

“I JUST COULDN’T SIT AT HOME AND DO NOTHING”:
A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF BRIDGE EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCES

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*For loved ones I lost along the way:
my Uncle Ralph F. Shover, my Grandfather John L. Shover Jr.,
Onyx, and Ash.
You are dearly missed.*

And for Matthew.

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ABSTRACT

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SUPERVISING PROFESSOR: PATTI GIUFFRE

There are significant increases in the number of people approaching retirement age and of individuals opting to return to work after retirement. Although there are many studies on the meaning of work and retirement, bridge employment is a neglected area of sociological research. In order to analyze people’s motivations for and experiences with returning to work after retiring, I conducted fifteen in-depth interviews. Respondents discussed extrinsic and intrinsic rewards that influenced their decisions to return to paid work. They also described the need for activity, which is indicative of what researchers have termed “the busy ethic.” In addition, the data indicated several gender differences in bridge employment motivations. Men and women in the study had similar obstacles in finding bridge employment, but used different strategies to find jobs. Men discussed extrinsic rewards such as identity and sense of control as motivating factors for returning to the workforce and sources of job satisfaction, whereas women emphasized intrinsic rewards such as the challenge and variety bridge employment provided.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Charlotte is a seventy-two year old single mother of six adult children.

Throughout her life she has worked numerous jobs to support her children after their father passed away at a young age. She searches through her purse to show me the many lists of phone numbers and addresses she has gathered in order to find another job. Charlotte is currently unemployed after cutbacks in federal spending eliminated her job at a senior service agency. This is her third time in retirement, but as she reveals to me she “cannot afford not to work,” and is frantically searching for another job. Further into the discussion of her employment history, a pattern emerges that mirrors a trend visible in the work histories of many older Americans: the concept of retirement and employment is rapidly changing.

Research on demographics, aging and retirement provides several statistics that illustrate this phenomenon (U.S Census Bureau 2005; Fullerton and Toosi 2001). The average life expectancy for men and women is rising. Currently women have an average life expectancy of 80.82 years, while men can expect, on average, to live 75.02 years (McNamara, Dobbs, Healy, Kane and Mak 2007). The steady decline in the fertility rate since the baby boom of the late 1940’s and into early 1960’s also contributes to the change in the overall make up of the United States workforce. Fertility rates are measured by the number of live births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 44. At its peak, the

National Fertility Rate for the United States was 118 births per 1,000 and has steadily declined to 66.7 in 2005 (Hamilton, Martin and Ventura 2005). The consequence of this decline is evident in the decreasing numbers of younger workers (workers under 55 years of age) entering the workforce and the rise in the number of workers approaching retirement age. In 2000, workers 55 to 64 constituted approximately 8 percent of the workforce and workers 65 and older roughly 2.5 percent. These percentages are expected to nearly double once all of the baby boomers reach 55 years of age in 2020, while the percentages of workers 16 to 54 is projected to steadily decline (McNamara et al. 2007).

Sociological literature contains an assortment of studies on employment and retirement behavior. However, much of the literature relies on aging and retirement theories developed in an era where retirement was more clearly defined (Novak 2006; Bengston and Scaie 1999; Atchley 1976). In recent years, the meaning of retirement has evolved into something more ambiguous as the number of employees engaging in bridge employment grows. The term “bridge employment” is used by researchers to describe the type of employment that retirees take on after official retirement and prior to the onset of a complete withdrawal from the workforce (Novak 2006; Weckerle and Shultz 1999). In light of these studies, my research attempts to address some important issues surrounding bridge employment using the following research questions: 1) What experiences are unique to individuals who engage in bridge employment? 2) Why do formerly retired individuals return to the workforce? 3) How do formerly retired individuals currently conceptualize retirement? 4) Do women and men experience bridge employment differently?

Previous studies on work after retirement focus on factors that increase the likelihood and ability to engage in such employment, as well as the decision-making process behind it. The fact that many older workers no longer have the option for full retirement from their careers makes an examination of late-life employment vital to sociological study so that we may understand the impact this trend has and may have on social interaction in all realms of experiences. This study attempts to gather in-depth information on the factors that motivate bridge employment, as well as the unique experiences that men and women who are bridge employees share. It will also allow sociologists to supplement the current research and provide insight into modern conceptualizations of retirement and employment. This information may be used in future research on bridge employees and for social policy that may directly affect the lives of older Americans.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many studies analyze individual and status characteristics that influence the likelihood of returning to the workforce as well as the probability of successfully doing so. Gender, age, race, occupational status, educational attainment, current health status, employment history, and perceived voluntariness of retirement influence the likelihood that one will return to work (Pisarev 2006; Cox, Hammonds, Parks and Sekhon 2001; Davis 2001; Weckerle and Shultz 1999; Herz 1995; Hayward, Hardy and Liu 1994; Hardy 1991; Ruhm 1990; Fillenbaum 1971). These studies show that one-third to one-half of older men continue to work after they formally retire from their full time jobs, and many receive pensions (Pisarev 2006; Hayward et al. 1994; Ruhm 1990; Fillenbaum 1971). These men either leave their full time jobs and return to the work force within a few years or gradually transition into retirement by working part time either at their current place of employment or a new one after they reach retirement age.

Women are less likely than men to follow this path into retirement, and make up a larger part of the available labor pool that exists among those considered retirement age that are capable of working. Retirees who are able to work or are seeking employment are defined by researchers as “available workers” (Davis 2003; Hardy 1991). Many women do not re-enter because they receive Social Security benefits that are based on their husbands’ work histories (Novak 2006; Herz 1995). Others do not return to work

because they have household responsibilities that may entail taking care of their husbands, children or grandchildren (Novak 2006). While the probability of re-entry into the workforce is less likely for females, the success rate of those women who do wish to reenter the workforce is only one-third that of men (Hardy 1991). Success rate is based on the number of available workers that obtain either a part-time or full-time job.

Age and the number of years that have passed since retirement also have an effect on workforce re-entry. Currently the average age of retirement for men is 62 and for women is 63 (Munell, Sass, and Soto 2006). Hardy's (1991) study on work after retirement found no significant difference between the mean ages of those who do and do not successfully re-enter the workforce (64 years for re-entrants and 66 years for available workers). However, the mean age of retirees was on average higher (70 years). Likewise, Hayward et al. (1994) found that workforce re-entry for men occurs relatively soon after retirement - often within the first few years after formally retiring. The more time has passed since retirement, the less likely it is that retirees will return to the workforce.

Work histories also play a role in workforce re-entry. The type of job an individual held prior to retirement has an influence on the probability of reentering the workforce; self-employed individuals are more likely to reenter the work force than private sector or government employees (Hayward et al. 1994). Retirees with a continuous work history prior to formal retirement tend to have an easier transition into retirement and back into the workforce, although some studies debate the importance of tenure in the actual decision making process (Davis 2003). Racial and ethnic minorities, women, and the working class who are approaching retirement age are at a disadvantage

because many have had disjointed work histories for economic or cultural reasons such as discrimination or (for women) the expectation of leaving the workforce to raise a family (Cox et al. 2001; Hardy 1991). The importance of work history influences the employment status at the time of retirement, which may influence the ability to find a job after retirement. Studies show that those who have experienced unemployment throughout their work histories and/or within a few years of retirement tend to have less success returning to the workforce than those who hold some form of employment just prior to the event (Cox et al. 2001). Another related factor to workforce re-entry by retirees is educational attainment. Retirees with educational training beyond a high school diploma are more successful in reentering the workforce after retirement than those with a high school diploma or less (Cox et al. 2001; Hayward et al. 1994; Hardy 1991). These individuals often had higher paying (typically white collar) jobs with benefits that were adequate enough to negate the necessity for work after retirement. Others state that highly educated individuals tend to have more information on retirement planning and engage in it at a higher rate, decreasing the necessity for bridge employment (Davis 2003; Kim and Feldman 2000; Weckerle and Shultz 1999).

Health status is also associated with the likelihood of bridge employment. Individuals who retire for health reasons seldom are able to return to the workforce, even though they might benefit the most from additional income and benefits of employment. Many blue-collar workers retire early and are less likely to re-enter the workforce because of their deteriorating health or the health risks involved in their line of work (Cox et al. 2001). Retirees who successfully return to the workforce often report high levels of health (Cox et al. 2001; Hayward et al. 1994; Hardy 1991). The perceived

“voluntariness” of retirement also has an effect on the possibility of returning to the workforce. Voluntariness is defined as the retiree’s perceptions of the degree to which he or she retired voluntarily (Weckerle and Shultz 1999). Those who retire involuntarily – due to circumstances such as a plant shut down, layoffs or even mandatory retirement policies – have more difficulty and are less likely to return to the workforce than those who left voluntarily for reasons such as a sick spouse or job dissatisfaction (Hardy 1991). Those who return to the workforce often do so to gain some sort of power or control over their retirement situation (Weckerle and Shultz 1999). Mor-Barak (1995) states that there are four primary reasons why many decide to return to work: financial, social, personal, and the need for generativity. Financial reasons seem to be the most significant with regard to this decision (Pisarev 2006; Davis 2003; Cox et al. 2001). A later study done by Dendinger et al. (2005) on these reasons shows that most of these reasons (except for generativity) are only useful in predicting retirement attitudes, and not propensity to return to work or job satisfaction. Other recent studies show that many return to work because they find that their retirement pension is insufficient to maintain their standard of living (Pisarev 2006; Dendinger et al. 2005). This research refutes previous studies that claim financial incentives only apply to those in lower occupational job statuses prior to retirement (Fillenbaum 1971).

Social reasons for returning to work include the need to maintain social status as well as the need to maintain contact with other people (Mor-Barak 1995). Incidents of each of these tend to deteriorate with the advent of retirement, and re-entering the workplace is one way to meet these needs (Novak 2006; Fillenbaum 1971). Retirees also

cite the structure that work schedules provide as enhancing their social lives (Cox et al. 2001).

