor variables for feelings of depression in this sample.

The results are represented graphically in a “tree” (segment tree). This tree (Figure 1) has 11 nodes, of which 6 are terminal nodes, that is, nodes that show the percentage of people who have felt depressed, on the one hand, and those who have not, on the other, according to a series of variables that define their profile.

It is based on a total sample of 1,315 cases, of which 54.6% have not felt depressed in comparison to 45.4% that have; therefore, there is certain equilibrium between both categories. The variable sex creates the first divide. The differences between men and women are evident: among women, 58.7% have felt depressed following lockdown, while 33.9% of men have felt depressed.

Among women, the perceived risk of loss of income creates the second divide, determining the first two profiles: on the one hand, among those women who perceive the loss of income as unlikely or not at all likely, there is certain equilibrium between the percentage of those who have felt depressed (49.0%) and those who have not (51.0%). Therefore, it would be difficult to determine the feeling of depression in women who consider losing their income as unlikely or not at all likely. However, among those women who consider it highly or quite likely, have already lost their income or lack knowledge (Do not know), the percentage of women who have felt depressed is 65.0%. Thus, being a women and also being in a negative financial situation, or lacking knowledge, increases the risk of depression following lockdown.

Returning to the group of men, the variable of perceived risk of loss of income in the same categories creates the second divide. In this instance, they are not terminal nodes. Furthermore, in both cases the majority of the individuals did not feel depressed during this period, although the probability of not having felt depressed is greater in the case of those who perceive the loss of income as unlikely or not at all likely (75.2% compared to 58.1%).

Among those men who do not perceive the loss of income as likely, there is a divide based on the degree of urbanisation in the municipality of residence. On the one hand, there are those who live in cities or rural areas; and on the other, those who live in intermediate density areas. In both cases, the majority have not felt depressed, although this percentage is greater among those who live in intermediate density areas. Although the differences in this instance are not very pronounced, they could be due to the lack of services in rural areas and the

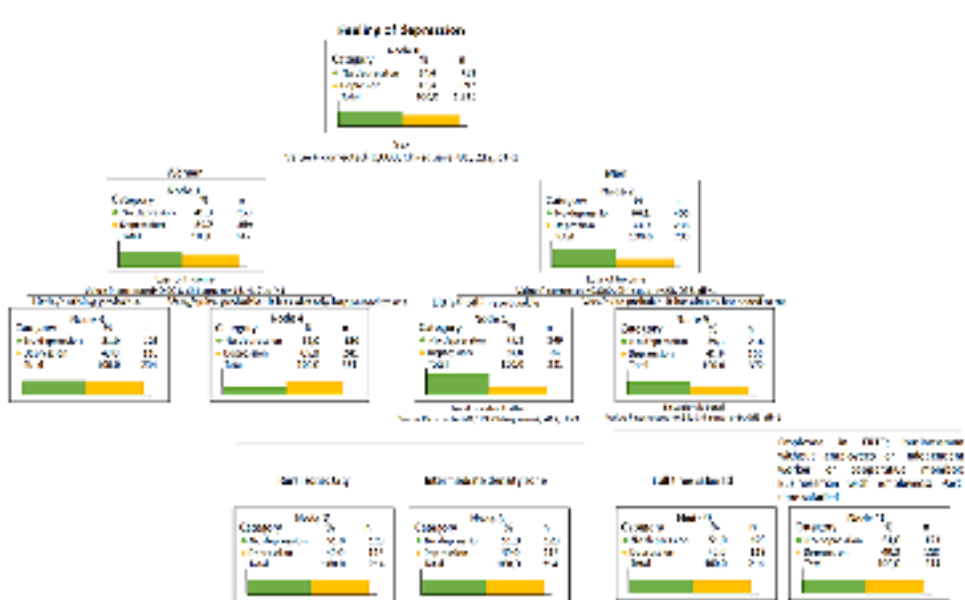


residential conditions of cities (more smaller-sized homes); while intermediate density areas tend to have the necessary services and lack the confinement of cities.

Of the men who have a greater perception of loss of income, or who have already experienced loss of income, two further groups are identified according to employment situation. In this case, the majority of full-time employees have not felt depressed (65.9%). In contrast, among the group made up of the remaining employment situations, the results are more balanced (50.5%–49.5%).

**Figure 1**

*Segment tree: profiles within the AWP in relation to the probability of feeling depressed after lockdown*



Source: own research based on IECA: Social Survey 2020. Habits and Living Conditions of the Andalusian Population During the State of Alarm.

## 5. Discussion

The impact of the pandemic on the perceived mental health of people is somewhat evident and has been confirmed by various studies. In the case of the AWP, we have seen how their subjective mental health has been differentially affected according to socio-demographic, employment and financial characteristics.

This study has shown that the worst results in terms of perceived state of mental health are concentrated in women, young people, employees in temporary layoff, part-time employees, employers with employees, employees in the group of catering, personal, protection services and sales workers, and basic occupations. However, the key to interpreting these results lies in the perceived risk of loss of income, strongly associated with the perceived risk of loss of employment.

In the case of young people, there are different studies that show that they are one of the groups in a more vulnerable situation within the labour market, being most affected by its precariousness —temporality, low salaries, etc.— (OXFAM Intermón, 2020), something which also occurs with occupations such as hospitality and basic occupations, which were mostly forced to cease their business activity. For this occupational group, during the state of alarm, the uncertainty prevented the end of the lockdown from being predicted, which in turn increased the likelihood (at least the perceived likelihood) of losing employment or income for the summer season when higher profits are generated.

In this case, the explanation of the deterioration of the perception of mental health may lie in the instability of employment in certain sectors, such as the hospitality industry, which was particularly compounded due to stay-at-home orders, experiencing and predicting a loss of employment and the consequential loss of income.

In this sense, as various studies and reports point out, the most vulnerable were those who were most affected by the pandemic, both in employment terms and financially, with this situation being a clear aggravating factor for their perception of their mental health. Furthermore, of the issues related to work situation and employment, there are structural issues such as the worse state of mental health of women in comparison to men who, in crisis situations such as that caused by the pandemic, are particularly compounded, with sex being a key factor in the feeling of depression.

On the other hand, there were certain limitations to this study that must be taken into account when considering the results and conclusions. Firstly, the classification of occupations in the questionnaire has not allowed for a clearer distinction of those professions that were more exposed to the virus, such as is the case of health professionals and shop assistants in essential shops.

Secondly, the variables “state of mental health twelve months ago” and “current state of mental health” used to create the dependent variable “comparative state of mental health” are measured using an unbalanced scale that includes three positive items (excellent, very good, good), one neutral item (average) and one negative item (poor), with the corresponding “do not know” and “no opinion” responses. This imbalance in the scale has not enabled these variables to be used individually to further the study of perceived mental health, as the imbalance of the scale ends up distorting the results, in this instance, with a positive bias.

Thirdly, the question related to the feeling of depression lends itself to various interpretations, as the symptomatology that characterises depression is not

explained previously. Thus, those people who have affirmed feeling depressed may have had a different symptomatology that, in some cases, may respond to feelings of sadness or discouragement that do not correspond to the clinically established symptoms for diagnosing depression. Therefore, the findings related to the feeling of depression cannot be considered strictly associated with depression in its theoretical and clinical sense.

## 6. Conclusions

This study proves that not only has the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic affected those people who were already particularly vulnerable on a financial and working level, but also that these were the groups that experienced a deterioration of perceived state of mental health linked to employment and, particularly, financial instability.

Therefore, not only would it be necessary to draw up policies that reduce the impact of future crises on unemployment and loss of income, but also policies that ensure access to mental health services for the most vulnerable groups (the most affected by unemployment and loss of income). Two years on from the decree of state of alarm and lockdown, the strengthening of these services continues to be a political challenge in Spain. Although there is still a long way to go in this regard, the first steps must be taken for the most vulnerable (working) population group, aimed at reducing the negative consequences of the pandemic.

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**RESEARCH NOTE**

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**RESEARCH NOTE**/NOTA DE INVESTIGACIÓN

# Collective Narcissism, Populism and Political Profiles in Andalusia and Catalonia<sup>1</sup>

Narcisismo colectivo, populismo y perfiles políticos en Andalucía y Cataluña

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## ABSTRACT

This article explores the relation between populism and collective narcissism resorting to the empirical data provided by a survey conducted in Andalusia and Catalonia. Collective narcissism is the belief that the group one belongs to is exceptional and lacks the recognition it deserves. It should be expected that collective narcissism is a predictor of populism, insofar as the latter is grounded on the moralistic antagonism between the true people and its enemies. Our survey suggests that the relation between narcissism, populism and identity is complex, being mediated by contextual factors that are social and political in nature-linguistic self-identification standing out in the case of Catalonia. An additional finding is that Akkerman et al. (2014) scale fails to predict support for left-of left-wing populist parties.

**KEYWORDS:** populism, collective narcissism, Andalusia, Catalonia.

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## RESUMEN

Este artículo analiza la relación entre populismo y narcisismo colectivo a partir de los datos empíricos proporcionados por una encuesta de opinión realizada en Andalucía y Cataluña. Por narcisismo colectivo hay que entender la creencia de que el grupo al que se pertenece es excepcional y carece del reconocimiento que merece. En principio, cabría esperar que el narcisismo colectivo fuese un predictor del populismo, ya que este último se basa en la creación de un antagonismo moralista entre el pueblo auténtico y sus enemigos. Los resultados de la encuesta sugieren que la relación entre narcisismo, populismo e identidades es compleja y se encuentra mediada por factores contextuales de carácter social y político; así sucede con la identificación lingüística en Cataluña en el marco del conflicto separatista. Hallazgo adicional son las limitaciones de la escala de Akkerman *et al.* (2014) a la hora de predecir el voto por partidos populistas de izquierda.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** populismo, narcisismo colectivo, Andalucía, Cataluña.

## 1. Collective Narcissism and Political Populism

Analysing “populist demand”, that is, the attitudes and beliefs of citizens that, in theory, are linked to the speeches given by populist party leaders, has gained momentum over the last ten years (Akkerman *et al.*, 2014; Elchardus and Spruyt, 2016; Kefford *et al.*, 2021). Bar a few exceptions, however, comparative studies on demand have focused on the state — as opposed to the sub-state — level (Mazzoleni *et al.*, 2022). At the same time, it is worth highlighting that exclusionary nationalism and nativism are attributes that are often associated with populism (Mudde, 2010; Newth, 2021). Populist movements draw on the idealised description of a threatened or mistreated society or nation (“heartland”) as a tool to foster a sense of unity against the “other” (Taggart, 2004; Olivás Osuna, 2021a). Narcissistic and collective self-affirming narratives also allow the (re)construction and ontological “securitisation” of political identities (Chernobrov, 2016), which can be considered a staple of the logic of populist articulation (Laclau, 2005).

This article explores the relationship between populism and collective narcissism in Andalusia and Catalonia to ascertain whether the sub-state political and cultural identities are in any way associated with the citizens’ interpretations of the political dynamics that surround them. Over the last decade, the concept of collective narcissism has evolved from the initial suggestion by Golec de Zavala and contributors (Golec de Zavala *et al.*, 2009; Golec de Zavala and Santos, 2020; Golec de Zavala and Keenan, 2021). It expresses the belief that the group to which one belongs is exceptional but does not receive the recognition it deserves. It is a form of intra-group love that is associated with inter-group hate: the group itself is perceived as threatened and the “other” (rather than rival), as hostile. This is coupled with hypersensitivity to provocation and the conviction that the only reasonable response is aggression or retaliation. Collective narcissism differs from collective self-esteem (Crocker and Luhtanen, 1990) since the latter is a positive appreciation of the group that does not need to be associated with a lack of external recognition. Thus, collective narcissism is an inflated form of collective self-esteem.

