

Diversity in Late Life – Project 3
**Social embeddedness before and after a residential relocation
of older adults living independently**

Sociale inbedding voor en na verhuizing van zelfstandig wonende ouderen

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Principal investigators

dr. T.G. van Tilburg (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)

dr. G.C.F. Thomése (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)

Concise summary of research problematic

Social antecedents and consequences of residential relocations among Dutch older adults are investigated. Research questions are: (1) Is residential relocation triggered by late life changes in the domains of marriage, the family, health and employment? Is moving distance related to community integration at departure and to the availability of helpers at destination? (2) To what extent and under which conditions does a residential relocation induces the ending of imbalanced relationships, affect support received and wellbeing negatively? Are new, supportive (local) relationships formed? (3) Do effects of a residential relocation differ for the supportive exchanges within different types of relationships? (4) Are effects of relocation on social embeddedness and wellbeing conditioned or moderated by earlier and recent changes in the domains of marriage, the family, health and employment? Is there a positive or negative accumulation effect on social embeddedness and wellbeing in case of a number of relocations during the life course?

Scientific relevance

The goal of the present project is to investigate social antecedents and consequences of residential relocations among Dutch older adults. Both antecedents and consequences have been studied earlier, mainly in studies conducted in the USA. However, research directed to the link between antecedents and consequences as well as research adopting a life course perspective is rare. Firstly, the project will gain insight into the importance of social embeddedness, in particular community integration (local social capital) as a determinant of residential relocation. Secondly, the project integrates insights from the life-course perspective and exchange theory in the examination of older adults' social embeddedness, and more specifically, their supportive exchanges after residential relocation. The central assumption of exchange theory is that people strive towards balance in their relationships (Gouldner, 1960). Within almost all the previous empirical studies, the application of exchange theory has been limited to direct reciprocity of the exchanges, thereby neglecting the perspective of time-delayed reciprocity of social exchange (Uehara, 1995). This project goes beyond direct reciprocity and adopts a long-range time perspective. Relationships in which older adults are underbenefited with social support, i.e., more support is given than received, are ended more likely than balanced or overbenefited relationships (Klein Ikkink & van Tilburg, 1999). If this is in particular the case after relocation, the hypothesis of time-delayed reciprocity is even more challenged.

Elaboration of the problematic

Litwak and Longino (1987) characterize residential relocations in late life according to three developmental phases: (i) comfort seeking, i.e. amenity moves, for example when one retires, (ii) support seeking, when moderate forms of disability are experienced, and (iii) care seeking, i.e. institutionalization when one faces chronic disability. Institutionalization is the

topic of project 4 of this program of research and will not be considered in the present project. According to Longino (1990), for each phase person-environment adjustment factors might be identified that affect geographic migration decision making. Different from earlier studies, we will neither study motives for relocation (e.g. de Jong, Wilmoth, Angel & Cornwell, 1995) nor the decision making process (e.g. Cuba, 1991), but focus on life-course transitions and community integration as related to relocation. In addition, demographic, housing and neighborhood characteristics (de Boer, 1999; Fokkema, 1996) will be studied. We will distinguish between relocation over a short distance (i.e., within the neighborhood or municipality) and over a long distance.

Triggering mechanisms associated with migration-related life-course events (e.g. retirement, widowhood, gaining a partner and health decline) will be identified (Bradsher, Longino, Jackson & Zimmerman, 1992; Chevan, 1995; Cuba, 1991; Hassan, Zang & McDonnell-Baum, 1996; Longino, 1990). For those with present or foreseen physical incapacities relocation is more likely when potential helpers such as children live elsewhere (de Jong, Wilmoth, Angel & Cornwell, 1995; Longino, Jackson, Zimmerman & Bradsher, 1991; Speare, Avery & Lawton, 1991). However, community integration or family care giving might be a constraint on moving (Fernandez & Dillman, 1979; Hassan, Zang & McDonnell-Baum, 1996; Wai & Beaujot, 1982; Zimmerman, Jackson, Longino & Bradsher, 1993). According to Haas and Serow (1983) pull factors, i.e. the attractiveness of the destination, are more important than push factors, i.e. negative forces to leave the home and community. Examples of pull factors are a geographically nicer environment with leisure amenities, and opportunities to reorient one's life after a major event (e.g. widowhood), as provided by the proximity of children or a new partner or by a more comfortable house. *(1) Which older adults are more likely to move? More specifically: (1a) Is residential relocation triggered by late life changes in the domains of marriage, the family, health and employment? (1b) Is moving distance negatively related to community integration at departure and positively to the availability of helpers at destination?*

