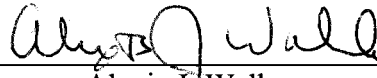


AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

Cheryl L. Peters for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Human Development and Family Studies presented on February 2, 2006.

Title: Diverse Pathways in Retirement Transitions: Influences of Family, Work, Wealth, and Health.

Abstract approved:

  
Alexis J. Walker

Shaped by life course and feminist perspectives, this study investigated the influence of finances, human capital, health, family situations, and work factors on two different retirement transitions among married and partnered men and women. Because women and men arrive at retirement under different life circumstances, logistic regression analyses were conducted separately by gender. Respondents were drawn from Waves 1–4 of the biennial, longitudinal *Health and Retirement Survey (HRS)* and included individuals who retired between Waves 1 and 2 (1992–1994), Waves 2 and 3 (1994–1996), and Waves 3 and 4 (1996–1998). Retirees ( $n = 1,275$ ) transitioned from the labor force at Time 1 to either a partial or complete retirement at Time 2. Results indicated that, relative to partially retired men, completely retired men had higher earnings at their job, worked for larger companies, were more likely labor union members, were covered in pension plans, started pension incomes at Time 2, had health insurance that continued in retirement, likely covered partners in their health plan, were older, were in poorer health, and had provided 400+ hours of care to a grandchild in the last year. Relative to completely retired men, partially retired men had more wealth, were more likely

receiving health insurance coverage from their partners' health plan, had partners who were working for pay at Time 2, had fewer years at their last job, retired earlier than planned, and perceived their last jobs as important. Relative to partially retired women, completely retired women were more likely covered in pension plans, had health insurance that continued in retirement, were more likely labor union members, were White, were older, were in poorer health, and had grandchildren in the home at the time of retirement. Relative to completely retired women, partially retired women had partners who were working for pay at Time 2, retired earlier than planned, and were providing financial support to another individual. Results suggest that partial retirement is a possible solution for workers trying to negotiate a labor force exit while keeping financial and health benefits. Implications and future directions were explored.

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Diverse Pathways in Retirement Transitions:  
Influences of Family, Work, Wealth, and Health

by  
Cheryl L. Peters

A DISSERTATION

submitted to

Oregon State University

in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the  
degree of

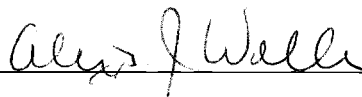
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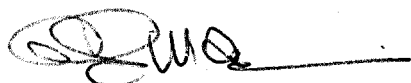
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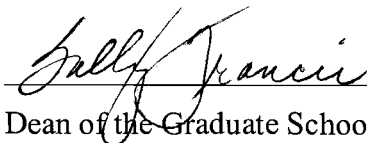
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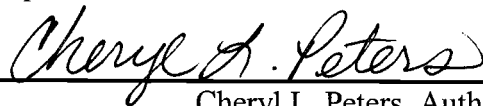


Chair of the Department of Human Development and Family Sciences



Dean of the Graduate School

I understand that my dissertation will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my dissertation to any reader upon request.



Cheryl L. Peters, Author

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This life achievement was not possible without the support of my loving family and dear friends. Writing retreats have been a key motivator for staying on track and working through the emotional side of completing a PhD. Thank you to Marina, Megan, and Cory for good food, great advice, and personal inspiration. A special thanks to Jana Meinhold for her friendship throughout the years – we made it through all the flaming hoops! Most importantly, thank you to my parents, in-laws, and siblings. Your faith in me to do well has shaped my life in countless ways. And finally, to my husband and best friend, Matt: You deserve the most praise. In return, I offer you the chance to chase *your* dreams.

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DEDICATION

To my retired parents, with my deepest love and respect

John K. Eschbach, Jr.

Roberta (Bobbie) M. Eschbach

Your hard work has provided me a better life.

Thank you.

# Diverse Pathways in Retirement Transitions: Influences of Family, Work, Wealth, and Health

## Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

Contemporary American society was built on “institutionalized solutions to individual risks” (O’Rand, 2005, p. 116). Social security benefits, employer health insurance, worker’s compensation programs, and disability coverage are examples of institutionalized solutions. Today, however, there is a push toward “individualized solutions to institutional risks” (O’Rand, 2005, p.116). The individualized approach requires employees to have individualized plans and back up solutions for income and health care costs should an employer dissolve, merge, or otherwise layoff its workforce. Retirement is no exception.

Retirement today is the responsibility of individual workers. With this personal responsibility for one’s own retirement comes increasingly diverse pathways and transitions. The concept of retirement, that is the cessation of paid work typically in later life, is changing with the push of the baby boom generation into the retirement years. In general, the American social institution of retirement can be characterized as in a state of flux. The originally implemented system (circa 1930s) of employer-earned pensions and state compensation in social security programs is insecure today. Many researchers now claim that most retirement models found in earlier literature (before the 1980s) are unsuitably based on men’s retirement pathways of the past. Researchers need to examine diverse retirement transitions, especially incorporating experiences of women, minorities, and those of men from a more varied group of occupations and family situations (Calasanti, 1993; Burr, Massagli, Mutchler, & Pienta, 1996; Szinovacz & Ekerdt, 1995).

The worker with long-standing job tenure at the same firm, a firm that offers benefits and a pension for retirement, is the exception and not the norm (Cahill, Giandrea, & Quinn, 2005). Completely retired individuals represent the old norm, a male-based model of retirement; that is, individuals work for many years, build a pension, and subsequently self-select retirement at a norm-appropriate age. Partially retired individuals represent a *new retirement* model and the norms around this trend are less clear.

In addition to the emerging partial retirement pathway, the trend toward earlier retirements reversed in the late 1990s (Costa, 1999; Haveman, Holden, Wilson, & Wolfe, 2003; Quinn, 1997). Some researchers predicted a time of increased leisure coupled with longevity for future generations, but an aging society is expensive to care for (Hudson, 2005) and Americans must redefine retirement. As secure employment over the life course has become more tenuous and the burden of financing retirement has fallen on the worker, rather than on the employer or society, people are creating alternative pathways that fit their needs, aspirations, and circumstances. Partial retirement is one such alternative pathway or transition. In partial retirement, individuals may self-identify as retired, but still work for pay (Quinn, 1981).

Understanding how partially and completely retired individuals differ in important family and work characteristics can illuminate the types of retirement transitions Americans are selecting in light of recent social and economic changes. Examining types of retirement transitions may shed light on the elusive process of social change in the institution of retirement in the United States (Beehr, 1986; Han & Moen, 1999). Exploring how retirement transitions are different experiences for women and men is also a timely topic of study (Calasanti, 1996). The growing number of working women

in American society means more women are confronting retirement decisions. Including women in the study of retirement is necessary because changes in women's life course experiences are partly responsible for the changing types of retirement today.

### *Purpose of Study*

The goal of this research was to better understand different types of retirement transitions among women and men. Specifically, I sought to understand the work factors and family circumstances of married and partnered individuals transitioning from the labor force at one point in time to either a partial or full retirement two years later. My focus for this study examined characteristics of individuals working for pay at Time 1 and reexamined them when they self-defined as retired at Time 2 (two years later). Partial retirement includes some individuals still working for pay, but who nonetheless, claim to be retired. The data are from the decade of the 1990s, a time in American history with social and economic differences in the paid labor force compared to the earlier decades that may have implications for current retirement transitions.

### *Theoretical Perspective*

I used the life course perspective, in tandem with a feminist perspective, as the guiding framework in designing analyses and interpreting results (Hägestad, 1990; Moen, 1996a, 1996b, 2003; Withers Osmond & Thorne, 1993). The life course perspective is a powerful guide to understanding older individuals because experiences accumulate over the lifespan. Studies that use a life course framework can take into account complex issues in family research including contextual influences, interdependence of life spheres, timing of transitions, and differing trajectories and pathways into retirement (Moen, 2001; Szinovacz, 2003). Feminist perspectives encourage researchers to use gender as an



organizing concept (Withers Osmond & Thorne, 1993). The goal in feminist research is not to compare men against women, or merely to identify differences by gender; the purpose is to view life experiences and transitions in a way that considers possible structural constraints on personal agency.

Women and men have fundamentally different experiences in the paid labor market and at home. Individuals have different opportunities and experience in life depending on structural features such as gender, ethnicity, or social class membership. A feminist perspective draws attention to these dimensions. Using the life course perspective makes it difficult to overlook family variables in research on work and family (Harrington-Meyer & Pavalko, 1996). Using a feminist perspective means that structural and sociodemographic influences are highlighted (Withers Osmond & Thorne, 1993).

Four life course themes, infused with a gendered perspective, were useful for developing this study: (a) explaining individual variation and age heterogeneity of cohorts entering into retirement, (b) identifying meanings of retirement transitions and historical contexts, (c) linking personal agency to social change, and (d) examining multiple time clocks in individual lives.

*Individual variation and age heterogeneity of cohorts.* The life course perspective predicts greater heterogeneity among cohorts as they age (DeViney & O’Rand, 1988; Han & Moen, 1999). Individuals become more diverse over time even if they have experienced the same cultural events and historical markers during their biological and social development. I expected diversity among even same-aged individuals, especially those with differing family and work experiences across the lifespan. The life course perspective calls for attention to individual differences in characteristics and in daily life

experiences. For example, differences are found in human capital, finances, health, work characteristics, family care obligations, spousal/relationship influences, and because of sociodemographic features (i.e., gender, race/ethnicity, class). I expected that women and men arrived at retirement transitions under differing family and work circumstances.

*Meanings of retirement transitions and historical context.* Retirement is a life transition. As the life course perspective would predict, changes in an individual's roles and relationships may occur with retirement (Hägestad, 1990). Individual characteristics (i.e., gender, work history, family situations) influence the adjustment period and consequences of the transition. For example, married or partnered individuals may have more to negotiate in the personal or family sphere now that paid work no longer dominates daily life. Personal health, as well as spousal health and other family care obligations, may influence an individual's pathway into either a complete or partial retirement. For example, women are likely to feel greater obligation than men feel toward family care needs (Hatch, 1990, 1992).

Changes in the work sphere affect other spheres, including family relationships. Meanings of life transitions are highly individualized, even if they occur on time (Settersten, 2003). Life course theory reminds us that everything in the present is embedded in some historical context. Although this study does not treat historical context in specific analyses, both life course and feminist tenets ask that we remain mindful of how values and social patterns form over generations.

*Linking personal agency to social change.* The life course perspective emphasizes the concepts of personal agency and social change (George, 1996). If we believe that individuals, couples, and families are agents of change and do not simply react to social

conditions, then we should seek reasons for variability in experience, especially during life transitions. Because people arrive at the retirement transition under differing circumstances, we expect variability. Social change is noticeable when clusters of individuals chart new pathways in their social experiences. Therefore, by charting variation in types of retirement transitions, comments about the nature of social change may be possible. Examining whether and how women and men experience retirement transitions differently will further illuminate the nature of any social change.

*Examining multiple time clocks in individual lives.* Bengtson and Allen (1993) highlight three complementary time clocks in a life course. First, ontogenetic time and events refer to the “unfolding biography” of individual lives (p. 471). Individual lifespan development involves emotional, social, and intellectual growth and losses over time. Although retirement transitions occur at different biological ages, each retiree experiences the event in ways that are related to their lifelong development. Second, generational time and events (family time) connect individual lives to each other. Retirees are part of a social or familial system and may simultaneously identify as being a spouse, parent, and grandparent. Family positions, especially the provider role and the presence of dependent family members, may influence retirement choices. Third, because retirement decisions are likely to be influenced by economics, social politics, and culture, historical time and events should be considered.

#### *Historical Context of Retirement in the U.S.*

Retirement as a social institution is young. Several benchmarks indicate its development since the implementation of the Social Security Act by Congress in 1935. I trace some of the history of this important social program to illustrate how individual

needs, and work participation and history, can align with family situations to produce social institutions. Americans value a social security program because it is distributed to everyone, regardless of need (Adams & Beehr, 2003). Today, just as in 1935, the purpose of a state-supported pension is as a financial supplement—a safety net—in old age to prevent or to combat the ill effects of poverty (Szinovacz, 2003). The history of state-sponsored pension can be traced to the 1890s, when union veterans of the Civil War received pensions in their old age. The first privately funded pensions developed by company firms in manufacturing and textiles appeared in the early 1900s.

American retirement, as we have come to know it today, is an artifact of the industrial revolution (Atchley, 1976; Szinovacz, 2003). Because small industries and trades were replaced by large-scale manufacturing, there was a gradual separation of the home and work sphere. Speed of production replaced quality of craftsmanship. The need for manual labor decreased because of time-saving machines, reduced work hours, and increased opportunities for leisure and consumption (Robinson & Godbey, 1997). Increased numbers of never married individuals entered the labor force whereas older adults exited paid labor and entered a retirement phase of life. Free from paid work, retirees in an earlier time were expected to enjoy a simple life with greater leisure, until they eventually became sick or died. In general, during the industrial revolution, male workers became more specialized or skilled and advanced to management or other secure positions within company firms. As women entered the paid labor force, most took employment in lower-skilled, hence lower-paying jobs alongside male minorities (Dailey, 1998). Historically, Black women have had higher rates and more years of labor force participation compared to White and Hispanic women (Flippen, 2005; Gibson, 1987).

In 1935, with the beginning of legislation sanctioning the support of state-based pensions, age eligibility for retirement appeared. Thus, the social transition of retirement became institutionalized at age 65. The new support from the state to protect elderly adults from poverty had remarkable and almost immediate results (Szinovacz, 2003). The success of the social program in protecting elderly persons from poverty indirectly encouraged private firms to offer their workers retirement pensions (Henretta, 2001).

In 1939, the Social Security Administration (SSA) added spousal benefits and categories for blind and permanently disabled individuals to receive state financial assistance. It was not until 1950 that husbands' (widowers) became eligible for their deceased wives' social security benefits. Until then, only widows received their deceased spouses' earned benefits. If individuals were married for 20 years or more, they were eligible for at least half of the former (now deceased) worker's benefits (Harrington-Meyer, & Bellas, 1995). In 1972, in response to the increasing divorce rate in America, this criterion was lowered to 10 years of marriage. Examining labor force trends since the industrial revolution helps to explain the early formation of retirement in American culture. In the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, a new generation was born. Social patterns at work and at home changed in remarkable ways with an increase in birth rates.

The years between 1946 and 1954, coinciding with the end of WWII, reflect the early baby boom cohort. Late boomers, a cohort born between 1955 and 1964, some of whom were siblings of the early boomers, added to the increase in U.S. birth rates. Labor force participation rates during the post-WWII era showed committed workers, mostly parents of these baby boomer children (Dailey, 1998). Workers' unions supported working-family initiatives including standardized cost-of living wage increases,

unemployment coverage, and programs developed to help workers plan finances for their growing families and eventual retirement needs.

Between 1968 and 1986, the average White, middle-class man had both an employer pension and state government supplements planned for his retirement (Quinn & Burkhauser, 1990). Blacks, other minorities, and low-wage earning women, however, failed to obtain such work rewards at the same rate as White men (Quinn & Kozy, 1996). As the labor force aged during this time in history, social pressures for older workers to retire increased, as did the desire for consumption and leisure on the part of retirees. A sense of entitlement to retirement settled into American culture. Further, normative expectations, once defined by the SSA, hardened with cohorts stepping out of the labor sector at norm-appropriate ages.

In 1983, Congress enacted a delay in social security eligibility. Age 66 was now in place for early baby boomers (born 1946 – 1954) to receive Social Security benefits, and age 67 became the age eligibility criterion for late baby boomers (born 1955 – 1964). In 1986, Congress voted to abolish *mandatory* retirement age all together. This abolishment of mandatory retirement allowed flexibility for older workers to continue paid employment full time or on a part-time basis, or to receive earned employer and state pensions. Partial retirement (working retirees) and how to deal with this phenomenon began appearing in the research literature along with involuntary job loss in late life (Quinn & Burkhauser, 1990).

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, individual retirement accounts (IRAs) and employer-sponsored pensions continued to be sought by skilled workers. Even when employees did not stay with the same firm for their entire work lives, IRAs allowed them

to take retirement savings to their next employer. Early retirement settlements also appeared during this time (late 1980s and early 1990s), offering workers early exits from paid labor as corporate “downsizing” and company mergers spread throughout a large industrial sector (Hardy & Quadagno, 1995). The downsizing of companies benefited workers who were positioned to enjoy an early retirement but caught others off-guard and needing to search for new employment. In general, the paid labor market became volatile. Individual workers now had to manage their own career opportunities *and* prepare for retirement. In sum, in the current sociohistorical context, the confluence of individual, policy, and workplace factors have led to diverse pathways in retirement transitions. Today, individuals are continuing to transform the social institution of retirement.

## Chapter 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In this literature review, which excludes retirement studies outside of the United States, I describe the multiple meanings of retirement. The role of gender, race/ethnicity, work histories, education, financial statuses, and health in retirement is addressed. A critical look at the life course and gendered family patterns associated with individuals' work situations throughout adulthood follows. I end this chapter by highlighting gaps in our understanding of retirement transitions and by presenting the primary research questions for this study. Finally, expectations for this study that were derived from the literature and the conceptual framework are presented.

### *Meanings of Retirement*

Retirement is a process (Beehr, 1986; Ekerdt & DeViney, 1993; Hardy & Quadagno, 1995; Moen, Kim, & Hofmeister, 2001). To conceptualize retirement as a stage or one-time life event is inadequate and even incorrect. Viewing retirement as a process is consistent with the life course perspective, which emphasizes the linkages between work and family spheres across the lifespan and the interdependence of lives (Kim & Moen, 2002). Hardy and Quadagno (1995) stressed the importance of thinking of retirement as a transition out of paid work to nonemployment; they noted, however, that retirement transitions often occur with several gradations not captured by research.

Feldman (1994) offers the following definition of retirement in an attempt to incorporate a diversified experience. Retirement is "the exit from an organizational position or career path of considerable duration, taken by individuals after middle age, and taken with the intention of reduced psychological commitment to work thereafter" (p.



287). This definition excludes work transitions in early adulthood (20s and 30s), allows for subjective and objective indicators of retirement, and incorporates the reality of postretirement work on either a part-time or self-employment basis. This definition, however, erroneously assumes retirement is experienced by all workers at some point. Some workers never leave the labor force, others exit and reenter several times, and some die before they get the chance to retire.

Early retirement transitions are common today, but so are longevity and reentry into the labor force after retirement (Burr et al., 1996). A recent study showed that the early retirement trend might have begun to reverse for women and men in the late 1990s (Haveman et al., 2003). More retirement research from this time in social history is needed. Some workers experience a planned and abrupt complete retirement whereas others experience partial retirement that may include working for pay. Ruhm (1990) noted that job stopping often includes postcareer bridge jobs, a spurt of partial retirement, or even reverse retirement after a length of time out of the labor force. Differences in work and family factors contribute to the diversity of retirement transition types (O'Rand, Henretta, & Krecker, 1992).

Examining push factors (commonly from work and society) and pull factors (commonly from family and personal life) is one way to hypothesize what individuals are considering when making or planning a retirement transition (Beehr, 1986; Shultz, Morton, & Weckerle, 1998). Quinn and Burkhauser (1990) called the push and pull factors the stick and carrots of retirement. Push factors can involve inability to perform work tasks, age discrimination, or pressure to retire from coworkers and management (Hardy, 1982; Hayward & Hardy, 1985). Pull factors can involve the desire for more

leisure or consumption and the need to fulfill family obligations for care (Henretta, 2003). For some, retirement is neither planned, nor intended, nor even desired; they are forced into retirement through company layoffs, job displacement, and other involuntary forces rooted in labor force trends (Gallo, Bradley, Siegel, & Kasl, 2000; Hardy & Quadango, 1995; Szinovacz & Davey, 2005).

Job displacement for older workers is more challenging than for the young because of standards of living achieved from former employment. Displaced workers typically face a 39% loss of earnings (Couch, 1998). In later life, there is simply less time to make up for financial losses. Among older displaced workers, only 16% find health insurance coverage after a job loss (Couch, 1998). Finding health insurance through a family member (most commonly a spouse) becomes a critical, yet often unmet need. Because Black Americans are less likely to be married than Whites, they are also less likely to be covered by spousal health insurance or pension plans (Bound, Schoenbaum, & Waidmann, 1996).

Some laid off older workers turn to self-employment (Quinn & Burkhauser, 1990) and only partially retire. Self-employment is not an option for all workers, however, and the type of work that self-employed individuals do for pay sadly is missing from the literature. Because other laid off workers suffer wage losses in new employment opportunities, they fully retire to collect their pensions and benefits (Couch, 1998).

*Defining retirement.* In defining retirement for research purposes, the general consensus is that multiple measures are best. Ekerdt and DeViney (1990) identified five subjective and objective indicators researchers may use to define retirement: (a) separation from a career, (b) exit from the labor force, (c) reduced effort, (d) pension

receipt, and (e) self-definition. Multiple criteria are preferred, as is using a definition that best suits the research design. Partial retirement has been conceptualized as both an intermediate category (between reduced effort and complete retirement) and an “unordered alternative” (Ekerdt, DeViney, 1990, p. 224). Any research model of retirement that does not consider the treatment of the partially retired is considered misspecified. Ekerdt and DeViney (1990) posit that the mistreatment of the partially retired in past retirement studies may be one cause for the confusion surrounding the definition of retirement. Previous studies would sometimes filter out partially retired individuals because their experiences were judged to be different from those who had fully retired and researchers were unclear how to handle these cases. For example, in the Retirement History Survey (RHS) only 5% of the respondents self-identified as partially retired, so researchers had few reservations about deleting those cases (Quinn, 1981).

What is unknown in secondary data analysis, when a respondent self-identifies as partially retired, is whether individuals consider themselves to be in a conditional or transitional state; that is, are they purposely slowing down and cutting back or are they planning to pick up extra work or income at some point in retirement? In any case, retirement is more complicated than single exits from long-term careers. Researchers must note the influence of family, organizational (work), and environmental (policies) factors in addition to the well studied personal reasons (i.e., wealth and health) for retirement (Feldman, 1994).

