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From 'Trailing Wives' to the Emergence of a 'Trailing Husbands' Phenomenon: Retirement Migration to Rural Areas

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ABSTRACT

Migration and gender studies have focused on economically active heterogeneous couples and traditionally highlight a dominant male role in migration decision-making. The female partner is commonly portrayed as a 'trailing wife' or 'trailing mother' with the move found to have a negative effect on her employment prospects. Much less is known about if or how the balance of power shifts between husbands and wives when employment or career-motivated moves are removed from the decision-making process. This is analysed with reference to retirement migration to rural areas of the UK and involved interviews with both partners present. For this cohort of retired couples, and in common with the literature, migration during economically active life course stages demonstrates strong 'trailing wife' and 'trailing mother' tendencies. The male's decision to retire signalled the commencement of a retirement life course stage for the couple. However, in contrast to the earlier male-dominated decision-making, retirement migration saw the emergence of a 'trailing husband' phenomenon. Wives appear to adapt most successfully to the new rural environment, while many husbands found it difficult to adjust (at least initially) to the multiple life changes: moving from largely urban areas to a rural setting alongside exiting the workforce. The findings suggest that the role of leader/follower changed during the

course of these couples' lives together and in relation to their reasons for moving. © 2016 The Authors Population, Space and Place Published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd

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INTRODUCTION

Migration studies that incorporate a strong gender dimension have tended to focus on the migration decision-making of economically active heterogeneous couples. These studies, at least until recently, demonstrate the powerful role of the male partner, with the couple's decision to move influenced by considerations regarding the male's employment, career, and earning capacity (Spitze, 1984): '... a husband with a greater earning ability than his wife has the primary say in a migration decision' (Cooke, 2008a: 165). Males, among the cohort now enjoying a retirement phase of their lives, have traditionally been the dominant breadwinner. As such, family migration during this cohort's economically active life course stages is reported to have been commonly initiated, and the associated decision-making process undertaken, from a predominantly male perspective. The wife has frequently been 'married' to her husband's job (Finch, 1983), a 'tied mover' (Mincer, 1978) or 'trailing wife' (Cooke, 2008b): moving against her wishes but, nevertheless, was prepared to move for the sake of her husband and/or family even when the move may have had a negative effect on her employment prospects and/or earnings.

This paper seeks to contribute to the migration and gender literature with reference to retirement

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migration into rural areas of the UK. It specifically tests if gender aspects observed during earlier life course stages among heterogeneous couples' decisions to move are retained following retirement. It adopts a life course approach, acknowledging that life course change can be an important driver in the decision to move (Clark, 2013), and views the decision to migrate within the context of couples' linked lives (Elder *et al.*, 2003). While retirement and later life migration (Brown & Glasgow, 2008; Warnes, 2009; Evandrou *et al.*, 2010; Rees & Hardill, 2015), rural in-migration (Milbourne, 2007; Ni Laoire & Stockdale, 2016), and related decision-making processes (Stockdale, 2014) have received considerable attention in the academic literature, few studies have explicitly investigated gender aspects to migration at this life course stage: which partner initiated the move? which is most influential in the final decision? and is the 'trailing' partner's post-migration experiences positive or negative relative to the dominant decision-maker?

Following a short overview of the literature on gendered aspects of migration and retirement, the research methodology is outlined, which includes interviews with married heterogeneous couples who had undertaken a long-distance retirement move to rural locations within the UK. The interview explored couples' migration histories and, in greater detail, the more recent retirement move. This interview material is reported in three analytical sections: migration decisions during economically active life course stages; synchronising retirement and migration at retirement; and post-retirement migration experiences. The analysis focuses on identifying and understanding gender dimensions in migration decision-making. The paper concludes by suggesting the emergence of a 'trailing husbands' phenomenon following retirement, noting that males are most likely to experience difficulties following retirement migration and/or the act of retirement itself, and calling for further qualitative research into the changing gender roles of leader-follower across the life course and for different reasons for moving.

The Migration and Retirement Behaviour of Couples

There is an extensive literature on family migration (see Rossi, 1955; Mincer, 1978; Cooke, 2008b), which

acknowledges that the decision to move is affected by multiple considerations (Swain & Garasky, 2007) and characterised by couple disagreements, negotiations, and compromises (Green, 1997; Challiol & Mignonac, 2005; Ferreira & Taylor, 2009; Coulter *et al.*, 2012). This literature concentrates on migration during the economically active life course stages of a heterogeneous couple's life together. Specifically, these studies report that the female partner/wife is more likely to initiate and have her desire to move fulfilled, if 'she' dislikes the current dwelling or neighbourhood (Coulter *et al.*, 2012): such residential moves frequently involve short-distance relocation and do not necessitate a change of employment by either partner. They, therefore, have no effect (either negative or positive) on the husband's career. By contrast, when it comes to long-distance and primarily employment or career-motivated migration, there is broad consensus (Cooke, 2008b; Coulter *et al.*, 2012) that '...one partner (more frequently the woman) [has] to bear the burden of compromise...' (Green, 1997: 645). The longer distance migration behaviour of couples is, therefore, frequently couched in terms of the human capital model and more specifically the man's employment. There is a strong relationship between spatial and male social mobility. The more discontinuous or interrupted work histories of women (caused, for example, by family formation) affects their income and career progression (Griffin *et al.*, 2013) and, accordingly, their role in migration decision-making. Moreover, the geographical ubiquity of wives' jobs frequently facilitates migration motivated by their husbands' careers (Green, 1997; Shauman, 2010).

