

**Researching older people's citizen groups: The need for greater  
cross-pollination between social gerontology and political science  
literatures**

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**Abstract**

The study of older people's citizen groups requires firmer theoretical underpinnings and calls for more empirical analysis. Most of the recent research on older people's citizen groups stems from the discipline of social gerontology. This literature tends to examine the political influence of these groups at a very perfunctory level and fails to explore in depth the contextual factors which impact upon the development, growth, influence and survival of these groups. In this paper I argue that existing theoretical frameworks in social gerontology do not provide an adequate conceptual basis for understanding the complexity of older people's citizens groups formation, maintenance, tactical choices and influence on the policy process and that it is necessary to draw on theoretical insights from political science to do this. The application of key concepts and theories from political science will provide a more detailed empirical understanding of older people's political representation, by offering a robust analytical and theoretical framework in which to position studies of these groups. I orient the discussion around three key issues of relevance to older people's citizen's group:

- 1.) the characterising and categorising of older people's citizen groups,
- 2.) delineating the key agendas / policies these groups seek to promote and the channels they utilise to exert influence, and
- 3.) identifying and explaining their influence (if any) on policy-making.