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**Psychological and psychosocial predictors of attitudes to working past
normal retirement age**

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Psychological and psychosocial predictors of attitudes to working past normal retirement age

ABSTRACT

Purpose: The research looks at preferences for retirement, in particular, later retirement, amongst a sample of older employees in the UK in the financial services industry. It investigates specifically the influence of personal, psychological and psychosocial determinants of preferences for retiring later. Additionally, the study presents a typology of different retirement preferences based on psychological and psychosocial variables.

Design / methodology / approach. The data is based on questionnaires from 556 employees of a UK financial services organisation (aged 40 – 60) and measures include psychological expectations of retirement (expected adjustment to retirement, attitudes towards leisure and social interaction), psychosocial attitudes (job satisfaction, intrinsic motivation, organisational commitment and work commitment) and attitudes towards working beyond normal retirement age. Hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted and one-way ANOVA was conducted to identify differences between groups.

Findings. The data show very negative attitudes towards working later than the normal retirement age and that expectations of adjustment to retirement were the most significant predictor towards retirement preferences, followed by work commitment. Significant differences in retirement attitudes and intentions were found between different groups of employees.

Practical implications. Some of the practical implications of the work suggest that retirement preferences are shaped only to a moderate degree by psychosocial attitudes. In seeking to retain older workers in the workforce for longer employers should encourage employees to develop strong social relationships at work and allow gradual transitions to ultimate retirement.

Psychological and psychosocial predictors of attitudes to working past normal retirement age

1 Introduction

Over the past decade knowledge about the predictors of retirement and its antecedents has been extended considerably. The majority of work has focussed on predicting early retirement behaviours. A research interest in early departures, whilst reflecting the empirical trends over the past two decades, is out of kilter with the prevailing pressures for employees to remain in active work for longer. Pressures for continuing to work later in life arise from financial pressures on pension schemes from an ageing population, labour shortfalls and skills shortages (Flynn and McNair, 2009).

Zappala et al. (2008) argue that different countries hold their own normative expectations of retirement ages, based on the prevailing legislative and welfare environment and that employees' retirement choices and decisions are influenced by these norms. Preferences around retirement can therefore be characterised as 'early', 'on time' (according to the local norms) or 'beyond' where the individual continues to work beyond the local norms. Phased retirement refers to working for the same employer, but might also include different working patterns such as job sharing, reduced hours etc (Reday-Mulvey, 1995, Chen and Scott, 2006). Recent studies have found support that workers, including older workers, hold more positive attitudes towards working longer than was previously thought (e.g. Age Concern, 2005, Employers Forum on Age, 2002, HSBC, 2005).

This study makes a contribution to the growing understanding of the factors that influence workers to remain in their job beyond normal retirement age.

Definitions of retirement itself has, of course, attracted much discussion and the research literature has deliberated around its meaning, arguing that the 'point in time', or 'cliff edge' model, when an individual crosses between work and non-work, is no longer valid. Yet the cliff edge model of retirement tends to be entrenched in social and organisation policies and became normatively defined in the 20th century (Moen et al., 2005). Alternative perspectives propose that retirement should be a 'transitional' process between a state of 'work' and non-work.

Historic approaches to predicting retirement decisions have focussed on demographic variables such as income, age and health (Adams, 1999, Beehr et al., 2000, Taylor and Shore, 1995). However, one of the areas that is still unclear is how older workers' views on their jobs impact on their expectations of retirement (Flynn and McNair, 2008). Therefore, recent work in the retirement literature has concentrated on the importance of psychosocial variables in predicting attitudes towards retirement decisions (Crego et al., 2008, Taylor et al., 2007, Wong and Earl, 2009, Zappala et al., 2008). Psychosocial variables relate to the meaning that work plays in an individual's life (for example, their commitment to the organisation, and to work itself) but also their attitudes and expectations of retirement. These variables have been consistently found to be significant in predicting retirement decision and retirement adjustment.

The aims of this research are threefold. Firstly, we examine the preferences for retiring later amongst a sample of older employees in the UK in the financial

services industry. Secondly, we investigate the influence of personal, psychological and psychosocial determinants of preferences for retiring later. Thirdly, we propose and test a typology of work / retirement scenarios based on expected attitudes towards retirement and work related attitudes.

In the next sections psychological and psychosocial antecedents of retirement decisions are reviewed and then a typology of work/ retirement scenarios is presented. We describe and report the findings of a survey of 556 employees from a UK based financial services company to address the research findings. Finally, the results are discussed.

2 Psychological expectations of retirement

An individual's expectations regarding retirement are significant in predicting retirement choices (Adams and Beehr, 1998, Beehr et al., 2000, Kim and Feldman, 2000, Schmidt and Lee, 2008, Taylor and Shore, 1995, Fletcher and Hansson, 1991, Henkens, 1999, Henkens and Tazelaar, 1997). Retirement expectations seem to play an important role in the timing of retirement: employees who expect retirement to be positive are more likely to be interested in earlier retirement (Gall and Evans, 2000, Taylor and Shore, 1995). Individuals' expectations of retirement can vary considerably as people's reactions to a situation depend on their values and belief systems.

