

Retirement Satisfaction for Retirees and Their Spouses

Do Gender and the Retirement Decision-Making Process Matter?

DEBORAH B. SMITH

University of Missouri–Kansas City

PHYLLIS MOEN

University of Minnesota

This study investigates factors related to retirees' and their spouses' individual and joint retirement satisfaction using decision-making theory and a life course perspective. The sample includes 421 retired respondents (ages 50 to 72) and spouses from the Cornell Retirement and Well-Being Study. Although 77% of retirees report retirement satisfaction, only 67% of their spouses are satisfied; even fewer couples (59%) report joint satisfaction. Multivariate logistic regression analyses reveal that retirees' and spouses' individual and joint reports of retirement satisfaction are related to perceptions of spousal influence on the retirement decision, with effects varying by gender. Those couples most likely to report being satisfied with retirement, individually and jointly, are retired wives and their husbands where wives reported that their husbands were not influential in their retirement decision. The results underscore the importance of regarding retirement as gendered and as both an individual- and a couple-level experience.

Keywords: *retirement; satisfaction; gender; decision making; couples*

Authors' Note: A preliminary version of this research was presented at the annual conference of the American Sociological Association, August 1998. Support for the research reported here was provided by a grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation (grant #96-6-9 and 99-6-23) and grants from the National Institute on Aging (grants #P50AG11711 and #2P50AG11711). The authors would like to thank Stephen Sweet and Jungmeen Kim for their comments on earlier drafts, as well as Madhurima Agarwal, Sarah Demo, Mary Ann Erickson, William Erickson, Vivian Fields, Shin Kap Han, Chuck Henderson, Heather Hofmeister, Brenda Neal, Heather Quick, Julie Robison, Leslie Schultz, Laurie Todd, and David Warner for their work on the Cornell Retirement and Well-Being Study. Please address correspondence to Deborah B. Smith, Ph.D., Department of Sociology/Criminal Justice and Criminology, University of Missouri–Kansas City, 208 Haag Hall, 5120 Rockhill Road, Kansas City, MO 64110; e-mail: smithde@umkc.edu.

JOURNAL OF FAMILY ISSUES, Vol. 25 No. 2, March 2004 262-285

DOI: 10.1177/0192513X03257366

© 2004 Sage Publications

Historically, most retirement research has considered the retirement decision as one between employer and employee; research on retirement satisfaction has focused on individual satisfaction for the same reason—an individual worker retires. But most workers in the United States retire within the context of marriages and families (Dorfman, Heckert, Hill, & Kohout, 1988; Kim & Moen, 2002; Moen, Kim, & Hofmeister, 2001; Stanford, Happersett, Morton, Molgaard, & Peddecord, 1991; Szinovacz, 1980, 1991, 1996; Szinovacz, Ekerdt, & Vinick, 1992; Szinovacz & Schaffer, 2000). Recent studies have begun to investigate the complexities of couples' behavior around the retirement transition (Henretta, O'Rand, & Chan, 1993a, 1993b; Moen et al., 2001) as well as perceptions of spousal influence on the retirement decision (Henkens, 1999; Smith & Moen, 1998). A logical extension of this line of retirement research assesses retirees' and spouses' satisfaction with the retirement experience by incorporating factors concerning how and why the decision to retire was made. Drawing from two bodies of theory and research—couple decision making and retirement—and employing a life course perspective, we address the following research questions: Does the couple-level retirement decision-making process affect subsequent retiree, spouse, and joint reports of satisfaction with the retirement experience? Does this effect vary by gender of retiree?

EXISTING EVIDENCE

COUPLES' DECISION MAKING AND RETIREMENT

In the past, the literature has focused on couples' decision making on early adult decisions (such as buying a home or childbearing), but as the population grows older and retires earlier (and most retirees in the United States are married—see Stanford et al., 1991, and Szinovacz, 1991), understanding later-life couple decisions becomes increasingly salient. Hence, there is a growing literature on couples' decision making around the retirement status passage (Henkens, 1999; Henretta et al., 1993a, 1993b; Kim & Moen, 2002; Moen et al., 2001; Smith & Moen, 1998).

In addition, most studies of couple decision making focus on decisions affecting both spouses equally (Kenny & Acitelli, 1989). Retirement, on the other hand, is ultimately an individual decision, but there are dual repercussions of one spouse's retirement: One person retires and the other has a retired spouse. Even though both partners do not have equal say, growing empirical evidence suggests the decision to retire is a joint one

between retirees and their spouses (Henkens, 1999; Smith & Moen, 1998).

In examining couple-level decision making and subsequent satisfaction surrounding this joint but unequal decision, the experiences of each spouse are key. Jessie Bernard (1982) argued that each marriage is really two marriages—"his" and "hers." In one of the few research projects that investigates the individual retirement satisfaction of husbands and wives, Dorfman et al. (1988) and Austrom, Perkins, Damush, and Hendrie (2003) found that different constellations of factors predict retirement satisfaction for husbands and wives, attesting to the importance of including both retirees' and spouses' experiences in this type of research.

In addition to his and her perceptions, there is a third component of marriage that cannot be ignored—the congruence of "his" and "her" responses. Earlier literature has found very little agreement between spouses; one study reported that only in 6% of the cases (in a sample of 98 couples) did spouses' perceptions concerning the decision-making process agree (Spiro, 1983). This incongruence between spouses calls for examining their joint as well as individual perceptions (Monroe, Bokemeier, Kotchen, & McKean, 1985; Zipp & Toth, 2002); however, until recently studies actually combining spousal information have been rare (Maguire, 1999).

GENDERED RETIREMENT SATISFACTION

Because historically more men than women have retired from career jobs, research on retirement satisfaction has not focused on gender differences in the retirement experience. But with more women, particularly wives, having a work history that allows for pension eligibility, gender is now becoming integrated into the research and these studies indicate gender differences in retirement satisfaction. Quick and Moen (1998) found that men tend to be more satisfied with their retirement than are women. Dorfman (1995) found that the types of health ailments that were associated with dissatisfaction in retirement varied by gender, with pulmonary disease and heart attack being most important for men and arthritis for women. Dorfman and Rubenstein (1993) uncovered gender differences in retirement satisfaction with a sample of rural elderly finding an increase in number of voluntary association memberships being related to females' retirement satisfaction, whereas both work after retirement as well as voluntary association memberships are important for males. Moen and Fields (2002) also pointed to the importance of paid work for men's and

unpaid community volunteer participation for men's and women's life quality following retirement from their primary career jobs.

