

**Relationships of Proactive Behaviour with Job-Related Affective Well-Being and
Anticipated Retirement Age: An Exploration Among Older Employees in Belgium**

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Introduction

Developed countries throughout the world are challenged with the ageing of their labour force (Czaja and Sharit 2009; Ekerdt 2010). We conducted our study in Belgium. In 2009 the Eurostat indicators (Eurostat 2010) showed an employment rate of 49.1 per cent for the 50-64 age bracket in Belgium, while the average for the European Union (EU27) was 56.5 per cent. Only two EU countries had an even lower employment rate, namely Italy (47.8 per cent) and Poland (46.0 per cent). In 2007, the average exit age from the labour market in Belgium was 61.6 years (Eurostat 2010; EU27 = 61.2 years), whereas the official retirement age was 65 years. The retention of older employees in the labour force remains a challenge in Belgium for all parties involved: governments, organisations, and employees. Furthermore, ageism is still present in Belgium. This phenomenon includes stereotypes and prejudices about older persons, as well as behaviours such as discrimination towards and self-fulfilling prophecies of older persons. For the European Social Survey (ESS 2010), Belgians within the 50-64 age bracket were asked how often they had been treated with prejudice the past year. It was found that 37 per cent of the respondents reported “more than once” through “very often”. When asked how serious discrimination against them was, 5 per cent said it was “very serious”. Buyens, Van Dijk, Dewilde and De Vos (2009) found that the fear of conforming others’ negative stereotypes about them made it more difficult for older employees to perform up to their potential. This in turn led to a decrease in performance, a rejection of tasks, and a decrease in motivation, thus confirming the stereotypes. Until now, little attention has been paid to proactive behaviour of older employees when facing (re)hiring and retention versus early retirement, and ageism.

We have four arguments to use 50+ as threshold to denote employees as “older”. This threshold marks changes in career development and work attitudes (Simpson, Greller and Stroh 2002). In many countries the decline in employment rate starts at 50 (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2006). The 50+ threshold is used by the Survey of Health, Ageing, and Retirement in Europe (SHARE) (Börsch-Supan, Hank, Jürges and Schröder 2009). In Belgium, 50+ is the threshold for legal provisions for older employees and for negotiations among the social partners about older employees. We have therefore chosen respondents in the 50-64 age bracket.

Our research objective is to test the relationships of proactive behaviour with job-related affective well-being and anticipated retirement age, in a sample of older employees in Belgium. Although proactive behaviour has been extensively studied, none of these studies have focused specifically on older persons in the labour market area. The only exception is the study by van Veldhoven and Dorenbosch (2008) in the Netherlands. In the following subsection, we define proactive behaviour, differentiate it from other concepts, describe its various forms, and summarize the model of proactive behaviour of Bindl and Parker (2010). Next, we integrate our research objective, reformulated as research questions and hypotheses, into the Bindl and Parker (in press) model. Finally, we provide a first empirical test based on a small sample of Belgian older employees.

Proactive Behaviour

The seminal description by Bateman and Crant (1993, p.104) of the proactive component of organisational behaviour was that “people can intentionally and directly change their current circumstances, social or non-social”. After more than fifteen years of studying proactive behaviour under different labels, the integration of conceptualizations began (Bindl and Parker in press; Grant and Ashford 2008; Parker and Collins 2010; Thomas, Whitman and Viswesvaran 2010). The widely accepted definition of Grant and Ashford

(2008, p. 8) of proactive behaviour as “anticipatory action that employees take to impact themselves and/or their environments” indicates its distinctive characteristics. Proactive behaviour is acting in advance, in a self-initiated manner, in order to make a difference. Bindl and Parker (in press) distinguished proactive behaviour from innovation and adaptation. Proactive behaviour is not necessarily “novel”, whereas innovative behaviour is. Proactive behaviour initiates change, whereas adaptive behaviour is adjusting to and responding to change. Proactive behaviour also differs from proactive cognitive-motivational states, such as role breadth self-efficacy and control appraisals, which are some of its antecedents (Bindl and Parker in press; Grant and Ashford 2008; Parker, Bindl and Strauss 2010; Parker, Williams and Turner 2006).

