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Unpaid productive activities during the retirement process

Theoretical insights and empirical findings

Olga Grünwald, Marleen Damman, Kène Henkens

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Olga Grünwald, PhD

Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI)-KNAW/University of Groningen, University Medical Center Groningen (UMCG: Department of Health Sciences)

Marleen Damman, PhD

Utrecht University (UU: Department of Sociology), Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI)-KNAW/University of Groningen

Kène Henkens, PhD

Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI)-KNAW/University of Groningen, University Medical Center Groningen (UMCG: Department of Health Sciences), University of Amsterdam (UvA: Department of Sociology)

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Introduction

Two parallel demographic trends – declining fertility and increasing longevity – are changing the population structure of most industrialized countries: there are more older and fewer younger people (European Commission, 2019). This development creates a shrinking labor force and challenges the sustainability of the welfare state, especially of pension and social security systems. An essential policy response to population aging has been to increase and extend the labor force participation of older adults (Phillipson, 2019). The extension of working lives is raising concerns about older adults' other engagements in society and, with that, concerns about the welfare of communities and families. If older adults work longer, communities and families may lack services that older adults have traditionally provided in retirement.

This chapter aims to provide an in-depth picture of engagement in unpaid productive activities during the retirement process. We first present conceptual considerations about and previous research on unpaid productive activities during the retirement process. The empirical evidence in this chapter is based on data from the Netherlands. Therefore, we also briefly present the Dutch context regarding retirement and unpaid productive activities, as well as the data source. We provide detailed insights regarding unpaid productive activities by (1) showing empirical insights on *participation* in volunteering, caregiving, and grandparenting, and by (2) presenting empirical insights on how older workers *experience*

informal caregiving and grandparenting. This chapter is concluded by discussing the empirical insights, suggesting avenues for future research and describing the societal implications.

The concept of unpaid productive activities

Early conceptions of later life, and retirement life, viewed social withdrawal and disengagement as inevitable (Johnson & Mutchler, 2014). Older adults' capabilities and skills were considered to decline, and so, older adults would become dependent on the welfare state and their families. In the last decades, this discourse on the aging process and life after retirement has gradually shifted (Moulaert & Biggs, 2013) towards a 'positive gerontology' that emphasized activity and social engagement in the aging process (Johnson & Mutchler, 2014) and the retirement transition (James et al., 2016). Concepts like active aging or productive aging became the guiding policy principles and are prominent in the public and academic discourse about aging and retirement lifestyles (Moulaert & Biggs, 2013). They revolve around the idea that later life is not a period of rest and disengagement but a time for continuous active engagement in several life domains (Boudiny, 2013). With that, the notion of an 'earned retirement' filled with leisure is being challenged: retirement is not the end of activity and productivity, but retirees are encouraged to stay active and engaged for as long as possible in order to maintain their quality of life as well as the welfare of their surroundings (van Dyk, 2014).

The literature mentions several activities through which older adults contribute to their families and communities (Adams et al., 2011) and conceptualizes them as unpaid work (e.g., Di Gessa & Grundy, 2017), civic engagement (e.g., van den Bogaard et al., 2014), or productive activities (e.g., Hank & Stuck, 2008). There is some debate about what specific activities these concepts cover and how to define them (Serrat et al., 2019). Scholars agree,

however, that such activities are socially valued, produce goods and services (Bass & Caro, 2001), and contribute to the well-being of older adults (Adams et al., 2011).

Types of unpaid productive activities

Volunteer work is probably the most recognized way older adults, particularly retirees, can *formally* contribute to society. It is the "unpaid work provided to parties to whom the worker owes no contractual, familial or friendship obligations" (Wilson & Musick, 1997, p.694), and includes "any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group, or organization" (Wilson, 2000, p.215). The enormous attention paid to volunteering in later life comes mainly because of the win-win nature of volunteering. It serves as a way to strengthen civil society and to improve the well-being of those doing it (Morrow-Howell, 2010).

Ideas of productivity can also extend to contributions that older adults make within their social networks (Glaser & Hank, 2018), such as providing informal care or looking after grandchildren. Contributions of older adults as caregivers have received generally less attention in debates about productivity than formal contributions (Glaser & Hank, 2018; Verbakel et al., 2017). This might be because informal care and grandchild care can be perceived as something that individuals are generally expected to do (Fredriksen-Goldsen & Scharlach, 2001) and that they themselves consider necessary to do (Airey et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the contributions of older adults as informal caregivers and grandparents matter not only for the family but also for society as a whole (Glaser & Hank, 2018; Verbakel et al., 2017).

Informal caregiving refers to "the unpaid care provided to (…) dependent persons by a person with whom they have a social relationship" (Broese van Groenou & de Boer, 2016, p.271), for example, to a spouse, parent, or close friend. It can involve activities like physical care,

assistance with domestic chores, or transportation. Most informal caregivers are in mid and later life (Eurostat, 2019). They are also often engaged in paid work (de Boer & Keuzenkamp, 2009). The expectation is that the combination of work and informal care will become more common because of an potential increase in care needs due to population aging (Colombo et al., 2011) and an increase in the labor market participation of older adults (European Commission, 2019). Academic discourses often assume that paid work adds to caregiving challenges and might result in a 'double burden' (Hansen & Slagsvold, 2015) or might keep individuals away from caregiving (Lilly et al., 2007).

