

Title of Paper:

Adjusting to life in retirement: the protective role of new group memberships and identification as a retiree

Paper abstract:

Among the many factors that influence retirement adjustment, there is increasing recognition of the role played by people's social relationships. In particular, research points to the benefits that joining new groups can have for people's well-being when they experience life change. In three studies we extend this research to assess the contribution that new groups and identities make to supporting the well-being and adjustment of people transitioning to retirement. Study 1, involving 302 retirees, demonstrates that joining new groups in retirement and developing a stronger sense of identification with retirees predicts life satisfaction after controlling for known predictors (e.g., financial planning, marital status, physical health status, retirement aspirations), while only retiree identification predicts adjustment. We then examine the extent to which multiple group memberships support retirement adjustment and well-being through the mediating role of new group memberships and retiree identification. This is first examined in a cross-sectional study of 90 retired academics (Study 2) and then in a two-wave study involving a general sample of 121 recent retirees (Study 3). Findings from both studies point to the importance of social group and identity gain in retirement adjustment and highlight the particular importance of retiree identification in the transition.