In line with these authors, collective narcissism is a good predictor of nationalism, confrontational attitudes on the international scene and escalation in inter-group conflicts. And what about populism? Focusing on the “illiberal right”, Golec de Zavala and Keenan (2021) suggest that the appeal of populism largely lies in its defence of a vision of national identity that responds to those conditions — economic and cultural — that challenge the expectations of the members of a group about their own importance. They conclude that the populist attitudes are largely built on a substrate of collective narcissism that is fuelled with narratives that seek to generate resentments based on uniqueness and rights to certain group privileges (Golec de Zavala and Keenan, 2021). This connection seems to be backed up by the literature on populism, which has repeatedly pointed out the idealisation of society as a key element in the construction of otherness and praise of a non-empirical “people”, that would justify the exclusion of an “other” that threatens or disregards it (Berlin, 1968: 168; Müller, 2014). While populism draws an anti-pluralist picture of society, collective narcissism can use it as a basis. In the case of Spain, this dimension of the populist phenomenon is also noted in the political parties Vox and Podemos and the Catalan and Basque independence movements (Olivas Osuna, 2021b). Collective narcissism upholds the belief in the *unique* and *exceptional* quality of the group, which would logically result in the demand for the *right* to privileged treatment.

There is room to disagree with the reference to *national* collective narcissism made by Golec de Zavala and Keenan given that a populist society does not need to be based on the nation, despite it often being the case. A monist understanding of the people or political community may be a more relevant distinguishing feature of populism. Moreover, that group may exhibit traits of collective narcissism that underpin a belligerent identity that strengthens the antagonistic and moral construction of a society that is also characteristic of populism. Cichočka and Cislak (2020) suggest that collective narcissism is *equally* correlated with nationalism and populism. Nor should it be forgotten that populists consider themselves defenders under a monopoly regime of common good, as well as representatives of “the people” (Müller, 2016: 3). This moral dimension is also reflected in the use of a discourse of blame and victimisation (Vasilopoulou et al., 2014). Ultimately, the theoretical conceptualisation and empirical measurement of collective narcissism is, therefore, potentially relevant for the study of populism.

## 2. Data and Methodology

This study is based on original data collected through two telephone surveys, one in Andalusia and the other in Catalonia, conducted by the COTESA Department of Statistical Research between 5 and 25 October 2021, following a CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) method. The survey was conducted based on criteria of representativeness in relation to age (persons 18 years and over) and gender, as well as the population distribution in the provinces of each of these self-governing regions. In Catalonia, the respondents chose the language in which the

interview was conducted (Olivas Osuna et al., 2022a and 2022b). They are the most populated regions in Spain and maintain historic ties due to the arrival of Andalusian immigrants in Catalonia; the ethno-linguistic division in the latter (Oller et al., 2019) allow us a better understanding of how other social structural factors are associated with populism and collective narcissism.

The surveys were expressly designed for this comparative study of social and political attitudes and psychological attributes and include more than 80 items. In most instances, the respondents are presented with a phrase and asked to rate their degree of agreement on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is *completely disagree* and 5 is *completely agree*). The questions are identical or equivalent in Andalusia and Catalonia, although some have been adapted to the specific context or to contrast mutual visions between the inhabitants of these regions. This survey is pioneering as it includes a series of topics that have never, or very rarely, been studied in these two regions.

To capture the populist demand, we have used not only the reduced scale developed by Akkerman, Mudde and Zaslove (2014), the most widely used in comparative studies (see, for example, Meléndez and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2019; or Zanotti and Rama, 2020), but also an extensive array of other items associated with populism and related phenomena. Although the comparative evaluations of populism scales offer good reliability and validity, the scale developed by Akkerman et al. (2014) is not without limitations from both an operationalisation point of view (Castanho Silva et al., 2020; Wuttke et al., 2020) and conceptual standpoint, since it is based on a minimal definition of populism (De la Torre and Mazzoleni, 2019). Furthermore, this scale has shown that it does not have the same power for predicting the populist vote in Europe and abroad or between left- and right-wing groups (Rovira-Kaltwasser & Van Hauwaert, 2020; Hawkins et al., 2020). In line with other authors (Wiesehoimeier, 2019; Hamelaers and de Vreese, 2020; Kefford et al., 2022), this study adopts a more multidimensional approach that helps mitigate the limitations of the scale developed by Akkerman et al. (2014) and extract a more complete image of the populist individual in these self-governing regions of Spain.

It includes questions about illiberalism, immigration, Spanish constitutional and political order, regional prejudices, language and the pandemic are added to these dimensions. Said questions are intentionally related to political frames used frequently by parties, movements and the media in Spain. Finally, scales entrenched in literature were included to measure conspiratorial thinking (Brotherton et al., 2013) and, of course, the extent of collective narcissism (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009).

Through the inclusion of the latter scale in our survey, this study aims to capture the extent to which the feeling of belonging to a group leads to victimisation and/or an additional demand for recognition. Andalusia and Catalonia are the two most populous autonomous communities and their citizens display a strong sense of identity and collective pride. On the one hand, it measures the degree of collective narcissism, enabling its correlation with different voting and/or linguistic identification profiles; on the other, it makes it possible to determine whether collective narcissism is a predictor of populism.

Table 1 shows the 6 items of the reduced version of the scale, operationalised in this study as an additive index.

### Table 1

*Collective narcissism scale, reduced version (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009)*

1. Andalusia/Catalonia deserve special treatment
2. I will never be satisfied until Andalusia/Catalonia gets the recognition it deserves
3. I insist that Andalusia/Catalonia obtains the respect that it is due
4. It really makes me anger that others criticise Andalusia/Catalonia
5. If Andalusia/Catalonia had a major say in the world, would be a much better place
6. Not many people seem to fully understand the importance of Andalusia/Catalonia

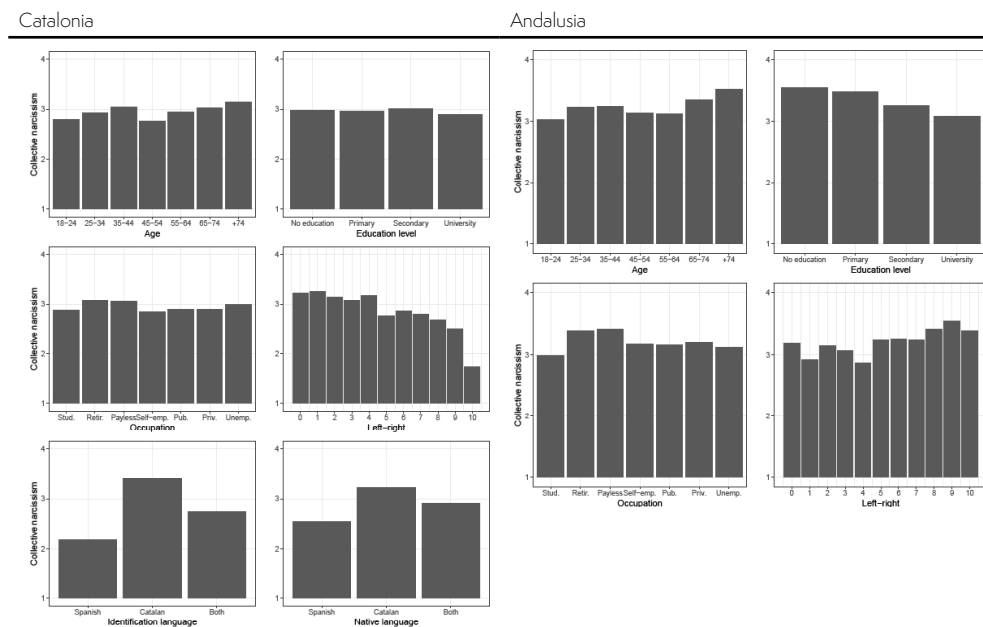
## 3. Results

While overall populist attitudes and beliefs in conspiracies are higher in Catalonia (3.82 and 2.58 on a scale of 1 to 5 compared to 3.77 and 2.45 in Andalusia), *collective narcissism* is higher among the population of Andalusia (3.44 compared to 3.12). Unlike for the first two scales, when the results of collective narcissism in Catalonia are broken down by language of identification (answer to the question: “What language do you identify most with?”), we find major differences: those who identify with Catalan have a mean score of 3.61 in collective narcissism, while those who identify with both average 2.88, and those who identify with Spanish score considerably lower (2.38). It should be clarified that more than two-thirds of the respondents whose mother tongue is Catalan claim to identify with that language (just over one-quarter identify with both Catalan and English), while only 36.5% of the respondents whose mother tongue is Spanish *also* claim to identify with it (58.2% identify with both Catalan and Spanish). Among those who consider *both* languages their mother tongue, 20.9% identify with Catalan and 76.7% with both.

The mean values for collective narcissism can be broken down in different ways, addressing different variables: age, studies, ideological self-identification, occupation and, in the case of Catalan, mother tongue (Figure 1). There appears to be a greater incidence among pensioners and unpaid workers. Beyond a slight positive association with the age of the citizens, there does not appear to be a strong correlation between the degree of collective narcissism and other socio-demographic variables. An interesting effect is observed, as narcissism is lower among those aged 45 to 64 in relation to those respondents in the age groups immediately above and below. Thus, this suggests a moderate generational difference that requires an explanation. For its part, a low level of studies is only positively correlated with a high degree of collective narcissism in the case of Andalusia, where the latter decreases as the level of education increases. Strikingly, in Catalonia, narcissism is uniform across all levels of education, peaking among those who have completed secondary education. Ideological self-location varies: in Andalusia, right-wing citizens present higher

values of collective narcissism, while in Catalonia, the most narcissistic citizens are left wing. It is therefore evident that, in both regions, the higher the age of the respondent, the greater the degree of collective narcissism, even with nuances. Finally, and as stated previously, there is significantly more collective narcissism among those Catalonians who identify with Catalan.

**Figure 1**  
*Collective narcissism in relation to socio-demographic variables*



In Andalusia, collective narcissism is a transverse phenomenon among voters of different parties (Table 4), with those who vote for Vox and PP scoring higher on this scale. Note that the degree of collective narcissism is one of the main distinctive characteristics between voters of Podemos and Adelante Andalucía. In Catalonia, however, there is a divide between those who vote for pro-independence and “pro-constitution” parties (for example, JxC=3.88, ERC=3.72; PP=1.95, Vox=1.77). This reveals a clear dissonance in terms of collective feelings and perceptions within Catalonia, as well as different degrees of narcissism among voters of the same party in different self-governing regions: among Vox voters, the highest level is seen in Andalusia and the lowest, in Catalonia. Thus, collective narcissism appears to be related to the desire for political independence in Catalonia; in Andalusia, on the other hand, it is mostly linked to cultural and social matters.