Classic research by Hornstein and Wapner (1985) identified four dimensions of attitudes towards retirement: 'a transition to the rest of life'; 'a new beginning', 'continuity' and 'imposed disruption'. In popular imagery, for the baby-boomers, retirement is typified as a 'new beginning' of a meaningful period of life where

the commitments of work are removed and people are able to prioritise non-work activities. The new beginning may also entail renewed work roles and second careers. Moen (1996) characterises this as a 'plurality of life worlds' where individuals occupy a number of roles (such as parent, child, member of a community / group etc) and retirement allows individuals to place greater emphasises on other roles in their lives; or to pursue existing or new leisure activities. For some, therefore, retirement is the opportunity to be released from the obligations of paid employment to undertake new activities or devote more time to existing leisure activities. For others however, retirement can be a source of real anxiety, for example through anxiety about how one will spend one's day, anticipated decrease in social contacts, loss of structure, reduced financial security etc. MacEwen (1995) suggest that anxiety in retirement arises through parental socialisation and through an individual's planfulness arising through his/her locus of control.

Psychological resources such as a sense of control, coping and adaptation play a significant role in retirement expectations. Taylor and Shore (1996) suggest three factors associated with retirement expectations: perceived self-efficacy of adjustment to retirement, anticipated social interaction after retirement and attitudes towards leisure. Self efficacy refers to the sense that one is able to cope effectively with changes leading towards the transition to retirement. Van Solinge and Henkens (2003) found that higher self-efficacy scores are associated with greater ease in adjustment to retirement. Taylor and Shore (1995) found that retirement self-efficacy may predict planned retirement age, because low retirement self-efficacy may lead to an avoidance of retirement.

It may be naive however to consider self-efficacy attitudes to retirement as being positive or negative: Lim (2003) studied attitudes towards retirement and found respondents held rather ambivalent attitudes with regard to the prospect of retirement. That is, while they did not view retirement negatively, they were nevertheless anxious about certain aspects of retirement.

Continuity theory (Atchley, 1976) suggests that older adults seek to continue thoughts, patterns and lifestyles in older life that connect them to their past experiences. Individuals who have pursued leisure activities during their working life will expect to continue with these activities into retirement and there is evidence that attitudes towards leisure also may influence retirement (Poitrenaud et al., 1979, McPherson and Guppy, 1979, Hwalek et al., 1982). Retirement may also bring the adoption of new leisure activities as people may expect to socialise more or travel with friends and family, develop new interests, skills, education or even new careers (Beehr et al., 2000).

Based on the discussion above, we predict that :

H1: Psychological expectations of retirement will explain additional variance over and above personal variables in preferences for working past normal age of retirement. Positive retirement self-efficacy, expected adjustment to retirement and attitudes towards leisure will be negatively related to later retirement preferences.

3 Psychosocial influences on retirement preferences

Individual differences towards attitudes towards work itself impact on retirement choices and the significance that work plays in individuals' lives varies. Role theory (Cottrell, 1942) suggests that individuals occupy a range of roles in their lives which are critical to their self concept and personal identity (Moen et al., 2000, Petters and Asuquo, 2008). Work roles can be an extremely important element of self-concept and self-identity for some individuals, and retirement from work can lead to a significant rupture of personal identity, loss of role and role-related activities and behaviours (Hopkins et al., 2006, Wong and Earl, 2009). Such role loss has been associated in the research literature with difficulties in adjustment (Hedge and Lammlein, 2006, Parsons, 1942, Taylor et al., 2008), decreased life satisfaction (Fry, 1992) poorer adjustment (Van Solinge and Henkens, 2005) and raised levels of stress, depression and anxiety (Adams et al., 2002).

The negative effects of role loss are most significant for people who value the income from work and enjoy status and fulfilling working lives and for whom work forms a central role in their lives. However, this is not the case for all workers. For those with jobs which offer little by way of autonomy and control, retirement may result in greater individual autonomy and reduced stress. For others, work itself may be of significantly less importance than other domains of life (such as leisure or family related activities) and its loss of less personal significance.

Work commitment attitudes therefore are likely to influence an individual's desire to either retire early, retire 'on time' or retire later. Attitudes to work

range from specific (job satisfaction and organisational commitment) to general (work commitment) and are separate constructs (Hackett et al., 2001).

Early work examining the relationship between job satisfaction and retirement decisions has shown mixed results with some studies reporting that high job satisfaction is associated with lesser likelihood of early retirement (Ekerdt and DeViney, 1993, Hayward and Hardy, 1985, McGoldrick and Cooper, 1990).

