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Union activism in an inclusive model of industrial relations: Evidence from a Spanish case

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Abstract

In this article we analyse the reasons, within the context of Spanish industrial relations, for trade union members' active participation in their regional union. The case of Spain is particularly interesting as the unions' main activity, collective bargaining, is a public good. The text, based on research involving a representative survey of members of a regional branch of the 'Workers' Commissions' (Comisiones Obreras) trade union, provides empirical evidence that the union presence in the workplace has a significant influence on members' propensity for activism. By contrast, the alternative hypothesis based on instrumental reasons appears of little relevance in the Spanish industrial relations context.

Keywords

Union involvement, union activism, type of membership, union presence and proactive action in the workplace

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Introduction

The relationship between workers and trade unions can be drawn out along two axes. On the one hand, workers' demands have to be converted into trade union aims and the organized action necessary to win them. On the other hand, this process bolsters the union's legitimacy and the support it receives from workers and leads to organizational activity aimed at producing identification and leading to possible action. From this perspective, the relationship between unions and workers depends on the type of demands and/or support from the workers, on union successes and on stimuli for identification. This interaction is captured by the literature on this subject which distinguishes between different incentives: material, functional, identity and sociability (Lange et al. 1982). Nevertheless, it may also depend on attributes of the trade union system under study, for example on its exclusive or inclusive nature and, as a consequence, the representation of only members, or of both members and workers in general.

In this sense our study is centred on the Spanish trade union system (particularly a regional branch of one of the largest Spanish unions) where bargaining takes the form of a public good, not discriminating in its results between trade union members and non-members. What interests us in this case is to compare and contrast individual propensities for participation in union activities with the opportunities afforded by the workplace situation. This article contributes an initial quantitative analysis which enables us to confirm that instrumental motives play only a small part in explaining members' decisions to become active, while sociability and institutional factors are more important.

The text is ordered as follows: first the theoretical framework is briefly explained after which the elements of the Spanish industrial relations system which relate to the aims of this study are outlined. This is followed by the hypothesis, data and variables which, after due analysis, provide the results and lead to the conclusions.

Theoretical framework

The active involvement of workers in the trade union has been approached from various perspectives. A distinction is usually made between members who are active or militant and those who are passive, the latter limiting their commitment to the payment of union dues while the former participate in union activities and possibly take on responsibilities by becoming reps or officials within the union organization. Klandermans (1994) goes one step further and distinguishes between "non-active members", "active non-office holding members" and "union reps and officials", a

typology which we also find in Madsen (1996). This last author refers to the second group as “activists”, taking this term to mean those who are not elected reps or officials but who nevertheless take part in activities called by the union, be they meetings or industrial action. We shall also refer to these as activists and they are the focus of this study. To be precise, we are interested in those factors which separate active members from the passive ones.

Klandermans (1986) asserts that the main predictor of activism is the motivation to participate which he defines as a function of the perceived costs and benefits of the action. This is a process on which both individual intentions and external opportunities or constraints have a bearing. Nonetheless, this author mentions three different approaches by way of explaining the incentives which encourage the adoption of activist behaviour on the part of the individuals concerned. The first is an instrumentalist perspective which takes as its reference point the collective action theory of Olson. A second approach makes use of contributions from industrial psychology and explains commitment to the union in terms of satisfaction or frustration engendered by the work environment. This is reinforced in one form or another by elements of the interaction between the person with his or her environment. The third approach stresses the role of institutions and, on occasions, of the labour process (workplace, labour market...) as mediating the opportunities for, and the obstacles to, activism.

The instrumentalist approach involving the costs and benefits of participation is based on the theory of rational choice which explains a person’s activism as depending on a balance between past effort and anticipated future benefit. The idea is that members will only take part in action which is effective in achieving collective goals (Olson 1965), and that their involvement will be conditioned by the importance they attribute to their own contribution. Therefore, involvement depends to a great extent on the effectiveness of the union in pursuing the goals valued by the membership who for their part contribute to the action to the extent that there are social pressures, typical of small groups, or particular inducements. For Visser (1995), Olson’s theory of collective action explains the instrumental reasons for deciding not to participate, but its line of reasoning is weak when it comes to explaining the behaviour of those who do decide to take part.

As regards the second approach, Blackwood et al. (2003) describe different psychological theories of activism. All have in common the idea that personal and social environment factors affect the attitude and commitment of the person towards the union. This *social identity* is linked to the notion of collective action so that a greater identification with the group leads to more willingness to take part (Frege 1996; Veenstra & Haslam 2000). Likewise, some studies carried out along these lines such as that of Nelly & Breinlinger (1996) or Simon et al. (1998) hold that the principal prerequisite for activism is the identification of a person with a specific group which he or she perceives as being in an unequal position compared to others. If the person’s group is felt to be in an unfair situation there is greater propensity to mobilize

in defence of that group's interests (Hogg & Abrams 1995; Kelly 1999). This propensity increases the greater the identification with and commitment to the group, and also the greater the dissatisfaction with the unfair situation (Klandermans 2002).