Both Arber and Ginn (1995) and Moen (2001) suggest that an important reason for the differences in the retirement experience lies in men's and women's differing labor force experiences and related differences in their resources and roles. Calasanti (1996) found that preretirement work experience such as gender segregation in the labor force affects retirement satisfaction, and research by Szinovacz, DeViney, and Davey (2001) suggests variations in gender and marital status to be important influences on the effect of family obligations on one's decision to retire. Kulik (1999) found that retirement increased the dependence of retired husbands on their wives' expressive resources, indicating that the transition to retirement may trigger changes in the gendered marital roles and responsibilities, reinforcing the need to incorporate couple-level factors when investigating retirement satisfaction. Moen et al. (2001) found that wives who had not yet retired but whose husbands had retired experienced lower marital quality than those whose circumstances were congruent with their husbands. These and other examples underscore Kim and Moen's (2001) assertion that considering gender differences is critical when studying retirement transition adjustments.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL

We draw on existing theory and evidence from the life course, decision-making, and retirement domains to construct a logical context, process, and outcome model. A life course perspective (Elder, 1995; George, 1993) focuses on the complex intersection of human experience, including both retiree/spouse and husband/wife dynamics, each of which come into play when examining couples' experiences of such a major status transition.

Key tenets of the life course approach related to retirement are that (a) prior experiences may shape subsequent later life choices and transitions (George, 1993; Henretta et al., 1993b; O'Rand & Henretta, 1982), (b) life transitions (such as retirement) are processes rather than events (Kim & Moen, 2001), and (c) couples' lives and roles are interdependent (Han & Moen, 2001; Moen et al., 2001). Couple decision-making theory can both inform and be informed by this life course approach, given that each conceptualizes the retirement transition as a process occurring within a broader context of gendered norms and expectations and marital power

relationships (Kulik, 1999; Slevin & Wingrove, 1995). The life course emphasis on "linked lives" (Elder, 1998) underscores the need to examine both retirees' and spouses' individual and joint assessments and experiences.

The couple decision-making literature provides a context, process, and outcome model of couple decision making (Godwin & Scanzoni, 1989; Hill & Scanzoni, 1982; Scanzoni & Szinovacz, 1980), which includes the key life course theme of dynamic, biographical interdependency, thereby providing a useful framework with which to examine couples' retirement satisfaction. The model can accommodate contextual factors from the accumulated experience of the marriage, as well as factors related directly to the retirement transition. Couple decision-making theory holds that couples' decision-making process around the retirement decision also affects the decision outcome (Smith & Moen, 1998; Szinovacz, 1996). A life course perspective extends the outcome to include not only the decision to retire but also subsequent satisfaction with the retirement experience.

The decision-making literature helps to determine which contextual and decision-making process factors may matter when modeling the outcome of retirement satisfaction for couples individually and jointly. To identify factors directly related to the retirement transition that affect retirement satisfaction, we also draw from current retirement literature even though it deals mostly with retired workers, not their spouses. A life course perspective combined with decision-making theory suggests the incorporation of current conditions as well as couples' experiences around the decision when trying to model retirement satisfaction.

CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

A large body of evidence points to gender as an important overarching contextual consideration in the retirement transition (Calasanti, 1996; George, Fillenbaum, & Palmore, 1984; Hatch, 1992; Henretta et al., 1993a; Moen, Fields, Quick, & Hofmeister, 2000; Quick & Moen, 1998; Richardson & Kilty, 1991; Szinovacz et al., 2001) with the retirement experience qualitatively different for men and women. Arber and Ginn (1995), Calasanti (1996), and Moen (2001) suggest that men and women have different labor force experiences and Szinovacz et al. (2001) indicate that marital and familial roles play a part in the retirement decisions that follow.

Husbands and wives may have different retirement experiences in part because of their gender ideology. People acquire their gender role ideology over the life course, and there is a body of work linking gender role

orientation and couples' decision experiences (Scanzoni & Szinovacz, 1980; Szinovacz & Harpster, 1993). In his study of 89 couples buying a home, Qualls (1987) found gender role ideology to be a primary contextual variable underlying spouses' perceptions of each other's role in the decision-making process, and Kingsbury and Scanzoni (1989), studying 51 couples, found that a smaller difference in gender role ideology between husbands and wives was associated with more power for wives in the decision-making process.

Gender role ideology also may account for differences in satisfaction with a decision outcome. When a male with a traditional gender role ideology was paired with a female with a modern ideology, Voelz (1985) found they took longer to reach consensus on a decision task and both expressed less satisfaction with the decision outcome than couples where the male and female shared the same gender role ideology. Gender role expectations to prioritize family over career early in the life course negatively affected women's subsequent later-life adjustment; men did not express the same frustration with their gender role expectations (Hollis, 1998).

Poor health has been shown to have a consistently negative effect on retirement satisfaction (Atchley, 1996; Calasanti, 1988; Mannell & Dupuis, 1996; McGoldrick & Cooper, 1994; Quick & Moen, 1998; Richardson & Kilty, 1991; Seccombe & Lee, 1986). Retirees' health may also affect their spouses' retirement satisfaction, given that they may have to care for their ailing partner (Myers & Booth, 1996). Research has also found income adequacy to be an important contributor to retirement satisfaction (Dorfman, Kohout, & Heckert, 1985; Vinokur-Kaplan & Bergman, 1987).

The psychological motivations for why people retire also predict retirement satisfaction. Studies show that retirees who decide to retire because they see retirement as an opportunity to "launch a new life" tend to find the retirement experience satisfying (Dorfman et al., 1985; Henkens, 1999; McGoldrick & Cooper, 1994). There are, however, some elements that affect the decision to retire that are completely out of the retiree's control, what Moen (1996) refers to as structural exigencies; early retirement incentive packages offered by organizations is one example.

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Historically, a key component of the couple decision-making process in the context, process, and outcome model has been the concept of influence (Cromwell & Wieting, 1975). This may be a proxy for marital power;

evidence suggests that spousal influence concerning a particular decision can be affected by the balance of this power (Corfman & Lehmann, 1987; Kulik, 1999; Szinovacz, 1987). In fact, scholars depict influence itself as the exertion of power or an observable manifestation of power (for a review, see Szinovacz, 1987). Corfman and Lehmann (1987) define influence as "the result of the (active or passive) use of power." We operationalize spousal influence as "the degree to which authority, power, and decision responsibility is attributed to the husband or wife by the spouse" (Qualls, 1987, p. 266).