Other studies however have generally reported a lack of association between job satisfaction and retirement predictions (Beehr et al., 2000, Taylor and Shore, 1995) and that job satisfaction is a predictor of actual retirement behaviours. Studies too have found no effects between attachment to a particular job and retirement decisions (Adams, 1999, Adams et al., 2002). A more recent meta-analysis suggest that job satisfaction is a poor predictor of retirement decisions (Topa et al., 2009).

Organisational commitment refers to the strength of identification with and involvement in a particular organisation (Mowday et al. 1979). Commitment to the organisation has featured in a number of retirement studies and has also yielded mixed findings. From the early retirement literature, there are findings that low commitment to the organisation is associated with early retirement intentions (Adams et al., 2002, Ekerdt and DeViney, 1993, Hayward and Hardy, 1985, McGoldrick and Cooper, 1990). Results indicated that organisational commitment was negatively related to retirement intent.

More recent work has focussed on more generalised work related constructs.

Work centrality refers to the extent that an individual views work itself as the

main component of their life (Diefendorff et al., 2002), (Hirschfeld and Field, 2000). The implications of the worker role on attitudes toward retirement suggest two competing sets of expectations. In line with Atchley's (1976) continuity theory, it could be argued that the more positive the worker identity and commitment to the worker role, the more positive will be the attitudes toward retirement. Men and women who have grown accustomed to thinking of themselves as competent and confident workers will carry over their positive identity to form positive attitudes toward retirement. Likewise, Quinn et al., (1990) found that negative feelings about work in general were reported causes of early retirement. In the later retirement literature, Luchak et al. (2008) find that employees with higher levels of affective work commitment are more likely to plan to retire later and past the age when it is most financially attractive for them to leave the organization. Schmidt and Lee (2008), too, found work centrality to be a predictor in retirement intentions. Given the mixed findings, further research is needed in this area. We investigate four work related constructs: job satisfaction, organisational commitment, intrinsic motivation and work commitment.

Based on the discussion above, we predict that

H2 The work related attitudes of job satisfaction, organisational commitment, intrinsic motivation and work commitment will be positively associated with retirement preferences and will add additional variance over and above personal variables (age, financial comfort and health) and psychological expectations of retirement variables

4 Interaction between retirement expectations and work commitment.

As noted in the review above, the decision to retire is central to both individual's work life and their non-work life: the shift is from 'worker' to 'retiree'. It is therefore a decision which is likely to be complex and involve considerations from both the work and non-work domains. Both work attitudes and employees' expected adjustment to retirement have been found to be significant predictors of retirement decisions (Luchak et al., 2008, Taylor and Shore, 1995).

Nevertheless, these variables may exert conflicting pressures on an individual. (Shultz et al., 1998) discussed the 'push / pull' of retirement decisions whereby the employee is pushed into retirement by aversive working factors or 'pulled' into retirement by the attractions of greater leisure and social time. However, the converse might also prevail. For some individuals, work commitment exerts a 'pull' that retains them in the workforce, whereas negative perceptions of retirement may 'repel' the employee from retirement.

We can use this framework to suggest that employees may be in one of four states. As illustrated in Figure 1, an employee who has a low level of work commitment and high expectations of retirement (Cell 1) is most likely to be actively looking forward to retirement and will seek to retire as early as possible. Behaviourally, this may suggest taking advantage of early retirement options. On the other hand, employees who hold negative expectations of retirement, but who experience high levels of work commitment are most likely to wish to remain in employment and therefore wish to work beyond normal retirement age (Cell 4).

Figure 1: Expected relationships

	Negative expectations of retirement	Positive expectations of retirement
Low work commitment	Cell 2 Despair	Cell 1 Retire Early
High work commitment	Cell 4 Retire late	Cell 3 Dilemma

However, there will be employees for whom the position is not as clear. The employee who has a high work commitment, but also high expectations of retirement (Cell 3) may be in a position of ‘dilemma’, experiencing both pulls from the work environment and also from the prospect of retirement. This position might suggest psychological discomfort and the potential for poor decision making by the employee. On the other hand, the employee who has low work commitment and negative expectations of retirement (Cell 2) may well be in a position of ‘despair’, dissatisfied in the work environment, apprehensive of retirement.

Based on the discussion above, we predict that

H4 The retirement intentions and attitude towards working beyond normal retirement will differ depending on employees expectations of retirement and their work commitment.

In summary, in this study we extend previous research in two respects. Firstly, the focus of the study is on an employees' willingness to work beyond normal retirement age, a variable that has received much less attention than other retirement related studies. Secondly, the study investigates the interaction between work commitment and psychological adjustment on the attitudes.

5 Methodology

Studies into retirement have taken two approaches to measuring retirement variables: retirement intentions and retirement behaviours. The former use cross-sectional survey designs to measure future retirement intentions and the latter use actual retirement behaviours (often drawn from national databases). Beehr and Bennett (2007) make a robust defence of the use of surveys which investigate intentions citing the work of Prothero and Beach (1984) who substantiated the use of retirement intentions as a proxy for actual retirement behaviour, concluding that measuring retirement intentions are viable sources of information about retirement decisions.