*Early retirement.* Research literature from the 1940s and 1950s shows that most early retirement was involuntary. Workers left the paid labor market because of health problems, company lay offs, or mandatory retirement (Quinn & Burkhauser, 1990). Early

retirement is still associated with these unanticipated events. In 1963, the first study to report *voluntary* retirement decisions demonstrated that some workers quit paid labor in pursuit of leisure (Quinn & Burkahuser, 1990).

In the 1980s, however, attention returned to involuntary early retirement transitions as job loss among older workers became predominate in blue collar (i.e., production workers, operators, laborers) *and* white collar (i.e., managers, professionals) occupations (Couch, 1998). Today, some retirees leave work earlier than they anticipated because of complicated pension structures, including the possibility of losing pension wealth (accrual) with continued work (Anderson, Burkhauser, & Quinn, 1986). Early retirees, however, who take reduced Social Security benefits between the ages of 62 and 65, may face a 20% penalty in lifetime payment receipt (Haveman et al., 2003).

Early retirement windows can shield older workers from potential company layoffs (Hardy & Hazelrigg, 1999). Early retirement windows are used by employers to reduce the number of higher wage workers in some job categories and about one half of workers offered such exits take them (Henretta, 2003). Taking an early retirement window does not necessarily mean the worker fully retires. Accepting an early pension and continuing to work fewer hours at a different pay scale can mean stronger financial security in the future (Henretta, 2003). Workers who retire from one job, but then take employment elsewhere, are considered to be in “bridge jobs” (Henretta, 2003; Quinn & Kozy, 1996). Working in bridge jobs is not a new social trend, but it has warranted greater research attention in recent years as ways of retiring have broadened (Cahill et al., 2005).

Today, early retirees leave the paid labor force because they are in poor health or because they have sufficient financial resources (Adams, 1999). A study of professional workers found that individuals with high status jobs often retire early (Kilty & Behling, 1985), but this may be because of higher wages and the pension receipt associated with such jobs. Pienta, Burr, and Mutchler (1994) found that women with continuous work histories were more likely to delay retirement, suggesting professional women may have strong attachments to the paid labor force. Furthermore, women who work when their children are small tend to retire later in life (Henretta, O'Rand, & Chan, 1993a). Women who delay the birth of their first child are also likely to delay retirement (Pienta, 1999) and are less likely to retire early.

The decision to retire early has been conceptualized as three interconnected decisions including the decision to leave the current employer, whether to take bridge employment, and whether to accept bridge work in the same occupation or a different field (Feldman, 1994). This conceptualization overlooks the reality of the workplace: Sometimes workers have little choice between keeping their jobs and choosing among alternative employment options.

In short, early retirement may be voluntary or involuntary and partial or complete. Today, researchers are aware of multiple outside forces such as company layoffs and social security or Medicare eligibility changes that impinge on personal preferences to retire as planned. Earlier studies that focused solely on individual desires for more leisure or family and spouse time as the catalysts for labor force exits, may have overestimated the importance of personal *pull* factors in retirement transitions (Flippen, 2005). There is little doubt that personal preferences, as well as family situations, are influential in an

early retirement transition. Yet, early retirement may include continued work for pay, further blurring a clear exit from paid work into a full retirement status.

*Partial retirement.* There are now more forms of retirement than there are clear patterns. Workers who continually move in and out of the paid labor force create “blurred exits” that trouble researchers trying to conceptualize the meanings and pathways of retirement. Elder and Pavalko (1993) applied a life course perspective to a cohort analysis of older men and found four pathways into retirement. The all-male sample was mostly White and many of the men had professional careers, but the pathways illuminate diversity even in this relatively homogeneous group. Gradual retirement (reducing work hours) was the dominant transition type (37%), followed closely by the traditional pathway of retirement as a single exit and no postretirement work (35%). About 15% of the sample experienced a sporadic exit of the labor force, averaging five transitions or more after age 50 (Elder & Pavalko, 1993). Altogether, nearly 50% of older men experienced gradual retirement transitions. This study provided further evidence for the importance of considering multiple retirement measures—subjective (self-identified status) and objective (work for pay status)—to examine complex work transitions and to incorporate the role of partial retirement pathways.

Partial retirement is less common in wage and salary work than it is among healthy, older workers who are likely to be self-employed (Quinn, 1981). Research shows that self-employment increases with age (Quinn & Kozy, 1996), but there is little discussion of the types of work self-employed workers do or the pay they earn. Ruhm (1990) estimates that about half of older workers partially retire at some point in their lives; roughly one fifth leave before age 50, a third leave before age 55, and half exit the

labor force before age 60. Ruhm's (1990) estimate matches Elder and Pavalko's (1993) estimate of workers who partially retire (about 50%).

Partial retirement lasts longer and is more common than it was in the 1980s (Gustman & Steinmeier, 1984; Honig & Hanoach, 1985). This trend makes sense given the increased longevity of Americans today. It seems reasonable that all types of retirement may increase in future years because individuals are living longer. The peak ages for a partial retirement are 66 – 67 years (Ruhm, 1990). White Americans, less educated workers, those in poor health, and women covered by pensions are the least likely to select partial retirement and are less likely to reverse retirement by returning to paid work (Flippen, 2005; Fullerton, 1999; Henretta, Chen, & O'Rand, 1992; Honig, 1985; Kim & DeVaney, 2005); that is, they are the most likely to enter into a complete and permanent retirement. This leaves a gap in understanding about minorities, skilled or educated workers, workers in good or stable health, and women without pension eligibility. Partial retirement has been treated as a footnote in most studies on retirement. Factors potentially influencing partial retirement related to wealth, health, family, work, and demographics are important to explore.

Rather than studies designed to extend the definitions of retirement, researchers need to focus on the complex and varied transitions that people are actually making from work to retirement (Quandango & Hardy, 1996). As previously noted, varied retirement transitions exist because labor force exits after midlife can be planned or unanticipated, voluntary or involuntary, early or on-time, and finally, partial or complete. Any combination of the above combined with gender, age, race/ethnicity, marital status, and class differences, will surely produce variation in retirement transitions.

### *Critique of the Male Model of Retirement*

Most retirement research from the 1960s through the early 1980s focused on professional men in careers typically married to homemakers; that is, unemployed wives raising children at home. Some studies identify this group as reflecting the *male model* of retirement. Research from the male model consistently showed that individuals retired as soon as they were financially able, either through pensions or personal savings, and that being married, White, and highly educated predicted an on-time retirement (near age 62). Research from the 1960s through the 1980s mostly charted the adjustment phase into retirement and frequently reported on role loss and identity issues, as well as attitudes, morale, depression, and life satisfaction in retirement (Beck, 1982; Dorfman, Heckert, Hill, & Kohout, 1988; Matthews & Brown, 1988).

During the late 1980s and in the 1990s, researchers became increasingly interested in women's retirement (Connidis, 1986; Honig, 1985; Skirboll & Silverman, 1991; Szinovacz, 1980, 1982, 1987). A weakness of earlier retirement surveys was the limited number of women in nationally representative samples. For example, the Retirement History Survey (RHS) only sampled unmarried working women (Quinn & Burkhauser, 1990).

Longitudinal studies, dyadic data, and more complex research designs were introduced to examine the greater variability in retirement experiences (Gustman, Mitchell, & Steinmeier, 1995). Women's experiences, minority employment experiences, and dual-earner couples' joint and sequential transitions into retirement challenge the male model. Simply, there is now more diversity to account for in retirement transitions.



*Individual Differences in Retirement Transitions*

Retirement choices are often constrained (i.e., health or disability of self or other, financial assets or debts, job loss). To connect the theme of institutional change to individuals' life experiences, I describe choices and circumstances people face in charting their own retirement. In the literature, financial dimensions are the most frequently studied, followed by health characteristics of the worker. Researchers call these factors the *opportunity structure* of retirement or the "wealth and health" of retirement.

The opportunity structure considers human capital, financial dimensions, and demographic variables such as gender, age, race/ethnicity, education, household income and assets, occupational position (i.e., type of job, union membership, firm size), health conditions, and family situations (i.e., marital status, dependent children, coresident kin). Other choices contribute to diversity in retirement experiences and might relate to the personal motivations to retire, such as no longer wanting to work or perceiving social norms to retire (Shultz, Morton, & Weckerle, 1998; Taylor & Shore, 1995).

*Gender, race/ethnicity, and age.* Key demographic variables reflect the opportunity structure of retirement. Women face unique challenges in retirement because of a life time of accumulated decisions and circumstances related to education, marriage, childrearing, and labor force participation (Moen, 2001; Pienta, 1999). Women may differentially emphasize domesticity and paid work over the course of their adult lives (Gerson, 1985). For example, women emphasize paid work when there is an economic need, domestic isolation or devaluation, and expanded work opportunities (Gerson, 1985). Women have fewer years in the paid labor force (29.4 years) compared to men

(38.8 years) and more interruptions; women average 11 work transitions over their life course (Dailey, 1998).

Women often work part-time in the labor force, eliminating them from potential benefit opportunities offered by their jobs (Hardy & Shuey, 2000). Any indication in recent decades that the gender gap in fringe benefits is closing may be more related to the reduced rate of men being covered by employer pension plans and other benefits, rather than actual increases in the rates that women are covered by pensions. Women also earn less than men do in wage and salary pay (Bond, Galinsky, & Swanberg, 1997). Gender discrimination in wages leads to financial disadvantages in later life (Szinovacz & DeViney, 2000). Because women work mostly in the service industry and in other low-paying, low-mobility jobs, they have more difficulty saving money and less access to pensions (Hardy & Shuey, 2000; Skirboll & Silverman, 1992). A feminist or gendered perspective pushes researchers to include structural factors (e.g., pension plan coverage) in their analyses that reflect the inequalities women experience in the labor force. For example, women are more likely than men to be employed in nonunion jobs, smaller firms, on a part-time basis, in low-waged jobs, and in benefit-poor occupations and industries (Harrington Meyer & Pavalko, 1996).

Calasanti (1996) noted that most retirement models link women to their family obligations and men to their paid work roles. Szinovacz and DeViney (1999) also found that retirement identity for men was tied to occupational attainment, but women's retirement self-definitions depended more on life course circumstances (e.g., family history, work history). Generally, women retire when their husbands retire, if their husbands are in poor health, if dependent children or parents are in the household, and

when financial assets facilitate retirement (Talaga & Beehr, 1995). Pienta et al. (1994) found that women with a family orientation who were employed intermittently were more likely to retire than women with a strong orientation to the labor force. Some women select partial retirement, but what work and family factors most influence this transition is unclear. The two main predictors of women working during normative retirement years (65+) are being single and having no other income but social security (Dailey, 1998). It appears being married adds spousal influences on decisions to retire such as having pooled resources and perceiving marital commitments (Smith & Moen, 1998).

Few Black Americans identify with the idea or cultural phenomenon of retirement (Gibson, 1987, 1991) because of the lifelong instability they experience in the paid labor market. Older Black Americans more commonly report their work status as disabled or unable to work rather than retired (Burr et al., 1996; Hayward, Friedman, & Chen, 1996). Bound et al. (1996) found that Black Americans drop out of the paid labor force quickly as they approach age 62, mostly because of poor health. Black Americans are at high risk for diabetes, hypertension, and arthritis, which may account for their self-identifying as disabled rather than as retired (Bound et al., 1996).

Gibson labeled disabled Black Americans who do not work the “unretired retired.” Black Americans are not just claiming a sick or disabled role; Blacks are more likely to be in physically demanding jobs than employed Whites and to have poorer subjective and objective health across every age group (Burr et al., 1996). Hispanic-origin Americans are similar to Black Americans given that they also have poor health and higher rates of disability compared to Whites (Choudhury, 2001; Smith, 1995). Minorities, in general, have discontinuous work histories compared to Whites, poorer

health, and more experiences of involuntary job loss across the life span (Flippen, 2005). Additionally, the labor force participation of Hispanics continues to be understudied.

Most studies focusing on economic models of retirement tend to examine retirement planning behavior and anticipated retirement age. Americans report a normative age at retirement of 59 years and 62 years, for women and men, respectively (Settersten & Hägestad, 1996). Generally, the more individuals plan for retirement, the less likely they are to reenter the labor force (Feldman, 1994). For example, Ekerdt, DeViney, and Kosloski (1996) found that anticipatory rehearsal of retirement began with a subjective proximity to retirement age. The closer retirement was in the mind of workers, the more they thought about the upcoming transition. Typically, workers can answer *when* they will retire, but they are far less likely to know *how* they will retire. About two fifths of workers have no plans and have not thought about retirement (Ekerdt et al., 1996). Women are more likely to have no plans for retirement and they are also more likely to be working part time (Ekerdt, Hackney, Kosloski, & DeViney, 2001). Blacks and Hispanics are likely to report a shorter probability of subjected lifespan than Whites (Smith, 1995), and this may contribute to a lack of planning for retirement and for later life, in general.

*Human capital and wealth.* Human capital such as education is connected to lifetime earnings and to accumulated financial assets that can be used in retirement. Higher educational achievement is associated with higher paying jobs, which are associated with greater work history stability, and therefore with higher personal savings and stronger likelihood of pension receipt in retirement (Haveman et al., 2003). Among

unionized auto-plant workers, those with higher education levels were more likely to postpone retirement when offered an early retirement window (Hardy & Hazelrigg, 1999). Little research has studied the connections between education and the selection of partial versus complete retirement.

Wealth is a broad concept incorporating a variety of assets. Pension, health insurance coverage, and social security payments are the “big three” wealth factors or “three-legged stool” in planning for and executing a retirement (Ekerdt & Hackney, 2002). Financial literacy is a factor as well: The highly educated seem better at planning for retirement (Ekerdt & Hackney, 2002), perhaps because they are likely to have more financial resources to manage and invest. For example, among college graduates, 2 out of 3 Whites are invested in IRAs, whereas 1 in 3 Blacks and 1 in 4 Hispanic Americans are invested in such programs (Choudhury, 2001). This difference widens when considering that 25% of Whites in the Health and Retirement Survey data (1992 Wave) have college degrees and less than 10% Black or Hispanic-origin Americans have college degrees (Choudhury, 2001).

Pension receipt is a strong predictor of retirement (Szinovacz & DeViney, 2000, Gustman & Steinmeier, 2002). Pensions encourage workers to retire and pension eligibility and amount influence retirement decisions (Adams & Beehr, 2003; Feldman, 1994, Hardy & Shuey, 2000). Age and date of hire greatly determine pension accrual as well as potential Social Security benefits in the future (Gustman & Steinmeier, 2002). Workers covered in a pension plan typically have longer job tenure. When women are covered in an employer-based pension plan, they are more likely to take cash settlements upon job transitions and they are more likely to have lower asset accumulations than men

in later life (Hardy & Shuey, 2000). Women have lower social security payments than men because of lower wages and discontinuous work histories, and because zero earning years bring down the average SSA payment (Haveman et al., 2003).

Stronger benefit packages are generally offered by unionized employers that typically offer health insurance coverage to retirees along with a pension in retirement (Ekerdt & Hackney, 2002). Health insurance coverage, especially during times of high health costs, is becoming a critical issue that should be incorporated into retirement studies (Harrington-Meyer & Pavalko, 1996). A recent study has confirmed that coverage in employer-based health insurance plans has declined for all workers—men and women, Whites and minorities—in the last two decades, including full-time workers (Dushi & Honig, 2005). Because private health insurance coverage is expensive, employer-based coverage can be viewed as an additional aspect of individual or household wealth.

Individuals who rely on health insurance coverage from their spouses' plans (dual-earner couples) are receiving more attention in research (Harrington Meyer & Pavalko, 1996; Honig & Dushi, 2005). Obtaining health insurance and continuing coverage into retirement have become important considerations for couples exiting the labor force (Honig & Dushi, 2005). Purchasing private health insurance is costly and the anticipated costs may encourage some individuals to continue working longer than they expected, therefore delaying a complete retirement. Quinn, Burkhauser, Cahill, and Weathers (1998) found access to health insurance plans that continued into retirement influenced workers' decisions to retire. The availability to enroll in employer health insurance is related less to individual features, than to occupational characteristics

including firm size, unionization of the workplace, wages, hours worked (e.g., full-time status) and industry (Seccombe, Clarke, & Coward, 1994).

The influence of health insurance coverage on retirement transitions and on health in later life in general is poorly understood. Chronic disability and illness are expensive. Out-of-pocket medical costs and lack of adequate coverage depletes accumulated wealth in later life (Lee & Kim, 2003). Few who need health insurance coverage can afford out-of-pocket coverage. Again, whether a retiree has health insurance coverage is structurally linked to firm size and union membership, wage rates, and work hours (part-time or full-time) (Harrington-Meyer & Pavalko, 1996). There is growing evidence that wives with their own health insurance coverage through paid employment expect to work about 30% longer than those without (Hoing, 1998). Continued health insurance coverage tends to lower the probability that a worker will continue employment past age 62 (Honig, 1998).

Personal savings is an additional feature of wealth considered in retirement research. The baby boom cohort is a generation of spenders, not savers, which is a different pattern from their parent's saving behavior (Dailey, 1998). Personal financial saving behavior is at the highest rate during ages 45 – 64 and at the lowest during ages 25 – 44 (Dailey, 1998). Age differences in saving behavior are mostly related to the large cost expenditures of household formation and childrearing. Financial resources influence both those with the highest (Fillenbaum, George, & Palmore, 1985) and those with the lowest wages to retire early (Belgrave, 1988). Calasanti (1996) connects this contradiction to the sharp divide between high-paying and low-paying jobs that also come with different work schedules and flexibility (Clarkberg & Moen, 2003).

Smith (1995) found race/ethnicity differences in financial saving behaviors. Although Whites have the highest household worth, Hispanics have 11% higher household wealth than do Black Americans. Hispanic-origin Americans, however, carry higher levels of deficit and debt compared to Blacks (Smith, 1995). It can be important to distinguish between earnings and household assets because they are not necessary equivalent. Total net household worth incorporates a sum of all wealth minus any debt.

In the HRS data, 79% of the White households own their homes, compared to 59% of Blacks and 60% of Hispanics; Hispanic homes, however, have lower average property values than homes of Whites and Blacks (Smith, 1995). Hispanic-origin Americans may face particular financial challenges in retirement because they are less likely to have pensions than Blacks and they receive lower SSA payments because of their higher rates of immigration, therefore shorter work histories paid into the state system (Choudhury, 2001).

*Health and disability issues.* The mixed results in the literature related to the influence of health on retirement may stem from how health is measured as well as what other characteristics are controlled in studies. Hayward (1986) warned that the relationships between health and retirement can be spurious. Health and disability status is linked to socioeconomic status (Hayward et al., 1996). Socioeconomic status is related to type of occupation, education, earnings, and other financial assets. Health is only linked to retirement age if the individual has an impairment or disability and cannot work (Feldman, 1994).

Ethnic group membership and class differences are found in health and retirement studies. Black Americans have poor self-reported health compared to Whites and this



disparity accounts for the different rates of labor force exit (Bound et al., 1996). Blacks also are more likely to be disabled (Hayward et al., 1996). Work disability status is a significant mortality predictor and is highly correlated with help received in activities-in-daily-living (Hayward et al., 1996). Worker disability is associated with bouts of unemployment across the life course (Hayward, Friedman, & Chen, 1998) and these lead to reduced pensions, savings, and social security payments in later life.

Loprest, Rupp, and Sandell (1995) found that women and men in the Health and Retirement Survey had comparable rates of disability keeping them out of the paid labor force (approximately 20% of women and men in the total 1992 sample). Women have higher rates of functional disabilities than men (Loprest et al., 1995). One hypothesis for why men and women (all race/ethnicities) have different experiences in the labor force is because of the type of jobs that they work. A majority of women (65%) are in three types of nonphysical occupations—managerial/professional, sales, and clerical—and nearly half (48%) of men are found in these three job categories (Loprest, et al., 1995). Occupational job types, when considered alongside pay rates and education, are often indicative of social class membership.

*Work conditions.* Work characteristics matter in retirement decisions, especially the influence of work demands, hours on the job, and type of occupation or nature of the work (Szinovacz, 2003). As previously stated, Black Americans tend to work in physically demanding jobs and that may contribute to their higher rates of reported disability compared to Whites (Bound et al., 1996). Because of limited job opportunities, Black Americans may have a harder time finding employment if they cannot perform in a physically demanding job.

Firm size of the last employer has been found to be a significant indicator of type of pensions and benefits available with the onset of retirement, with larger firms typically offering substantial and standardized benefits in retirement (Dailey, 1998). Union workers are better informed about workplace policies and benefits that are typically offered by their employers and as a result usually plan better for retirement (Ekerdt & Hackney, 2002).

Attitudes toward the job can predict whether individuals will retire earlier or postpone retirement. Career commitment, a form of labor force attachment, has been found to keep workers in the labor force longer than they had planned. Erdner and Guy (1990) found that school teachers, especially women, had lower expectations to retire because of their high career commitment. Also, people will postpone retirement to reach their goals (occupational attainment), even if they do not really like their work (Adams, 1999). In general, the stronger the commitment to their jobs, the more likely they will delay retirement (Adams, 1999). Work role attachment may mediate the relations between commitment to occupational goals and retirement decisions (Taylor & Shore, 1995). Women who worked while their children were young tend to retire later (older) than women who remained childless or worked only sporadically during childrearing years (Henretta et al., 1993; Pienta, 1999). It appears women with few family-related job interruptions may have a stronger labor force attachment in later life (Pienta et al., 1994).

Other work factors associated with retirement include autonomy, complexity, and mental stress. Jobs with higher autonomy for work tasks, greater complexity in skill, and less mental stress are associated with delayed retirement (Hackney & Hardy, 1985). Only one fifth of the difference in job desirability reported from Black and Whites comes from

the difference in monetary rewards (Burr et al., 1996). How job attachment among Hispanic workers is connected to retirement is not well represented in the literature and therefore unknown. Clearer connections between work factors and retirement transitions are needed for women and men of all race/ethnicities (Adams, 1999).

#### *Family and Spousal Influences on Retirement Transitions*

Retirement timing and meaning are connected to the work *and* family life spheres of individuals (Moen, 1996; Szinovacz & Ekerdt, 1995; Szinovacz, Ekerdt, & Vinick, 1992). Family members are interdependent and they rely on each other to provide help when needed (Brubaker, 1990; Moen, 2003). Most older adults are married (Connidis, 2001), therefore, they are likely to have in-law relationships. Most older adults also have children and grandchildren.

