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Journal of Aging Studies

Volume 14, Issue 1, March 2000, Pages 81-101

Women and retirement: relinquishing professional identity

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[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0890-4065\(00\)80017-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0890-4065(00)80017-1)

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Abstract

Twenty-eight interviews were conducted with a sample of 14 retired professional women with continuous work histories. Life history data about the meaning of retirement and the relationship of retirement to issues of identity were collected. By using the grounded theory method, the investigator identified a common theme experienced among the women interviewed: the sacrificing of one's professional identity following retirement, the loss of social contacts, the loss of professional challenges, and encountering stereotypes during retirement. Data from this study indicate women with continuous work histories may enter retirement with apparent ease, yet experience difficulty adjusting to the loss of their professional role. Further research investigating the transition for women from professional status to retirement status is needed.



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