## Figure 2

Collective narcissism in Andalusia (above) and Catalonia (below), by party and according to attitudes towards independence (1- strongly disagree to 5- strongly agree)

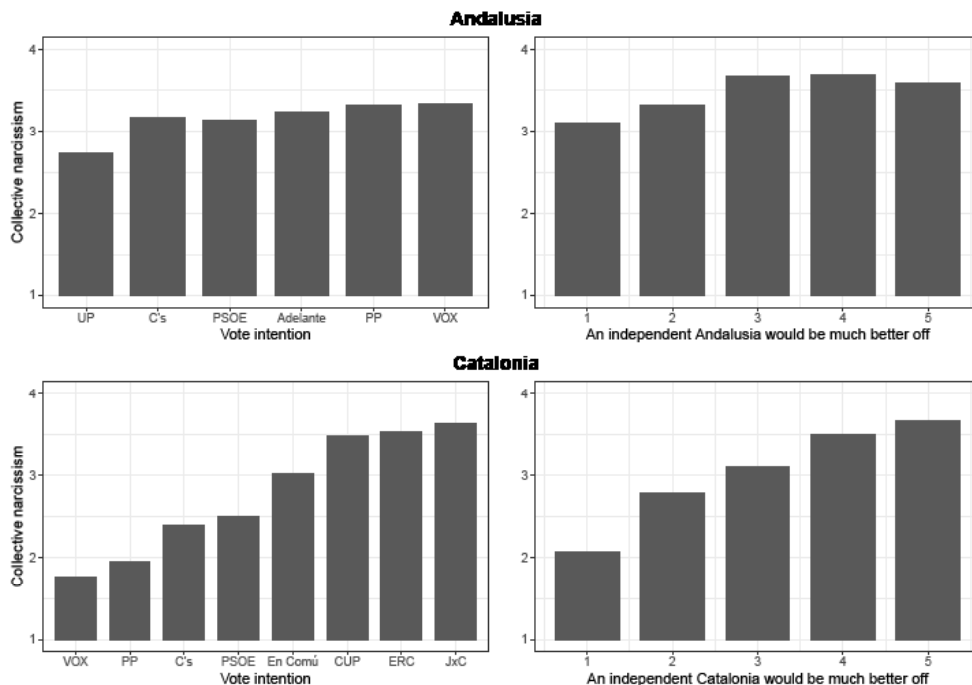


Table 2 illustrates how ethno-linguistic considerations affect social attitudes and processes of otherness in Catalonia; in Andalusia, the traditional left-right cleavage appears more decisive. Linguistic identification is decisive when experiencing, or not, a threat to identity (3.1 among those who identify with Catalan; 2.18, with Spanish), while this belief is most common among right-wing Andalusians, albeit to a lesser extent than in Catalonia (Table 4, Vox= 2.11 and PP=1.81). Moreover, many of those respondents who identify with the Spanish language have considered leaving Catalonia due to the political context (2.46 compared to 1.37 on average for those who identify with Catalan). This has more weight than the economic factor, where there is also a discrepancy across groups (1.99 among those who identify with Spanish compared to 1.47 with Catalan). In Andalusia, however, financial reasons (1.69) prevail over political grounds (1.37) as the motive for hypothetically moving away from the region.

**Table 2***Mean values by linguistic groups in Catalonia*

	Language of identification			
	TOTAL	Catalan	Spanish	Both
Indices				
Collective narcissism	3.12	3.61	2.38	2.88
Populist attitudes	3.82	3.86	3.88	3.75
Conspiracy belief	2.58	2.63	2.58	2.53
Geographical and identity question				
An independent Catalonia would fare much better	3.01	4.11	1.56	2.41
Spain needs to be decentralised to a far greater extent	3.71	4.13	2.94	3.54
My identity is threatened	2.58	3.1	2.18	2.19
Rejection of immigrants				
Immigration has adversely affected our culture	2.22	2.23	2.44	2.11
Immigrants steal our jobs	1.68	1.69	1.8	1.61
It is good that people from abroad move to Catalonia	4.19	4.11	4.31	4.23
Attitudes towards the Spanish				
It is good that people from other parts of Spain move to Catalonia	4.3	4.16	4.4	4.4
A person can feel both Catalan and Spanish at the same time	4.45	4.1	4.77	4.7
An Andalusian who moves to Catalonia is an immigrant	2.12	2.28	2.25	1.92
Victim mentality and superiority				
People from the rest of Spain look down on Catalonians	2.8	3.16	2.38	2.59
Catalonians are harder working than people from other self-governing regions in Spain	1.93	2.2	1.56	1.78
Catalonians give a lot more to the state than they receive	3.59	4.35	2.24	3.25
Linguistic polarisation				
In Catalonia, Catalan speakers have the right to be educated in Catalan	4.38	4.68	3.9	4.23
In Catalonia, Spanish speakers have the right to be educated in Spanish	3.46	3.05	4.13	3.63
Social consequences				
I have considered leaving Catalonia due to the political context	1.73	1.37	2.49	1.82
I have considered leaving Catalonia due to the economic context	1.62	1.47	1.99	1.63
N		635	220	636

Significantly, there is a stronger belief in conspiracy theories, a lower level of rejection of immigrants and also a lower degree of satisfaction with the arrival of citizens from other parts of Spain among those who primarily identify with Catalan. In Andalusia, it is the right-wing sympathisers who show greater rejection of people from abroad. For their part, it is those Catalonians who identify with this language who express a greater victim mentality. It is interesting how, in our interviews, Andalusians consider themselves to be harder working than people from other regions (2.6), and they do so to a much greater degree than the interviewed Catalonians (1.93).



In Catalonia, language acts as an internal border between “us” and “them”, as theory on populism would predict (Laclau, 2005). For example, those people in the middle ground who identify with *both* languages present fewer populist attitudes and are less likely to consider those Andalusians who work in Catalonia “immigrants” (1.92 compared to 2.28 of those who only identify with Catalan, and 2.24, only with Spanish); likewise, they express less rejection of immigration. Those interviewees with dual linguistic identity “foreignise” Andalusians who work in Catalonia to a lesser extent; Catalonians living in Andalusia are very rarely considered as “immigrants” (1.63).

Although the right to education in the mother tongue is widely acknowledged in the survey, there is a significant discrepancy between voters of different parties. Among CUP voters, for example, the difference in agreement between the statements “*In Catalonia, Catalan speakers have the right to be educated in Catalan*” and “*In Catalonia, Spanish speakers have the right to be educated in Spanish*” is 2.15 points in favour of Catalan speakers (4.89 compared to 2.65, respectively); there is also a significant difference between JxC voters (1.72); between En Comú voters (1.67); and between ERC voters (1.4). In contrast, there is less discrepancy in the recognition of language rights among those who vote for self-styled pro-constitution parties.

In our study, it also appears that ethno-nationalist dynamics affect the perception of what is considered left- and right-wing in Catalonia. For example, those who vote for CUP, a theoretically left-wing party, are most inclined to consider Andalusians immigrants (2.86); are less satisfied, after JxC voters, with the arrival of other Spaniards (4.2); and are most likely to think that the rest of Spain looks down on Catalonians (3.32). Both CUP (4.38) and ERC (4.43) voters consider that Catalonians contribute significantly more than what they receive from the state, a far cry from the opinion of those who vote for other left-wing parties such as PSC (2.6) and En Comú (3.54). Note that the responses of Vox and PP voters differ largely between the two communities: those who most uphold this statement are in Andalusia (3.81 and 3.59, respectively) and those who least, in Catalonia (1.33 and 1.52).

**Table 3**  
*Mean values by voting intention (Catalonia)*

	CUP	ERC	JxC	En Comú	PSC	Cs	PP	Vox
Indices								
Collective narcissism	3.61	3.72	3.88	3.07	2.54	2.39	1.95	1.77
Populist attitudes	4.06	3.88	3.9	4.02	3.54	3.61	3.67	3.73
Conspiracy belief	2.64	2.54	2.73	2.47	2.45	2.36	2.72	2.85
Language of identification								
Catalan	57.8%	67.2%	78.3	7%	16%	29%	5%	22.2%
Spanish	10.9%	0	12%	12.3%	25%	35.3%	36%	44.4%
Both	31.2%	32.8%	20.2%	80.7	6%	61.8%	58%	33.3%
Geographical and identity question								
An independent Catalonia would fare much better	4.41	4.29	4.45	2.51	1.48	1.65	1	1.06
Spain needs to be decentralised to a far greater extent	4.4	4.2	4.38	4	3.36	2.97	2.24	2.06
My identity is threatened	3.09	3.08	3.39	2.02	1.68	2.38	2.43	2.22
Rejection of immigrants								
Immigration has adversely affected our culture	1.62	2.25	2.32	1.46	1.9	3.21	2.84	3.35
Immigrants steal our jobs	1.31	1.54	1.76	1.14	1.5	1.97	2.06	2.56
It is good that people from abroad move to Catalonia	4.23	4.32	4.13	4.65	4.22	3.91	4.42	4.22
Attitudes towards the Spanish								
It is good that people from other parts of Spain move to Catalonia	4.2	4.31	4.15	4.68	4.39	4.47	4.58	4.61
A person can feel both Catalan and Spanish at the same time	4.14	4.1	4.03	4.85	4.83	4.74	4.94	5
An Andalusian who moves to Catalonia is an immigrant	2.68	2.06	2.38	2.21	1.81	1.68	1.68	1.67
Feeling of superiority and victim mentality								
People from the rest of Spain look down on Catalonians	3.32	3.18	3.39	2.84	2.36	2.35	1.58	2.29
Catalonians are harder working than people from other self-governing regions in Spain	1.78	2.1	2.29	1.81	1.63	2.03	1.48	1.39
Catalonians give a lot more to the state than they receive	4.38	4.43	4.65	3.54	2.6	2.38	1.52	1.33
Linguistic polarisation								
In Catalonia, Catalan speakers have the right to be educated in Catalan	4.89	4.64	4.78	4.6	4.15	3.47	3.1	4.06
In Catalonia, Spanish speakers have the right to be educated in Spanish	2.65	3.24	3.06	2.93	3.78	4.21	4.1	4.59
Social consequences								
I have considered leaving Catalonia due to the political context	1.31	1.25	1.42	1.49	2.02	2.41	3.1	2.72
I have considered leaving Catalonia due to the economic context	1.41	1.36	1.48	1.49	1.7	2.15	2.58	2.06
N	64	238	258	57	229	34	62	36

**Table 4**  
*Mean values by voting intention (Andalusia)*

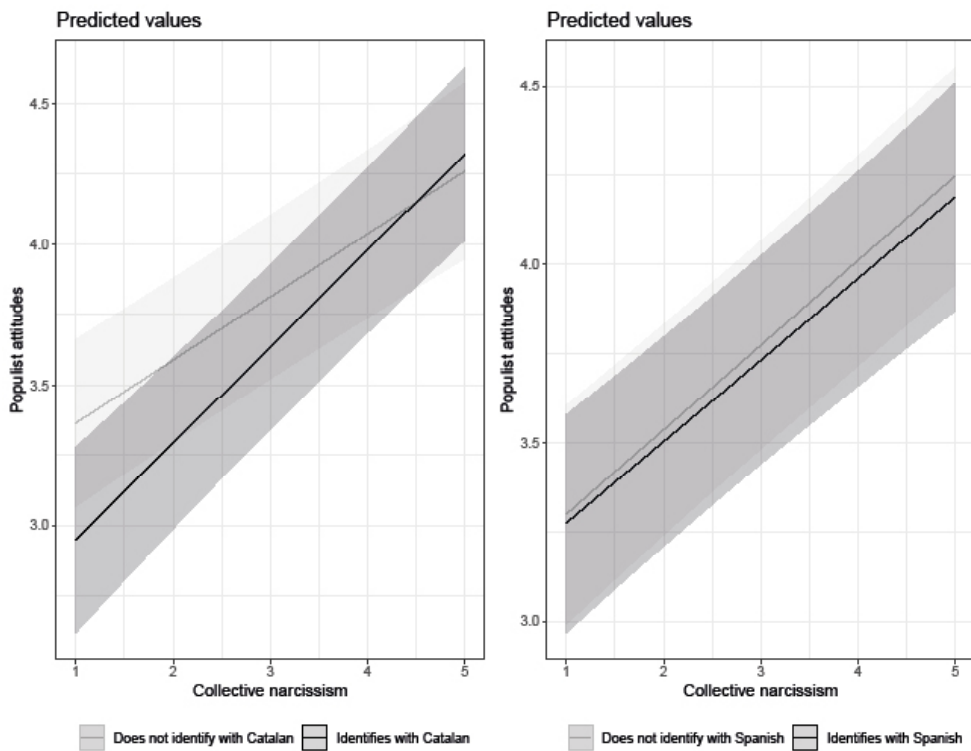
	TOTAL	Adelante Andalucía	Pode- mos	PSOE	Cs	PP	Vox
Indices							
Collective narcissism	3.44	3.43	2.88	3.37	3.31	3.55	3.59
Populist attitudes	3.77	3.63	3.69	3.57	3.82	3.82	4.14
Conspiracy belief	2.45	2.28	2.22	2.43	2.55	2.53	2.85
Geographical and identity question							
An independent Andalusia would fare much better	1.56	1.75	1.68	1.59	1.56	1.42	1.46
Spain needs to be decentralised to a far greater extent	2.3	3.07	2.94	2.51	2.6	1.93	2.27
My identity is threatened	1.82	1.61	1.75	1.76	1.79	1.81	2.11
Rejection of immigrants							
Immigration has adversely affected our culture	2.38	1.98	1.81	2.11	2.04	2.53	3.07
Immigrants steal our jobs	1.9	1.64	1.67	1.83	1.91	1.89	2.34
It is good that people from abroad move to Andalusia	4.2	4.05	4.49	4.27	4.24	4.2	3.93
Attitudes towards the Spanish							
It is good that people from other parts of Spain move to Andalusia	4.37	4.17	4.52	4.36	4.37	4.39	4.32
A person can feel both Andalusian and Spanish at the same time	4.81	4.67	4.67	4.79	4.69	4.84	4.91
A Catalan who moves to Andalusia is an immigrant	1.63	1.88	1.67	1.58	1.64	1.64	1.58
Feeling of superiority and victim mentality							
People from the rest of Spain look down on Andalusians	2.7	2.61	2.44	2.64	2.4	2.72	2.83
Andalusians are harder working than people from other self-governing regions in Spain	2.6	2.79	2.36	2.55	2.26	2.62	2.99
Andalusians give a lot more to the state than they receive	3.5	3.45	3.16	3.31	3.38	3.59	3.81
Social consequences							
I have considered leaving Andalusia due to the political context	1.37	1.43	1.61	1.27	1.46	1.27	1.27
I have considered leaving Andalusia due to the economic context	1.69	1.78	1.93	1.62	1.81	1.55	1.56
N		58	70	267	54	393	100