Personal reasons for returning to work often have to do with self-esteem, self-efficacy, personal satisfaction and sense of pride (Mor-Barak 1995). In her work, Mor-Barak found that personal reasons for returning to the work force were especially important for those individuals who decided to return to the work force, but had a difficult time finding a job. Generativity is also a key factor in the decision to return to work. Generativity is defined as the need or desire to pass on accumulated knowledge to the next generation (Mor-Barak 1995). This implies that the desire to share the skills acquired in previous employment may also influence the decision of retirees to re-enter the workforce.

Theory

There are several sociological and psychosocial theories that are used when studying aging, retirement and the decision to return to work: role theory, continuity theory, political economy theory and modernization theory. Role theory states that loss of roles accompanies the aging process and may be associated with low self-esteem (Novak 2006). Continuity theory builds on this premise and proposes that people who age most successfully are those who carry forward the habits, preferences, lifestyles and relationships from mid to late life – in this case from pre-retirement to post-retirement (Novak 2006). It takes into account the potential influence that past roles left behind may have on future ones. The political economy theory of aging argues that programs created for the elderly are more beneficial for capitalists who fund them than for the elderly and

others they are intended to assist (Bengtson and Schaie 1999), and modernization theory argues that the role and status of the individual is inversely related to the level of industrialization within a society, which tends to have a negative impact on the elderly (Novak 2006). Finally, the meaning of work is examined using identity theory. An identity consists of the various meanings attached to an individual by self and others (Stryker and Burke 2000). In studies on the concept of self, identity and role are key factors connecting the individual to larger social structures (Gecas and Burke 1995). The concept of self revolves around the idea that as humans we have the ability to be reflexive, to see ourselves as both subject and object (Stets and Burke 2000; Blumer 1980). According to the symbolic interactionist perspective, roles are given meaning through recognized patterns of social interaction (Mead 1934). These patterns of interaction influence and are influenced by the concept of self, and facilitate the formation of an identity. The “self concept” is the culmination of thoughts and feelings an individual has about his or herself and often consists of multiple identities (Gecas and Burke 1995). I will build on these perspectives in my analysis.

Gaps in the Literature

There are four significant gaps in previous research regarding bridge employment. The majority of these studies were conducted using quantitative methods such as telephone surveys, questionnaires, mail-in surveys, and secondary data sets. These quantitative studies are usually reliable and generalizable, but lack the depth of information that qualitative methods provide. With only a limited amount of response choices available to participants of quantitative research (except in the case of telephone

surveys), it is difficult to assess whether the answers that a subject may give encompass all possible responses. This leads to the possibility that the findings are not entirely representative of the population being studied. The use of qualitative methods is beneficial to this subject matter because they allow respondents to discuss their experiences in detail. Qualitative methods are often used prior to or in conjunction with quantitative methods such as surveys or questionnaires so that researchers can figure out what kind of questions to ask and whether or not these questions address the issue in the manner in which they intend them to (Berg 2004).

Current research also relies on theories conceived in a different era of work and retirement. Social and economic shifts have changed workforce demographics. The women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s influenced women's work decisions and gave way to a rise in the amount of women who decide to enter into paid work. There is also an increase in the number of two income households. These and other factors such as deindustrialization and decreasing pensions may have an impact on theories related to work and retirement, and sociology (as well as other disciplines) need to consider how these changes may support or discredit current theories.

The studies on bridge employment also lack in-depth information on experiences of women in the workforce, focusing instead on the experiences of men because of their less-fragmented work histories. Nevertheless, studies are beginning to show that differences between the histories of men and women are growing more similar (Fullerton and Toosi 2001). In fact, Fullerton and Toosi's (2001) study demonstrates that older women are entering or staying in the workforce at a higher rate than men. As gender becomes less indicative of who reenters the workforce, it is important to decipher if the

reasons for doing so are changing with social trends. It is also important to understand the unique experiences of these women in comparison to men. Many of these studies on bridge employment also tend to limit their research to particular sector of the workforce: white-collar, blue-collar, private or public sector jobs. In order to have a broad understanding of the experiences of bridge employees, I compare various types of employment, as opposed to limiting my focus to one sector.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In order to explore the experiences of retirees returning to the workforce, I chose a qualitative methodological approach. Qualitative methods provide rich descriptions of complex social phenomena, allow researchers to track unique or unexpected events, illuminate the experience and interpretation of events by actors with widely differing stakes and roles, and give voice to those whose views are rarely heard (Esterberg 2002; Soafer 1999). These methods also allow researchers to conduct initial explorations of phenomena in order to develop theories, generate and even test hypotheses.

For the purpose of this study, I conducted semistructured in-depth interviews with 15 individuals who met the requirements for participation. The goal of semistructured in-depth interviews is to provide a forum for researchers to explore a topic more openly and to permit the interviewees to “express their opinions and ideas in their own words” (Esterberg 2002:87). This method gives interviewers the freedom to adapt to the individual they are interviewing and allows more flexibility with the questions they ask compared to a structured interview. This method also gives researchers the ability to probe respondents for clarification on responses and explore unique topics that surface in the course of the interview (Berg 2004; Babbie 2002; Esterberg 2002). Respondents were in some form of employment or seeking employment after retiring from the

workforce. Previous research on retirement and bridge employment often stipulates a minimum age limit, duration of retirement and time spent in employment prior to and after retirement in order to be considered for the study (Cox et al. 2001, Kim and Feldman 2000, Weckerle and Schultz 1999). In order to generate a diverse sample, these requisites were not taken into consideration.

Sample Characteristics

The sample of bridge employees consisted of eight men and seven women who previously retired from the workforce with all but one currently working part time or full time jobs (see Table 1 for demographic information). The age of the respondents ranged from 54 to 72 years at the time of the interview, with a mean age of 62. The median duration of retirement before returning to work was five months and ranged from two months to nineteen years. Eleven of the fifteen respondents identified themselves as married and four were divorced. All respondents who categorized themselves as divorced were women, and only one of the four was in a relationship at the time of the interview. A majority of the jobs held by the participants are in the public sector. Nine of the fourteen participants who were employed at the time of the interview held jobs at state agencies (this includes education as well). Nine of the fifteen respondents held degrees beyond high school. Sigenthaler and Brenner (2000) suggest that bridge employees tend to be employed part time. A majority of the respondents in this sample (9) were employed part time, and therefore not qualified for retirement benefits or health insurance through their current employer. One respondent who was not working at the time of the interview had been employed at the time of initial contact but because of

financial cutbacks was laid off. At the time of the interview the respondent was in the process of finding employment.

Actual participant names are replaced with pseudonyms to ensure anonymity. The sample was predominantly white, with eleven out of fifteen identifying themselves as Caucasian. Hispanics and African Americans are equally represented with two in each category. Two of the eight males in the study were Hispanic and two of the seven women were African American. Roughly half of the sample had college degrees. One woman was a homemaker for a majority of her adult life, but went into paid work after her children left home. One respondent described her initial work history as “sporadic.” Only one participant was self employed prior to retirement, while the rest of the sample worked for state institutions or private sector jobs prior to retirement. Nine of the participants were formerly employed in state enterprises or institutions and of these; seven went on to gain bridge employment with the same or similar state enterprise or institution. Pisarev (2006) suggests that women typically re-enter state jobs after retirement, however, most individuals re-entering state jobs in this sample were men.

There were multiple reasons why the participants left the workforce, but financial incentives, “burn out” and family related reasons were the most frequent reasons given, and coincide with literature that exists on retirement decisions (Adams, Prescher, Beehr and Lepisto 2002; Eckherdt, Deviney and Koslosky 1996; Feldman 1994; Atchley 1982). Two of the fifteen respondents retired due to disability but, after their health status improved, transitioned themselves back into the workforce. The choice to return to work was also varied, but primarily coincided with the four reasons that Mor-Barak (1995) discussed, although generativity was only discussed by two participants, and not in the

context of the decision to return to work; rather, it was addressed in terms of job satisfaction.

Data Collection

The sample was generated using several non-probability sampling techniques. Initially, convenience sampling was used to generate a list of possible candidates but eventually purposive and snowball sampling techniques were also used (Esterberg 2002). In qualitative research, purposive sampling allows researchers to collect a sample that reflects their theoretical purpose, thus I attempted to find former retirees from agencies I thought would generate the most qualified respondents. I mentioned my study to some people in the department where I attend graduate school, and found an employee willing to participate. I also generated a list of addresses and phone numbers of local and regional senior service agencies and centers from websites and the telephone directory in order to reach as many potential candidates as possible. I sent out a total of 40 letters (see Appendix A). Seven of these letters were returned by the post office because the service centers or agencies moved or no longer existed. I also placed flyers at local senior centers and agencies, as well as state agencies giving a brief description of the project and participation requirements. Three agencies sent emails or left phone messages declining assistance, and four agencies expressed an interest in supporting my candidate search. After initial contact with these agencies, I made personal visits in order to conduct a respondent search. Once I found interested individuals, I contacted them by phone to set up the interviews. Interviewees also contributed to my search by providing names and numbers of others they believed qualified for my research. Only one of the

individuals initially interested in interviewing dropped out of my study due to personal time constraints that limited his ability to meet with me for our scheduled interview.