Henkens (1999), using a multiactor approach to investigate 1,052 Dutch workers and their spouses' support of retirement intentions, found that husbands and wives do influence each other. He also found gender differences in retirement intentions, with husbands' retirement intentions being more of a joint decision than wives. Smith and Moen (1998) investigated a similar concept—perception of spousal influence on the retirement decision—finding that retired husbands and retired wives saw their spouses as more influential in their retirement decision-making process than the spouses themselves did. They also found gender differences in the perceptions of spousal influence; retired husbands who discussed retirement with their wives were more likely to see their wives as influential. Retired wives were most likely to report their husbands as influential when the wives retired because their husbands were retiring. What has not yet been examined in the literature to date is whether spousal influence on the retirement decision-making process affects subsequent retirement satisfaction for the retiree, the spouse, or the couple as a unit.

HYPOTHESES

In light of the existing theory and evidence, our model of retirement satisfaction incorporates broad contextual variables including gender. Specifically, we hypothesize,

Hypothesis 1: Gender of the retiree predicts reports of retirement satisfaction of the retirees, spouses, and couples.

Prior research suggests that one cannot separate the retirement decision from the marriage experience (Henkens, 1999; Smith & Moen, 1998), requiring that we delve into the complexity of retiree/spouse and husband/wife dynamics. This process is captured by perceptions of spousal influence on the retirement decision. Therefore, we propose a second hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Gender moderates the relationship between spousal influence on the retirement decision and retirement satisfaction of retirees, spouses, and couples.

We test this hypothesis by including an interaction term in the multivariate analyses.

METHODS

SAMPLE

The data come from a random sample of retired employees, age 50 to 72, and their spouses from six large organizations in upstate New York from the first and second waves (1995-1997) of the Cornell Retirement and Well-Being Study (Moen & Fields, 2002; Moen et al., 2001). For this analysis, we use information gathered from the married, retired respondents and their spouses, with complete data available for 241 couples (a response rate of 59%). Note that complete data were collected on respondents' retirement decisions only, with the respondents' retirement being the targeted retirement of interest within a couple. "Retirement" is operationalized as being on the retirement rolls of employers, typically linked to receiving either a lump sum payment, Social Security, and/or a pension.

Most couples are still in first marriages (for at least one spouse in 81% of the cases), with an average (mean) marriage length of 36 years. Two thirds of the 241 couples represent retired husbands and their wives ($n = 156$ pairs) and the remaining third is made up of retired wives and their husbands ($n = 85$ pairs).

DEPENDENT VARIABLES: PERCEPTIONS OF RETIREMENT SATISFACTION

Because our purpose is to investigate retirees' and spouses' perceptions of their own satisfaction with the retirement experience, the dependent variables are based on the response of the retiree to the question, "All in all, would you say that your retirement from (company name) has turned out to be very satisfying, moderately satisfying, or not at all satisfying?" as well as the spouse's response to the question, "All in all, would you say that your spouse's retirement has turned out to be very satisfying, moderately satisfying, or not at all satisfying for you?"

We investigate both individual and joint retirement satisfaction using three dependent variables. The first is a dichotomous individual-level variable for retirees who are very satisfied with their retirement experience versus retirees who are only moderately or not at all satisfied with it. The second variable is also an individual-level dichotomous measure of spouses who report being very satisfied with their own experience of the retirees' retirement versus spouses who are only moderately or not at all satisfied. The third variable is a couple-level dichotomous measure combining information from both spouses to compare couples in which both retiree and spouse report being very satisfied with the retirement experience versus all other couples.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Because one spouse's retirement is both an individual and joint decision, we include variables that capture information at both the individual and the couple level. Following our conceptual model, we include two sets of independent variables: couple context and decision process variables.

Couple Context Variables

Prior research shows gender to be critically important in the couple decision-making process surrounding the retirement decision (Henkens, 1999; Smith & Moen, 1998); therefore, we include gender as a key component of our analysis (0 = male retirees, 1 = female retirees). Note that for the spouses' satisfaction dependent variable, it is the wives (for male retirees) and husbands (for female retirees) whose satisfaction is being modeled.

Gender ideology can affect decision making (Scanzoni & Szinovacz, 1980; Szinovacz & Harpster, 1993). We created a couple-level measure of couple gender ideology using a summed score of four questions concerning roles at home and work to construct a gender ideology score for each spouse, using the median as the division point for a dichotomous higher/lower score, with those above the median labeled "modern" and those below labeled "traditional." Earlier analyses (not shown) indicated that, regardless of whether it was the husband or wife who was retiring, only whether the wife held a modern gender ideology predicted retirement satisfaction, with husbands' orientations having no predictive power. Therefore, we use a dichotomous variable, "wife modern," which contrasts couples whose wife holds a modern gender ideology with all other couples.

Poor health is related to lower retirement satisfaction (Calasanti, 1988; Richardson & Kilty, 1991; Seccombe & Lee, 1986) and poor health of a spouse negatively affects marital quality (Booth & Johnson, 1994). We include a health measure, the self-reported subjective health of the retiree, where 0 indicates a retiree reporting very serious health problems and 10 indicates very best health. Perceived income adequacy is also related to retirement satisfaction (Vinokur-Kaplan & Bergman, 1987). We measure this with a five-level variable where 0 = 0, 1 = 1-49, 2 = 50, 3 = 51-99, and 4 = 100 on a 100-point scale where 0 = *less than adequate* and 100 = *more than adequate income to meet current needs*.

Reasons for retirement also predict subsequent retirement satisfaction. Many retirees retire voluntarily if they see retirement as an opportunity to launch a new life (Henkens, 1999). We capture this with the measure, retired to do other things, coded as either 1 (a little, moderately, or very important reason for retirement) or 0 (not an important reason for retirement). About half of our sample (51.5%) indicated that a company-offered early retirement incentive package played an important role in their decision to retire (coded as 1).

Decision Process Variables

We attempt to capture the process of decision making around the retirement transition using perceptions of spousal influence. Retiree's perception of spousal influence on the retirement decision is the retirees' reports of how much influence their spouses had on their decision to retire. If the retirees report their spouses had equal to a great deal of influence in their retirement decision (between 50 and 100 on a 100-point scale), this variable was coded 1; all others are coded 0. The second variable in this category gauges spouses' own evaluations of their degree of influence on the retirees' decision to retire. Spouse's perception of own influence on the retirement decision was coded 1 when the spouse's perception was that the spouse had equal to a great deal of influence in the retirement decision (between 50 and 100 on a 100-point scale); all others are coded 0.