The relationship between collective narcissism and populism is, therefore, more complex than it may seem. In the case of Catalonia, there is a positive correlation that is clearer in the segment of the population that identifies more with Catalan than with Spanish (Figure 3). The mediating effect of the language of identification is also observed in the model that predicts support for populist parties in that region (Table 5). Populist attitudes, as measured by the scale developed by Akkerman et al. (2014), do not appear to predict votes for populist parties in these regions (selection of populist parties based on: Norris, 2020; Meijers and Zaslove, 2020; Olivas Osuna, 2021b) (Tables 5 and 6). In Catalonia, the main predictors of votes for populist parties are Catalan as the language of identification, the consideration that immigrants

adversely affect the culture, as well as support for independence and referendums as a decision instrument. The exception to this is Vox, which has a stronger correlation with negative attitudes towards immigration. There is a significant relationship between voting for ERC and the belief that “democracy has to be above the law”. Greater collective narcissism appears to be a predictor for voting for JxC, and less so for voting for Vox. Voting for JxC also appears to be associated with a stronger belief in conspiracy theories.

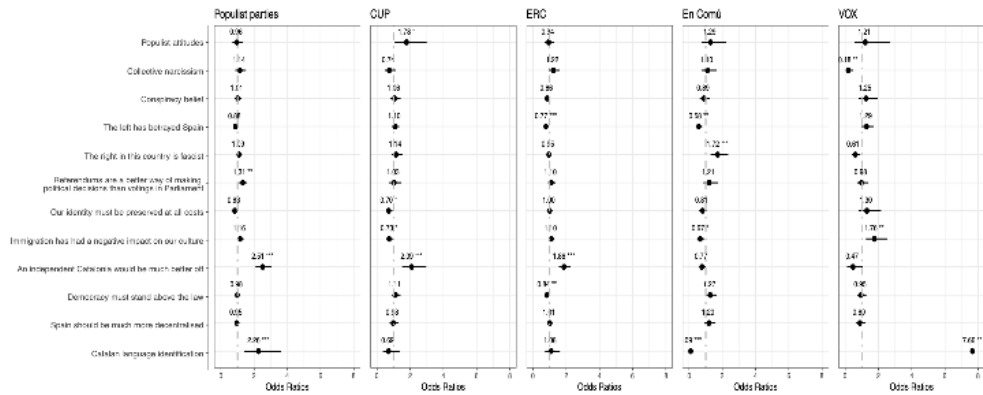
**Figure 3**

*Effect of interaction between language of identification, collective narcissism and populist attitudes in Catalonia*



Note: Models controlling for age, gender, education level, occupation, and left-right self-placement (n=1,392). Standardized coefficients for interaction terms are  $\beta=0.126^{**}$  (Catalan identification) and  $\beta=-0.005$  n.s. (Spanish identification).

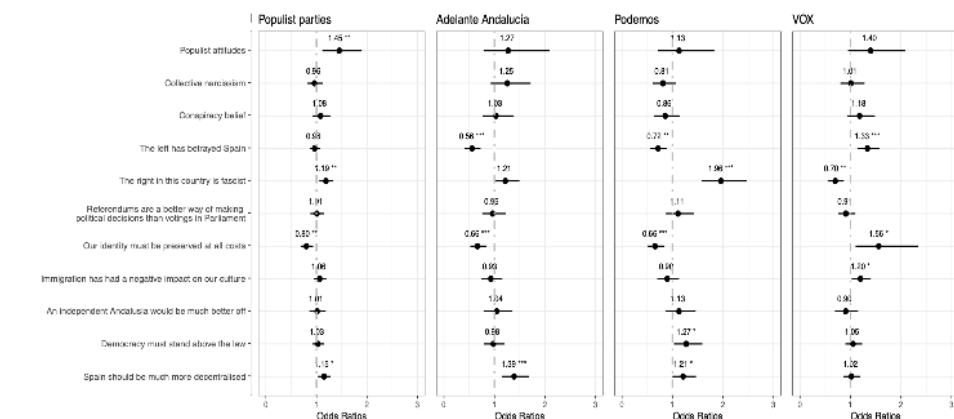
**Table 5**  
*Determining factors for voting for populist parties in Catalonia*



Note: Result of logistic regression. Model controlled by socio-demographic variables. \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$ .

In the case of Andalusia, populist attitudes are positively related with voting for a populist party, but do not predict support for any party in particular. The consideration that immigration is negative for the culture is the only factor clearly associated with voting for Vox, while the belief that “democracy has to be above the law” and demonising the right wing (“the right wing in this country is fascist”) are clearly positively correlated with voting for Unidas Podemos. The desire to further decentralise Spain also serves to predict the vote for populist left-wing parties, Adelante Andalucía and Unidas Podemos; furthermore, those who vote for these two parties score significantly lower in the need to preserve identity at all costs.

**Table 6**  
*Determining factors for voting for populist parties in Andalusia*



Note: Result of logistic regression. Model controlled by socio-demographic variables. \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$ .

## 4. Conclusions

This exploratory work serves to illustrate that the relationship between collective narcissism, populism and identity is complex. There are notable differences between the two self-governing regions of Spain in many of the factors analysed, as well as in the variables that would explain the vote for populist parties in each of the regions. Contextual factors appear to have an impact on the levels of collective narcissism and support for populist parties. This is particularly evident in the case of Catalonia, where the secessionist conflict seems to have created new internal borders and exacerbated the polarisation. In the case of Andalusia, despite the mean score for collective narcissism being higher, it does not appear to have either political roots or consequences in the region's partisan dynamics. It appears to be mostly of social and cultural nature. In Catalonia, this narcissism is very unevenly distributed, with the population that identifies exclusively with the Catalan language scoring considerably higher. Although further research would be required to confirm our exploratory findings, it appears that collective narcissism in Catalonia is a constitutive element of a process of otherness and the creation of a distinctive political identity that is based not only on social and cultural aspects, but also on an ethno-linguistic interpretation of the people and a very negative perception of the Spanish transition and democratic institutions. The data suggests two more general considerations. One is that the unique Catalan context hampers the identification of populist attitudes as a predictor for voting for populist parties, as linguistic identification and the support for independence are more important. The other is that our analysis confirms that the scale developed by Akkerman et al. (2014) has limitations when predicting left-wing populist votes in these regions. It would therefore be advisable to review and build on this instrument for measuring populism, considering the need to include questions adapted to the specific context of each case that is to be studied.

## 5. Notes

1 This article has been published as part of the project "Democracy and Populist Attitudes in Andalusia: A Multidisciplinary Comparative Analysis" [Democracia y actitudes populistas en Andalucía: un análisis comparado multidisciplinar] (PRY025/19), funded by the Andalusian Studies Centre. It has also had the support of the project "Populism in Spain: Theoretical Foundations and Dominant Narratives" [Populismo en España: fundamentos teóricos y relatos dominantes] (2018-T1/SOC-10152), funded by the Community of Madrid.

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**REVIEWS/**  

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**RESEÑAS**  

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RESEÑAS/REVIEWS

## Juan Carlos de Pablos Ramírez. *Un mapa de la realidad social. Categorías centrales de la teoría sociológica*. Sevilla: Fundación Centro de Estudios Andaluces, 2022

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El libro *Un mapa de la realidad social. Categorías centrales de la teoría sociológica*, de Juan Carlos de Pablos Ramírez, con la cuidada edición del profesor Alejandro Romero Reche, inaugura una serie de títulos de la Biblioteca de Investigación Centra en el ámbito de las Ciencias Sociales. Nos encontramos con un texto póstumo del profesor de la Facultad de Ciencias Políticas y Sociología de la Universidad de Granada, al cual debo agradecer haber disfrutado de su docencia en aquellos años que finalizaban el siglo XX. Con su obra, De Pablos Ramírez parece atraernos hacia las reminiscencias de uno de los más citados libros del granadino Miguel Beltrán, puesto que incluye en su título al clásico *Realidad social* de 1991. Empero, De Pablos incorpora las categorías para poder interpretar esa inconmensurable realidad de apellido sociológico aduciendo al mapa de la misma. Como buen amante del senderismo que fue, ofrece al lector los principales elementos categóricos para que pueda interpretarse el mapa. Estos se traducen en los 9 capítulos que se integran en el manuscrito. A través de ellos, y con la ayuda de los autores de referencia en cada uno de ellos, esboza su principal finalidad, es decir, elaborar un mapa de ayuda para facilitar el entendimiento de los que se acercan a una disciplina tan hermética como la teoría sociológica.

Considero reseñable la estrategia empleada por De Pablos a la hora de estructurar un texto como el que tenemos ante nosotros, pues en vez de hacer como en los manuales convencionales, es decir, contemplar las distintas escuelas de pensamiento en la teoría sociológica y con posterioridad incorporar los aportes de los principales autores, el autor de *Un mapa de la realidad social* construye su manuscrito en torno a conceptos sociológicos (relaciones sociales, acción social, posiciones sociales, factores estructurales, procesos sociales y lógicas de lo social) para, a renglón seguido, enmarcar en ellos a autores pertenecientes a diversas tradiciones de pensamiento sociológico.

El propio autor, cuya procedencia académica no es propiamente sociológica —como la de otros muchos clásicos a nivel nacional, *verbi gratia*, Manuel García Ferrando, Manuel Pérez Yruela, Jesús Ibáñez o el propio Juan Maestre—, confecciona una herramienta heurística que posibilite la comprensión weberiana de una temática de tal complejidad. *Un mapa de la realidad social* se constituye como una obra con un marcado carácter paradójico —figura literaria que tanto apasionaba a su autor y a su admirado Chesterton—, pues camina en la senda de la teoría sociológica al más puro estilo clásico, pero que se abandona en ocasiones hacia la sociología de la ciencia y las variadas explicaciones epistemológicas sobre el objeto de la sociología. A este último quehacer se dedican numerosos pasajes de la obra que, aun pareciendo espureos —en un primer momento—, una vez que se concluye la lectura son los que con más intensidad se graban como recuerdos de lo leído. Coincidiendo con el editor, la obra denota que se establece como un hito de doble vertiente, de tal manera que enseña las principales categorías sociológicas para interpretar la realidad social, al tiempo que Juan Carlos de Pablos aprende por medio de sus propios escritos.