When an older adult is transitioning into a retirement, changes in finances, health, leisure patterns, residence, distribution of power, and loss of friends and older family members are likely (Brubaker, 1990). Retirement decisions are coupled with decisions related to personal leisure, paid work, and caregiving obligations, all influenced by earlier life choices and related to education, marital status, childbearing, and labor force participation (Pienta, 1999). Employment over the adult life course for women does not decrease caregiving responsibilities for children and employment history does not decrease the likelihood of becoming a caregiver for an elderly relative (Robison, Moen, & Dempster-McClain, 1995).

Family work is gendered. To a greater extent than men, women adjust commitments to paid labor for family obligations (Clarkberg & Moen, 2001; Connidis, 2001). Approximately 80% of all care is performed by a family member (Dentinger &

Clarkberg, 2002; Raschick & Ingersoll-Dayton, 2004). An estimated one-in-four waged and salaried working people care for an older adult (Bond et al., 1998).

Furthermore, caregiving obligations peak during an individual's late 50s and mid 60s, right at the time when retirement or job-stopping decisions are surfacing.

The literature is mixed on the effect of family care obligations on retirement transitions. Type of ill relatives and the different life stages of dependent family members are key influences. Some studies show that the financial costs of caring for dependent kin keep individuals in the paid labor force, when other studies highlight that caregiving takes time and some individuals must retire from paid labor to provide care (Hatch & Thompson, 1992; Pavalko & Artis, 1997). Women who are providing care for more than one person have odds of retiring that are 50% higher than those who do not have any care obligations (Dentinger & Clarkberg, 2002). Dependent children in the household tend to discourage retirement, however (Szinovacz & DeViney, 2000).

Working women are especially likely to help aging parents (Robison et al., 1995). Employed women provide comparable amounts of care to extended family as homemakers do, including tasks such as help with shopping, transportation, housework, and emotional support (Brody, Kleban, Johnsen, Hoffman, & Schoonover, 1987). Women in lower wage jobs, however, tend to leave work for caregiving more often than do women with higher paying, higher-status jobs (Brody et al., 1987). Women in low-paying service jobs will likely reduce the hours they work to provide family care, thereby jeopardizing long-term financial security and indirectly hastening an insecure retirement.

Race and ethnicity differences appear in studies on kin care and retirement and they contribute to the mixed results concerning the influence of family care obligations

on later life employment exits. On one hand, White women with coresident children are less prone to retire, whereas Black women with coresident children are more likely to retire (Szinovacz, DeViney, & Davey, 2001). On the other hand, both White and Black men with coresident children are less likely to retire (Szinovacz et al., 2001).

Care for a spouse seems to have a dramatic influence on retirement decisions. Wives who care for their husbands are five times more likely to retire than noncaregivers (Dentinger & Clarkberg, 2002). This pattern reflects that seen earlier in life, with women dropping out of the labor force or drastically reducing time in paid work to care for family (usually young children). When a spouse becomes sick or has a major health issue, women drop out of the labor force at high rates to provide care (Clarkberg & Moen, 2001; Dentinger & Clarkberg, 2002).

Dual-worker couples often retire at the same time, creating a joint retirement. Other couples retire in a sequential retirement, where one retires before the other (O'Rand et al., 1992). Joint retirement of spouses, especially if close in age, is common when affordable (Henretta, O'Rand, & Chan, 1993a, 1993b). The most common pattern is for a wife to retire at the time her husband does (O'Rand et al., 1992). There is evidence that married women retire because their husband did to match timing of the retirement experience regardless of their age (Han & Moen, 1999; Kim & Moen, 2001). Other research has shown that husbands exit the labor force more rapidly than wives do, when a spouse retires (Henretta et al., 1993a). Szinovacz (1996) suggests that employment or retirement status of both spouses should be taken into account in studies on retirement transitions. It is unknown whether partial retirement of a spouse influences the retirement the decision.

Husbands who continue to work after their wives retire are usually providing financial assistance to a dependent family member in the household (Ruhm, 1996). Wives who continue to work after their husband retires usually have greater attachment to the labor force. These wives experience more marital problems because of depressed husbands and increased conflict with husbands who are at home (Davey & Szinovacz, 2004b; Kim & Moen, 2002). Gender ideologies may partially explain the negative situations that can occur from men retiring before their spouses (Szinovacz, 2003). Of the wives who keep working, an estimated 43% retire within one year of the retirement of their husbands (Szinovacz, 1989). Szinovacz and Davey (2005b) found that continued employment of one spouse reduced satisfaction of the retired spouse and that these results were partly explained by preretirement influences on the marital relationship. Szinovacz and Davey reported that “husbands or wives who were dominant in marital decisions may be less satisfied post-retirement if their spouse continues to work because this retirement pattern undermines their influence” in the relationship (2005b, p. 395).

Other factors in a partnered *or* marital relationship that may influence retirement decisions include length of the current relationship as well as whether the retiree was previously married. Women involved in long marriages (more years) tend to exit the labor force more rapidly when their husbands retire (Henretta et al., 1993a). It is unknown whether the length of a current marriage will influence the type of retirement that individuals select in later life. A life course and feminist perspective would support the inclusion of a variable for current relationship length because of the interdependency of linked lives.

*Gaps in the Retirement Literature*

The literature suggests two related areas in need of further exploration. First, both the individualized nature of the life course and changing sociohistorical contexts have led to greater diversity in retirement transitions. This increased diversity is a compelling demand for continued efforts to update the knowledge base. There is not an exhaustive literature on the different factors that predict a partial or complete retirement for recent retirees. Distinguishing factors that lead to a partial versus a complete retirement would be especially useful if obtained from a nationally representative sample, particularly one that includes a large number of new retirees (from the 1990s and later). New data on retirement transitions will help to document social changes and are likely to continue to challenge the male mode of retirement.

Better understanding is needed of women's retirement decisions and experiences, as well as of men's experiences from a wide occupation range. Further, the retirement transitions of Blacks and Hispanics continue to be either overlooked or unidentified. Understanding the family, work, financial, and health characteristics of Blacks and Hispanic Americans also will help to illuminate diversity in retirement transitions.

Second, a focus on married and partnered individuals contributes to research in family gerontology. The influences of family care obligations, partner health, and the work situation of partners (i.e., work status, pension receipt, health insurance coverage) may contribute to our understanding of different retirement transitions. Current estimates show rates of cohabitation among older adults are on the rise (King & Scott, 2005). Older adults view their partnered relationships as either an alternative to marriage or an alternative to singlehood in later life, and few have plans to marry (King & Scott, 2005).

Using both partnered and married individuals represents the wider range of important intimate relationships currently underrepresented in retirement research.

### *Research Questions*

I seek to contribute to the literature on partial versus complete retirement transitions for married men and women from various race/ethnic backgrounds and from a variety of socioeconomic classes by addressing the following research questions:

- (a) What factors predict a partial versus complete retirement among married and partnered individuals?
- (b) Do the influences of wealth, health, family characteristics, and work factors on retirement transitions differ by retirement status?

### *Expectations*

This study used the same set of predictors, motivated by previous literature and theory, for both men and women. I expected some of the predictors to act in different ways by gender, motivating separate analyses for men and women. Expectations for the study by retirement status and gender are summarized in Table 1. Below, I summarize the literature that was reviewed in this chapter to highlight expectations for this study.

*Wealth and health factors.* Men and women with more accumulated wealth and less debt are able to retire earlier (Smith, 1995). In this study, I expected men and women who have greater household net worth to be completely rather than partially retired. Similarly, I expected men and women who had higher earnings in their past jobs to completely retire because they have more financial resources to do so. Higher earnings are associated with greater work stability, which is related to higher savings and the stronger likelihood of pension receipt (Haveman et al., 2003).



Table 1  
Summary of Expectations by Retirement Status and Gender

| Variable                                    | Partially      | Completely     | Partially        | Completely       |
|---|----------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|
|   | retired<br>men | retired<br>men | retired<br>women | retired<br>women |
| <i>Wealth and health factors</i>            |                |                |                  |                  |
| Net household worth                         | –              | +              | –                | +                |
| Earnings                                    | –              | +              | –                | +                |
| Education (higher levels)                   | +              | –              | +                | –                |
| Pension plan coverage in last job           | –              | +              | –                | +                |
| Pension income receipt with retirement      | –              | +              | –                | +                |
| Partner receives pension income             | –              | +              | –                | +                |
| Had health insurance in job                 | –              | +              | –                | +                |
| Health insurance continues in retirement    | –              | +              | –                | +                |
| Partner had health insurance in job         | +              | +              | +                | +                |
| Partner's insurance continues in retirement | ?              | +              | ?                | +                |
| Retiree covered in partner's health plan    | ?              | ?              | ?                | ?                |
| Retiree covers partner in health plan       | ?              | ?              | ?                | ?                |
| Change in self-reported health              | +              | –              | +                | –                |
| Respondent's number of ADLs                 | –              | +              | –                | +                |
| <i>Family and spouse/partner factors</i>    |                |                |                  |                  |
| Current relationship length                 | ?              | +              | ?                | +                |
| Time spent in activities with partner       | –              | +              | –                | +                |
| Enjoyment in activities with partner        | –              | +              | –                | +                |
| Partners' employment status (T1)            | –              | +              | –                | +                |
| Partners' employment status (T2)            | –              | +              | –                | +                |
| Change in partner's ADLs                    | –              | +              | –                | +                |
| Dependent children < 18 in home             | ?              | –              | ?                | +                |
| Dependent grandchildren in home             | ?              | –              | ?                | +                |
| Provides ½ financial support to other       | +              | –              | +                | –                |

(Table continues)

Table 1  
Summary of Expectations by Retirement Status and Gender (Continued)

| Variable                                     | Partially | Completely | Partially | Completely |
|--|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|
|  | retired   | retired    | retired   | retired    |
|  | men       | men        | women     | women      |
| Care for parent/in-law 100+ hrs in last year | ?         | ?          | –         | +          |
| Care for grandchild (< 400 hrs in last year) | ?         | ?          | –         | +          |
| Care for grandchild (> 400 hrs in last year) | ?         | ?          | –         | +          |
| <i>Work factors</i>                          |           |            |           |            |
| Years worked at last job                     | –         | +          | –         | +          |
| Hours worked in last job                     | –         | +          | –         | +          |
| Stress experienced from job                  | ?         | ?          | ?         | ?          |
| Retiree perceived last job as important      | +         | ?          | +         | ?          |
| Firm size                                    | –         | +          | –         | +          |
| Union membership                             | –         | +          | –         | +          |
| Retirement was perceived as forced           | +         | –          | –         | +          |
| Retired $\geq 2$ years earlier than planned  | +         | –          | +         | –          |
| <i>Control variables</i>                     |           |            |           |            |
| Age at retirement                            | –         | +          | –         | +          |
| Black  | ?         | +          | ?         | +          |
| Hispanic origin                              | ?         | +          | ?         | +          |
| Other race                                   | ?         | +          | ?         | +          |
| Wave 2 (Retirement year 1994)                | ns        | ns         | ns        | ns         |
| Wave 3 (Retirement year 1996)                | ns        | ns         | ns        | ns         |

*Note.* + indicates positive association expected; – indicates negative association expected; ? indicates unknown association expected. ns indicated non-significant effect expected.

I expected education level to operate different in predicting partial or complete retirement for men and women. From previous research, I expected men with less formal education to be completely retired, mostly because of the type of jobs that these men worked (e.g., manufacturing), jobs associated with larger employers and unionized workplaces (Hardy, 1982). I expected men who have more education to be partially retired because they are likely to have had longer job tenures and greater work stability; therefore, they may perceive a stronger attachment to the labor force and may have greater opportunities for employment in later life. From the life course and feminist approaches, I expected women with less education to be completely retired and women with more education to be partially retired. Women with more education, similar to men, are likely to have greater work attachment, access to employer benefits, and a continuous history of paid labor participation (Moen, 1994; Pienta, 1999; Pienta et al., 1994).

Pension coverage and pension receipt are well established factors for securing a retirement (Ekerdt & Hackney, 2002; Hardy & Shuey, 2000). A complete retirement is possible because of the retirement income pensions provide (Daily, 1998; Henretta et al., 1992). I expected men and women who were covered by a pension and who were receiving a pension income with their last exit from the labor force to be completely retired. I expected men and women not covered in a pension plan or not yet eligible for pension income receipt to be partially retired. My conceptual framework, utilizing a life course and feminist approach, motivates expectations that men and women with a partner (wife or husband) who receives pension income will be completely retired. Married men and women have pooled resources and joint consumption behavior, contributing to the establishment of linked lives (Smith & Moen, 1998).

Health insurance that continues into retirement is associated with the ability to exit the labor force in late life (Harrington Meyer & Pavalko, 1996; Quinn et al., 1998). Health care coverage is costly and nonemployer-based insurance can be difficult to afford in retirement, before retirees are eligible for Medicare (Dushi & Honig, 2005; Honig & Dushi, 2005). It was expected that men and women who had health insurance at their current job at Time 1, and who had coverage in their retirement at Time 2, would be completely retired. Respondents not covered in health insurance plans were expected to be partially retired. Men and women with a partner (wife or husband) who *is* covered by health insurance are likely to be completely retired.

Although this study contained a relatively detailed examination of health insurance coverage, I did not have clear expectations from the literature whether certain situations, in which the retiree covers the partner or the partner covers the retiree, influence the retirement transition of men or women. Because of the interdependency of linked lives supported by my conceptual framework, I expected health insurance coverage of the partner to influence the respondent who has retired in some way.

Health of the retiree is likely to affect the selection of a partial or complete retirement, although some previous research has found spurious connections between health and retirement decisions because of racial and socioeconomic class differences (Bound et al., 1996; Gallo et al., 2000; Hayward, 1986; Hayward et al., 1996). I expected men and women with health declines—worse self-reported health between Time 1 and Time 2—to be completely retired. I also expected men and women with greater ADL limitations at Time 2 to be completely rather than partially retired.

*Family and spouse/partner factors.* I expected retirees married longer to be completely retired, because of the possible effects of accumulated life course capital (O’Rand, 2005). Life course capital considers the “stocks of resources inherited, attributed, and accumulated” over an individual’s life span (O’Rand, 2005, p. 115). Life course capital includes human capital (i.e., wages, education), social capital (i.e., personal networks, kin), psychophysical capital (i.e., mental health, physical health), and personal capital (i.e., social competence, personal identity, roles). Greater life course capital is related to SES, income, education, and health. Married or partnered individuals typically have more life course capital because of shared resources and the positive opportunities that are associated with close intimate relationships (O’Rand, 2005).

Time spent in leisure activities with a partner, and the satisfaction experienced in joint activities with a partner, can represent a *pull* factor in deciding to retire (Beehr, 1986; Shultz et al., 1998; Quinn & Burkhauser, 1990). I expected men and women who spend more time in activities with their partners, and who *enjoy* their time with their partners in joint leisure pursuits, to be completely retired.

Research on the sequential and joint retirement of spouses has shown that most couples plan and attempt to execute retirement transitions together (Han & Moen, 1999; Henretta et al., 1993a, 1993b; Kim & Moen, 2001; O’Rand et al., 1992; Szinovacz, 1996). I expected men with a partner *not* working at Time 1 to be completely retired, because these men were likely to have wives who self-identified as homemakers and who were not participating in the paid labor market. I expected men who had a partner working at Time 2 to be partially retired, because they may be waiting to execute a full retirement when their spouses are also near retirement. I expected women who had

partners not working for pay at either Time 1 or Time 2 to be completely retired, because these women were likely to have partners who were already retired or otherwise out of the labor force. I expected women with a partner working at Time 2 to be partially retired, because they are waiting to execute a full retirement when their spouses are also near retirement.

Family caregiving obligations, whether expressed by time exchanges, financial support, or coresidence, can influence life span paid work trajectories and retirement decisions (Dentinger & Clarkberg, 2002; Pavalko & Artis, 1997; Raschick & Ingersoll-Dayton, 2004; Robison, Moen, & Dempster-McClain, 1995; Szinovacz & Davey, 2004b; Szinovacz & DeViney, 2000). Gendered patterns were expected in selecting either a partial or complete retirement, in light of family situations.

A partner with more ADL limitations may possibly influence a complete retirement transition for men and women, because the retiree is a likely candidate to provide care. Men with dependent children or grandchildren in the household at the time of retirement were expected to be partially retired, because they and their family members may still rely on earnings or benefits from paid work. Women with dependent children or grandchildren in the household at the time of retirement were expected to be completely retired, because they may be obligated to spend time helping coresidential family members, time that can hinder their commitment to paid labor. Men and women responsible for the provision of at least one half of any person's (i.e., parent, child, or other relative) financial support are likely partially retired, because they need to stay attached to the labor force for income and job benefits.

It was expected that men who provide care for parents (in-laws) were partially retired whereas women who provide such care for parents (in-laws) were completely retired. The life course and feminist conceptual frameworks predict this gender difference. If there is a need for time spent in family care (e.g., caregiving duty), women are more likely to flex their other commitments, such as paid work, to provide the care. Similarly, it is also expected that if a man has grandchildren, this will not be a significant influence on his retirement transition; yet, women with grandchildren, who provide care for them, are expected to be out of the labor force and completely retired.

*Work factors.* Longer job tenure typically means more work-related benefits (Cahill et al., 2005). It was expected that men and women with more years at their former job were completely retired because of benefits (i.e., pensions, continued health insurance). Men with more hours spent at the last job were expected to be completely retired because of these same work benefits that are typically not offered to part-time employees. It was expected, however, that women who worked fewer hours at their last job were completely retired, probably because they lacked a strong attachment to the work force in general, or at least to their last job (Pienta, 1999; Pienta et al., 1994).

The role of job stress in predicting type of retirement transition is unclear. Higher perceived job stress may be associated with a complete retirement for men and women because, if work was demanding, retirees may want to exit completely. Higher job stress, however, may also predict a partial retirement because occupations associated with higher mental demands may be professional positions that also offer a high level of perceived job importance. It is expected that men and women who view their last job as important are partially retired because of this greater work attachment.

Larger employers offer better benefit packages (i.e., pensions, health insurance, disability insurance) to workers and retirees (Dailey, 1998; Harrington Meyer & Pavalko, 1996; Seccombe et al., 1994). It was expected that men and women who worked for larger employers were completely, rather than partially, retired. It was also expected that respondents (men and women) who belonged to a union at their last job were completely retired because unionized workplaces offer more benefits (Ekerdt & Hackney, 2002).

It was expected that men who felt forced into retirement were partially retired and women who felt forced were completely retired. This difference may be attributable to the gendered life course patterns of paid work that emphasize men's continuous employment and women's work "options." Similarly, it was expected that men and women who did not retire earlier than planned were completely retired because they are retiring on-time. Workers who retired earlier than planned may have experienced an unexpected exit from the labor force, prompting continued participation in paid work.

*Control variables.* In general, with each year of biological age, Americans are more likely to be retired and out of the labor force (Adams, 1999; Dailey, 1998; Taylor & Shore, 1995). Relative to younger respondents, it was expected that older men and women were completely retired. Because minorities tend to have sporadic labor force participation history, poorer health, and higher rates of disability (Bound et al., 1996; Burr et al., 1996; Flippen, 2005; Gibson, 1991; Quinn & Kozy, 1996), it was expected that Black, Hispanic, and other Americans of color were completely, rather than partially, retired. Wave membership was not expected to have significant effects in any analyses because a significant wave membership (retirement year) difference could illustrate possible age-cohort-period effects not sufficiently controlled in this study.



### Chapter 3 METHOD

#### *Data*

Data were from the biennial, longitudinal Health and Retirement Survey (HRS) that began in 1992. HRS data are publicly available through the University of Michigan. HRS was originally funded by the National Institute on Aging. Subsequent funding has come from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Social Security Administration. Detailed information about the data is available at <http://hrsonline.isr.umich.edu>.

The initial HRS sample was comprised of 12,652 individuals from 7,705 households with one main respondent between the ages of 51 – 61 (cohort born 1931 – 1941) and that person's spouse, regardless of age. The overall response rate of the initial 1992 survey was 81.7% (Juster & Suzman, 1995). First interviews with respondents were conducted in-home, face-to-face, and follow-up participation in subsequent waves was conducted over the telephone.

The term household refers to (a) a single, unmarried, age-eligible participant and (b) a married couple in which either one or both persons were age-eligible and participated. Only 379 households in 1992 had a spouse deny participation, resulting in a 93% response rate for couples in the same residence. Households were selected by a multistage area probability design (also unknown as clustered design) using an 84 strata National Sample frame. Hispanic and African American households were oversampled relative to Whites by a ratio of 1.9:1 and 1.7:1, respectively. Floridians were also oversampled by a ratio of 2:1. Sample weights are available for each wave of data.