Grandparenting is another form of care in which "grandparents [are] providing childcare assistance to non-coresident kin" (Hank & Buber, 2008, p.55). A common arrangement in many families is that grandparents provide regular assistance with childcare (Glaser et al., 2013; Hank & Buber, 2008). Grandparental childcare is often seen as 'the next best thing' to parental childcare (Wheelock & Jones, 2002) and often supplements formal childcare (Glaser et al., 2013). Traditionally, grandparents had ample opportunity to respond to childcare requests because grandparents, especially grandmothers, were not working (Glaser et al., 2013) or retired early (van Bavel & de Winter, 2013). Meyer (2014, p.2) illustrates that "any lingering images of grandmothers in aprons or rocking chairs are being replaced by grandmothers who need to set down their briefcases so they can bathe little ones."

Existing research on unpaid activities

The literature on unpaid activities is mostly built around the idea that older adults are no longer in paid work around age 65 as, until recently, many retired at that age – or even earlier – and led an employment-free retirement (Gonzales et al., 2015; Hirshorn & Settersten, 2013). They were, therefore, available to volunteer for organizations, provide informal care to dependent family members and friends, and look after grandchildren (Adams et al., 2011;

Hirshorn & Settersten, 2013). However, this notion is challenged by the radical changes in late-career work and retirement (Phillipson, 2019). Next to the closure of early retirement schemes and increased retirement ages (OECD, 2019), countries are stimulating employment in retirement to increase labor market participation. Studies suggest that in Europe, on average, eleven percent of older adults aged 60-75 work in retirement (Dingemans et al., 2016). Retirement is, therefore, becoming increasingly complex. It is no longer a one-time transition at a specific age but a process that differs between people: some leave the workforce entirely, while others continue to work for pay after retiring from their career job (Beehr & Bennett, 2015). This new career pattern – i.e., post-retirement work where employees who are eligible for (public) pension continue working – will most likely become only more common (Lassen & Vrangbæk, 2019). Therefore, with the ongoing extension of working lives, the need to understand engagement in unpaid productive activities around the retirement transition becomes more pressing.

Studies find that retirement is linked to an increased likelihood of volunteering (e.g., Erlinghagen, 2010; Mutchler et al., 2003), but some contradictory evidence exists (e.g., Tang, 2016). Most often, the explanations revolve around the similarity between paid work and volunteering as well as the ability of volunteer work to substitute for the loss of paid work during the transition into retirement. Scholars explain that individuals leave paid work and have more time as well as they encounter a need to replace weak ties, making them more likely to engage in volunteer work (e.g., Mutchler et al., 2003).

Conversely, fewer studies examine the impact of retirement on engagement in care. For informal care, most research is cross-sectional and shows that retirees are more likely to provide informal care than workers (e.g., Hank & Stuck, 2008). A few longitudinal studies exist, but they provide mixed findings. For instance, van den Bogaard et al. (2014) show that retirement

positively affects the likelihood of providing informal care. In turn, van der Horst et al. (2017) find no effect of retirement on the likelihood of providing informal care. For grandparenting, our understanding of retirement's impact on the likelihood of looking after grandchildren also comes predominantly from cross-sectional studies. These studies show that retirees are more likely to look after grandchildren than workers (e.g., Hank & Buber, 2008). A longitudinal study has shown that retirement positively affects the likelihood of grandparenting for men but not women (Kahn et al., 2011).

Taken together, current research has mainly examined engagement in volunteering, informal caregiving, and grandparenting in the retirement context apart from one another (e.g., Erlinghagen, 2010; Hank & Buber, 2008; Hansen & Slagsvold, 2015). Furthermore, studies on engagement in unpaid productive activities generally measure retirement as a dichotomous event. Considering the complex nature of retirement can, however, be expected to be relevant for understanding older adults' engagement in unpaid productive activities (Cook, 2015; Grünwald et al. 2021; van den Bogaard et al., 2014; van der Horst et al., 2017).

Theoretical mechanisms linking retirement and unpaid activities

Role theory is among the most influential theoretical approaches in scientific debates about the interplay of paid work/ retirement and engagement in unpaid productive activities (Fredriksen-Goldsen & Scharlach, 2001). It posits that individuals have specific roles in life (Biddle, 1986). Roles emerge through (assigned) relationships to others (e.g., spouse, parent, child, grandparent) and from valued activities such as paid work or volunteer work. Role theory further assumes that roles are interrelated: engagement in one role may affect how individuals engage in other roles. The interrelatedness of social roles makes that role sets are not static but can change during transitions. Transition are "the psychological and (if relevant) physical movement between sequentially held roles" (Ashforth, 2001, p.7). To

understand the impact of prolonged employment on unpaid productive activities, it is important to consider transitions within the work context.

During late careers, retirement is a major transition during which individuals leave career employment and enter retirement. Although individuals differ in work engagement (Damman et al., 2013), their career job nevertheless defines their daily lives (Jahoda, 1981). When individuals exit a valued role – such as in the case of retirement – they experience a shift in their daily lives as well as in their personal and social identities (Ebaugh, 1988). Role theory and the retirement literature point to several mechanisms that could take place during this transition (e.g., Barnes-Farrell, 2003; Mutchler et al., 2003).

The first theoretical mechanism that can be distinguished relates to time availability. Individuals typically experience a considerable increase in free time when they retire (Mutchler et al., 2003; van den Bogaard et al., 2014) as the time previously devoted to work is freed up. Many retirees have the whole day at their disposal, often without any formal obligations (Ekerdt, 1986). Such an increase in free time may evoke feelings of boredom or marginality (Weiss, 2005). Ekerdt and Koss (2016, p.1295) point out that "the experience of retirement is fundamentally about dealing with time." The gained time allows retirees to do what they enjoy, what they value, or to do nothing (Weiss, 2005). Retirees are thus challenged to fill the time gap that retirement created. This mechanism can be referred to as time substitution.

