

# Wealth Accumulation Status: An Exploratory Study of the Role Saving and Inheritances Play in Shaping Wealth Accumulation Status

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The purpose of this study was to test several propositions imbedded in Stanley and Danko's (1996) ground breaking book, *The Millionaire Next Door*. Given the book's impact in shaping the type of advice provided by those in the media and many financial planners and wealth managers, this study was designed to evaluate the impact saving and receiving an inheritance play in shaping wealth accumulation status. Using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY79), the study focused on answering a series of research questions related to wealth accumulation—as defined by Stanley and Danko—over the lifecycle. Results show that the percent of the American population that meets or exceeds wealth accumulation targets was not particularly large in 1992, 2002, or 2012. Results also indicate that wealth accumulation status is relatively fluid. Findings show that Whites and those who have received an inheritance, and to some extent active savers, are more likely to accumulate wealth over the lifecycle. Opportunities for additional research are presented.

※ Key words: wealth, wealth accumulation, savings behavior, inheritance, *Millionaire Next Door*

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# I . Introduction

A primary client-centered goal within the financial planning and wealth management profession has traditionally been the development and preservation of household financial wealth. The primary measure of household wealth has been net worth. A little more than 20 years ago the concept that all households should be focused on building wealth, by increasing net worth, over time was broadly introduced with the publication of *The Millionaire Next Door* (MND), which was authored by Thomas Stanley and William Danko (1996). When published, the book was among the first trade publications to provide survey evidence documenting pathways to wealth accumulation.

MND's impact in shaping discussions about the use of household income and the purpose of accumulating wealth over the lifecycle has been profound. A *Google* internet search, using terms like "millionaire next door stories" and "the impact of the millionaire next door," results in several hundred thousand hits. While few of the links that emerge from such searches are academic in nature, those that do come up are read by thousands, if not millions, of individuals and households. Consider, for example, a 2014 article in *Kiplinger's* titled: *Wealth-Building Secrets of the Millionaire Next Door*. The purpose of the article was to prompt readers to adopt behaviors exhibited by those who have accumulated large wealth positions. The advice provided was essentially the same as recommendations made by Stanley and Danko (1996). Specifically, the editors at *Kiplinger's* indicated that readers should, among other things, (a) not spend beyond their means, (b) save regularly, (c) live frugally, and (d) avoid debt.

When providing guidance to the nation's librarians about the most important personal finance books to include in library collections, Faulkner (2015) selected MND as one of 12 essential titles. Presumably, this recommendation was made to ensure that libraries worldwide would own the most influential manuscripts available to patrons, which helps explain why MND continues to be one of the most read and influential personal finance books in libraries across the country. Other books on the list included *The Total Money Makeover* by Dave Ramsey (2009), *Secrets of the Millionaire Mind* by T. Harv Eker (2009), and *The Automatic Millionaire* by David Bach (2004). The commonality among these additions to the list is that each subsequently adopted many of the principles

originally outlined in MND. The penetration of MND concepts within the popular personal finance culture is so deep that media pundits, such as Dave Ramsey, advocate aspects of MND daily to millions of radio listeners and those who follow personal finance blogs (Ramsey, 2014).

According to Faulkner (2015), MND and similar books help consumers conceptualize the role of money in the household and promote financial literacy. A key element of MND is its focus on frequency of engaging in pro-wealth accumulation behaviors and tasks. Concepts such as creating and following a budget, living life frugally, and saving on a regular basis are examples of behaviors and tasks reported by Stanley and Danko (1996) to be associated with prodigious wealth accumulation. Whether the advice provided is economically or normatively correct is something that has not received much attention in the literature. One anticipated outcome from this study was to test the veracity of some of the most important propositions presented by Stanley and Danko.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the following five questions: First, what percent of the American population meets or exceeds wealth accumulation targets, as defined by Stanley and Danko? Second, how stable is wealth accumulation status across time? Third, what are some of the demographic characteristics associated with being classified as a prodigious wealth accumulator? Fourth, what role do inheritances have in shaping wealth accumulation? Finally, to what extent do wealth accumulation attributes influence the amassing of wealth? It is important to note that this study was not designed to determine the normative validity of Stanley and Danko's wealth accumulation measure. The fact is that many thousands of households throughout the world use the formulas and concepts within MND on a daily basis. This study was conceptualized to provide some insight into whether concepts within MND are, in fact, related to wealth accumulation guidelines as outlined in the original book. Results from this study provide an insight into the robustness of MND as a guide to helping consumers, and to a lesser extent financial planners and wealth managers when working with clients, maximize wealth over the lifecycle.

## II. Literature Review

### 2.1 Millionaires Next Door and the Concept of Wealth Accumulation

Stanley and Danko (1996) were among the first personal finance authors doing work in the mass trade market to quantify aspects of wealth accumulation. While this type of work had been conducted previously among household finance researchers, very little of what was known made an impact among the consuming public. Based on interviews with millionaires, Stanley and Danko developed lists of behaviors and tasks that concluded were associated with being wealthy. When defining who is and is not wealthy, Stanley and Danko made a distinction between being income affluent and having a high net worth. They noted that many households earn significant incomes but have little in terms of investable assets. While these households are able to fund current consumption from income, those who are income affluent generally do not achieve long-term financial stability. Stanley and Danko instead focused their generalizations towards households that have significant balance sheet wealth, particularly wealth that has the potential to appreciate in value over time. They did not, however, discount the role of income in the wealth accumulation process. They, in fact, extended the work of Kinley (1911) and others who documented that having sufficient income is a primary ingredient of wealth accumulation (Beutler, 2014).

Stanley and Danko (1996), in an effort to quantify whether an individual or household fits the mold of a 'millionaire next door' or has the potential to reach this outcome, developed the following formula to measure a target level of wealth accumulation:

$$\textit{Wealth Accumulator Estimate} = (\textit{Income} \times \textit{Current Age} \times .10)$$

The two important elements in the formula are income and age. As noted by Beutler (2014), it is very difficult to accumulate wealth over time unless a household's income is relatively high in relation to expenses. The age factor serves as a proxy for a household's stage in the lifecycle. Consider the following example. Say someone is 40 years old and earns \$200,000 per year. Based on the formula, their targeted level of net worth (assets

less liabilities) should be \$800,000. Within the framework of MND, someone with this level of net worth would be defined as an average accumulator of wealth. In other words, they are exactly where they need to be in relation to wealth accumulation, given their age and income. Stanley and Danko also identified those who were much less likely to ever reach a suitable level of net worth. They called these individuals and households under accumulators of wealth. Specifically, if someone has accumulated 50 percent or less of their target amount they fit the definition of under accumulator. On the other hand, an individual or household that has at least twice the amount of the targeted wealth figure is deemed, within MND, to be a prodigious wealth accumulator. In 1998, Sun and Hanna found that approximately 22% of American households met this target.