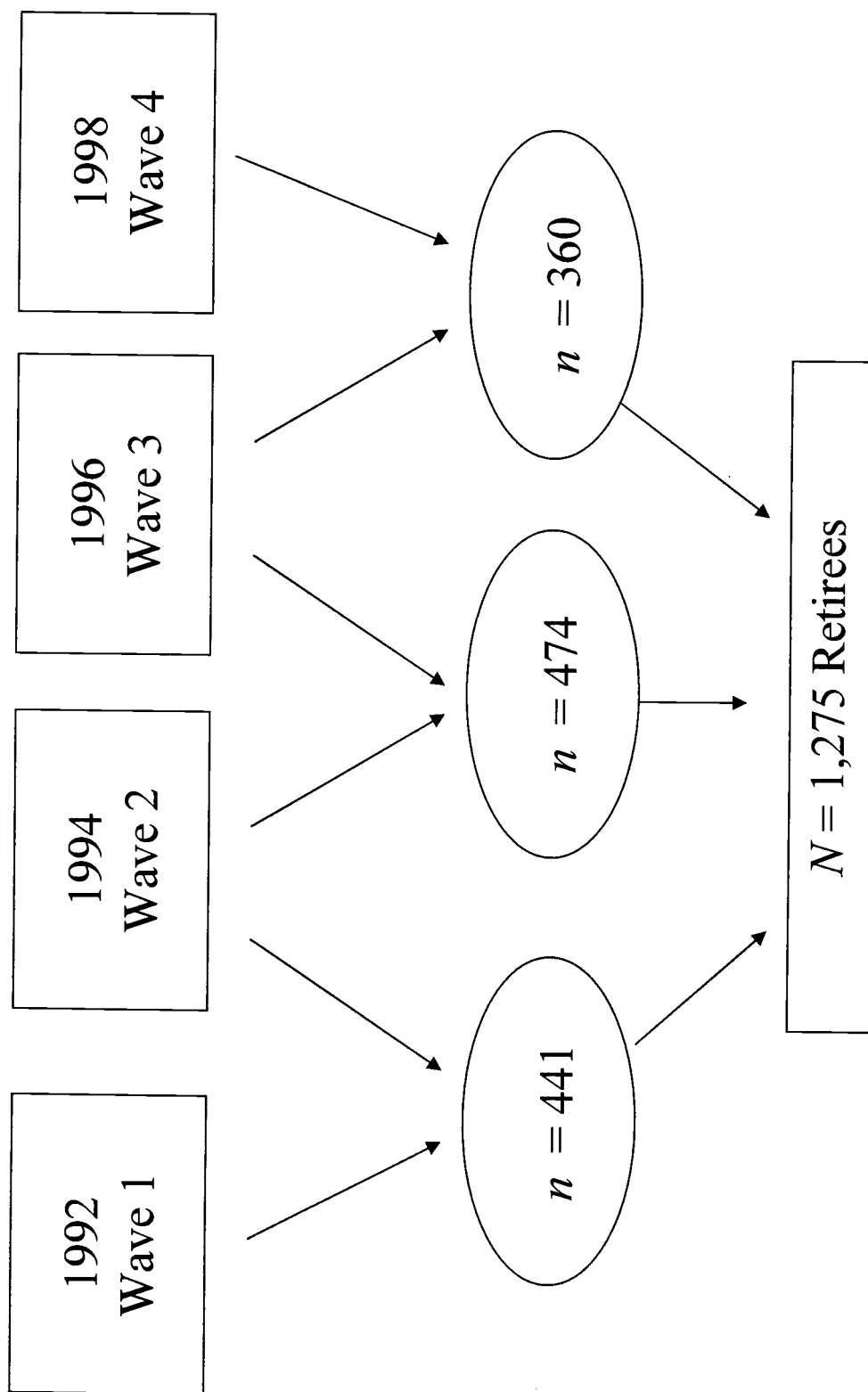
HRS investigators selected eligible households on the basis of age, not gender, so the inclusion of married women in the dataset is a major benefit. The Health and Retirement Survey is generally composed of information on individuals' labor force participation and incomes/pensions, health conditions and disabilities, family structures and transfers (i.e., time, money, coresidence), and mobility (i.e., occupational and residential moves) (Juster & Suzman, 1995). Unfortunately, there are few relationship quality measures in the dataset, which limited the scope of this study.

Data used in this study were provided by Szinovacz and Davey (2004a, 2004b, 2005a, 2005b) who constructed a pooled sampling frame of HRS retirees. Similarly, respondents in this study were pooled to create a sufficient sample size of retirees for analyses. In each case, the preretirement wave (Time 1) was used for variables measured when all respondents were still working for pay and the postretirement wave (Time 2) was used for outcome measures relevant at the time of retirement.

### *Sample*

Respondents for this study were drawn from Waves 1 – 4, and include women and men who retired between Waves 1 and 2 (1992 – 1994), Waves 2 and 3 (1994 – 1996), and Waves 3 and 4 (1996 – 1998). The initial sample of HRS respondents from these pooled waves was  $n = 13,499$ . See Figure 1 for a schematic of the pooled sample. The number of respondents from each wave was 441, 474, and 360. The reinterview response rates for participation in the HRS Waves 2, 3, and 4 were 89%, 86%, and 84%, respectively. Attrition in the longitudinal design has been carefully monitored by HRS staff, but the nature of the design for this study precludes any bias from attrition.

Figure 1  
Schematic of Pooled Sample With Retirees From Four Waves of HRS Data



*Pooled sample issues.* Pooling potential respondents from multiple waves of longitudinal datasets to create sufficient sample sizes can raise questions about the use of such procedures. Are there biases that result from pooling sample respondents? The use of pooled samples is common and acceptable, as long as certain issues are addressed by the researcher. The most common issues include (a) the use of proper variable weights and the correction of standard errors when using data gathered via clustered sampling frames, and (b) controlling for possible age-cohort-period effects from any social change occurring between waves of measurement as well as differences naturally found in cohorts participating in different waves. These issues applied to the use of the pooled data for this study.

*Using weights and adjusting for complex survey design.* As noted above, proper variable weights are available for HRS data. Sample weights can control for correlated error that may occur among individuals likely to have certain qualities in common. For example, individuals selected from the same cluster often come from the same U.S. region, which may lead to shared characteristics in labor force opportunities. STATA offers the `svy` command for analyses and can adjust standard error estimates for the complex survey data. Users can “set up their data by identifying variables that indicate the strata, PSUs (Primary sampling units) or clusters, finite population correction, and probability weights” (Hamilton, 2004, p. 57). Logit models can be analyzed using this statistical feature. Szinovacz and Davey (2005) employed this technique in their research.

*Controlling for possible age-cohort-period effects.* Controlling for cohort effects can be achieved by using a sample identifier as a control in the analyses. In these data, wave membership was used to control for possible cohort effects. The time span for

collected data was 8 years. Because data are from two time points for each individual, there are only three sample “pools” (Figure 1) and a gap of just four years between the first and last wave of retirees. There are no obvious reasons why these four years (1994 to 1998) would produce period effects from dramatic social changes in labor force or retirement patterns. Fortunately, each wave/cohort responded to similar measures and was interviewed using the same procedures.

*Sample construction.* Table 2 presents details on sample construction.

Respondents were excluded if they never worked, were nonemployed, were already retired, or were employed 10 hours or less at Time 1 ( $n$  excluded = 8,192, 61%) because there are no baseline data for these individuals (e.g., previous work conditions). After this initial sample reduction, 5,307 respondents remained. Previous sensitivity analyses with these data revealed that results were unchanged if a  $\leq 20$  rather than 10-hour cutoff was used (Szinovacz & Davey, 2004b). Individuals employed under 10 hours a week may be “underemployed or already in postretirement bridge jobs” (Szinovacz & Davey, 2004b, p. S335). This sample retains workers who identified as self-employed at Time 1.

Only married and partnered individuals who remained with the same partner in pre- and postretirement waves (Time 1 and Time 2) and who completed the survey were included in this sample. I chose to study married and partnered women and men because there are more family situation and experience variables asked of these respondents in the HRS data. Also, I focus on married and partnered individuals because retirement is a couple experience (Henretta & O’Rand, 1983; Henretta, O’Rand, & Chan, 1993a, 1993b; Honig, 1998) as well as an individual event. Only individuals who were continuously partnered between waves (same partner in Time 1 and Time 2) were retained in the study.

Table 2  
Sample Construction

| <i>Criterion</i>   | <i>n (%) excluded</i> |        | <i>n retained</i> |
|--|-----------------------|--------|-------------------|
| Total sample of pooled Waves 1 – 4   |                       | --     | 13,499            |
| Never worked/nonemployed, already retired at Time 1, or employed less than 10 hours at Time 1  | 8,192                 | (61)   | 5,307             |
| Respondents who changed partners between waves   | 473                   | (3.5)  | 4,834             |
| Respondents with missing data on changed partners variable                                     | 3                     | (.01)  | 4,831             |
| Did not retire, but not working at Time 2  | 563                   | (4.2)  | 4,268             |
| Continued to work for pay at Time 2 and did not self-define as retired—partially or completely | 2,750                 | (20.4) | 1,518             |
| Respondent does not have person weight to account for oversampling technique                   | 243                   | (1.8)  | 1,275             |
| Continuously partnered individuals who completely or partially retired between waves           |                       |        | 1,275             |

*Note.* Data are from Waves 1 – 4 of the *Health and Retirement Survey* (1992 – 1998).

Respondents who changed partners are excluded ( $n = 473$ , 3.5%). Three respondents (.02%) were missing data on the variable about change in partner status and were excluded from the sample.

With these 4,834 respondents, further sample filters eliminated respondents who did not retire and were not working at Time 2 ( $n = 563$ , 4.2%) and those who continued to work for pay and did not self-identify as retired ( $n = 2,750$ , 20.4%). The sample therefore included only respondents who self-identified as partially or completely retired between two waves ( $n = 1,518$ ).

As mentioned earlier, using *person weights* in all analyses, including descriptive statistics, is very important when using HRS data because of the sampling strategy. Unfortunately, 243 cases that otherwise met the criteria for this study had missing person weights. Weights for these 243 cases could not be imputed in a valid way. Therefore, these cases (1.8%) were removed and the final sample for all analyses was 1,275.

*Retirement status.* Of the 1,275 retirees, (a) 719 respondents were completely retired and not working, (b) 142 were partially retired and not working, and (c) 414 were partially retired individuals who continued to work for pay at Time 2. Working retirees are considered partially retired in this study. Of the working retirees ( $n = 414$ ), 262 (63%) were men and 152 (37%) were women. I combined the 142 nonworking partially retired individuals with the 414 working retirees to create a subgroup of 556 partially retired respondents. Using multiple measures (e.g., self-defined status and work status) to define retirement reflects that seen in the literature (Ekerdt & DeViney, 1990; Elder & Pavalko, 1993; Quinn & Burkhauser, 1990). To clarify, there were no individuals who were classified as completely retired *and* reporting that they still worked at Time 2.

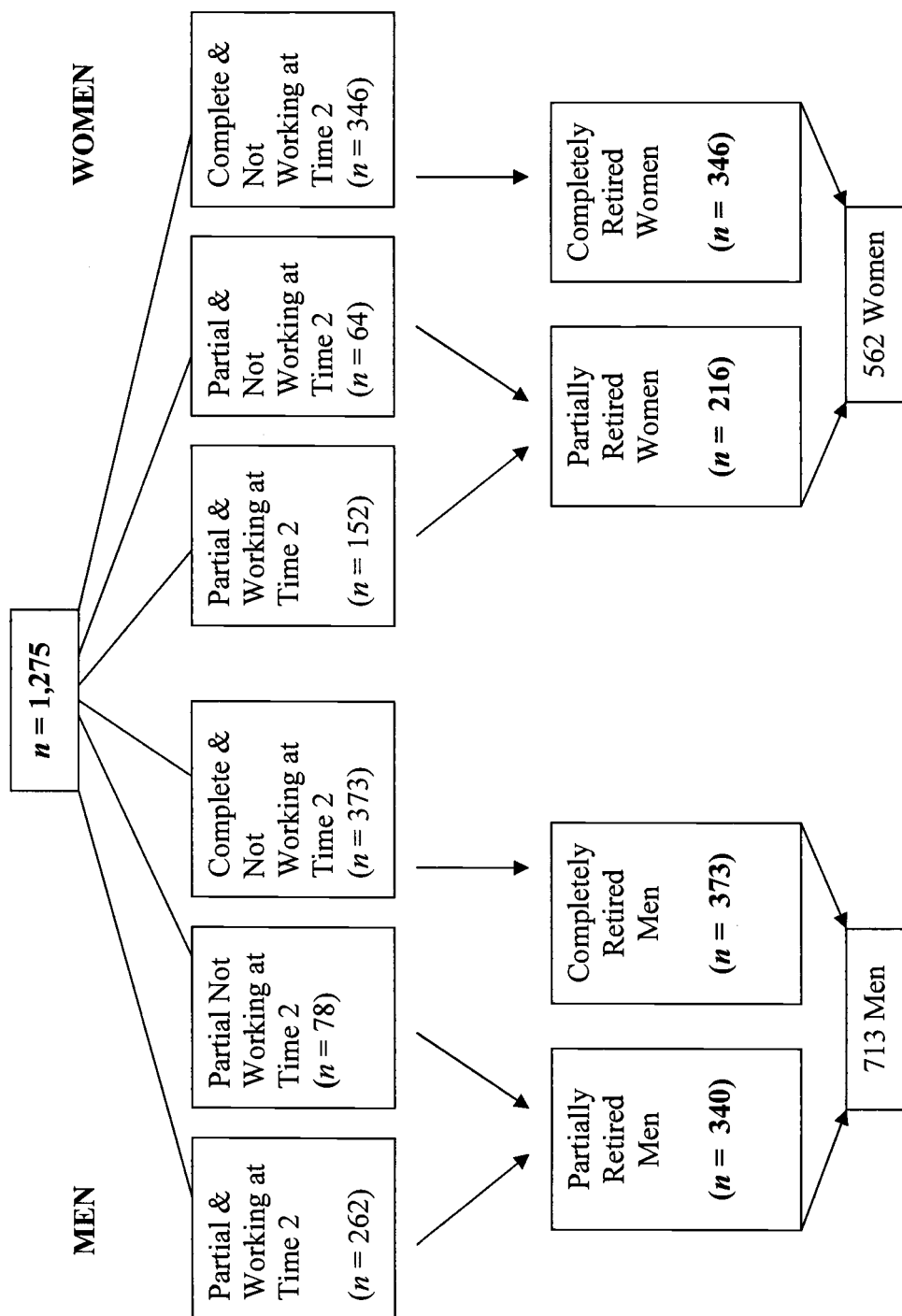
The final sample for this study included 1,275 individuals. See Figure 2 for a schematic of the final sample. In the final sample, 719 (56%) respondents were completely retired and 556 (44%) were partially retired. Of the partially retired, 340 (61%) were men and 216 (39%) were women. Of the completely retired, 373 (52%) were men and 346 (48%) were women. Reducing the sample from 1,518 to 1,275 because of missing person weights, the following cases were lost: 109 partially retired and 134 completely retired individuals. By comparison, the final sample of 1,275 resulted in fewer partially retired men, more completely retired men, fewer completely retired women, and more partially retired women ( $\chi^2(1, 243) = 5.65, p < .05$ ).

*Sample characteristics.* Because of the HRS design, some women and men in this sample are from the same couple. Inclusion of both spouses in the analyses can violate independence of observation assumptions, therefore, all analyses take this into account by examining data separately for men and women. There were 318 respondents from the same household ( $n = 159$  couples), representing 25% of the sample.

Respondents pooled for this study represented a cohort of Americans who experienced an early transition into retirement. In fact, Szinovacz and Davey (2005a) reported that all current retirees from the Health and Retirement Survey tend to retire early compared to the nationally estimated age of 62 years for retirement (Gendell, 2001; Gendell & Siegel, 1996), with minimal gender difference. Settersten and Hägestad (1996) found, however, that the normative age expected for Americans to reach retirement was 59 years for women and 62 years for men.



Figure 2  
Schematic of Final Sample Size by Gender and Retirement Status



Average age at retirement for the married/partnered men and women in this sample was 59 years. This sample reflects a younger cohort of retirees than expected from the general national population, but is consistent with the ages found in other studies using HRS data. In this study, both the partially retired and completely retired individuals averaged 59 years of age. The similarity in age at retirement between the two retirement groups provides further motivation for this study: What predicts partial versus complete retirement?

*Missing data.* Missing data on control and predictor variables were imputed through multiple imputation inference techniques performed through NORM (Schafer, 1999). Many economic variables were already imputed and had been made available by the HRS staff and the RAND Corporation, most notably the economic variables such as total household net worth. Imputed data sets were generated through data augmentation procedures, resulting in five sets. Because this study used data from the work of Szinovacz and Davey (2005a), five previously imputed datasets were available with an initial 13,499 respondents/cases (described earlier). Missing data were minimal. Because this study proposed the use of additional variables, however, some cases had missing values. For example, the health insurance coverage and partner's health coverage status variables had 17 and 10 values missing, respectively. Altogether, 12 of 63 variables (19%) had some missing values, with no variable having more than 17 cases missing.

*Data management.* In this study, SPSS 13 and STATA 9 program files were used. SPSS 13 served as an organizing statistical program and was used to review initial descriptive statistics, including crosstabulations and *t*-tests. The STATA 9 program was used to calculate final descriptive statistics and to run inferential statistics. STATA 9

commands used person sample weights (accounting for the oversampling of minorities and Floridians) and defined the data structure to control for complex survey design. Stat Transfer© was used to communicate between statistical programs. After the final sample was obtained for this study, the retirement groups defined, and the missing data augmented, unnecessary variables were dropped and only variables used in this study were retained in the program files. A description of the variables is provided below. Table 3 and Table 4 list the means and standard errors of control and predictor variables, presented by retirement status and separate by gender. All means and standard errors are weighted and adjust for complex survey design.

### *Measures*

The key variable of interest was the self-identified category of retirement: “At this time, do you consider yourself partly retired, completely retired, not at all retired?” Individuals in this study self-identify as either partially or completely retired. Self-identification of retirement status limits some of the generalizations that can be made from the data. As noted in Chapter 2, for example, Black Americans are often underestimated or not counted in retirement studies because they are less likely to self-define as retired (Gibson, 1987).

*Wealth and human capital.* Relevant variables included total household worth, earnings, level of education, type of occupation, pension plan coverage, and health insurance coverage. Measurement of *net household worth* was total household assets at baseline minus any household debts (truncated into \$1,000s). *Earnings* included the respondent’s personal income at Time 1 and was logged. *Education* was measured in years (range 0 to 20).

Table 3  
Means and Standard Errors of Control and Predictor Variables by Retirement Status for Men

|   | Partial<br>( <i>n</i> = 340) |           | Complete<br>( <i>n</i> = 373) |           | Total<br>( <i>n</i> = 713) |           |
|---|------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------|-----------|----------------------------|-----------|
|   | <i>M</i>                     | <i>SE</i> | <i>M</i>                      | <i>SE</i> | <i>M</i>                   | <i>SE</i> |
| <i>Control variables</i>                      |                              |           |                               |           |                            |           |
| Age at retirement (T2)                        | 58.91                        | .15       | 59.18                         | .15       | 59.05                      | .11       |
| Black   | .05                          | .01       | .07                           | .01       | .06                        | .01       |
| Hispanic origin                               | .04                          | .01       | .04                           | .01       | .04                        | .01       |
| Other race                                    | .01                          | .01       | .02                           | .01       | .01                        | .00       |
| Wave 2 (Retirement year 1994)                 | .35                          | .03       | .40                           | .03       | .38                        | .02       |
| Wave 3 (Retirement year 1996)                 | .41                          | .03       | .33                           | .03       | .37                        | .02       |
| <i>Wealth and health factors</i>              |                              |           |                               |           |                            |           |
| Net household worth (T1)                      | 318.58                       | 18.11     | 221.58                        | 15.34     | 267.78***                  | 11.78     |
| Earnings (T1)                                 | 9.35                         | .19       | 9.92                          | .16       | 9.65***                    | .11       |
| Education (T1)                                | 13.32                        | .16       | 12.40                         | .19       | 12.84                      | .13       |
| Pension plan coverage in last job (T1)        | .61                          | .03       | .83                           | .02       | .72                        | .02       |
| Pension income receipt with retirement (T2)   | .22                          | .02       | .35                           | .04       | .29                        | .02       |
| Partner receives pension income (T2)          | .34                          | .03       | .31                           | .03       | .32                        | .02       |
| Had health insurance in job (T1)              | .22                          | .03       | .22                           | .02       | .22                        | .01       |
| Health insurance continues in retirement (T2) | .49                          | .03       | .63                           | .03       | .56                        | .02       |

(Table continues)

Table 3  
Means and Standard Errors of Control and Predictor Variables by Retirement Status for Men (Continued)

|  | Partial  |           | Complete |           | Total             |           |
|--|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|
|  | <i>M</i> | <i>SE</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SE</i> | <i>M</i>          | <i>SE</i> |
| Partner had health insurance in job (T1)         | .11      | .02       | .08      | .02       | .09               | .01       |
| Partner's insurance continues in retirement (T2) | .16      | .02       | .18      | .02       | .17               | .01       |
| Retiree covered in partner's health plan (T2)    | .17      | .03       | .12      | .02       | .15               | .02       |
| Retiree covers partner in health plan (T2)       | .52      | .03       | .64      | .03       | .58               | .02       |
| Change in self-reported health (T2)              | -.16     | .06       | -.28     | .07       | -.22 <sup>†</sup> | .04       |
| Change in respondent's ADLs (T2)                 | -.05     | .07       | .26      | .12       | .11**             | .07       |
| <i>Family and spouse/partner factors</i>         |          |           |          |           |                   |           |
| Current relationship length (T1)                 | 30.83    | .65       | 30.00    | .53       | 30.39             | .44       |
| Time spent in activities with partner (T1)       | 3.24     | .04       | 3.22     | .03       | 3.23              | .02       |
| Enjoyment in activities with partner (T1)        | 2.43     | .03       | 2.41     | .03       | 2.42              | .02       |
| Partners' employment status (T1)                 | .60      | .03       | .55      | .03       | .58               | .02       |
| Partners' employment status (T2)                 | .54      | .03       | .41      | .03       | .47               | .02       |
| Change in partner's ADLs (T2)                    | -.17     | .12       | -.26     | .10       | -.22              | .09       |
| Dependent children under age < 18 in home (T2)   | .05      | .01       | .07      | .02       | .06               | .01       |
| Dependent grandchildren in home (T2)             | .05      | .01       | .05      | .01       | .05               | .01       |

(Table continues)

Table 3  
Means and Standard Errors of Control and Predictor Variables by Retirement Status for Men (Continued)

|  | Partial  |           | Complete |           | Total    |           |
|--|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|
|  | <i>M</i> | <i>SE</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SE</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SE</i> |
| Retiree provides ½ financial support to other (T2) | .13      | .02       | .18      | .02       | .16      | .01       |
| Care for parent/in-law 100+ hrs in last year (T2)  | .04      | .01       | .04      | .01       | .04      | .01       |
| Care for grandchild (< 400 hrs in last year) (T2)  | .27      | .02       | .22      | .02       | .24      | .02       |
| Care for grandchild (> 400 hrs in last year) (T2)  | .08      | .02       | .08      | .02       | .08      | .01       |
| <i>Work factors</i>                                |          |           |          |           |          |           |
| Years worked at last job (T1)                      | 22.15    | .97       | 23.85    | .53       | 23.04**  | .55       |
| Hours worked in last job (T1)                      | 44.17    | .60       | 44.13    | .55       | 44.02    | .34       |
| Stress experienced from job (T1)                   | 5.43     | .07       | 5.39     | .08       | 5.40     | .06       |
| Retiree perceived last job as important (T1)       | 1.94     | .06       | 1.72     | .06       | 1.83***  | .05       |
| Firm size (T1)                                     | 3.45     | .11       | 4.02     | .11       | 3.80     | .07       |
| Union membership (T1)                              | .24      | .02       | .37      | .03       | .31      | .02       |
| Retirement was perceived as forced (T2)            | .22      | .02       | .26      | .03       | .24      | .02       |
| Retired ≥ 2 years earlier than planned (T2)        | .57      | .03       | .45      | .02       | .51      | .02       |

*Note.* Means and standard errors are based on weighted sample of HRS respondents ( $n = 1,275$ ). Means for categorical variables indicate percentages for the subsample. Asterisks in the total column indicate significant mean differences between partially and completely retired respondents.