In the organisational setting in which the research was conducted the normal (mandatory) retirement age was 60 and consequently no employees worked beyond the age of 60. The study of actual behaviours was not possible. Therefore, the study uses self-reported attitudinal measures about current attitudes towards working beyond normal retirement age.

The research was conducted in the UK offices of a major international financial services organisation. In total, 1200 employees were sent questionnaire via the organisation's internal mail service. Of these, 556 were returned, a response rate of 46.3%. Considering that retirement issues are likely to be of less relevance to younger people (Adams, 1999) this research focused on employees aged 40 to 60. The upper age threshold was determined by the organisation's mandatory retirement age which was set at 60 for both male and female employees. Unlike some previous studies (Taylor and Shore, 1995) which were dominated by male participants, this study sought a more balanced sample in terms of gender, resulting in a sample that included 42% males and 58% females. The mean age of respondents was 48.31 years and the mean tenure in the organisation was just over 19 years. The sample was extracted from the administrative management job grades across a number of branches in five regions of England and Wales.

5.1 The dependent variables

There have been few studies which have specifically investigated attitudes to work beyond normal retirement age amongst samples where later working is not permitted and there are no published scales. A recent study by Zappala et al. (2008) which looked at 'early' or 'later' retirement measure sought to measure attitudes indirectly by calculating differences between expected age of retirement and preferred retirement age. A positive value indicated a preference for later retirement and a negative value indicated a preference to retire before the expected age. This approach is adopted in this study.

The study also investigates the willingness of employees to work beyond normal retirement age. A bespoke four item scale of willingness to work beyond normal retirement age (WBNRA) was developed for the study that incorporated elements of 'flexibility in retirement'. The items were 1) I definitely do not want to work after 60 (reverse coded), 2) I might consider working past 60 if I can keep my present role 3) I might consider working post 60 if I could choose to work more flexibly and 4) I would definitely like to work past 60 (reverse coded). Each of these items was measured on 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). These items have been combined into a single measure of attitudes beyond normal retirement age. Higher scores indicate positive attitudes towards working post 60 and lower scores indicate negative attitudes. As this is a new scale, factor analysis was undertaken. A single factor had an eigenvalue greater than 1 suggesting that the items were measuring a single conceptual construct. The reliability of the 4-item scale measured by the internal consistency coefficient is .86.

5.2 Independent variables

A full description of all of the independent variables and the items and reliability scores is shown in the Appendix. Four personal variables were included in the study: health, age, tenure and financial comfort. Each of these variables has been associated with retirement choices. Psychological factors address a person's beliefs about his/her ability to make a successful transition from full time working to retirement. Three measures developed by Taylor and Shore (1995) were used: expected adjustment to retirement (EAR), Social Interaction (SI) and Leisure orientation (LO). Four psychosocial attitudes scales were selected for inclusion in the study: organisational commitment (OC) (Cartwright

and Cooper, 2002); job satisfaction (JS) (Warr et al., 1979), work commitment (WC) (Mutran et al., 1997) and intrinsic motivation (IM) (Vallerand, 1997).

6 Results

6.1 Intentions and preferences towards retirement age

The mean preferred retirement age for the sample of respondents was 56.13 years and the intended age of retirement was some two years later at 58.5 years. Both the intended and preferred ages of retirement were well before the normal retirement age of 60 in the organisation. This difference was tested statistically using a paired t-test ($t = -14.77$, $df = 507$, $p < .000$). Following the method adopted by Zappala et al., (2008), a single index of the difference between preferred and expected retirement ages was calculated (Table 1). The table shows that 38% of respondents would like to retire 5 years or more before they intend to. Only 5% of the respondents on the other hand believe that they will retire before they would like to.

Table 1: Preferred retirement age minus expected retirement age

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
-15.00	3	.5	.6	.6
-10.00	35	6.2	6.9	7.5
-8.00	4	.7	.8	8.3
-7.00	3	.5	.6	8.9
-6.00	2	.4	.4	9.3
-5.00	147	26.2	28.9	38.2
-4.00	10	1.8	2.0	40.2
-3.00	15	2.7	3.0	43.1
-2.00	18	3.2	3.5	46.7
-1.00	7	1.2	1.4	48.0
.00	238	42.3	46.9	94.9
2.00	2	.4	.4	95.3
3.00	3	.5	.6	95.9
5.00	19	3.4	3.7	99.6
8.00	1	.2	.2	99.8
10.00	1	.2	.2	100.0
Total	508	90.4	100.0	
Missing	54	9.6		
Total	562	100.0		

6.2 Working beyond 'normal' retirement age (WBNRA).

The mandatory retirement age in the organisation was 60 years old. To investigate attitudes towards working beyond this age on a 'flexible' basis, the mean and standard deviation were collected for the 4-item scale. Items were measured on a scale of 1 (low) to 7 (high) and the mean score was 2.86 (standard deviation 1.67). 25% of the sample score the lowest possible score for working beyond normal retirement age suggesting a very low level of pent-up demand for working beyond 60, flexibly or otherwise.

