

## Psychology and Aging

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# Older Workers' Plans for Activities in Retirement: The Role of Opportunities, Spousal Support, and Time Perception

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Retirement is a major life-course transition for which some people plan more than others. Given that planning positively affects retirement adjustment, it is important to investigate the heterogeneity in retirement planning and its antecedents. While financial preparation has been thoroughly investigated, little is known about the activities older workers plan to do in retirement. We hypothesize that older workers' plans for retirement activities can be categorized into 3 domains: bridge employment, self-developmental leisure, and social leisure. Moreover, we expect these plans to be affected by workers' opportunities for continuity, spousal support, and perception of time. We test these hypotheses using data from the first wave of the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute Pension Panel Study (NPPS). The study consists of a sample of almost 6,800 Dutch older workers who were asked about their plans to engage in 10 different activities in retirement. Where relevant, spouses of older workers were also surveyed, providing multiactor data for these couples ( $N = 4,052$ ). Our results support the classification of retirement activity plans into 3 domains. Moreover, the results of structural equation models confirm that the activities for which older workers plan are related to their opportunity structure (i.e., occupational status, number of preretirement leisure activities, number of social roles), spousal support to engage in these activities, and older workers' perception of time (i.e., future time perspective, perceived life expectancy). Our findings can help identify older workers who might face a more difficult retirement transition, because they have fewer plans to address the various psychosocial aspects of retirement.

*Keywords:* nonfinancial retirement planning, bridge employment, leisure activities, continuity theory, resource perspective

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Populations are aging and consequently an increasing number of workers reaches retirement age (Ekerdt, 2010). The switch from employment within an established career to retirement is consid-

ered a major life course transition for older workers, with many accompanying challenges (Wang & Shultz, 2010). There is substantial heterogeneity in workers' adjustment to this transition (Calasanti, 1996; Kim & Moen, 2002; Perreira & Sloan, 2001; Van Solinge & Henkens, 2008; Wang, 2007). Given that both financial and nonfinancial retirement planning facilitate adjustment to retirement for older workers, it is important to gain further insight into their retirement plans and what precedes these plans. Currently, retirement planning is predominantly studied from a financial perspective. This study focuses on nonfinancial planning and its precursors.

In general, planning for retirement shows a positive relationship with several beneficial retirement outcomes. For instance, retirement planning positively affects retirement satisfaction, adjustment, health, and wellbeing (Earl, Bednall, & Muratore, 2015; Noone, Stephens, & Alpass, 2009; Quick & Moen, 1998). Currently, retirement planning research is predominately focused on older workers' financial plans for retirement; for example, to gain more insight into how older workers save money for retirement (Van Rooij, Lusardi, & Alessie, 2012). Alongside financial

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changes, retirement also consists of various nonfinancial, psychosocial changes. For instance, employment as part of an established career may provide older workers with a valuable way of spending their day and with key social relationships with coworkers. In retirement, former workers have to compensate for the loss of these (social) aspects. Hence, older workers can be expected to plan not only for the financial implications of retirement but also for the psychosocial changes, such as their retirement activities. Unfortunately, little research to date has focused on older workers' plans to engage in these activities. Moffatt and Heaven's (2017) explorative qualitative study showed that older workers and retirees were more inclined to plan for the financial rather than the psychosocial aspects of retirement. Moen, Huang, Plassmann, and Dentinger (2006) demonstrated that older workers' propensity for financial and lifestyle planning is affected by their spouse's propensity to plan in these domains. The main aim of this study was not to gain further insight into older workers' plans for retirement activities, but rather how dual-earner couples affect each other's overall propensity for financial and lifestyle planning in retirement.

Other studies on retirement have considered the ways in which older workers prepare for retirement and the factors affecting these preparations. For instance, Petkoska and Earl (2009) asked people whether they read books or visited web sites to gain more insight into people's preparation in the financial, health, (social) leisure, and work domains. They showed that people's preparation in these domains is affected by both demographic and psychological determinants. Studies of retirement preparation to date have focused on how people plan for retirement (i.e., retirement activity preparation) rather than on which activities they plan for in retirement. Conversely, our study specifically focuses on the question of what kind of retirement activities older workers plan to engage in. These plans allow older workers to set goals about the activities they wish to undertake in retirement. We argue that this goalsetting aspect of planning behavior is the main aspect facilitating retirement adjustment (Adams & Beehr, 2003). As an illustration, older workers may have clear plans to take new courses in retirement. Even if these plans are never actually carried out, they might still offer people a clearer picture of the psychosocial changes of retirement and thereby improve their adjustment to these changes.

This study contributes to the retirement literature in three ways. First, it offers an exploratory view of the activities older workers plan to do during retirement. In general, little is known about older workers' plans for retirement activities as opposed to their financial planning. The first aim of this study is therefore to provide insights into older workers' plans for activities in retirement, that is, for which retirement activities do older workers have clear, vague, or no plans?

Second, our study offers a theory-driven categorization of older workers' retirement activity plans. Based on our theoretical framework, we categorize older workers' plans for activities in retirement into (a) bridge employment, (b) self-developmental leisure, and (c) social leisure. Bridge employment refers to older workers' plans to keep doing some form of paid work in retirement. Self-developmental leisure encompasses older workers' retirement plans for leisure in which they either reinforce and develop pre-existing skills or acquire new skills and knowledge. For example, older workers may plan to pick up former hobbies or to take new

courses. Social leisure refers to social retirement activities, such as plans to meet friends or family more often.

Third, our study aims to explain retirement activity plans by including structural, social, and psychological precursors in our model. Building on continuity and role theory and taking a resource perspective, we argue that the extent to which older workers have plans for each of the three retirement activity domains is affected by their (a) opportunities for continuity, (b) spousal support to engage in retirement activities, and (c) time perception. To date, little is known about how these precursors affect older workers' psychosocial retirement plans in general and older workers' plans for activities in retirement specifically.