Interaction

We also include in the model an interaction term that combines gender of retiree with retirees' perception of spousal influence. The value of 1 represents women retirees who report that their husbands had a great deal of influence on their decision to retire with 0 representing all other couples. (An interaction term between gender and spouses' perception of

TABLE 1
Frequencies of Factors Associated With
Perception of Retirement Satisfaction

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Full Sample</i>		<i>Retired Husbands and Their Wives</i>		<i>Retired Wives and Their Husbands</i>	
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Couple context variables						
Female retiree						
0 = male	156	65	156	100	0	
1 = female	85	35	0		85	100
Wife modern gender ideology						
0 = traditional	110	46	74	47	36	42
1 = modern	131	54	82	53	49	58
Retiree's poor health						
0 = poor		7.97		7.93		8.05
10 = best		2.77		2.82		2.68
Income adequacy						
0 = 0 (very inadequate)	3	1	0		3	3
1 = 1-49	14	6	9	6	5	6
2 = 50	40	17	27	17	13	15
3 = 51-99	162	67	103	66	59	70
4 = 100 (much more than adequate)	22	9	17	11	5	6
Wanted to do other things						
0 = not important	59	25	43	28	16	19
1 = important	182	75	113	72	69	81
Early retirement incentive package						
0 = not important	117	49	58	37	59	69
1 = important	124	51	98	63	26	31
Decision-making process						
Retiree's perception of spousal influence						
0 = little or no influence	68	28	38	24	30	35
1 = equal or a great deal of influence	173	72	118	76	55	65
Spouse's perception of own influence						
0 = little to no influence	109	45	73	47	36	42
1 = equal to a great deal of influence	132	55	83	53	49	58
Interaction						
Female Retiree × Retiree's Perception of Spousal Influence						
0 = others	186	77	156	100	30	35
1 = female retiree who reported husband as having equal or a great deal of influence	55	23	0		55	65

their own influence was included in an earlier model but did not add any information and therefore was excluded from the final model.)

Frequency and percentage distributions of all variables are found in Table 1.

METHODS OF ANALYSES

First, we use bivariate analyses to assess differences in retirement satisfaction for retirees and their spouses, both individually and jointly. We also look for effects of the retiree's gender on retirement satisfaction for the retiree, spouse, and couple. Using logistic regression, we then estimate three multivariate models of retirees', spouses', and couples' joint retirement satisfaction. All three dependent variables are regressed on all main effect variables plus the interaction term combining gender with retirees' perceptions of spousal influence on the retirement decision.

As McGoldrick and Cooper (1994) note, because the retirement experience is so individualized, research should consider the characteristics of individuals and groups with differing perceptions, expectations, and needs. Therefore, we will pay particular attention to regression results for the four types of couples created by the interaction term: couples where (a) retired husbands reported no influence by their wives, (b) retired husbands reported a great deal of influence by their wives, (c) retired wives reported no influence by their husbands, and (d) retired wives reported a great deal of influence by their husbands.

To further illuminate relevant differences, we then calculate and graph the retirement satisfaction (the averages for the covariates as determined by gender) for the four types of couples.

RESULTS

Overall, the retirees in this study are more satisfied with their retirement than are their spouses. Bivariate analyses (not shown) indicate that 77% of retirees report being very satisfied with their retirement, but only 67% of their spouses are very satisfied with the respondents' retirement. In an even smaller percentage of couples (59%) do both spouses report being very satisfied. However, the story becomes more complex when we stratify by gender.

Women retirees in this sample are no more likely to report being satisfied with their retirement experience than are their male counterparts (*p* value *ns*). But there are significant differences in their spouses' and in

couples' joint reports of retirement satisfaction. Husbands of retired wives are more likely to report being satisfied with the respondents' retirement than are wives of the retired husbands ($\chi^2 = 3.86, df = 1, p \leq .05$). Moreover, retired wives and their husbands are significantly more likely to jointly report being satisfied with the retirement experience than are retired husbands and their wives ($\chi^2 = 5.12, df = 1, p \leq .05$).

MULTIVARIATE MODELS

Retirees' Satisfaction

As shown in column 1 of Table 2, the multivariate model is significant for retirees ($\chi^2 = 34.71, df = 9, p \leq .0001$), with individual covariates also significant. A female retiree is more than five times more likely to report being satisfied when she reported that her husband was not influential in the retirement decision; conversely, retired husbands who perceived their wives as influential are more likely to report being satisfied. Several covariates predict retirees' retirement satisfaction regardless of gender. Retirement satisfaction is positively related to subjective reports of health, and retirees who reported greater income adequacy are more than twice as likely to report being satisfied with the retirement experience compared with those who felt their income inadequate. Those retiring due to an early retirement incentive package are almost twice as likely to report satisfaction as their counterparts who did not retire for this reason.

Spouses' Satisfaction

Our model is also significant for spouses' satisfaction with the respondents' retirement ($\chi^2 = 30.82, df = 9, p \leq .001$). For the spouses, the interaction term has a significant negative effect, meaning the husband of a retired wife is less likely to report being satisfied if his wife indicated he was influential in her retirement. In fact, the odds of reporting satisfaction with the retirement experience increase by a factor of four and a half for husbands whose wives reported he had no influence on her decision to retire. For retired husbands and their wives, the effect is just the opposite; wives are three and a half times more likely to be satisfied with their husbands' retirement if their husbands perceived them as influential.