I interviewed the participants in locations of their choice. The interviews were conducted at job sites, coffee shops, restaurants or their homes. Prior to each interview, respondents were asked to read and sign a consent form. This form specifies the purpose of the study; the positive and negative repercussions they may experience by allowing me to inquire into their life experiences, and emphasizes the confidentiality associated with the agreement (see Appendix B). I also asked each respondent for demographic data including age, marital status and race/ethnicity. Interviews lasted approximately thirty minutes to an hour and they were tape-recorded and transcribed for this analysis. I then generated field notes after each interview as a reminder of initial feelings about the interview and included any other information deemed relevant to my study. For instance, I took note of their nonverbal actions (i.e. reluctance, anxiety, enthusiasm), and any other relevant information shared before the interview started and after it ended. The semistructured interview guide consisted of open-ended questions and was organized into three main themes: previous work experience, retirement experience, bridge employment experiences (see Appendix C). Interview questions primarily focused on the circumstances and reasoning behind retirement decisions as well as those surrounding the decision to re-enter the workforce. I also addressed personal relationships prior to and after retirement. At the conclusion of each interview I also asked each participant to offer any advice they would give to future retirees and retirees contemplating bridge employment. In response to these questions, the participants discussed their experiences

in and out of the workforce, the motivations and feelings surrounding their employment decisions and the impact these decisions had on personal and professional relationships.

Data Analysis

I analyzed the data using coding techniques described by Esterberg (2002). The aim of qualitative data analysis is to discover patterns within the data that may lead to a theoretical understanding of social life (Babbie 2002). In order to identify themes, I read each transcript over several times and identified key concepts. I then conducted focused coding by eliminating and combining concepts and I looked for repeating ideas and larger themes to connect the codes (Babbie 2002; Esterberg 2002). Using these techniques, I identified several recurring patterns and themes concerning the decision to engage in bridge employment and experiences distinct to bridge employment that were present in the data.

The purpose of this thesis is not to generalize the experiences of these bridge employees to all bridge employees; rather it is to examine the experiences of bridge employees and explore gender differences. These findings are meant to be a foundation for further research on the subject and are by no means representative of all bridge employees' experiences.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Five themes emerged in the interviews: 1) expectations and realities of retirement, 2) extrinsic and intrinsic rewards from bridge employment 3) the busy ethic, 4) obstacles and opportunities in acquiring bridge employment and 5) workplace expectations. First, respondents discussed how they viewed retirement before and after they entered it. Second, they described the reasons why they returned to the workforce. Typical responses found in this theme related to financial and psychosocial motivational factors such as the need or desire for extra money in retirement and the benefit of being around other people. Retirees also discussed their reasons for returning to the workforce in terms related to what is known as the “busy ethic.” They expressed a need to “have something to do” in retirement and related that to their decision to return to work to this. Respondents then discussed some of the ways in which retirees are hindered in their employment search as well as methods they use to find employment after retirement. Lastly, respondents described job characteristics that they desire when they return to the workforce. I will argue that overall, the reasons that retirees return to work differ between men and women and are related to ways in which men and women are socialized into work.

Expectations and Realities of Retirement

The expectations that respondents had about retirement were mixed. Some of the respondents were certain they would never be capable of retirement, while others admitted that they had “never thought about it.” When I asked Frannie what her expectations of retirement were prior to the event she said:

I, I really didn't think a lot about it because I have a lot of hobbies and so, it just didn't matter because I have, I have a lot to do you know I have a lot of things I like to do : dance, and knit, and crochet and paint and design so. In fact I think “I'll just have another new life” ya know?

Others were uncertain of what to expect going into retirement. Edgar mentioned that he had “apprehension” about retirement and said that reaching a point in his life where he was “actually going to retire” was scary for him. Several of the respondents discussed an expectation of time and leisure, and often cited myths related to retirement such as traveling the world or sitting on the porch. Like some of the respondents, Jeff describes his expectations in terms of having extra time for his hobbies, and saw retirement as a time to “catch up” on things he had be unable to do during his tenure at his previous job. However, many of the respondents didn't see their retirement in traditional terms. That is, they viewed their retirement as “switching of jobs” as Bobby put it or an “extended vacation” from the workforce. This is especially true for those that had not planned on leaving the workforce, but retired for family reasons, or because their employer offered financial incentives to induce them into retirement.

For most of the respondents, the reality of retirement was markedly different than their expectations, even for those that did not conceive of retirement in “traditional” terms, what Atchley (1976:2) refers to as the “final stage of the occupational cycle.” In

accordance with Beehr and Nielson's (1995) study of retirement activities, some respondents overestimated the amount of activity that they would engage in during retirement. The activity levels of many of the respondents tended to level off after a relatively short amount of time in retirement. Jeff's expectations about activity levels did not match what he actually experienced. He had "expectations that I would have all this wonderful time to do all these wonderful hobbies that I enjoy doing and going to see all the movies that I hadn't seen in the last 10 yearsdidn't happen!" He went on to say that he soon realized that the transition into retirement was becoming difficult. Oliver, a retired minister and teacher, "thought maybe I'd do a lot more...thought I would be writing" and that he'd "have more things done around the house." Even those that were somewhat active in retirement became "bored and restless" during that time. As Ned stated "There is only so much golf I can play." When I asked him to tell me more about his retirement experience he said:

After living with my wife for two months I decided I had to get out. One of us had to leave. Twenty-four/seven with my spouse was getting a little bit uuuuh hard to deal with so my wife and I both agreed that I need to do something.

The leisure often associated with retirement wasn't always gratifying for retirees either (Atchley 1976). Lenore - who had expectations of "sitting on the porch and [doing] nothing" - discovered within "days of her retirement" that she "really couldn't do any of that, couldn't do any of it." For Isaac (who had been retired once before) the unexpected nature of his second retirement revolved around the impact that raising his grandchildren had on him:

The biggest surprise about retirement, having grandkids...that was the biggest surprise and that's that's - the flipside of that is it might be the biggest thing that keeps me going is the kids, what those kids do nowadays with, on computers and school and things that they get into the things that they come up with are,

interesting and it keeps you uh, keeps you in touch with a lot of things that otherwise would kind of be passing you by...

Ashley also experienced incongruence between the expectations she had and how retirement actually was for her. A self-described “workaholic” she expected the transition to be difficult, when in actuality she says that: “I was surprised; I didn’t think I could walk away from it that easily. But I walked out the door that afternoon and I woke up the next morning already in retirement mode and uh my daughter kept waiting for depression and all that.”

Only one respondent expressed cohesiveness of expectations and realities of her retirement. Mitzi divulged that her retirement was “all I had expected it to be” and that “it was lovely.” Studies on satisfaction in retirement often cite the difference in expectations versus experiences in retirement as factors contributing to dissatisfaction in retirement (Quick and Moen 1998; Atchley 1976). In terms of gender however, more of the men and women in this study cited lack of “meaningful” activity, boredom, restlessness and how the newfound leisure time was not as rewarding as they had previously thought it would be. The general sentiment, regardless of gender, was as Franny puts it: “this retirement business isn’t what it’s cracked up to be. It just isn’t.”

Previous literature on life satisfaction in retirement suggests that men report higher levels of satisfaction in retirement than women, but other research suggests that because of women’s “disjointed work histories” they do not view retirement the same and do not attribute the same importance to it as men do (Quick and Moen 1998; Calasanti 1996). Some of these previous studies may not be accurate because they were conducted using what Calasanti (1996) calls a “male model” and do not accurately represent

contemporary experiences of working women. A study on retirement satisfaction for retirees and their spouses by Smith and Moen (2004) emphasizes the importance of considering factors outside the individual that may affect expectations and perceptions of retirement. Retirees in this study tended to be more satisfied with their own retirement than their spouse's, regardless of the retiree's gender.

Extrinsic and Intrinsic Rewards from Bridge Employment

All fifteen participants discussed the motivations and processes that led them to return to the workforce after retirement. Research on the meaning of work identifies the centrality of work in older workers and suggests that they have a stronger work ethic and are more committed to their employers (Mortimer and Lorence 1995). Other research suggests that while there are age differences in the meaning of work, the motivations and/or rewards that workers gain from employment are similar in nature (Frieze, Olson, Murrell and Selvan 2006). Studies identify two categories of motivators that persuade individuals to engage in paid work. One of these categories involves what are known as extrinsic rewards (Mor-Barak 1995; Loscocco and Kalleberg 1988). Extrinsic rewards provide satisfaction independent of the actual activity itself and are controlled by someone other than the employee (Harpaz 2002). Examples of extrinsic rewards include pay, social status, and security, the benefits of which the individual negotiates in terms of Emerson's "cost/benefit" analysis of interaction (Loscocco and Kalleberg 1988; Emerson 1976). Many of the respondents described extrinsic rewards when they discuss why they work and/or why they enjoy their work experiences. Exchange theory was developed as a way to examine the cognitive processes that underlie human behavior and social

interaction (Emerson 1976). Exchange theory is based on the premise that social interaction resembles a form of economic exchange wherein the participants must make a cost/benefit analysis of the interaction with another individual. In order to calculate the potential profits and/or losses that the behavior and relationships entail, individuals must be able to imagine alternative lines of conduct, anticipate others responses and exert some form of control (Emerson 1976). The meanings individuals place on these exchanges are studied from the symbolic interactionist perspective.

Symbolic interactionism is the process of interaction in the formation of meanings for individuals (Stryker 1990). There are three premises to this theory: meaning, language and thought. The premise of meaning contends that as humans, we act towards people or things according to the meaning ascribed to them. In symbolic interactionism, meaning is central to human behavior. We negotiate meaning through the use of language and thought, based-on language, is the dialogue we engage in mentally that requires we view thing from a different perspective, what is termed the “other” (Mead 1934). This applies in every aspect of interaction, including work. The meaning an individual ascribes to work and their status as a worker is negotiated through an accumulation of life long interactions with others, and because each person’s life experience is different, what work means for them is just as unique.