Newton & Shore's (1992) psychological theory of *frustration-aggression* in particular maintains that the dissatisfaction caused by work, or at least by certain conditions of work, determines the increase in commitment to the union. Although Klandermans (1994) indicates that lack of job satisfaction, or dissatisfaction with the career or trajectory of work, is above all significant in members becoming reps or officials, this assertion – based on empirical analysis – could also be the result of an endogenous relationship between trade union commitment and lack of job satisfaction. In other words, job dissatisfaction could result from a long period of activism which frustrates the member due to the fact of being better informed about possible improvements in working conditions which appear difficult to attain (Bryson et al. 2004). In previous studies of the CCOO-Catalonia membership it was noted that, in general, union reps and officials were more dissatisfied with their working conditions or more critical of company management compared with members without any particular union responsibility (Alós et al. 2005).

The third approach is found in Waddington & Kerr (2002) when they warn that activism does not depend solely on individual inducements or group sentiment, but also on opportunities for involvement that present themselves to the member. The authors refer to unionised and non-unionised environments (typical of the Anglo-Saxon system they are considering). In the second of these environments the opportunities for involvement in trade union activities are much reduced. In another study of leaving in British trade unions, (Waddington & Kerr 1999) found that the decrease in the number of union reps within a company went hand in hand with a decline in activism on the part of union members. On the other hand, the presence of union organization and local leaders in a workplace increases the propensity for activism on the part of members (Sinclair 1996): union reps and officials impart information and can be consulted, the member knows more about union activities and feels motivated (Metochi 2002; Sudano 1998). So thanks to the interaction of members with the local union leaders there is an increase in sociability which in turn facilitates identification with the group.

In highlighting *social custom* within national trade union systems, Visser (2002) concurs with this last viewpoint. For this author workers' decisions are paramount for the study of trade union membership, but these decisions take place in social contexts where social pressures mean that workers join the union either when they wish to obtain something which they cannot do easily on their own (this "something" can include elements which are material, functional and to do with sociability and solidarity), or due to the social environment – "everybody's in the union" (the key here is sociability, but also identity). From this viewpoint unions won't be able to sign up members or be capable of ensuring their participation in proposed collective action unless they are effective in pursuing goals or of creating a social context which

induces joining and/or involvement. In the *social custom* approach, the acceptance of membership as a norm, in spite of extensive opportunities for *free-riding* (Olson 1965), is the result of maintaining the perceived reputation which in turn depends on the beliefs and actions of other significant social actors (Akerlof 1980).

In any case, the activism which is driven by sociability and commitment is largely based on the presence of trade union organization within the workplace, guaranteeing members the opportunity for involvement (Gallagher & Clark 2001; Bissonnette 1999). However, according to Waddington (2006) the decline in membership or in workers' involvement in the union can be attributed to dissatisfaction with the union reps. For Fiorito et al. (1988) this dissatisfaction depends on the attainment, or otherwise, of classic instrumental goals such as those to do with wages - though also on more nuanced instrumental concerns such as job quality or workers' involvement in company decisions – and at the same time on the perception of the relationship between the union and the member (information, representation and support, dealing with complaints, solving problems). Waddington (2006), for his part, suggests that the type and structure of the unions, or the incorporation of new organizational tools – for example the strategies of *servicing*, *organizing* and *partnership*, studied in the recent Anglo-Saxon literature (Cregan 2005; Heery 2002) - has an influence on membership and activism. This is such that the composition of the membership (age, sex, occupation, etc), the handling of demands and the types of union action, or the structures for involvement and taking decisions within the organization create a climate whereby joining and getting involved in the union is either favoured or not.

Activism in an inclusive trade union model: the case in a Spanish region

It should be taken into account that the studies mentioned in this last group are centred almost exclusively within the institutional context of the workplace. However, the literature on comparative studies (Bean 1994; Ferner & Hyman 1998) shows that the broader institutional context (for example features of the industrial relations system) can also influence workers' decisions about whether to join a union and especially about whether to take part in union action. Bean (1994) sees the differences in membership composition, in union aims and in types of action as being in general due to two distinct concepts. In the Anglo-Saxon system unions are understood as agencies for collective bargaining on behalf of their members, a form of exclusive and voluntary association to defend specific economic and occupational interests and which requires a high level of effectiveness in attaining instrumental objectives in the workplace and in defending them once they are attained. As opposed to this the typical aim of continental European trade unionism, based on principles of representativeness and generality of interests, is to represent the overall body of workers independently of the type of job. With a class orientation and inclusive bargaining (involving specific mechanisms for making it legally binding), factors of identity and sociability take on more importance in the decisions about whether to join a union.