Such moves are reported to have a negative effect on wives' employment, occupational status, and earnings (Boyle *et al.*, 2001; Clark & Huang, 2006; Cooke *et al.*, 2008a; Cooke *et al.*, 2009; Mulder & van Ham, 2005; Taylor, 2007). This gendering of migration may be an unintended consequence of rational (income maximising) household decision-making or an outcome of traditional patriarchal gender roles (Boyle & Halfacree, 1999). Either way, women have been referred to as 'tied migrants' and 'trailing wives'. Some studies suggest that any negative effect may be short-lived (Cooke, 2001; Clark & Withers, 2002; Blackburn, 2010), while Geist and McManus (2012) report that the effects differ depending on the reason for moving. Mincer (1978: 771) alleged that '[t]ied migration ranks next

to child rearing as an important dampening influence in the life-cycle wage evolution of women'. However, it is unknown whether the post-migration employment outcomes for wives signify intended or unintended consequences of family migration (Cooke, 2001; Smith, 2004): '... at least some of the negative migration effects might have been due to the "trailing mother" with young children rather than simply "the trailing wife"' (Hiller & McCaig, 2007: 459). Moreover, it is generally the post-migration experiences in terms of wives' employment, occupational status, and earnings that have been studied. Smith (2004) and Amcoff and Niedomysl (2015) call for greater research into the wider satisfaction levels following migration.

Many of the studies reported earlier consider family migration from a purely economic or employment perspective and rely on quantitative data, such as Census and longitudinal data. Smith (2004: 263), in advocating a more qualitative approach (along with Bielby & Bielby, 1992; Cooke, 2003), argues that 'previous quantitative-based studies have over-privileged economic-related outcomes and masked the underlying social and cultural decision-making processes of family migrants'. For example, the gender role beliefs of both partners are important (Bielby & Bielby, 1992; Challiol & Mignonac, 2005). Where traditional gender roles are held, it is the husband who influences the decision to move (irrespective of the consequences for his wife). Where more egalitarian gender role beliefs dominate, then the effects of the move on the spouse's employment are considered in the couple's decision-making (irrespective of whether the husband or wife commands the greater salary).

Non-economic factors (social, cultural, and psychological processes) of family migration decision-making have dominated the literature on rural in-migration and retirement migration. Quality of life or lifestyle motivations, for example, feature more prominently than economic or employment considerations in many studies (van Dam *et al.*, 2002; Benson & O'Reilly, 2009; Bijker *et al.*, 2012). Retirement as an impending or actual life course event has long been acknowledged as a trigger for migration (Wiseman, 1980; Litwak & Longino, 1987; Bures, 1997; Carlson *et al.*, 1998; Longino *et al.*, 2008; Sander & Bell, 2014), although household formation and dissolution at or around the time of retirement may muddy the link (Grundy,

1985). In common with all migrations, retirement migration is influenced by personal and household characteristics (Sommers & Rowell, 1992) including the spouse's employment status (Sander & Bell, 2014). Preferred destinations favour scenically attractive coastal or rural areas (Law & Warnes, 1982; Warnes, 1993; Brown & Glasgow, 2008) and include international relocations (King *et al.*, 1998; Oliver, 2008; Warnes, 2009). Such moves are widely acknowledged as amenity-led and/or lifestyle-led (Haas & Serow, 1993; Longino *et al.*, 2002; O'Reilly & Benson, 2009; Davies & James, 2011); but see, for example, Hoggart and Buller (1995). Notwithstanding these different motivations, and just as during economically active life stages, retirement migration is commonly reported as male-led (Law & Warnes, 1982; Carlson *et al.*, 1998).

Other research notes gender differences over the course of the life course (Green, 1997), at different stages of the actual decision-making process (Seavers, 1999), over time (Smits *et al.*, 2003) and for different migration types (Bailey & Cooke, 1998; Amcoff & Niedomysl, 2015). Cooke and Bailey (1999) suggest that families in fact give greater weight to the female's employment in migration decision-making than is assumed by the human capital model, and Challiol and Mignonac (2005) claim that a couple's decision-making process is increasingly a search for compromise solutions with respect to both the professional and family roles within the couple. Smits *et al.* (2004) and Hiller and McCaig (2007) find evidence of female-initiated moves to further 'her' career with the husband now a 'tied mover'. Hiller and McCaig (2007: 470) further note that 'migration can potentially be empowering for women as a "catapult for growth and change" (McCollum, 1990: 34) in contrast to the victim/subordination theme' (Hiller & McCaig, 2007: 470).

This suggests that the migration decision-making of married couples is becoming increasingly nuanced, and that today's cohort of retirees may well be the last to display evidence of the human capital model, whereby migration at earlier life course stages was largely undertaken from 'his' perspective. Bearing this in mind, focusing on retirement as a life course event allows us to examine family or more accurately (given that children will most likely by now have left home) couple migration with his and her employment, career, and earning capacity removed as critical factors in the decision. With their removal, has the

gendered aspects of migration reported earlier continued (namely, does the 'trailing wife' phenomenon which allegedly characterised economically active life course stages continue in retirement migration decision-making) or has there been a notable shift in the balance of decision-making power within couples towards the emergence of a 'trailing husband' phenomenon? Moreover, does the post-migration experiences of the 'tied spouse' (irrespective of gender) at this life course stage continue to be negative?