Second, individuals lose the functions of paid work when they retire (Barnes-Farrell, 2003). Paid work provides income, but also creates a daily time structure, provides social contact outside the family, a purpose in life, social status, and it gives people something to do (Jahoda, 1981). Damman et al. (2015) find that what retirees miss most about work is losing

their social contacts. Weak interpersonal ties (Granovetter, 1973) satisfy social needs that close family and friends do not meet, namely the need for social status and social approval (Bruggencate et al., 2018). Retirees are thus challenged to replace work-related ties with other weak ties that meet their social needs. This mechanism can be referred to as weak-tie replacement.

Third, individuals enter a new phase of life when they retire; they become retirees (Moen, 2003). The role goes beyond that of a former worker in a career job (Moen, 2003). It is a role that retirees themselves need to define and negotiate because it lacks explicit expectations and responsibilities (Weiss, 2005). To do so, they expand, redefine, and change roles that were less central before retirement (Barnes-Farrell, 2003), or they seek new central roles (Eismann et al., 2019). Retirement is more than filling the gap that was created by leaving a career job – it allows retirees to develop new identities and roles (Dorfman & Kolarik, 2005). This mechanism can be referred to as role making.

Studies often treat these mechanisms as general consequences of retirement (e.g., Di Gessa & Grundy, 2017; Mutchler et al., 2003) and consider retirement as a permanent exit from the labor market. There are, however, different processes of retirement and the mechanisms may differ depending on the type of retirement process.

The time-substitution mechanism may be more central for full retirees than for working retirees because they completely withdraw from the labor market. Working retirees may also need time substitution, although to a lesser degree than full retirees, because post-retirement work is typically more flexible and requires fewer work hours than career jobs (Dingemans et al., 2016). The weak-tie replacement mechanism may be most central for full retirees – they lose professional ties in retirement (van Tilburg, 2003). Working retirees, in contrast, can still

enjoy work-related social contacts. In fact, many retirees remain in paid work due to the social contact that a job provides (Fasbender et al., 2015). Role making may be as relevant for full retirees as for working retirees. Both groups of retirees leave their role as workers in careers and gain an opportunity to create a new post-retirement lifestyle.

The Dutch context

The Dutch context offers a unique opportunity to study the impact of longer working lives on engagement in unpaid productive activities. As in most industrialized countries, two parallel demographic trends have changed the age composition of the Netherlands. First, life expectancy at birth has risen steadily. From 1950 to 2020, it increased by around eleven years (Statistics Netherlands, 2022b). Life expectancy is expected to continue to increase, but probably somewhat slower than before. How large and quick the increase in life expectancy will be is uncertain, though. Second, the number of children born per woman has decreased. While a woman had on average 3.1 children in 1960, this number fell to 1.5 in 2020 (Statistics Netherlands, 2022a). It remained low thereafter and is projected to remain like that in the next decades. Together, these two trends resulted in an aging Dutch population. While in 1960, the share of individuals age 65+ was 9%, it increased to 20% in 2020 and is projected to further increase to 25% by 2050 (Statistics Netherlands, 2022b). The increase in the share of persons aged 65+ has set in motion several policy changes.

Retirement in the Netherlands

The demographic developments and projections about the future age composition have challenged the Dutch retirement landscape. The pension system was considered unsustainable given the increasing shares of older adults. Within a relatively short period of time, the Netherlands moved from an early exit retirement culture to a culture of longer working lives (Euwals et al., 2010; Fleischmann & van den Broek, 2020). At the same time as the

prominent early retirement routes were closed, policy measures were taken to extend working lives beyond the traditional public pension age of 65. It was decided that the public pension age will be fixed at 66 years and four months until 2021, after which it will rise to 67 in 2024. From 2025, it will be linked to the life expectancy by a factor of two-thirds – i.e., with every year that people live longer, they have to work eight months longer. Although most collective labor agreements still prescribe that employment contracts end when employees reach the public pension age, increasing shares of employees choose to remain on the labor market after retirement in a post-retirement job. Whereas in 2003, the net labor market participation in the age group 70+ years was 3%, this has increased to 8% in 2020 (Statistics Netherlands, 2021).

Unpaid activities in the Netherlands

In the last decade, the Dutch government has implemented a series of policies to move from a traditional welfare state to a participatory society where individuals are asked to take responsibility for themselves and their surroundings. Dekker (2019, p.78) notes that "self-responsibility has become a buzzword in Dutch politics." In other words, people should expect fewer services from the government but engage more themselves as volunteers and informal caregivers but also as grandparents.

Rates of volunteer work are among the highest in the Netherlands in a European comparison (Hank, 2011). Reasons for high levels of volunteer work in the Netherlands are due to the historical 'pillarization' of Dutch society along religious or political lines (Burger & Veldheer, 2001). Even though the pillars have disappeared, the organizations and social norms regarding volunteering remain (Dekker, 2019). There is also strong support from the government for voluntary organizations. It has recently introduced different interventions

aimed at the community and non-profit sector to further stimulate volunteering (Dutch Government, 2013).