Es necesario destacar que el autor granadino fue un enamorado de las nuevas tendencias virtuales que empezaban a gestarse por aquellos años, y que hoy ya pueden considerarse cristalizadas. Las tendencias globalizadoras, los procesos de virtualización de la realidad social, la ambivalencia de los fenómenos sociales, la sociedad del riesgo, fueron elementos que se trabajaban en las clases del profesor De Pablos, y que pese a no estar explícitamente recogidos en esta obra —es una evidencia que eran tendencias emergentes cuando fue escrito el libro— ya empezaban a tener resonancia en la concepción de la sociología de su autor. *De facto*, la primera vez que el que escribe escuchó el concepto glocalización de Featherstone fue de boca del autor de este título, e inmediatamente despertó un importante proceso de curiosidad intelectual. Como muestra de esa concomitancia, se extrae este fragmento que fundamenta que «[...] las tornas han cambiado, y frente al relativismo con que se considera socialmente a la religión, democracia y economía de mercado no han cesado de expandirse [...]» (p. 157). El interés de Juan Carlos de Pablos siempre estuvo orientado a entender la sociología bajo el tamiz de la propia globalización, fundamentando que entender los fenómenos sociales estaba intrínsecamente ligado a posicionarlos en las lógicas ambivalentes de la propia globalización económico-cultural.

Volviendo estrictamente al contenido del texto, se subraya que uno de los mayores aportes del mismo estriba en la sabia complementación de las fuentes referenciales extranjeras con otras de origen nacional. De Pablos demuestra conocer las últimas aportaciones de los teóricos españoles, pero sin abandonar los escritos de procedencia internacional. Es más, se adelanta en el año de su escritura a la aparición del segundo volumen de la clásica trilogía de Ritzer dedicada a la teoría sociológica, que se constituye como el mayor referente a nivel mundial sobre esta temática. Como en el caso del norteamericano, el autor de este libro dedica las primeras páginas del mismo a desentrañar uno de los principales escollos ante el que se encuentra la disciplina sociológica, es decir, tratar de delimitar, conceptualizar y hacer visible epistemológicamente el objeto de la misma. ¿La sociología es la ciencia que trata de comprender la acción social (como aducía Weber), es la ciencia que interpreta los efectos no queridos de la acción (como sugirió Merton), establece teóricamente el acto-unidad

(como trabajó Parsons), objetiva los procesos sociales (como evidenció Durkheim), o tal vez otra u otras finalidades (como sostiene la sociología posmoderna)? De Pablos se detiene ante estas interrogantes y trata de ofrecer los puntos cardinales del mapa con los que el senderista, transformado en intrépido sociólogo, ha de enfrentarse cuando está sobre el terreno. Pues, una cosa es lo que se escribe/transcribe de la realidad social y otra bien distinta es la propia realidad social en la que se encuentra inserto el *homo sociologicus*, que construye en su visión Ralf Dahrendorf.

No se ha de dejar pasar la ocasión para destacar la relevancia de los aportes de Simmel que De Pablos va desgranando a lo largo y ancho de su escrito, pues señala un hecho que aunque resulte palmario es lícito resaltar, y es que el alemán es el precursor de lo que con posterioridad vendría a denominarse sociología formal y que ha propiciado numerosos planteamientos en la teoría sociológica contemporánea. Además, hace visible y da difusión al poco conocido concepto simmeliano de *sociación*, cuyo significado transcribe como «[...] referencia directa al hecho del vínculo social que existe entre los seres humanos, a la relación social» (p. 34). Este concepto ha pasado casi desapercibido, ya que ha estado siempre subsumido en otro de mayor alcance, como es socialización, y que ha sido estudiado con mayor profundidad. Sin embargo, el valor inherente de la sociación es que refleja la propia materia de la que están formadas las relaciones humanas y posibilita la configuración de formas claras y diáfanas de interacción social en distintos contextos, lo cual hace muy interesante su empleo. Quizá aquí se encuentre el núcleo central de la sociología formal como variante de pensamiento en la propia teoría sociológica y que con las teorías reticulares y el interaccionismo simbólico (que trabajó Blumer) han tomado mayor consideración intelectual.

Desembocando en sendos capítulos que ponen el epílogo al mapa de la realidad social dibujado por De Pablos, y que tienen un marcado carácter sintético y recapitulador, se presenta el titulado «En búsqueda de una síntesis integradora: la sociedad civil». En dicha sección del libro, el autor se muestra seducido en algunas ocasiones, encandilado en otras y fascinado en la mayoría de los pasajes por la tesis del último hombre y el fin de la historia de Francis Fukuyama, un conocido exégeta de Hegel y miembro del Departamento de Estado del gobierno federal de los Estados Unidos. En su teoría se retrata un futuro prometedor auspiciado por la reciente caída del Muro de Berlín (1989) y las bondades y éxitos cosechados por el binomio capitalismo/democracia. Al mismo tiempo, y rememorando los logros de la transición política hacia la democracia en nuestro país, se hace eco de la obra de Víctor Pérez Díaz, en la que se ofrece un panegírico sobre el concepto de sociedad civil y las potencialidades que brinda en una sociedad democrática como la española. Empero, la correosa realidad social y su dinamismo intrínseco hace que los intentos de recrear un mapa estático sean objetivos vanos. Al mismo tiempo, De Pablos siempre fue partidario de lo interactivo, de ahí que el mapa que imaginó no puede desplegar otros atributos que interactivo y virtual, como los que utilizamos actualmente y que están siempre en constante mutación.

Ya en el último capítulo, que lleva por título «Reflexiones sobre el objeto formal de la sociología», el sociólogo granadino trae a colación muy acertadamente una variable transversal en el propio quehacer sociológico y que logra permear numero-

sas subdisciplinas de la misma. Se refiere a la desigualdad social, a la cual presenta aprovechando los indicios mostrados por Dahrendorf del siguiente modo: «[...] el *homo sociologicus* ha sido desvestido de toda referencia individual, la sociología está en condiciones de entender la desigualdad como ninguna otra ciencia, para la que las posiciones sociales no son objeto de estudio, sino indirectamente». El sociologismo como argumento intelectual y el deseo ávido por lograr el entendimiento del fenómeno de la desigualdad confluyen en la utilización de una suerte de apología sociológica relativa. De tal modo que se muestra como el lugar en el que el mapa ya ha sido utilizado, pues se ha llegado al destino, y ese (destino, haciendo las veces de realidad social) sigue siendo todavía un misterio por desentrañar. Aunque nunca se ha de olvidar que De Pablos creía en los trascendentales apriorísticos y por eso su destino ya estaba escrito, de hecho fue desarrollar la tarea de despertar la curiosidad intelectual, académica e investigadora de todos aquellos que leyesen sus libros o que pasasen por su docencia.

Para finalizar, explicitar que es un texto de ávida lectura, que acerca con claridad los complejos conceptos de la teoría sociológica y los debates epistemológicos sobre la naturaleza del objeto de la sociología y con un marcado carácter pedagógico, como el que imprimía Juan Carlos de Pablos a las dinámicas docentes. Todo ello hace que sea un libro de amena lectura y que resulta un producto intelectual de valía pese a su carácter extemporáneo. En último lugar, es de agradecer el magno trabajo de refinado, revisión, pulido y demás quehaceres que ha desplegado el profesor Romero Reche en su labor de editor y que ha permitido que hoy esté a nuestro alcance la obra póstuma del autor, que hoy de nuevo cobra vida mediante este texto.



**RESEÑAS**/REVIEWS

**Francine M. Deutsch y Ruth A. Gaunt (Eds.).**  
*Creating equality at home. How 25 couples*  
*around the world share housework and childcare.*  
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020

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Los cambios que están surgiendo en cuanto al género, están haciendo converger a hombres y mujeres en la misma dirección. A estos cambios contribuyen la mejora de los derechos legales de las mujeres desde mediados del siglo XX, favorecidos por CEDAW (*Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*). Estos derechos deben ir encaminados hacia la igualdad política y social entre hombres y mujeres. Fruto de estas transformaciones surge este libro y su interés para profundizar en la investigación sobre la igualdad de género. Así, si bien se está produciendo una convergencia de género en la esfera pública, las investigaciones apuntan a que siguen persistiendo ciertas divergencias.

Esta investigación recoge la idea de que las desigualdades de género no solo se deben al contexto más amplio en el que se encuentran, sino que el camino hacia la igualdad se logra a partir de la relación en la propia pareja. Para demostrar esta hipótesis se ha entrevistado a 25 parejas cohabitantes o casadas de 22 países diferentes en los cinco continentes. Las parejas elegidas se consideran igualitarias, ya que reparten equitativamente las tareas, aunque esto les pueda suponer ciertos costes. El libro se desarrolla dedicando un capítulo a cada país en el que se detalla información acerca de la vida diaria de la pareja o las parejas, la forma en la que han conseguido la igualdad, las maneras de conciliar la vida laboral y familiar, y un análisis de los factores que influyen sobre los esfuerzos que realiza la pareja para lograr la igualdad.

El marco teórico se encuadra respecto a diversas hipótesis que presuponen los factores que hay que considerar en esta investigación: los recursos relativos, la disponibilidad horaria, la ideología de género, el contexto nacional, la construcción y disolución del género en el hogar. Los recursos relativos explican que es el miembro con unos ingresos menores el que tiene que ser el principal encargado del hogar. Sin

embargo, la hipótesis de la disponibilidad horaria no se centra en los ingresos, sino que atribuye dicha responsabilidad al miembro que dedica menos horas al mercado remunerado (aunque ambas hipótesis pueden estar relacionadas, porque el miembro que dedica más horas probablemente tenga unos ingresos superiores). Según esta conjetura, solo se conseguirá la igualdad si ambos miembros de la pareja dedican el mismo tiempo al mercado laboral y al hogar. Asimismo, la ideología de género que tienen los miembros de la pareja también va a determinar la forma que se tiene de gestionar el hogar, por lo que aquellas relaciones con valores más tradicionales van a ser menos igualitarias en cuanto al reparto de las tareas domésticas.

Para el trabajo de campo se localizaron investigadores de psicología social, sociología y antropología de los 22 países analizados, teniendo en cuenta que hubieran tratado temas relacionados con las tareas domésticas, el género y el cuidado de los hijos. Ellos debían ser los encargados de localizar las parejas, que debían cumplir ciertos requisitos: estar casados o ser cohabitantes, con al menos un hijo de como máximo 10 años y que ambos estuviesen empleados (sin que ninguno de los dos fuese profesor de universidad o académico). Una vez se conseguía acordar la entrevista, esta se solía hacer a cada miembro de la pareja por separado, de forma normalmente telefónica. Durante las entrevistas se preguntaba sobre la distribución de distintas tareas del hogar, pudiendo contestar del 1 al 5, donde 1 era «la mayoría de las veces lo hace mi pareja» y 5 «la mayoría de las veces lo hago yo», siendo 3 la máxima igualdad. Entre las tareas analizadas se encuentran algunas rutinas del hogar, como la colada, cocinar y limpiar, y otras de las tareas relativas al cuidado de los hijos, como jugar o leer, acostarles y darles de comer.

En el análisis de los casos, en los que se tomaban las entrevistas previamente codificadas, se tenía que llegar entre todos los investigadores a las conclusiones de lo que hay detrás de la igualdad en la pareja. El método de estudio de casos hay que tomarlo con cautela, puesto que para hacer generalizaciones sobre los resultados que se dan en un grupo concreto son necesarios unos requisitos probabilísticos previos. Para facilitar el análisis cualitativo se usó el programa Nvivo. Algunas variables cuantitativas de las entrevistas, como el miembro del hogar con más ingresos, fueron codificadas cuantitativamente y trasladadas a SPSS.

Las parejas analizadas se agrupaban en función de algunas características clave que les encaminaban a lograr un hogar igualitario. De esta forma, los investigadores encontraron los siguientes factores: algunas parejas crean conscientemente la igualdad, otras parecen violar las normas sociales del país en el que viven, otras priorizan el tiempo familiar, también algunas tienen cierta influencia por las familias de origen y, por último, algunas parejas se benefician de las facilidades que les proporcionan en el país en que residen. Todas estas características se detallarán a continuación, además de explicarse cómo influye cada una en el logro de un hogar igualitario.