In seeking to answer such questions, the literature on the retirement decision of couples, and specifically the timing of retirement, is insightful. The timing of retirement is influenced by several factors (De Preter *et al.*, 2015) and is gendered, although Feldman and Beehr (2011) allege that the decision to retire early is a joint or household decision. Which partner is most influential depends on individual age, who is affected most by retirement, and the financial and social resources balance between partners (Henkens, 1999). The partner who becomes eligible to retire first is most influential: traditionally, the male is the older partner. Similarly, retirement is likely to have most repercussions for the men: traditionally, the main breadwinner whose transition from (most likely) full-time employment (and a position of relative power and responsibility) to retirement will be the greatest. Regarding financial resources, the husband's greater contribution is likely to hold sway in any retirement decision. However, Henkens (1999) hints that women's greater social resources might prove influential in the decision, because retirement as an event involves a transition from an economic to more social life course stage.

Previous studies (Henkens, 1999; van Solinge & Henkens, 2005) demonstrate that wives frequently synchronise their retirement with that of their husbands: '... both spouses see a man's retirement as a family event, but a woman's retirement is viewed more as an isolated occurrence [and as such] a wife's life transition to retirement seems to fall into the tagalong category' (Smith & Moen, 1998: 743). This has continued to be the case among diverse family histories and marital experiences (Damman *et al.*, 2014). The shared transition into retirement reportedly also enhances both partners' adaption to retired life. Men find it most difficult to adjust to retirement (Szinovacz, 1989) and are more socially isolated than women (Slevin &

Wingrove, 1995). Retired husbands whose wives are also retired report fewer depressive symptoms (Kim & Moen, 2001; Szinovacz & Davey, 2004), and wives' satisfaction following their husbands' retirement is greater if it has been a joint decision (Dorfman & Hill, 1986). Synchronised retirement can also maintain or shift power structures within the couple (Szinovacz & Davey, 2005). Either retirement leads to parallel resource losses, and therefore a continuation of the husband's authority, or it changes the couple's relative resources and with it the wife's dependency. In the latter case, wives may emerge as the dominant decision-makers so that in terms of retirement migration, a 'trailing wife' phenomenon is potentially replaced by that of a 'trailing husband'.

It is acknowledged that some of the literature on gendered aspects of family migration is now dated. It can no longer, for example, be assumed that husbands are the main breadwinner (Green, 1997; Soobedar, 2011; Richardson *et al.*, 2014) or that migration decisions are taken from 'his' perspective. In dual-career households, compromises will be made (Green, 1997) including husbands becoming 'tied stayers' (Swain & Garasky, 2007). Men are now just as likely to be tied migrants (Smits *et al.*, 2004). If the move is in search of employment, both partners may in fact be tied migrants (Cooke, 2013): neither spouse wants to move but a move is necessary. Nevertheless, focusing on retirement migration, which removes employment, career, and earning considerations from a couple's decision-making process, yet reports on a cohort of retirees that (relative to future cohorts) is most likely to have experienced the dominance of male human capital in migration decision-making at earlier life course stages, provides an opportunity to explore whether retirement as a life course event results in a shift from a 'trailing wife' to a 'trailing husband' phenomenon in the decision to move. In short, this paper asks: does the male-dominated gendered nature of pre-retirement decision-making continue after retirement and does the 'trailing spouse's' post-migration experiences continue to be negative?

The Data

Interview material collected as part of a qualitative phase of a research project examining rural in-migration at or around retirement in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland is analysed. Interviewees were selected following a household

survey – the analysis of which is reported elsewhere (Stockdale & MacLeod, 2013; Stockdale, 2015). The survey asked for individuals to volunteer to participate further by way of a face-to-face interview (thereby generating the interview sample frame). The aim was not to deploy statistically representative sampling to select cases but to employ symbolic sampling in order to explore the multiplicity of life course mobilities and experiences. Interviewee selection focused on in-migrant households who had undertaken their most recent move when the head of household (self-defined) was aged 50 years or over and who explicitly cited ‘planning for retirement’ or ‘retirement’ as a motivation for the move to their current address. Sixty interviews were conducted: some with both partners present (a joint interview). All interviewees were in heterogenic relationships and had retired at or around the time of their move. All had, therefore, participated in retirement migration (both in terms of timing and reason for moving).

Interviews adopted a biographical and life course approach and were designed to elicit in-depth information about household migration histories, migrant decision-making processes, and post-migration experiences of living in their current rural locality. Additionally, interviews with both partners present focused on negotiation and compromise in the couple’s migration decision-making process, as well as any differences in their post-migration experiences. With one exception, all interviews were conducted in the interviewees’ homes (the other at their workplace), lasted on average 2 hours, were recorded, and later fully transcribed. Through close reading and re-reading of the transcripts, emergent themes were identified and analysed as part of an iterative analytical process. The inclusion of joint interviews with both partners present captured gendered aspects of migration decision-making, which otherwise may have gone unreported. As noted by Challiol and Mignonac (2005: 259), ‘each partner was in a position to enrich each other’s narrative or challenge their points of view ...’ for each shared migration event. The sections that follow focus on gender (namely, was it the male or female partner who was most influential in the couples’ decisions) and analyse the couples’ decision-making for moves undertaken during earlier economically active life stages, the

retirement decision and subsequent retirement migration, and their post-retirement migration experiences in order to shed light on the satisfaction levels of ‘leader’ and ‘follower’. Extracts from the interviews use a pseudonym in order to protect anonymity.