## 2.2 Criticisms of the Wealth Accumulation Formula

There have been and continue to be criticisms of the formula and the associated definitional categories. For example, a young couple just starting their life together, even if they earn a reasonable combined household income, may not have had time to accumulate what the wealth accumulation formula suggests. Another criticism is that the formula is premised on the notion that accumulating wealth is or should be a primary household financial goal. MND is indeed premised on linking well-being and satisfaction with wealth accumulation. While this certainly may be valid, particularly in the context of accumulating enough lifetime wealth to fund post-retirement income needs, it is also possible that some households may be willing and able to downsize their later life needs, and as such, require less wealth. A third critique of the formulaic approach proposed in MND is that it assumes engagement in certain personal finance behaviors and tasks drives wealth accumulation. It is possible, however, that serendipitous windfalls play a large role in meeting a targeted wealth accumulation figure. An expected outcome associated with this study was to evaluate this potentiality.

At this point, it is worth acknowledging the inherent weaknesses of the MND wealth accumulation formula. Some in academia have labeled the formula as arbitrary and not theoretically compatible with life cycle theory. These arguments may, in fact, be true. However, the fact remains that MND is one of the most widely read and quoted personal finance trade publications still in print. The wealth accumulation formula is regularly

used as a consumer guide. Smith (2016), for example, provided a detailed explanation of the formula's use on one of the internet's most popular investing sites. This hints at the likelihood that more than a few consumers worldwide are relying on the formula and the advice developed to meet formula guidelines when benchmarking their household's financial performance. Unfortunately, there has been very little empirical work to gain a better understanding of the elements associated with wealth accumulation as described in MND.

Even when accounting for criticisms of the wealth accumulation formula, it is important to note that MND helped us in a new era of personal finance advice. After the book's publication, consumers—driven in large part by the book's impact on personal finance reporting in the media—and those in the financial planning and wealth management community began to take notice of behaviors and tasks that appear to spur wealth accumulation. Although MND covered a wide range of personal finance and financial planning topics, a few behaviors and tasks emerged as being particularly important in shaping wealth accumulation. Of primary importance was the notion of living within one's means or spending less than earnings. Rather than focus on the amount of money being earned, Stanley and Danko (1996) argued that it was more important to be saving as much income as possible.

## 2.3 Factors Affecting Wealth Accumulation

### 2.3.1 Task Engagement Factors

MND pointed to the importance of saving habits as a significant factor shaping wealth accumulation. Stanley and Danko (1996) noted that under accumulators of wealth, regardless of their income situation, often exhibit behavior that is most closely aligned with conspicuous consumption. Alternatively, accumulators of wealth tend to be less competitive in attempting to maintain their financial status vis-a-vis their peers and neighbors. The old adage that a millionaire next door drives an older, fully-paid-for car rather than an expensive new, debt laden import, comes to mind as an example of this observation (*Kiplinger's*, 2014).

Others have examined the issue of spending and saving behavior in different ways. Rather than look strictly at personal finance behaviors and tasks, some researchers have attempted to identify personal characteristics that underlie wealth accumulation behaviors.

The notion of self-concept has received some attention in the literature. Self-concept is a description of how people perceive themselves (Bandura, 1977). Those who engage in future oriented planning tend to share a self-concept profile (O'Neill, Xiao, & Ensle, 2016): they are goal oriented savers. They also exhibit an internal locus of control and high self-esteem (Romal & Kaplan, 1995). Locus of control refers to the degree a person believes they can control life outcomes. Locus of control can be conceptualized on a scale ranging from an external locus of control (little or no control over life outcomes) to internal locus of control (much or a great deal of control over life outcomes). Self-esteem refers to the amount of respect someone has for oneself. Those with low self-esteem have generally negative feelings about themselves, whereas those with high self-esteem exude competence and good feelings. While it is generally difficult for someone to alter their feelings of control, there is some evidence that self-esteem is somewhat malleable, particularly at earlier ages (Cast & Burke, 2002).

Montford and Goldsmith (2016) found that people's "belief[s] about their capability of organizing and executing courses of action to achieve a goal" (p. 102) have an influence on wealth accumulation. Those with a lower self-concept tend to shy away from optimal spending and saving behavior. They tend not to be planners. This finding matches well with what Stanley and Danko (1996) originally reported. They noted that under accumulators of wealth often believe that investing is essentially akin to gambling and that, for the most part, saving and investing is hopeless. This is an example of holding an external locus of control perspective. Additionally, under accumulators of wealth are more likely to make excuses for avoiding recommended spending and saving behavior. Those with a low self-concept sometimes argue that the timing of life events is too variable, which makes it difficult, if not impossible, to implement a regular savings program.

### 2.3.2 Demographic and Other Background Factors

It is possible that other factors are also influential in determining someone's spending and saving behavior. Demographic characteristics have often been shown in the literature to influence wealth accumulation. Consider someone's sex. Women generally exhibit a relatively high degree of risk aversion (Grable, 2013; Montford & Goldsmith, 2016), which can slow down the accumulation of wealth over the lifecycle. Women's access to initial wealth and their historical exclusion from the employment marketplace lead to a hypothesis

that women may be more likely to fall below wealth accumulation targets as outlined in MND. Age is another important determinant of spending and saving behavior. Younger individuals and households are often income constrained due to their stage in the lifecycle. They may be simultaneously incurring and paying down debt, encountering expenses related to having children, and sustaining ongoing cash flow emergencies related to helping other family members achieve financial stability. Households headed by those who are older may have more income flexibility that allows them to increase saving and invest their financial resources more efficiently (Gillen & Kim, 2014).