The inclusive or exclusive nature of the trade union system, linking to Olson's notion (1965) of collective and selective goods, can be observed from the interaction of two key variables: representation and representativeness. These variables, which are a key dividing factor between countries, are on the one hand the trade union density and on the other the collective bargaining coverage. From their interaction we find countries with low membership and low bargaining coverage, clearly exclusive systems such as those in Anglo-Saxon countries; countries with high membership and a high bargaining coverage which, despite negotiating being carried out exclusively on behalf of the membership, is in practice inclusive – these are the Nordic countries. Finally there are the countries which, despite having only a medium or even a low level of membership, nevertheless provide the workers as a whole with a broad and even inclusive bargaining coverage - these are the Latin and Central European countries.

Spain, and the regional's industrial relations systems, is in this last group. The Workers' Statute (*Estatuto de los Trabajadores*) of 1980 adopted the criteria of universal application (*erga omnes*) for collective agreements and so confirmed them as having, as noted by Baylos (1991) or Valdés dal Ré (1996) a legally binding status on a par with legislation. Thus the EIRO Observatory noted in 2002 that in spite of having a level of membership below 20%, bargaining coverage reaches 81% of the workforce. In other words the main activity of the unions, that is bargaining, is recognised as a public good. To this it should be added that in Spain the trade unions are not involved, as happens in some other European countries, in the administration of the unemployment or national insurance systemsⁱ. Hence the defining of the Spanish system as a trade unionism of voters rather than of members (Fernández Macías 2003; Martínez Lucio 1995) in that the representativeness of a union is legally recognised according to the proportion of its slates of candidates who are elected onto the works councils. These bodies are re-elected every four years with different unions or groups of workers presenting slates of candidates. The council is always composed of workers from within the company and the electing constituency is the whole workforce. In these elections, more common in medium and large than in the small companies, a high percentage of the workforce, estimated at between 70% and 75% (Martínez Lucio 1995), usually voteⁱⁱ. The Spanish legislation accords legal bargaining rights at local and company level to the works councils, and at higher levels to the trade unionsⁱⁱⁱ. The resulting collective agreements, if accepted by more than 50% of the representatives on both sides, are of universal application within the scope of the agreement.

In line with what has been said up till now, the central hypothesis of this article is that in Spain the presence of trade union organization in the workplace exerts an important influence on union members' propensity for activism. The proximity of the union promotes sociability among members, also greater identification with the interests of the group leading to higher levels of commitment. On the other hand, improvements in pay and working conditions along with other instrumental ends are not considered sufficient for mobilising the members because, as already stated, the Spanish industrial relations system does not require the participation of employees in order for them to reap the benefits of collective bargaining.

Data and measurement of union activism

For the empirical analysis of union activism the CCOO-Catalonia 2003 Membership Survey^{iv} was used. Among other things, this survey contains data on individual members, working conditions, the company and the trade union situation for a total of 801 persons who are representative of the population of CCOO-Catalonia members. The consistency of the sample was validated with data from the union register. Features of CCOO-Catalonia members can be consulted in detail in Jódar et al. (2004), so only those elements associated with union activism are described and measured from answers to questions about participation in union activities. These activities are varied however and correspond to different facets of union activism.

Remembering that Klandermans (1994) proposed that different degrees of implication can separate out non-active members, activists and reps or officials, we take it that the very acceptance of a union position assumes a greater degree of involvement on the part of the holder. Table 1 shows the gradation of activities which can be considered to indicate member activism, excluding those relating to responsibilities within the union organization. This categorisation distinguished between forms of industrial action and attending meetings both in the workplace and outside, as proposed by Chacko (1985) or incorporated within empirical analysis, as is the case in Kuruvilla et al. (1990). This hypothetical categorisation assumes that becoming a union rep or official implies a greater degree of union involvement on the part of the member, likewise the attending of meetings outside of the workplace.

Table 1. Classification of union activities according to level of involvement.