Migration During Economically Active Life Course Stages

Any information relating to moves undertaken at earlier life course stages is fraught with the problem of memory recall. Because all interviewees were aged 55 years or over and retired at the time of interview, many of the moves reported had been undertaken some considerable time earlier. It is acknowledged that important information may have been omitted or forgotten by each interviewee, and ‘the reasons for moving people retrospectively report may tell us only part of the story about why they moved’ (Coulter & Scott, 2015: 356). Nevertheless, the migration histories reported by these couples typically reflect moves at key stages of the life course, for example, to further or higher education and on completion of full-time education/commencement of employment as individuals, at the union formation stage, when the current household/couple was established, at the family formation and empty-nest stages, and at or around retirement (when all had moved to their current rural address). The most recent move undertaken by the interviewees (that is, the retirement migration) had been from an urban to rural area and frequently (but not exclusively) involved a move from urban England to rural Scotland, Wales, or Northern Ireland. All had undertaken a long-distance retirement move.

The following interview excerpts are typical migration histories and provide evidence of the female partner as a ‘trailing wife’ or ‘trailing mother’ during the economically active stages of the couples’ lives together. Eva who, with her husband, now lives in rural Northern Ireland recalled the principal moves undertaken during her lifetime alongside her employment history:

I went to college and lived in [named accommodation block]. I went to do a post-graduate qualification in England and then I came back and worked in Belfast. Well my sister had moved overseas and I went

out to visit and stayed for a year! [On my return] I worked in Belfast and continued to live in Belfast when I got married: .. our house was half-way between his parents and my parents. ... We took out a mortgage because he [husband] had a reasonable job ... he worked in an engineering works. ... No I didn't work then, ... I had the children. ... He got a job overseas. So we were there for about 9–10 years. ... The youngest was five when we came back [to Belfast]. ... I returned to work for a period when the children were older I left work to look after mum. [When mum died] I applied for work and then got a job ... in a neighbouring town. That suited very well – ... work in neighbouring town, two days a week. (Eva).

Note how Eva's migration history after marriage was dictated by her husband's career opportunities even though she herself was highly educated/qualified. Similarly, observe her own employment breaks during a family formation stage and then later to care for an ageing parent. When she did return to work, it was only 'when the children were older', and later, only on a part-time basis (that is, two days a week).

Just like Eva, Anne's account (quoted below) provides evidence of a 'trailing wife' moving in response to her husband's new job even though she herself was a midwife. The move also corresponded with a family formation stage for the couple so that Anne (along with Eva) is probably best categorised as a 'trailing mother'. Observe too how a more local, short-distance move was initiated by Anne (following her illness). This accords with the view of Coulter *et al.* (2012) that short-distance relocations initiated by the female partner are more likely to occur because they have no effect on the husband's career.

I left school at sixteen and then went into nursing. I did my four years [nursing training] and then I applied to do my midwifery and I did that in <city in south of England> and that's where I met my husband. ... He [husband] was working for an engineering firm doing research and development. Later he trained as a teacher. ... [When we got married] we moved into a rented flat and we

lived there for two years. William [husband] applied for a teaching post in Scotland and got it, so we had to move all the way up there and we had our children up there. ... I did go back to nursing but not until <youngest child> got to sixteen. I went to work in a nursing home... that is until I got ill... And then I was diagnosed, ... we lived in a big house and we had a huge garden and I said to William, I don't know whether I'm going to live or die but you'll never manage the house and garden on your own, so I think we should start looking [for a smaller house]. ... We downsized considerably. (Anne now living in rural Scotland with her husband William).

Similar life course and migration histories were reported during interviews with males, so that the earlier excerpts cannot be criticised for reflecting a specific female slant. An excerpt from Robbie's interview is used by way of illustration. Here, not only did the couple move in response to Robbie being relocated/transferred by his employer but there is also evidence of his wife's (Joanne) career being 'put on hold' for the sake of Robbie's career advancement. This also corresponded with a family formation/child rearing phase of the couple's life. It was only when the children were at secondary school and Robbie held 'a fairly senior job' that his wife Joanne embarked on a teaching career.

I'm from the NW of England <large town> and my degree was in business studies. and I ended up with a fairly senior job in the telecommunications. I headed up the telcoms department. When I married Joanne ... we lived in NW England, ... then after eighteen months I got transferred to <large city> and we moved to a small village close to the city. Joanne was at college when I met her ... she then worked part-time in a shop, ... but no she didn't work while the children were young, she only started working when they went to secondary school. ... Then she decided she wanted to do a bit more so she went back to college and did teacher training. (Robbie who with Joanne now lives in rural Wales).

Up until this point, these interviewees 'matter-of-factly' and subconsciously report evidence of a

'trailing wife or mother' but do not necessarily present it in negative or sacrificial terms. Only Anne expressed any sort of dissatisfaction '... so we had to move all the way up there' when commenting on the couple's move to Scotland. In contrast, Patricia consciously reported herself as a 'follower' with reference to the couple's multiple overseas moves in relation to her husband Martin's employment:

I just followed him around the world and we ended up here (Patricia).

Moreover, Patricia expressed a degree of reluctance for this role claiming:

...[it] wasn't easy. But it's easier to keep him sweet! ... I just followed

Indeed, frequently, it was husbands (not wives) that explicitly acknowledged a 'trailing wife' element. For example, Huw who moved with his wife Sally and their then young family from England to Wales noted:

I was applying for jobs and I got this one [in Wales]. ... we had a young family and yes Sally was working – so she had to quit. ... Yes the decision [to move] was about my employment. Very selfish!

In relation to the migration histories of couples now enjoying a retirement life course stage, most had moved multiple times during their life together. These moves, undertaken during earlier economically active life stages, follow the well rehearsed narrative evident in the family migration literature, namely, moves initiated by the husbands' employment or career opportunities with wives fulfilling the role of 'follower' or 'trailing wife' (Hiller & McCaig, 2007; Cooke, 2008b). However, like Smith (2004), it is impossible to distinguish the effects of such moves on wives' career prospects from a conscious family formation stage in the couples' lives. What can be said, however, is that economically active migration by these couples corresponds to certain life course events and relates to at least two domains of a couple's life

together: husbands' career progression and family formation.