Wealth accumulation is also thought to be closely related with educational and marital status (Beutler, 2014). Those with more attained education, as a measure of human capital, tend to earn more and accumulate more wealth over time (Cagetti, 2012). In terms of marital status, Sanders and Porterfield (2010) reported that those with strong marriages are more likely to report greater financial success. This may be because being married allows a couple to delegate financial management tasks based on strength and interest, whereas singles must manage all household financial behaviors and tasks alone. Skogrand, Johnson, Horrocks, and DeFrain (2011) reported that married couples tend to be more frugal, which reduces debt loads. Interestingly, these behaviors match what Stanley and Danko (1996) recommended. Racial and ethnic background can also play a role in shaping spending and saving behavior. Coleman (2003) reported that households headed by Blacks and Hispanics have historically experienced significantly different personal finance outcomes compared to similar households headed by Whites. She attributed some of the differences in outcomes to risk aversion preferences, with Blacks and Hispanics holding less risky assets. Some have argued that spending, saving, and investment differences are related to financial knowledge, experience, and cultural issues. Historically, for example, Black and Hispanic households have had less access to financial markets (Brimmer, 1988; Gutter & Fontes, 2006). Also, cultural preferences associated with holding real estate and other hard assets that sometimes depreciate in value may help explain wealth accumulation among diverse populations (Choudhury, 2001; Kreinin, 1959).

The variables described here were used in the following analyses that were designed to address the five research questions presented earlier in the discussion. The remainder of this paper describes the methodology used to answer the five questions. This is followed by a reporting of results and a discussion of findings.



### III. Methodology

#### 3.1 Data Source

Data were obtained from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 (NLSY79), which is part of the National Longitudinal Surveys (NLS) program. The panel sample consists of individuals born between 1957 and 1964. At the time of first interview, respondents' ages ranged from 14 to 22. The respondents were 47 to 56 years of age at the time of their 2012 interviews. Initially, 12,686 individuals were interviewed in 1979. Of those interviewed, 6,403 (50.50%) were males and 6,283 (49.50%) were females. Three subsamples initially comprised the NLSY79 cohort. The first included a cross-sectional sample of 6,111 respondents designed to represent the non-institutionalized civilian segment of people living in the United States in 1979 and born between January 1, 1957, and December 31, 1964. The second was a supplemental sample of 5,295 civilian Hispanic or Latino, Black, and economically disadvantaged non-Black/non-Hispanic respondents living in the United States in 1979 and born between January 1, 1957, and December 31, 1964. Finally, a sample of 1,280 respondents designed to represent the population serving in one of the four branches of the U.S. military as of September 30, 1978, and born between January 1, 1957, and December 31, 1961 (ages 17-21 as of December 31, 1978) was included. Following the 1984 interview, 1,079 members of the military sample were no longer surveyed; however, 201 respondents randomly selected from the military sample remained in the survey. Following the 1990 interview, none of the 1,643 members of the economically disadvantaged, non-Black/non-Hispanic sample were included in the survey. Given the multiple years of analysis in this study and variable restrictions, sample sizes ranged from 6,109 to 7,326.

#### 3.2 Dependent Variable

The dependent variable of interest in this study was derived using a multi-step process. First, the wealth accumulation formula proposed by Stanley and Danko (1996) was used to estimate each respondent's target wealth position in 1992, 2002, and 2012.

These dates were chosen to correspond to points in time when those in the sample, on average, were out of college and permanently employed with stable income. Household income and age data corresponding to these years were obtained in the NLSY79 dataset. The following formula was used to make the wealth estimate:

$$\text{Wealth Accumulator Estimate} = (\text{Income} * \text{Current Age} * .10)$$

Each respondent's wealth accumulation estimate was then subtracted from the household's net worth position corresponding to the year of interest (i.e., 1992, 2002, or 2012). And this was used as a dependent variable in regression analyses of examining factors associated with wealth accumulation. Table 1 shows the descriptive data for the dependent variable, and the elements comprising the variable, over the three periods.

<Table 1> Sample Dependent Variable Descriptive Statistics

|  | 1992        | 2002       | 2012        |
|--|-------------|------------|-------------|
| <b>N</b>                                     | 7,326       | 6,402      | 6,109       |
| <b>Net Worth</b>                             |             |            |             |
| <b>M</b>                                     | \$ 46,828   | \$ 167,718 | \$ 263,961  |
| <b>Median</b>                                | \$ 9,400    | \$ 61,250  | \$ 69,950   |
| <b>SD</b>                                    | \$ 132,712  | \$ 330,246 | \$ 577,857  |
| <b>Wealth Accumulation Estimate</b>          |             |            |             |
| <b>M</b>                                     | \$ 173,449  | \$ 250,877 | \$ 386,429  |
| <b>Median</b>                                | \$ 93,000   | \$ 196,000 | \$ 280,500  |
| <b>SD</b>                                    | \$ 428,515  | \$ 253,392 | \$ 420,243  |
| <b>Wealth - Wealth Accumulation Estimate</b> | -\$ 123,958 | -\$ 78,958 | -\$ 113,958 |
| <b>Meet or Exceed Estimate</b>               |             |            |             |
| <b>%</b>                                     | 8%          | 18%        | 19%         |

As shown in Table 1, few respondents met the wealth accumulation target as outlined by Stanley and Danko (1996). In fact, respondents, on average, fell below the formula estimate by significant dollar amounts. This was not unexpected (see Sun & Hanna, 1998). The estimates confirmed what Stanley and Danko outlined in their book: namely, those fitting the profile of a wealth accumulator are indeed relatively rare.

Given the importance of income in shaping the wealth accumulation status of respondents, the sample was split into income quartiles over the three periods. Quartiles were calculated using the log of income, which ranged from 9.74 to 10.77 in 1992, 10.20 to 11.29 in 2002, and 10.20 to 11.51 in 2012. Table 2 shows descriptive statistics for the dependent variable, and the elements of the variable, by income quartile.