In this study, we use Dutch data from the first wave of the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute Pension Panel Study (NPPS). This multiactor survey was carried out among 6,793 workers aged 60 to 65 and (where applicable) their spouses. We use structural equation modeling to analyze older workers' plans for activities in retirement and the precursors of these plans.

## Theoretical Background

Lachman and Firth (2004) argued that "having a sense of control over outcomes in key life domains helps one to negotiate challenges and demands and to minimize the negative consequences of declines and losses associated with aging" (p. 320). The retirement transition contains many of these challenges and demands. Because planning for the future provides people with a sense of control (Lachman & Firth, 2004), older workers benefit from plans for their time in retirement.

Planning for the future allows people to set goals on which they can focus. Goalsetting is an important and beneficial self-management technique, which increases people's self-efficacy; it makes them more confident in their capabilities (Latham & Locke, 1991). Concerning retirement, Adams and Beehr (2003) stated that "retirement planning may influence adjustment by allowing prospective retirees to develop realistic expectations of retirement and by encouraging retirees to set goals for their financial, health-oriented, and social well-being" (p. 59). Plans to engage in specific activities in retirement may facilitate retirement adjustment because they allow older workers to set goals for the psychosocial aspects of retirement.

## Challenges of the Retirement Transition

Employment not only provides workers with financial security, but also with various nonfinancial benefits (Jahoda, 1981). A job offers workers the opportunity to spend their days in structured and meaningful ways (Christiansen, 1999). Workers also often develop important social relationships at work and derive social status from their jobs (Atchley, 1989; Helliwell, 2006; Weiss, 2005). Hence, the retirement transition presents older workers with several psychosocial changes, in that they must compensate for the loss of their career job in terms of day-to-day activities and social relationships.

According to continuity theory (Atchley, 1989), people strive to uphold both internal and external structures in older age. Importantly, continuity is not the opposite of change. Rather, people aim to maintain their self-concept (i.e., internal continuity) and social world (i.e., external continuity) even when the context is changing.

The transition to retirement implies such contextual changes. In the face of changing circumstances, older workers attempt to remain 'who they are' and maintain their social environment. Workers might achieve this by engaging in retirement activities that reaffirm their self-concept and strengthen their social network. As with an older worker's career employment, activities in retirement can provide a structured and meaningful way to spend one's day. Retirement activities and continuity of existing life patterns are important determinants of successful aging, life satisfaction, and retirement adjustment (Earl, Gerrans, & Halim, 2015; Ekerdt, 1986; Longino & Kart, 1982; Nimrod, 2007; Paillard-Borg, Wang, Winblad, & Fratiglioni, 2009).

According to role theory, the retirement transition is characterized by role exit. When older workers retire, they lose their specific work role and need to attain a retirement role (Riley & Riley, 1994; Wang, Henkens, & van Solinge, 2011). People who are not able to take on a fitting retirement role may experience low levels of wellbeing in retirement (Riley & Riley, 1994; Wang et al., 2011). Older workers might compensate for the loss of the work role by taking on a familial role, meaning that they spend more time with their spouses or families. Social relationships such as these have numerous benefits. In general, people with better social integration show lower mortality rates than people who are less socially integrated (Holt-Lunstad, Smith, Baker, Harris, & Stephenson, 2015). In retirement, supportive interactions with family and friends have been associated with greater life satisfaction and decreased loneliness (Adams, Leibbrandt, & Moon, 2011; Chen & Feeley, 2014; Hong & Duff, 1997; Levitt, Antonucci, Clark, Rotton, & Finley, 1986). Older workers also seem to anticipate that insufficient role substitution hinders their retirement adjustment: workers who expect to feel isolated and to miss relationships with their colleagues are less likely to express an intention to retire (Adams & Beehr, 1998). We argue that older workers may plan to engage in retirement activities to maintain the internal and external structure of their lives, and may plan to find acknowledged social roles that substitute for their career role.

## Retirement Activities

Based on continuity and role theory, we suggest three types of activities that are particularly important in the development of plans for retirement activities. Engaging in bridge employment, self-developmental leisure activities, and social leisure can all contribute to internal and external continuity throughout the retirement transition and toward a sustainable retirement role.

Older workers are generally considered to be bridge employees if they have retired from their career employment, but still undertake paid work, often with more flexible arrangements. Bridge employment is often argued to facilitate the retirement transition (Dingemans & Henkens, 2014; Kim & Feldman, 2000; Wang & Shi, 2014). Some older workers might plan to continue in paid work to ease their way into a retirement role. Others might see retirement as an opportunity to switch careers or work for a different organization. In our study, we aim to capture all these different aspects by including plans for three different types of bridge employment in which older workers might intend to engage: continuation of paid work, self-employment, and occasional work for their former employer.

Self-developmental leisure includes any leisure activity that has a component of growth and thus allows retirees to express themselves and to reaffirm their self-concept. When engaging in activities in this domain, retirees might either further develop preexisting skills or acquire new skills and knowledge. Often, self-developmental activities also offer retirees a sense of structure that is similar to their former employment (Atchley, 1989; Ekerdt, 1986; Nimrod, 2007). We define self-developmental leisure rather broadly, because even though the activities studied here stimulate development in different areas, they all contribute to retirees' growth and offer the basis for successful adaptation to retirement. In our study, we group together three self-developmental leisure activities older workers might plan to engage in after retirement: to take new courses, to return to former hobbies, and to be creative.

Social leisure describes social activities that facilitate the retirement transition of older workers by maintaining their social networks and retaining a feeling of being socially valued, as well as helping them to create an appropriate retirement role (Adams et al., 2011; Lemon, Bengtson, & Peterson, 1972; Maddox, 1963). In previous studies, social leisure has often been seen as a separate category of activities (Kridahl, 2014; Lee, Min, & Chi, 2018). In our study, we focus on four types of plans older workers might have for social leisure after retirement: to spend time with their spouse, to spend time with their family, to spend time with their friends, and to reconnect with former social contacts.