Informal care takes a prominent role in the change towards a participatory society. This is especially evident in the reforms of the publicly funded healthcare sector (Da Roit, 2012) to decrease the pressures on the formal care sector by shifting responsibilities for care from the state to the municipalities and the citizens themselves (Da Roit, 2012; Feijten et al., 2017). People with care needs will live at home for as long as possible and receive care from their social network or community services before using institutional care (van Campen et al., 2017). The threshold for the allocation of institutional care has been increased so that not only persons with mild disabilities will receive care at home but also people with more severe physical disabilities. Within this framework, the informal caregivers of the persons in need play an important role as their ability to help is included in finding a solution to the support of the dependent person (Kromhout et al., 2018).

Grandparental childcare in the Netherlands often supplements the widely available formal childcare, especially when grandchildren are of preschool age (Portegijs et al., 2014; Roeters & Bucx, 2018). In 2012, the affordability of formal care became an issue for many parents, given the cuts of the childcare benefits (Portegijs et al., 2014). Consequently, the use of formal childcare declined, while the use of informal childcare arrangements (e.g., grandparents) increased (Portegijs et al., 2014). In 2018, the government reinvested into formal childcare by increasing the childcare benefit and broadening the group of parents entitled to a benefit. Despite increases in childcare allowance, many Dutch parents prefer not to send their children to daycare five days a week and rely on grandparents for assistance (Roeters & Bucx, 2018).

Research Methods: NIDI Pension Panel Study

Survey data from the NIDI Pension Panel Study (NPPS) provide insights into older adults' engagement in unpaid productive activities during the retirement transition. The NPPS is a large-scale longitudinal study in the Netherlands among the cohort of older workers who were first affected by the drastic policy shift from an early retirement culture to prolonged employment. The objective was to study the determinants and consequences of extended working life and the retirement transition.

In 2015, researchers from the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI) launched the first wave of the NPPS (Henkens et al., 2017). The sample was drawn from the three largest pension funds in the Netherlands (ABP, PfZW, and BpfBouw). These pension funds cover different sectors (government, education, construction, welfare, and social work), and represent roughly 49% of Dutch wage-employed workers. Within these pension funds, a sample of organizations was drawn. Then, a random sample of older workers aged 60–65 who worked at least 12 hr a week was drawn within the organizations. The selected participants (N=15,470) received a questionnaire per mail with an introductory letter from the responsible researchers at NIDI and a letter from the CEO of the pension fund. Respondents could either fill in the paper or online version of the questionnaire. A total of 6,793 questionnaires were completed, which equals a response rate of 44%. A follow-up study took place in 2018, with the same participants receiving a new questionnaire (Henkens & van Solinge, 2019). A total of 5,316 respondents participated in the follow-up survey (response rate of 79%). Around half of the respondents in the follow-up study had fully retired from their career job, while around 9% remained on the labor market after retirement in a post-retirement job, and 40% continued working in a career job.

The questionnaire was designed to study a wide range of subjects linked to the extension of working lives and the retirement transition. Next to detailed information on the late-career work context and the retirement process, it sheds light on older adults' other roles in society next to paid work. The focus is on volunteer work, informal care, and grandchild care. As such, it is possible with the NPPS to take a comprehensive view of engagement in unpaid productive activities. Moreover, the respondents in the NPPS were not only asked whether they perform an unpaid productive activity, but they also were asked about the extent to which they experience it as gratifying, burdensome, obligatory, and stressful. This provides more in-depth information about unpaid productive activities than other large-scale surveys, which often only ask about engagement status and frequency. Thus, the NPPS allows for a detailed look at engagement in unpaid productive activities, by covering both behavioral and attitudinal aspects. Furthermore, the NPPS was designed in such a way that it would be able to observe many retirement transitions between baseline and follow-up as well as have a comparison group of continuous career workers. Together with detailed information on different aspects of the retirement process (e.g., the voluntariness of the retirement transition, the ability to find paid work after retirement), it is possible to capture the diversity and complexity of the retirement process.

Empirical insights on unpaid activities during the retirement transition

Volunteering during the retirement transition

Reasons for volunteering go beyond altruism and include motives such as learning new skills, sharing knowledge, feeling better about oneself, and establishing social contacts (Clary & Snyder, 1999). Many older adults value the social dimension of volunteering (Okun & Schultz, 2003). Formal volunteer work integrates older adults into an organization and creates weak social ties (Berkman et al., 2000). Volunteering may, therefore, create a way for

individuals to reestablish social contacts that were lost upon exiting the work role, thereby providing a weak-tie replacement.

Figure 1. Share of individuals volunteering at least weekly by employment/ retirement status

Source: NPPS

Figure 1 shows a clear increase in volunteering after retirement. Among those who completely stopped paid work during the study period, the percentage of volunteering increased from 19 percent before retirement to 35 percent after retirement. By comparison, in the group of older workers who were not yet retired, the percentage of volunteering changed little over the study period. Moreover, participation in volunteer work hardly increased among those who remained active in paid work after retirement (from 19 percent before retirement to 22 percent after retirement). This result suggests that also remaining partially active in paid work after retirement age is a barrier to starting volunteer work. The same pattern is also observed when controlling for a broad range of factors in a multivariate model (cf. Grünwald et al., 2021).