Existing research on proactive behaviour has predominantly emphasised its benefits (Grant and Ashford 2008). However, Bateman and Crant (1993) already stated that not all proactive behaviour is beneficial. Nevertheless, the potentially negative implications of proactive behaviour have not yet been fully explored, except for Belschak, Den Hartog and Fay (2010) and for Bolino, Valcea and Harvey (2010). For individual employees, proactive behaviour may be a source of job stress because it implies spending additional time and energy (physical and mental). Proactive behaviour also implies challenging the status quo (e.g., tasks, roles, practices, routines) and that may be a source of friction between proactive employees and their co-workers/superiors.

There exists a wide variety of proactive behaviour. Parker and Collins (2010) proposed three categories: (i) proactive work behaviour aiming to change the internal organisational environment; (ii) proactive person-environment fit behaviour intending to affect the person’s fit with the organisational environment; and (iii) proactive strategic behaviour aiming to change the organisation’s fit with the external environment. We consider the first two types as relevant to older employees in general. Indeed, in their work settings,

older employees can engage in the first type (proactive work behaviour) that includes taking charge, voice, and problem prevention; and in the second type (proactive person-environment fit behaviour) that includes job change negotiation and career initiative. In contrast, the third type (proactive strategic behaviour) may only be relevant to older employees who are (top) managers. It includes, for example, influencing the formation and implementation of organisational strategy to emerging markets and to future external threats and opportunities.

Bindl and Parker (in press) presented a model of proactive behaviour that integrated existing frameworks (Crant 2000; Grant and Ashford 2008; Parker, Williams and Turner 2006; Parker, Bindl and Strauss 2010). In their model, individual differences (e.g., demographics) interact with situational differences (e.g., job design) and constitute distal antecedents of proactive behaviour. These distal antecedents lead to proximal antecedents of proactive behaviour that include cognitive-motivational processes (e.g., perceived capability, role breadth self-efficacy, and control appraisals) and affect-related processes (positive versus negative affect). In turn, proactive behaviour leads to outcomes for individuals (e.g., job performance, well-being, and career progression), for teams (e.g., team performance), and for organisations (organisational performance). Our research objective is a partial test of the Bindl and Parker (in press) model, and includes three research questions and five hypotheses.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The first research question addresses the relations between proactive behaviour and affect. In the Bindl and Parker (in press) model, the links between proactive behaviour and affect are bi-directional. The link from positive and negative affect towards proactive behaviour is a proximal antecedent, while the link from proactive behaviour towards job-related affective well-being is an individual outcome (i.e., part of well-being). Den Hartog and Belschak (2007), Parker et al. (2010), and Bindl and Parker (in press) argued that further research is needed on these relations. Affect at work refers to positive and negative emotion

experiences aroused in response to the job; it is also referred to as job-related affective well-being (Warr 1978; Van Katwijk, Fox, Spector and Kelloway (2000). Examples of positive high arousal affect are “enthusiastic” and “inspired”; examples of positive low arousal affect are “relaxed” and “satisfied”. Examples of negative high arousal affect are “anxious”, “disgusted”; examples of negative low arousal affect are “discouraged” and “fatigued”. Earlier research proposed that there is a positive relation between positive affect and proactive behaviour (Bindl and Parker in press; Parker, Bindl and Strauss 2010; Strauss, Griffin and Rafferty 2009). Fritz and Sonnentag (2009) assumed that positive affect increases resources, energy, attention, optimism, and active engagement with the environment, all of which initiate, and are necessary for, proactive behaviour. Den Hartog and Belschak (2007) argued that negative affect may either activate employees to behave proactively, render employees passive, or make them withdraw from work. In the first hypothesis we expect a positive relationship between proactive behaviour and job-related affective well-being (both positive and negative): the higher the proactive behaviour, the more positive and negative job-related feelings. In the second hypothesis we expect a negative relationship between proactive behaviour and negative job-related affective well-being: the higher the proactive behaviour, the less negative job-related feelings.