## Predictors of Plans for Retirement Activities

According to a resource perspective, the activities in which older workers plan to engage after retirement are related to their resources, or the "total capability an individual has to fulfill his or her centrally valued needs" (Wang et al., 2011, p. 3). Wang and colleagues suggested that resources can take physical, cognitive, motivational, financial, social, and emotional forms. In this study, we distinguish between structural, social, and psychological resources. Structural resources reside in the context in which older workers retire and originate from decisions they made earlier in their lives. Continuity theory suggests that when approaching retirement, structural resources provide the opportunity to engage in activities that contribute to internal and external continuity. According to role theory, structural resources in the form of social relationships provide the opportunity structure to compensate for the loss of one's work role with a social role. Social resources, in line with Wang and colleagues, are related to the social support older workers receive for engaging in specific activities in retirement. Psychological resources, as defined here, are most closely associated with what Wang and colleagues termed motivational resources and indicate a tendency of older workers to plan for their future in retirement. Implicitly, physical, financial, and emotional resources as mentioned by Wang and colleagues are also represented in this study. Older workers are most likely to plan to engage in activities after retirement where these fit their resources. We now consider in detail the three types of resources deemed most important in the context of plans for retirement activities: opportunities for continuity (structural), support from one's spouse (social), and perceptions of time (psychological).

**Opportunities for continuity.** Opportunities to engage in bridge employment, self-developmental leisure, and social leisure are constrained by the retirement context that partially arises from

earlier life choices. This corresponds to the idea of agency within structure of the live course perspective (Elder & Giele, 2009). What constitutes an opportunity for continuity differs by the type of retirement activity of interest. We therefore distinguish between opportunities for self-developmental leisure, bridge employment, and social leisure. We argue that older workers with more opportunities in each of these domains are less restricted in their plans to engage in specific activities after retirement. Thus, our central hypothesis (*opportunities-for-continuity hypothesis*) is that the more opportunities older workers have in a domain, the more likely they are to have plans in that domain.

Opportunities and motivations to engage in bridge employment differ by occupational status. Workers in lower-status jobs might benefit most from the additional income from a bridge job, but the better educated are more likely to be rehired by employers after having retired due to their previous investment in education (Oude Mulders, van Dalen, Henkens, & Schippers, 2014). Moreover, a higher occupational status also indicates higher intrinsic motivation and commitment to the work role (Dysvik & Kuvaas, 2013), which makes bridge employment more attractive for those in high-status jobs. Previous studies have shown that workers with a higher occupational status are more likely to participate in bridge employment and more successful at finding bridge jobs (Dingemans, Henkens, & Solinge, 2016). Overall, we expect that the higher older workers' occupational status, the more likely they are to plan for bridge employment.

Older workers also differ in their opportunities to engage in self-developmental leisure. Some workers engage in many different self-developmental leisure activities, such as courses or hobbies, while they are still active in the labor force, whereas others are largely inactive outside work. It is much easier to extend activities in which one already engages than to pick up new ones (Earl, Gerrans, et al., 2015). Thus, older workers who are active in a larger number of activities are assumed to have more opportunities for self-developmental leisure in retirement. The extent to which older workers participate in different self-developmental leisure activities before retirement could affect the extent to which they plan to participate in them during retirement. We therefore expect that the larger the number of self-developmental leisure activities older workers engage in before retirement, the more likely they are to plan for self-developmental leisure in retirement.

Similarly, older workers differ with regard to the opportunities they have to engage in social leisure. Some workers have many different types of connection to other people and thus many social roles, such as being a grandparent, parent, spouse, or sibling. Other workers rely solely on friendships. Older workers who have more social roles have more opportunities to engage in social leisure activities. It is more difficult to engage in social leisure if one only has a limited number of social roles. Therefore, we expect that the larger the number of social roles that older workers have, the more likely they are to have plans for social leisure in retirement.

**Spousal support.** Spouses can provide workers with affection and guidance and have a strong influence on various aspects of one's life (Settersten, 2003; Szinovacz, 2012). It can be expected that workers see their spouses as valid sources of information, aim to maintain a good relationship with them, and want to see themselves a good member of the couple. All of these have been shown to facilitate social influence (Cialdini & Trost, 1998). With regard to retirement, spousal support has been shown to affect when older

workers prefer to and actually do retire (Eismann, Henkens, & Kalmijn, in press; Henkens, 1999; Szinovacz & DeViney, 2000). Among dual-earner couples, spouses influence each other's preferences for joint retirement (Eismann, Henkens, & Kalmijn, 2017) and one partner's propensity to plan for retirement has been shown to affect the other partner's propensity to plan (Moen et al., 2006). Therefore, we expect that, for older workers who have a spouse, spousal support is an important determinant of workers' plans for retirement activities. We hypothesize that the more spousal support older workers receive for engaging in bridge employment, self-developmental leisure, or social leisure, the more likely they are to have plans for activities in the respective domain (*spousal-support hypothesis*).

**Perception of time.** Older workers differ with regard to how they perceive time. This perception of time can fundamentally influence how they plan for the future. We expect two types of time perception to be particularly important in the context of retirement: first, the degree to which an older worker is oriented toward the future (future time perspective) and second, how long an older worker expects the "future" to be (perceived life expectancy). Our central hypothesis is that the more older workers' perceptions of time lead them to think about retirement, the more likely they are to have plans in all retirement activity domains (*time-perception hypothesis*).