†  $p < .10$ . \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Table 4  
Means and Standard Errors of Control and Predictor Variables by Retirement Status for Women

|   | Partial<br>( <i>n</i> = 216) |           | Complete<br>( <i>n</i> = 346) |           | Total<br>( <i>n</i> = 562) |           |
|---|------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------|-----------|----------------------------|-----------|
|   | <i>M</i>                     | <i>SE</i> | <i>M</i>                      | <i>SE</i> | <i>M</i>                   | <i>SE</i> |
| <i>Control variables</i>                      |                              |           |                               |           |                            |           |
| Age at retirement (T2)                        | 58.30                        | .25       | 59.01                         | .17       | 58.74*                     | .15       |
| Black   | .07                          | .02       | .04                           | .01       | .06                        | .01       |
| Hispanic origin                               | .03                          | .01       | .03                           | .01       | .03                        | .01       |
| Other race                                    | .02                          | .01       | .01                           | .01       | .01                        | .01       |
| Wave 2 (Retirement year 1994)                 | .41                          | .03       | .34                           | .03       | .37                        | .02       |
| Wave 3 (Retirement year 1996)                 | .35                          | .03       | .36                           | .03       | .35                        | .02       |
| <i>Wealth and health factors</i>              |                              |           |                               |           |                            |           |
| Net household worth (T1)                      | 305.30                       | 20.01     | 273.46                        | 15.60     | 285.78                     | 11.73     |
| Earnings (T1)                                 | 9.02                         | .16       | 9.35                          | .14       | 9.22                       | .12       |
| Education (T1)                                | 13.23                        | .17       | 13.04                         | .15       | 13.11                      | .12       |
| Pension plan coverage in last job (T1)        | .47                          | .03       | .68                           | .03       | .60                        | .02       |
| Pension income receipt with retirement (T2)   | .16                          | .02       | .23                           | .02       | .20                        | .02       |
| Partner receives pension income (T2)          | .45                          | .03       | .49                           | .03       | .47                        | .02       |
| Had health insurance in job (T1)              | .21                          | .04       | .20                           | .02       | .20                        | .02       |
| Health insurance continues in retirement (T2) | .22                          | .04       | .36                           | .03       | .31                        | .02       |

(Table continues)

Table 4  
Means and Standard Errors of Control and Predictor Variables by Retirement Status for Women (Continued)

|  | Partial  |           | Complete |           | Total            |           |
|--|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|------------------|-----------|
|  | <i>M</i> | <i>SE</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SE</i> | <i>M</i>         | <i>SE</i> |
| Partner had health insurance in job (T1)         | .11      | .02       | .13      | .02       | .12              | .01       |
| Partner's insurance continues in retirement (T2) | .35      | .04       | .37      | .03       | .36              | .03       |
| Retiree covered in partner's health plan (T2)    | .47      | .04       | .44      | .03       | .45              | .02       |
| Retiree covers partner in health plan (T2)       | .22      | .03       | .27      | .02       | .25              | .02       |
| Change in self-reported health (T2)              | -.14     | .06       | -.28     | .05       | -.23*            | .04       |
| Change in respondent's ADLs (T2)                 | -.27     | .17       | .17      | .16       | .00 <sup>†</sup> | .13       |
| <i>Family and spouse/partner Factors</i>         |          |           |          |           |                  |           |
| Current relationship length (T1)                 | 31.72    | .74       | 33.44    | .64       | 32.78            | .44       |
| Time spent in activities with partner (T1)       | 3.05     | .04       | 3.11     | .04       | 3.09             | .04       |
| Enjoyment in activities with partner (T1)        | 2.32     | .04       | 2.39     | .05       | 2.36             | .04       |
| Partners' employment status (T1)                 | .66      | .03       | .64      | .03       | .65              | .02       |
| Partners' employment status (T2)                 | .56      | .03       | .43      | .03       | .48              | .02       |
| Change in partner's ADLs (T2)                    | -.18     | .12       | .03      | .11       | -.05             | .08       |
| Dependent children under age < 18 in home (T2)   | .02      | .01       | .01      | .01       | .03              | .01       |
| Dependent grandchildren in home (T2)             | .03      | .01       | .06      | .01       | .05              | .01       |

(Table continues) 59



Table 4  
Means and Standard Errors of Control and Predictor Variables by Retirement Status for Women (Continued)

|  | Partial  |           | Complete |           | Total              |           |
|--|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|--------------------|-----------|
|  | <i>M</i> | <i>SE</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SE</i> | <i>M</i>           | <i>SE</i> |
| Retiree provides ½ financial support to other (T2) | .16      | .03       | .11      | .02       | .12                | .02       |
| Care for parent/in-law 100+ hrs in last year (T2)  | .05      | .02       | .07      | .01       | .07                | .01       |
| Care for grandchild (< 400 hrs in last year) (T2)  | .19      | .03       | .24      | .02       | .22                | .01       |
| Care for grandchild (> 400 hrs in last year) (T2)  | .15      | .03       | .17      | .02       | .15                | .02       |
| <i>Work factors</i>                                |          |           |          |           |                    |           |
| Years worked at last job (T1)                      | 16.09    | .78       | 17.06    | .71       | 16.72              | .41       |
| Hours worked in last job (T1)                      | 36.45    | .88       | 37.73    | .54       | 37.18 <sup>†</sup> | .38       |
| Stress experienced from job (T1)                   | 5.49     | .08       | 5.52     | .07       | 5.49               | .04       |
| Retiree perceived last job as important (T1)       | 1.94     | .07       | 1.96     | .71       | 1.95               | .04       |
| Firm size (T1)                                     | 3.31     | .11       | 3.72     | .10       | 3.54               | .06       |
| Union membership (T1)                              | .16      | .02       | .26      | .02       | .21                | .02       |
| Retirement was perceived as forced (T2)            | .27      | .02       | .24      | .02       | .24                | .02       |
| Retired ≥ 2 years earlier than planned (T2)        | .63      | .03       | .47      | .02       | .56                | .02       |

*Note.* Means and standard errors are based on weighted sample of HRS respondents ( $n = 1,275$ ). Means for categorical variables indicate percentages for the subsample. Asterisks in the total column indicate significant mean differences between partially and completely retired respondents.

<sup>†</sup> $p < .10$ . \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Although variables related to the respondent's occupational category were not used in the inferential statistics (logit models), I included occupation type in the sample description as part of the preliminary analyses. Seven occupation codes were used: clerical, farming, production, service, sales, management, and other professional. See Table 5 for a breakdown of occupations by gender and retirement status. More men than women were farmers [ $\chi^2(1, 1,275) = 14.80, p < .001$ ] or production workers [ $\chi^2(1, 1,275) = 124.82, p < .001$ ]. More men were also in management positions at their last job (72% of all managers in the sample were men) [ $\chi^2(1, 1,275) = 28.43, p < .001$ ].

Education levels were correlated with occupational positions in gendered ways. For men, fewer years of education was related to jobs in such fields as farming ( $r = -.14, p < .001$ ), production ( $r = -.45, p < .001$ ), and the service industry ( $r = -.10, p < .05$ ). Men with higher education had jobs in management ( $r = .23, p < .001$ ) and in other professional occupations ( $r = .41, p < .001$ ) including sales ( $r = .12, p < .01$ ). Among men, more production workers were partially rather than completely retired [ $\chi^2(1, 713) = 13.48, p < .001$ ]. Additionally, more men leaving a sales occupation were partially retired [ $\chi^2(1, 713) = 11.48, p < .001$ ]. On a trend level, more farmers were partially retired [ $\chi^2(1, 713) = 3.29, p < .10$ ].

More women had worked in jobs that were in clerical occupations (80% of all clerical workers in the sample were women) [ $\chi^2(1, 1,275) = 133.66, p < .001$ ] or were in the service industry [ $\chi^2(1, 1,275) = 32.82, p < .001$ ]. Women with fewer years of education were more likely to be working in production ( $r = -.28, p < .001$ ) and in the service industry ( $r = -.32, p < .001$ ). Women with more education were working in professional occupations ( $r = .57, p < .001$ ).

Table 5  
Occupation Type by Gender and Retirement Status

| Occupation   | Men               |      |                    |      | Women             |      |                    |      | Total    |      |
|--------------|-------------------|------|--------------------|------|-------------------|------|--------------------|------|----------|------|
|              | Partially Retired |      | Completely Retired |      | Partially Retired |      | Completely Retired |      | <i>n</i> | %    |
|              | <i>n</i>          | %    | <i>n</i>           | %    | <i>n</i>          | %    | <i>n</i>           | %    |          |      |
| Clerical     | 16                | 4.7  | 25                 | 6.7  | 55                | 25.5 | 113                | 32.7 | 209      | 16.4 |
| Farming      | 21                | 6.2  | 9                  | 2.5  | 3                 | 1.3  | 1                  | 0.0  | 34       | 3.0  |
| Management   | 82                | 24.1 | 73                 | 19.5 | 29                | 13.4 | 30                 | 8.7  | 214      | 16.7 |
| Production   | 105               | 31   | 165                | 44.3 | 20                | 9.2  | 38                 | 11   | 328      | 25.7 |
| Other        | 49                | 14.4 | 56                 | 15   | 47                | 21.8 | 85                 | 24.6 | 237      | 18.6 |
| Professional | 23                | 6.7  | 24                 | 6.4  | 40                | 18.6 | 54                 | 15.7 | 141      | 11.0 |
| Service      | 44                | 12.9 | 21                 | 5.6  | 22                | 10.2 | 25                 | 7.3  | 112      | 8.6  |

Pension plan and health insurance coverage data were reported for the respondent and the respondent's partner/spouse. *Pension plan coverage* was a categorical variable reflecting individual coverage at Time 1 (1 = *yes* and 0 = *no*). Seventy-two percent of men and 60% of women were covered in a pension plan in their last job. *Pension income receipt with retirement* accounted for coverage by a pension plan at Time 1 and receipt of a new pension income at Time 2 (1 = *yes* and 0 = *no*). Twenty-nine percent of men and 20% of women began receiving a new pension income at Time 2, the time of the retirement transition. The variable, *partner receives pension income*, examined whether the respondent's spouse was covered by a pension plan *and* receiving pension-related income at Time 2 (1 = *yes* and 0 = *no*). Thirty-two percent of men, but 47% of women, have a spouse or partner who received pension income that started at Time 2.

Health insurance coverage was measured with six categorical variables. The variable, *had health insurance in job*, meant the respondent was covered by health insurance when working at Time 1 (1 = *yes* and 0 = *no*). Only 22% of men and 20% of women had health insurance coverage in their last job. *Health insurance continues in retirement* was measured in the same way (1 = *yes* and 0 = *no*) and was recorded at Time 2, at the time of the retirement status change. Just 60% of the men who had coverage had continued health insurance in retirement. For women, only 31% who had coverage had continued health insurance in retirement. Information about the respondent's partner was also retained and two variables, *partner had health insurance in job* and *partner's insurance continues in retirement*, were coded in the same categories as for the respondents. Whether respondents were *covered in their partner's health insurance plan*

was also measured (1 = *yes* and 0 = *no*). Additionally, whether the *retiree covered their partner in their health plan* was measured (1 = *yes* and 0 = *no*).

*Health.* Personal health factors that may influence the respondent's transition into either a partial or complete retirement included two variables that measured health status changes between Time 1 and Time 2. Self-reported health was an indicator of how a respondent feels in everyday life and in comparison to others (1 = *poor* to 5 = *excellent*). *Change in self-reported health* was the difference in scores between Time 1 and Time 2. The variable ranged from -4 to +4. *Change in respondent's ADLs* (Activities of Daily Living) was also created. Sixteen ADL tasks were considered:

walking one block, walking across a room, climbing stairs, sitting longer than two hours, dressing, bathing, eating, getting out of bed, toileting, preparing a hot meal, driving, shopping for groceries, making telephone calls, taking medication, working around the house/yard, and paying bills.

ADL tasks were coded by respondents as either 1 = *causing any difficulty* or 0 = *causing no difficulty*. Change the number of ADLs between waves was measured; an increase, or positive change score, signified more ADL limitations (possible range -16 to +16). Importantly, we do not know from the data when health status changes occurred in relation to retirement transitions.

*Family and spouse/partner factors.* Family situations of the respondent were examined for potential influence on retirement status. *Current relationship length* (marriage or partnership) was measured in years. Men had been in their current relationships an average of 30 years (range  $\leq 1$  to 45 years). Women had been in their current relationship for an average of 33 years (range  $\leq 1$  to 49 years). *Time spent in activities with partner* was a categorical variable in response to the question: "Some

couples like to spend their free time doing things together, while others like to do different things in their free time. What about you and your [husband/wife/partner]?” Responses were code (1 = *like to do different/separate things*, 2 = *like some together, some different*, 3 = *like to do together*).

*Enjoyment in activities with partner* was based on the question, “Generally speaking, would you say that the time you spend together with your [husband/wife/partner] is extremely enjoyable, very enjoyable, somewhat enjoyable, or not too enjoyable?” Responses were coded (1 = *not too enjoyable*, 2 = *somewhat enjoyable*, 3 = *very enjoyable*, 4 = *extremely enjoyable*).

*Partners' employment status* for Time 1 and Time 2 was included (1 = *employed*, 0 = *not employed*). For completely retired men, 165 (44%) did not and 208 (56%) did have partners working for pay at Time 1. Of these completely retired men, 218 (58%) did not and 155 (42%) did have partners working for pay at Time 2. For partially retired men, 130 (38%) did not and 210 (62%) did have partners working for pay at Time 1. Of these partially retired men, 149 (44%) did not and 191 (56%) did have partners working for pay at Time 2.

For completely retired women, 126 (36%) did not and 220 (64%) did have partners working for pay at Time 1. Of these completely retired women, 199 (58%) did not and 147 (42%) did have partners working for pay at Time 2. For partially retired women, 72 (33%) did not and 144 (67%) did have partners working for pay at Time 1. Of these partially retired women, 97 (45%) did not and 119 (55%) did have partners working for pay at Time 2.

*Change in partners' ADLs* between Time 1 and Time 2 was coded the same as change in respondents' ADLs. An increase, or positive change score, signified more ADL limitations (possible range = -16 to + 16). There were no direct questions about care to spouse in the HRS data. Unfortunately, there is no information on whether the spouse received help exclusively from the retired respondent, nor do we know which came first, change in spouse's ADLs or respondent's retirement. Therefore, we cannot link respondent's retirement to spouse's need for care. The measure included, however, serves as a proxy for estimating the influence of partner's disability/health status on the selection of partial or complete retirement by the respondent.

Family care obligations included cases of coresidence, time in care transfers, and financial help. Whether the respondent had any *dependent children under the age of 18* in the household (1 = *yes*, 0 = *no*) or any *grandchildren of any age in the household* (1 = *yes*, 0 = *no*) provided information about coresidential family situations. These were both measured at Time 2. Six percent of men and 2% of women had dependent children under the age of 18 in the household. Five percent of men and 5% of women had coresidential grandchildren.

Another item assessed at Time 2 asked respondents if they were responsible for the provision of at least one half of any person's (i.e., parent, child, or other relative) financial support (1 = *yes*, 0 = *no*), demonstrating financial responsibility to kin either within or beyond the household. This question does not explicitly address financial responsibility to the respondent's spouse. Sixteen percent of men in the sample and 13% of women provided one half of the financial provisions to another person.

Care for parents and parents-in-law (i.e., dressing, eating, bathing, household chores, errands, transportation) was measured categorically in number of hours (1 = 100+ hours, 0 = < 100 hours) in the last two years (between Time 1 and Time 2). Four percent of men and 6% of women in the sample provided 100+ hours of care to a parent or in-law in the last two years. *Care for a grandchild* was coded in two variables. If the respondent helped a grandchild 1 – 400 hours in the last year (1 = yes, 0 = no) and if the respondent helped a grandchild > 400 hours in the last year (1 = yes, 0 = no). If a respondent had no grandchildren, the question was not asked. Respondents without grandchildren were coded as 0, *not providing care*.

*Work factors.* Work characteristics included the number of years and hours worked at last job, perceived job stress, perceived job importance, firm size, union membership, and whether the respondent perceived a forced or early retirement. *Years worked at last job* was measured in years. Unfortunately, this variable does not count years working in other paid positions prior to the respondent's last job. Number of years worked in last job provided some indication of the attachment to the job from which the respondent retired. Men worked for an average of 23 years at their last job. Women worked for an average of 17 years at their last job. *Hours worked in last job* was measured in average hours per week. Men worked an average of 44 hours per week and women worked an average of 37 hours per week in their last job.

*Stress experienced from job* was recorded at Time 1 when the respondent was still working and was created from two items: "My job requires me to do more difficult things than it used to" and "My job involves a lot of stress" (1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *agree*, 4 = *strongly agree*). The job stress scores ranged from 2 to 8.



Whether *retirees perceived their last job as important* was constructed from a question asked at Time 1, while they were still working: “Do you consider work important as a source of income or do you value the work in itself?” The HRS surveyors expected a dichotomous reply with respondents identifying either work as important or money from working important, but some respondents said both the work and the money were important, creating three responses (1 = *income important*, 2 = *both important*, 3 = *work itself important*). By design, not all respondents were provided with the option to say both work features were important. The ordering of the response categories did not project any intended meaning as to which was more important. For example, work was rated 3, but it was not theorized to have a higher meaning than 1, in which income was seen as more important.

*Firm size* was measured by the number of employees or coworkers at the respondent’s last job (range = 1 – 6) with higher scores indicating larger firms. *Union membership* was denoted if respondents belonged to a labor union at the last job from which they exited (1 = *yes*, 0 = *no*). Thirty-one percent of men and 21% of women in the sample belonged to a labor union. The variable regarding why retirees left their former employer (i.e., job business closed, laid off/let go, poor health/disabled, family care, better job, quit) was not used in this study. Respondents are not asked this question if they continue to work for pay (working retirees).

Two items were used to explore the perceived nature of the retirement. Whether retirement was something the respondent wanted or felt forced into, and whether the timing of retirement matched the respondent’s expected timing were captured. Whether the respondent felt retirement was forced was determined by the answer to the following

question: “Was retirement something you wanted to do or something you felt forced into?” Respondents could answer (a) forced, (b) wanted to, (c) felt retirement was part forced, part wanted. Answer c was not a response category, but was recorded if mentioned. In this study, *retirement was perceived as forced* was coded (0 = *retirement wanted or part wanted/part forced*, 1 = *retirement forced*). Twenty-four percent of men and 25% of women reported that they felt their retirement transition was forced.

Expected and preferred timing of retirement was recorded by examining the difference between the age of planned retirement indicated by the respondent at Time 1 (while still working) and the age when a retirement transition was experienced (Time 2). The difference between when the respondent planned on and actually self-identified as retired was coded (1 = *two years or more prior to planned retirement age than expected* and 0 = *retired at expected time or later.*) This variable reflects the life course dimension of retirement experienced as an on-time event. Respondents retiring later than expected could be considered off-time, but because samples from the HRS data tend to retire earlier than the national average, the coding used reflects either an early or on-time transition. Fifty percent of men and 53% of women perceived their retirement transition occurring two or more years earlier than planned.

*Control variables.* Controls in the analyses included sociodemographic background variables such as age at retirement and race/ethnicity as well as wave membership. Age at retirement was measured in years. Ethnicity included four categories: White, Black, Hispanic, and Other Race. Most respondents were White. Black men comprised 10% of the unweighted sample ( $n = 72$ ) and Hispanic-origin men comprised 6% of the unweighted sample ( $n = 40$ ). Black women comprised 10% of the

unweighted sample ( $n = 58$ ) and Hispanic-origin women comprised 5% of the unweighted sample ( $n = 26$ ). Less than 1% of the unweighted sample ( $n = 9$  men and  $n = 6$  women) identified the *other* race/ethnicity categories. Wave membership indicated the year (1992, 1994, 1996, 1998) in which the respondent self-identified as retired.

#### *Data Screening and Preliminary Analyses*

The first step was to construct the sample through a series of filters, as noted earlier, and to determine frequencies for the sample based on inclusion criteria (i.e., self-identified retirement status, work status at Time 2). I began the diagnostic review of the data by examining mean-difference tests, cross-tabulations, and correlations. I ran descriptive statistics separately for men and women, then within gender, sorted by partially and completely retired individuals.

After generating means and standard errors for the control and predictor variables (Tables 3 and 4), I performed independent *t*-tests (separately by gender) between means for the partially and completely retired on the following variables: age at retirement, net household worth, earnings, change in health status, change in ADLs, current relationship length, enjoyment in activities with partner, years worked at last job, hours worked at last job, and perceived job stress. Significant mean differences are shown in Tables 3 and 4.