For the second research question we turn to the relation between proactive behaviour and anticipated retirement age. In the Bindl and Parker (in press) model career progression is one of the potential individual outcomes and we consider anticipated retirement age as part of career progression. According to Topa, Moriano, Depolo, Alcover and Morales (2009), anticipated or planned retirement age belongs to the first phase of the retirement process, during which older employees start thinking about retirement. The next two phases are deciding on retirement and the act of retirement. Zaniboni, Sarchielli and Fraccaroli (2010) stated it is meaningful to study retirement planning and decision since these predict actual

retirement behaviour. Our reason to include anticipated retirement age as potential individual outcome of proactive behaviour stems from the urgent need to retain older employees longer in the Belgian labour force (see above). According to van Veldhoven and Dorenbosch (2008), the relevance of the relationship between age and proactivity is threefold. Firstly, society can convince proactive older employees to continue working instead of retiring early. Secondly, organisations can consider retaining and/or (re)hiring proactive older employees who will engage more in their work and remain productive and flexible. Thirdly, when being proactive at work, older employees are active, forward-looking, and persistent agents in their own occupational future. Through their proactive behaviour, older employees tackle negative stereotypes of being incompetent, less productive, reluctant to training, and resistant to change. As such, they reduce the risk of getting marginalised at work and they retain career opportunities. All this may result in anticipating a later retirement age. In the third hypothesis we expect that proactive behaviour predicts anticipated retirement age in a positive way: the higher proactive behaviour, the older the age at which retirement is anticipated.

Finally, the third research question addresses the relations between job-related affective well-being and anticipated retirement age. In the Bindl and Parker (in press) model, this research question deals with the interrelations between two individual outcomes. There is overall consensus that affective commitment and job satisfaction are favourable for older employees' retention, while older employees with burnout are inclined to retire (for the latter see Henkens and Leenders 2010). Kluemper, Little, and DeGroot (2009) found three important relationships: (i) positive relations between positive affect, affective commitment, and job satisfaction, (ii) negative relations between positive affect and burnout, and (iii) opposite relations between negative affect and the job-related outcomes mentioned. Applying their findings to our study, we formulate the fourth and fifth hypothesis. We expect in the fourth hypothesis that positive job-related affective well-being predicts anticipated retirement

age in a positive way: the more positive job-related feelings, the older the age at which retirement is anticipated. We expect in the fifth hypothesis that negative job-related affective well-being predicts anticipated retirement age in a negative way: the more negative job-related feelings, the younger the age at which retirement is anticipated.

Bindl and Parker (in press) regarded age and gender as individual differences within the distal antecedents. Earlier studies on proactive behaviour (Bindl and Parker in press; Grant and Ashford 2008; Parker and Collins 2010; Thomas, Whitman and Viswesvaran 2010) denoted age and gender as demographic variables affecting proactive behaviour. However, the effects of age and gender on proactive behaviour were not straightforward: sometimes there were effects and sometimes not; across studies effects were in different directions (i.e., young versus old; men versus women). Hence, we control in our statistical analysis for age and gender.

Method

Sample and Procedure

Data were collected from November 2009 through February 2010. A variety of 17 organisations granted permission to contact their older employees. These organisations included food and furniture manufacturing, large retail businesses, banks and insurance companies, hospitals, schools, cultural institutions, and public institutions. A total of 133 questionnaires were distributed at the workplace to employees aged 50+. Voluntary participation and anonymous, confidential treatment of the data was clearly explained to the participants. A period of two weeks was provided for submitting the filled out questionnaires in sealed envelopes. The response rate was 72 per cent. Seven questionnaires could not be used because of incomplete answers. The final sample consisted of 89 older employees, between the age of 50 and 63 years ($M=54.29$, $SD=3.20$). According to Cohen (1992), our sample size is sufficient to obtain medium effect sizes (ES) given our number of independent

variables and statistical tests. The sample comprised 45 males and 44 females and there were no age differences according to gender.

Measures

Control variables.

Age was measured in years and gender was dummy coded with male=0 and female=1.