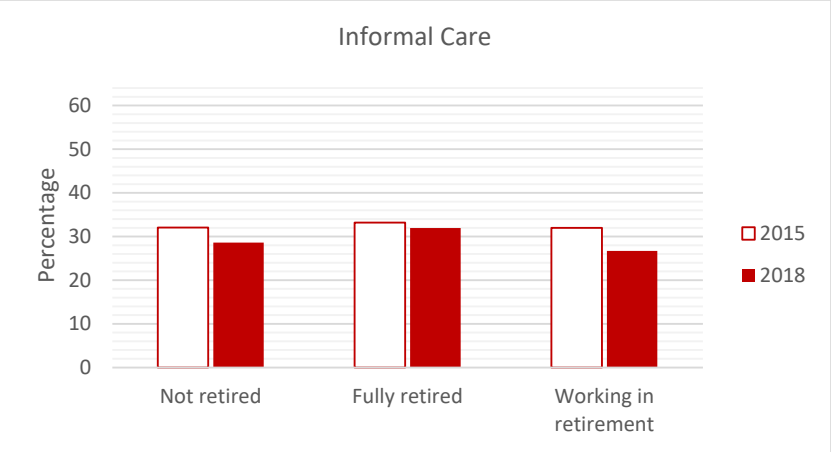
Full retirement, moreover, is not always the desired situation. Some retirees would like to continue working after retirement, but cannot find paid work. Especially in this group there is

a strong increase in volunteering (from 18 percent before retirement to 46 percent after). This outcome supports the view that volunteering plays an important role in shaping a life without paid work. The main motives for volunteering are social contacts, sharing knowledge and doing something for others (approx. about two thirds of the respondents mentioned these motives). Much less common are the status and appreciation from others are mentioned. However, these latter motives are more important for those who could not find could find paid work after retirement.

Informal caregiving during the retirement transition

Who takes on caregiving responsibilities is negotiated within families and social networks (Broese van Groenou & de Boer, 2016). Work is considered a "legitimate excuse" to avoid providing care because it limits the time available for caregiving (Henz, 2009). Given the considerable increase in available time after retirement, the opportunities for people to provide informal care can be expected to increase after retirement because more time will be available.

Figure 2. Share of individuals providing informal care at least weekly by employment/ retirement status



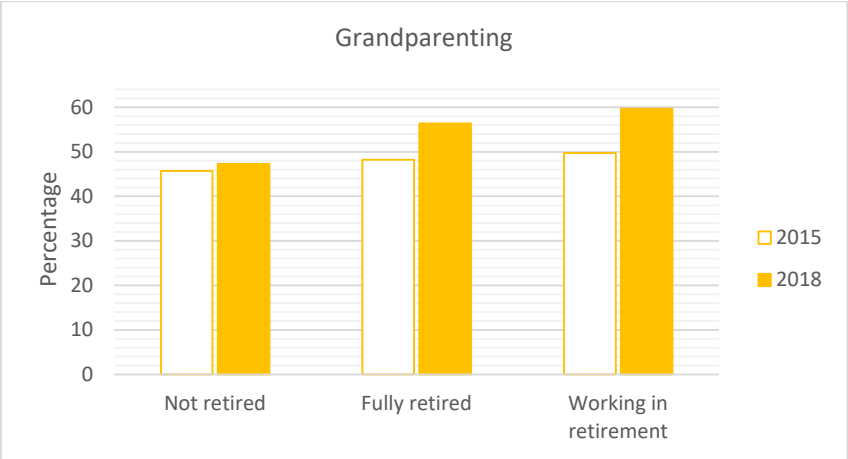
Source: NPPS

However, Figure 2 shows no increase in the percentage of informal caregivers among retirees. Similar to the group of older workers who have not yet retired, the percentage of caregivers among recent retirees remains almost constant. Working retirees who remain active in paid work after retirement do not show a different pattern either. There is also no difference between the groups when controlling for a broad range of factors in a multivariate model (cf. Grünwald et al., 2021). This possibly shows that time constraints are not very important in whether or not to provide informal care. Informal care is provided primarily because a family member or close friend needs help and assistance (Broese van Groenou & de Boer, 2016). As such, caregiving primarily seems to be demand-driven.

Grandparenting during the retirement transition

Grandparenthood is a central stage in later life, a form of intergenerational solidarity that grandparents express by regularly looking after their grandchildren (Bengtson, 2001). It offers older adults a unique social role that they frequently assume with pleasure and joy (Silverstein & Marenco, 2001). Grandchildren are stimulating because, with them, grandparents participate in activities that they otherwise would not. Gauthier (2002, p.302) describes grandparenting as a "second, deeply gratifying career." As a new, central role in later life, grandparenting may be an opportunity for role-making in retirement.

Figure 3. Share of grandparents looking after grandchildren at least weekly by employment/ retirement status



Source: NPPS

Figure 3 shows that the proportion of grandparents looking after their grandchildren remains stable for grandparents who did not retire. Yet, there is a clear increase for grandparents who retired during the study period, both for those who retired fully (from 48 percent before retirement to 56 percent after) and those who continued working after retirement (from 50 percent before retirement to 60 percent after). Thus, paid work after retirement does not appear to interfere with looking after grandchildren. Also, when controlling for a broad range of factors in a multivariate models, these differences remain (cf. Grünwald et al., 2021).

Experiences in caregiving and grandparenting

Given that paid work and care activities seem to occur together even though both are considered difficult to combine, it is important to go beyond measures of who participates in these activities and additionally focus on how individuals experience these activities. In other words, it is important to conceptualize engagement in unpaid productive activities not only in terms of what people do – i.e., whether they volunteer, provide informal care, or look after grandchildren – but take a broad approach to also focus on how they experience the

engagement. Examining experiences allows a better understanding of the normative roles, as individuals may have limited choice in whether they perform these roles (particularly informal care and, to some extent, grandchild care).