<Table 2> Sample Dependent Variable Descriptive Statistics by Income Quartile

| Year                               | 1992       |            |            |           | 2002       |            |             |             | 2012       |            |             |             |
|------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|
| Income Quartile                    | 1Q         | 2Q         | 3Q         | 4Q        | 1Q         | 2Q         | 3Q          | 4Q          | 1Q         | 2Q         | 3Q          | 4Q          |
| <b>N</b>                           | 1931       | 1770       | 1808       | 1817      | 1627       | 1605       | 1575        | 1595        | 1682       | 1484       | 1448        | 1495        |
| <b>Net Worth</b>                   |            |            |            |           |            |            |             |             |            |            |             |             |
| <b>M</b>                           | \$10,591   | \$23,706   | \$46,732   | \$121,970 | \$37,768   | \$82,720   | \$159,048   | \$427,504   | \$47,677   | \$113,535  | \$241,251   | \$720,983   |
| <b>Median</b>                      | \$1,000    | \$7,000    | \$22,000   | \$55,000  | \$4,917    | \$40,500   | \$100,750   | \$238,375   | \$2,700    | \$43,300   | \$126,100   | \$416,000   |
| <b>SD</b>                          | \$54,929   | \$79,762   | \$108,727  | \$128,063 | \$133,824  | \$158,186  | \$227,546   | \$520,023   | \$212,613  | \$255,382  | \$454,302   | \$917,702   |
| <b>WAE</b>                         |            |            |            |           |            |            |             |             |            |            |             |             |
| <b>M</b>                           | \$28,271   | \$72,147   | \$119,011  | \$480,718 | \$53,702   | \$155,131  | \$260,857   | \$562,039   | \$63,744   | \$210,534  | \$385,168   | \$918,348   |
| <b>Median</b>                      | \$30,160   | \$71,711   | \$117,800  | \$194,650 | \$56,000   | \$154,800  | \$258,000   | \$443,760   | \$62,400   | \$207,755  | \$379,800   | \$733,819   |
| <b>SD</b>                          | \$15,655   | \$13,364   | \$17,027   | \$781,285 | \$34,329   | \$29,044   | \$38,191    | \$338,077   | \$42,255   | \$44,283   | \$62,648    | \$535,977   |
| <b>Mean Wealth - WAE</b>           | (\$17,629) | (\$48,673) | (\$72,571) | (361,516) | (\$17,294) | (\$71,785) | (\$101,579) | (\$126,952) | (\$15,746) | (\$97,174) | (\$145,455) | (\$206,363) |
| <b>Meet or Exceed Estimate (%)</b> | 13%        | 5%         | 7%         | 6%        | 22%        | 13%        | 15%         | 22%         | 24%        | 14%        | 15%         | 21%         |

### 3.3 Independent Variables

Eleven independent variables were used to describe wealth accumulation status. These variables were grouped into three broad categories representing MND attributes associated with wealth accumulation: (a) personal characteristics, (b) task engagement, and (c) windfalls.

#### 3.3.1 Personal characteristics

The sex of respondents was measured dichotomously and coded 1 for male and 2 for female. Age was assessed as an interval level variable using each respondent's year of birth to calculate their age in 1992, 2002, and 2012. An age-squared variable was included to account for a possible curvilinear effect in the data. Education level was evaluated as the number of years of formal education indicated by a respondent. Marital status was

measured for each respondent in 1992, 2002, and 2012 and coded categorically. Using married as the reference category, those who were never married were coded 1, otherwise 0. Additionally, those who were separated, divorced, or widowed were grouped together and coded 1, otherwise 0. Racial and ethnic background was evaluated using the coding system within the NLSY79 dataset. Blacks were coded 1, otherwise 0. Likewise, Hispanics were coded 1, otherwise 0. Whites were used as the reference category.

### 3.3.2 Task Engagement

Two self-concept and two behavioral variables were included in the analyses as indicators of task engagement. As noted previously, Stanley and Danko (1996) attributed much of the wealth accumulation success of those fitting the millionaire next door profile to these individuals' engagement in certain personal finance and money management behaviors and tasks. Unfortunately, few of the behaviors and tasks outlined by Stanley and Danko were or are specifically evaluated in the NLSY79 dataset. In order to proxy the broad scope of some of these behaviors and tasks, locus of control and self-esteem were used as indicators of self-control and personal values. Rotter's (1954) locus of control scale scores were used to evaluate each person's status on a continuum of external to internal locus of control. Those holding a strong external locus of control perspective tend to believe that outside events, luck, and fate are the primary determinants of life's outcomes. On the other end of the continuum are those holding a strong internal locus of control perspective. Those with an internal locus of control believe that their efforts and work are the primary determinants of life's outcomes. The way the variable was coded, high scores were indicative of an external locus of control. Rosenberg's (1965) self-esteem scale scores were also used in this study. Self-esteem refers to a person's beliefs about his or her personal competencies, abilities, and personal value. Those with a high self-esteem generally hold positive feelings about their position in life, possible future accomplishments, and overall well-being. Previous studies have consistently shown that people with high self-esteem go on to do better academically, socially, and economically. They also tend to be better planners. In this study, high scale scores were representative of higher self-esteem. It is important to note that given the relative stability of locus of control and self-esteem as psychosocial constructs, scale questions were asked only once in the NLSY79.

Many of the primary financial behaviors and tasks outlined by Stanley and Danko (1996) involved savings behavior. In this study, exhibiting saving behavior was used as an indicator of frugality. Saving behavior was proxied in 1992 with the following question: Do you or your husband/wife have any money in savings or checking accounts, money market funds, credit unions, U.S. Savings bonds, individual retirement accounts (IRA or KEOGH), 401K, or pre-tax annuities, certificates of deposit, personal loans to others or mortgages you hold (money owed to you by other people) or any cash you keep in a safe place at home or elsewhere? Those who answered yes were coded 1, otherwise 0. No saving question was asked in 2002; however, the 1992 saving question was asked in 2000 and again in 2004. An estimate for 2002 was made by calculating an average estimate based on the 2000 and 2004 responses; a score of 0 was coded to indicate no saving, whereas a positive score was rounded to 1 and coded as having savings. A slightly different worded question was asked in 2012: Do you or your spouse/partner have any money in a savings account, a checking account, or a money market account? Those who answered yes were coded 1, otherwise 0.

Impulsiveness and risk seeking were proxied using the number of alcoholic drinks someone reported consuming in an average day. It was thought that those who reported higher consumption of alcohol were more prone to myopic behavior, fewer positive planning behaviors, and a tendency towards sensation seeking (Zuckerman, 1979).

### 3.3.3 Windfalls

Finally, an inheritance variable was used in an attempt to determine the effect of receiving a financial windfall on the likelihood of meeting or exceeding the wealth accumulation target. The NLSY79 dataset included the following question in 1992, 2002, and 2012: "Since the last interview, did you or your spouse/partner receive any property or money, even if only a small amount, from any estates, trusts, inheritances, or gifts from relatives?" A choice was made to evaluate the receipt of an inheritance in the prior period rather than the eight year period between 1992 and 2002 and 2002 and 2012. This measurement choice was made as a way to evaluate the influence of an immediate windfall on the targeted wealth accumulation estimate. This variable was labeled inheritance with those who answered yes being coded as 1, otherwise 0. Descriptive data for this and the other independent variables are provided in Table 2.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

In addition to descriptive statistics that were used to describe wealth accumulation across periods, a series of OLS regression models were created to determine the level of association among the independent variables and wealth accumulation. Respondents were grouped together by income quartile (based on the log of reported household income), with four models tested for each time period. Multicollinearity was evaluated using a combination of methods (e.g., correlations and variance inflation factors). No evidence of multicollinearity that was strong enough to skew results was identified.