Synchronising Retirement and Migration at Retirement

Turning now to retirement as a life course event, the female role as 'follower' continues when the act of retirement is considered. Not one example of the female retiring first or initiating the decision to retire was reported at interview. Instead, in accordance with other studies (Smith & Moen, 1998; Henkens, 1999), the male's exit from employment signalled the commencement of a retirement life course stage for both partners, with the female falling into the 'tagalong category'. The following selections of interview quotes are illustrative of this:

Clive – well he'd retired, so I thought I can retire too (Jackie).

Alex, my husband, took early retirement in his 50s. I retired as well (Iris).

... at my retirement, Joanne finished work at the same time (Robbie).

Simon had retired, it made sense that I retired too (Rebecca).

Paul retired, so I can retire too (Eva).

This occurred irrespective of whether or not the male had reached the eligible state (male retirement age of 65 years (for this cohort) so that the decision was not only influenced by an (generally) older husband reaching retirement age first. To the contrary, many males had retired early – in their fifties – with the female often several years younger. It is perhaps because many of the males had professional or managerial careers that they were able to retire early with a good pension and so accommodate their spouses' withdrawal from economic activity at the same time. This pattern will not necessarily be repeated among couples where the husband works in a 'less good' job or where the female commands a high salary. Nor might it be

repeated among later cohorts composed of a greater proportion of dual-career households.

Nevertheless, among this particular cohort of couples, this move into retirement represents something of a watershed in terms of the male's authority when it comes to the decision to move. In broad terms, the motivations for retirement migration (Stockdale, 2014) centre on a desire for a change of lifestyle, the shift into an empty-nest phase of the couple's life, financial considerations with many releasing equity from a family home and down-sizing, or quite simply that retirement gave the couple an opportunity to fulfil long-held residential preferences for a place in the country. As several interviewees put it:

Stephen [husband] had retired. ... Our children had more or less left home too by then. Our youngest was at university... We were free in a way (Barbara).

We'll do what we want – we can now do what we want (Lawrence).

We decided to enjoy ourselves – it [retirement] was an adventure (Elizabeth).

However, in contrast to the presence of 'trailing wives' and 'trailing mothers' during economically active life course stages, retirement migration was more frequently (but not exclusively) initiated by the female partner. Indeed, it is striking from the excerpts in the succeeding paragraphs that following retirement, it is commonly the wives who initiate the decision to move and decide where to move to. Accordingly, there is evidence that a 'trailing wives' phenomenon, if not wholly replaced by, is at least accompanied by the emergence of a 'trailing husbands' phenomenon: males who reluctantly moved or at least were initially reluctant when the idea to move was first broached by their spouses. Note too how the 'trailing' partner's reluctance (especially if the trailing partner is male) is explicitly reported. This is in contrast to the male career-motivated moves reported earlier where the female role as 'follower' was rarely acknowledged. Perhaps this lack of acknowledgement signals that females were quite happy to 'follow' or at the very least

viewed such behaviour as normal during an economically active stage of a couple's life together.

Eva, who was shown earlier to have 'followed' her husband's career-motivated moves throughout her married life, at retirement became the decision-maker or 'leader' in such decisions, despite her husband Paul's initial reluctance to move:

Paul was approaching retirement. ... I was the one who realised it first, ... I was the one who said to Paul, 'look, I would much rather we move ... go for broke and go to my parents' area'. .. He was uncertain at first. He wasn't sure. I suppose the idea of moving to the country and all that. He was a city man. He hesitated for quite a wee while. But in my mind I was absolutely sure that I wanted to come and live here and that was what we did (Eva).

Similarly, Susan following the couple's retirement initiated a move from the South of England to rural Scotland. While Christopher (her husband) expressed a reluctance to consider such a drastic change of residential environment at first, he finally agreed:

I managed to convince my husband [Christopher] that Scotland was the way to go – I was not going to stay in the South of England ... I'd had enough. And he agreed. In the end he said, 'do you know you're right' (Susan).

Christopher confirmed his initial reluctance in their joint interview:

Scotland – the Scottish countryside – let's just say I had to be convinced! I worked in the SE [all my life]. ... she was serious about the move, well the idea grew on me.

Ruth too had clearly made her mind up to move from Edinburgh following her husband Norman's retirement: indeed it seems that Norman had no say in this decision at all.

If I was moving, he [Norman] was coming too! (Ruth).

Trailing Husbands

Again, when Kevin and Claire retired, it was Claire who initiated their move from SW England to the Welsh countryside. Kevin, despite his reservations, went along with his wife's wishes. This seems to have been in recognition that Claire had made sacrifices throughout Kevin's career, suggesting that she too had been a 'trailing wife' during the couple's previous relocations. Note the following exchange between the couple during their joint interview:

She decided (Kevin).

.... I thought 'yes, this is what I want, (Claire).

I ... didn't want to be here, But then Claire had made so many sacrifices the years before it would have been not right of me to [not have] gone along with it (Kevin).

In these examples, it would appear that couples' entry into a retirement life course phase (although its timing was dictated by males) allowed wives to step out from behind their husband's dominant decision-making (up to that point in their lives) and assume a more active role in the decision to move. The end of couples' working life course phase seems to empower women to take greater responsibility for where the couple reside, take the lead, and indeed persuade husbands on occasions. Retirement migration, among this cohort of retirees at least, includes 'trailing husbands'.