Moving necessitates both the loss of previous (local) social ties and the building of a new social network within the new community. Patterns of support exchange are formed over the course of a life time. Exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Gouldner, 1960) tells us that the buildup of social capital (Antonucci, 1985a, 1994; Coleman, 1988; Klein Ikkink, 2000) will pay off by means of delayed ('lagged') reciprocity, i.e., support given in the past will be returned when there is a need for support. Relocation may lead to a reduction of support due to the destruction of investments. Van Busschbach (1996) studied the consequences of three life events (the birth of a child, relocation and retirement) on support exchanges: the networks of movers deteriorated most severely. The results of a study by Starker (1990) showed that middle-aged people received minimal support in the first months after moving; though intimacy increased, pre-move levels were not attained and the new networks were unstable. Thissen (1995) showed that pension migrants were less socially integrated and received less help, compared to older adults who had been living in the community for a long time and those who moved from an other community in the region. Wenger and St Leger (1992) reported similar findings. In Sluzki's (1992) research, the needs of individuals increased throughout the process of relocation markedly, while their support network was severely disrupted. Many crucial links were left behind, and neither family nor new relationships fulfilled these needs. As a result, relocation was associated with distress. Contrary to these findings Wan (1982) reported that social ties disrupted as a consequence of relocation frequently were renegotiated.

Negative consequences are most likely when relocation is associated with increased incapacities (Bourestom, 1984; Brand & Smith, 1974). There is evidence that the perceived predictability and controllability of the events surrounding relocation determine people's responses to the relocation (Schulz & Brenner, 1977): voluntary relocation (amenity moving) results in higher wellbeing than involuntary relocation (Bourestom, 1984; Kling, Seltzer & Ryff, 1997; Minkler, 1985). *To what extent and under which conditions (2a) does a residential relocation induces the ending of imbalanced relationships, affect support received and, consequently and independently, wellbeing negatively, and (2b) are new, supportive (local) relationships formed?*

The composition of the networks of most people is heterogeneous, for example, consisting of various kin and various non-kin relationships (Broese van Groenou & van Tilburg, 1996a). Furthermore, relationships vary in contact frequency and proximity. These characteristics affect the intensity of support exchanges. Neighbors usually give short-term support in acute situations (Litwak & Szelenyi, 1969; Klein Ikkink & van Tilburg, 1998), and there is more mutual support among proximate kin than among kin at a distance (Connidis, 1994; Kivett, 1996). Relocation may affect the composition of the network and, consequently, the availability of and the support exchanged within specific relationship types. *(3) Do effects of a residential relocation differ for the supportive exchanges within different types of relationships, such as kin and non-kin in the neighborhood, and non-local kin and non-kin?*

There might be conjunction of life course developments in different domains since changes in life often create other housing needs, which induce relocation (Hassan, Zang & McDonnell-Baum, 1996). For example, retirement might be followed by relocation. The interplay in changes in different domains may contribute to the diversity in consequences. It is known that retirement results in a decrease in contacts with colleagues and an increase in contacts with acquaintances (Bossé, Aldwin, Levenson, Workman-Daniels & Ekerdt, 1990; van Tilburg, 1992). Recently retired men focus on neighborhood relationships (Thomése, 1998). Retirement in conjunction with relocation may lead to a decrease in peripheral relationships, in particular local ones, and consequently in the number of potential supporters. Barer (1994) concluded that men have a high risk of social isolation, in particular when they experience multiple events, such as widowhood or care giving to the impaired spouse in conjunction with relocation. Differences in the partner history—some have experienced early changes due to divorce or widowhood, while others are in their first marriage— affect wellbeing (Dykstra & de Jong Gierveld, 1997; Peters & Liefbroer, 1997). However, its association with residential relocation had not yet been studied. *(4a) Are effects of relocation on social embeddedness and wellbeing conditioned or moderated by earlier and recent changes in the domains of marriage, the family, health and employment?*