## IV. Results

Before addressing the research questions that guided this research project, it is worth examining the descriptive profile of respondents. Table 3 provides an overview of sample characteristics in 1992, 2002, and 2012.

The distribution of males and females and the racial/ethnic composition of the sample was relatively stable from 1992 through 2012. As expected, the average reported age of respondents increased over time. By 2012, the majority of respondents reported having completed at least a high school level of education. Over time, the percent of respondents were reported being married increased, while the percent of never married respondents decreased. The number of separations, divorces, and widowhood statuses increased. Given the way in which locus of control and self-esteem were evaluated and based on the assumption that these personal attributes are essentially trait characteristics the first assessment score is reported in Table 3. The percentage of respondents who reported receiving an inheritance remained relatively constant over the three periods (7% to 8%). In 1992 slightly more than one-third of respondents exhibited saving behavior. By 2012 that percentage had climbed to over 70%, down marginally from a high of 76% in 2002. Finally, daily alcohol consumption fell from slightly more than three drinks per day in 1992 to less than 2.50 drinks per day in 2012.

<Table 3> Independent Variable Descriptive Statistics by Year of Analysis

| Variable                 | Overall                              | 1992                                 | 2002                                 | 2012                                 |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Sex                      |                                      |                                      |                                      |                                      |
| Male (coded 1)           | 50.50%                               |                                      |                                      |                                      |
| Female (coded 2)         | 49.50%                               |                                      |                                      |                                      |
| Age                      |                                      | <i>M</i> = 30.82<br><i>SD</i> = 2.29 | <i>M</i> = 40.82<br><i>SD</i> = 2.29 | <i>M</i> = 50.82<br><i>SD</i> = 2.29 |
| Education                |                                      | <i>M</i> = 12.91<br><i>SD</i> = 2.43 | <i>M</i> = 13.19<br><i>SD</i> = 2.50 | <i>M</i> = 13.35<br><i>SD</i> = 2.57 |
| Marital Status           |                                      |                                      |                                      |                                      |
| Married                  |                                      | 67.08%                               | 74.84%                               | 73.56%                               |
| Never Married            |                                      | 21.02%                               | 11.34%                               | 9.38%                                |
| Sep/Div/Wid              |                                      | 11.90%                               | 13.82%                               | 17.06%                               |
| Race/Ethnicity           |                                      |                                      |                                      |                                      |
| White                    | 59.20%                               |                                      |                                      |                                      |
| Black                    | 25.00%                               |                                      |                                      |                                      |
| Hispanic                 | 15.80%                               |                                      |                                      |                                      |
| Locus of Control         | <i>M</i> = 8.66<br><i>SD</i> = 2.42  |                                      |                                      |                                      |
| Self-Esteem              | <i>M</i> = 22.37<br><i>SD</i> = 4.13 |                                      |                                      |                                      |
| Saving (1 = Yes)         |                                      | 67.00%                               | 76.00%                               | 72.00%                               |
| Inheritance (1 = Yes)    |                                      | 8.00%                                | 7.00%                                | 8.00%                                |
| Number of Drinks Per Day |                                      | <i>M</i> = 3.32<br><i>SD</i> = 3.67  | <i>M</i> = 2.75<br><i>SD</i> = 2.09  | <i>M</i> = 2.46<br><i>SD</i> = 1.84  |

The answer to the first question asked in this study—what percent of the American population meets or exceeds wealth accumulation targets, as defined by Stanley and Danko?—was not be surprising. Stanley and Danko (1996) originally reported that few American households truly fit the profile of a wealth accumulator. As reported earlier in Table 1, the percent of respondents who were wealth accumulators ranged from 8% to 19%, with the percent increasing over time. Generally, as shown in Table 2, lower income respondents were more likely to meet the wealth accumulation estimate.

The second research question asked how stable wealth accumulation status was across time. Data from Tables 1 and 2 provide some insight into this question. The gap between the targeted wealth accumulation amount and actual net worth fluctuated within and between the three periods. The gap decreased from -\$123,958 in 1992 to -\$78,958 in 2002; however, by 2012 the gap had increased to -\$113,958. Although

there was fluctuation, the answer to the question was that respondents exhibited a consistency of under accumulation of wealth across the three time periods. The gap between net worth and wealth accumulation estimates was profound.

Data in Table 4 tell an interesting story in relation to this question. Findings indicated that there appears to be some fluidity among those who met or exceeded the wealth accumulation target over time. For example, in 1992, 580 respondents met the criterion. It is important to note that in 1992 respondents were relatively young and just beginning their careers. Of these 580 individuals, only 75, or about 13%, met the criterion for being classified as a wealth accumulator in both 2002 and 2012. By 2002, 1,029 respondents had shifted into a position of being a wealth accumulator. The increase was likely do to advancement in careers and continued asset buildup and growth. However, only 378, or about 37%, of this group met or exceeded their wealth accumulation target in 2012. This implies that less than half of those who met the wealth accumulation target maintained their position over time.

<Table 4> Consistency of Wealth Accumulation over Time

| Survey Year | # Who Met or Exceeded Wealth Accumulation Estimate | # Who Continued to Meet or Exceed Wealth Accumulation Estimate From the Initial Period to 2012 | Percent        |
|-------------|--|--|----------------|
| 1992        | 580  | 75   | 13%            |
| 2002        | 1,029  | 378  | 37%            |
| 2012        | 1,189  | Not Applicable   | Not Applicable |

Before describing the role of saving and inheritances in shaping wealth accumulation status, it is important to review answers to the third research question, which asked, ‘what are some of the demographic characteristics associated with being classified as a prodigious wealth accumulator?’ Table 5 shows the variables that were found to be significantly associated with wealth accumulation in 1992. Results represent coefficients from four regressions based on each respondent’s membership in an income quartile. Among those with the lowest incomes, none of the demographic factors were related with wealth accumulation. The model was not significant. Among those in the second and third income quartiles being Black was negatively associated with wealth accumulation. A positive relationship was noted between saving in 1992 and wealth accumulation status



for those in the third income quartile. Among the highest income group, the age relationship was positive. However, a negative relationship was noted between wealth accumulation status and education and being never married. A n age curvilinear effect was noted.