I performed cross tabulations on categorical variables separately for women and men, by retirement status (partial and complete). Categorical variables included in the cross tabulations performed with chi-square analyses were as follows: race/ethnicity, wave membership, education, pension plan coverage (3 variables), health plan coverage (6 variables), partners' employment status at Time 1 and Time 2, time spent in activities with partner, presence of dependent children or grandchildren in the home, whether the

retiree provided half of the financial support to other, care for parents (in-laws) and grandchildren, perceptions of importance of job, firm size, union membership, and whether retirement was perceived as forced or early. The cross tabulations were performed to examine the characteristics of the sample. Significant results from the chi-square analyses are discussed in Chapter 4.

In preliminary analyses, I examined correlations among all variables. Diagnostics also included examination of variables using a *variance inflation factor (VIF)* option in STATA 9. The *VIF* procedure is considered to be superior to examining bivariate correlations. In STATA, the *VIF* option estimates how much variance in a predictor is not confounded with other predictors and is used to assess the amount of inflation in the estimates of the standard errors. An individual multiple regression of each predictor is calculated on all other predictors in the model to show how much variance in each predictor is explained by all the other predictors. If the values are extremely high, multicollinearity issues may need to be addressed. When examining the data used in this study, all *VIF* coefficients were smaller than 10. The *VIF* procedure provided confidence that at least 10% of the variance in the predictor variable was not confounded with the other variables in the logit models.

### *Statistical Models*

For this study, two sets of logistic regressions were modeled, separately by gender. This analysis was best suited to answer my research questions: (a) What factors predict a partial versus complete retirement among married/partnered individuals? (b) Do the influences of family characteristics, work factors, finances, and health on retirement transitions differ by retirement status?

*Logit models for men and women.* Logistic regression is parallel to linear regression, but used when the dependent variable is binary or dichotomous (Long, 1997). Logistic regression shows the effects of predictor variables on a dependent variable (in this study, partial or complete retirement) in log odds coefficients. Odds coefficients estimate the change in the dependent variable for any one-unit increase in the independent variable. For example, a positive log odds coefficient (greater than one) indicates that, with each one-unit rise in the predictor, the likelihood of the outcome is increased (DeMaris, 1995).

Odds ratios were computed in addition to the regression coefficients of the predictor variables as the exponential of B. Maximum likelihood (ml) criteria were used in selecting parameter estimates. Logistic regression models are referred to as logit models when there are categorical predictors (Agresti & Finlay, 1997). Formulas are presented below.

The first formula represents the odds of respondents selecting partial or complete retirement transitions. The second formula introduces a constant and categorical/continuous predictors into the model.

$$\text{Logit}(\pi) = \text{Ln} [\pi/1 - \pi]$$

$$\text{Logit}(\pi) = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \dots + \beta_k X_k$$

Coding of the outcome variable, in this case, retirement transition type, is important because how the variable is “coded determines the direction of the odds ratios as well as the sign of the B coefficients” (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996, p. 605).

Interpretations of the output depend on the coding of the outcome variables.

In this study, the response category was the *completely retired* (coded as 1) and the reference group was the *partially retired* (coded as 0). It is helpful to think that the completely retired (more traditional format of retirement) was compared to the partially retired (more varied, emerging form of retirement). With this coding scheme, most parameter estimates were positive and the output indicated the odds of being in the response category (completely retired) in comparison to the reference group (partially retired). This coding scheme, therefore, set up the output so that I was able to address the research question of what factors significantly predicted partial and complete retirement for men and women.

Once final logit models were determined, B coefficients and standard error estimates from the five datasets were entered into the NORM program as stacked columns, separately by gender. Averaged coefficient and standard error estimates across the five datasets produced the final results for the logit models presented here. All odd ratios and percent change in the odds were recalculated using these averaged B coefficients and standard errors that were produced by NORM.

*Assumptions of logistic regression.* One assumption of logistic regression analysis is that the outcomes are mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive. This assumption was met because individuals were only classified as either partially or completely retired; irrelevant cases were already filtered out of the sample. Another assumption calls for correct specification in the models, with no irrelevant variables unnecessarily influencing the estimates. This assumption was harder to meet, but was not violated, because I considered only the most parsimonious logit models during the diagnostics on the variables.

One last assumption must be met for logistic regression. A potential *ratio of cases to variables* issue was considered for my logit models, because a model can fail to converge if there is a combination of discrete variables resulting in too few cells with no cases (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996, p. 579). Surprisingly, I did not have to collapse categories for men or women. I closely examined the family variables, in particular the care for grandchildren and care for parents (in-laws) variables, but found sufficient cases to retain the variables in my analyses for both men and women. For example, 31% of men were caring for a grandchild and 4% were caring for a parent (in-law). These cases split as expected between the partially and completely retired groups. In comparison, 39% of women were caring for a grandchild and 7% of women cared for a parent (in-law) for 100+ hours. These cases also split evenly across retirement groups.

*Benefits of estimating logit models.* Strengths in using logit models include the lack of assumptions related to the distribution of the predictor variables (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). Predictors are not required to be normally distributed, linearly related, or to have equal variance within each group. Long and Freese (2003) suggest using the STATA option to calculate *percent change in the odds* when an independent variable does not have an easily interpretable unit of change. This feature was utilized in this study. Percent changes in the odds were presented for variables that were better interpreted using an increase or decrease of standard deviation changes (i.e., log of household net worth, job stress), rather than the odds calculated from binary variables that have one easily identifiable unit of change (i.e., pension coverage, partners' work status).

## Chapter 4 RESULTS

This chapter is organized by the research questions proposed for this study, to examine what factors were important in predicting a partial versus complete retirement among married and partnered respondents. Results are discussed separately for men and then for women. To examine the influence of specific factors (i.e., wealth, health, family characteristics, work situations, control variables), the results are organized by categories.

First, the influences of wealth and human capital on retirement types are examined. A look at health status of the respondents follows. Next, family situations and work characteristics are discussed. Tables 6 and 7 provide a summary of the logistic regression analyses for variables predicting complete versus partial retirement for men and women. Results from these analyses are highlighted throughout the chapter.

### *Results For Men*

*Wealth: The importance of a pension and health insurance.* In this sample, partially retired men had significantly higher total net household worth than completely retired men [ $t(1, 713) = -4.04, p < .001$ ]. Earnings from the respondent's last job, however, were significantly higher among completely retired men [ $t(1, 713) = 2.02, p < .05$ ]. In the logit models, on a trend level and as expected, the log of total net household worth was a predictor of retirement status for men ( $B = -.01, p < .10$ ). A standard deviation increase in the log of total net household worth reduced the odds of a complete retirement relative to a partial retirement by 21%, holding all other variables constant.



Table 6  
 Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Complete Retirement for Men

| Predictor   | <i>B</i>          | <i>SE B</i> | <i>e<sup>B</sup></i> |
|---|-------------------|-------------|----------------------|
| <i>Control variables</i>                                |                   |             |                      |
| Age at retirement (T2)                                  | .07*              | .03         | 1.07                 |
| Black   | -.29              | .34         | .75                  |
| Hispanic origin   | -.43              | .36         | .65                  |
| Other race  | .19               | .79         | 1.21                 |
| Wave 2 (Retirement year 1994)                           | -.06              | .32         | .94                  |
| Wave 3 (Retirement year 1996)                           | -.40              | .28         | .67                  |
| <i>Wealth and health factors</i>                        |                   |             |                      |
| Net household worth (T1)                                | -.01 <sup>†</sup> | .00         | .99                  |
| Earnings (T1)   | -.01              | .03         | .99                  |
| Education (T1)  | -.11***           | .03         | .90                  |
| Pension plan coverage in last job (T1)                  | 1.10***           | .29         | 3.00                 |
| Pension income receipt with retirement (T2)             | .43 <sup>†</sup>  | .26         | 1.54                 |
| Partner receives pension income (T2)                    | -.09              | .21         | .91                  |
| Had health insurance in job (T1)                        | -.21              | .36         | .81                  |
| Health insurance continues in retirement (T2)           | -.03              | .37         | .97                  |
| Partner had health insurance in job (T1)                | .09               | .40         | 1.09                 |
| Partner's health insurance continues in retirement (T2) | .69 <sup>†</sup>  | .41         | 1.99                 |
| Retiree covered in partner's health plan (T2)           | -.46              | .31         | .63                  |
| Retiree covers partner in health plan (T2)              | .24               | .23         | 1.27                 |
| Change in self-reported health (T2)                     | -.16              | .11         | .85                  |
| Change in respondent's ADLs (T2)                        | .12**             | .04         | 1.13                 |

(Table continues)

Table 6

## Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Complete Retirement for Men (Continued)

| Predictor   | <i>B</i> | <i>SE B</i> | <i>e<sup>B</sup></i> |
|---|----------|-------------|----------------------|
| <i>Family and spouse/partner factors</i>                |          |             |                      |
| Current relationship length (T1)                        | -.01     | .01         | .99                  |
| Time spent in activities with partner (T1)              | -.07     | .16         | .93                  |
| Enjoyment in activities with partner (T1)               | .01      | .10         | 1.01                 |
| Partners' employment status (T1)                        | .48      | .30         | 1.62                 |
| Partners' employment status (T2)                        | -1.01*** | .29         | .36                  |
| Change in partner's ADLs (T2)                           | -.04     | .04         | .96                  |
| Dependent children under age < 18 in home (T2)          | .32      | .34         | 1.34                 |
| Dependent grandchildren in home (T2)                    | -.09     | .43         | .91                  |
| Retiree provides ½ financial support to other (T2)      | .41      | .30         | 1.51                 |
| Care for any parent (in-law) 100+ hrs in last year (T2) | -.12     | .51         | .89                  |
| Care for any grandchild (< 400 hrs in last year) (T2)   | -.10     | .19         | .90                  |
| Care for any grandchild (> 400 hrs in last year) (T2)   | -.55†    | .31         | .58                  |
| <i>Work factors</i>                                     |          |             |                      |
| Years worked at last job (T1)                           | -.00     | .01         | 1.00                 |
| Hours worked in last job (T1)                           | .00      | .01         | 1.00                 |
| Stress experienced from job (T1)                        | -.05     | .06         | .95                  |
| Retiree perceived last job as important (T1)            | -.15     | .10         | .86                  |
| Firm size (T1)  | .04      | .07         | 1.04                 |
| Union membership (T1)                                   | .11      | .21         | 1.11                 |
| Retirement was perceived as forced (T2)                 | .19      | .24         | 1.21                 |
| Retired ≥ 2 years earlier than planned (T2)             | -.25     | .17         | .78                  |

(Table continues)

|                          |       |       |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|
| Constant                 | -1.85 | 2.36  |
| $\chi^2$                 |       | 57.94 |
| <i>df</i>                |       | 41    |
| % Men completely retired |       | 52.3  |

*Note.* Sample weights and corrections for complex survey design used.  $n = 713$ .  $e^B$  = denotes odds ratio.

<sup>†</sup> $p < .10$ . \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Table 7  
 Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Complete Retirement for Women

| Predictor   | <i>B</i>         | <i>SE B</i> | <i>e<sup>B</sup></i> |
|---|------------------|-------------|----------------------|
| <i>Control variables</i>                                |                  |             |                      |
| Age at retirement (T2)                                  | .03              | .04         | 1.03                 |
| Black   | -.99*            | .45         | .37                  |
| Hispanic origin   | -.29             | .53         | .75                  |
| Other race  | -1.41*           | .70         | .25                  |
| Wave 2 (Retirement year 1994)                           | -.14             | .27         | .87                  |
| Wave 3 (Retirement year 1996)                           | .11              | .28         | 1.12                 |
| <i>Wealth and health factors</i>                        |                  |             |                      |
| Net household worth (T1)                                | .01 <sup>†</sup> | .00         | 1.01                 |
| Earnings (T1)   | -.02             | .04         | .99                  |
| Education (T1)  | -.06             | .04         | .94                  |
| Pension plan coverage in last job (T1)                  | .97**            | .35         | 2.64                 |
| Pension income receipt with retirement (T2)             | -.11             | .27         | .90                  |
| Partner receives pension income (T2)                    | -.06             | .23         | .94                  |
| Had health insurance in job (T1)                        | -.03             | .43         | .97                  |
| Health insurance continues in retirement (T2)           | .62              | .49         | 1.86                 |
| Partner had health insurance in job (T1)                | .39              | .43         | 1.38                 |
| Partner's health insurance continues in retirement (T2) | .26              | .49         | 1.30                 |
| Retiree covered in partner's health plan (T2)           | .05              | .37         | 1.05                 |
| Retiree covers partner in health plan (T2)              | .17              | .40         | 1.19                 |
| Change in self-reported health (T2)                     | -.18             | .11         | .84                  |
| Change in respondent's ADLs (T2)                        | .06              | .05         | 1.06                 |

(Table continues) 79

Table 7  
 Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Complete Retirement for Women (Continued)

| Predictor   | <i>B</i>          | <i>SE B</i> | <i>e<sup>B</sup></i> |
|---|-------------------|-------------|----------------------|
| <i>Family and spouse/partner factors</i>                |                   |             |                      |
| Current relationship length (T1)                        | .01               | .01         | 1.01                 |
| Time spent in activities with partner (T1)              | .02               | .17         | 1.02                 |
| Enjoyment in activities with partner (T1)               | .13               | .12         | 1.14                 |
| Partners' employment status (T1)                        | .16               | .34         | 1.17                 |
| Partners' employment status (T2)                        | -.67*             | .30         | .51                  |
| Change in partner's ADLs (T2)                           | .05               | .04         | 1.05                 |
| Dependent children under age < 18 in home (T2)          | .50               | .68         | 1.65                 |
| Dependent grandchildren in home (T2)                    | .91 <sup>†</sup>  | .50         | 2.48                 |
| Retiree provides ½ financial support to other (T2)      | -.53              | .33         | .59                  |
| Care for any parent (in-law) 100+ hrs in last year (T2) | .41               | .42         | 1.51                 |
| Care for any grandchild (< 400 hrs in last year) (T2)   | .18               | .28         | 1.20                 |
| Care for any grandchild (> 400 hrs in last year) (T2)   | .30               | .30         | 1.35                 |
| <i>Work factors</i>                                     |                   |             |                      |
| Years worked at last job (T1)                           | -.02 <sup>†</sup> | .01         | .98                  |
| Hours worked in last job (T1)                           | .00               | .01         | 1.00                 |
| Stress experienced from job (T1)                        | -.12 <sup>†</sup> | .07         | .89                  |
| Retiree perceived last job as important (T1)            | .14               | .14         | 1.15                 |
| Firm size (T1)  | .01               | .07         | 1.01                 |
| Union membership (T1)                                   | .48               | .30         | 1.62                 |
| Retirement was perceived as forced (T2)                 | .01               | .23         | 1.01                 |
| Retired ≥ 2 years earlier than planned (T2)             | -.42              | .26         | .66                  |

(Table continues)

|                            |       |       |
|----------------------------|-------|-------|
| Constant                   | -1.02 | 2.69  |
| $\chi^2$                   |       | 45.31 |
| <i>df</i>                  |       | 41    |
| % Women completely retired |       | 61.5  |

*Note.* Sample weights and corrections for complex survey design used.  $n = 562$ .  $e^B$  = denotes odds ratio.

<sup>†</sup> $p < .10$ . \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

In this sample, 506 men were covered in a pension plan at Time 1 (72%). Sixty percent of the men covered in a pension plan transitioned into a complete retirement. Respondents not covered in a pension plan through their employer were much more likely to be partially retired and workers who *were* covered in a pension plan at Time 1 were much more likely to be completely retired [ $\chi^2(1, 713) = 43.79, p < .001$ ]. Additionally, receiving a pension at the start of this latest retirement transition was more likely among completely retired men [ $\chi^2(1, 713) = 15.18, p < .001$ ].

Interestingly, no men were not covered by a pension plan at Time 1 and were receiving pension income at Time 2. This provides validation to the expected importance of the *covered in pension* variable. Pension coverage and receipt were powerful indicators for type of retirement transition (partial or complete). Examining the crosstabulations by retirement type, between the two variables—covered by pension at Time 1 and started new pension at Time 2—the importance of a pension was again clear: There were more partially retired men not covered and not receiving pensions than expected [ $\chi^2(1, 340) = 60.56, p < .001$ ]; there were more completely retired men covered and receiving pensions than expected [ $\chi^2(1, 373) = 38.47, p < .001$ ]. In the logit models, coverage in a pension plan was a significant predictor of retirement status for men ( $B = 1.10, p < .001$ ). The odds of a man being completely retired relative to being partially retired was nearly three times greater for a retiree who was covered in a pension plan at Time 1. Also, in the logit models, on a trend level, men who were completely retired were more likely than men who were partially retired to begin pension receipt with their latest retirement transition. If the respondent had started new pension income at Time 2, the odds of him being completely relative to being partially retired increased by 54%.

As expected, health insurance coverage distinguished the retirement groups for men. More partially retired men had health insurance that did not continue into retirement (51%) whereas more completely retired men (63%) *did* have continued health insurance [ $\chi^2(1, 713) = 14.29, p < .001$ ]. More partially retired men (17%) had health insurance coverage through their partner (wife) than expected [ $\chi^2(1, 713) = 3.40, p < .05$ ]. More completely retired men (64%) used their health insurance plan to cover their partner (wife), and partially retired men were less likely to cover their partner under their health insurance plans [ $\chi^2(1, 713) = 9.49, p < .01$ ]. In the logit models, on a trend level, whether the men had a partner who had health insurance that continued into retirement was a predictor of retirement status ( $B = .74, p < .10$ ). If the respondent's wife or partner had continued health insurance for herself in retirement, the odds of him being completely retired relative to being partially retired were nearly 100% greater.

In sum, relative to partially retired, completely retired men had higher earnings at their last job, were three times more likely to be covered in a pension plan from their former employer, were more likely to start pension income at Time 2, had health insurance that continued in retirement, and were more likely to cover a partner in their health plan. Relative to completely retired men, partially retired men had higher net household worth, were less likely to be covered in a pension plan from their former employer, had health insurance that did not continue in retirement, and, on a trend level, were more likely receiving health insurance coverage from their partners' health plan.

*Human capital: Education and occupation.* Completely retired men had less education (grade levels 5<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup>) than expected whereas partially retired men had higher educational levels than expected (4-year college degree) [ $t(1, 713) = -3.56, p < .001$ ].



Education was also related to how the retiree viewed his last job: Men with a college education were more likely to value the work in their last job as important, rather than viewing the work as just a source of income [ $\chi^2(1, 34) = 101.94, p < .001$ ].

In the logit models, as expected, education level was a significant predictor of retirement status for men ( $B = -.11, p < .001$ ). A standard deviation increase in education level reduced the odds of a complete retirement by 30%, holding all other variables constant. Higher education, particularly at the college level, was more likely associated with partial retirement.

*Health.* Men in the sample were healthy at Time 1, while they still worked for pay, and they reported few limitations with ADLs (65% had  $\leq 1$  ADL). Change in men's ADLs, however, significantly differed between the partially and completely retired groups [ $t(1, 713) = 2.30, p < .05$ ]: Completely retired men were more likely to have increased ADL limitations at Time 2.

In the logit models, as expected, having more ADLs was a significant predictor of retirement status for men ( $B = 0.11, p < .01$ ). A standard deviation increase in ADL limitations increased the odds of being completely retired relative to being partially retired by 25%, holding all other variables constant. The results confirmed that poor health is associated with complete retirement for men.

*Family factors.* Crosstabulations by retirement type of the two variables—partner works for pay at Time 1 and partner works for pay at Time 2—showed the importance of partners' work status. For the partially retired, more men than expected (48%) had partners who continuously worked for pay between Time 1 and Time 2 [ $\chi^2(1, 340) = 141.68, p < .001$ ]. For the completely retired, more men than expected (42%) had

partners not working for pay at Time 1 and not working at Time 2 [ $\chi^2(1, 373) = 146.14, p < 0.01$ ]. Additionally, more partially retired men than expected had partners who worked for pay at Time 2 (55%) and fewer completely retired men (40%) had partners who worked for pay at Time 2 [ $\chi^2(1, 713) = 15.22, p < .001$ ].

In the logit models, as expected, partners' employment status at Time 2 was a significant predictor of retirement status for men ( $B = -1.00, p < .001$ ). If a man had a partner who was *not* working at Time 2, the odds of him being completely retired relative to being partially retired increased by 36%, holding all other variables constant. Partially retired men were more likely to have partners who were working for pay at Time 2. Partners' work status at Time 1 did not significantly predict retirement type for men.

On a trend level, in the logit models, whether the retiree provided more than 400 hours of care to a grandchild in the last year was a predictor of retirement status for men ( $B = -.55, p < .10$ ). The odds of a complete relative to a partial retirement were greater if a man provided care to a grandchild.

Few family variables were statistically significant in understanding the differences between the partially and completely retired men in this study. Variables that were *not* significant included current relationship length, time spent in activities and enjoyment in these activities with partner, change in partner's ADLs, whether the respondent provided financial assistance to another outside the household, if there were dependent children or grandchildren in the home, and time spent in care transfers to parents or in-laws. The most useful variable in predicting type of retirement status for men was partners' employment status at Time 2, at the time of the retirement transitions.

*Work characteristics.* On a trend level, the number of years at the respondent's last job differ by retirement status, with completely retired men having more years with their last employer before retirement [ $t(1, 713) = 1.76, p < .10$ ]. Men worked an average of 44 hours a week and this value did not differ by retirement status. As expected, company size and union membership were important in determining whether men experienced a partial or complete retirement transition. Partially retired men were more likely to have worked for a smaller firm and completely retired men were much more likely to have worked for larger employers [ $\chi^2(5, 713) = 28.35, p < .001$ ]. Fewer partially retired men had worked in union jobs (24%) and more completely retired men (37%) claimed union membership [ $\chi^2(1, 713) = 16.65, p < .001$ ].

Whether men perceived their last job as important work and whether they viewed their retirement as early differed by retirement status. More partially retired men responded that the work itself was more important than the income received at their last job whereas more completely retired men perceived the income they received from their last job as more important than the actual work tasks [ $\chi^2(1, 713) = 12.02, p < .01$ ]. Also, more partially retired men and fewer completely retired men perceived their retirement transition as happening earlier than planned [ $\chi^2(1, 713) = 10.71, p < .01$ ]. Unfortunately, neither of these work characteristic variables were significant in the logit models.