This, however, is not always the case. For some couples, the traditional and long-standing power or authority of the male partner was found to have continued. In such instances, 'trailing wives' were more likely to voice their reluctance or initial hesitation about the retirement move than was the case for moves undertaken during the economically active stage of their lives.

Take, for example, the following excerpts from interviews with Iris, Rosemary, and Patricia. All report that retirement migration was led by their husbands and that they personally had some hesitation/reservations:

When Alex [husband] first broached the

subject of moving here, I wasn't so sure. Well I wasn't sure. Alex had to convince me (Iris).

It was really him [husband] who wanted to come here. I was quite happy where I was ... (Rosemary).

I loved Glasgow ... It was just so convenient for everything I was very reluctant when he [husband] said we'd buy this place here. I've accepted it now. But it wasn't easy (Patricia).

What we find then, in contrast to the largely male-initiated moves that occurred during the couples' working lives, is that wives are just as likely as husbands to 'lead' or initiate retirement migration. 'Trailing husbands' emerge as a notable feature of migration following retirement. In addition, the 'trailing spouse' (irrespective of gender) in a retirement move is more likely to acknowledge their initial hesitation than was the case for moves undertaken at earlier life course stages. One should be cautious not to read too much into this finding. It may simply be the result of memory recall, that is, interviewees remembering more of the negotiation and compromise associated with the most recent move (compared with those that took place, in some cases, some considerable time previously) and/or interview questions focusing more specifically on the couple's last move. Further, probing into the decision-making associated with earlier moves may have exposed greater reluctance to move by the trailing spouse.

Post-Retirement Migration Experiences

The literature relating to migration during earlier life course stages reports the negative consequences for the 'trailing' partner's (i.e. the wife) employment and earnings (Mulder & van Ham, 2005; Cooke *et al.*, 2009). Does this negative outcome for the 'follower' continue when it comes to retirement migration and when the 'follower' is just as likely to be male as female? In addition, the retirement literature specifically suggests that males have greater difficulty adjusting to retirement than females (Szinovacz, 1989), but that retirees whose wives are also

retired report fewer difficulties (Szinovacz & Davey, 2004). Does the fact that females in this study synchronised their exit from the labour force with that of their husbands suggest that the transition into retirement for these males will be less traumatic? Add to this change in employment status those affecting other life domains – the move to a rural location (residential domain) alongside possibly children having left home (family domain) – and it becomes important to ask if the post-migration experiences of retired couples are gendered. This section of the paper seeks to contribute to calls from Smith (2004) and Amcoff and Niedomysl (2015) to study post-move satisfaction levels and to respond to Halfacree and Rivera's (2012: 92) observation that '... migrants' subsequent lives in rural places [are] much less examined'.

Personal post-move experiences were explored at interview and could have been considered from different perspectives. Here, couples' level of involvement in the local rural community is used as a proxy to obtain a sense of how these retired migrants have adapted, adjusted, or settled into their new rural location. It is acknowledged that age, gender, education, and health help to explain variable participation levels (Moen & Flood, 2013), and that non-involvement does not necessarily indicate a more negative experience or lesser satisfaction with the move. Nevertheless, it was when discussing each couple's active participation in the local community that gendered aspects to 'how each partner had adapted to their new residential environment' emerged. Previous studies have alleged that rural in-migrants may become heavily involved in rural politics (Woods, 2005), and that retirees in particular are often active community volunteers (Joseph & Skinner, 2012). Such aspects are not explicitly considered here: instead, the emphasis is on how couples perceived and portrayed their involvement in the local rural community and importantly if this involvement was gendered.

In some instances, both partners had become actively involved. Take for example, Iris and her husband Alex who moved to rural Northern Ireland from England:

Everyone was really friendly towards us and introduced us to a lot of people. I found there were things to do here. I had the opportunity

to do flower arranging, then I joined the painting class. I'm secretary of the local community association (Iris).

I run a little computer club on a Tuesday and Wednesday night – we show them how to use a computer. ... I volunteer for a local charity and I do the admin side of it. ... I also helped the local community association do a web site and I help them with doing their applications for grants. ... Yes, we're supposed to be retired! (Alex).

or Huw and Sally who moved within Wales.

For our sins, Sally and I got involved. ... I'm involved with the local rugby club, cricket club, tennis club, also Sally is on the board or committee of voluntary organisations I'm on the local community council (Huw).

Personality traits are known to affect, for example, levels of volunteering (Mike *et al.*, 2014), and some interviewees offered this as an explanation for either partner's lack of community involvement. Christopher reports this with reference to himself, while Brian does so with reference to his wife, Wendy.

[T]o be honest ... I'm not really a people person. It's not like I'm a hermit or anything [but] I'm not really a people person either ... (Christopher).

It strikes me if you don't have friends here or don't know people in the village it's down to you, it's not down to anybody else. ... I met a lot of friends through joining a local club. I meet people there. ... Wendy [my wife] doesn't get involved so much She is much more timorous than I. Wendy I suppose is not as comfortable doing things as I am (Brian).

In a joint interview with Adam and Gillian, both alleged that the other 'didn't want any involvement'. According to Adam, Gillian, who had initiated the couple's retirement move, despite her best efforts, prefers her own company when it comes to pastimes.

Gillian [my wife] didn't want any involvement

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in anything. ... She's tried to join things but hasn't found herself comfortable. So she tends not to get very much involved. I go to the choir – she wouldn't. I was in the drama festival – she wouldn't ... she struggles to get involved in the same way. ... so for her it's the TV and a lot of reading (Adam).