6.3 Predictors of working beyond normal retirement age

The means, standard deviations and correlations for all of the variables are laid out in Table 2.

Table 2: Means, standard deviations and correlations between principal variables

	Mean	Std Dev	Health	Financial Comfort	Tenure	Age	EAR	SI	LO	OC	JS	WC	IM
Health	22.05	4.51											
Financial Comfort	10.83	4.29	0.14**										
Tenure	19.17	11.48	-0.02	0.25**									
Age	48.13		-0.01	-0.01	0.18**								
Expected Adjustment to retirement	23.36	4.24	0.08	0.16**	0.09*	-0.01							
Social interaction	22.20	3.28	0.26**	0.14**	0.00	0.06	0.22**						
Leisure	23.84	3.14	0.07	0.08	0.16**	0.05	0.51**	0.06*					
Organisational Commitment	17.90	3.70	0.17**	0.18**	0.09*	0.02	-0.02	0.17**	-0.10*				
Job satisfaction	77.11	13.65	0.24**	0.24**	-0.01	-0.01	0.01	0.31**	-0.10*	0.57**			
Work commitment	28.04	4.51	0.19**	0.00	-0.09*	0.01	-0.09*	0.14**	-0.12**	0.47**	0.28**		
Intrinsic motivation	49.59	11.43	0.10*	0.05	-0.07	0.03	-0.07	0.25**	-0.15**	0.52**	0.45**	0.46**	
Working beyond normal retirement age	11.44	6.71	.31	-.26**	-.30**	.11*	-.41**	-.01	-.33**	.12**	.01	.26**	.16**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level 2-tailed.

Table 2 shows that this particular sample has an average length of service of more than 19 years. Average level of health is relatively high (mean = 5.57 [scale 1-7]) although the level of financial comfort is lower (mean = 3.68). The score of expected adjustment is high (5.84) suggesting that across the sample, the expectations of respondents' ability to make the transition to retirement are high.

There are significant correlations between the criterion variable and a number of predictors: tenure ($r = -.30$), financial ($r = -.26$), expected adjustment to retirement ($r = -.41$) and organisational commitment ($r = .12$).

To test the hypotheses, hierarchical multiple regression was used to show the amount of variance in the criterion variable could be predicted by the independent variables. In this procedure, the predictor variables were entered hierarchically into the module based on the theoretical predictions above.

Personal variables (age, health, financial comfort and tenure) were entered in the first step as the literature has found strong relationships between these variables and retirement behaviours. Psychological expectations of retirement attitudes were entered in the second step and psychosocial variables were entered in the third step. In each case, if the block was found to be significant, the individual

predictors within the block were examined in further detail to determine those driving the significant prediction.

The results of the multiple regression are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Hierarchical multiple regression

	Step 1 β	Step 2 β	Step 3 β
(Constant)	13.88**	27.01**	20.21**
<i>Personal variables</i>			
Number of years service	-0.17**	-0.14**	-0.14**
Age	1.16**	1.12**	1.06**
Health	0.08	0.10	0.09
Financial Comfort	-0.32**	-0.24**	-0.24**
<i>Psychological variables</i>			
Expected Adjustment to retirement		-0.48**	-0.46**
Social Interaction		0.19*	0.17 *
Leisure		-0.33**	-0.30**
<i>Psychosocial attitudes</i>			
Job satisfaction			-0.06 *
Intrinsic motivation			0.03
Work commitment			.24**
Organisational commitment			0.74
R ²	.17	.33	.37
Adj. R ²	.17	.32	.36
Δ R ²	.17**	.15**	.04**

In step 1, main effects for personal variables were found, accounting for 17% of the variance in the criterion variable. As hypothesised, age was significantly positively associated with retiring later. Tenure and financial comfort were significantly negatively related with the dependent variable. Unlike some other studies, health was not significant.

Hypothesis 1 was supported in that when retirement related variables were added to the model in Step 2, an additional 15% of variance in the dependent variable was found beyond those accounted for by personal factors. The beta values allow comparison between the predictors. Examination of the beta values shows that two of the predictors are significant: expected adjustment to retirement and social interaction. As hypothesised, employees with higher expectations of adjustment to retirement are less likely to work beyond the normal age of retirement, but the higher the level of social interaction, the more likely they are to want to continue to work. .

To test Hypothesis 2, in step 3, psychosocial variables were added. The addition of these variables – in particular work commitment - contributed a small, but significant variance of 4%. The total variance accounted for the by the model is 36%.