High ----- (level of involvement) ----- Low					
Union rep	Attend union meetings outside the workplace	Take part in industrial action	Attend meetings inside the workplace convened by the union branch	Attend meetings inside the workplace convened by the works council	Not take part

Own ranking based on Chacko's (1985) classification

Madsen (1996) considers two types of orientation in the analysis of union involvement: the collectivist, corresponding to members who tend to be present at all

union activities, as opposed to the individualist, those who specialise in attending meetings in the workplace as they are the ones more likely to be about improvements in working conditions. However, certain facts prevent us from accepting this assumption as read. Contextual factors such as company strategy, workplace organization, union reps' relationship with members, with the workforce as a whole and with the trade union, plus a long list of others, can affect the level of involvement in different types of union activity. So for example, in a situation of management hostility there may be a greater predisposition to attend meetings outside the workplace as these represent less risk compared with those held inside.

To avoid falling into this trap the measuring of activism was carried out by summing different acts of participation in union activities. Although we are conscious that different kinds of activity imply different degrees of involvement, the lack of objective variables for these makes it more logical to measure activism via a quantitative treatment by summing acts of participation (Bissonette 1999).

With regard to activities organized by the union, questions relating to these can be found in the questionnaire and Table 2 shows five of them and their respective response rates. The last one, the fact of being a union rep, was left out when making up the activism variable. This is because the impact that union presence in the workplace has on the likelihood of an individual becoming a rep is endogenous, given that the latter implies that union organization is already present in the workplace. The dependent variable is therefore made up of three items: taking part in meetings – either convened by the union branch or the works council – in the workplace, taking part in meetings outside the workplace and taking part in industrial action either inside or outside the workplace.

Table 2. Proportion of members taking part in union activities, according to type of activity.

	Percentage
Industrial action	78,1
Meetings in the workplace convened by the works council	60,5
Meetings in the workplace convened by the union branch	55,6
Meetings in the union headquarters	35,1
Union rep	12,8

Source: membership survey of CCOO-Catalonia, 2003

We decided to model activism as a dichotomised variable which measures the probability of taking part in union activities compared to an activism which is nil or scant – this last due to the fact that a minimal participation in union activities can be considered as a one-off case and not really different from the probability of not participating^v. So the dependent variable has a value of 0 when a person takes part in no union activity or, incidentally, in just one. The variable has a value of 1 when a person takes part in a minimum of two different activities – different in the sense defined above. This variable allows us to model under which conditions individual, labour process and union organization variables influence the probability of taking part, and not only in a fortuitous manner, in union activities. Complementary analyses where the dependent variable is the taking part or not in a particular activity were also carried out in order to study differences in members' orientation (collectivist or individualist) in the sense shown by Madsen (1996).

Descriptions

Descriptive analysis allows us to study the association between members' activism and other factors. In Table 3 the proportion (or mean) and the standard deviation of different individual, labour process and union characteristics can be seen. Table 3 takes proportions and mean values for the individuals who take part in two or more activities, as well as for all the individuals of the sample. In the last column of the table it can be seen that the differences between the mean values of active members compared to the global mean of all members are statistically significant.

In Table 3 significant differences in activism can be observed depending on the presence or otherwise of union organization and reps. As our hypothesis would indicate, a greater institutional presence goes hand in hand with a higher level of participation in union activities. However, the indicators which could substantiate the alternative hypotheses of dissatisfaction and instrumentally motivated action do not show significant differences in their mean values for member activism. On the one hand, lack of job satisfaction is not significantly different among active as opposed to non-active members, and on the other hand, salary improvements due to local agreements negotiated between the company and union reps do not appear to be a factor which affects the degree of member activism.

Table 3. Mean (or proportion) and standard deviation of selected variables for the whole of the sample and for the fraction taking part in union activities.