Proactive behaviour

Our measure for proactive behaviour was an abbreviated Dutch version (Claes, Beheydt and Lemmens 2005) of the Proactive Personality Scale (PPS) (Bateman and Crant 1993). Recently, other researchers have also used items of the PPS to measure proactive behaviour (e.g., Armstrong and Hird 2009; Chiaburu, Marinova and Lim 2007; Kirby and Kirby 2006; Porath and Bateman 2006). The original PPS had 17 items and proved to be a reliable, valid, and unidimensional measure of the proactive component of organisational behaviour across multiple contexts and times. Pringels and Claes (2001) developed a Dutch version of the 17-item PPS across occupational samples in Belgium. Over time, several abbreviated forms of the PPS have been used in research and practitioners' settings to assess individual proactivity. Claes, Beheydt and Lemmens (2005) established a 6-item version of the PPS that was internally consistent and unidimensional in Belgium, Finland, and Spain. In a separate Belgian sample, the correlation between the 6-item PPS with the original 17-item PPS was found to be satisfactory with $r = .92$. In the current study we used the Dutch version of this 6-item PPS. The respondents were asked to reflect on the degree to which an expression was applicable to him/her and to mark it on a scale from *Certainly Not Agree (1)* to *Certainly Agree (7)*. Sample items were "I excel at identifying opportunities" and "I am always looking for better ways to do things". For each respondent an average was computed across the six items. The PPS score was thus a composite score where each item was equally weighted.. The internal consistency was $\alpha = .72$.

Job-related affective well-being

We selected the Job-Related Affective Well-Being Scale (JAWS) to measure positive and negative affect at work. For both the original 30-item scale (Van Katwyk, Fox, Spector and Kelloway 2000) and the abbreviated Dutch 12-item version (Schaufeli and van Rhenen 2006) the items were selected from a large item pool, and internal consistency, factorial validity, and construct validity were confirmed in various samples. Predictive validity was confirmed for sickness absenteeism in a large Dutch sample of managers. The correlation between the original 30-item scale and the abbreviated Dutch 12-item version proved to be satisfactory with $r = .94$. The JAWS has already been used for a variety of research questions and across many countries (e.g., Balducci, Fraccaroli and Schaufeli 2010; Cole, Walter and Bruch 2008; Meier, Semmer, Elfering and Jacobshagen 2008; Uncu, Bayram and Bilgel 2007). We used the abbreviated Dutch 12-item version of the JAWS (Schaufeli and van Rhenen 2006). The JAWS included positive high arousal affect (i.e., energetic, enthusiastic, inspired), positive low arousal affect (i.e., at ease, relaxed, satisfied), negative high arousal affect (i.e., angry, anxious, disgusted), and negative low arousal affect (i.e., discouraged, fatigued, gloomy). Respondents were asked how often they had experienced each emotion at work over the prior 30 days. Responses were provided with a five-point scale with anchors *Never (1), Rarely (2), Sometimes (3), Quite often (4), and Extremely often (5)*. High scores represented high levels of each emotion. For each respondent, we computed two averages, each across six items. The scores for positive affect and negative affect were thus composite scores where each item was equally weighted. The internal consistency was $\alpha = .81$ for positive affect and $\alpha = .84$ for negative affect.

Anticipated retirement age.

A single question measured the anticipated retirement age: "At what age do you plan to retire?" Recently, other researchers have also used single item measurement to assess

anticipatory retirement age (Bidewell, Griffin and Hesketh 2006; Brougham and Walsh 2009; Herrbach, Mignonac, Vandenberghe and Negrini 2009; van Solinge and Henkens 2009; von Bonsdorff, Huuhtanen, Tuomi and Seitsamo 2010). In Belgium and in this study, retirement intention denotes “full retirement intention”. This is in contrast to Zaniboni et al. (2010) who studied three types of retirement intention in Italy (i.e., full retirement, part-time retirement, and job mobility).

Statistical Analysis

To test the first and the second hypothesis, we computed partial correlations, i.e., controlled for age and gender. We tested the third, fourth and fifth hypothesis with hierarchical regression analysis. In each hierarchical regression analysis, age and gender were entered in step 1. In the analysis to test the third hypothesis, proactive behaviour was entered in step 2. In the analysis to test the fourth and the fifth hypothesis, positive and negative affect were entered in step 2. We evaluated the effect of each block of predictors by testing the statistical significance of the change in the explained variance (ΔR^2). Next, we evaluated the effect of each single predictor by testing the statistical significance of the standardized beta coefficient (β).