<Table 5> Regression Results Showing Variables Associated with Wealth Accumulation by Income Quartile in 1992

| Variable                      | 1st Income Quartile |          | 2nd Income Quartile |          | 3rd Income Quartile |          | 4th Income Quartile |          |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|----------|---------------------|----------|---------------------|----------|---------------------|----------|
|                               | $\beta$             | <i>t</i> | $\beta$             | <i>t</i> | $\beta$             | <i>t</i> | $\beta$             | <i>t</i> |
| (Constant)                    |                     | .432     |                     | -.466    |                     | 1.144    |                     | -1.858   |
| Sex                           | .027                | .783     | -.012               | -.360    | -.035               | -1.118   | .014                | .473     |
| Age 1992                      | -.411               | -.443    | .223                | .241     | -1.131              | -1.266   | 1.677               | 2.042*   |
| Education 1992                | .011                | .301     | .036                | .998     | .027                | .790     | -.143               | -4.563** |
| Never Married 1992            | .001                | .013     | -.032               | -.878    | .007                | .200     | -.100               | -3.364** |
| Sep/Div/Wid 1992              | -.038               | -.821    | -.039               | -1.136   | .032                | 1.000    | -.025               | -.864    |
| LOC Scale                     | -.063               | -1.835   | .024                | .724     | -.007               | -.220    | .027                | .878     |
| Self-Esteem Scale             | -.018               | -.521    | .052                | 1.532    | .016                | .468     | -.025               | -.812    |
| Race Black                    | -.058               | -1.480   | -.090               | -2.691** | -.119               | -3.643** | .001                | .047     |
| Race Hispanic                 | .007                | .192     | -.063               | -1.920   | -.031               | -.984*   | .038                | 1.286    |
| Saving 1992                   | .028                | .793     | .051                | 1.561**  | .069                | 2.173**  | .039                | 1.315    |
| Inheritance 1992              | .059                | 1.730    | .146                | 4.606    | .083                | 2.685    | -.015               | -.504    |
| Number of Drinks Per Day 1992 | -.029               | -.862    | .014                | .422     | -.023               | -.713    | .010                | .348     |
| Age <sup>2</sup>              | .414                | .446     | -.184               | -.199    | 1.117               | 1.252    | -1.786              | -2.179*  |

Notes: \* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$

Model 1:  $F_{13,936} = 1.316, p = .20; R^2 = .02$

Model 2:  $F_{13,987} = 3.75, p = .01; R^2 = .05$

Model 3:  $F_{13,1022} = 2.83, p = .01; R^2 = .04$

Model 4:  $F_{13,1129} = 4.76, p = .01; R^2 = .05$

As shown in Table 6, education was positively associated with wealth accumulation status for those in the lowest and highest income quartiles. A negative relationship was noted for those who were separated, divorced, or widowed in the first income quartile. Being Black was negatively related with wealth accumulation status across income categories. A similar negative relationship was noted for Hispanics in the first and second income quartiles. Self-esteem was positive associated with wealth accumulation status among

those in the third income quartile. Among those in the highest income quartile, education and receiving an inheritance in 1992 and 2002 were found to be positively associated with wealth accumulation.

<Table 6> Regression Results Showing Variables Associated with Wealth Accumulation by Income Quartile in 2002

| Variable                      | 1st Income Quartile |          | 2nd Income Quartile |          | 3rd Income Quartile |          | 4th Income Quartile |          |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|----------|---------------------|----------|---------------------|----------|---------------------|----------|
|                               | $\beta$             | $t$      | $\beta$             | $t$      | $\beta$             | $t$      | $\beta$             | $t$      |
| (Constant)                    |                     | -1.463   |                     | -.026    |                     | -.546    |                     | -.790    |
| Sex                           | .064                | 1.475    | .057                | 1.446    | -.042               | -1.156   | -.037               | -1.107   |
| Age 2002                      | 2.338               | 1.414    | -.014               | -.010    | .576                | .427     | .867                | .700     |
| Education 2002                | .109                | 2.275*   | -.004               | -.103    | .030                | .765     | .068                | 1.965*   |
| Never Married 2002            | -.073               | -1.249   | -.035               | -.820    | .005                | .139     | .050                | 1.519    |
| Sep/Div/Wid 2002              | -.113               | -2.021*  | -.047               | -1.127   | .036                | .991     | .018                | .566     |
| LOC Scale                     | .005                | .113     | -.029               | -.717    | -.021               | -.551    | .006                | .182     |
| Self-Esteem Scale             | .028                | .613     | .028                | .697     | .075                | 1.961*   | .032                | .920     |
| Race Black                    | -.151               | -2.932** | -.143               | -3.346** | -.130               | -3.450** | -.127               | -3.774** |
| Race Hispanic                 | -.112               | -2.380*  | -.087               | -2.167*  | -.048               | -1.312   | -.037               | -1.104   |
| Saving 1992                   | .011                | .223     | .059                | 1.433    | .059                | 1.584*   | .059                | 1.795    |
| Savings 2002                  | .050                | 1.041    | .071                | 1.766    | .087                | 2.313    | .037                | 1.106    |
| Inheritance 1992              | .081                | 1.888    | .029                | .756     | .048                | 1.299    | .095                | 2.845**  |
| Inheritance 2002              | .091                | 2.083*   | .116                | 3.026**  | .073                | 1.994*   | .103                | 3.087**  |
| Number of Drinks Per Day 2002 | -.045               | -1.023   | .049                | 1.196    | -.074               | -1.936*  | -.019               | -.557    |
| Age <sup>2</sup>              | -2.342              | -1.416   | -.019               | -.014    | -.540               | -.401    | -.888               | -.717    |

Notes: \* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$

Model 1:  $F_{15,513} = 4.27, p = .01; R^2 = .11$

Model 2:  $F_{15,659} = 3.54, p = .01; R^2 = .07$

Model 3:  $F_{15,735} = 3.74, p = .01; R^2 = .07$

Model 4:  $F_{15,900} = 4.48, p = .01; R^2 = .07$

Data for 2012 are shown in Table 7. Among those in the lowest income quartile, education was positively related to wealth accumulation status; however, the relationship was negative among those who were separated, divorced, or widowed. Being Black was negatively related to wealth accumulation status at the second, third, and fourth income quartiles. Among the highest income earners being never married was found to be positively

associated with wealth accumulation status. Those who reported being a saver in 1992 were found to have greater wealth in 2012.