	Active		Whole sample		N	Sig.
	Mean	St. Dev.	Mean	St. Dev.		
Presence of works council	0,93	0,26	0,83	0,38	785	***
Presence of union branch	0,90	0,31	0,79	0,41	779	***
Union rep or official	0,38	0,48	0,28	0,45	795	***
Woman	0,33	0,47	0,38	0,48	802	***
Age						
16-35	0,22	0,42	0,25	0,43	801	*
36-50	0,50	0,50	0,47	0,50	801	*
51-65	0,28	0,45	0,28	0,45	801	
Job category						
<i>Unskilled</i>	0,09	0,28	0,10	0,31	798	
<i>Skilled – clerical</i>	0,62	0,49	0,60	0,49	798	
<i>Technical - professional</i>	0,29	0,45	0,29	0,45	798	
Length of service						
<i>Under 3 years</i>	0,04	0,19	0,11	0,31	796	***
<i>3-9 years</i>	0,23	0,42	0,25	0,43	796	
<i>Over 9 years</i>	0,73	0,44	0,64	0,48	796	***
Educational level						
<i>Basic</i>	0,36	0,48	0,34	0,48	795	
<i>Intermediate</i>	0,31	0,46	0,33	0,47	795	
<i>Higher</i>	0,32	0,47	0,33	0,47	795	
Job autonomy	0,39	0,49	0,40	0,49	797	
Continuous training	0,68	0,47	0,64	0,48	801	**
Service sector	0,51	0,50	0,57	0,50	802	***
Company type						
<i>Private national</i>	0,48	0,50	0,53	0,50	802	***
<i>Multinational</i>	0,27	0,44	0,22	0,41	802	***
<i>Public</i>	0,25	0,44	0,26	0,44	802	
Company size						
<i>Under 6 employees</i>	0,04	0,20	0,10	0,29	710	***
<i>6-50 employees</i>	0,28	0,45	0,32	0,47	710	***
<i>Over 50 employees</i>	0,68	0,47	0,58	0,49	710	***
Job dissatisfaction	12,77	3,16	12,89	3,22	786	
Union improves conditions	0,14	0,35	0,13	0,33	795	
Member typology						
<i>Traditional-core</i>	0,52	0,50	0,44	0,50	802	***
<i>Emerging-core</i>	0,27	0,44	0,29	0,45	802	**
<i>Peripherals-in-transition</i>	0,17	0,38	0,21	0,40	802	**
<i>Peripherals</i>	0,04	0,19	0,06	0,24	802	***

* Level of significance for Student's *t* statistic (test for difference of means) with a probability of less than 0.1; ** 0.05; *** 0.01 (N-whole sample = 802; N-active = 525)

The individual variables do not show any important differences with regard to member activism. Differences according to educational level or job grade are not significant. Differences according to age are slight and associated with less activism on the part of young workers and more on the part of ones around middle-age. On the other hand there are noticeable differences according to sex, with women showing much less involvement. Cunnison & Stageman (1995) attribute the low female participation rate to the weak presence of the union in feminized sectors, giving them less opportunity to receive information and relate to other members. This latter assertion is also applicable to young workers (Gomez et al. 2002; Haynes et al. 2005).

Work attributes show a greater association. Both a larger workforce and longer service in the company are associated with a higher level of activism. Working in the service sector implies less activism, while working in a company in manufacturing industry, in public administration or in a multinational implies more. Involvement in continuous training is likewise associated with a high level of activism; on the other hand job autonomy yields no significant difference.

And finally, the union profile of individuals also influences the level of activism. In accordance with the typology in Alós et al. (2005)^{vi}, it can be seen that those with a longer period of membership and centrally placed in the labour market in traditional industrial occupations show a higher level of activism than members employed either in skilled service jobs or those in weaker positions in more secondary parts of the labour market.

However, the descriptive statistics reach their limit here as they only provide for simple associations which do not allow the hypotheses to be tested in a direct manner. For this reason a regression analysis was run in order to test the hypotheses on activism.

Analysis

The study starts from the hypothesis that factors associated with the presence of union organization in the workplace influence the propensity for activism on the part of members. To test this we set up a regression analysis controlling for individual and work factors as well as for industrial sector and size of workforce; these last two as we have seen are strongly associated with union activism.

The explanatory or independent variable should measure aspects of union organization in the workplace. As mentioned above the supposition is that the more union presence there is the more member activism we can expect, keeping constant the rest of the

incentives which could make a member decide to get involved. However, the mere existence of the union in the workplace need not be, in itself, a precise indicator of a pro-union atmosphere which would be consequently favourable for member activism. It could be the case that the union is present, but not active. To control for this possible source of bias it was decided to add variables for inducement to activism, and so the survey contains information on the convening of meetings and the calling of industrial action by the workplace union organization.

In measuring active union presence only the convening of meetings inside the workplace was taken into account. Calls for industrial action are possibly more associated with an environment of industrial conflict than with the dynamics of an active union branch. So we expect greater member involvement the more active the union shows itself to be through the convening of meetings.

An element of doubt with regard to union presence appears when we consider the double nature (general and strictly union) of workplace representation in the Spanish industrial relations system^{vii}. A comparison between the presence of one or other of these two types of representation could be interesting in revealing different dynamics of activism, as well as an association with different member profiles. Along these lines Alós et al. (2005) noted that the presence of a works council is associated more with the *traditional-core* type of membership (Hyman 1997); while the *peripheral* type on the other hand are more associated with the branch and the protective function of the union. However, the present analysis does not allow for the study of distinctions according to the type of workers' representation. In only 1,4% of the cases studied was there a trade union branch in the company without the corresponding presence of a works council; while a works council without the presence of a trade union branch was found in 5,2% of the cases. This situation made it difficult in this analysis to identify any differences between effects of one or other structure.