When wives have a modern gender ideology, spouses (be they husbands or wives) are significantly less satisfied with the respondents' retirement. Spouses are also significantly more likely to report retirement satisfaction when retirees see their income as adequate for current needs

TABLE 2
Factors Associated With Perception of Retirement
Satisfaction: Odds Ratios With Coefficients in Parentheses^a

	<i>Retiree</i>	<i>Spouse</i>	<i>Couple (Joint)</i>
Couple context variables			
Female retiree	5.21* (1.65)	4.57** (1.52)	8.00*** (2.08)
Wife modern gender ideology	.85 (-.16)	.50* (-.70)	.55* (-.60)
Early retirement incentive package	1.90† (.64)	.63 (-.46)	1.09 (.09)
Wanted to do other things	1.41 (.34)	1.73† (.55)	1.29 (.26)
Income adequacy	2.03** (.71)	1.55* (.44)	1.69** (.52)
Retiree's subjective health	1.26** (.23)	1.08 (.06)	1.14† (.13)
Decision-making process			
Retiree's perception of spousal influence	2.24† (.81)	3.51** (1.25)	4.65*** (1.54)
Spouse's perception of own influence	.57 (-.57)	1.16 (.15)	.86 (-1.74)
Interaction			
Female Retiree × Retiree's Perception of Spousal Influence	.33 (-1.12)	.26* (-1.36)	.18** (-1.74)
Constant	— (-3.47)***	— (-2.02)*	— (-3.37)***
Hosmer Lemeshow	4.65	9.52	8.93
Goodness of fit ^b	<i>df</i> = 8	<i>df</i> = 8	<i>df</i> = 8
ROC curve	.75	.70	.71
-2 log likelihood	224.18	274.10	291.09
Model χ^2	34.71****	30.82***	36.00****
Model <i>df</i>	9	9	9
<i>N</i>	241	241	241

a. Data from Waves 1 and 2 of the Cornell Retirement and Well-Being Study, 1995-1997.

b. Not significant at the .10 level.

†*p* ≤ .10. **p* ≤ .05. ***p* ≤ .01. ****p* ≤ .001. *****p* ≤ .0001.

and when retirees retire to do other things. Retirees' subjective health reports are not related to their spouses' satisfaction with the retirement experience.

Joint Satisfaction

The model for couples' joint retirement satisfaction is also significant ($\chi^2 = 35.99$, *df* = 9, *p* ≤ .0001), and effects of several individual covariates are large. Couples with retired wives perceiving their husbands as not influential are eight times more likely to report joint satisfaction than cou-

ples with influential husbands. The significance of the interaction term also indicates a negative effect on the odds of both spouses being satisfied when female retirees saw their husbands as influential. On the other hand, when retired husbands perceive their wives as influential, odds increase more than fourfold that both spouses will report being satisfied. Regardless of the retiree's gender, the greater the income adequacy and the better the retiree's health, the more likely couples are to be satisfied, but having a wife with modern gender ideology has a significant negative effect on joint reports of satisfaction.

The multivariate analyses of these three indicators of satisfaction with one spouse's retirement—his, hers, and theirs—imply that, overall, retired wives who see their husbands as not influential in the retirement decision are the most likely to report being satisfied with the retirement experience, as are their husbands, and both together.

INTERACTIONS

To get a clearer picture of the interaction between gender and the retiree's perception of spousal influence on the retirement decision, we calculate and graph retirement satisfaction odds ratios for the four groups of interest: couples where (a) retired husbands reported no influence by their wives, (b) retired husbands reported a great deal of influence by their wives, (c) retired wives reported no influence by their husbands, and (d) retired wives reported a great deal of influence by their husbands.

Retirees' Satisfaction

As seen in Figure 1, when retired husbands perceive their wives as influential, the odds of the husbands reporting retirement satisfaction are more than two times greater than retired husbands with noninfluential wives. The direction is just the opposite for retired wives; the odds of retirement satisfaction decrease when comparing retired wives who see their husbands as influential with those wives who considered their husbands as noninfluential.

Spouses' Satisfaction

Figure 2 shows that as a group, wives' reports of satisfaction are so contingent on their retired husbands' assessments of their influence on his retirement that the odds of wives being satisfied with their husbands' retirement change from less than one (negative odds) when the retired husbands

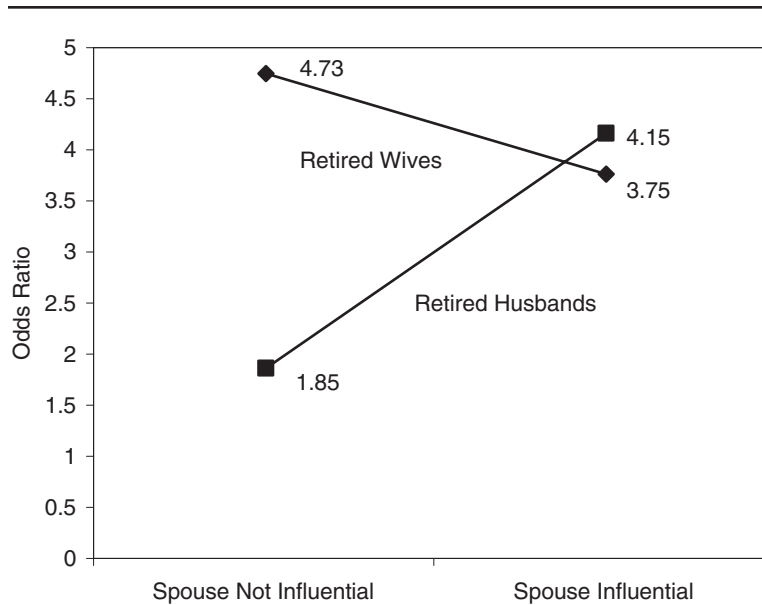


Figure 1: Odds Ratios of Retirees' Retirement Satisfaction by Gender of Retirees and Retirees' Perception of Spousal Influence on the Retirement Decision

perceive their wives as noninfluential to greater than one (positive odds) when the retired husbands perceive their wives as influential. In contrast, the odds of retirement satisfaction for the husbands of retired wives who perceive their husbands as not influential are higher than those husbands whose wives indicated they were influential in the decision to retire.

Joint Satisfaction

When retired husbands perceive their wives as influential in their retirement decision, the odds of both spouses being satisfied are higher than those of couples where the retired husbands do not see their wives as shaping their retirement decision. And again, the odds are smaller that couples of retired wives with influential husbands are satisfied with her retirement compared to those couples with noninfluential husbands.