Although financial rewards were identified in every interview as *one* of the motivating factors behind the decision to return to paid work, only three of the interviewees explicitly conveyed salary as the *primary* reason they returned to work. Charlotte, described work as a “necessity” because she can’t live off of social security alone. Mitzi is a married state employee working in child protective services who

“already knew that [she] wanted to retire and go back to work because that’s the only way to make a living wage at that particular job.” Mitzi was given a financial incentive to leave her job with the understanding that she would be allowed to return to that job. Despite assurances from those with whom she worked, the job was not a guarantee and within months of her retirement she was looking for jobs with other agencies. One male respondent returned to work after his second retirement in order to assist with his grandchildren. Isaac, who works for the state, previously retired from a state job to provide day care for his grandchildren. Now that his grandchildren were getting to an age where his role as caretaker was decreasing, he decided to go back to work because “raising grandchildren costs money.”

Those expressing finances as the primary motivator for bridge employment are employed in what would be considered “low occupational status” jobs, and their motivations are consistent with other studies (Cox et al. 2001; Hardy 1991; Fillenbaum 1971). This research indicates that only those in lower status jobs would describe income as a primary factor for the return to work. Other research finds that minority group members and women were at higher risk for “severe financial difficulty” because of their work histories that typically contain lower status jobs and lack secure benefits from employment in jobs that offer retirement packages (Mor-Barak 1995; Perkins 1995). Charlotte worked as a caretaker for the majority of her employment history and went on to work for the police department for several years before she was forced to find employment elsewhere as an intake worker for a senior employment agency. She is currently unemployed looking for employment to supplement her Social Security after budget cuts forced her to retire. Isaac works for the state as an administrative technician

for a human services agency. He discusses his financial concerns with regard to the unexpected responsibility of caring for his grandchildren. Money he “could have used for [him and his] wife” went towards raising his grandchildren instead:

And so a lot of, a lot of family finances go in that direction as opposed to just my wife and I, we might not be doing anything differently, you know but we might spend that money on ourselves and the grandkids and maybe we – I don't know, we don't know. It's expensive and I, a significant financial commitment there but...they're worth it.

One respondent was reluctant to attribute financial rewards to her retirement decision.

Lenore does not explicitly say that finances were her motivation for retirement, but she states that the incentive to take the retirement package:

Being the person I am- it almost it was it would probably kill me, not kill me but, no not that bad but it was an opportunity that I needed to take advantage of . If I didn't take advantage of it I would be upset about it you know and I would think “well now why didn't I do that?” but most jobs even with the state won't let you retire and come back.

While she doesn't attribute her decision to her financial situation, ultimately the decision to accept the retirement package was related to monetary rewards. The prospect of having two salaries gave her the incentive to leave the work force and therefore both her decision to retire and her decision to come back to work were motivated financially.

It is important to note that while only three respondents discussed financial necessity as the principal reason for returning to work, *all* of the respondents expressed concerns with financial issues - be it with concern for the future or stressing the planning aspects surrounding their current financial status. All but one linked bridge employment with the alleviation of all or some of their concerns regarding money. Even though some of them explicitly state that they “don't do it for the money,” the significance of financial reward still exists for all of the respondents, regardless of self-proclaimed financial

stability going into, and coming out of, retirement. This is also apparent in discussions about how respondents would change their retirement preparations. Men often stated that they would have “started planning sooner” or would have “saved more.” In fact, when asked if they felt they were “financially prepared going into retirement” respondents who asserted that they were more often than not claimed that they had been planning for retirement throughout their work histories and/or used financial planners to aid them. Some of those that had lingering financial concerns expressed distrust with financial planners who were “only out for themselves.” Women tended to claim that they couldn’t or wouldn’t have planned differently, although Helena said that she might have “exercised more and eaten better.” Men primarily focused on financial concerns and women on more personal ones (such as going to college sooner or changing jobs earlier). This may relate to traditional gender norms that socialize men to believe that they need to be the ones supporting family financially and women socially (Kimmel 1999). This tendency to focus on finances shows that this belief carries on into retirement and may influence men’s decisions to go back to work instead of engaging in leisurely activities or volunteering. The distrust that many of the men shared in relation to utilizing financial planners may also relate to the notion that as the “breadwinner” they should be able to manage their own finances in order to support themselves and their families.

Identity is another extrinsic reward gained from employment, and a reason many of the respondents decided to go back to work. Sociological studies on the relationship between identity and work show that work is a salient aspect of an individual’s work identity (Reitzes and Mutran 2006; Loscocco and Kalleberg 1988; Schwalbe 1988). The activity theory of aging also suggests that a person's self-concept is related to the roles

held by that person. That is, if an individual actively maintains other roles, such as familial roles, recreational roles, volunteer and/or community roles, the retirement transition is less difficult (Novak 2006; Reitzes and Mutran 2004). The role of “worker” constitutes a large part how we identify ourselves to others as well as our own definition of self (Mortimer and Lorence 1995). Much of who we are is tied up in this role, and many of the respondents returned to work because it was part of their identity. For instance, in the discussion of their post retirement jobs, respondents remarked how they had “always worked” and didn’t see themselves in any other context, or how not working was “not their personality.”

Edgar retired from a job as a school administrator, only to find himself bored at home. When I asked him about his expectations going into retirement, he discusses the importance of work in his life, and how this affected his adjustment to retirement:

It’s a big step in your life, a major major step and ya know there’s some times – especially during those first six months I was thinking “what the hell have I done now?” uh but I no – I don’t know. I enjoy working, I’ve always worked, I like to work, I still work half time and expect to do that for many years to come.

The anxiety Edgar expressed indicates that he had difficulty adjusting to retirement. This anxiety relates to the loss of the work role and the importance this role had in his personal identity and self concept. In fact, several of the men in the study engaged in work similar to the job they had before retirement, during the time that they considered themselves retired. Bobby, Edgar and Isaac (who had hoped to find a job teaching when he went back to work after his first retirement) were all substitute teachers at one point during their retirement, even if for short periods of time. Jeff admitted that even though he *expected* to spend a lot of time doing leisurely things, the transition into retirement did

not meet these expectations. He found that detaching himself from his previous job was somewhat difficult:

I found myself still very caught up and particularly since I was getting ready to enter into a doctoral program I found myself still very caught up in my profession still reading and still going to workshops so that I didn't lose my connection.

His identity was strongly attached to his role as a worker, and when he initially retired he had to renegotiate this role which for him and others in the study proved different. This aspect of bridge employment is important to consider, because unlike retirement, those who retire and return to the workforce have to not only renegotiate the role of “worker” into “retiree,” when they decide to return to work, this process works in reverse. This was a subject that several of the respondents brought up. When asked about the transition into the workforce again, replies often consisted of the challenge of “shifting gears” and “getting back into work mode.” Others spoke of role renegotiation in terms of having to “come to terms” with the fact that, in their new jobs, they did have the same status as they did before. This was a concern many of the men expressed. Edgar spoke of having to reconcile not being “the man” anymore and also spoke of how difficult the realization that he would likely “never again be the man” was for him. Kit was a little more optimistic about regaining his status as a worker, but stressed the need to “humble yourself and take a different role.” Lenore was the only woman that discussed changing roles in her new job, but spoke of the different expectations and loss of freedom that she had in her previous job, and did not address this renegotiation in terms of identity. This may relate to the importance of work in men’s identities compared to women. Men tend to describe themselves in terms of their work more than women do (Frieze, Olson, Murrell and Selvan 2006).

Sense of worth is also an extrinsic reward gained from engaging in bridge work. Studies indicate that a positive work experience is often associated with high self esteem (Schwalbe 1985). The need for a sense of worth was expressed by some respondents in the data, and also related to their decision to return to the workforce, as well as job satisfaction. In particular, Bobby felt that as a teacher he was no longer wanted, but found that at the new job he had, his sense of worth was fulfilled because the people there needed him:

Heh. The only thing that I can think of is that I kinda feel unwanted as a teacher anymore...so it's kinda, get the feeling once you're out, that they don't want you no more. In fact - they have two science jobs open up right now and at first I told them I would take one and then they said "well this other lady we're gonna use her" so when they asked me about the other I said - my wife and I talked about it - I said "Forget it I'm tired of playing that game. They need me over here at the senior center more than they need me over there. Because this job I don't think they could find anybody else to do it.

The fact that Bobby's skills as a worker are *needed* by the men and women who use the town's Senior Center gives meaning to his work and in turn affects his sense of self worth. I ascertain that - from what he says about the "game" the school district played with him as far as getting a job - had he taken the job at the school, the need for a sense of worth would not have been fulfilled and he would have sought a work environment where it would be. Not feeling wanted as a worker superseded the need for finances and in the end, was enough for him to take a completely different job with "very little pay" that he considered "more community service" than a job.

The need for social interaction also surfaced as one of the reasons why participants decided to go back to work. Vroom (1964) described this as another factor that motivates people to work (see also Mor-Barak 1995). Several respondents talked

about this requisite in terms of “needing to be around people.” They also attributed this need to factors related to their own personalities. Several described themselves as “people person” and said this influenced the need to be around other people. Helena references the need for interaction with other people throughout her interview. When I asked her to offer advice for future retirees and bridge employees, she suggests:

Just do it, I mean to me to be able to have the mental stimulus and to having, just being around the people and to be doing something positive is the only thing to do.

Ned also describes himself as a “people person.” When I asked him about the reason why he decided to return to work he answered that, after two months in retirement he and his wife decided that he needed to go back to work because:

“I’m a people person... so I decided that I need to go do something just to get out of the house and effectively find me a job that will make me a little money to pay for my golf game...part of the deal why I went back to work, I just felt that I wanted to be more involved in the community.”

The need to be around people and interacting comes through in his desire to be involved with the community. Community involvement in the form of work and voluntarism also fulfills the need for social interaction, and coincides with previous research on the subject (Omoto, Snyder and Martino 2000). Many of the responses regarding mitigating factors related to bridge employment cited this as one of, if not the most, important reasons why they returned to the workforce.