En cuanto al apartado de las parejas que crean conscientemente la igualdad, todas llevan a cabo ciertas acciones con este fin. La pareja de Israel no tenía como prioridad ganar mucho dinero, sino que más bien prefería tener comodidades para pasar tiempo junto a sus hijos y repartir equitativamente las tareas. No obstante, hay que tener en cuenta que ambos tenían facilidades horarias en el trabajo, pero esto era así por-

que sus prioridades no eran ganar mucho dinero, sino tener comodidad para poder estar juntos con sus hijos. La pareja suiza tenía una disponibilidad horaria similar, porque ambos trabajan a jornada parcial y esto les permite llevar a cabo un reparto igualitario.

La pareja hondureña tenía una división del trabajo igualitaria, a pesar de vivir en un país muy pobre y con valores de género arraigados a su cultura. En el hogar cada uno hacía la tarea que más le gustaba, aunque no consideraban que a cada género se le dé bien ciertas tareas, sino que ambos eran capaces de hacer cualquier cosa. Para ellos era clave la comunicación, para entender y trabajar en las diferencias. Para la pareja de Montenegro el modelo igualitario se debía a que la mujer rechazaba totalmente los valores de género igualitario, mientras que él no se posiciona en ningún tipo de creencia, pero aceptaba los valores de ella. En la pareja de Suecia ella también tenía unos valores feministas, era la principal sustentadora y se centraba en su desarrollo profesional, mientras que para él era importante la parentalidad, encargándose principalmente del hogar.

Otro grupo de parejas son los que consideraron los autores que violaban las normas sociales de los países en los que residían. Entre estas se encuentra la pareja de Indonesia, que le daba especial valor a estar juntos. En concreto, lo importante para ellos era realizar las tareas domésticas juntos, porque así sentían el apoyo el uno del otro y no daba lugar a ningún tipo de conflicto. A la pareja de Bután lo que les unía es la paternidad. Se repartían las tareas domésticas, pero en sus discursos se comprobó que el género tenía influencia en el tipo de tareas (femeninas y masculinas) que realizaban cada uno.

Otra pareja para la que era importante la comunicación es la croata, además de clave en el reparto igualitario de tareas. Ambos miembros se responsabilizaban del hogar de forma separada, pero se paraban a negociar lo que debían hacer en cada momento. En el caso de la pareja de California, no es que tuvieran valores de género igualitarios (o al menos así lo expresan en sus discursos), sino que consideraban que tenían que ayudarse el uno al otro, lo que les llevaba a compartir de manera igualitaria las tareas del hogar. Para la pareja de Hungría también era muy importante compartir las tareas, sobre todo porque para ella era crucial su trabajo y tenía menos flexibilidad que él en este aspecto.

La siguiente agrupación pertenece a aquellas uniones que priorizan la familia. Las dos parejas de Nueva Inglaterra eran similares en el sentido de que ambos miembros de cada relación tenían salarios similares, fomentando un reparto igualitario. Además, todos priorizaban la familia y los cuidados familiares, coincidiendo también en que todos habían crecido en hogares de doble ingreso. La pareja de Brasil asociaba la igualdad de las tareas domésticas a su alto nivel educativo, lo que hacía que ambos priorizaran el respeto y justicia en su relación, y lo vinculaban al reparto igualitario. El caso de la pareja australiana es similar al anterior, puesto que también daban importancia a este aspecto, señalando que la ausencia de conflicto en su relación era debida a la forma que tenían de repartir el dinero. En esta pareja eran importante también las horas que cada uno dedicaba al mercado laboral (30/30) para no sentir demasiada carga, dando de esta forma mayor prioridad a la familia. La pareja de Sin-

gapur hacía todo de manera conjunta, pero no tenían reglas fijadas acerca del reparto de las labores del hogar. Además daban importancia a estar en familia, no estando dispuestos a trabajar más prescindiendo del tiempo familiar.

Los autores identificaron también algunas parejas que aprovechaban las lecciones de las familias de origen. Los orígenes de la pareja austriaca eran similares porque ambos procedían de familias de doble ingreso, aunque seguían los roles de género tradicionales por parte de los hombres, pero no de las mujeres. Sin embargo, ellos deshicieron estos roles, priorizando la carrera profesional de la mujer y el cuidado de los hijos por parte del padre. La pareja de Turquía tampoco abogaba por los roles de género tradicionales, sino que practicaba totalmente lo contrario. Así, ella era la sustentadora principal mientras que él hacía más tareas en el hogar. Y, además, en el cuidado de los hijos jugaban un papel importante los abuelos.

Para las parejas de República Checa también tenía importancia en la ideología de género las familias de origen porque, sobre todo en las de los hombres, les habían enseñado que se tienen que implicar en las labores del hogar. En la pareja china, la mujer tenía unos padres que siempre habían compartido las tareas domésticas, mientras que en la familia del hombre esto no fue así. Pero precisamente esta situación le había hecho concienciarse a él de la carga que sufría su madre. Estos dos hechos hacían que siguieran un reparto igualitario. La pareja de Eslovenia provenía de familias con roles de género muy marcados, excepto porque ambas madres trabajaban a tiempo completo. Sin embargo, la pareja no quería reproducir ese escenario en su hogar, por lo que decidieron seguir un reparto más igualitario.

Algunas parejas usan las políticas del gobierno para lograr esa igualdad en el hogar. En Islandia existen diversas políticas familiares para facilitar la conciliación, de las que se beneficiaba la pareja islandesa entrevistada. Pese a que hayan pasado por conflictos para organizar el tiempo y las obligaciones familiares, gracias a las ayudas proporcionadas por el gobierno consiguieron lograr la equidad. La pareja alemana también repartía las tareas y cuidados de forma igualitaria, ya que ambos se beneficiaban de largos permisos de paternidad. Consideraban que lo mejor para los hijos es que fueran los propios padres los que los cuiden y críen. Esto fue posible gracias a que en sus respectivos trabajos les habían proporcionado permisos y reducción de jornada.

Para la pareja de Reino Unido también era crucial para lograr un reparto igualitario las ayudas que se les proporciona en el trabajo, como la flexibilidad horaria para cuidar a sus hijos. Lo mismo sucedía con la pareja de Portugal, pues el país proporciona facilidades para lograr la igualdad de género. A esto también contribuía la buena posición en la que se encontraba la mujer en el mercado laboral y la voluntad del hombre para limitar su inversión profesional y dedicarse en mayor medida al hogar.

Para concluir, en el libro se explica que la cultura y los valores de un país pueden influir sobre la reproducción del asimétrico papel del género en las familias. De esta manera es bastante común que se priorice el trabajo remunerado para el hombre y el cuidado para las mujeres. Sin embargo, las parejas de este estudio deshicieron el género principalmente a causa de los siguientes puntos clave: el hombre asume re-

laciones con el trabajo remunerado poco convencionales y el aspecto materno de la paternidad; la mujer rechaza ser la posición principal en esta cuestión y ambos le dan importancia a la igualdad en sus carreras; y las parejas comparten las tareas domésticas.

Este trabajo muestra que la clave de lograr deshacer el tradicional papel asignado al género y lograr la igualdad en la pareja consiste en no conformarse con las normas de género que tratan como normal o correcto el reparto asimétrico en el hogar. Todas las parejas entrevistadas pensaban que el trabajo hay que dividirlo de manera igualitaria. Además, hay que tener en cuenta que una parte de la muestra pertenece a países donde no es común un reparto igualitario de las tareas domésticas. Por tanto, aunque el contexto nacional sea importante porque es clave en los valores que conforman una sociedad, no es lo único que influye sobre los valores de género, sino que es esencial la predisposición de la pareja, sin miedo a ser juzgados por el círculo social (familia, amigos y compañeros de trabajo) en el que viven.

En línea con los valores que se dan en la pareja, se percibe que los autores concluyen que es fundamental que al menos la mujer adopte valores feministas para lograr la igualdad en el hogar. Pero este factor no es extrapolable a toda la sociedad, ya que existen otros aspectos importantes para que se den estos valores más allá de las dinámicas concretas de estos casos de estudio. Así, a partir de los años sesenta la institución de la familia comienza a experimentar distintos cambios que van a afectar a la organización de la pareja dentro y fuera del hogar. Entre estos se puede destacar un cambio de valores de la sociedad en general que afectará al mercado doméstico. Algunas investigaciones asocian esta tendencia hacia valores igualitarios con un cambio social hacia valores posmodernos, por lo que no es una cuestión meramente de valores asociados al sexo. Por otro lado, los agentes socializadores como la escuela, y la propia familia, también transmiten estos valores de igualdad tanto a los hombres como a las mujeres. En definitiva, no es solo la mujer la que empuja al hombre hacia la igualdad, sino que ellos también poseen estos valores.

Adicionalmente la familia solía ser el núcleo central en las parejas analizadas, por lo que preferían invertir tiempo en la misma en lugar de dedicar más tiempo al trabajo remunerado para ganar una mayor cantidad de dinero. En suma, durante el recorrido de este análisis de caso se han observado múltiples factores que influyen en un hogar igualitario, incluso algunos de ellos se superponen. Pero existe algo común en todas las historias: la voluntad de adaptarse a las nuevas formas de trabajo y de los roles domésticos.



**RESEÑAS/REVIEWS**

## Luis Enrique Alonso (Ed.). *Siempre nos quedará Bourdieu*. Madrid: Círculo de Bellas Artes, 2021

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A finales de 2021 se publicó, en la colección de ciencias sociales del Círculo de Bellas Artes de Madrid, un libro singular: *Siempre nos quedará Bourdieu*. El título del volumen, con esa preciosa referencia a la película *Casablanca*, evoca lo que ha significado Bourdieu y su extraordinaria obra para generaciones de sociólogos: títulos como *La distinción*, *Homo academicus* o *Las reglas del arte* son parte fundamental del canon sociológico contemporáneo, y su perspectiva teórica ha influido de forma manifiesta no solamente en el trabajo de muchos investigadores y académicos, sino en la emergencia de ciertos debates y problematizaciones en el campo de la sociología. Y no podía ser sino Luis Enrique Alonso, uno de los grandes especialistas en lengua castellana en la obra y sociología de Bourdieu, el responsable de esta compilación de textos, que tratan de festejar y reivindicar el legado del gran autor francés a las dos décadas de su fallecimiento. El origen del proyecto de este libro, editado en un formato estéticamente muy vistoso (con un tamaño de cubierta inferior al habitual, y un sobrio diseño), se remonta a una serie de conferencias que se celebraron en el Círculo de Bellas Artes de Madrid en el año 2012, entonces décimo aniversario de la muerte del gigante francés de la sociología, con el título «El oficio de sociólogo. El legado de Pierre Bourdieu», y la exposición «Imágenes de Argelia», organizada en el mismo lugar. El libro editado por Alonso recopilará dichas conferencias y añadirá algunos materiales adicionales, escritos ya expresamente para este volumen, constando, finalmente, de ocho contribuciones a las que se ha añadido un prefacio del editor.

En dicho prefacio, solvente introducción al volumen, Luis Enrique Alonso hace referencia a que, dos décadas después del fallecimiento de Bourdieu, el legado del autor francés está realmente vivo, una vez que se ha convertido en una de las referencias fundamentales de la sociología contemporánea, captando el interés de generaciones de académicos en el terreno de las ciencias sociales. Una prueba de ello es la continua reedición de sus clásicos, siempre presentes en los catálogos editoriales, así como la recuperación de ediciones críticas de textos inéditos como los de sus cursos (publicados recientemente por la editorial Siglo XXI), que muestran un inusitado interés

por la obra de Bourdieu, hasta el punto de que, como señala acertadamente Alonso, se podría decir que, en la sociología actual, una de las tomas de posición fundamentales es la de estar con o contra Bourdieu. A partir de ahí, el editor del volumen procede a realizar una presentación de las distintas contribuciones, para concluir su primer texto con una referencia al añorado Jesús Ibáñez, que solía afirmar que Bourdieu era uno de los pocos sociólogos de la segunda mitad del siglo XX que había sido capaz de construir una gran teoría a la altura de los proyectos de clásicos como Marx o Durkheim, algo con lo que el autor de esta reseña no podría estar más de acuerdo.