People who are future-oriented like to think about the future; they are curious what it has to offer and are likely to plan ahead (Lang & Carstensen, 2002; Prenda & Lachman, 2001). This general tendency is likely to encourage older workers to think about the many aspects of retirement, to imagine what life as a retiree would be like in some detail, and to make plans for the transition. These plans would probably include all possible domains of retirement activities. Therefore, we expect that the more strongly older workers are oriented toward the future, the more likely they are to plan for bridge employment, self-developmental leisure, and social leisure in retirement.

Older workers differ with regard to their perceived life expectancy. Given that retirement encompasses the life phase spanning the period from labor force exit until death, workers who expect to live longer also expect to be retirees for a longer period of time. This might induce them to plan to participate in more activities in retirement. This is in line with Griffin, Hesketh, and Loh (2012), who argued that "those who expect to live longer may feel that they have time to engage in both work and non-work activities" (p. 130). We expect that the greater older workers estimate their chances of reaching advanced old age, the more likely they are to plan for bridge employment, self-developmental leisure, and social leisure in retirement.

## Method

### Sample

This study used data from the first wave of the Pension Panel Study carried out by the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute in 2015. The data were collected from a stratified sample of 60- to 65-year-old members of three large pension funds in the Netherlands (representing workers in government, education, social care, health, and construction), covering 49% of the Dutch workforce. A postal questionnaire was sent to 15,480 older

workers and, where applicable, their spouses. In total, 6,793 workers returned the questionnaire (response rate 44%). Selective non-response with respect to gender, age, sector of employment, and size of employing organization was limited (Henkens, Van Solinge, Damman, & Dingemans, 2017). We excluded older workers who received a shortened version of the questionnaire ( $n = 499$ ) and workers who did not respond to any of the 10 items regarding their plans for retirement activities ( $n = 46$ ), leaving a final dataset of 6,248 respondents. Item nonresponse was relatively low (3%) and never exceeded six percent for any single measure. Under these circumstances, less rigorous missing data procedures than multiple imputation are generally acceptable (Little, Jorgensen, Lang, & Moore, 2014). We therefore dealt with missing data by single stochastic regression imputation (`mi impute chained` in Stata Version 14,  $m = 1$ ; Enders, 2010).

To investigate the effect of spousal support on older workers' plans for retirement activities, we analyzed a subsample of workers who indicated that they had a spouse ( $n = 5,065$ ). Of these spouses, 81% returned their questionnaire, leaving a sample of 4,116 couples. Couples in which either the older worker ( $n = 15$ ) or the spouse ( $n = 52$ ) did not respond to any of the 10 items measuring plans and support for activities in retirement were excluded. The final dataset consisted of 4,052 couples. Again, item nonresponse was low (2%), never exceeded five percent for any one measure, and was dealt with by single stochastic regression imputation.

## Measures

**Plans for retirement activities.** We measured older workers' plans for activities in retirement by asking the following question: "Some people have clear plans for their life in retirement, others have no plans. Those plans could also vary a lot. When thinking about your life in retirement, in what areas have you made plans?" People indicated whether they had *no plans* (1), *vague plans* (2), or *clear plans* (3) for 10 different activities. Bridge employment plans were indicated by the following three items: continuation of paid work, self-employment, and occasional work for former employer. Self-developmental leisure plans were indicated by the following three items: take new courses, be creative, and resume hobbies.<sup>1</sup> Social leisure plans were indicated by the following four items: reconnect with former social contacts, spend a lot of time with family, spend a lot of time with friends, and do a lot of things with spouse.

**Opportunities for continuity.** Older workers' opportunity for bridge employment was based on their occupational status. We derived participants' occupational status from their answer to the open question, "What is your job or profession?" and the closed question, "In which category could your job or profession be grouped?" with the following answer categories: (a) higher professional occupation, (b) higher managerial occupation, (c) intermediate professional occupation, (d) intermediate managerial or commercial occupation, (e) administrative and other nonmanual work, (f) lower supervisory and technical occupation, (g) semi-routine occupation, (h) routine occupation, (i) agricultural occupation, and (j) do not know. The answers to both questions were coded according to the 2008 international socioeconomic index of occupational status (ISEI; Ganzeboom, Degraaf, Treiman, & Deleeuw, 1992), standardized, and combined in a single, continuous

measure of occupational status based on a sample of all responding older workers (for more detail, see Henkens et al., 2017). A higher score on the international socioeconomic index of occupational status indicates a higher occupational status and thus more job-related opportunities.

To determine older workers' opportunities for self-developmental leisure, we asked participants, "How many hours do you spend on average each week on the following leisure activities?" Workers could indicate that they currently engaged in any of the following five activities: gardening and household maintenance; hobbies; study, courses, or lectures; reading; and volunteering.<sup>2</sup> We counted the number of different activities, ranging from zero to five. The more different activities older workers engaged in, the more opportunities they had to continue self-developmental leisure activities in retirement.

We derived older workers' opportunities for continuity in social leisure from the question, "How frequently do you see the following persons?" Answer categories included frequencies from *daily* to *rarely or never*, but also *not applicable*. Participants' answers were used to determine whether any of the following six social roles applied to them: parent, grandparent, child, child-in-law, brother or sister, and friend. When data from the foregoing question were missing, we enriched the information on social roles using other variables. Specifically, information was available on whether respondents had children or grandchildren. Moreover, older workers indicated whether they cared for a sibling, which also provides information on whether workers had any siblings. In addition to the roles mentioned above, we derived workers' relationship status from the question "Do you have a spouse?" (responses were *yes, I am married*; *yes, I cohabit with a partner*; *yet, I have a partner, but we do not live together*; and *no, I am single*). We coded this question such that the role of spouse applied where workers were in any kind of romantic relationship. In total, older workers could have a minimum of zero and a maximum of seven social roles. The more different social roles older workers performed, the more opportunities they had to engage in social leisure opportunities in retirement.