Research on how individuals respond to care often focuses on general well-being indicators such as life satisfaction, depressive symptoms, or quality of life (e.g., Barnett, 2015; Bordone & Arpino, 2019; Di Gessa et al., 2016; Hansen & Slagsvold, 2015; Verbakel et al., 2016). For informal caregiving, studies generally find that providing informal care is linked to lower well-being compared to not providing informal care (e.g., Pinquart & Sörensen, 2003). For grandparenting, studies have found that looking after grandchildren is linked to greater well-being (Glaser et al., 2013; Hank et al., 2018). The use of such general indicators to infer how individuals fare as informal caregivers and grandparents has been challenged. Kahneman and Krueger (2006) argue that global well-being indicators provide an evaluation of life as a whole and are, therefore, sensitive to several aspects of life (e.g., marriage, bereavement, unemployment). Consequently, such measures reveal little about activity-specific experiences (Chappell & Reid, 2002). Using general indicators of well-being might be thus limited in its ability to conclude how individuals fare as care providers. It is, therefore, informative to directly examine how individuals experience informal care and grandchild care to better understand it.

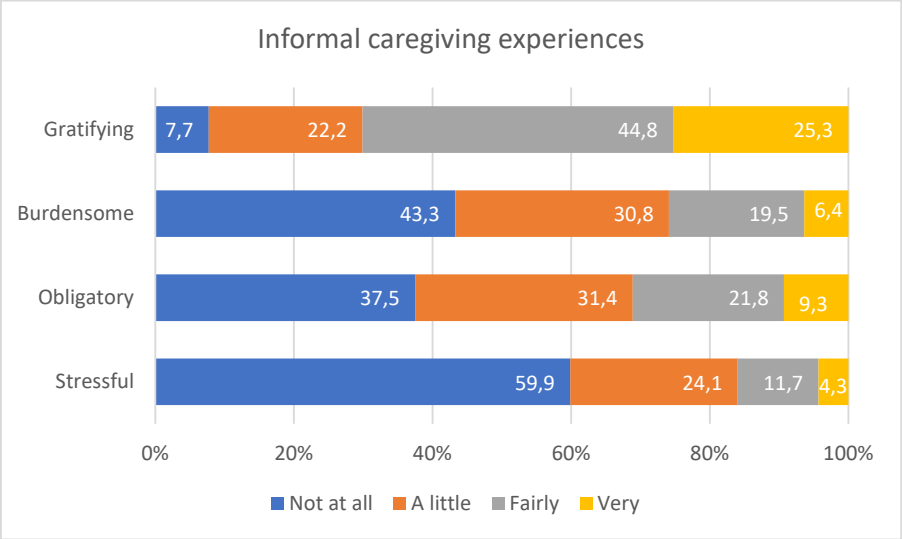
Informal caregiving experiences

The importance of examining role experiences has received recognition in research on informal caregiving (e.g., Braithwaite, 2016; Gordon et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2006; Mello et al., 2017; Tolkacheva et al., 2011). However, most studies are based on small-scale samples and often focused on caregivers to persons with specific illnesses (e.g., de Labra et al., 2015; Kruithof et al., 2015; Nijboer et al., 1999). These studies show that caregivers often

experience burden and stress in informal caregiving (e.g., Mello et al., 2017). A handful of studies shows that caregivers can also experience gratification in informal caregiving (Broese van Groenou et al., 2013; Grünwald et al., 2021; Lin et al., 2012; Pristavec, 2018; Raschick & Ingersoll-Dayton, 2004).

Figure 4 illustrates to what extent older workers in the Netherlands who provide informal care to a dependent family member or friend *at least weekly* experience it as gratifying, burdensome, and stressful. The findings show that the provision of informal care was a gratifying experience for most studied Dutch older workers. More than two-thirds experienced their caregiving activities as gratifying. At the same time, it evoked feelings of burden and stress. A substantial share experienced caregiving as fairly or very burdensome (26%) and stressful (16%). Moreover, 31% experienced the provision of informal care as obligatory. These findings support the notion that positive and negative experiences are distinct from one another, rather than being opposites within the same dimension.

Figure 4. Extent to which working informal caregivers who provide care at least weekly experience it as gratifying, burdensome, obligatory, and stressful (N=1,645)