There is evidence that older adults' social embeddedness is small when they have moved. However, attention should be given to the frequency of relocation during the life course. Some older adults continued to live in a neighborhood, where others had a large geographic mobility, for example due to frequent changes in their (husband's) employment setting. The multiple occurrence of relocation may have resulted in small networks and low intensity of support received. On the other hand, one might have developed networks that are less vulnerable for (late life) changes in residential location or (even) in other domains. *(4b) Is there a positive or negative accumulation effect on social embeddedness and wellbeing in case of a number of relocations during the life course?*

Methods

In addition to descriptive analyses, various explanatory multivariate analyses of data of all respondents will be conducted. If appropriate, effects will be controlled for relevant characteristics of the older adults. For the first research question the dependent variable is having moved or not and characteristics of movers and non-movers will be compared by means of logistic regression and survival analysis. For question 2a, a linear structural model with multiple dependent variables (support received, wellbeing) will be developed and tested. Multi-sample analysis will be applied to compare effects for movers and non-movers. In answering question 2b and 3, over time change in network composition of movers will be compared with that of non-movers by means of multilevel regression analysis. Finally, for question 4 the number and sequence of various events will be analyzed in order to modify the models developed in answering the previous questions. If necessary, in all analyses local movers, other movers and non-movers will be distinguished.

Societal relevance

There is a lack of knowledge on the consequences of a geographic relocation by older adults living independently ('home to home' moves). This is the more important since in recent years the housing market has become emergent: more houses suitable for aged people (with mild or moderate forms of disability) were built, and on the other hand, the admittance to ho-

mes for the aged has been restricted. There are also indications that pension migration in the Netherlands has become more popular. For example, in publications the province of Zeeland recently presented the province as the 'Florida of the Netherlands'. The results of the proposed study will inform local agencies and services about the social consequences of residential relocations. Furthermore, people considering a move, whether they decide on the basis of other than social consequences or decide predominantly on the basis of assumed positive social consequences, should be made better aware of the potentially negative social consequences of residential relocation at advanced ages.

Data sources relevant to the project

General information on the data sources is provided in the program proposal. Data before and after a move is available for 510 (17%) of the independently living respondents (N=2990); about 6% moved within the same neighborhood. Data on relocation are provided by the respondents and by means of updates from the population registers. Furthermore, the residential municipality at birth, after the first move, in 1944, and at the age of 45 is known. Earlier and recent changes in the domains of marriage, the family, health and employment are assessed by asking questions at T1 and by comparisons of T1 through T4 data. A number of housing characteristics is available. Neighborhood characteristics based on the postal code are also available (Thomése, 1998). Community integration consists of membership of local organizations and characteristics of the personal network. From the latter, the size of the neighborhood network (Thomése & van Tilburg, 2000), the instrumental and emotional support received and given in the local and non-local network, the number of personal relationships within (local) organizations and the geographic dispersion of the network can be derived. For most of the parent-child relationships information on support exchanged, contact frequency and traveling time is available, in addition to subjective information such as filial responsibility expectations by the older adults. Several indicators of health and wellbeing will be used.

Relevance and position of the project within the program

Although residential relocation is experienced not as frequently as the other events studied in this program, there is evidence that it might be a major disruptive one. It is the more important since it occurs frequently in conjunction with retirement and changes in the partner status (*multidimensionality*). Furthermore, given that retirement, widowhood and institutionalization tend to be involuntary transitions (i.e. they 'happen' to people or are strongly structured by state regulations), the consideration of voluntary relocation and relocation related to (foreseen) health decline will add to the completeness of the picture of the impact of late-life events on wellbeing. The central aspects of *chronology* and *historic specificity* will be addressed in particular by studying relocations over the life span. *Social embeddedness* is a key concept in the study of antecedents and consequences of relocation.

Description of the research design for the entire period

Elaboration of the problem and the hypotheses: 3 months; Research questions 1 to 4: each 7 months; Final conclusions: 4 months; PhD courses research school Psychology & Health: 7 months; Holidays: 6 months; Total: 48 months.

Publication plan

The four research questions will be answered in papers to be submitted to international journals. In addition, findings most specific for the Dutch situation will be reported in Dutch journals. Provisionary titles of the papers are: (1) Social determinants of older adult's residential relocation (September 2002). (2) The formation of a local support network after residential relocation: Its effect on wellbeing (September 2003). (3) Older adult's local and non-local supporters: Changes in network composition after a residential relocation (August 2004). (4) Wellbeing of movers in a life course perspective (March 2005). The PhD dissertation will be based on these publications (September 2005).