6.4 Post-hoc analysis of main effects.

It was hypothesised that work commitment and expected adjustment to retirement would be significant and the hierarchical regression model found there to be main effects for each of the variables. Following the discussion in the theory development section, in order to shed greater light on the relationship between these two variables, we undertook post-hoc tests of the means.

The sample was divided into two groups based on the two independent variables: expected adjustment to retirement and work commitment. For EAR, the sample was divided into 'positive' (individuals who agreed with the statements – scores 5,6 and 7) and 'neutral / negative' (individuals who either did not agree or responded don't know - scores 1- 4). Likewise, for work commitment, the sample was divided into two groups: 'high' (scores 5,6 and 7) and 'low' (1,2 3 and 4). This yielded four groups, as illustrated in Table 3.

The mean score for the three dependent variables was calculated for each group: a) preferred retirement age; b) intended retirement age and c) attitudes to working beyond 60. The results are shown in Table 3. To test for significant differences between groups, the one way ANOVA statistic was calculated.

The results show that the preferred retirement age increases incrementally between the four stages from 54.98 years for those we hypothesised to be in the

'retire early' group through to 59.13 years in the 'retire later' group. (It is notable however that the preferred age of retirement still falls below the normal retirement age in the organisation which was 60 years). The 'intended age' of retirement is also consistent with the hypothesised relationships: the mean intended retirement age of the 'retire early' group is 57.91 years, compared with the 'retire later' group 59.95 years. The 'despair' group too intend to retire aged 59.23 whereas the 'dilemma' group intend to retire at the younger age of 58.80. A similar pattern arises in comparing the attitudes towards working past retirement age: the most negative attitudes are held by those with positive EAR and low work commitment (mean = 2.25) and the highest by those with negative EAR and high work commitment. Those in the 'despair' group hold slightly more positive attitudes to working past retirement age than those in the 'dilemma' group. As shown in Table 3, all of the differences between the groups were significant.

Table 3. Cross-tabulation of work commitment (High / Low) and Expected Adjustment to Retirement (positive / negative)

	CELL 1 <i>Positive EAR / Low WC Retire Early</i>	CELL 2 <i>Negative EAR / Low WC Despair</i>	CELL 3 <i>Positive EAR / High WC Dilemma</i>	CELL 4 <i>Negative EAR / High WC Retire late</i>	F	Sig
n	276	40	175	43		
Preferred retirement age	54.98 years	56.50 years	56.94 years	59.13 years	17.55	.000
Intended retirement age	57.91 years	59.23 years	58.80 years	59.95 years	6.83	.000
Attitude to working past retirement age*	2.25	3.67	3.19	4.43	35.71	.000

* Scale 1 – 7.

7 Discussion

The present research found that attitudes towards retiring later within this sample were largely negative. Nearly one quarter of the sample held the lowest possible score on the dependent variable, a willingness to work beyond normal retirement age. 38% of respondents would like to retire 5 years or more before they intend to. These findings are interesting as they contrast significantly with those of some other studies (e.g. the CROW survey) which found that many workers (including older workers) would like to stay in work longer. Moreover, analysis of the individual items also indicate that more flexible forms of working past normal retirement age were not perceived to be highly attractive. It is not clear whether this is because workers could not envisage alternative working patterns in their own organisation or whether they really did not want to work longer.

The specific focus of this research was to investigate the contribution of psychological attitudes towards retirement and psychosocial work related variables in predicting preferences for retirement later. Prior to discussing the impact of these variables, however, it is important to make some comment on the role of personal factors. Personal factors have been associated consistently with retirement choices and this study too found these to be the strongest predictors of preferences for later retirement. The strongest effect was found for age, followed by tenure. As the age of the worker increases, the more likely they are to want to retire later. On the other hand, the longer the employment in the

organisation, the *less* likely they were to continue working past retirement age. Although there may be some conflation between the two variables here, this may be indicative that individuals become tired of working for the same organisation, rather than work itself. The study found the effect of financial comfort to be weaker than in previous retirement research and health was not significant. Feldman (1994) notes that health might not only play a role in influencing retirement decisions where there are severe health issues which affect the ability to work. Ill-health might be a reason for choosing to retire *early*, effectively 'pushing' the employee out of the work force, but may not influence attitudes towards extending working life.