However, while Adam reported his own participation in a choir and drama group, Gillian alleged that he withdrew psychologically immediately following the move.

Adam [my husband] didn't want any involvement in anything ... psychologically he just withdrew from everything (Gillian).

As the interview progressed, Adam admitted that he had found it difficult initially. In this example, it was the male 'follower' who had greatest difficulty adapting. Indeed, it was alleged by both genders that it was the males who commonly found it most difficult to assimilate or settle into their new rural location, or perhaps more accurately had greatest difficulty adapting to the multiple life changes associated with the move (as recognised by Martin among the excerpts in the succeeding paragraphs). It is worth noting too that, in the case of Eva and Paul, Susan and Christopher, and Kevin and Claire, it was the wives who initiated retirement migration to a rural area.

Eva reported:

The main thing I became aware of – Paul [her husband] had cut himself off – he loved golf and he didn't have a golfing buddy [here]. ... The first few months, I kept thinking is Paul missing the sociability of the city? It took him time to make friends He found it difficult to begin with.

Martin admitted that

I was a bit itchy at the beginning [when first moved] ... I'd also stopped working. So it was a mixture of settling here and stopping working.

Christopher acknowledged that he found it difficult to develop a circle of friends in the area:

I've found it difficult I haven't been able to build my own social group. ... I'm very much more the social friend getter type and I've found that difficult here.

The move was most traumatic for Kevin who displayed depressive symptoms:

[After we moved here] I sat indoors for nearly two years. Claire [his wife] had to drag me out, 'stop feeling sorry for yourself and get on with it'. ... Slowly it improved

By comparison, females appeared to adapt more easily to the move and were much more likely to get involved in the local community. Contrast, for example, Susan's assertion that

I volunteer for activities at the school ...

with the experience of her husband Christopher (reported earlier), 'I've found it difficult'.

Similarly, while Eva remarked that '... Paul had cut himself off...', she

[got] involved locally, I go to women's groups in nearby villages, ... I lead a weekly event I feel very much part of the community,

and while Kevin '... sat indoors for nearly two years...', Claire reported:

I go to the gardening club and I go to painting classes. I always fancied joining the WI [Women's Institute] and I did.

It is unclear, however, whether these 'trailing husbands' initial negative post-retirement move experiences were as a result of them being male, a 'follower', struggling to adjust to retirement, or simply an outcome of their personalities. In any case, not all retired male 'followers' experienced difficulties. Ruth, who reported earlier that if she were moving, her husband (Norman) was coming too, was very active in the local community but so too was Norman. Norman's retirement or lack of input into the

decision to move does not appear to have affected how he has settled into a rural destination.

I'm involved with the McMillan Cancer Support so that is fund raising I organise coffee mornings, fairs, cheese and wine Norman he's involved with the Red Cross. ... He's been very involved .. last year organising a barbeque for 70 people for a local charity (Ruth).

Notably, and despite initially cutting himself off, Paul too was beginning to become active in the local community as his wife Eva explained:

Paul he's getting involved He's starting a club for car enthusiasts. ... He takes on some roles through the Church (Eva).

Some males then (like Paul) seem to take time to adjust to their new residential environment (or indeed adjust to the retirement stage of life): after initial difficulties, many go on to become just as involved as their wives. Nevertheless, time and time again during the interviews, female participation in community activities and volunteering appeared greater than for males. Even though it has been claimed that 'women volunteer more frequently than men at all stages of the life cycle' (Chambre, 1984: 295), here, there is a sense that retirement migration (or the move into the retirement life course stage itself) was a more positive experience for wives and gave many a new zest for life. Their experiences (illustrated in the succeeding texts) are in stark contrast to the 'initial difficulties' reported by and for men. Note Rosemary's significant charity work and Katherine's involvement in 'almost everything'. Barbara makes an interesting suggestion reflecting different personality traits. She alleges that she 'put the effort in' while her husband Stephen did not.

I run things here. If there is anything to be run it's me that does it. I did a charity event ... on that night I was able to raise £4600 (Rosemary).

I love it here. There is so much going on. I'm

involved in almost everything I first of all found out that there was a cultural group, ... I started off and joined that one.... I started working in a charity shop – well volunteering in the shop ... There are other things I'm involved in now as well. I have more acquaintances here than I ever had anywhere in my life before (Katherine).

I've been the one who has been going out joining different things ... Stephen [husband] doesn't actually put the energy into sustaining things all that much (Barbara).

Alex, however, suggests another reason for greater participation by females, namely, that women's activities are available, but even if men's activities were available men would not get involved. Alex's latter observation is supportive of Slevin and Wingrove's (1995) assertion that men are more socially isolated than women.

I always say – they always organise stuff for the women but there is very little for the men and the reason is the men wouldn't do it (Alex).

It is impossible to disentangle these varying experiences from aspects of gender, retirement, migration, and indeed individual personality traits: there is, therefore, a causality issue. The difficulties that some retirees report following retirement migration may, for example, be because the individual had recently retired and therefore was still adjusting to their exit from the labour market, or it may be because they were a 'trailing spouse' with little input into the decision to move because the literature suggests that 'followers' are most likely to report negative effects. Any gender differences may simply be due to the fact that activities and opportunities to 'become involved' were greater for one and not the other. In all individual personalities will also play a role. Bearing all these possibilities in mind, the weight of evidence does seem to point towards men – especially those whose wives had initiated the retirement move – finding it most difficult to adjust to their new destination. This may be evidence of women's greater social resources as alleged by Henkens (1999). Notably,

with time, men do seem to become just as involved as their wives: indeed, for both genders, it appears that when they are involved, they are very involved, as illustrated by the number of activities undertaken by both partners.