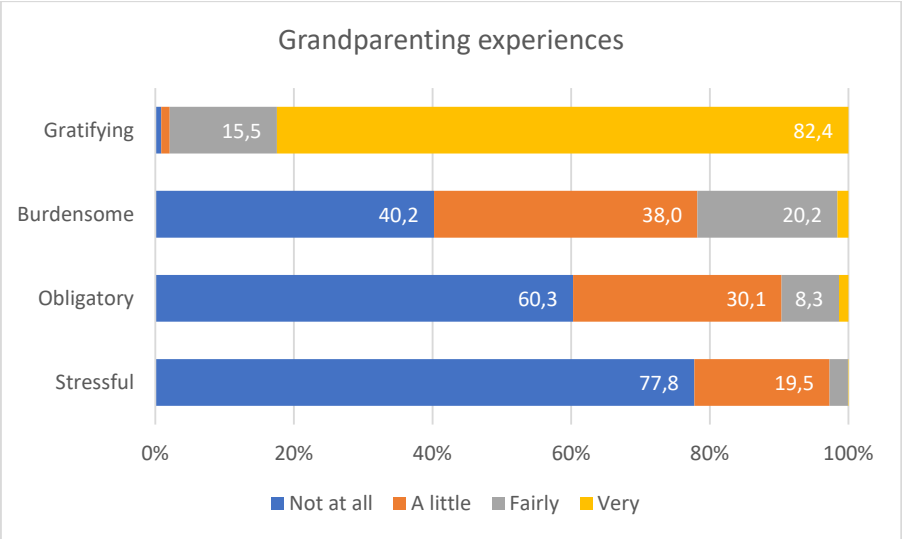
Source: NPPS, wave 1

Grandparenting experiences

In research on grandparenting, role experiences have received limited attention. Few qualitative studies, however, show that non-custodial grandparents experience the grandparenting role in different ways: besides emphasizing the rewards of grandparenting, some also report that it can be demanding (Hamilton & Suthersan, 2020) and that they sometimes feel pressured to look after their grandchildren (Meyer, 2014). Yet, qualitative studies are limited in their ability to systematically test among which grandparents this is particularly the case (Condon et al., 2019; Grünwald et al., 2022; Moore & Rosenthal, 2014).

Figure 5 illustrates how older workers in the Netherlands, who look after their grandchildren at least weekly in their preretirement years, experience looking after their grandchildren. Around one in five working grandparents reports that looking after grandchildren is very or fairly burdensome and one in ten grandparents feels obliged to look after grandchildren. Yet, only 3% experiences grandparenting as stressful. At the same time, it is relevant to note that almost all working grandparents (98%) in the sample report that they experience grandparenting as very or fairly gratifying. These findings support the notion that challenging experiences can co-exist with positive experiences.

Figure 5. Extent to which working grandparenting who look after their grandchildren at least weekly experience it as gratifying, burdensome, obligatory, and stressful (N=1,390)



Source: NPPS, wave 1

A study by Grünwald et al. (2022) has shown that grandparenting experiences differ slightly when comparing grandparents who are still in career employment, work in post-retirement jobs, or are fully retired. Grandparents in career employment were more likely to experience higher levels of burden, but lower levels of obligation than fully retired grandparents. Also, grandparents in post-retirement paid work were more likely to experience higher levels of grandparenting burden, but not obligation, than fully retired grandparents. Thus, post-retirement work seems to still contribute to grandparenting burden, although post-retirement jobs often offer more flexibility and cover fewer work hours than career jobs (Dingemans et al., 2016). As older adults are increasingly stimulated to prolong employment and at the same time are expected to contribute to their families (Verbeek-Oudijk et al., 2014), increasing numbers of grandparents may face a challenging combination of engagements.

Discussion

Engagement in unpaid productive activities during the retirement transition goes beyond formal volunteer work and extends not only to informal care but also to grandchild care (Glaser & Hank, 2018). So far, research has mainly examined these activities in the late-career and retirement context apart from one another (e.g., Erlinghagen, 2010; Hank & Buber, 2008; Hansen & Slagsvold, 2015) or contrasted formal and informal forms of unpaid productive activities (e.g., van den Bogaard et al., 2014b; van der Horst et al., 2017). Volunteer work, informal care, and grandchild care differ not only in the degree of formality but possibly also in the degree of decision-making leeway, as the findings here suggest. Informal care might be primarily demand-driven and, therefore, provided in response to the needs of a dependent family member or friend. In turn, individuals might have the autonomy to decide whether to volunteer and, to a certain extent, whether to take on grandchild care. These conceptual distinctions highlight that focusing on different activities simultaneously and comparatively is important for capturing older adults' engagement in unpaid productive activities and for studying to what extent the retirement process affects them differently.

In the literature, volunteer work, informal care, and grandchild care are often expected to become more likely in retirement (e.g., van den Bogaard et al., 2014b; van der Horst et al., 2017). The general theoretical explanation is that retirees gain more time after the retirement transition and need to replace paid work with other activities. The findings here challenge the assumption that all unpaid productive activities serve as a replacement for the functions of paid work. That is, volunteer work might provide an opportunity to re-establish social contacts lost upon exiting the work role, while informal care and grandchild care might be taken up for other reasons. Informal care seems to be taken on irrespective of the retirement process but potentially in response to the care needs of a dependent family member or friend. Grandchild care seems to serve as a new central role that individuals take on in retirement. These activities differ, therefore, in the extent to which they replace functions of the work

context. To better understand the diversity of unpaid productive activities during the retirement process, the assumed mechanisms need to be tested directly. This might include an examination of the underlying reasons for engagement in specific unpaid productive activities during the transition to retirement.

The image of retirement as the abrupt and complete withdrawal from the labor market is becoming somewhat outdated. For a considerable proportion of people, retirement is not a complete exit from the labor force but many remain on the labor market and keep working – mostly part-time – after retiring from career employment. Engagement in unpaid productive activities differs between those who continue engagement in paid work after retirement from a career job and those who do not. Working retirees seem to represent a special group that falls in-between continuous workers and full retirees in terms of their engagement in unpaid productive activities. Working retirees resembled workers in career employment concerning their involvement in volunteering (as there was no increase in volunteering for both groups), but were similar to full retirees regarding their engagement in grandparenting (as there was an increase in grandparenting for both groups).

The difference between career workers, full retirees, and working retirees in their behaviors links to a central idea of role theory. That is, role theory often focuses on role transitions, which are generally defined as "the psychological and (if relevant) physical movement between sequentially held roles" (Ashforth, 2001, p.7). Role transitions, such as retirement, may be fluid – i.e., the processes of 'work role exit' and 'retirement role entry' might intertwine. As such, in the retirement transition, some individuals need to find ways to substitute for the functions of paid work as well as they need to create their retiree role.