Psychological expectations of retirement constructs

As hypothesised, main effects were found for both psychological attitudes towards retirement and also psychosocial variables. Psychological attitudes towards retirement accounted for 15% of the variance in the dependent variable, in addition to personal variables. The most influential variable was expected adjustment to retirement. There are wide variations in people's perception of retirement and retirement research suggests that people may hold ambivalent attitudes (Kloep and Hendry, 2006). In addition to the freedom from working, retirement can be variously perceived as a time for 'new beginnings' or the opportunity to take up activities which were either not possible during working or could not be fully developed during working life. For others, retirement signals the beginning of the end, where an individual realises that life is finite and

assumes that the path thereon is one of inevitable decline and death. This research suggests that these expectations of retirement are highly influential in shaping attitudes towards future working / retirement behaviours: those who have more positive expectations of retirement are less likely to be willing to retire later than those whose expectations are more negative. This is consistent with the Zappala et al. (2008) study. Taylor and Shore (1995) argue that people may evaluate themselves on the extent to which they may successfully make the transition to retirement and that this shapes their attitudes towards retirement planning, well before the actual retirement decision. Those who perceive retirement negatively may see continued work as a means of postponing the undesirable aspects of retirement such as having too much time on their hands or a perceived lack of purpose. The fact that leisure activities are significantly negatively associated with preferences for retiring later suggests that older employees are likely to become more involved in non-work activities post retirement. In retirement employees can fulfil different roles in their lives and devote more time to activities which they have been able to prioritise in working lives. This fits with the concept proposed by Moen (1986) of a 'plurality of life worlds' where individuals occupy different domains in their lives which wax and wane over the course of life.

Psychosocial constructs

The study also investigated a number of psychosocial work related constructs and found there to be a main effect for this block which added around 4% of the

total variance in the dependent variable. Commitment to work itself was found to be a significant positive predictor of preferences for retirement later. Work commitment can be linked to role theory which suggests that people occupy a range of roles in their lives which are critical to their self concept and personal identity. Where that role is work related, retirement threatens the individual's sense of self worth and identify. Unless this can be replaced with other roles or links with working life can be retained, then retirement may be seen as undesirable. It is interesting to note that work commitment is the only variable positively significantly associated with a desire to work later. Job satisfaction, which relates to the relationship between the individual and his / her own job, was found to relate negatively to retiring later. The other two variables measured, organisational commitment and intrinsic motivation were not found to be significant. These findings suggest that it is more general considerations relating to the centrality of work in the employee's life which plays a role in retirement decisions, rather than the more specific aspects of the relationship between the employee and his/her present job or company. The findings in this work support those of other studies such as Schmidt and Lee (2008) which found that work centrality was a predictor of retirement decisions and that attitudes towards retirement appear to be influenced by general attitudes towards work, and less so by job or organisation specific considerations. This insight might also help explain the relationship between age and tenure discussed above.

The post hoc analysis of means yield some interesting findings and suggest that the typology proposed is valid. As might be expected, the position on the extremes is as expected: employees who had positive expectations of retirement and whose commitment to work was low preferred and intended to retire at the earliest dates and were the least likely to want to retire later; conversely, those whose commitment to work was high and who had negative expectations of retirement score most highly on the preferences for working later. From a managerial perspective of wishing to understand which employees might be more interested in working later, the intermediate positions yield some interesting results. Those with high work commitment, but who have other significant outside interests are likely to feel have some apprehensions about retirement but sense that they will be able to develop outside roles in order to maintain a sense of identity. For this group, the preferences for working later are lower on the scale and their stated intention retirement intentions were earlier than two of the other groups. Based on Atchley's continuity theory, this group however might be willing to extend their working lives into traditional retirement periods if their employers are able to promote aspects of continuance of valued aspects of the job – such as social structures, meaningful work etc.

Finally, those who have low expectations of retirement and for whom work is not central are more likely than others to stay in work. Again, these findings support the work of Schmidt and Lee (2008) who discuss that individuals are more likely to be committed to activities outside the workplace when their commitment to

work is low. From a theoretical perspective, this interpretation could support both role theory or continuity theory.

Limitations

There are aspects of the present study which require consideration. The primary limitation is that study was conducted in a single organisational setting. The organisation itself was characterised by long tenure and relative stability. As a financial services organisation, the jobs were predominantly white collar. We must therefore be cautious about making any generalisations about the findings. Jobs in manufacturing, academic or professional occupations might differ substantially.

Secondly, the study is based on cross sectional self-report data. The study asks about attitudes towards retirement and preferences towards retirements, rather than measuring actual behaviours. Also, given that the mean age of the respondents was 48 years, it is possible that these employees may have unrealistic expectations of retirement and that their attitudes and actual behaviours may vary considerably. Thirdly, some of the independent variables had low internal reliability scores.

In terms of the examination of constructs, the focus of this study was limited to attitudes towards remaining working in the same organisation. The study did not

investigate attitudes towards working 'post retirement' for a different organisation, or bridge employment.

Implications

In light of concerns about the security of private occupational pensions, the ageing population and the recent changes in legislation surrounding the employment of older workers, there has been a great deal of attention paid in recent years to the need for employees to retire later – beyond the 'normal' expectations of traditional retirement ages. As governments increasingly emphasise a culture which promotes the expectation that an employee need to work longer, the early retirement culture is no longer sustainable. Nevertheless, recent surveys have suggested that there is considerable variation in people's willingness to extend working life and it is helpful to understand the factors which might help predict which workers would prefer to continue to work and those who would not.