<Table 7> Regression Results Showing Variables Associated with Wealth Accumulation by Income Quartile in 2012

| Variable                      | 1st Income Quartile |         | 2nd Income Quartile |         | 3rd Income Quartile |          | 4th Income Quartile |          |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|---------------------|----------|---------------------|----------|
|                               | $\beta$             | $t$     | $\beta$             | $t$     | $\beta$             | $t$      | $\beta$             | $t$      |
| (Constant)                    |                     | 1.477   |                     | .468    |                     | .142     |                     | .575     |
| Sex                           | .050                | .987    | .045                | 1.078   | .006                | .170     | .027                | .828     |
| Age 2012                      | -3.477              | -1.531  | -1.022              | -.515   | -.367               | -.214    | -1.024              | -.675    |
| Education 2012                | .142                | 2.681** | .050                | 1.142   | .005                | .112     | -.019               | -.552    |
| Never Married 2012            | -.082               | -1.268  | -.035               | -.778   | .074                | 1.964*   | .074                | 2.304*   |
| Sep/Div/Wid 2012              | -.139               | -2.186* | -.068               | -1.554  | .021                | .552     | -.005               | -.157    |
| LOC Scale                     | -.092               | -1.816  | .005                | .109    | -.009               | -.243    | .037                | 1.116    |
| Self-Esteem Scale             | .096                | 1.791   | .029                | .679    | .020                | .506     | .018                | .520     |
| Race Black                    | .027                | .445    | -.094               | -2.105* | -.106               | -2.696** | -.112               | -3.440** |
| Race Hispanic                 | .038                | .704    | -.057               | -1.358  | -.033               | -.867    | -.055               | -1.702   |
| Saving 1992                   | .040                | .723    | .020                | .442    | .040                | 1.044    | .072                | 2.166*   |
| Savings 2002                  | -.066               | -1.126  | .050                | 1.129   | .051                | 1.300    | .057                | 1.730    |
| Savings 2012                  | .092                | 1.768   | .064                | 1.479   | .086                | 2.239*   | .058                | 1.755    |
| Inheritance 1992              | -.026               | -.527   | .136                | 3.337** | .060                | 1.627    | .047                | 1.420    |
| Inheritance 2002              | .143                | 2.934** | -.011               | -.263   | .108                | 2.853**  | .051                | 1.542    |
| Inheritance 2012              | .174                | 3.531** | .163                | 3.891** | .067                | 1.782    | .014                | .440     |
| Number of Drinks Per Day 2012 | .023                | .435    | -.030               | -.701   | -.074               | -1.910   | -.012               | -.358    |
| Age <sup>2</sup>              | 3.498               | 1.540   | 1.024               | .517    | .420                | .245     | 1.055               | .696     |

Notes: \* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$

Model 1:  $F_{17,382} = 4.23, p = .01; R^2 = .16$

Model 2:  $F_{17,581} = 4.29, p = .01; R^2 = .11$

Model 3:  $F_{17,705} = 4.67, p = .01; R^2 = .08$

Model 4:  $F_{17,955} = 2.90, p = .01; R^2 = .05$

When viewed holistically, data from Tables 5, 6, and 7 show that only one demographic characteristic was consistently associated with wealth accumulation status across the three periods: being Black. The relationship was negative among all income quartiles. This suggests that those who were Black were less likely to report holding assets that met or

exceeded their wealth accumulation estimate. Few of the other demographic variables showed consistent significance across time periods or income quartiles. Education was generally positively related to wealth accumulation status, whereas being separated, divorced, or widowed was found to be negatively associated with wealth accumulation status. Although not significant in all models, self-esteem was also found to be associated with wealth accumulation status. Those with a higher self-esteem were more likely to report more wealth.

The fourth research question asked ‘what role do inheritances have in shaping wealth accumulation status?’ Stanley and Danko (1996) argued that receiving a financial windfall, such as an inheritance, may not be as important a factor as behavioral variables in shaping wealth accumulation status. Data from Tables 5, 6, and 7 were used to address this issue. It turns out the issue of receiving an inheritance is somewhat nuanced. Receiving an inheritance was found to be positively associated with wealth accumulation among those in the middle income quartiles in 1992. In 2002, receipt of an inheritance, either in 1992 or 2002, was found to be associated with wealth accumulation status across income quartiles. Receipt of an inheritance was also found to be positively associated with wealth accumulation status in 2012, with expectation that no relationship was noted for those in the highest income quartile.

Results suggest the notion that wealth accumulators achieve their status based primarily on engagement in positive behaviors and task engagement may be overstated somewhat. Receiving a serendipitous financial windfall can certainly help shift a household into a better financial position. While receipt of an inheritance closer to the survey date tended to be more important, there was evidence of a lingering effect of receiving an inheritance in the past as well.

An answer to the fifth research question—to what extent do behaviors and tasks, as wealth accumulation attributes, influence the amassing of wealth?—can also be found in Tables 5, 6, and 7. The saving variables were used as indicators of frugality. While the effects of savings were generally positive, the consistency of statistical significance varied across periods and income quartiles. In 1992, saving was only significant for those in the third income quartile. A similar relationship was noted in 2002 and 2012. Impulsivity, as proxied by the number of alcoholic drinks consumed per day, was found to be significantly associated with wealth accumulation status for those in the third income quartile in 2002.

## V. Discussion

The publication of MND in 1996 had a profound impact on the way consumers, those in the media, financial planners, and wealth managers conceptualize what it means to be wealthy in the United States. Instead of focusing on the advantages of being income affluent, Stanley and Danko (1996) argued that households need to focus on becoming net worth affluent. By this they meant that households need to engage in personal finance behaviors and tasks that promote savings, frugality, and thrift as a way to accumulate appreciating assets. The original work presented in MND influenced much of the personal finance advice generated in the media that emerged just prior to and after the new millennium. Nearly every bestselling personal finance book has since advanced the argument that it is important to convert income into wealth that can later be used to generate passive income. Additionally, concepts such as being a consistent saver have taken root as an essential factor shaping wealth accumulation over time.