In sum, just a few work factors were useful in determining why men transition into either partial or complete retirement pathways. Completely retired men worked for larger companies at their last job, had worked for more years, and were more likely members of labor unions. Partially retired men had fewer years at their last job, retired earlier than they planned, and perceived their last jobs as important work.

*Demographics influencing a partial versus complete retirement.* There was not a significant age difference between the men who partially retired and those who completely retired. In the logit models, however, as expected, age at retirement was a significant predictor of retirement status for men ( $B = .07, p < .05$ ). For each additional year in age at retirement the odds of being completely retired relative to being partially retired increased by 7%, holding all other variables constant. Furthermore, a standard deviation increase in the age at retirement increased the odds of being completely retired by 24%, holding all other variables constant. Race/ethnicity categories such as Black, Hispanic-origin and other race membership were not significant characteristics influencing *type* of retirement status for men. Wave membership was equally distributed between retirement status groups for men and was also not a significant predictor in the logit models.

#### *Results For Women*

*Wealth: The importance of a pension and health insurance.* Among the women, there was not a significant difference between the partially and completely retired on total net household worth. On a trend level, however, women differed on personal earnings from their last job: Partially retired women had higher personal earnings, on average, relative to completely retired women [ $t(1, 562) = 1.76, p < .10$ ]. In the logit models, on a trend level, women's total net household worth was a predictor of retirement status ( $B = .01, p < .10$ ). A standard deviation increase in the log of total net household worth reduced the odds of a complete retirement relative to a partial retirement by 17%, holding all other variables constant.

In this sample, 314 (60%) women were covered in a pension plan at Time 1. Of these, 70% of the women covered in a pension plan transitioned into a complete retirement. As expected, women not covered in an employer-based pension were more likely to be partially retired and workers who were covered in a pension plan at Time 1 were much more likely to be completely retired [ $\chi^2(1, 562) = 25.91, p < .001$ ]. On a trend level, completely retired women were more likely to start receiving a pension with this latest retirement transition, and starting to receive pension income was less likely for the partially retired women [ $\chi^2(1, 562) = 3.58, p < .10$ ].

No women were not covered by a pension plan at Time 1 and were receiving pension income at Time 2. By examining the crosstabulations by retirement type, between the two variables—covered by pension at Time 1 and started new pension at Time 2—the importance of a pension was again clear: There were more partially retired women not covered or not receiving pensions than expected [ $\chi^2(1, 216) = 44.98, p < .001$ ]. Furthermore, more completely retired women were covered and were receiving pensions [ $\chi^2(1, 346) = 46.46, p < .001$ ]. In the logit models, as expected, coverage in a pension plan was a significant predictor of retirement status for women ( $B = .97, p < .01$ ). If the respondent was covered in a pension plan at Time 1 the odds of her being completely retired relative to being partially retired at Time 2 increased by 164%, holding all other variables constant.

As expected, health insurance coverage distinguished the retirement groups for women. More partially retired women had health insurance that *did not* continue in retirement (78%) whereas more completely retired women (36%) had continuing health insurance coverage [ $\chi^2(1, 562) = 12.73, p < .001$ ]. Whether women were covering

partners (husbands) with their health insurance plans and whether women were covered by partners' (husbands') health plans did not differ significantly by retirement status group and were not significant predictors in the logit models.

*Human capital: Education and occupation.* Women had a range of education levels equivalent to what was expected by retirement status (partial and complete); surprisingly, there was no effect of education on the type of retirement transition found in the logit models. Education, however, was related to how the retiree viewed her last job. Women with a college education were more likely to value the work in their last job as important, rather than viewing the work as just a source of income [ $\chi^2(1, 32) = 72.59, p < .001$ ]. On a trend level, more women managers ( $n = 59$ ) than expected were partially retired [ $\chi^2(1, 562) = 3.20, p < .10$ ]. In clerical occupations, the reverse was seen: On a trend level, it was found that more clerical women were completely retired than expected [ $\chi^2(1, 562) = 3.29, p < .10$ ]. For women, to evaluate the influence of human capital on the selection of retirement status, it was not as helpful to consider only education, as it was to examine education *combined* with the type of occupation held.

*Health.* Women in the sample were healthy at Time 1, while they still worked for pay, and they received little help with ADLs (48% had  $\leq 1$  ADL for which they received help). Change in women's ADL limitations significantly differed between the partially and completely retired groups [ $t(1, 562) = 2.31, p < .05$ ]: As expected, completely retired women had more ADL limitations at Time 2. Change in health status, however, showed on a trend level that the completely retired also self-reported worse health at Time 2 [ $t(1, 562) = -1.76, p < .10$ ]. Although not significant in the logit models, these results confirmed that poor health is more likely associated with complete retirement for women.

*Family factors.* Partner's work status mattered for the women in the sample.

Among the partially retired, more women than expected (49%) had partners who continuously worked for pay between Time 1 and Time 2 [ $\chi^2(1, 216) = 54.49, p < .001$ ].

For the completely retired, more women than expected (34%) had partners not working for pay at Time 1 and not working at Time 2 [ $\chi^2(1, 346) = 107.45, p < .001$ ].

Additionally, more partially retired women than expected (22%) had partners who worked for pay at Time 2 and fewer completely retired women (26%) had partners who worked for pay at Time 2 [ $\chi^2(1, 562) = 9.32, p < .01$ ].

In the logit models, as expected, partners' employment status at Time 2 was a significant predictor of retirement status for women ( $B = -.67, p < .05$ ). If a woman had a partner who was working at Time 2, the odds of her being completely retired were reduced by 49%, holding all other variables constant. Partially retired women were more likely to have husbands or partners who were working for pay at Time 2. Partners' work status at Time 1 did not significantly predict retirement type for women.

Although 32 (16%) partially retired women and 34 (11%) completely retired women were providing one half of the financial support to another person (e.g., kin outside the home), as expected, but on a trend level, proportionately more partially retired women provided such provisions [ $\chi^2(1, 562) = 4.03, p < .10$ ].

Two additional family variables were important in understanding retirement types for women. On a trend level, as expected, partially retired women were more likely to report that time spent in activities with their partner was somewhat enjoyable, whereas completely retired women were more likely to report that time with their partner was *very* enjoyable [ $\chi^2(3, 562) = 9.03, p < .10$ ]. In the logit models, on a trend level, having

dependent grandchildren in the home was a predictor of retirement status for women ( $B = .91, p < .10$ ). As expected, if a woman had grandchildren in the home at Time 2, the odds of her being completely relative to being partially retired increased by 148%, holding all other variables constant.

Family variables were important in understanding the differences between the partially and completely retired women in this study. The most useful variables in predicting type of retirement status for women were partners' employment status and whether grandchildren were present in the home at the time of retirement. Whether women enjoyed time spent in activities with their partner was also notable. Variables that were surprisingly *not* significant included current relationship length, time spent in activities with partner, change in partner's ADLs, dependent children in the home, and time spent in care transfers to parents, in-laws, or grandchildren.

*Work characteristics.* The number of years women worked at their last jobs, as well as the number of hours worked per week, did not differ by retirement group. On a trend level, however, in the logit models, the number of years women worked at their last jobs was a predictor of retirement group ( $B = -.02, p < .10$ ): A standard deviation increase in the number of years employed at their last job reduced the odds of a woman being completely relative to partially retired by 18%, holding all other variables constant. Union membership was also important in determining whether women were more likely to experience a partial or complete retirement transition. Fewer partially retired women than expected worked in union jobs (16%) and more completely retired women (26%) claimed union membership [ $\chi^2(1, 562) = 8.64, p < .01$ ].



In the logit models, on a trend level, experiencing job stress was a predictor of retirement status for women ( $B = -.12, p < .10$ ): A standard deviation increase in the level of job-related stress experienced reduced the odds of a woman being completely relative to partially retired by 16%, holding all other variables constant. For women, whether retirement was perceived as two or more years earlier than planned was also predictive of retirement status. More partially retired women (63%) and fewer completely retired women (47%) perceived their retirement transition as happening earlier than planned  $\chi^2(1, 562) = 13.53, p < .01$ ].

In sum, work factors were somewhat useful in determining why women transition into either partial versus complete retirement pathways. Completely retired women experienced less stress at their last job, had fewer years at their last job, and were more likely labor union members. Partially retired women were more likely to report that they retired earlier than they had planned. For women, the number of hours worked per week, company size, whether the respondent perceived their last job as important work, and whether retirement was perceived as forced were surprisingly not significant.

*Demographics influencing a partial versus complete retirement.* For women, age at retirement differed significantly between the partially retired (58 years) and the completely retired (59 years) [ $t(1, 562) = -2.37, p < .05$ ]. Age at retirement for women, however, was not a significant predictor in the logit models. Race/ethnicity did not differentiate between the partially and completely retired groups for women in the crosstabulations. In the logit models, however, race/ethnicity variables were predictors of retirement status for women, specifically whether she was Black ( $B = -.99, p < .05$ ) or self-classified as another race ( $B = -1.41, p < .05$ ). If a woman was White and not Black,

the odds of her being completely relative to being partially retired increased by 63%, holding all other variables constant. Similarly, if a woman was White and *not* self-classified as other race, the odds of her being completely relative to being partially retired increased by 75%, holding all other variables constant. In essence, White women were more likely to be completely retired. Wave membership was equally distributed between retirement groups for women and was not a significant predictor in the logit models.

## Chapter 5 DISCUSSION

This study found similar, and different, predictors for partial versus complete retirement for men and women. The focus of the study was on the different factors (i.e., wealth, health, family, work) that influence workers transitioning into either a partial or complete retirement. This study was shaped by life course and feminist perspectives. The theoretical framework simultaneously considered accumulated life experiences and the notion of interdependent, linked lives of married individuals (Hägestad, 1990; Moen, 1996a, 1996b, 2003). All men and women in this study were currently married or in a partnership. Examining a group of married or partnered retirees allowed for the analysis of family situations and spousal influences, as well as the variables associated with the opportunity structure (i.e., wealth, health, demographics) on retirement pathways.

In this study, gender was an organizing feature (Withers Osmond & Thorne, 1993) and finding differences between men and women was *not* the focus. Instead, gender was treated as an opportunity structure among respondents and analyses were conducted separately by gender to honor the perspective that men and women arrive at retirement under different life circumstances (Harrington-Meyer & Pavalko, 1996).

I expected diversity in this sample, regardless of similar ages. There was individual variation and age heterogeneity among this cohort of retirees (retiring between 1994 – 1998). The age at retirement for men (partially and completely retired) was the same: 59 years. For women, the age at retirement was 58 for the partially retired and 59 for the completely retired. Similar biological age provides evidence that respondents selected partial or complete retirement for other reasons.

Retirement was defined by multiple measures—subjective (self-identified status) and objective (paid work status at Time 2)—to examine work-exiting transitions and to highlight the important and emerging role of partial retirement pathways. Considering multiple measures to create retirement status is ideal, especially for studying partial retirement (Ekerdt & DeViney, 1990; Kim & DeVaney, 2005; Ruhm, 1990).

During the onset of this project, it was unclear what proportion of partially versus completely retired respondents to expect and how that would differ by gender. Would there be more completely retired individuals because that was traditionally the common pathway? In this study, 44% of the respondents were partially retired and 56% of the respondents were completely retired. Among men, 48% were partially retired and 52% were completely retired. Among women, 38% were partially retired and 62% were completely retired. That the samples of the two retirement status groups were relatively similar in size or proportion, especially among men, supported that retirement is changing in form. New forms, such as partial retirement, deserve research and theoretical attention.

For both men and women in this study, traditional retirement was not characteristic of the overwhelming majority. In fact, as predicted by the theoretical perspectives, the two types of retirement show how individual behaviors in the aggregate are changing social patterns. Also, the consideration of multiple time clocks in individual lives was useful for understanding the results found in this study. It was not just age or years of work that predicted a type of retirement transition. Instead, beyond biological age, other life circumstances (e.g., family statuses such as grandmotherhood), were important in predicting retirement type. Furthermore, human capital characteristics of individuals such as education and occupation also influenced retirement pathways.

### *Summary of Findings*

A summary of the predictors important for understanding the differences between partially and completely retired respondents is presented in Table 8. The first column lists the variables used in the analyses. The second column highlights significant differences between partially and completely retired *men*. The third column highlights significant differences between partially and completely retired *women*. The methodology used in this study, in addition to the conceptual framework, prohibits direct comparisons between men and women, even though some findings were similar.

*Wealth and human capital.* As expected, wealth factors were instrumental in predicting type of retirement transition. Respondents with more reported wealth, measured as household net worth, were expected to be completely retired. In this study, however, men and women who had greater wealth were instead partially retired. One explanation for this unexpected finding may be related to how household net worth was measured. Kim and DeVaney (2005) used multiple waves of HRS data and found partially retired respondents had higher liquid and investment assets and more real assets (e.g., actual pension income amount), but higher debt than completely retired respondents.

Debt may be a possible motivator for retirees to remain in the labor force and to select partial retirement over a traditional, complete retirement. As baby boomers approach retirement, a cohort notorious for spending and not saving (Dailey, 1998), individual debt history, as well as current debt status, will be increasingly important to monitor as a factor in retirement decisions. Debt status is likely related to other aspects comprising the opportunity structure for retirement (i.e., socioeconomic class and race).

Table 8  
Summary of Study Findings by Retirement Group and Gender

| Variable   | Partial retirement (PR) vs.<br>complete retirement (CR) |                   |
|--|---|-------------------|
|  | Men   | Women             |
| <i>Wealth and health factors</i>                 |   |                   |
| Net household worth (T1)                         | <i>PR &gt; CR</i>                                       | <i>PR &gt; CR</i> |
| Earnings (T1)                                    | <i>CR &gt; PR</i>                                       | <i>CR &gt; PR</i> |
| Education (T1)                                   | <i>PR &gt; CR</i>                                       | ns                |
| Pension plan coverage in last job (T1)           | <i>CR</i>   | <i>CR</i>         |
| Pension income receipt with retirement (T2)      | <i>CR</i>   | <i>CR</i>         |
| Partner receives pension income (T2)             | ns  | ns                |
| Had health insurance in job (T1)                 | ns  | ns                |
| Health insurance continues in retirement (T2)    | <i>CR</i>   | <i>CR</i>         |
| Partner had health insurance in job (T1)         | ns  | ns                |
| Partner's insurance continues in retirement (T2) | ns  | ns                |
| Retiree covered in partner's health plan (T2)    | <i>PR</i>   | ns                |
| Retiree covers partner in health plan (T2)       | <i>CR</i>   | ns                |
| Change in self-reported health (T2)              | ns  | <i>CR &gt; PR</i> |
| Number of respondent's ADLs (T2)                 | <i>CR &gt; PR</i>                                       | <i>CR &gt; PR</i> |
| <i>Family and spouse/partner factors</i>         |   |                   |
| Current relationship length (T1)                 | ns  | ns                |
| Time spent in activities with partner (T1)       | ns  | ns                |

(Table continues)

Table 8  
 Summary of Study Findings by Retirement Group and Gender (Continued)

| Variable  | Partial retirement (PR) vs.<br>complete retirement (CR) |                              |
|---|---|------------------------------|
|   | Men   | Women                        |
| Enjoyment in activities with partner (T1)         | ns  | <i>CR &gt; PR</i>            |
| Partners' employment status (T1)                  | if worked, PR<br>no work, CR                            | if worked, PR<br>no work, CR |
| Partners' employment status (T2)                  | if worked, PR<br>no work, CR                            | if worked, PR<br>no work, CR |
| Change in partner's ADLs (T2)                     | ns  | ns                           |
| Dependent children < 18 in home (T2)              | ns  | ns                           |
| Dependent grandchildren in home (T2)              | ns  | <i>CR</i>                    |
| Provides ½ financial support to other (T2)        | ns  | <i>PR</i>                    |
| Care for parent/in-law 100+ hrs in last year (T2) | ns  | ns                           |
| Care for grandchild (< 400 hrs in last year, T2)  | ns  | ns                           |
| Care for grandchild (> 400 hrs in last year, T2)  | <i>CR</i>   | ns                           |
| <i>Work factors</i>                               |   |                              |
| Years worked at last job (T1)                     | <i>CR &gt; PR</i>                                       | <i>CR &gt; PR</i>            |
| Hours worked in last job (T1)                     | ns  | ns                           |
| Stress experienced from job (T1)                  | ns  | <i>PR &gt; CR</i>            |
| Retiree perceived last job as important (T1)      | PR  | ns                           |
| Firm size (T1)                                    | <i>CR &gt; PR</i>                                       | ns                           |

(Table continues)

## Summary of Study Findings by Retirement Group and Gender (Continued)

| Variable   | Partial retirement (PR) vs.<br>complete retirement (CR) |         |
|--|---|---------|
|  | Men   | Women   |
| Union membership (T1)                            | CR  | CR      |
| Retirement was perceived as forced (T2)          | ns  | ns      |
| Retired $\geq$ 2 years earlier than planned (T2) | PR  | PR      |
| <i>Control variables</i>                         |   |         |
| Age at retirement (T2)                           | CR > PR   | CR > PR |
| Black  | ns  | PR      |
| Hispanic origin                                  | ns  | ns      |
| Other race                                       | ns  | PR      |
| Wave 2 (Retirement year 1994)                    | ns  | ns      |
| Wave 3 (Retirement year 1996)                    | ns  | ns      |

*Note.* ns = nonsignificant statistical effects. Italicized letters indicate significance at a trend level. > denotes variable averages were greater for one retirement group than the other retirement group. < denotes variable averages were less for one retirement group than for the other retirement group.



Completely retired individuals in this study were expected to have higher earnings reported at their last job and this finding was confirmed for men. Completely retired men had higher earnings at their last job, but this advantage did not significantly predict their retirement status. The reason men with higher earnings at their last job were more likely completely retired probably had more to do with the benefits associated with the job they left, rather than the actual earning amounts. As shown in the pattern of correlations, those who had higher earnings likely had longer job tenures either at the same company or at least in the same occupation. In this way, work characteristics seem important to consider in tandem with personal earnings to fully understand retirement transitions. Personal earnings for partially and completely retired women did not significantly differ and did not help predict retirement status for women.

As established in previous literature, education is related to lifetime earnings because more education typically means greater labor force attachment and work stability, higher earnings and job mobility, and better access to employer benefits (Haveman et al., 2003; Moen, 1994; Pienta, 1999; Pienta et al., 1994). In this study, it was expected that men who had more education would be completely retired because they are likely to have had longer job tenures and greater work stability, therefore more savings, higher estimated SSA payments, and pension coverage. It was also anticipated that men with less education would be completely retired because of the type of jobs that these men may have worked (e.g., manufacturing), jobs that are often associated with larger employers, unionized workplaces, and traditional retirement pathways (Hardy, 1982). This study only partly confirmed this expected pattern of associations.

Education level was a significant predictor of retirement status for men in this study. More education predicted partial retirement and less education was associated with complete retirement and these results matched expectations. As expected, men with more education did not overwhelmingly select a traditional pathway of complete retirement. It is plausible that men with more education had greater labor force attachment and experienced work differently than men with less education. Although a variable measuring work importance was included in this study, it was not significant in the logit models. Other subjective work experience variables not included here, however, may differentiate between partially and completely retired men.

The life course perspective encourages consideration of accumulated life experiences within a historical time frame. As jobs from the American middle class disappear (e.g., manufacturing) with changes in the economy, a complete retirement pathway option for today's workers may also be vanishing. Workers today are not guaranteed life-long employment at a particular company (e.g., "30 years and out" Han & Moen, 1999) or even within a specific occupation. The present study found workers who retired between 1994 and 1998 were more likely to follow a complete retirement pathway if they worked for a larger company and belonged to a labor union. One explanation is that larger firms and unionized employers offer retirement packages, encourage workers to save for retirement, and reward workers who put in sufficient time for the company with a traditional retirement. In recent years, securing a retirement has fallen on individual workers and away from the responsibility of employers; therefore, in future studies on retirement we may see fewer workers who could plan a traditional, complete retirement.

Notably, educational levels were not significantly different between the partially and completely retired women in this study; yet, completely retired respondents had less education, on average. Kim and DeVaney (2005) also found in their study on HRS respondents that completely retired individuals had less education than the partially retired. A finer analysis than just examining education level is necessary to see how education influences work and retirement pathways; occupation type must be considered, especially for the study of women's retirement pathways.

*Pensions and health insurance in retirement.* Enrollment in a pension plan and obtaining health insurance coverage in retirement were very important determinants in the type of retirement selected by respondents. As expected, men and women enrolled in a pension plan at Time 1 were able to select a traditional, complete retirement pathway. Matching previous literature, this study confirmed that pension coverage leads to retirement possibilities (Adams & Beehr, 2003; Feldman, 1994; Hardy & Shuey, 2000; Szinovacz & DeViney, 2000). This study also confirmed that health insurance coverage, an important variable often overlooked in the retirement literature (Harrington-Meyer & Pavalko, 1996), also leads to retirement possibilities, both partial and complete.

Surprisingly, whether retirees were covered in a health insurance plan at Time 1, or whether their partner was covered by health insurance at Time 1, was not significant in any analyses. Variables related closely to the timing of retirement appeared to be more predictive of retirement status in this study. Also not significant was whether the partner was receiving pension income at Time 2. My theoretical framework motivated the inclusion of these variables because of the phenomenon of linked lives, but the nonsignificance of these variables seems to justify the lack of findings in the literature.

Partially retired men were more likely covered in their partner's health plan.

This finding suggests more men are now relying on their wives' work benefits, such as health insurance coverage in late life, and this coverage is influencing their husband's retirement pathways. The feminist perspective guiding this research emphasizes the importance of this pattern. Women's involvement in the labor force and the benefits that are gained from women's labor force participation must neither be ignored nor disparaged.

Completely retired men were more likely to cover their partner in their health plan. This finding suggests that some men are still in primary supporter roles for their spouses' and earn benefits that help wives who may not be eligible for health benefits on their own because they have not adequately participated in the labor force. For women, whether they were covered in their partners' health plan or whether they covered their partner in their health insurance plan, was not significant in predicting retirement status.