The findings of this study suggest that any government proposal to raise the retirement age further are likely to be unpopular given the negative attitudes encountered toward the notion of working beyond normal retirement age – at least amongst the type of respondents in the present study. From a practical standpoint, the significance of expectations of retirement as a predictor of attitudes towards working later suggests that active steps employers might take to encourage their staff to work longer may be fairly limited. Where expectations

of retirement and leisure are high, it may be difficult to persuade employees to stay. What is interesting is look at the characteristics of those who were interested in working later. Typically, it is those for whom the prospect of retirement was not positive. This may be of little consolation to those seeking to encourage people to remain in work. One approach that may play a role in helping to retain the work force is to foster strong work based social relationships.

The findings do tentatively suggest however that there is a tension between the expectations of retirement (positive and negative) and work commitment (high and low). If employers do wish to retain the knowledge, skills and expertise of their employees later, then it would seem that they need to devise means of allowing people to achieve some of the more desirable aspects of retirement (greater free time, opportunity to pursue hobbies and interests) at the same time as retaining some of the benefits of work (status, professional interest, income etc). Phased and flexible retirement initiatives therefore seem to be one of the solutions.

Appendix A Measures

Health was measured using the four item scale adopted by (Adams, 1999). The items were measured on a 7 point Likert type scale. Items were : 1) Overall I am very satisfied with my health; 2) My health is better than that of most people of my age; 3) My health limits my work; 4) Generally speaking, my health is very good. The alpha coefficient for the 4-item scale was 0.94.

Financial Comfort. Satisfaction with expected retirement income was measured using a scale developed from (Keith, 1993)) and consisted of three items: 1) I am satisfied with what my income will be when I retire, 2) I can afford to retire financially 3) One reason I continue to work is because I can't afford to retire. The alpha coefficient was 0.74.

Tenure. Duration of service (tenure) was measured using a single item measure which asked respondents how many years they had worked in the organisation.

Age. Respondents were asked to allocate themselves to one of four groups.

Expected adjustment to retirement. This variable was measured using a scale developed by (Taylor and Shore, 1995). Four items were used to measure an individual's beliefs about his / her ability to make the retirement transition: 1) I am confident that I will easily adjust to retirement; 2) I don't think that I will have any trouble handling retirement; 3) I expect to enjoy retirement; and 4) When I imagine what retirement will be like I feel depressed (reverse coded). The alpha coefficient for the 4-item scale was 0.89.

Social interaction measures were included to capture current and expected post-retirement satisfaction with interactions with work friends with friends outside the work setting and as well as interaction with family members. The scale used was an adaptation of that used by (Taylor and Shore, 1995): 1) I am satisfied with my current level of social interactions at work; 2) I am satisfied with my current level of social interaction outside work; 3) I am satisfied with my current level of family time; 4) In retirement I expect I will be satisfied with social interactions. The coefficient alpha for the resultant 5 item scale was 0.54.

Leisure orientation provides an assessment of whether participants look forward to retirement as a means to enjoy and pursue leisure activities. The 4 items developed by (Taylor and Shore, 1995) constitute the leisure orientation subscale: 1) I look forward to having more leisure time after retirement; 2) I feel that work prevents me from having as much leisure time as a I would like; 3) I enjoy spending time pursuing leisure activities; 4 I feel that retirement will allow me to enjoy more leisure activities. The Cronbach coefficient alpha for the 4-item scale was 0.65.

Organisational commitment The 9 item scale consisting of two subscales: commitment of organisation to employee (e.g. I feel valued and trusted by the organisation) and commitment of employee to organisation (e.g. I feel that it is worthwhile to work hard for the organisation) developed by Cartwright and Cooper (2002) was used. As the original scale, items were measured on a 6 point likert scale. The alpha score for the 4 item scale is .8046.

Job satisfaction. The Warr et al. (1979) job satisfaction scale was used. This scale has 16 items and measures internal motivators and external motivators. Measured on a 7 point scale.

Work commitment. Work commitment was measured using the scale devised by (Mutran et al., 1997), and was composed of a Likert-type scale containing six items. The 6 item scale yielded a coefficient alpha of .70.

Intrinsic motivation was assessed using a version of the intrinsic motivation scale developed and validated by Vallerand (1997). The 12-item scale represents three types of intrinsic motivation: intrinsic motivation to know, to accomplish things and to experience stimulation. Items were measured on a seven point scale. The coefficient alpha for the 10 item scale was .95.

Attitude to working beyond normal retirement age. A 4 item scale was devised and tested: 1) I definitely do not want to work after 60 (reverse coded) ; 2) I might consider working past 60 if I can keep my present role; 3) I might consider working past 60 if I could choose to work more flexibly 4) I would definitely like to work past 60. The 6 item scale yielded a coefficient alpha of .86.

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