Results from this study show that few Americans actually achieve what Stanley and Danko (1996) called wealth accumulator status. It does appear that Americans—regardless of their income situation—spend too much of their earned income and fail to save enough to meet future income needs. Few American households can or will meet their wealth accumulation formula target. Additionally, there appears to be a high degree of fluidity associated with just who is and is not a wealth accumulator. Very few households in this study met or exceeded the wealth accumulation target in 1992, 2002, and 2012. Households moved into and out of the classification over time. It is worth noting, however, that by 2012 more households were categorized as wealth accumulators compared to 1992 or 2002. This was likely due to the overall aging of respondents and the tendency of most households to transition from having children present in the household to becoming empty nest adults. It is reasonable to hypothesize that as family expenses fall, households save more. This may be prompted by a greater realization by those who are 40 years of age or older that either forced or voluntary retirement is approaching and that a need to increase savings is important.

On a negative note, findings from this study illustrate the discrepancy in targeted wealth accumulation between households headed by Whites compared to those headed

by Blacks, and to some degree, Hispanics. Compared to Whites, Blacks and Hispanics were less likely to report having a net worth that exceeded their wealth accumulation estimate. More research is needed to examine the potential cause(s) of this wealth difference. For example, how much of the wealth accumulation discrepancy is based on cultural values, discrimination, or behaviors? It is possible, for example, that White households are too obsessed with the accumulation of wealth, whereas other household types focus on more meaningful measures of well-being. In other words, maybe White households are pursuing something that is “A mere madness, to live like a wretch, and die rich” (Burton, 1621: 2001). Alternatively, it is possible that financial knowledge and experience barriers have historically limited access to wealth accumulation strategies for some groups. Until more research is conducted that highlights solutions, the likelihood that this finding will change dramatically in the future is not particularly high.

An important finding from this study was that receiving an inheritance appears to be an important element of wealth accumulation. While few financial planners or wealth managers would ever encourage their clients to build a financial plan around the concept of receiving a financial windfall, it is nonetheless true that receiving an inheritance increases the probability of being classified as a MND wealth accumulator.

Additionally, findings from this study indicate that either Stanley and Danko (1996) may have overestimated the importance of certain financial behaviors and tasks as tools leading to wealth accumulation or their measure of wealth accumulation is somewhat problematic. While it is universally accepted as true that consumers should attempt to save aggressively, the evidence from this study suggests that being a saver is not sufficient to achieve a high wealth accumulation status. Receiving an inheritance was found to be more important across time periods and income quartiles. Saving was not particularly valuable for those at the lowest and highest income quartiles. It is also worth noting that impulsivity and self-esteem were related to wealth accumulation status in one model each. The relationship with impulsivity was negative, whereas the relationship with self-esteem was positive.

As an exploratory study, this research provides a foundation for further research focused on identifying the determinants of wealth accumulation over time. While some evidence emerged that engagement in certain personal finance behaviors and tasks is associated with wealth accumulation, at least among certain segments of consumers, more information

is needed about the veracity of other behaviors and tasks in shaping wealth outcomes. More research is needed to explore what other behaviors and tasks are and how consumers (and their advisers) can implement strategies to improve financial outcomes. As noted in this paper, future studies ought to consider the different ways financial windfalls influence wealth accumulation, savings, and spending patterns. It may be worth tracking the receipt of financial windfalls on a yearly basis to determine how households allocate inheritances between savings and consumption. Another avenue of research worth exploring is related to what Kennickell, Starr-McCluer, and Sunden (1997) called self-control. As proposed in MND, wealth accumulators appear to differ from non-wealth accumulators in their ability to think strategically long term and forgo current consumption for saving. Including measures of self-control, discounting, and time perspective in future studies may help substantiate the degree to which self-control explains wealth accumulation over the lifecycle.

Finally, it is important to understand the limitations associated with this exploratory study. The results from this study can only be generalized to the accumulation of wealth as conceptualized in the formula presented by Stanley and Danko (1996). The wealth accumulation measure provides only a target for comparing a household's current position against those in the original MND database. Given this context, many households will still have adequate resources to meet their future needs even if they fall short of the target. Those seeking a more universal level of generalization may find traditional life cycle models more appealing. As stated earlier in the paper, this study was not designed to evaluate the normative validity of the MND wealth accumulation formula. It is possible that had another measure of wealth accumulation been used as the outcome variable the results might have changed. There are other measures of wealth accumulation that appear to be more aligned with life cycle theories (e.g., Letkiewicz & Hanna, 2013; Yuh, Montalto, & Hanna, 1998). A comparison of these measures with the MND target formula may be worthwhile. Additionally, given the focus of this study, only a select number of variables were used in the models. Extensions of this work could include measures for risk aversion, anticipated retirement age, and participation in retirement plans. Even within the context of these limitations, for those who do use the MND wealth accumulation formula, the results from this study add more evidence that the accumulation of wealth is, to some degree, controllable. Whether or not the MND measure is appropriate is a topic for another study.

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# 가계의 자산 축적 상태: 저축과 유산상속의 영향에 관한 탐색적 연구

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## 요 약

본 연구에서는 미국에서 발간된 책 중에서 부유층(millionaires)의 특성을 연구한 가장 영향력 있는 책인 Stanley & Danko (1996)의 *The Millionaire Next Door*에서 말하는 자산축적상태에 영향을 미치는 요인을 확인해 보고자 하였다. 구체적으로 종단연구자료인 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY79)의 자료를 활용하여 Stanley & Danko가 제시한 라이프사이클에 따른 바람직한 자산축적 목표에 도달한 가계의 특성을 살펴보고자 하였다. 1992년, 2002년, 2012년에 대한 분석결과 미국가계에서 Stanley & Danko가 제시한 자산축적 목표에 도달한 가계는 많지 않았으며 자산축적 상태는 상대적으로 유동적이라는 것을 밝혔다. 또한, 인종, 저축행동, 유산을 상속받은 경우가 자산축적 목표에 도달할 가능성과 밀접한 관련을 보이는 변수로 밝혀졌다. 라이프사이클에 따라 자산축적 목표에 도달하는 것은 재무목표 실현과 밀접한 관련을 보이며, 바람직한 방향으로 자산을 축적하는 가계의 특성을 파악하는 것은 재무설계 실무에 유용한 정보를 제공할 수 있을 것으로 보인다.

핵심단어: 자산, 자산축적, Millionaire Next Door, 저축 행동, 유산 상속

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