Results

Insert Table 1 about here

Table 1 presents the partial correlations (i.e., controlled for age and gender) to test the first and the second hypothesis. Proactive behaviour was positively related to positive affect ($r=.38, p\leq.001$). According to Cohen (1992), for product-moment correlations, an effect size (ES)-index of .10, .30, and .50 indicates respectively a small, medium, and large effect size. Proactive behaviour was not statistically significant related to negative affect or anticipated retirement age. This means that the first hypothesis is partially confirmed: proactive behaviour is positively related to being energetic, enthusiastic, inspired, at ease, relaxed, and

satisfied. However, the first hypothesis is not confirmed for negative job-related affective well-being. The second hypothesis is also not confirmed.

Insert Table 2 about here

We cannot confirm the third hypothesis on the positive relation between proactive behaviour and anticipated retirement age. The hierarchical regression analysis resulted in an explained variance in anticipated retirement age of only 5 per cent ($p=.09$).

Table 2 presents the results of the hierarchical regression analysis to test the fourth and the fifth hypothesis. The explained variance in anticipated retirement age was 15 per cent, resulting in an ES-index of .18. According to Cohen (1992), for multiple correlations, this result indicates a medium effect size. The step with the control variables (age and gender) did not contribute in a statistical significant way to the explained variance ($\Delta R^2=.05$, $p=.12$), but the step with job-related affective well-being contributed in a statistical significant way to the explained variance ($\Delta R^2=.10$, $p\leq.01$). However, only the standardized beta coefficient for positive affect was statistically significant ($\beta=.24$, $p\leq .05$). These results confirm the fourth hypothesis: positive job-related affective well-being predicts anticipated retirement age in a positive way. Older employees that were energetic, enthusiastic, inspired, at ease, relaxed, and satisfied, anticipated to retire later. We cannot confirm the fifth hypothesis on the negative relation between job-related affective well-being and anticipated retirement age.

Discussion

Along with van Veldhoven and Dorenbosch (2008), we are the only researchers so far who have studied proactive behaviour among older persons in the labour market area. The older employees in our small sample exhibit a fairly high degree of proactive behaviour ($M=5.13$ on a rating scale 1-7, see Table 1), which agrees with the results of van Veldhoven and Dorenbosch (2008). They composed a sample of 619 employees across 11 organisations in the Netherlands (i.e., health care, manufacturing, service sector, government, and

education). They found that older employees were rather on the positive side of on-the-job proactivity (i.e., actively engaging in improving efficient job performance), and were hardly different from younger employees in their developmental proactivity (i.e., actively learning and acquiring skills and knowledge to ensure future employability). Schalk et al. (2010) voiced the stereotype that ageing workers are low on proactive behaviour, but our findings contradict that. As such, older employees' proactive behaviour may buffer negative stereotypes about them and their own self-fulfilling prophecies. Examples of proactive behaviour serving these purposes include speaking up (i.e., voice) and negotiating about future tasks, opportunities, and roles (i.e., job change negotiation, career initiative), as well as bringing about improved work procedures (i.e., taking charge) and acting to prevent the reoccurrence of work problems (i.e., problem prevention).

Our findings confirm the bi-directional relationships between proactive behaviour and positive affect (the first part of the first hypothesis) that are proposed in the model of Bindl and Parker (in press). The proximal antecedent "positive affect" is positively related to proactive behaviour, and vice versa, proactive behaviour is positively related to the individual outcome "job-related affective well-being". Based on these findings, we can confirm and extend earlier research, given our sample of older employees. Den Hartog and Belschak (2007) found positive relations between positive affect and proactive behaviour in two Dutch samples (i.e., 359 hospital employees and 80 employee-manager dyads). Fritz and Sonnentag (2009) found similar results in a German sample of 172 civil service employees. As suggested by Den Hartog and Belschak (2007), we explored but did not find a relation between proactive behaviour and negative affect (the second part of the first hypothesis). On average (see Table 1), our sample of older employees reported high positive affect ($M=3.76$ on a rating scale 1-5) and low negative affect ($M=2.21$ on a rating scale 1-5).