Maintaining structure in the daily life of the individual is also a reason why retirees decide to re-enter the workforce (Fillenbaum 1971). Three of the respondents discussed how the structure that a workday provided them made having a job rewarding. When I asked Helena what she would have done differently in retirement she mentioned that she “would have found a job sooner” because she had noticed herself “oozing into

the day” and for her, that lack of structure “wasn’t a good thing.” Mitzi mentioned that the structure her state job provided her was the perfect balance between the isolation and lack of structure associated with her work as a writer:

I would but I kind of like the structure with my other job you know as a writer particularly you can get really isolated and I don’t like that so there’s a lot of good things about the balance with having both of these careers that I’ve always cared real strongly about.

For two of the men in the study, the structured nature of paid work had negative connotations. For Dexter, one of the difficulties he described with coming back to work was getting “pinned down to a schedule” and for Ned, the reason he went back to work as a contract employee for a realtor was because he was reluctant to get into another structured job like the one he had working for a state agency.

Respondents often spoke of the desire to engage in work because it challenged them mentally and contributed to their overall mental well-being. Intrinsic motivation also affects an individual’s decision to work. This occurs when an individual performs a task for its own sake, instead of doing it to gain material or social reinforcers (Harpaz 2002). Such behaviors satisfy inherent needs such as a sense of responsibility, challenge, sense of achievement and variety (Harpaz 2002; Mor-Barak 1995). Helena says that her work “gives me things to think about. Every case is so different and every case is a puzzle and it gives you something to try to figure out, to work out, which to me is - I like that.” Ashley also discussed the challenges and mental stimulation that her job provides as vocational rewards. The responsibility associated with her work motivated Lenore to continue the type of job she had before retirement. The variety associated with her job also gave her personal satisfaction. In contrast, one male respondent (Isaac) mentions

that the diminished responsibility that he has at his new job is one of the things that he enjoys about his work.

Men and women in this study identified different types of motivation during the process of deciding whether or not to re-enter the workforce. Previous literature on the meaning of work attributes extrinsic motivational factors to men and intrinsic motivational factors to women (Altschuler 2004; Harpaz 2002; Loscocco and Halleberg 1988). These data show that extrinsic rewards such as finances and security are motivators for men and women, but men tend to attach status, identity and self worth to their jobs more than women do. Also, men and women talk about financial incentives in distinctly different ways. Franny and Georgiana spoke of their salary as a bonus to their work their “extra spending money” or their “grocery money”, and Mitzi was explicit on her reasons for working when she states that “I’ve just got a double career and I care fully about both of them and the CPS career is more about the substance of what I do and certainly not about the money. *If it were about the money I would have gone with a different job*” [emphasis added]. On the other hand, men tended to discuss finances with a sense of concern. Bobby mentions that, even though finances weren’t his primary concern going back to work, the rising cost of expenses soon changed his perspective:

Oh money is kinda worrying me...because what I wasn’t prepared for – my retirement has stayed the same for four years but the insurance keeps going up – what I have to pay and teacher’s retirement. Of course everything else – the price of gas has gone up tremendously...so that’s kind of a semi-worry. But not major.

I asked whether this financial issue influenced his decision to go back to work. He minimizes financial reward as a motivator and attributes his financial anxiety to “being retired”:

Oh when I went back to work I thought we had plenty of money. But I think it's just part of being retired and worrying about money so I – I've become much more conservative since I retired...It's – it's strange. I still haven't gotten used to that.

Dexter, Edgar, Kit, and Ned frequently expressed financial concern in some form, using phrases such as “it's always in the back of your mind” or “how much money is enough?” as well as discussing other retirees that they know and the financial difficulties they are (or in some cases, are not) having and why. However, this issue usually surfaced after they initially discussed other motivating factors.

The difference in the way men and woman discuss finances may relate to traditional gender roles that persist in American society. Although Kimmel (1999) suggests that men and women have the same motivations for working, these data show that - while there are similar motivational factors for returning to work - men and women emphasize them in different ways. This may relate to the value we place on certain types of labor – paid or unpaid. Despite cultural shifts in the number of women entering the paid labor force, the “traditional” model of male as breadwinner and female as homemaker remains a pervasive one in contemporary society. Jobs are often gender oriented, and favor men in the context of pay and prestige (Kimmel 1999). The difference in prestige afforded to women's roles as workers as well as the persistent gap in wages between men and women with the same skills and experience may be one factor leading women to rely on intrinsic rewards for the motivation to work. Other “traditional” views of women and work placed those who did engage in paid work in a negative light. Women worked because they “had to” which meant either they were single, single mothers or middle class women looking for extra “play money” (Kimmel 1999:177). An attempt to disassociate work as a “necessity” borne from what may be

seen as “deviant” behaviors such as single motherhood or singlehood from divorce or the choice not to marry may be another reason why women are reluctant to attribute financial rewards as a reason for work after retirement. Men on the other hand, may show reluctance for the same reason. The lingering idea that men need to be the breadwinner of the family may lead them to be hesitant in admitting that they have to go back to work because of financial reasons.

The Busy Ethic

The “busy ethic” is used in academic literature to describe the ethic that retirees use to justify life without work (Eckherdt 1986:239). A tenet of the American work ethic, the busy ethic is a set of values and beliefs used to identify ideal and acceptable conduct during retirement. Early symbolic interactionists have also explored the influence social structures such as the workplace can have on individual beliefs and behaviors. The American work ethic has evolved over centuries, and its evolution over time has made it difficult to find a universal definition that scholars agree upon (Eckherdt 1986). It was once based on what Weber deemed “The Protestant Ethic,” a more outward, religiously based ethic that focused on work as a “calling”, where hard work was rewarded with prospects of “heavenly gains” (Weber [1905] 1958). Now it has changed to become an inwardly, materialistic desire to accumulate tangible goods and status (Eckherdt 1986). The development of the busy ethic serves several purposes: to legitimate the leisurely aspect of retirement, it defends retired people against perceptions of obsolescence; it defines the retirement role and domesticates retirement by adapting retired life to prevailing societal norms related to work (Eckherdt 1986). Similar to the

activity theory of aging, the busy ethic emphasizes the importance of ongoing activity in order to maintain a positive sense of self (Novak 2006; Hillier and Barrow 1999.)

In the study of social gerontology, some academics adopt a life course perspective, which explains the process of aging as dynamic and contextual. It examines age-related transitions such as retirement, as well as the social meaning of aging by focusing its research on individuals, cohorts and groups (Novak 2006; Hillier and Barrow 1999). Some of the key concepts of this perspective include the study of life transitions as well as age roles and norms (Hillier and Barrow 1999). Gerontologists use this perspective to describe conditions beneficial to successful role transitions. They find that when continuity exists between the two roles, the transition into the new one is easier (Quick and Moen 1998; Carter and Cook 1995; Atchley 1982). This occurs when beliefs and values of an individual in one role carry over to another, and thus makes the shift is more manageable. When an individual retires, the work ethic socialized over the course of his or her career(s) alters itself to become the busy ethic.

Respondents emphasized activity in their discussions of retirement and bridge employment, and many cited the need for activity as a reason why they returned to the workforce. Common explanations revolved around keeping busy, remaining active and not falling into “mindless activity” such as watching television. In response to my question “Why did you return to work” one replied “just uh, to keep busy and to um just, just stay interesting and *interested* it was, I wanted something to do.” Inactivity and engagement in “useless” activities is viewed negatively by many of the respondents. Helena’s response is indicative of this and reflects the overall feeling of disdain regarding lack of activity in retirement in this sample. When I asked her why she liked her job she

said that “it *gives me something to do*, to ponder you know, *I don’t want to go home and just watch television.*” She also goes on to describe her activity level during the time she was a homemaker and volunteered prior to her entrance into the paid labor force and compares it to her current activity level. Here she uses language that invokes a negative image of an individual that does not engage in similar activity levels as herself:

I was very very busy doing volunteer work and community work even when my children were in school course then I could keep my own hours, you know I could leave after they left and get home before they got back so it never interfered with their life and but once they had their own marriages ya know and their own lives I just really wanted to keep busy, I didn’t want to read mystery books and eat bon bons that just wasn’t my way of doing things.

For Helena, “reading mystery books” and eating bon bons is an image she associates with retirees who do “nothing” when they are at home. Later in the interview she revisits this sentiment when she tells me “just can’t imagine sitting there doing nothing.” This technique is known as “associational distancing” and refers to the type of narrative that individuals use in “identity talk” in order to distance their identity or self from similar group members that are negatively evaluated in society (Snow and Anderson 2004). In this case, the group these respondents distance themselves from are retirees who do not engage in meaningful labor – in this case voluntarism or paid labor. Prevailing stereotypes about individuals who are currently unemployed or not engaged in paid labor often conjure negative images and attribute personal characteristics such as “laziness” or “lack of initiative” to those who fall into those categories (Letkemann 2002). This type of attribution is common towards the unemployed, but inactivity in retirement may also be seen as a ‘discreditable state’ by those retirees who adhere to the busy ethic (Goffman 1963). Franny invokes this type of identity talk when she describes some of the reasons why she volunteered after she retired and ultimately returned to paid work: “Well, people

that retire they go home and they sit in front of the TV and I hear the way the people talk sometimes and they get bored and I thought I'm not gonna do that." In other words, she does not want to associate her status as a "working retiree" with other types of retirees who do not engage in the same types of activities she does, namely, work.