Overall, the graphing of the interaction terms reveals that the retirees, spouses, and couples least likely to be satisfied with retirement are those where retired husbands do not perceive their wives as influential in their retirement decision. This group is both individually and jointly less likely

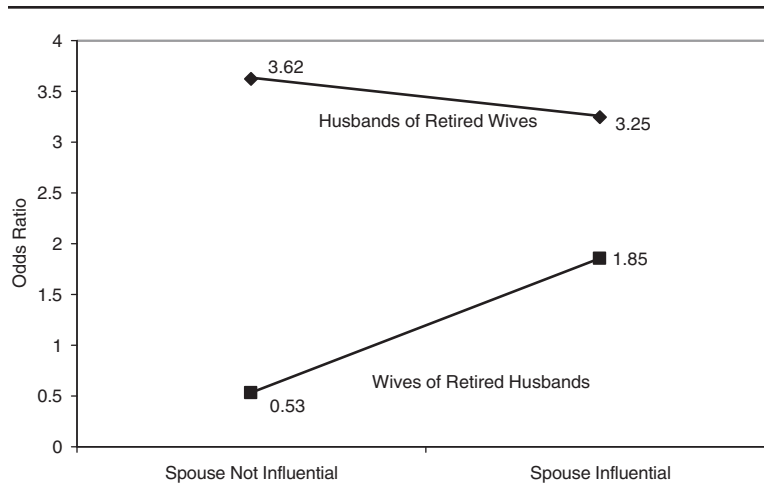


Figure 2: Odds Ratios of Spouses' Retirement Satisfaction by Gender of Retirees and Retirees' Perception of Spousal Influence on the Retirement Decision

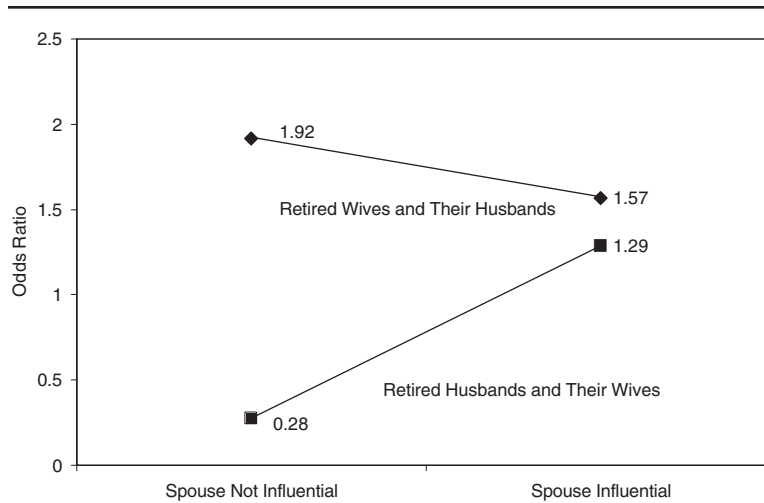


Figure 3: Odds Ratios of Couples' Joint Retirement Satisfaction by Gender of Retirees and Retirees' Perception of Spousal Influence on the Retirement Decision

than the couples with retired husbands who saw their wives as influential to report satisfaction with the retirement experience. They are also less likely to report satisfaction than couples where the wives' retirement was

of interest, regardless of how influential the husbands were perceived to be.

DISCUSSION

Our findings suggest first that married retirees are more satisfied with their own retirement experience than are their spouses, but gender is an important consideration. Hypothesis 1 was partially supported. Whereas the bivariate analyses indicate that retired husbands are not more satisfied than retired wives, the gender of the retiree is predictive of reports of retirement satisfaction for their spouses; on the whole, husbands of retired wives are more satisfied than are wives of retired husbands. The relationship between gender and retirement satisfaction also extends to reports of couple-level satisfaction; retired wives and their husbands jointly report higher retirement satisfaction than do retired husbands and their wives.

Theory suggests and this study's empirical results support the view that the decision-making process influences the decision outcome of retirement satisfaction not just for retirees but for their spouses' and the couples' joint retirement satisfaction as well. Hypothesis 2 is supported. For retired husbands, the perception of how influential their wives were on their retirement decision has a small effect on their own retirement satisfaction, and the effect grows larger when looking at the spouse and couple retirement satisfaction. If these husbands perceive their wives as having influence in the retirement decision, their wives are far more apt to be satisfied with their husbands' retirement and, indeed, to have both members of the couple report satisfaction about his retirement. In surprising contrast, retired wives and their husbands, both individually and jointly, are more likely to be satisfied when the wives perceive their husbands as not influential in their retirement decision. These results indicate that not only does spousal influence on the retirement decision affect the subsequent retirement satisfaction, but this relationship is moderated by gender.

Individual predictors of retirement satisfaction vary for the three dependent variables. For the retirees in this sample, many of the well-documented variables associated with retirement satisfaction hold; poor health reduces retirees' satisfaction whereas higher perceived income adequacy and retiring due to an early retirement incentive package increase their satisfaction (Atchley, 1996; Calasanti, 1988; Mannell & Dupuis, 1996; McGoldrick & Cooper, 1994; Quick & Moen, 1998; Richardson & Kilty, 1991; Seccombe & Lee, 1986; Vinokur-Kaplan & Bergman, 1987). And yet, Figure 1 shows quite clearly the importance of considering gen-

der in combination with spousal considerations when modeling the retirement experience, as a change in the retirees' perception of spousal influence from influential to not influential has the opposite effects on retirement satisfaction for retired husbands as it does for retired wives.

Gaining more insight into the connection between the retirement decision-making process and subsequent retirement satisfaction for retirees is an important contribution to retirement research, but focusing on retirees only does not tell us the whole story. Our results underscore the need to include the experiences of spouses and couples if we are to have a thorough understanding of the retirement transition—and life after retirement—of married individuals.

The perceptions and responses of retirees play a meaningful role in predicting their spouses' satisfaction with the retirement experience. Spouses' perceptions of their own influence on the retirement decision are seemingly unimportant compared to the large, significant effect on these spouses' retirement satisfaction of the retirees' perception of spousal influence, suggesting the interdependence of the retiree and spouse even as it reaffirms the unequal nature of the retirement decision. The fact that the direction of the effect depends on the gender of the retiree indicates a complex intersection between marital roles, perceptions of spousal influence on retirement decision making, and subsequent retirement satisfaction.

But gender does not fully explain spouses' retirement satisfaction. Some factors matter regardless of gender; retiring to do other things is positively related to spouse's satisfaction and having a wife who holds a modern gender ideology is negatively related to a spouse's satisfaction. These findings confirm that factors related to the actual retirement transition must be present when modeling spouses' retirement satisfaction. It is interesting that health of the retiree, uniformly important in studies of retirees' retirement satisfaction, does not predict the spouse's retirement satisfaction, prompting a call for further study.

The effect of retirees' perception of spousal influence on couples' joint reports of retirement satisfaction is great and, again, hinges on the gender of the retiree. Couples made up of retired wives and noninfluential husbands are significantly (eight times) more likely to report joint satisfaction than those retired wives who perceive their husbands as influential. And couples with retired husbands who report having influential wives are four times more likely to be satisfied than are couples with noninfluential wives.