The model of Bindl and Parker (in press) proposed career progression as an individual outcome of proactive behaviour. These authors and the earlier research they integrated (e.g., Crant 2000) operationalised career progression as career success (i.e., salary raise, number of promotions, and career satisfaction). We extend the notion career progression by including anticipated retirement age as potential individual outcome of proactive behaviour. By anticipating a later retirement age, older employees prolong their career and create opportunities for (further) career success. We find that proactive behaviour is not related to the anticipated retirement age (the second hypothesis). Several models depicted a multi-level variety of antecedents of retirement age but did not mention proactive behaviour. Bidewell, Griffin and Hesketh (2006) distinguished personal variables (e.g., health and age), work-related variables (e.g., job satisfaction, achievement of goals, tiredness of work), and retirement-related variables (e.g., self-efficacy in handling retirement finances). Topa et al. (2009) concluded that cultural differences can play, from their meta-analysis on retirement planning and decision-making. Also Ekerdt (2010) described societal context as relevant to retirement behaviour: welfare state (e.g., governmental arrangements for retirement), family (e.g., financial household considerations), labour market (e.g., demand for older employees), and cultural norms and values (e.g., mutual obligations between generations). We addressed only a limited number of employee level correlates (i.e., age, gender, proactive behaviour, and job-related affective well-being) across a variety of organisational contexts and within one societal context. We therefore urge future retirement research to be multi-level and cross-cultural.

Our last set of hypotheses (the fourth and the fifth hypothesis) extends the Bindl and Parker (in press) model by investigating interrelations between two individual outcomes: job-related affective well-being (as part of well-being) and anticipated retirement age (as indicator for career progression). Models of retirement (e.g., Bidewell, Griffin and Hesketh 2006; Ekerdt

2010; Topa et al. 2009) do not mention affect at work as related to retirement planning and decision. We extrapolated from existing relations between job satisfaction, burnout, affect, and retirement intentions (Henkens and Leenders 2010; Kluemper et al. 2009) that positive affect may predict a later anticipated retirement age, while the opposite may be true for negative affect. In our sample of older employees, a later retirement age is anticipated when they have positive job-related affective well-being (the fourth hypothesis). We fail to confirm the fifth hypothesis on negative affect as predictor for an earlier anticipated retirement age.

A particular finding of our study is the lack of relationships of gender with proactive behaviour and with anticipated retirement age. As mentioned in the Introduction, earlier research on the effects of gender on proactive behaviour was not conclusive and advocated more research. We added one limited empirical study that found no relationship. In contrast to Buyens et al. (2009) and von Bonsdorff et al. (2010), we found no relations between gender and anticipated retirement age. The former found in Belgium that highly involved men who worked fulltime at a high level and under low psychological pressure, wished to retire later. Their sample was not comparable to ours (i.e., N=1290 employees, 62 per cent males, and only 20 per cent older than 55 years). The latter found gender differences in retirement intentions: men with poor self-rated work ability and perceived poor health retired earlier; women with low work and general life satisfaction retired earlier. However, their study took place in the Finnish context and their sample was not comparable to ours (i.e., 6257 municipal employees, 45 per cent males and 55 per cent females, and average age of 50.5 years). Both the model of Bindl and Parker (in press) of proactive behaviour and models of retirement (e.g., Bidewell, Griffin and Hesketh 2006; Ekerdt 2010; Topa et al. 2009) include gender in a wide variety of multi-level antecedents. Therefore, straightforward empirical evidence of relationships of gender with proactive behaviour and with anticipated retirement age remain hard to find.