Tras este interesante prefacio, el primer capítulo, firmado por el profesor Lahouari Addi, se va a centrar en destacar la importancia de la experiencia en Argelia de Bourdieu en su formación como sociólogo, centrándose en dos cuestiones centrales: la primera, la crítica, central en la obra de Bourdieu, que se plantea a la opresión del hombre dominado y objeto de violencia simbólica, resultado de un conflicto permanente en la sociedad consecuencia de la competición en los distintos campos que generan posiciones sociales diferenciadas entre agentes dominadores y dominados. Esta mirada, marcada por un profundo pesimismo antropológico, situaría a la modernidad como un destino trágico para la humanidad, que sería incapaz de romper con las lógicas de dominación, ni por la vía reformista ni revolucionaria: nunca seremos libres. La Cabília aparecería así, en la obra de Bourdieu, como ese contraste a la modernidad donde el hombre no tiene, sino es, lo que le sirve como referencia para construir su teoría social, tan crítica con las desigualdades y al mismo tiempo ajena a cualquier clase de populismo. Addi señala además dos grandes aportaciones de Bourdieu: la primera es que, en su obra, jamás juzga moralmente a los agentes ni los idealiza como víctimas, sino que se centra en denunciar los sistemas de reproducción social; la segunda es que Bourdieu fue un sociólogo apegado al terreno, desarrollando una sociología de las prácticas capaz de superar la dicotomía establecida entre objetivismo y subjetivismo. Tras esta interesantísima contribución, Luis Enrique Alonso será el autor del siguiente capítulo, «Siempre nos quedará Bourdieu», título que comparte con el libro y en el que el autor, uno de los más reputados especialistas en la obra de Bourdieu, va a señalar la relevancia de la obra de Bourdieu para el proyecto de la sociología como disciplina de conocimiento: para Alonso, no solo su obra es central en los debates contemporáneos, sino que incentiva el desarrollo de una sociología diferente, crítica y multidimensional. En su contribución, Alonso, con gran erudición, glosa algunas de las principales contribuciones del autor francés, sus influencias teóricas (que tan bien conoce al haber sido él mismo responsable de las ediciones en castellano de libros como *La barrera y el nivel* de Goblot) y también repasa algunas de las principales críticas a la obra de Bourdieu. Alonso afirma que el legado de Bourdieu ha sido enorme, como responsable de una sociología conflictivista realizada con gran rigor científico y con un profundo compromiso con la idea de reforma social.

El tercer capítulo del libro está firmado por Cecilia Flachsland, que ya había publicado hace unos años un interesantísimo libro sobre Bourdieu, y que va a proponer una contribución muy original, en la que además de discutir la importancia de *La dominación masculina* como ejemplo de aplicación de la teoría bourdieusiana a la dominación de género, va a aplicar su análisis a un caso particular en la historia argentina, como es la experiencia del Partido Peronista Femenino (PPF). Flachsland considera que la aportación de Bourdieu es muy relevante como análisis del poder hipnótico de la dominación



masculina, mostrando con numerosos ejemplos cómo opera la violencia simbólica en este terreno. La autora considera meritoria su óptica pese a sus limitaciones, derivadas del escaso conocimiento de Bourdieu acerca de la teoría feminista contemporánea. El análisis de Flachsland del «ejército de Evitas», cuya función era la de consolidar el sufragio femenino y los avances en igualdad de género que habían tenido lugar en Argentina durante el peronismo, es extraordinariamente interesante y muestra la vigencia de los conceptos de Bourdieu para abordar el análisis de fenómenos vinculados a la desigualdad de género. Mientras, en el siguiente capítulo, la contribución de Aïssa Kadri se centrará, de nuevo, en el Bourdieu de la época de Argelia, abordando tanto el período en el que el sociólogo francés vivió allí (1955-1960) como su relación posterior. Kadri, en su detallado texto, señala que esta estancia en Argelia será clave en su formación intelectual, donde, formando parte del ejército francés, realiza diversos estudios que lo llevan tanto a familiarizarse con las estadísticas como con las entrevistas en profundidad, y cuyos hallazgos terminan siendo la base de sus primeros libros. Bourdieu se marcha de Argelia en 1960, aunque siguió manteniendo una relación muy cercana con el país ya independizado, regresando en varias ocasiones y colaborando en la puesta en marcha de instituciones de investigación sociológica como el CERDESS (formando a doctorandos como el propio Kadri). Su contacto con Argelia continuará hasta el final de sus días a nivel académico e incluso personal, ayudando a académicos argelinos amenazados durante la terrible guerra civil de los años noventa.

Ildefonso Marqués, uno de los sociólogos españoles que más ha trabajado a Bourdieu, es el autor del quinto capítulo del libro, en el que realiza un repaso concienzudo al concepto central de *habitus* propuesto por Bourdieu, centrándose particularmente en las definiciones propuestas en textos como el *Bosquejo para una teoría de la práctica*, pero también poniéndolo en diálogo con las teorías sobre la acción de otros autores vinculados a las ciencias sociales como Goldthorpe o Piketty. Marqués considera que el concepto sigue teniendo una gran utilidad en la explicación sociológica y supone una defensa de la racionalidad práctica frente a las idealizaciones del individualismo metodológico. Por su parte, Enrique Martín Criado, otro de los referentes fundamentales en los estudios sobre Bourdieu en España (y editor de algunos textos clave de esa época para el CIS, como *Sociología de Argelia*, además de compilador de un clásico trabajo de reivindicación del legado bourdieusiano con Luis Enrique Alonso y José Luis Moreno Pestaña como *Pierre Bourdieu: las herramientas de un sociólogo*), se centra de nuevo en el período argelino de Bourdieu, concentrándose en los tres libros del autor asociados a este período. Su capítulo proporciona una magnífica contextualización histórica para comprender la génesis de estas obras, describiendo con detalle los eventos históricos de la colonización y la guerra y, sobre todo, las experiencias de Bourdieu en ese período histórico tan convulso para el país norteafricano. Además, Martín Criado analiza de forma prolija y brillante los argumentos de Bourdieu en sus libros del período argelino, así como las influencias teóricas y la metodología presente en los mismos, enfatizando además el carácter combativo de su sociología.

El séptimo capítulo del libro lo firma otro reputado especialista en la obra de Bourdieu como es José Luis Moreno Pestaña, que se centra, en este caso, en uno de los libros clásicos y permanentemente reimpresos de Bourdieu (en coautoría con Passeron y Chamboredon): *El oficio de sociólogo*. Moreno Pestaña manifiesta que observa entusiasmos

menguantes respecto al libro en los últimos tiempos, una vez que este es percibido como un texto difícil por las nuevas generaciones de sociólogos, y procede a contextualizarlo destacando sus ejes propositivos y las polémicas que apareja. Moreno Pestaña considera que el libro representó un avance en su momento, particularmente con su concepto de ruptura epistemológica, si bien quizá en la actualidad el libro pueda verse como una herramienta que, si bien no sirve para dar pasos adelante en la sociología, sí puede contribuir a evitar retrocesos. Finalmente, el último texto de esta interesante colección lo firma Marina Requena-i-Mora, que propone, más que una discusión teórica, un ejercicio de sociología aplicada: para ello, va a partir del concepto de *habitus* de Bourdieu para investigar la conciencia medioambiental entre la ciudadanía. El objetivo de la autora va a ser el de aplicar la óptica bourdieusiana y en particular las diferencias existentes entre las formas de defender el medio ambiente de distintos grupos sociales en varias zonas de humedales en el litoral mediterráneo (espacio que había estudiado en profundidad en su tesis doctoral). El interesante análisis realizado por Requena nos muestra que, frente al medio ambiente fetichizado que forma parte de los valores posmaterialistas de las clases urbanas, existe también un ecologismo de los pobres que mantiene una conciencia medioambiental ligada a las formas de vida de la tradición rural.

No es posible obviar la sensacional herencia que, para la sociología, ha dejado la obra de Bourdieu, que ha levantado grandes pasiones y se ha convertido en una referencia central en la investigación sociológica en educación, la cultura o el consumo. Y por ello, siempre es un riesgo publicar una obra de reivindicación de un autor clásico cuando el mercado académico tiende a inundarse de estudios críticos sobre estas figuras centrales para la disciplina académica. Sin embargo, en este caso, se puede afirmar que el riesgo asumido ha merecido la pena y, sin duda, *Siempre nos quedará Bourdieu* será un texto que deje huella entre los estudiosos del sociólogo francés. La colección de textos recopilada por Alonso es muy potente y todas las contribuciones no son solamente aportaciones intelectuales de primer nivel, sino que son capaces de transmitir la importancia que el legado de Bourdieu ha tenido para el campo de la sociología. Quizá se podría apuntar que, en esta reivindicación de la obra y legado de Bourdieu, hay una mayor representación de la obra argelina de Bourdieu y posiblemente el volumen se hubiera beneficiado de contribuciones adicionales que cubriesen otros campos en los que la obra de Bourdieu fue decisiva, como son los casos de la sociología de la cultura o de la educación. En todo caso, se entiende bien esta dificultad una vez que el origen del libro estaba en unas conferencias sobre el período argelino de Bourdieu y que, además, la obra de este es tan extensa y compleja que cubrir de forma solvente la bibliografía del autor francés requeriría probablemente varios volúmenes. En todo caso, el libro es más que coherente y se agradece además un detalle adicional, y es que, como acertadamente indica el editor del volumen, este es un proyecto de *longue durée* en el mejor sentido del término, que ha tardado mucho en ver la luz, pero que, a la vez, y desde el punto de vista del que escribe estas palabras, se ha beneficiado del trabajo no apresurado y cuidadoso que requiere un libro de estas características sin perder un ápice de originalidad y actualidad. En definitiva, se trata de una excelente obra colectiva que, sin duda, contribuirá a acrecentar, sin duda alguna y todavía más, la *bourdieumanía*.

**RESEÑAS**/REVIEWS

## Mary Kaldor y Saskia Sassen. *Cities at War: Global Insecurity and Urban Resistance*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2020

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Mary Kaldor, experta en globalización y relaciones internacionales, y Saskia Sassen, socióloga con grandes aportaciones a la sociología urbana y al análisis de la globalización, editan este libro que acumula varios casos de estudio como capítulos de un libro en el contexto de un marco teórico compartido que ha sido desarrollado por las autoras. Dichos estudios se centran en la conflictividad armada en las ciudades en contraposición a lo que denominan el paradigma clásico. Además, este libro continúa con el desarrollo de los conceptos de la obra de Kaldor en torno a las nuevas guerras frente a las clásicas, concretamente de su famosa monografía *New & Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era* (2013).

El texto tiene como planteamiento analizar diversos casos de conflictividad urbana, tanto del pasado como contemporáneos, enmarcándolos en un aparentemente nuevo tipo de conflictividad a nivel general, que presentaría una serie de particularidades en su dimensión urbana que este estudio trata de mostrar.

Se contraponen al análisis enfocado en la militarización o securitización de las ciudades de Stephen Graham (*Cities Under Siege: The New Military urbanism*, 2010), centrando la atención en la ciudad como campo de estudio desde donde entender el fenómeno de la paz y la violencia contemporáneas. En otros términos, se busca estudiar los conflictos desde una perspectiva no-estatocéntrica. La idea es contextualizar por regiones a las ciudades y entender sus dinámicas internas y externas con el fin de poder analizar los conflictos del siglo XXI, como señalan las autoras, «sin las lentes de las preocupaciones geopolíticas».