Certain life course and gender implications apply to this study's findings on health care coverage in later life. First, men who were able to provide health insurance coverage for their spouses in retirement may still represent the traditional model of retirement well; that is, these men were completely retired, were older, and were likely primary family-income earners who could share the benefits of their lifetime work histories with their spouses who were likely not eligible for their own work benefits (i.e., pensions and health insurance). Second, completely retired men with partners who had their own health insurance coverage benefited from their wives' participation in the labor force because they did not need to cover a spouse under their plan, which may have otherwise meant an increased or additional insurance premium cost in retirement. Third,

some men who were partially retired rely on their spouses' health insurance coverage at the time of their partial retirement; this benefit received from wives allowed men to consider and select a nontraditional, partial retirement and perhaps not factor health care coverage into their retirement decisions. Fourth, because the working women in this study were not influenced by whether they were covered in their partners' health plan or whether they covered their partner in their health insurance plan, it seems reasonable to conclude that, as expected, working women *are* changing today's retirement decisions and pathways. These women are not dependent on the health care benefits from their spouses' work participation; instead they can rely on their own earned retirement benefits.

*Health and retirement.* As expected, this study confirmed that poor health encourages withdrawal from the labor force, in a complete retirement (Feldman, 1984). Men who reported worse health at Time 2 and who had more ADL limitations were completely retired. Women in worse health, who had more ADL limitations, also self-identified as completely retired. Significant differences were *not* found in examining the influence of race/ethnicity on health disparities. Crosstabulations did not reveal significant differences in respondents' health status or number of ADL limitations by race/ethnicity. Because all the respondents in the sample were married or partnered, they may be in better general health on average, compared to a more representative sample from this age group.

*Family matters.* It was anticipated that spousal and partner variables related to the length of current relationship, and time and enjoyment in activities spent together, would be important in determining the type of retirement respondents selected. These variables,

however, did not have predictive power. There was a slight trend that women who enjoyed their couple time very much with their partner were more likely to be completely retired, but this was not as strong a *pull* factor as expected (Beehr, 1986). It seems plausible that men and women do not have the luxury to consider factors as idiosyncratic as enjoying time together in making choices related to finances, health, and other practical decisions about retirement. The lack of significant findings may also highlight what is commonly shown in relationship research on couples in later life: that is, couples who were likely to end their relationship because of incompatible leisure or household patterns would have likely done so earlier. In other words, the sample was selective in that the couples in this sample, whether in new unions or long-lasting marriages, were likely very satisfied in their relationships.

Work status of the partner at Time 1 and Time 2 were strong predictors of retirement status for the respondent. A similar pattern was seen for both men and women. There is strong evidence from prior research that suggests couples try to execute either a sequential or joint retirement (Han & Moen, 1999; Henretta et al., 1993a, 1993b; Kim & Moen, 2001; Szinovacz, 1996). Expectations regarding whether respondents would be partially or completely retired based on their partner's work status at Time 1 and Time 2 were confirmed in this study.

For men, if partners were not working at Time 1, they were more likely completely retired. It is possible that these men's spouses were homemakers and that they had little or no participation in the labor force. Men with wives who participated in a limited way in the paid labor market were also likely traditional breadwinners for their families, and probably had longer job tenures in their respective occupations. It makes

sense that these men would be completely retired because they would not be trying to plan a sequential retirement with a spouse and a traditional retirement would best fit their planned exit from the labor force. Men with spouses not working at Time 2 were also completely retired. If spouses were also out of the labor force when they were exiting, a complete retirement may have been perceived as ideal.

Men who had wives working at Time 1 were more likely partially retired. This finding demonstrates the possibility that men were likely trying to plan either a joint or sequential retirement with their working spouses. Men with partners working at Time 2 were also partially retired. Again, these men, like those with wives working at Time 1, may be waiting until their wives are ready for or closer to retirement and eligible for retirement benefits. Additionally, part of planning a joint retirement may include a partial retirement stage that includes working in a more limited capacity, either through fewer hours or less job responsibility.

Women with partners who were not working for pay at Time 1 and Time 2 were completely retired and were likely married to men who had already exited from the labor force, either through retirement or disability. Women with partners not working at Time 1 and Time 2 would have selected a complete retirement to join their husbands who were not working in the labor force and who were possibly older in age. Women with partners who were working at Time 1 and Time 2 were partially retired and they were likely waiting for a time to completely retire when their spouses were ready. The patterns for men and women were similar, even though men and women were not directly compared. Married and partnered men and women do appear to consider their partners' work statuses when making decisions regarding their own retirement.

Change in partner's ADLs was not a significant predictor of retirement status.

It was expected that a partner or spouse would be a likely candidate for helping with ADLs. Therefore, change in partners' ADLs between Time 1 and Time 2 would have had an important influence on the respondents' retirement transition. One possible explanation of why this factor was not significant may be because of what it was really measuring. It seemed reasonable that partner's change in ADLs would serve as a proxy for spousal caregiving, but there are strong doubts that this is what was captured. A direct question regarding whether the respondent was providing care to their spouse would have been ideal and should be included in future research. Also unknown is when the spouse experienced changes in their ADLs and how that relates to the respondents' transitions out of the labor force. For example, it is not known whether the respondent retired before or after a change in spouse or partner's ADLs.

Dependent children under the age of 18 in the home did not influence retirement transitions for this sample. It was expected that men with children at home would be partially retired and women with dependent children would be completely retired, but this was not found. In fact, the opposite arrangement, although not statistically significant, was found: More men with dependent children were completely retired and more women with dependent children were partially retired. Partially retired women may have still been participating in the workforce at a reduced commitment in terms of hours or responsibility.

Few men and women in the study had dependent grandchildren coresiding in their home at the time of their retirement. Whether men had dependent grandchildren at home did not predict their retirement transition. Women with dependent grandchildren in the



home, however, were more likely completely retired and this fit with expectations for the study. The conceptual framework supported the expectation that women would exit the labor force fully to care for or spend time with dependent grandchildren. Women typically adjust commitments to paid labor for family obligations (Clarkberg & Moen, 2001). The feminist perspective calls attention to this gendered pattern of family care and possible perceived family obligation.

Providing financial assistance was not predictive of different retirement transitions for men, although there was a trend for partially retired women to be more likely to provide such assistance to others. Additionally, women with *fewer* rather than more household assets were actually more likely to provide others with financial support. Surprisingly, as shown in crosstabulations, race/ethnicity was not associated with women providing financial support to another individual. In-depth interviews, designed to focus on reasons for giving financial support to others, might discern similarities and differences in perceived family obligations among retirees who provide at least one half of the financial support to others.

Time in care transfers was a not significant predictor of retirement status for men or women. Few men and women provided 100+ hours of care to a parent or parent-in-law in the last year before they made a retirement transition. Equal numbers of men were either partially or completely retired. Consistent with life course and feminist frameworks, it was expected that women would be completely retired if providing such care, but there was no difference by care provision in whether women selected a partial or complete retirement. It is possible that the respondents in this study had left work and simply retired, regardless of *retirement status (partial versus complete)*, to provide care.

Time spent in care transfers to grandchildren was significant in predicting retirement transitions for men. Completely retired men were more likely than partially retired men to be providing care for grandchildren (> 400 hours in the last year). Time spent in care transfers to grandchildren was not a significant predictor of retirement status for women, however. The feminist perspective would support the conclusion that perhaps *all* women, regardless of retirement status, are likely to be involved in time transfers to grandchildren. Not available in the data is whether respondents left work to spend more time in care of grandchildren or to be with grandchildren.

In general, there were limited effects related to family influences on a partial or complete retirement. Most notable included partners' work status and dependent grandchildren in the household (for women) and time spent in care transfers to grandchildren (for men). Other research has found that it is only when wealth and health issues are *not* factors, that family matters appear as influential pushes or pulls into retirement (Shultz et al., 1998). This study's findings support that possibility.

*Work features that influence retirement type.* Several work characteristics were useful in predicting partial or complete retirement transitions. Completely retired men worked for more years at their last employer, worked for larger companies, and were more likely to be a union member. These men who were completely retired fit the mold of the traditional retirement pathway. They had long job tenures and secured employer benefits for retirement that were likely protected by their labor union membership. Taken together, these work factors allow for a traditional retirement. Again, the life course perspective is useful for understanding how accumulated life events, such as labor force participation, contribute to later life pathways in retirement.

Partially retired were more likely than completely retired men to perceive their last job as important and to have retired earlier than planned. Plausible explanations include the possibility that these men were likely leaving the work force gradually through part-time, consultant work, or to work in new positions involving self-employment. These alternative explanations, however, were not tested in this study. The partially retired also had more education, so they may have been more likely to be offered opportunities to move into new postretirement situations. It seems reasonable that education has an important effect on the type of occupation and the meanings of work.

Variables not significant for predicting men's retirement pathways included the number of hours worked, stress experienced from the job, and whether the retirement was perceived as forced. Work hours may not distinguish retirement pathways because they vary greatly. There may not be one pattern of work hours that leads into a certain retirement pathway. Because this study only examined one labor force transition, it may be possible that some men and women had already reduced their hours in preparation for retirement. Gradual retirement (reducing work hours) has been found in other studies to be the predominate pattern of exiting the labor force (Elder & Pavalko, 1993). Stress experienced from the job may not have determined retirement transitions because it is confounded with other work benefits. Some jobs may be highly stressful for the worker, but adequately compensated with benefits, pay, intellectual growth, and flexibility. Other jobs may be experienced as stressful, even dangerous, and are not well compensated. Still other jobs may be low in stress and well compensated. Additional subjective measures of work experience, similar to job-related stress, might have made it possible to connect retirement transitions with how retirees viewed their jobs before retiring.

Completely retired women more likely experienced lower stress in their last job, had worked fewer years at their last employer, and were more likely union members. Partially retired women were more likely than the completely retired to have retired earlier than planned. One plausible explanation is that women who had retired from their last jobs earlier than planned took on new employment opportunities and were currently working in retirement. Plans are tentative and it is possible the women had situations of choice and circumstance (i.e., layoffs, early retirement options) that forged their retirement pathway more strongly than their anticipated plans.

It was expected that perceiving retirement as forced would influence the type of retirement transition men and women selected, but it did not. Szinovacz and Davey (2005a) found that men perceived retirement as forced when they had declines in their health, experienced involuntary job loss, had dependent grandchildren in the home, or spent time involved in parent time transfers (e.g., providing care). Women who perceived retirement as forced had stopped work for health reasons, provided care for grandchildren outside the home, and had spouse's who experienced declines in their health (Szinovacz & Davey, 2005a). It is possible that this study failed to find significant effects related to perceptions of forced retirement because other dimensions are important to consider in examining the selection of a partial or complete retirement. If the variable that considered specific reasons *why* respondents left their last job was used (i.e., health reasons, family reasons, job loss), perhaps a better understanding of the perceptions of forced retirement would have been available. Because of the HRS survey design, however, only those respondents who were no longer working were asked this question in the interviews; in this study, some partially retired respondents were still working for pay at Time 2.

### *Limitations and Contributions*

This study addressed gaps in the literature by examining White men in addition to minorities, workers from a range of occupations with different education levels, and married women with and without pension coverage. By design, this study had potential to uncover variability in two types of retirement transitions of married and partnered men and women: partial and complete retirement.

Retirement is a process and neither a single state nor a single transition or exit from the labor force (Beehr, 1986; Ekerdt & DeViney, 1993; Moen, Kim, & Hofmeister, 2001). I do not know whether respondents viewed their current retirement status as transitional. I examined only one cohort of retirees, at only one retirement transition in the life course. Because I used only two points in time for each individual, I was not able to establish how retirement processes develop and occur. This limitation could mean that the factors leading some individuals to partial retirement were not fully captured, especially because partial retirement may be just a phase of gradual, complete retirement.

I was not able to discover the *causal* factors associated with work-to-retirement transitions and any *direct* influence of family and spousal characteristics on retirement decisions are limited to variables that were measure both at Time 1 and at Time 2. All other conclusions are based on associations of variables that compared completely, relative to partially, retired men and women. To summarize, in this study, I compared individual, work, and spousal/family characteristics of new retirees to determine indirectly what explained or predicted their type of retirement. Wealth, human capital, health, family, and work influences on retirement were revealed in this study, for both men and women.

In this study, I used data from spouses, as well as the primary respondents targeted in nationally representative sampling procedures employed by HRS staff. Although some individuals recruited into the HRS sample were *not* representative of their age group in the population, these individuals *were* representative of spouses and partners “of a population falling within the age range” (ages 51–61) (Gustman et al., 1995, p. S77). The 25% of the respondents in this study who belonged to the same couple had potential to jeopardize the conclusions because of possible violations from nonindependence of the data. Separate analyses were conducted by gender, however, to combat this issue. Additionally, I included only married/continuously partnered individuals in this sample. By doing so, I lost any comparisons to other nonmarried partially or completely retired individuals. Black Americans may be underrepresented in this sample because older Blacks are less likely to be married than Whites (Bound, et al., 1996) and less likely to self-identify as retired in general (Gibson, 1987). A major implication of this limitation includes the possibility of not fully capturing the experience of retirement for American minorities. Although this study is an improvement over past studies in including Blacks, Hispanics, and individuals from other races/ethnicities in the design, there are still too few respondents in the sample to make direct comparisons by race/ethnicity. More retirement research focused on minorities is needed.

A limitation common to all secondary data analyses worthy of mention was the sole reliance on the HRS survey items. Some important aspects of individuals’ lives (i.e., lifetime paid work histories, job satisfaction, relationship quality measures) are missed. Other measures (e.g., spousal care) are measured in less than ideal ways. Future research would benefit from more detailed questions regarding family and spouse subjective

characteristics, such as satisfaction, communication, and well-being measures as well as characteristics of kin networks such as proximity of family members.

The strengths of using a large, representative sample outweigh the limitations, however. Because of my interest in connecting family, work, wealth, and health factors with the occurrence of different retirement transitions, namely partial versus complete retirement, a large scale, nationally representative sample was ideal for this work.

A major strength of this study was the use of a nationally representative dataset. Using the pooled waves of data was a creative use of the longitudinal data from the Health and Retirement Study. Many studies focus on single waves or use, at most, two waves simultaneously. Additionally, early retirement trends have been reversing in recent years and I used data on retirement from the 1990s that reflected this changing trend.

Finally, the inclusion of women in this study quells the harsh criticisms of the over-reliance on the traditional male model of retirement. With the inclusion of only married or continuously partnered men and women, I was also able to examine the influences of family situations on retirement transitions in addition to examining the common wealth, health, and work factors associated with retirement (Calasanti, 1993). Many previous studies either did not collect data from working women or eliminated women entirely from the analyses on retirement (Quinn & Burkhauser, 1990).

#### *Future Research Directions*

Future research directions suggestions can be made from the results of this study. In this section, I highlight some key points for future retirement research in the areas of wealth, human capital, health, family, and work. Some of the suggestions are based on

the significant or lack of significant findings from this study. Other recommendations are based on observations from reflecting on the study's limitations and contributions.

*Wealth and human capital.* This study confirmed the importance of wealth factors in retirement research. Contrary to expectations, however, respondents with *more* wealth were partially rather than completely retired. Personal earnings from the respondent's last job had a weak effect for men and were not significant for women, suggesting the importance of wealth compared to job earnings. It is hypothesized that because net household worth in this study incorporated debt, contrary results were found. Debt likely motivates individuals to postpone retirement, to work for pay during retirement, or to forgo retirement altogether. Future research should include, in addition to an individuals' personal debt, combined debt from former marital unions and domestic partnerships. A variable of *family debt* that includes the debt status of other kin, such as adult children or deceased family members, may also be important to consider in future research.

Just as spousal debt should be included in future research, financial contributions of spouses should be fully considered. With the rise of dual-earner couples in American society (Bond et al., 1998), it is important to consider spousal earnings and partners' work histories in future research on retirement. The life course and feminist perspectives also support the inclusion of such variables. From a historical perspective, the rising participation of women in the workforce and the prevalence of dual-earner couples places pressure on researchers to incorporate the financial influences of spouses and partners into retirement models. In particular, outdated models focused on men's retirement pathways without considering the contributions from spouses may have missed these connections in past research.



This study confirmed that education level has an accumulated effect on work opportunities and life course capital (O’Rand, 2005) that can eventually influence retirement transitions. Future research should examine the actual timing of education with occupational changes and other work transitions such as layoffs and promotions, to glean a more detailed account of how education shapes labor force participation over time and into retirement. If possible, future research should also consider the educational pathways of partners and spouses of retirees to further examine the concept of linked-lives and pooled social capital resources. Also, just as couples plan either a sequential or joint retirement, researchers may consider investigating the role of higher education attainment by couples; perhaps there are sequential or joint education plans that in turn influence paid work patterns across the life course in gendered ways.

Whether retirees are covered in their partners’ health plans should continue to be included in future research on retirement pathways. These variables were influential for men, yet whether women were covered in their partners’ health plan or whether women covered their partners in their health insurance plan was not significant. These different findings do not necessarily mean that detailed health insurance variables should not be included in future research. Important factors not captured in this study, such as detailed work histories of women might have captured leaves, gaps, and other discontinuities in labor market participation resulting from childrearing and the provision of other kin care. There are likely times when husbands and wives provide health insurance for each other sequentially, creating unique patterns within families to meet their needs. Future research should try to capture these patterns of coverage and to connect them to retirement transitions.

*Health.* Health effects operated in expected ways in this study; that is, poorer self-reported health and more ADL limitations at Time 2 were associated with a complete rather than a partial retirement pathway for both men and women. Future research would be well advised to continue including these important health characteristics of the retiree. Also, the health characteristics of spouses and partners should continue to be included in future research efforts. Health characteristics of individuals who receive one half of financial provisions from the retiree may also be included in future studies to further elucidate the connections between the type of retirement transition selected and the responsibilities of providing financial security to others.

*Family.* Family situations on retirement pathways were important, even though weaker than anticipated, and they cannot be overlooked in future research. Existing research connects the influence of marital satisfaction on life satisfaction in retirement. Future research could consider detailed reports of couple relationship satisfaction to see whether such satisfaction predicts a partial or complete retirement pathway.

Future research should aim for a more detailed approach, perhaps even by month intervals, to understanding what factors related to partners' work status are influencing respondents' decision-making process for their own retirement. It would be valuable to know, for example, how individuals are planning a retirement considering their partners' work characteristics, including variables such as partners' pension structures, health insurance plans, and work hours. Findings from this study also suggest that future research on retirement pathways include an occupational analysis to better understand the work situations of individuals and couples.

Future research with a larger sample could examine the influence of dependent children in the home. This might also be an ideal case for qualitative research using purposive sampling, examining how parents make decisions regarding complete or partial retirement in light of responsibilities for children or grandchildren in the household. This also may be an especially fruitful area of future research because age at birth of first child has increased in recent cohorts of Americans (Connidis, 2001) so that more Americans facing retirement may be influenced by these family situations.

Future research that examines working respondents preparing for retirement should consider whether individuals are providing care in time transfers to parents or in-laws to determine how these family care situations may influence retirement decisions and planning. Future research must consider the issue of kin proximity and relationship quality. Some workers may prolong participation in the labor force to avoid perceived family obligations to provide time and resources to kin when problematic relations exist whereas other workers may exit the labor force to spend more time and to give resources to kin who are perceived as close and important. Better measures of kin proximity and relationship closeness are needed in large scale research efforts. Additionally, future research could examine, possibly through in-depth interviews, whether workers felt forced into retirement because of family obligations.

*Work.* Contrary to expectations for this study, some work factors were either not significant in influencing retirement type or had weak effects (i.e., job stress, early or forced retirement). There may be a more complicated influence of work factors than what was captured by this study. For example, perceived job stress may be confounded with other work benefits. The issue of work compensation versus job stress should be

addressed in future research on retirement pathways. Perhaps a measure could be developed that examines this balance and takes into consideration the costs and benefits of work versus retirement choices in the decision-making process. Individuals confront tradeoffs in deciding when and how to enter retirement.

Although in this study whether the retirement transition was earlier than planned probably did not play a role in the type of retirement selected, future research should continue to include involuntary and voluntary factors of retirement. Furthermore, whether retirement was perceived as forced did not influence the *type* of retirement transition in this study. If retirement was forced, however, surely the choices and circumstances of the retiree were affected in some way. Future research would be well advised to continue monitoring the patterns of forced and early retirement resulting from involuntary and voluntary causes in future cohorts of retirees.

### *Conclusion*

Retirement as a social institution is changing for Americans. Increasingly, individuals are responsible for their own retirement, and this individual responsibility has resulted in more varied pathways, namely the emergence of partial retirement. As seen during the 1980s and 1990s, companies have the power to remove rights that once were common for workers, and even to eliminate rights to retirement benefits. Just as free trade in the current economic market has meant that the future of a company is unknown, workers now face choice regarding their retirement futures, which are now also uncertain. Employer benefits are necessary for retirement to maintain an institutional quality. As institutionalized benefits disappear, and as workers have more choices in planning retirement, they also face risks as there are few guarantees.

Workers must make difficult choices and sacrifices to fund a retirement that includes an unknown number of years until death and possible expensive health care crises and chronic illnesses in later years. In addition to worker benefits, government programs such as Social Security and Medicare seem essential for the health and financial well-being of older citizens. Traditional retirement, as Americans have come to know, will be lost in the future without support from employers and protection for worker rights (e.g., earned financial and health benefits). Historically, Congress has changed laws to reflect changes in social trends (i.e., banned mandatory retirement age, reduced number of years of marriage for SSA spouse benefit eligibility). With economic change as well as the push of baby boomers into retirement years, we will likely need more legal change to protect individuals from poverty and illness in old age.

This study has reached its broad goal of providing information to update the research knowledge base. Incorporating the experiences of women, minorities, and those of men from a varied group of occupations and family situations is an improvement on past research that has ignored or missed these workers. The norm of a male-based model of retirement *is* being challenged. The demographic diversity inherent in today's workforce and changes in corporate structures are transforming retirement pathways. Partial retirement is one outcome of these changes. In partial retirement, individuals self-identify as retired, but still work for pay. Why Americans are selecting partial retirements will continue to be an important area of study. Partial retirement is just one solution for workers who are trying to negotiate a labor force exit while keeping financial and health benefits. Perhaps other forms of retirement will be recognized and named in the future as individuals create institutional change.

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