The findings discussed above suffer from several limitations. This study shares two limitations with other studies: its cross-sectional design and its use of self-report data. To overcome these limitations, future research should use longitudinal designs and multiple data sources. As the data were gathered on a voluntary basis, our sample is not representative of the Belgian older workforce. Therefore, it is impossible to generalise findings to the workforce of older employees in Belgium. However, our sample was taken from a variety of organisations, such as food and furniture manufacturing, large retail businesses, banks and insurance companies, hospitals, schools, cultural institutions, and public institutions. These organisations have potentially different organisational practices concerning older employees (e.g., on retention, ageism), and different proactive behaviour and job-related affective well-being of older employees themselves. Moreover, our respondents reported an average anticipated retirement age of 61 years (see Table 1). This result approximately equals the Eurostat (2010) exit age (see Introduction). Future studies should use representative samples of the labour force in a given country and consider other relevant variables such as type of work, expertise, and organisational seniority. Another limitation to our study is the sample size ($N=89$). We therefore encourage future research to use larger samples when available. However, we recall that both the results of our correlation analysis (r) and the results of our regression analysis (R^2) reached what Cohen (1992) evaluated as medium effect size. This aligns with the medium effect sizes found in other studies on proactive behaviour (Den Hartog and Belschak 2007; Fritz and Sonnentag 2009; Griffin, Parker and Mason 2010; Parker, Williams and Turner 2006; van Veldhoven and Dorenbosch 2008; Thomas et al. 2010). Finally, our viewpoint on older employees was: working longer and retire later is positive. This was rather narrow-sided because, as the conceptual map of work and retirement research of Ekerdt (2009) shows, retirement form and timing have multi-level antecedents and outcomes for the individual (e.g., economic well-being, health, relationships) and/or for

social structures (e.g., government budgeting). In some contexts, it may be beneficial for older employees to retire rather earlier than later.

According to Bindl and Parker (in press), distal antecedents (i.e., individual and situational differences) lead to proximal antecedents (i.e., cognitive-motivational and affect-related processes), that in turn lead to proactive behaviour. We propose some organisational practices as tentative answers to the core question for practitioners: How to foster proactive behaviour of older employees in their organisational setting?.

Individual differences are quite stable as far as it concerns demographics and personality. However, job related skills are malleable by raising older employees' interest in training and facilitating their participation. Organisations have several ways to ensure that situational differences enhance proactive behaviour of older employees. First of all, job (re)design can provide jobs with autonomy, complexity, control, and accountability (Sharit and Czaja in press). Secondly, leadership can value older employees' contributions in decision-making and encourage them to go beyond standard expectations and adaptive behaviour. Thirdly, organisational climate can provide satisfaction, co-workers' support and trust, and reward reinforcements of those types of proactive behaviours that are interpersonally and/or organisationally beneficial.

Also proximal antecedents can be influenced by organisational practices. The "can do" and "will do" of proactive behaviour with older employees respectively refers to raising their perceived capability of carrying out a broad and flexible range of work activities and roles, and to stimulating their proactive motivation. The latter can be done by offering these employees an enjoyable and interesting job that (still) fulfils important life goals, and creates an hoped-for future identity at work (Parker, Bindl, Strauss 2010). Finally, as our findings suggest, positive affect with older employees should be activated since it increases resources,

such as energy, attention, optimism. It also results in active engagement with the environment, which initiates, and is necessary for, proactive behaviour.

We conclude that our study was about an interesting concept (proactive behaviour), an interesting model (Bindl and Parker in press), and an interesting sample (older persons in the labour market). However, it was only a first limited empirical test in a small sample. It remains a major challenge to empirically investigate the high number of proposed links between antecedents and proactive behaviour, as well as favourable and unfavourable outcomes of proactive behaviour. Future research that combines proactive behaviour and retirement should therefore be based on longitudinal, multi-level, and cross-cultural designs.

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Table 1
 Descriptives of, and Partial Correlations (i.e., controlled for age and gender) among Study Variables

	M	SD	1	2	3
1 Proactive Behaviour	5.13	.75			
2 Positive Affect	3.76	.61	.38***		
3 Negative Affect	2.21	.73	.04	-.19	
4 Anticipated Retirement Age	61.33	2.49	.18	.28**	-.23*

Note.

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$

Table 2
 Results of the Final Step of Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis on Anticipated Retirement Age

	β	ΔR^2
Control variables		.05
Age	.17	
Gender	-.02	
Job-Related Affective Well-Being		.10**
Positive Affect	.24*	
Negative Affect	-.18	
R^2		.15
Adjusted R^2		.12
ES-index ($R^2/1 - R^2$)		.18

Note.

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$