**Spousal support.** In the sample of older workers with a spouse, spousal support for older workers to engage in retirement activities was measured by asking spouses the following question: "How would you feel if your wife/husband/spouse after retirement . . .?" Spouses could indicate their support for the same 10 retirement activities that workers were also asked about (see "Plans for retirement activities"). Responses could be given on a 5-point scale (1 = *strongly in favor* to 5 = *strongly opposed*). The items were grouped into spousal support to engage in bridge employment (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .73$ ), self-developmental leisure (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .68$ ), and social leisure (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .61$ ).

<sup>1</sup> Initially, we included an item on physical exercise (RMSEA = .06; CFI = .83; TLI = .77; SRMR = .06). Model fit improved substantially when this item was removed. Theoretically, removing this item seemed warranted, because it measures physical development, while the other three items measure cognitive development.

<sup>2</sup> Given that we excluded the item on physical exercise from the measure of self-developmental leisure plans, the items "sports" and "other physical activity" were irrelevant as measure of opportunities for self-developmental leisure and were thus excluded. We also excluded the item "shopping (not grocery shopping)," because it does not offer the same opportunity for self-developmental leisure upon retirement as the other activities in the list.

**Perception of time.** We derived older workers' future time perspective from their responses to the following three items: "It is important to take a long-term perspective on life," "I enjoy making plans for the future," and "I pretty much live on a day-to-day basis" (reverse coded). Answer categories ranged from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 5 (*totally agree*) on a 5-point scale. The average of all three items was taken as a continuous indicator (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .60$ ), with higher scores indicating a stronger orientation toward the future (Hershey & Mowen, 2000).

Older workers' perceived life expectancy was measured using the question, "How likely do you think it is that you will live to the age of 80?" Answer categories ranged from 1 (*highly unlikely*) to 5 (*highly likely*) on a 5-point scale. Thus, a higher score indicated a higher perceived life expectancy.

**Control variables.** We controlled for older workers' gender, age, health, and financial satisfaction in all analyses. Workers' gender was determined based on their answer to the question, "Are you a man or a woman?" Workers were further asked to characterize their health in general (physical resource), giving them the possibility to rate it on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*very poor*) to 5 (*excellent*). Financial satisfaction (financial resource) was measured using the question, "How satisfied are you with your financial situation?" and life satisfaction (emotional resource) was measured using the question, "How satisfied are you with your life as a whole?" Both questions could be answered on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*extremely dissatisfied*) to 7 (*extremely satisfied*).

### Analytic Strategy

Using our sample of 6,240 older workers, we first tested our hypothesized categorization of plans for retirement activities into bridge employment, self-developmental leisure, and social leisure. We used structural equation modeling with a weighted least squares estimator—`sem, method(adf)` in Stata 14—to compare our three-factor solution to a solution with a single factor. Model fit was assessed by chi-square tests. Further comparisons were made based on the root mean square error of approximation

(RMSEA), the comparative fit index (CFI), the Tucker–Lewis index (TLI), and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR).

To test the effects of opportunities for continuity and time perception on plans for the three types of retirement activities, we estimated a structural equation model (with a weighted least squares estimator) in which each type of plan was a latent factor determined by its respective items and in which the independent and control factors were regressed on all three types of plans. For a visual representation of this model, see Figure 1. In an additional analysis based only on the subgroup of older workers with a spouse ( $N = 4,052$ ), we added spouses' support for bridge employment, self-developmental leisure, and social leisure as independent variables. Support in each domain was modeled as a latent factor determined by its respective items.

## Results

### Plans for Retirement Activities

To gain general insights into older workers' plans for activities in retirement, the share of older workers with clear, vague, or no plans for each retirement activity is depicted in Table 1. Most older workers had no plans for any kind of bridge employment. Less than six percent of older workers had clear plans to work, and between 12 and 24% had vague plans to engage in any form of bridge employment. Older workers had mixed plans for self-developmental leisure activities. Many had clear plans to resume old hobbies (47%), but only few had clear plans to take new courses (13%). Plans for social leisure were also mixed. While 50% had no plans to reconnect with former social contacts, many had clear plans to do many things with their spouses (58%). Table 2 presents the mean, standard deviation, standardized factor loading, and correlation of all 10 retirement activity items. For an overview of correlations of all study variables see Table S1 (full sample) and S2 (couple sample) in the online supplemental mate-

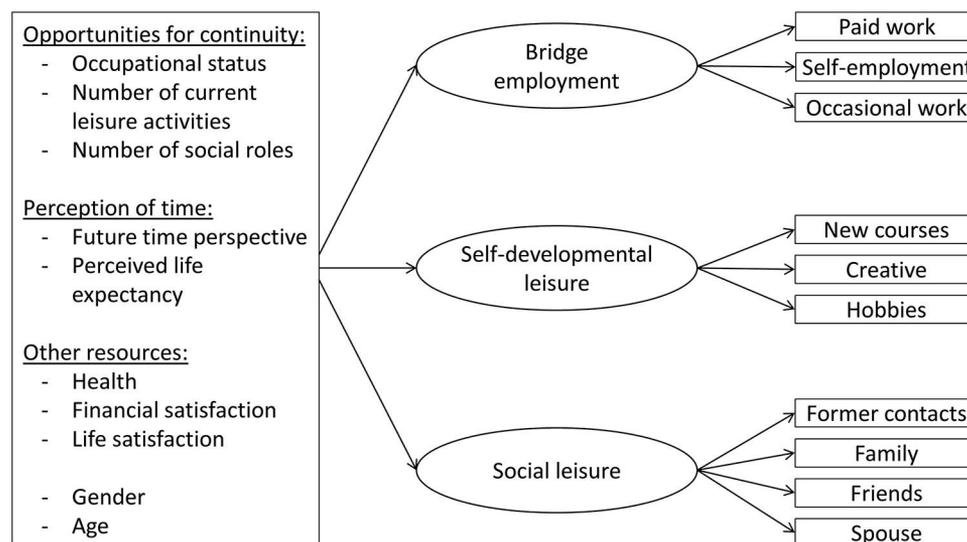


Figure 1. Visual representation of the model for the whole sample.