CONCLUSION

This paper has sought to contribute to the literature relating to gender and migration among heterogeneous couples. Male dominance, with the female partner frequently portrayed as a 'trailing wife' or 'tied migrant', has been widely acknowledged during economically active life stages. But is this male dominance maintained post-retirement?

The analysis shows evidence of a 'trailing wife' or 'trailing mother' phenomenon during the economically active life course stages. Even though many wives were highly qualified or trained, such moves were almost always undertaken in relation to the male's employment and frequently corresponded with a family formation stage for the couple. It is, therefore, difficult to distinguish clearly between a 'trailing wife' and a 'trailing mother' phenomenon. Any post-move employment difficulty for the wife may have provided a natural opportunity for family formation or expansion. Indeed, a female return to work (if at all) only occurred when the children were older and sometimes the return was on a part-time basis or to re-train for a perceived superior position. It is worth highlighting that the effect on the female partner was never explicitly reported in negative terms. Instead, migration in response to the male's economic activity seemed to be accepted and unquestioned as the norm. This of course may be very different among later cohorts with a greater share of dual-career households and possessing a more egalitarian outlook.

The female role as 'follower' or to 'tagalong' was maintained regarding the decision to retire. A male exit from the workforce signalled a couple's entry into a retirement life stage: wives were found to have synchronised their retirement (if in employment) with that of their husbands. However, post-retirement, power relations in the decision to move appear to shift from an exclusive male role to one that, at the very least, is just as likely to be undertaken by the female. Indeed, when employment considerations are

removed from the migration decision-making process (post-retirement), a 'trailing husbands' phenomenon emerged. This post-retirement switch in the gendering of migration decision-making may not be entirely explained by the removal of employment considerations. Period effects may also be evident. Earlier in these couples' life courses, the dominant gender ideology was male-dominated. Now, it is more egalitarian. It is, therefore, not only couples' employment circumstances that have changed, but over the course of their lives together, their gender role beliefs are likely to have evolved.

The post-retirement migration experiences were found to vary. Nevertheless, they were highly gendered: it was the male partner who seemed to find it most difficult to 'settle' or 'fit in' to the new rural community while females 'joined in' with ease. The move at this life course stage – perhaps in contrast to previous moves – seems to empower these women. 'Trailing husbands' appear to have most difficulty adapting. Equally, it is suggested that some males found it difficult to adjust to the multiple life changes experienced: the move from an urban to rural location, alongside the end of their working lives, and the transition into a more social life stage. By contrast, less career-orientated wives (among this cohort) may have been more social throughout their lifetime, so that they have more easily established new social circles in unfamiliar surroundings. Even though many husbands initially experienced difficulties, with some alleged to have withdrawn or cut themselves off, this seemed to be short-lived. By the time of the interview, most did participate in some local community event or activity.

This paper makes three contributions to the literature. First, it has adopted a qualitative approach incorporating interviews with both partners in a couple present. Giving voices to couples, and importantly reporting male and female voices, has shed considerable light on the role of decision-maker/follower and their experiences. Such rich insights and personal narratives are notably absent from much of the literature. Second, taking a life histories approach that acknowledges life course transitions has demonstrated that the role of leader/follower may change over the course of a couple's life together. For this cohort of retirees, removing employment considerations from the decision to

move is associated with a shift in power and accordingly a shift from 'trailing wives' to 'trailing husbands'. Equally, gender roles within the couple may have changed during the course of their lives together. Usefully, further research could examine migration decision-making and gender at other life course transitions, for example, at the family formation and/or empty-nest stages. A related aspect would be to investigate decision-making and gender for different reasons to move. Where a couple's decision is less employment-orientated and more, for example, based on quality of life considerations might further evidence for 'trailing husbands' emerge? A specific criticism of much of the literature on family migration and gender is that it tends to assume or focus on employment-led moves; yet, as Taylor (2007) reports, fewer than 2% of British couples migrate for job-related reasons. Third, an attempt has been made to incorporate the personal experiences of both partners following the retirement move. Experiences and satisfaction levels are largely absent from previous research, except in terms of employment or economic outcomes. An avenue for future research would be to incorporate non-economic outcomes: might these be less sacrificial for the trailing spouse?

A specific weakness of the paper (and indeed many migration studies) is that only couples who participated in retirement migration are included. Of equal interest are the gendered aspects of non-moving couples and couples who considered moving but then chose not to (that is, stayers). Coulter and Scott (2015) demonstrate that a desire to move accompanied by life events affects migration behaviour differently across the life course. There would seem to be merit in a study of 'stayers' and in particular 'tied stayers', which adopts a life course approach, focusing on different life stage transitions for couples, and includes personal narratives obtained via interviews. A similar call has recently been made by Cooke (2013: 832): '... it is likely that [staying has] negative effects that deserve as much attention as the negative effects of tied migration'.

Finally, the findings from this paper are likely to be only relevant to the current cohort of couples aged 55 years and over: in other words, to a generation of retired couples which were most likely to hold traditional gender roles including the male as breadwinner. Findings may be very different among subsequent retired cohorts

consisting of more egalitarian and dual-career couples (or indeed couples where the female partner contributes most to the family finances). As such, this paper not only sheds light on the gender aspects of recent retirement migration to rural areas but provides a useful 'benchmark' study with which to make comparisons with future cohorts of retirees.

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