The significant individual elements in the model of joint retirement satisfaction are variables important to one or the other spouse. Health of the

retiree, important to retirees' but not spouses' satisfaction, has a modest positive influence on couples' joint report of retirement satisfaction. Having a wife with a modern gender ideology, important to the spouses' but not retirees' satisfaction, is negatively related to couples' joint satisfaction with the retirement experience. These discrepancies indicate that couple-level experiences of retirement satisfaction are not merely the sum of two parts. Income adequacy is significant in all three models—his, hers, and theirs—confirming the importance of financial stability to satisfaction in later life.

IMPLICATIONS

This research suggests the necessity of examining retirement satisfaction for retirees and their spouses individually as well as jointly; investigation of one cannot be considered an adequate proxy for the other two. The multivariate analyses show a different constellation of significant covariates predicting retirees' satisfaction and spouses' satisfaction from each other as well as from the analysis where couples' retirement satisfaction is the unit of interest, suggesting distinct "his," "her," and "their" experiences of retirement.

These findings point to the importance when modeling retirement satisfaction of taking into account both the relevant relationships—that of retiree/spouse and husband/wife. In previous research, we found that both of these relationships played a role in predicting retirees' and spouses' individual and joint perceptions of spousal influence on the retirement decision (Smith & Moen, 1998). The research presented here testifies to the continued importance of both the retiree/spouse and husband/wife relationships for subsequent retiree, spouse, and couple retirement satisfaction. A prime illustration is the consistently negative effect of a husband's influence on a wife's satisfaction with her own retirement, his satisfaction with her retirement, and even their joint experience of her retirement. Further study is needed to determine the prevalence of this finding in other samples of retired couples.

This study is an additional step toward our understanding of the intricacy of couples' retirement satisfaction. The different configurations of factors predicting his, her, and their retirement satisfaction reinforce the life course notion of interdependency of spouses' lives, while simultaneously pointing to the complexity of this interdependency. Decision-making theory is useful in uncovering the mechanisms of interdependency by showing how the decision-making process surrounding the retirement decision affects subsequent retirement satisfaction.

One of the study's limitations is that we are unable to model both spouses' retirements, given the limitations of the data at hand. Research into the complexity of two individuals sharing their lives together with each spouse having primary responsibility for some decisions but not for others becomes even more urgent, as growing numbers of two-earner couples must decide about, and confront, two retirements. (We see the beginnings of this phenomenon in the pre-baby boom cohort, which will only intensify in later cohorts.) An extension of this line of inquiry would investigate a larger sample and examine both spouses' retirements, testing an even more complex model.

What is becoming increasingly evident is that couples' life choices and chances are multilayered and multidimensional, interwoven in sometimes unexpected ways. Capturing this dynamic complexity is the challenge contemporary family, life course, and retirement scholars must face.

REFERENCES

- Arber, S., & Ginn, J. (1995). Choice and constraint in the retirement of older married women. In S. Arber & J. Ginn (Eds.), *Connecting gender and ageing: A sociological approach* (pp. 69-86). Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.
- Austrom, M. G., Perkins, A. J., Damush, T. M., & Hendrie, H. C. (2003). Predictors of life satisfaction in retired physicians and spouses. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, *38*, 134-141.
- Atchley, R. C. (1996). Retirement. In J. E. Birren (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of gerontology* (Vol. 2, pp. 437-449). San Diego: Academic Press.
- Bernard, J. (1982). *The future of marriage*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Booth, A., & Johnson, D. R. (1994). Declining health and marital quality. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *56*, 218-223.
- Calasanti, T. (1988). Participation in a dual economy and adjustment to retirement. *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, *26*, 13-27.
- Calasanti, T. (1996). Gender and life satisfaction in retirement: An assessment of the male model. *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences*, *51B*, S18-S29.
- Corfman, K. P., & Lehmann, D. R. (1987). Models of cooperative group decision-making and relative influence: An experimental investigation of family purchase decisions. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *14*, 1-13.
- Cromwell, R. E., & Wieting, S. G. (1975). Multidimensionality of conjugal decision making indices: Comparative analysis of five samples. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, *6*, 139-152.
- Dorfman, L. (1995). Health conditions and perceived quality of life in retirement. *Health & Social Work*, *20*, 192-199.
- Dorfman, L., Heckert, D. A., Hill, E. A., & Kohout, F. J. (1988). Retirement satisfaction in rural husbands and wives. *Rural Sociology*, *53*, 25-39.
- Dorfman, L., Kohout, F. J., & Heckert, D. A. (1985). Retirement satisfaction in the rural elderly. *Research on Aging*, *7*, 577-599.

- Dorfman, L. T., & Rubenstein, L. M. (1993). Paid and unpaid activities and retirement satisfaction among rural seniors. *Physical & Occupational Therapy in Geriatrics, 12*, 45-63.
- Elder, G. H., Jr. (1995). The life course paradigm: Social change and individual development. In P. Moen, G. H. Elder Jr., & K. Lüscher (Eds.), *Examining lives in context: Perspectives on the ecology of human development* (pp. 101-140). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Elder, G. H., Jr. (1998). The life course and human development. In W. Damon (Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology, vol. 1: Theoretical models of human development* (pp. 939-991). New York: John Wiley.
- George, L. K. (1993). Sociological perspectives on life transitions. *Annual Review of Sociology, 19*, 353-373.
- George, L. K., Fillenbaum, G. G., & Palmore, E. (1984). Sex differences in the antecedents and consequences of retirement. *Journal of Gerontology, 39*, 364-371.
- Godwin, D. D., & Scanzoni, J. (1989). Couple consensus during marital joint decision-making: A context, process, outcome model. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 51*, 943-956.
- Han, S.-K., & Moen, P. (2001). Coupled careers: Pathways through work and marriage in the United States. In H.-P. Blossfeld & S. Drobnic (Eds.), *Careers of couples in contemporary societies: A cross-national comparison of the transition from male breadwinner to dual-earner families* (pp. 201-231). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Hatch, L. R. (1992). Gender differences in orientation toward retirement from paid labor. *Gender & Society, 6*, 66-85.
- Henkens, K. (1999). Retirement intentions and spousal support: A multi-actor approach. *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences, 54B*, S63-S73.
- Henretta, J. C., O'Rand, A. M., & Chan, C. G. (1993a). Gender differences in employment after spouse's retirement. *Research on Aging, 15*, 148-169.
- Henretta, J. C., O'Rand, A. M., & Chan, C. G. (1993b). Joint role investments and synchronization of retirement: A sequential approach to couples' retirement timing. *Social Forces, 71*, 981-1000.
- Hill, W., & Scanzoni, J. (1982). An approach for assessing marital decision-making processes. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 44*, 927-941.
- Hollis, L. A. (1998). Sex comparisons in life satisfaction and psychosocial adjustment scores with an older adult sample: Examining the effect of sex role differences in older cohorts. *Journal of Women & Aging, 10*, 59-77.
- Kenny, D. A., & Acitelli, L. K. (1989). The role of the relationship in marital decision making. In D. Brinberg & J. Jaccard (Eds.), *Dyadic decision making* (pp. 51-62). New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Kim, J. E., & Moen, P. (2001). Is retirement good or bad for subjective well-being? Retirement as a life course transition in time and in ecological context. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 10*, 83-86.
- Kim, J. E., & Moen, P. (2002). Retirement transitions, gender, and psychological well-being: A life-course, ecological model. *Journal of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences, 57B*(3), P212-P222.
- Kingsbury, N. M., & Scanzoni, J. (1989). Process power and decision outcomes among dual-career couples. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 20*, 231-246.
- Kulik, L. (1999). Continuity and discontinuity in marital life after retirement: Life orientations, gender role ideology, intimacy, and satisfaction. *Families in Society, 80*, 286-294.
- Maguire, M. C. (1999). Treating the dyad as the unit of analysis: A primer on three analytical approaches. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 61*, 213-223.