Table 1  
*Older Workers' Plans for Specific Retirement Activities*  
 (N = 6,248)

Retirement activities	Plans for activities (%)		
	No plans	Vague plans	Clear plans
Bridge employment			
Continuation of paid work	70	24	5
Self-employment	85	12	4
Occasional work for former employer	73	23	3
Self-developmental leisure			
Take new courses	52	35	13
Be creative	23	41	36
Resume hobbies	13	40	47
Social leisure			
Reconnect with former social contacts	50	40	10
Spend a lot of time with family	28	47	26
Spend a lot of time with friends	26	42	32
Do a lot of things with spouse	20	22	58

rials. Means and standard deviations of all dependent, independent, and control variables are shown in Table 3.

Chi-square tests of model fit revealed significant results for both the one-factor model,  $\chi^2(35) = 1,838.38, p < .001$ , and the three-factor model,  $\chi^2(32) = 484.68, p < .001$ , suggesting sub-optimal model fit. Chi-square tests tend to be significant in larger samples such as the one used here. We also investigated other fit indices to get a broader picture of model fit and the comparison between the two models. In support of our hypothesized model, the three-factor distinction (RMSEA = .05; CFI = .91; TLI = .87; SRMR = .04) of older workers' plans for retirement activities fit the data better than the one-factor model (RMSEA = .09; CFI = .60; TLI = .50; SRMR = .10) according to these indices. In the three-factor model, all items were significantly loaded on their respective domain with standardized factor loadings ranging from .25 to .99 (see Table 2).<sup>3</sup>

### Predictors of Plans for Retirement Activities

Table 4 shows the results of the structural equation model estimating the effects of older workers' opportunities for continuity and perceptions of time on their plans for retirement activities. Table 5 shows the structural equation model for the subgroup of older workers with a spouse. Here, spousal support was included as a determinant of workers' retirement activity plans. Both tables depict the effects on plans for bridge employment (column 1), self-developmental leisure (column 2), and social leisure (column 3). In both models, we use a weighted least squares estimator and present standardized coefficients.

In line with our *opportunities-for-continuity hypothesis*, the more opportunities older workers had in each of the retirement activity domains, the more likely they were to have plans in the respective domain. As can be seen from Table 4, older workers in jobs with higher occupational status were significantly more likely to plan to engage in bridge employment, older workers with a higher number of current leisure activities were significantly more likely to plan to engage in self-developmental leisure, and older workers with a high number of social roles were significantly more likely to plan to engage in social leisure. In exploratory analyses

(results not shown) we also investigated the interaction effects of workers' gender with opportunities for continuity in each of the three activity domains. Interestingly, we found that occupational status had a stronger effect on plans for bridge employment among male than among female workers,  $\beta = -.05, p = .037$ . The effect of current leisure activities on plans for self-developmental leisure did not significantly differ by gender,  $\beta = .09, p = .099$ . We found social roles to be more strongly associated with plans for social leisure among female than among male workers,  $\beta = .31, p = .002$ .

We found some support for our *spousal-support hypothesis*. As can be seen from Table 5, older workers whose spouse supported them to engage in bridge employment were significantly more likely to have plans for bridge employment and older workers whose spouse supported them to engage in self-developmental leisure were significantly more likely to have plans for self-developmental leisure activities. Spousal support for social leisure did not significantly affect older workers' plans for social leisure activities ( $p = .077$ ). Interestingly, spousal support in one domain sometimes had a discouraging effect on planning activities in another. Spousal support for bridge employment was associated with lower levels of older workers' planning for self-developmental and social leisure activities. Spousal support for social leisure was associated with lower levels of older workers' planning for self-developmental leisure activities.

As can be seen from Table 4, our results provide partial support for our *time-perception hypothesis*. As expected, the more future-oriented older workers were, the more likely they were to have plans for self-developmental leisure and social leisure. However, a future time perspective did not show the hypothesized effect on older workers' plans to engage in bridge employment. With regard to perceived life expectancy, we found the hypothesized effect that older workers who expected to reach an older age were more likely to plan for bridge employment. However, perceived life expectancy did not show the hypothesized effect on older workers' plans to engage in either self-developmental or social leisure.

With regard to the control variables, Table 4 shows that women were significantly less likely to plan for bridge employment, but more likely to plan for self-developmental leisure. The older workers were, the more likely they were to plan for bridge employment but the less likely they were to have plans for social leisure. Workers who considered themselves to be in better health were more likely to have plans for bridge employment and less likely to have plans for self-developmental and social leisure. The more satisfied older workers were with their financial situation, the less likely they were to have plans for bridge employment and self-developmental leisure. The more satisfied older workers were with their life in general, the more likely they were to have plans for self-developmental and social leisure.

<sup>3</sup> The items occasional work for former employer, take new courses, and do many things with spouse load on their respective domain relatively weakly. When excluding the item occasional work for former employer, the model no longer converged. When excluding take new courses (RMSEA = .04; CFI = .94; TLI = .91; SRMR = .04) or do many things with spouse (RMSEA = .05; CFI = .93; TLI = .90; SRMR = .05), model fit increased slightly. Given that there is not theoretical reason to exclude these items and that the main findings remained essentially the same after excluding them, we decided to retain these items despite their relatively low factor loadings.