With the aim of testing the viability of the alternative hypotheses a measurement of job satisfaction was used which included differing working conditions. According to the psychological theories of frustration we have mentioned, the higher the level of dissatisfaction there is the more commitment and involvement in union activities is to be expected. Measurements of perception of the union as an effective tool for improving working conditions were also used, this being for the supposed case of persons who value wage increases or improved working conditions and are deemed more likely to participate in union activities as this will be to their benefit. So the data base contains a variable for wage improvements resulting from bargaining between management and workers' reps. When this increase is achieved a greater degree of union involvement is expected, as it is the trade union that has won it.

Other variables which could exert an influence on union activism were also incorporated. First, demographic variables were introduced with the idea that age and sex differences could be significant in explaining differences. This is due to the strong association of women and young workers with a weaker position in the labour market

which would inhibit their activism owing to the greater risk of unemployment, other variables remaining constant. Education, however, is generally seen as a positive factor with regard to obtaining a stable position in the labour market (Iannelli & Soro 2003). Variables to do with work included occupational group, length of service and two indicators of position within the company: job autonomy and training. These variables are also considered predictors of the person's employment stability. Variables related to the labour process such as industrial sector, type of company and workforce size were also included due to their direct association with union and non-union environments which would either facilitate or hinder activism (Gallie & White 1994; Kalleberg 2003).

In the analysis of factors associated with activism a second strategy was adopted: that of looking at the usefulness of the membership typology found in Alós et al. (2005). It should be remembered that this typology is a construct of membership categories based on personal characteristics and features of the work situation, reflecting the variation of both these factors across the union membership spectrum. There are two elements justifying the use of this typology. First, it allows for a lean model. All the individual and work variables are replaced when the typology is used and the information from the excluded variables is thus condensed in a consistent manner, allowing the analysis to be carried out with fewer variables. Secondly, the typology is useful in explaining different membership dynamics, as individuals' motives vary according to the group they belong to. This enables the study of different types of activism according to the membership group and consequent motivations.

Results

Tables 4 and 5 show the results of the logistic regression analysis to explain which factors are associated with trade union activism. Table 4 shows the results for activism as a dichotomised variable which, as defined above, distinguishes between genuine activism and involvement which is merely incidental. Model 1 only contains personal, work and labour process variables, not trade union ones. It can be seen that the effect of variables such as young age, service sector or job category is not significant. On the other hand size of the workforce or length of service are strongly related to activism: the first could be explained by the greater likelihood of a union presence in larger workforces and the second by long service implying more job security. Women show less activism, something which could be attributed to the low levels of unionisation in feminized sectors or to work situations where non-standard contracts are more likely (Gallie 1996).

Table 4. Logistic regression: Odds probability of CCOO-Catalonia members' participation in union activities

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Odds	St. Errorr	Odds	St. Errorr	Odds	St. Errorr
Woman	0,63	0,18**	0,63	0,20**	0,54	0,20**
Age						
16-35	ref		ref		ref	
36-50	1,06	0,24	1,00	0,26	1,00	0,27
51-65	0,62	0,28*	0,56	0,31*	0,58	0,24*
Job category						
Unskilled	ref		ref		ref	
Skilled - clerical	1,36	0,39	0,67	0,22	0,74	0,22
Technical - professional	1,25	0,23	0,61	0,39	0,59	0,38
Length of service						
Under 3 years	ref		ref		ref	
3-9 years	5,20	0,38***	5,08	0,38***	5,06	0,38***
Over 9 years	7,20	0,22***	7,03	0,22***	6,52	0,22***
Educational level						
Basic	ref		ref		ref	
Intermediate	0,62	0,23**	0,55	0,13***	0,51	0,14**
Higher	0,79	0,24	0,70	0,24	0,67	0,25
Job autonomy	1,02	0,21	1,00	0,23	1,17	0,23
Continuous training	1,13	0,19	1,00	0,21	1,00	0,22
Sector						
Others	ref		ref		ref	
Services	0,96	0,21	0,96	0,22	0,95	0,24
Company type						
Private national	ref		ref		ref	
Multinational	1,62	0,22**	1,67	0,12**	1,66	0,12**
Public	1,14	0,28	1,28	0,24	1,25	0,25
Company size						
Under 6 employees	ref		ref		ref	
6-50 employees	2,94	0,19**	2,72	0,18***	2,63	0,18***
Over 50 employees	4,53	0,33***	3,04	0,36***	2,57	0,37***
Union rep or official			3,26	0,22***	3,30	0,22***
Job dissatisfaction			1,01	0,03	1,02	0,03
Union improves conditions			0,96	0,25	0,98	0,26
Union branch present			3,19	0,24***	0,84	0,35
Union branch active					5,33	0,31***
-2 log likelihood	838,6		732,6		699,6	
R ²	0,2		0,29		0,34	