Social psychological research shows that social comparison is a means by which individuals learn about and assess themselves by comparing with other people, or in this case, groups of people (Festinger 1954). Downward social comparison occurs when individuals mostly compare themselves with people deemed to be socially inferior to them in some way. This type of disassociation or comparison also shows up in a comparison of retired individuals that do work. When I asked Ned for advice for retirees who potentially would return to the workforce, he offered this:

I know there's a lot of people that do that because they can't learn to live within their means and they retire and they get another job and they get all that income from that job and retirement and it becomes their one income and they go out and by another car or something and then they need to have that money to make the payment and they can't quit.And you don't want to be in that situation, don't get into that.

He works because he likes to help people, and he likes to have "extra money for his children and grandchildren." For Ned, the reasons why people work are as important as the fact that they are engaging in it. That is, he holds similar stigmas towards people who work because they have to and not because they want to. In this way he also engages in downward social comparisons, not of retirees who do not work, but retirees who because they cannot afford not to. When asked for advice about bridge employment, several respondents to offered their advice in the context of "If you *have* to work, then..." which also suggests a negative connotation of working as a necessity as opposed to working for other, more personal or social reasons.

Eckherdt's (1986) description of the function of the busy ethic notes that leisure time in retirement is defended, but it appears that only those who engage in some form of constructive activity other than "sitting at home and watching the TV" - or in Ned's case, go back to work for the "right" reasons - are afforded a defense against any discredit associated with inactivity in retirement. For individuals that use associational distancing or social comparisons, the "stigmatization" of those retirees whom they deem inferior of or choose to disassociate from, helps them create and maintain self and social identities. Social identities are aspects of an individual's self-concept that derive from the social categories to which they see themselves as belonging (Gecas and Burke 1995). Individuals establish social identities through association with reference groups in social situations. Social reference groups serve as a mechanism for establishing a set of role expectations and norms, which guide the individual's behavior within each of the social identities. Social identity theory defines social identification as the perception of oneness with or belonging-ness to a reference group (Stets and Burke 2000). The more an individual identifies with a social identity, the more the individual invests his or her self-concept in that identity.

The high incidence of voluntarism in retirement also shows how pervasive and influential the busy ethic is. According to continuity theory, by engaging in work that is similar to the work they had previously done, respondents attempt to "preserve and maintain existing internal and external structures" and they accomplish this by "using strategies tied to their past experiences of themselves and their social world" (Atchley 1989:1). That is, in the process of trying to adapt to the world of retirement, they employ strategies similar to those they used in other, similar roles. Volunteering has been shown

to reward those who engage in it with the same types of extrinsic and intrinsic rewards that paid work does, and makes the transition into retirement easier (Kim and Feldman 2000; Omoto et al. 2000; Wilson 2000). Many of the respondents began to volunteer shortly after they retired, and eventually these volunteer jobs led to a return to paid work. For one respondent, the length of time between retirement and return to volunteer work was less than a month, and even those whose retirement duration is the longest, volunteered for a large portion of the time they were out of the paid workforce, regardless of the “voluntariness” of their retirement. Georgiana retired due to disability and after six years, once she was healthy, she returned to volunteer work for about thirteen years before she acquired a paying job. When Charlotte first retired (voluntarily) she continued to do volunteer work for the local police department and volunteered at various local agencies. She did so with the hopes of getting a job with the police department, through a program with Senior Services America, whose goal is to try and place seniors in jobs. When she did not get that job, she continued to volunteer there part time. If she had it her way, if she “didn’t need the finances” she would continue to do so:

Because there are so many other things I can do to help people... but see now if I had a job I can’t do all this. If I have a job I need to go because I need the money so, it’s the lesser of two evils.

In fact, when asked for advice for future retirees and potential bridge employees, both participants who engaged in volunteer activities prior to or during retirement and those who did not, gave advice that stressed either support for going back to work or an encouragement to “stay active” through volunteer work or in some cases “just having a hobby” and “not fiddling your day away.” As Kit puts it: “if I wanted to go home and

watch vegetables grow in the back yard I would.” It appears that for this set of bridge employees, this is not an option - or at least, not an acceptable one.

Men and women both discussed their desire to return to work and elements related to job satisfaction in terms of the activity involved. One notable difference that showed up was the frequency with which women and men used associational distancing and social comparisons. Women who had irregular work histories or longer time periods between retirement and the return to paid work tended to employ this type of identity talk more than the men who did. Most of the men in the sample went back to work rather quickly, but the men with longer retirement durations did not compare themselves to other retirees in the context of social comparisons or associational distancing. This could be because these men’s identities are not as strongly tied to their job as others. Men and women in this study engaged in voluntarism prior to or after retirement, and in some cases both. Previous research on voluntarism typically associate the propensity to volunteer by age (the “Long Civic Generation”) or gender (primarily women) but those that engaged in volunteer activities in this study are men and women in their fifties, sixties and seventies (Rotolo and Wilson 2004; Putnam 2000).

Obstacles and Opportunities in Acquiring Bridge Employment

Returning to the workforce after retirement may involve unique obstacles for older workers. Previous research on bridge employment suggests that older workers may have difficulties finding employment because of the increase in the cost of healthcare for older workers compared to their younger colleagues (Sigenthaler and Brenner 2000; Herz 1995). The difference in work histories may also be a factor, as those with more

experience are likely to expect higher pay. Retirees that receive a pension are at a disadvantage because of work restrictions that limit the hours they are allowed to work. Social Security also stipulates how much work certain recipients (blind and disabled receiving benefits) can engage in without penalty. Age discrimination may also inhibit job searches. Stereotypes regarding older workers and their abilities may affect hiring practices and in turn make the job search more difficult. Children's attitudes towards retired parents and the expectations they have also prove to be an issue that bridge employees face. In my interviews I explored the process of finding bridge employment in an attempt to identify what obstacles or challenges participants encountered and what methods they used to find their post retirement jobs.

Participants who experienced difficulty returning to work emphasized that their age was a disadvantage. Ageism and age discrimination were factors that some of the older respondents felt delayed their return to the workforce. Younger bridge employees (those in their fifties) did not recall difficulties related to age discrimination, which may indicate that there is less of a stigma regarding returning to work if it is done at an "earlier" age, although it depends on the context of the age categorization (Bytheway 2005; Hassell and Perewe 1995). Ageism entails a systematic stereotyping of and discrimination against people because of their age (Bytheway 2005; Palmore 1999). Studies on ageism and age discrimination in the workplace often cite elements of modernization theory by proposing that cultural changes such as technological advances and urbanization cause a decline in status for older workers and facilitate the development of ageism (Bengston and Schaie 1999; Palmore 1999). Research also suggests that ageism is becoming more pervasive in our society and that it may even be

more ubiquitous than sexism and racism that currently exists (Palmore 2001).

Respondents discussed ageism in terms of finding a job and experiences on the job. In particular, Kit described the process of finding a job as being “really difficult” and feels ageism had something to do with it:

For instance one of the things I noticed is I put all of experience down on resumes that I had with [Computer Corporation] and they'd figure out real quickly that I was in my fifties and you didn't get as many responses. And so, just to experiment I cut down the experience that I listed, which I cut down to maybe eight years, and then I started getting a lot of phone calls on the resume and so, at least I felt like, ageism in this nation is alive and well

Likewise, Isaac retired twice and discussed the different experiences he had with gaining employment after retirement each time. He mentioned that it took him a longer time to get one the second time because of the “tougher job market” and because he was “more confident he would get a job when [he] was in his fifties than when he was 61 and looking again.” He believes that individuals in their sixties may be discriminated against because of their age but, as he says “of course *they're* not going to tell you that.”

Charlotte brought up many examples in her own life where she encountered difficulties, both in the search for a job and on the job. The expectations that her younger bosses had for her did not coincide with her abilities, and one manager in particular did not take that into consideration, nor did he offer her assistance with learning the skills she needed in order to meet his expectations. This eventually led to her voluntary exit from the workforce to find a different job. Once employed, stereotypical doubts about cognitive ability also showed up in interactions. Isaac told me that at first, his coworkers were not sure what to make of him and his abilities, especially since this job wasn't in the same field as he was previously employed. While he eventually “proved himself” as a worker, he mentions that some of his coworkers use derogatory and stereotypical language when

they refer to his age and his demeanor, even resorting to calling him a “dirty old man” because of the nature of his sense of humor. One study shows younger workers (18 to 24 years old) view women positively with regards to creative problem solving abilities when they are 25-40 years of age but that the opposite is true for men. But, when they reach the age of 55 the opposite is true. In my sample, the same number of men and women over 55 expressed a dissonance between what younger workers perceived and their actual abilities (see DeArmond et al. 2006).

There also exist structural forms of age discrimination that prevent older workers from getting work. In certain industries, pension plans limit the amount of work that individuals can perform and still receive “full benefits.” For example, Edgar disclosed the intricacies behind his current work status related to the pension he receives from Teacher’s Retirement System (TRS) and said that in order to keep his full benefits he is only allowed to work less than half time, but, he says “it’s actually less and they make you figure it by the month.” He said that for him this is a negative aspect because he seldom gets everything done that he needs to or wants to. Social Security is another program that places restrictions on the amount of time people can work after they start receiving benefits (Ulrich and Brott 2005; Perkins 1995). Isaac lists these benefits as one of the reasons he will continue to work. He has earned too much money and has to pay Social Security back “at least through the fall.” Several of the respondents discuss this restriction, and most of them describe it negatively. Jeff was the only respondent who was satisfied with the requirement because he spends the rest of his time working on his doctoral program requirements.

The attitudes that adult children have about retirement also are a factor in finding and maintaining a job after retirement. Some of the respondents felt pressures from their children to not seek post-retirement employment or to leave the job they have now.

Lenore discusses the subject in anticipation of the Christmas holidays and the expectation that her children will (again) try and persuade her from continuing to work:

As a matter of fact my son in law and my daughter you know they're ready for me to get into a home and settle down and you know I just, with Christmas coming up they're going to be badgering me about it, but its hard for me to tell them that this is what I want, I'm not quite ready to sit.