- Mannell, R. C., & Dupuis, S. (1996). Life satisfaction. In J. E. Birren (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of gerontology* (Vol. 2, pp. 59-64). San Diego: Academic Press.
- McGoldrick, A., & Cooper, C. (1994). Health and aging as factors in the retirement experience. *European Work and Organizational Psychologist*, 4, 1-20.
- Moen, P. (1996). A life course perspective on retirement, gender, and well-being. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 1, 131-144.
- Moen, P. (2001). The gendered life course. In L. K. George & R. H. Binstock (Eds.), *Handbook of aging and the social sciences* (5th ed., pp. 179-196). San Diego: Academic Press.
- Moen, P., & Fields, V. (2002). Midcourse in the United States: Does unpaid community participation replace paid work? *Ageing International*, 27, 21-48.
- Moen, P., Fields, V., Quick, H., & Hofmeister, H. (2000). A life course approach to retirement and social integration. In K. Pillemer, P. Moen, E. Wethington, & N. Glasgow (Eds.), *Social integration in the second half of life* (pp. 75-107). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Moen, P., Kim, J. E., & Hofmeister, H. (2001). Couples' work/retirement transitions, gender, and marital quality. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 64, 55-71.
- Monroe, P. A., Bokemeier, J. L., Kotchen, J. M., & McKean, H. (1985). Spousal response consistency in decision-making research. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 47, 733-745.
- Myers, S. M., & Booth, A. (1996). Men's retirement and marital quality. *Journal of Family Issues*, 17, 336-358.
- O'Rand, A. M., & Henretta, J. C. (1982). Delayed career entry, industrial pension structure, and early retirement in a cohort of unmarried women. *American Sociological Review*, 47, 365-373.
- Qualls, W. J. (1987). Household decision behavior: The impact of husbands' and wives' sex role orientation. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 14, 264-279.
- Quick, H., & Moen, P. (1998). Gender, employment, and retirement quality: A life course approach to the differential experiences of men and women. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 3, 1-21.
- Richardson, V. E., & Kilty, K. M. (1991). Adjustment to retirement: Continuity vs. discontinuity. *International Journal of Aging & Human Development*, 33, 151-169.
- Scanzoni, J., & Szinovacz, M. (1980). *Family decision making: A developmental sex role model* (Vol. 111). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Secombe, K., & Lee, G. R. (1986). Gender differences in retirement satisfaction and its antecedents. *Research on Aging*, 8, 426-440.
- Slevin, K. F., & Wingrove, C. R. (1995). Women in retirement: A review and critique of empirical research since 1976. *Sociological Inquiry*, 65, 1-21.
- Smith, D. B., & Moen, P. (1998). Spousal influence on retirement: His, her and their perceptions. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 60, 734-744.
- Spiro, R. L. (1983). Persuasion in family decision-making. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 9, 393-402.
- Stanford, E. P., Happesett, C. J., Morton, D. J., Molgaard, C. A., & Peddecord, K. M. (1991). Early retirement and functional impairment from a multi-ethnic perspective. *Research on Aging*, 13, 5-38.
- Szinovacz, M. E. (1980). Female retirement: Effects on spousal roles and marital adjustment. *Journal of Family Issues*, 1, 423-440.
- Szinovacz, M. E. (1987). Family power. In M. B. Sussman & S. K. Steinmetz (Eds.), *Handbook of marriage and the family* (pp. 651-693). New York: Plenum.

- Szinovacz, M. E. (1991). Women and retirement. In B. B. Hess & E. W. Markson (Eds.), *Growing old in America* (4th ed., pp. 293-303). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Szinovacz, M. E. (1996). Couple's employment/retirement patterns and marital quality. *Research on Aging, 18*, 243-268.
- Szinovacz, M. E., DeViney, S., & Davey, A. (2001). Influences of family obligations and relationships on retirement: Variations by gender, race, and marital status. *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences, 56B*, S20-S27.
- Szinovacz, M. E., Ekerdt, D. J., & Vinick, B. H. (Eds.). (1992). *Families and retirement*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Szinovacz, M. E., & Harpster, P. (1993). Employment status, gender role attitudes, and marital dependence in later life. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 55*, 927-940.
- Szinovacz, M. E., & Schaffer, A. M. (2000). Effects of retirement on marital conflict tactics. *Journal of Family Issues, 21*, 367-389.
- Vinokur-Kaplan, D., & Bergman, S. (1987). Retired Israeli social workers: Work, volunteer activities, and satisfaction among retired professionals. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work, 9*, 73-86.
- Voelz, C. (1985). Effects of gender role disparity on couples: Decision-making processes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 49*, 1532-1540.
- Zipp, J. F., & Toth, J. (2002). She said, he said, they said—The impact of spousal presence in survey research. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 66*, 177-208.