Level of significance with a probability of less than 0.1; ** 0.05; *** 0.01

(in all models N=710 - Y=1: 453)

The second model in Table 4 adds the three selected variables for the testing of the activism hypotheses: the variable related to job dissatisfaction, the one related to the perception of the union as an effective tool for improving working conditions and, finally, the one related to the institutional presence of the union in the workplace. It can be seen that the dissatisfaction and instrumentality variables are not significant. On the other hand the presence of the union in the workplace impacts very positively on the likelihood of union activism. So the hypothesis that union presence in the workplace promotes activism, while controlling for alternative hypotheses, is substantiated. As mentioned previously however, we take it that the mere presence of the union is not in itself a sufficient indicator of greater activism and that the positive role of the union reps is needed. Model 3 includes an interaction variable of union presence combined with the convening of meetings (indicating a proactive trade union branch).

The results show that this interaction is very significant in fomenting activism with an active union branch being the determining factor. And finally, the fact of being a union rep or official is, as would be expected, always significant in favouring activism.

Table 5. Logistic regression: Odds probability of CCOO-Catalonia members' participation in union activities (typology of members).

	Odds	St. Error	Odds	St. Error	Odds	St. Error
Traditional-core	ref		ref		ref	
Emerging-core	0,52	(0,19)***	0,59	(0,19)***	0,58	(0,19)***
Peripherals-in-transition	0,46	(0,20)***	0,56	(0,20)***	0,55	(0,21)***
Peripherals	0,26	(0,39)***	0,40	(0,39)**	0,55	(0,40)
Union rep or official			3,16	(0,20)***	3,23	(0,21)***
Job dissatisfaction			1,00	(0,02)	1,01	(0,03)
Union improves conditions			1,09	(0,23)	1,12	(0,24)
Union branch present			3,82	(0,20)***	0,91	(0,30)
Union branch active					5,65	(0,27)***
-2 log likelihood	1043,8		910,7		858,3	
R ²	0,06		0,2		0,27	

*Level of significance with a probability of less than 0.1; ** 0.05; *** 0.01
(in all models N=710 - Y=1: 453)

Table 5 shows the results of the regression analysis in which the personal, work and labour process variables are replaced by the above mentioned typology of Alós et al. (2005). The first model, which only includes the typology as an exogenous factor in the form of indicator variables, shows that *traditional-core* members are very significantly more active than the rest of the membership. This is also seen in the previous table and may be due to them belonging to sectors with trade union tradition and job security which increases the probability of activism. There is a small gradation in the typology in that the *peripherals* show less activism, with *peripheral women* being the group showing the least participation. The rest of the models in the table bear out the activism hypothesis, maintaining unchanged the previous results. Only few exceptions stand out, for example, the *peripheral* category loses significant difference with respect to the *traditional-core* while the other membership groups, *emerging-core* and *peripheral-in-transition*, are still significantly less activist. This result is more in line with Madsen's (1996) hypothesis on the influence of individualist or collectivist orientations on activism leading us to expect a greater participation of *traditional* and *peripheral* members in all types of action.

In order to see differences in activism according to this hypothesis we carried out analysis on particular activities: union meetings inside the workplace, meetings outside the workplace and industrial action^{viii}. However we do not find large differences to the results of the index of activism. The presence of a union branch explains a large part of the activism in the attendance of meetings inside the workplace, and to a lesser extent in attending those outside. In the case of industrial action the results vary: union presence is of less or no importance, but work dissatisfaction on the other hand could go some way in explaining this activism. The membership typology categories once more partially support the Madsen hypothesis in that trade union members with a collectivist orientation (*traditional-core* and *peripheral*) are differentiated from the other two more individualist groups, being more active in terms of industrial action or attending meetings within the workplace.

Conclusions

In this article we have dealt with the reasons for members' activism. Our hypothesis is that, given the features of the Spanish industrial relations system, the presence of union organization in the workplace exerts an important influence on trade union members' propensity for activism. We compare and contrast this with alternative hypotheses of an instrumentalist and psychological mould.

Descriptive results show significant differences in activism according to the presence or otherwise of union organisation and union reps or officials; so we can say that the more institutional union presence there is the greater the level of union activism. On the other hand, the alternative hypotheses of dissatisfaction and instrumental

mobilization do not show significant differences with regard to member activism. Individual variables don't account for significant differences in activism but work variables such as workforce size and industrial sector, which in region of Spanish system condition the union presence, do.