Oliver also expresses concern with his children's opinions of what they think he should be doing with his retirement. In this case he feels he may be persuaded to oblige them, and take on less work. Helena and Mitzi also disclosed some trepidation about their children and grandchildren's expectations in relation to their job. The prospect of having more time to spend in the home and with family was the primary concern of adult children who opposed their parents returning to work, or who at least wanted them to work less.

Despite difficulties, all of the respondents managed to find a job after retirement. Even though Charlotte was retired and searching for employment at the time of the interview, she had left the workforce twice before and found employment. A common technique that bridge employees used was networking through coworkers at their pre-retirement job, family and friends outside of work. Networking is regarded as "individual actions directed toward contacting friends, acquaintances and other people to whom the job seeker has been referred for the main purpose of finding a job" (Wanberg, Kanfer and Banas 2000:492). This research identifies networking as a common strategy used by job seekers and, networking intensity is related to job seeking success. That is,

the more intense the networking the more likely the individual is to find a job and report high levels of job satisfaction than those with minimal efforts. Isaac and Kit both reportedly used networking as a main strategy and both describe themselves as satisfied with their current employer.

Volunteering was another strategy that several respondents used to get employment. Some of the respondents who had engaged in volunteering activities in retirement subsequently ended up working at one of the places where they volunteered. This is related to networking because they work alongside paid workers, thus enabling them to gain experience necessary for possible jobs. Networking also provides them with knowledge about the facility and how it is run as well as contact with people who are part of the hiring process. Franny said that volunteering was a “good way to get in” and recommended that retirees pursuing a career after retirement use volunteering as a way to realize that decision. Helena, Georgiana and Bobby all got hired for paid work as a result of their volunteering efforts as well.

There are a growing number of employment services for senior citizens as the population demographics change. Job placement websites, newsletters and federally funded agencies specifically targeted to older workers are on the rise (Hurst 2006). In this study however, only one respondent mentions them in her interview. Despite working for and utilizing senior citizens employment services such as Senior Services America, Charlotte was still without a job and as mentioned earlier, using networking as a means to find employment.

Most of the women in this sample did not discuss age or gender discrimination as part of the process of finding a job. Charlotte, however, cites instances of age

discrimination on the job. Mitzi describes her job experience in terms of problems with younger management as a “real trial” because they are “looking for [her] to do something wrong.” But more women cited family concerns related to finding or keeping their jobs than men did. Men discussed their experiences with ageism in relation to the job hunt as opposed to the job experience, but not in all cases. Oliver found that other workers around his age (or older) chastised him for wanting to retire “too early.” In order to find a job, respondents who did not get a job with the same agency (or were not guaranteed one) tended to use the same strategies for finding employment, although more women used volunteering as a path to a new job than men. Networking with family was prominent among the men, while women tended to network with friends or coworkers in order to get a new job. This difference may relate to men’s need to uphold an image of self-sufficiency in social groups and networks outside the family and women’s needs to show their family their capabilities and therefore rely on friends for assistance.

Workplace Expectations

When asked about job satisfaction, respondents often expressed satisfaction in relation to their current workplace environment. A prominent theme in the data was that bridge employees want to have a sense of control over their retirement and work experiences. Weckerle and Schultz (1999) suggest that control is one reason individuals return to the workforce, and that those that left the workforce early or involuntarily tend to share this desire. In this study, those that left voluntarily and involuntarily shared this desire equally. A sense of control attributes to an overall sense of self-efficacy in work, which in turn affects job satisfaction and self esteem. Self-efficacy is an individual’s

belief in his or her ability to reach a goal and the perception that they have the power to control outcomes (Gecas 1989). Respondents in this study discussed elements of self-efficacy in terms of job satisfaction and what their “ideal job” would offer them as employees. Schwalbe (1985) identified autonomy in the work place as a contributing factor in self –efficacy and ultimately self-esteem. It is often experienced as a “reward for demonstrated competence and reliability” and should therefore be viewed not only as the ability to work alone or plan work on one’s own terms, but also as a “badge of status” and indicative of the skills and responsibilities that an individual possesses in the workplace (Schwalbe 1985:527). The respondents in my study appeared to seek out employment in jobs where these types of autonomous behaviors were allowed. In some instances respondents abhorred “micromanagement” of workplace duties. Instead, they expressed a desire to “be left alone” to do their own work. Many, like Dexter, talked about the desire for personal responsibility over the outcomes of their labor:

Well not everybody does the same thing ...I’m, I’m available and real, quite flexible. It’s just uh, different people have a different way of doing things and my theory is: you give me a job and leave me alone, let me do it and if I screw it up I’ll take responsibility for it, that that’s the whole deal ya know.

He also discusses conflict in regard to expectations on the job. Originally he was hired for maintenance, and as they tried to change his job responsibilities, he was adamant about sticking to “what he was hired for.” Other respondents who discussed this sense of autonomy and control over their work also spoke in terms of being independent workers and cited the lack of this component as a “problem” in their workplaces. Mitzi expresses disdain towards her new manager because she has a habit of micromanaging her. She was accustomed to being valued as an experienced and competent employee in her previous job. Lenore speculates that had she not retired from the workforce as a result of

financial incentives from her job, she would have left because in her opinion, the state legislature has too much power over state jobs and “they are our parents and I like to be my own parent.” This statement relates to another concept: locus of control.

Respondents made statements related to locus of control that showed a tendency towards an internal locus of control. That is, they attribute outcomes to personal attitudes and behaviors as opposed to forces outside themselves and beyond their control. Some, like Charlotte and Lenore, convey elements of both, and attribute some of their situations and/or outcomes to religion or the government.

Flexibility is another characteristic of the workplace that bridge employees are attracted to and seek out in employment (Rau and Adams 2005). Flexibility contributes to self-efficacy and sense of control in work by providing workers the power to dictate which tasks they will perform as well as the time(s) they will do them and how long they will take (Schwalbe 1985). Almost all of the workers expressed this as a stipulation for entering into and/or continuing to work in their post retirement job. Those who were not satisfied with that aspect of their employment experience mentioned that if that facet of their job were to disappear at their workplace, they would leave that job and seek employment elsewhere.

Bobby enjoys the freedom to do as he pleases in his current job because he is able to get things done as they come along, both at home and at the workplace. He recently changed his schedule to “fit in his golf game” and liked the ability to just “tell them I need to go” if he needs to and is able to continue his work “on his own time.” Edgar is also pleased with the flexibility his job affords him. He works with another “retire rehire” and they often rearrange their schedules around their needs. Dexter and Isaac

have more set schedules, but they are given leeway with scheduling as it relates to situations that may arise with them or family members they care for (Dexter and his wife are caregivers for her parents, while Isaac watches grandchildren). To paraphrase their sentiments, if their jobs were not flexible with their schedules and outside demands, they would “look elsewhere.” This remark is especially true for the men in the study. More men than women cited lack of flexibility as a reason why they would leave their job. Women, on the other hand, emphasized flexibility as something they enjoyed as part of their work experience. Women discussed the desire for the option of having a flexible schedule more than they actually took advantage of it. Even though they were allowed flexibility in their scheduling, they often chose to adhere to a set schedule. For example Lenore and Mitzi talked about flexibility relative to their choice of a schedule, and Helena and Franny mentioned flexibility as an option, but chose to work a regular shift.

In addition to control, self efficacy, and flexibility, familiarity is also something that many respondents expected from work. Those re-entering the workforce often look for jobs similar to ones they had before they retired (Ulrich and Brott 2005). Kit explained to me that he felt “comfortable” in his new job because it had a similar bureaucratic structure as the one he held previously in the private sector. Ned found a job as a realtor because it was something he had done during college, so he was familiar with the expectations as a realtor and had the skills necessary.

Other respondents disclosed part of the reason they left the workforce in the first place was to “try something new.” For example, when Isaac first retired from his job with the prison system, he decided that, since he had degrees in guidance and counseling, he would look for a job as a teacher. In the end however, he ended up obtaining a job

with the state each time he went back to work. Even though he had hopes of being a teacher, Isaac obtained jobs that were similar to the one he had before he retired the first time. When Bobby retired and he and his wife moved, he originally wanted to go back to work as a teacher, but when he discovered that they “didn’t want him as a teacher” anymore, he applied for a job at the local senior center. Originally he volunteered at the center but eventually was hired to run it, despite initial reservations he had about taking the job. The difference in structure between teaching and managing a senior center gave him freedoms he had not had before:

It’s extremely low stress compared to teaching and a whole lot more freedom. I can go get coffee whenever I want to, I don’t have bells regulating what I can do, if I need to go to the restroom I can, if I wanna ...go to town I can - no problem.

While most respondents took comfort with the familiarity their bridge jobs afforded them, others, like Bobby, enjoyed a change of pace in their new employment.

Men and women in this study who had similar expectations and needs in their bridge jobs, and said their ideal job or satisfaction with their current job was a result of the autonomy, flexibility and familiarity they provided. It appears that the self-efficacy and self esteem that resulted from each of these factors is important for workers, regardless of gender. However, respondents who expressed dissatisfaction with their current job situation tended to be women who wished their schedules were more flexible or that management would trust their abilities more. As for locus of control, more women than men expressed possessed traits related to an external locus of control, and research shows that this is often the case (Smith, Dugan and Trompenaars 1997). This may relate to the process of socialization that subordinates women in American society. Traditionally in the United States, being male is associated with having power and

control and to be a woman is to be controlled by others (Kimmel 1999). Men also emphasized the benefits of job familiarity more often than women. Continuity theory of aging suggests that adults try to preserve and maintain structures in their life by using strategies that maintain continuity (Atchley 1989). Finding a job in an industry similar to previous jobs is one way to do just that, and for men it may again relate to identity. It is easier to maintain one's identity at work in a familiar environment, instead of having to renegotiate one's way through a new, unfamiliar one.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study explored the experiences of retirees who have returned to the workforce. Men and women were motivated by extrinsic and intrinsic rewards, as well as the “busy ethic.” There were gender differences in work related motivation, as men tended to focus on extrinsic rewards and women emphasized intrinsic rewards. Obstacles encountered in finding bridge employment were often age related. Networking is the primary tactic used in finding a job. Men often networked with family members while women used friends for finding work. Workplace expectations centered on a desire for a personal sense of control and included jobs where autonomy, flexibility and familiarity were present.