En el marco teórico plantean dos modos puros de gestión del conflicto bélico o de situaciones de alta inseguridad en las ciudades. Por un lado, la paz liberal, que supone la estabilización tras un cese de la violencia, y es una oportunidad para la cooperación cívico-militar y el desarrollo de capacidades de la ciudad. Sin embargo, el modelo fa-

lla por las dificultades en controlar a los actores no estatales armados. Por otro lado, la guerra contra el terror supone el uso de la fuerza estatal contra actores no estatales (conflictos asimétricos, normalmente, como Grozni, Raqqa o Faluya). Este modelo es capaz de reducir la violencia mediante la separación física de grupos, si bien no suele conseguir por sí mismo la imposición de la ley y el orden, y suelen generar resentimiento entre los civiles, según indican ambas autoras.

Los casos analizados se engloban en tres grupos. En primer lugar, aquellos donde la guerra contra el terror coexiste con la paz liberal, como en Kabul, Bagdad o Bamako. En segundo lugar, allí donde se aplica el modelo de la guerra contra el terror, como en Karachi y Ciudad Juárez–El Paso. Y en último lugar, los casos de conflictividad donde solo se aplica el modelo de la paz liberal, como en Bogotá, Novi Pazar y Goma.

Las autoras concluyen que las ciudades, como entes objeto de estudio polemológico, son sistemas complejos pero insuficientes en la mayoría de los casos por sí mismos, si se desea poder trazar un mapa completo de las capacidades de la ciudad en sí (de sus habitantes), dado que existe una compleja relación con el entorno bélico inmediato con el que debe relacionarse.

Los habitantes de las ciudades tienen capacidades limitadas en entornos de guerra para satisfacer sus necesidades de agua, alimento, cobijo y medicamentos. Con todo, otros actores, particularmente los armados no estatales, tenderán a eliminarlas siempre que les sea posible. Esto lo entienden como base empírica, con el fin de demostrar que las capacidades de una ciudad son un factor polemológico a tener en cuenta, reforzando su marco teórico.

En definitiva, las ciudades serían actores o conjuntos de estos, o marcos de actuación, en los que ciudadanos hasta entonces desprovistos de poder pueden crear orden (a nivel, claro, inferior al de un Estado) y donde se aseguren límites, controles, distribución de servicios (especialmente transporte) y recursos. No serían meros lugares donde ocurren las batallas, en contextos bélicos más grandes, o esa dimensión sería la menos importante en las nuevas guerras. Otras funciones vitales, aparentemente demostradas en el libro, que la ciudad puede ejercer son: la resistencia a la guerra (caso de Novi Pazar, en Serbia); constituirse en el enlace de la ayuda humanitaria con los refugiados para crear intercambios de bienes indispensables (Goma, en la RDC) y reforzar la confianza entre las fuerzas de seguridad y los locales (Kabul, en Afganistán).

Este libro pretende demostrar la validez conceptual de varios términos que en algunos casos comenzó Kaldor anteriormente, y que en otros se estrenan en esta obra conjunta. En primer lugar, la noción de nuevas guerras, que son formas de conflictividad postwestfalianas (aunque no se mencione en el libro esto específicamente) en confrontación con el carácter clásico de las guerras previas. Se argumenta que durante los siglos XIX y XX, y particularmente en Europa, se ha tendido a evitar la lucha urbana por motivos tácticos, incluso en el caso de grupos insurgentes, asentados sobre todo en montañas y desiertos. Aunque hubo conflictividad urbana anteriormente, las ciudades tenían un rol pasivo como simple localización.

De esta manera, las características fundamentales de las nuevas guerras serían la lucha asimétrica entre las redes de actores no estatales y el Estado. Por ejemplo, en Siria, pobres de origen rural y desempleados movilizados por la oposición, y con dinero de las monarquías del Golfo, contra el ejército de Bashar al-Ásad; en segundo lugar, un nuevo tipo de segregación identitaria. De esta manera, los hombres jóvenes, desempleados, a veces migrantes, y con posibilidades de reunirse en las mismas áreas en torno a factores como la cultura o la etnicidad, generalmente debido a condiciones de pobreza e inadaptación, son un grupo cuasi universal en la conflictividad urbana contemporánea; como tercer rasgo, se evitan las batallas clásicas. Por el contrario, la violencia es ejercida contra los civiles mayormente, ya que se busca el control político del territorio mediante la expulsión o aterrorizar a quienes pudieran desafiar el poder de los pequeños feudos. Las nuevas montañas y bosques son las zonas de chabolas; en cuarto lugar, las muertes son menores que en las guerras convencionales, no así en el número de desplazados; finalmente, el factor económico es especialmente relevante y con mayor énfasis en el tercer mundo. El crecimiento de la ciudad no ha ido siempre acompañado de más riqueza productiva. Así, bajos impuestos, alto paro y poca inversión pública llevan a poca o ninguna infraestructura, dependencia del exterior por ayuda humanitaria y por recursos naturales, economía ilegal y redes mafiosas previas al conflicto.

El segundo término, o idea importante del libro, es el de las capacidades de la ciudad. En contraposición a las clásicas capacidades estratégicas militares de los Estados (tradicionalmente, en estudios estratégicos, las *capabilities*), se propone que las ciudades tienen ciertas capacidades en ámbitos como la cooperación de los grupos internos, e incluso de la ciudad como unidad con respecto a grupos foráneos, con el fin de restaurar el orden y poder proveer servicios básicos a la comunidad que forma parte de dicho orden. Su fundamentación, insisten las autoras, son las nuevas subjetividades e identidades, o bien la gestión de las existentes y de los espacios comunes.

La tercera idea es el *Yogurt-Run*. Se trata de una metáfora surgida del caso del barrio de Ghouta, en Damasco oriental, donde existe una fábrica de productos lácteos. Mientras los rebeldes y el régimen controlaban partes de la ciudad y mantenían altos precios para los alimentos, los granjeros negociaron con el régimen para crear una zona segura en Ghouta y poder abastecer de yogurt al resto de Damasco. Las autoras lo exponen como un buen ejemplo de la capacidad de la ciudad en un entorno bélico o de alta inseguridad, y, por tanto, como la principal vía para construir o reconstruir la seguridad en la misma. La cuarta idea es el urbanismo táctico, entendido como recuperación de la vida diaria de quienes viven en una situación de guerra. Lo denominan táctico porque debe ajustarse a condiciones que varían diariamente o, incluso, según las horas.

La quinta gran idea que explora el libro es considerar los distintos procesos que se dan en las ciudades enmarcadas en conflictos bélicos bajo tres rasgos principales: la enclavización, que sería el proceso de reterritorialización, es decir, de división de una unidad en varios sectores con base en las relaciones de confianza o desconfianza, y su relación, a su vez, con la inseguridad que ha producido dichas divisiones. Es el proceso de construir enclaves; la privatización referida al proceso de traslado de los

servicios de seguridad y control de fronteras (*checkpoints*, vallas) de fuerzas estatales a fuerzas privadas, relacionado con lo que las autoras etiquetan como la cultura neoliberal de la seguridad, y, por último, la guetificación o tendencia a dividir la ciudad en guetos (se sobreentiende que sobre bases identitarias).

La sexta propuesta es la retroalimentación de los servicios de seguridad, que es una idea que está en el libro, aunque no se concreta explícitamente. Los conflictos en las ciudades, como las guerras de los antiguos imperios, generan una industria de servicios de seguridad que se refuerza a sí misma y que puede acabar alimentando más conflictos e inseguridades. Es decir, pueden generar carreras armamentísticas en entornos relativamente pequeños.

Y, como séptima y última noción, la idea del nuevo urbanismo militar, que indica la situación por la que las ciudades que no se encuentran formalmente en situación de guerra son arrastradas a la lógica de la securitización, bajo la logística militar del Estado.

En definitiva, y como valoración crítica de las ideas principales de la obra reseñada, el libro de Kaldor y Sassen presenta varios conceptos interesantes para el análisis de la conflictividad urbana contemporánea y para la sociología de la guerra. Si bien carece de una mayor exposición de su teoría, que es en el fondo la intención de la obra, en contraposición con lo que consideran la teoría «clásica», y optan por relacionar sus ideas con la evidencia empírica que se ha presentado durante la obra.

También resulta evidente el impacto de la cosmovisión posmoderna (por mucho que esto pueda parecer un oxímoron) en el enfoque de las autoras. De alguna manera, se pretende crear un marco de análisis polemológico *bottom-up*, lo contrario a un análisis geopolítico. Pero existen varios problemas en dicho enfoque.

En primer lugar, no se termina de explicar por qué las nuevas guerras son distintas de los conflictos asimétricos, si bien la conflictividad contemporánea, en general, presenta las características citadas anteriormente, tanto en ciudades como en guerras como la de Siria o Malí.

Los conceptos de guetificación y enclavización parecen un tanto ideales y reiterativos: la enclavización implica guetos. Parecerían más bien estadios sucesivos de un proceso, que es el de la privatización, no solo del uso de la fuerza, sino también del territorio político de la ciudad.

Si el modelo de la guerra contra el terror falla, ¿por qué Grozny se ha recuperado? Podría pensarse que por los factores internos de Chechenia (Kadyrov), pero eso es algo estatal, no relativo a la ciudad de Grozny. Por otro lado, dejar a las ciudades actuar «por sí mismas» (si se acepta esta idea) puede fácilmente generar Estados fallidos, separatismos, o genocidios (Chechenia, Somalilandia). Las autoras muestran demasiada confianza en la buena fe de los individuos. Y si la securitización es neoliberal, esta visión es igualmente individualista. Reiteramos que esto deviene de su impronta posmoderna.

En cuanto a la idea base de que no hubo conflictividad urbana en el siglo XX ni el XIX cabe señalar que se ignora, y esta ignorancia a propósito de la historia es un fundamento del pensamiento posestructuralista, la Comuna de París, el periodo interrevo-

lucionario de la Revolución rusa, e importantes batallas como Stalingrado, el levantamiento del gueto de Varsovia, la batalla de Praga (1945) o la conflictividad prebélica en la República de Weimar o en la propia Argel, donde además se produjo un conflicto entre un ejército y un grupo insurgente. También habría sido interesante ver si Jerusalén es un caso digno de estudio según este marco, ya que la ciudad lleva muchas décadas con la misma conflictividad, ergo poco nuevo podría entenderse de este último caso. No mencionaremos siquiera las capacidades de Jerusalén como ciudad.

En lo relativo a que los grupos no estatales intenten eliminar las capacidades de las ciudades, consideramos que la relación de causalidad de las autoras es una forma de *wishful thinking* o de falacia *cum hoc*. Los grupos no estatales, especialmente terroristas y rebeldes, quieren controlar las ciudades porque son centros de poder desde los cuales expandirse, y no porque vean esas capacidades como una amenaza.

Además, no existen carreras armamentísticas en ciudades sin que participen bien ejércitos de Estados, bien otros países que venden armas o compañías militares privadas. En esos casos, evidentemente, entra la geopolítica u otros factores macro. Esta oposición entre lo nuevo y lo viejo, y entre lo macro (geopolítica, Estado) y lo micro (la ciudad), es recurrente a la hora de presentar nuevos marcos teóricos. Sin embargo, cuanto más operativos resultan estos es en el momento en que se adaptan a la realidad con herramientas del marco rival.

Como hemos indicado, los estudios de campo, con una base analítica importante, que presenta este libro son valiosos por sí mismos. Y también lo es el propio marco de las autoras. De hecho sería muy interesante un estudio de las ciudades del Kurdistán sirio e iraquí en la actualidad a partir de estos conceptos, así como de otros casos de conflictividad de importancia en ciudades de Libia, República Centroafricana o Malí.

En suma, es una obra de lectura necesaria para seguir la conflictividad contemporánea y la guerra urbana, aunque teniendo en cuenta los sesgos derivados de la mentalidad posmoderna, ignorante (a propósito) de cualquier marco teórico o de factores explicativos a nivel macro.





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