The regression analysis confirms that both size of workforce and length of service are associated with trade union activism and that while the satisfaction and instrumentality variables are not significant, its likelihood is very positively affected by the presence of an active union in the workplace.

Finally the personal, work and labour process variables were replaced by a trade union membership typology and differing behaviour according to type of member was observed. This latter could be associated with different employment situations, the presence or absence of union tradition in different occupations and differences in economic sector. It should also be mentioned that, with regard to meetings inside the workplace, the presence of a trade union branch which stimulates activism explains in large measure the degree of attendance, while aspects of the labour process such as workforce size or economic sector, when added to the presence of a active union, are also conducive to opportunities for activism and participation. We also found partial evidence supporting Madsen's hypothesis that an individualist or collectivist orientation on the part of members has an influence, namely that members with a collectivist orientation (*traditional-core* and *peripheral*) take part in union activities more than the other types.

As a point of discussion we propose that, according to these results, an important part of member activism in an inclusive trade union system such as the Spanish one does not depend on individual characteristics, that is their propensity towards collective action, or on instrumentalist motives, but rather on the organizational effort which the union dedicates to a presence within the workplace and to the stimulation of activism on the part of members. On the other hand if, as Guest and Conway 2004 suggest, we consider that a certain continuity exists in the motivations and decisions that make a person join, remain in membership, get actively involved or, finally, leave a union, then this raises important questions for trade unions. In any case whether factors relating to active trade union presence are more influential than instrumental aspects not only for involvement but also for staying in or for leaving the union is, in a context such as the Spanish region one, something to look into.

Finally, we think it would be useful to carry out similar analyses in other countries with inclusive trade union systems with the aim of comparing and contrasting results with those we have obtained. We likewise consider that it would be interesting to carry out a more in-depth analysis on the extent to which social background and environment explain activism in an industrial relations system such as the Spanish region one. This would mean, on the one hand, a study of members' family and social environment enabling us to detect their influence on decisions to get involved, and on

the other hand, the insertion of a 'length of membership' variable as hypothetically explanatory of identity-based involvement.

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ⁱ In fact the Spanish unions together with the employer organizations sit on various consultative bodies including the institutions for administering unemployment and national insurance benefits. They also jointly administer, together with the employers, the system of continuous training. A significant part of this training is also a public good.

ⁱⁱ It is important to note that Spanish works councils are very much trade union entities, not only seen as such by members and non-members alike and able to negotiate and sign collective agreements, but also empowered to call strikes. They thus differ very much from counterparts in other European countries – for example in the Netherlands and Germany – and in many ways resemble more a shop stewards’ or union reps’ committee in the Anglo-Saxon trade union system.

ⁱⁱⁱ In this second case different unions and employer organizations take part according to the representation they possess within the scope of the agreement.

^{iv} Workers’ Commissions of Catalonia or CCOO-Catalonia (Comissions Obreres de Catalunya) is the main union in Catalonia. As with other European trade unions, the main base of CCOO-Catalonia is still the traditional Fordist worker: manual, male and working in the manufacturing sector. However, like other European trade unions it has recently incorporated service sector workers and women into its ranks. In January 2003 the union had 138,096 members, excluding the unemployed and pensioners.

^v We do not have information on how many participations of each type the member carried out, so probably we are better capturing non participation. Since there is a high degree of individuals who have ever taken part in industrial action, we decide to do model non participation as 0 or 1 participations. In fact in the Spanish industrial relations system seem to be a general pattern participation of all workers in some forms of industrial action like strikes.

^{vi} Alós et al. (2005) distinguish an initial group of *traditional-core* made up of older, long-term union members who work mainly in the industrial sector, do not have a high educational level and can be said to be the traditional union members from the industrial era. A second group, the *emerging-core*, is made up of skilled workers in the service sector, especially from company services and the public sector. They generally have a medium to high level of education. A third group, the *peripherals-in-transition*, is formed by young workers with little experience in the labour market and a short time in membership. A fourth group, the *peripherals*, is made up mainly women workers in low-skill service occupations with low expectations of changing their job situation.

^{vii} The Spanish legislation recognises a double mechanism for workers’ representation within the company: the works council, elected by and representing the whole of the workforce, and the union branch which brings together the workers who are members of the union in question. While the first has recognised functions for representing all the workers (amongst other things it can negotiate a collective agreement), the second is limited to representing its own members and in practice tends to centre its activity on influencing the decisions taken by the works council (Escudero 1985; Valdés Dal-Ré 1996).

^{viii} Though the results of the model are not shown here for reasons of space they are nevertheless available on request.