These results are consistent with much of the previous literature on work, retirement and bridge employment, with exception to financial rewards as motivation for returning to work. Regardless of social class or gender, financial rewards were cited as reasons to return to the workforce. However, as previously discussed, they were not primary motivators for most of the respondents. Although it appears that bridge employees have similar work experiences compared to those still in the workforce, their situation is unique. They have the distinctive challenge of having to navigate the workforce as individuals who previously formally retired from it. The renegotiation of identity and sense of self presents a process previously unexplored by much of the

literature. The obstacles they face re-entering the workforce are also unique to their age group, as they are newcomers in a movement from retirement towards productivity in later life.

The largest implication of this research relates to bridge employment experiences. Bridge employment is often considered to be short term, whereas these employees tend to see their jobs as long term. Although some were uncertain as to their future employment plans, most of the respondents expressed a desire to continue working as long as possible, while others discussed waiting until their spouse's retirement to go back into retirement permanently. Bridge employment was also primarily part time for the men and women I interviewed. This may affect the types of employment that retirees engage in because some retirees have limited availability due to pension rules. These limitations may have long-term ramifications on the job market because jobs that these former employees may be qualified for may not be equipped to accommodate their unique situations. This may also affect Social Security as it is projected to experience financial difficulties with fewer workers paying into the system. This may affect the future of younger workers, who, if trends continue, may have no Social Security to support them in old age.

Public policy also needs to address work limitations that are held on certain types of pensions. The static nature of pensions that, unlike Social Security, do not increase to compensate for the increasing cost of living, and make it difficult for individuals who would otherwise permanently retire to maintain a "decent" standard of living.

Researchers and policy makers need to examine current hiring practices and discrimination policies and consider the possibility of amending them to attend to the needs of *all* workers, including the older workers staying in or re-entering the workforce.

This will keep job satisfaction and productivity high, which are important factors to consider as worker demographics change in the United States.

The strengths of this study include the diversity of the participants. Men and women were represented almost equally, and I attempted to attain an ethnically diverse sample as well. The sampling technique allowed me to find respondents from different areas of central Texas who provided various dimensions of experience. The variety of job experience and ages of respondents also gave the data more depth. Qualitative interviewing techniques also provided insight into realms of experience that previous studies cannot capture. The emotions that surround the decision to return to the workforce as well as the feelings of respondents about their identity and status are not easily addressed with survey data.

Sample size is one of the primary weaknesses of this study. Fifteen interviews do not provide the amount of information that may be necessary to understand this emerging phenomenon. Although African Americans and Hispanics were represented in this study, either race only consisted of members from one gender. More interviews are necessary with women and men of other races and ethnicities. Class needs to be considered more closely as well, as only a few of the respondents had worked in blue collar jobs at some point and professional occupations (such as doctors and lawyers) were also left out of the study. This likely relates to the sampling method used, which limited the search to individuals involved with aging organizations that knew people as well as the offices where flyers were placed.

In the future, more research is needed regarding how bridge employment affects life outside of the workplace. Sociologists and other researchers would benefit from

knowing how this phenomenon affects relationships with coworkers, friends and family. Gender and class issues should also be considered, as the work histories of men and women are becoming more similar than in the past, and previous research treats men and women's work histories differently. Women now engage in the "double shift" of paid work and housework at a higher rate, and the consequences of this later in life and into retirement are areas of research that may need to be addressed. A closer examination of the work environment that older workers are in may also be necessary to find any other aspects that may cause conflict in or enhance work experiences.

After my interview with Charlotte was complete, she and I engaged in casual conversation, and she expressed concern with the current status of older Americans. She provided me with several encounters she has had with younger adults from this and other countries, and commented on the stark differences. Her hairdresser is a native of Africa and made her feel like she was "placed upon a pedestal," whereas with younger Americans she felt "tossed aside like an old tire." This conversation addresses an important issue in American society. We live in a society that is youth oriented and stigmatizes aging. Older Americans are subject to negative stereotypes in and out of the workplace, which in turn can affect self-esteem and overall wellbeing. It is important for researchers to understand the experiences and concerns of these individuals, so that their value is not lost on society. As the face of the workforce changes, their contributions will be invaluable. Not only their tangible contributions (such as labor), but also the intangible contributions such as personal experience are important as well. Baby boomers have witnessed and influenced unique social and economic changes and to

ignore the effects of these experiences across the life span could be detrimental to social research in general, but particularly in fields such as sociology and gerontology.

APPENDIX A

RESPONDENT SEARCH LETTER

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Adele Walajtys, and I am a Graduate student with the Texas State University Department of Sociology in San Marcos, Texas. I am currently beginning my Masters thesis for the 2006-2007 school year. I am writing your organization this letter in hopes that you may be of some assistance to me. My Master thesis consists of research on retired individuals who have returned to the workforce. The goal of this research is to uncover the experiences of retired individuals and their reasons for returning to the workforce. I feel that these experiences are vital to understanding the changing face of retirement in the United States today.

In order to collect this information, I am looking for 15 individuals to conduct tape recorded interviews with. Let me assure you that, should you agree to assist me in finding subjects for this research, their privacy is of the utmost importance to the professors of this department who will assist me, as well as myself. A consent form will be provided for all participants, and they may choose not to participate at any time during the entire process. As an added measure of privacy and confidentiality, I will not use the real names of any of the subjects when recording and discussing any findings.

If you feel that you can help me in any manner on this endeavor, or have further questions, please feel free to contact me or my thesis chair at the following email addresses and phone numbers:

Adele Walajtys
Office Phone: 512-245-2477
Cell Phone: 512-921-8290
E-Mail: adele@txstate.edu

Dr. Patti Giuffre
Office Phone: 512-245-2113
E-Mail: pg07@txstate.edu

I appreciate any feedback and/or assistance that you may provide.

Sincerely,
Adele Renee Walajtys

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

Adele Walajtys
Department of Sociology
Texas State University-San Marcos
601 University Drive
San Marcos, TX 78666

You are invited to participate in a study of the experiences of retired individuals who have returned to the workforce. I am a graduate student at Texas State University in the Department of Sociology working on my Masters thesis. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of your past and current employment status. You will be one of fifteen participants interviewed for this study. I will ask you questions concerning your experiences in retirement, as well as the motivations surrounding the decisions to retire and return to the workforce.

If you decide to participate, you will take part in a one-on-one in-depth interview with me. The interview will be conducted in a location that we both feel comfortable with. The interview will be tape-recorded and should take no more than one hour of your time. The possible risk of your participation in this study is the psychological harm from describing/re-living past events and experiences that may have been negative or damaging. Attached is a list of agencies providing different services you may find helpful. The possible benefit is the cathartic experience of discussing events in your life you may not have talked about prior to the interview.

Any information obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with you will remain strictly confidential. Tapes will be assigned a code number so that your name will never be attached to the tape. The tapes will only be heard by me as the interviewer and my supervising professor, Dr. Patti Giuffre. I will not transcribe any name you mention during the interview. When using the information obtained to write my report, an alias or false name will be used in place of your true identity. At the conclusion of this research these audiotapes will be destroyed.

This study has been approved by the Texas State Institutional Review Board (512-245-2102). If you decide to participate in the interview, you are free to stop the interview at any time. You do not have to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable. Feel

free to ask me any questions you might have. If you have any additional questions after the interview, please contact me at 512-245-2477 or my supervising professor Dr. Patti Giuffre in the Sociology Department at Texas State University at 512-245-8983. A copy of this form will be given to you to keep.

You are making a decision whether or not to participate in this study. Your signature means that you have read and understood the information provided and have decided to participate. You may withdraw from participating at any time after signing this form if you decide to do so.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Gender/Race/Ethnicity:

How old are you?

What is your current marital status?

Where did you work before you retired?

How did you get this job?

Why did you work there?

What kind of benefits did this job have?

QUESTIONS ON RETIREMENT

How long were you or have you been retired?

What were your reasons for retiring?

Have your family relationships changed since you initially retired?

Have your friendships changed since you initially retired?

What were your expectations going into retirement?

Would you say that you were prepared for retirement emotionally?

Would you say that you were prepared for retirement financially?

Describe any positive experiences you had as a result of being retired.

Describe any negative experiences you had as a result of being retired.

Overall do you feel that you were treated fairly as a man/woman in your pre-retirement job?

CURRENT EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE

What job do you currently work at?

Why did you return to the workforce?

Did you have any difficulty finding this job (or are you having difficulty, for those in the process of finding a job)

If so, what obstacles did you encounter?

What influenced your choice to work there?

What do your workplace duties entail?

What is your work schedule like?

What kind of benefits does your current employer provide?

Are you happy with your current work situation (why or why not) ?

How long do you plan on working for this company (or how long have you and how long do you plan on working there?)

Overall do you feel that you are/were treated fairly as a man/woman in your post retirement job?

CONCLUDING QUESTIONS

Would you change how you prepared for retirement?

How would you improve the transition from work to retirement?

How would you improve the transition from retirement to working again?

What advice would you give to someone who is contemplating going back to work after retirement?

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