**Optimizing Cognitive Functioning in the Retirement Years:**

**The Contribution of Active Engagement and Social Relationships**

Despite extensive research, it remains unclear whether retirement affects

health -- physical and mental, and in what ways; and it is sometimes argued that the

effect is not uniform, but rather depends on a variety of exogenous variables (e.g:

Wang, 2007; Segel-Karpas, Bamberger & Bacharach, 2013). The effects retirement

exerts on cognitive function have only recently become a part of the academic

discourse focused on retirement, and is a topic yet to receive the attention it deserves,

especially given the anticipated rise in cognitive impairment and dementia rates. A

few initial studies suggest that early retirement might result in a decline in cognitive

functioning (Rohewedder & Willis, 2010; Adam et al., 2007; Bonsang, Adam &

Perelman 2012). However, the results are inconsistent, and it remains unclear whether

or how retirement affects cognitive functioning, and what are the mechanisms

responsible for this association. Given the continuous increase in the number of

retirees, and given the grave personal and social costs of cognitive impairment, the

effects of retirement on cognition must be thoroughly understood. ***Thus, the key goals***

***of this study are to examine the effects retirement exerts on cognitive functioning,***

***and to examine whether variability in the effects of retirement on cognitive***

***functioning can be explained by exogenous variables – active engagement in social***

***and non-social activities. We will use a cross national comparison to examine these***

***effects in Israel and the US.***

The proposed research will address the following questions:

1. Does retirement affect cognitive aging? How and under what conditions?

2. Can active engagement in social and non-social activities minimize the effects

of retirement on cognitive functioning?

3. Do these effects vary between countries: comparing Israel and the US.