Table 2

Mean, Standard Deviation, Standardized Factor Loading, and Pairwise Correlation of Retirement Activity Plans ( $N = 6,248$ )

Retirement activity plans	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Factor loadings	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Bridge employment													
1. Continuation of paid work	1.35	.58	.99***	—									
2. Self-employment	1.19	.48	.49***	.50***	—								
3. Occasional work for former employer	1.30	.53	.28***	.29***	.16***	—							
Self-developmental leisure													
4. Take new courses	1.62	.71	.25***	.08***	.14***	.02	—						
5. Be creative	2.13	.76	.74***	.02	.03*	.04**	.18***	—					
6. Resume hobbies	2.35	.69	.80***	-.04**	-.01	.01	.17***	.58***	—				
Social leisure													
7. Reconnect with former social contacts	1.60	.66	.49***	.03**	.04**	.08***	.14***	.24***	.23***	—			
8. Spend a lot of time with family	1.98	.73	.68***	.01	-.00	.03*	.15***	.23***	.23***	.35***	—		
9. Spend a lot of time with friends	2.05	.76	.70***	-.02	-.05***	.03**	.06***	.24***	.26***	.29***	.48***	—	
10. Do many things with spouse	2.39	.79	.26***	-.05***	-.05***	-.03*	-.05***	.10***	.17***	.05***	.14***	.19***	—

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

## Discussion

Retirement planning facilitates the retirement transition. To date, little is known about nonfinancial retirement plans of older workers in general, and their plans for retirement activities in particular. This study makes the following three contributions to the retirement-planning literature. First, we show that there is much diversity in older workers' plans for activities in retirement: most older workers plan to engage in some self-developmental or social activities but not in bridge employment. Second, our proposed categorization of older workers' plans for retirement activities into bridge employment, self-developmental leisure, and social leisure was supported. Third, plans for activities in retirement were affected by (a) workers' opportunities for continuity, (b)

spousal support for these activities, and (c) workers' perceptions of time.

On a theoretical level, this study offers a test of continuity and role theory, as well as a resource perspective on retirement. In support of continuity theory, we show that older workers' existing internal and external life structures affect their plans for retirement activities (Atchley, 1989). In essence, older workers aim to maintain existing activities and relationships by making plans for similar activities in retirement; when people make plans for the future they rely on what they currently know. Interestingly, occupational status was particularly important for male workers' plans for bridge employment. This is in line with literature suggesting that men prioritize the work role (Pleck, 1977). Thus, given the same opportunity to continue employment, men might profit more from their occupational status when planning for bridge employment. With regard to role theory, our study suggests that older workers plan to spend considerable time in retirement with either family or friends—at least if they have the opportunity to do so. They seem to anticipate that these social relationships might provide them the possibility to attain a new role in retirement. Interestingly, social roles were more important for female than male workers' plans for social leisure. This is in line with literature suggesting that women have closer social ties (Aukett, Ritchie, & Mill, 1988; Bank & Hansford, 2000). Thus, given the same number of social roles, women might profit more from these roles when adapting to retirement. The results with regard to the resource-based dynamic theory were mixed. Some types of resources seem to be more closely related to the retirement activities studied than others. We show that workers' perceptions of the future and their motivation to plan for it were important when they make plans for their activities in retirement. The two motivational processes investigated here affect older workers' plans in different but complementary ways. Older workers who are oriented toward the future were more likely to focus on the leisure aspects, whereas those who expect to live longer were more likely to contemplate engaging in some form of work after having retired. The latter group might have felt that they will have enough time to enjoy leisure activities even if they engage in bridge employment for a while. They might also have been motivated by the wish to save more for retirement.

Table 3

Mean and Standard Deviation of Dependent, Independent, and Control Variables ( $N = 6,248$ )

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Retirement activity plans (predicted)		
Bridge employment plans	.02	.57
Self-developmental leisure plans	.00	.15
Social leisure plans	-.00	.27
Opportunities for continuity		
Occupational status	-.04	.95
Number of current leisure activities	3.10	1.10
Number of social roles	4.71	1.22
Spousal support (predicted) <sup>a</sup>		
Support for bridge employment	-.01	.53
Support for self-developmental leisure	.00	.25
Support for social leisure	.00	.28
Perception of time		
Future time perspective	3.63	.68
Perceived life expectancy	3.41	.86
Control variables		
Gender (reference = male)	.45	.50
Age	62.02	1.60
Health	3.20	.86
Financial satisfaction	5.42	1.00
Life satisfaction	5.47	.91

<sup>a</sup> Based on the subgroup of older workers with a spouse ( $N = 4,052$ ).

Table 4  
*Structural Equation Model Results of the Effect of Opportunity Structure and Time Perception on Retirement Plans to Engage in Bridge Employment, Self-Developmental Leisure, and Social Leisure (N = 6,248)*

Independent variables	Bridge employment		Self-developmental leisure		Social leisure	
	Std. Coef.	SE	Std. Coef.	SE	Std. Coef.	SE
Opportunities for continuity						
Occupational status	.17***	.01	.02	.01	-.05**	.00
Number of current leisure activities	.04*	.01	.34***	.01	.07***	.00
Number of social roles	.04**	.01	.08***	.00	.39***	.00
Perception of time						
Future time perspective	.03	.01	.29***	.01	.32***	.01
Perceived life expectancy	.08***	.01	.03	.01	.01	.00
Control variables						
Gender (reference = male)	-.19***	.01	.07**	.01	.04	.01
Age	.05***	.00	-.01	.00	-.06***	.00
Health	.07***	.01	-.05**	.01	-.08***	.00
Financial satisfaction	-.14***	.01	-.06**	.01	-.02	.00
Life satisfaction	.02	.01	.05**	.01	.20***	.00
R <sup>2</sup>	.10		.25		.33	