Avenues for future research

The Netherlands is an interesting case to study the impact of prolonged employment on engagement in unpaid productive activities, given the radical changes in the Dutch retirement landscape during the last decade. Although policymakers in other countries also focus on extending working lives, the insights from the Netherlands may have limited generalizability to countries with other welfare systems. In a European comparison, rates of formal volunteer work are exceptionally high in the Netherlands (European Commission, 2019). The effect of retirement on volunteering might thus be smaller in countries where the voluntary sector is less developed and where social norms of volunteering are less widespread. Moreover, the generalizability of the findings regarding experiences in informal care and grandchild care to countries with different support systems might also be limited. In countries with less access to formal care, the demand for informal care and grandchild care might be greater. So, older adults might face even more challenges when providing care next to a job. This highlights the need for cross-national research in this study area.

Most research on engagement in unpaid productive activities during the retirement transition is focused on wage-earners. The self-employed represent an interesting group to study. They are more likely to prefer working beyond the traditional retirement age (Zwier et al., 2021) but have been found to experience greater work-family conflict (Bettac & Probst, 2021). A promising avenue for future research would be to examine how late-career work and the retirement transition of the self-employed affect engagement in unpaid productive activities. Moreover, minority groups in society, such as older migrants, might face greater implications of prolonged employment. Research has found that some migrant groups are more likely to work in manual jobs (e.g., Lancee, 2012) and have strong cultural norms to provide informal care and grandchild care (e.g., Baykara-Krumme & Fokkema, 2019). As such, the extension of working lives would imply that older migrants may experience substantial difficulties in

combining paid work with care. Research on older migrants in the labor force and their engagement in unpaid productive activities is needed to understand better the implications of extended working lives.

Given that retirement is a process that unfolds over time, it can only be captured with longitudinal data. The literature shows that socialization into retirement can begin already before the actual retirement transition (e.g., Damman et al., 2013). Thus, it would be interesting to observe anticipatory effects of retirement, for example, individuals taking up unpaid productive activities in anticipation of their retirement. Moreover, questions arise whether individuals who are not engaged in unpaid productive activities at follow-up will do so later on. As such, for future research using data with a longer observation period – both before and after the actual transition into retirement – could provide valuable insights into the heterogeneity of retirement processes.

Societal implications and concluding remarks

In the last decades, radical changes occurred in work and retirement (Phillipson, 2019). Next to the closure of early retirement schemes and increased retirement ages, many countries stimulate employment beyond retirement. It is now more common to work for pay beyond the public pension age (European Commission, 2019). Most likely, this will become only more common (Lassen & Vrangbæk, 2019). At the same time, the anticipated challenges linked to population aging created greater expectations that individuals will contribute more to their families and communities. In most industrialized countries, policymakers implement policies to move from a traditional welfare state to a participatory society with cuts in public services (Dekker, 2019). The theoretical and empirical insights reported in this chapter highlight the potential societal implications that prolonged employment may have for engagement in unpaid productive activities.

Volunteer work has traditionally been considered a prominent productive activity after retirement from career employment. However, with the extension of working lives, older adults remain in the labor market for longer – either in career or post-retirement jobs. The findings from this chapter suggest that, in particular, the emergence of post-retirement jobs will impact volunteer work, given that volunteer work and post-retirement work seem to compete with each other. As such, the increasing emergence of post-retirement jobs might reduce the interest in and availability for volunteer work of recent retirees. This development might suppress the numbers of older, retired volunteers in the coming decades. The societal implications of this are yet unknown.

Informal care is crucial for addressing the potential increase in care needs due to population aging (Colombo et al., 2011). There is concern that the extension of working lives might keep individuals away from informal caregiving, given the difficulties of combining paid work and informal care (Broese van Groenou & de Boer, 2016; Lilly et al., 2007). Research findings suggest that whether older adults take up informal care is less dependent on the potential constraints of paid work but may rather be linked to the needs of a dependent family member or friend. Consequently, the extension of working lives and the increase in potential care needs will likely result in relatively large shares of older working caregivers. Combining paid work and informal care during later working life can, however, be more burdensome and stressful (Grünwald et al., 2020) and might be overwhelming, especially with additional care obligations to grandchildren (Zelezna, 2018). As older adults are increasingly expected to extend their working lives as well as provide informal care, this dual role combination may affect their well-being. As such, organizations may play an important role in facilitating the combination of work and caregiving obligations during late careers, for instance, by offering opportunities for phased retirement (Grünwald et al., 2020).

The active role of grandparents in the support network for young children is crucial due to societal changes like population aging, increased maternal labor market participation, and higher divorce rates (Glaser et al., 2013). Despite the extension of working lives, grandparents continue playing an active role in family care. Even though continuous career work discouraged frequent grandchild care, post-retirement work did not deter grandparents from frequently looking after their grandchildren. Consequently, this implies that the share of working grandparents involved in grandchild care is likely to increase. More attention is needed for how these role combinations evolve and how working grandparents experience them.

Taken together, prolonged employment affects participation in and experiences of unpaid productive activities. As future cohorts of older workers will further extend their working lives, the compatibility of paid work and unpaid productive activities can be expected to be a theme that will – also in the future – warrant attention from policymakers, organizations, family members, and older adults themselves.

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