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Social resources were clearly associated with plans for retirement activities, thus supporting a resource perspective on retirement. Importantly, spousal support for any type of retirement activity did not translate into a general tendency to plan, but, with the exception of social leisure, most strongly affected plans for the specific type of activity that was supported. We implicitly also tested the effects of physical, financial and emotional resources on plans for retirement activities. The results for these resources are mixed. Some effects of health and financial satisfaction were contrary to what might be expected from a resource perspective, while the

results for life satisfaction support a resource perspective on retirement activities. Our measures of these resources are rather crude, so testing the validity of a resource perspective on retirement activities requires further research. It is, however, likely that at least the negative association between financial resources and plans for bridge employment will emerge again in future studies, because bridge employment offers those with fewer financial means the opportunity to add to their retirement income. Future research is also needed to test the effect of cognitive resources, such as processing speed and working memory, on plans for

Table 5  
*Structural Equation Model Results of the Effect of Opportunity Structure, Spousal Support, and Time Perception on Retirement Plans to Engage in Bridge Employment, Self-Developmental Leisure, and Social Leisure (N = 4,052)*

Independent variables	Bridge employment		Self-developmental leisure		Social leisure	
	Std. Coef.	SE	Std. Coef.	SE	Std. Coef.	SE
Opportunities for continuity						
Occupational status	.08***	.01	-.03	.01	-.03	.01
Number of current leisure activities	.10***	.01	.32***	.01	.12***	.01
Number of social roles	.05*	.01	-.00	.01	.05*	.01
Spousal support						
For bridge employment	.35***	.02	-.23***	.03	-.25***	.02
For self-developmental leisure	.00	.03	.62***	.06	.12*	.05
For social leisure	.06	.04	-.33***	.08	.13	.06
Perception of time						
Future time perspective	.06**	.01	.28***	.01	.27***	.01
Perceived life expectancy	.01	.01	-.04	.01	-.04	.01
Control variables						
Gender (reference = male)	-.16***	.01	.27***	.02	.36***	.01
Age	.08***	.00	.04*	.00	-.01	.00
Health	.04	.01	-.04	.01	-.06	.01
Financial satisfaction	-.12	.01	-.12	.01	-.08*	.01
Life satisfaction	.06***	.01	.06***	.01	.09***	.01
R <sup>2</sup>	.23		.56		.36	

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

retirement activities. We were unable to test these due to our survey design. However, we might expect cognitive resources to play an important additional role when older workers plan their retirement activities.

On a practical level, our findings may help to identify older workers who are less likely to be prepared for the psychosocial aspects of retirement. These are workers who have fewer opportunities for continuity, receive less spousal support, or are not focused on their future in retirement. Specific interventions that target these aspects of workers' lives before retirement might be successful in encouraging workers to plan for retirement activities. For example, older workers who are oriented toward the present rather than the future may be at risk of having fewer plans for the leisure aspects of retirement; they are therefore less prepared for the psychosocial changes associated with retirement. For these workers, it might be beneficial to organize sessions in which they are encouraged to think about their retirement. Interventions such as these offer older workers the opportunity to create a clearer picture of what their actual retirement might look like and to set their goals accordingly. For older workers with a spouse, the support they receive from their spouse is an additional determinant of the type of plans they make. This points to the importance of spousal involvement in preretirement counseling programs, including where this concerns nonfinancial, psychosocial aspects.

This study has some important strengths. As far as we know, ours is the first study to investigate older workers' plans for retirement activities. We fill a gap in the retirement-planning literature by providing a categorization that can be tested and developed in the future. We also show how older workers' activity plans in three different domains are affected by structural, social and psychological determinants. Another key strength is that we take a multiactor approach to older workers' plans for activities in retirement by investigating social support from their spouse.

Nevertheless, the current study is not without its limitations. First, the national context of our investigation might hamper the generalizability of our findings to other countries. For instance, in the Netherlands the mandatory retirement age is gradually being increased from 65 to 67. This means that the current generation of older workers has to work longer than their predecessors and might thus be less likely to plan for bridge employment after reaching public pension age. Moreover, mandatory retirement policies make labor force exit the default and continued employment the exception. Income inequality is relatively low in the Netherlands and the pension system is comparatively generous. Self-developmental and to some extent social leisure require basic financial means. Therefore, in countries with less retirement security, financial considerations might overshadow the effects of the opportunity structure, social support, and perception of time we find in this study. Participation in organized leisure is common in the Netherlands. Of the 55- to 65-year-olds, 93% engage in hobbies on a weekly basis and on average they spend almost 8.5 hr a week on activities such as sports, photography and painting, music, and acting (Statistics Netherlands, 2014). In countries where fewer opportunities exist, activity plans may be less developed.

Second, the cross-sectional nature of the data limits our ability to test causal effects. Although respondents were on average more than three years from mandatory retirement age, there is a possibility that some older workers might have expanded their leisure activities in anticipation of retirement. In this case, opportunities

for self-developmental leisure would be partly the result of their future plans. This type of reversed causality is less likely in the case of plans for bridge employment and social leisure, because the occupational status of one's last job and the social roles available primarily result from earlier life course decisions and transitions. Another limitation due to the cross-sectional design of our study is that we have no information on how older workers' plans for activities in retirement change over time. It remains unclear whether older workers' plans for bridge employment, self-developmental leisure, or social leisure change when they approach mandatory retirement age. Future studies might investigate to what extent and how older workers' plans for activities in retirement shape actual retirement behavior.

Third, the internal consistency of our measure for future time perspective is rather low. Nonetheless, the effects of this measure on plans for retirement activities are largely in line with our time-perception hypothesis. We expect that future research that uses a more reliable six-item version of this scale (Jacobs-Lawson & Hershey, 2005) will be able to replicate our findings.

Retirement is a new life phase for older workers, with many accompanying challenges and uncertainties. Making plans can help to deal with these. To date, retirement-planning research is dominated by older workers' plans for the financial aspects of retirement. Our study shows that nonfinancial planning for retirement can be separated into different domains and is shaped by a complex interplay of contextual factors, namely older workers' opportunities, social support, and psychological dispositions.

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