

Retirement and Its Discontents

Why We Won't Stop Working, Even if We Can

Michelle Pannor Silver

In the popular imagination, retirement promises a well-deserved rest—idle days spent traveling, volunteering, pursuing hobbies, or just putting around the house. But as the nature of work has changed, becoming not just a means of income but a major source of personal identity, many accomplished professionals struggle with discontentment in their retirement. What are we to do—individually and as a culture—when work and life experience make conventional retirement a burden rather than a reprieve?

In *Retirement and Its Discontents*, Michelle Pannor Silver considers how we confront the mismatch between idealized and actual retirement. She follows doctors, CEOs, elite athletes, professors, and homemakers during their transition to retirement as they struggle to recalibrate their sense of purpose and self-worth. The work ethic and passion that helped these retirees succeed can make giving in to retirement more difficult, as they confront newfound leisure time with uncertainty and guilt. Drawing on in-depth interviews that capture a range of perceptions and common concerns about what it means to be retired, Silver emphasizes the significance of creating new retirement strategies that support social connectedness and personal fulfillment while countering ageist stereotypes about productivity and employment. A richly detailed and deeply personal exploration of the challenges faced by accomplished retirees, *Retirement and Its Discontents* demonstrates the importance of personal identity in forging sustainable social norms around retirement and helps us to rethink some of the new challenges for aging societies.

MICHELLE PANNOR SILVER is an assistant professor in the Department of Sociology and the Interdisciplinary Centre for Health and Society at the University of Toronto.

\$30.00 / £24.00 cloth · 978-0-231-18856-2
\$29.99 / £24.00 ebook · 978-0-231-54792-5
AUGUST 2018 296 pages

ORDER ONLINE NOW AND SAVE 30%

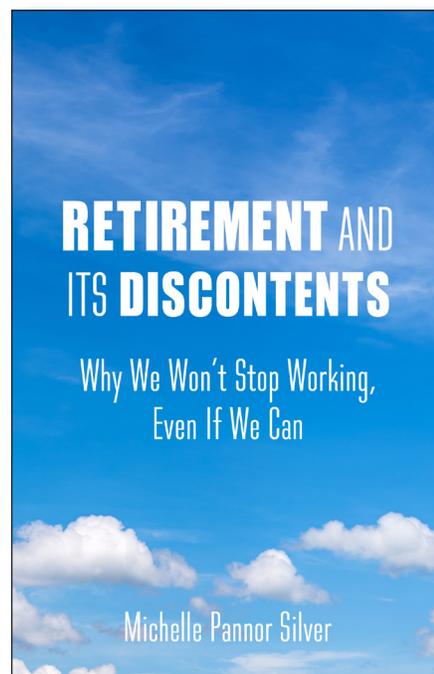
CUP.COLUMBIA.EDU

Enter Code: **CUP30** for 30% discount

Regular shipping and handling charges apply.



**COLUMBIA
UNIVERSITY
PRESS**



“A convincing analysis of the disquiet among a small group of elders who—despite having money—want to work. Warning! A furtive tear may betray empathy for their deep feelings of abandonment, depression, being a renegade. Silver digs deep for courageous insights into the transition from career to retirement.”

—Teresa Ghilarducci, The New School,
author of *Rescuing Retirement: A Plan to Guarantee Retirement Security for All Americans*

“This fascinating read holds insights not only for those on the verge of retirement, but for all of us—in how we think about structuring our work and living our lives.”

—Michael Norton, Harvard Business School,
coauthor of *Happy Money: The Science of Happier Spending*

“This extremely well-written, interesting, and informative book gives rich and vivid retrospective accounts by contemporary professional retirees of what was, for them, a jarring transition. The in-depth accounts of people with different occupations are deftly analyzed—revealing both commonalities and differences. *Retirement and Its Discontents* feels timely, as growing numbers of workers are reaching conventional retirement age. Michelle Silver’s writing style is appealing, and the stories capture and hold the reader’s attention.”

—Phyllis Moen, University of Minnesota,
author of *Encore Adulthood: Boomers on the Edge of Risk, Renewal, and Purpose*

“This is a really interesting book—I can’t say I’ve seen anything like it. Obviously well written and well researched in addition to being a great read, it takes an innovative and personal look at a seemingly familiar concept—retirement—and challenges us to think beyond the stereotype of golf courses and loving grandchildren. Instead, it explores the social constructions of identity and work through interviews and examples ranging from physicians to homemakers.”

—Kate de Medeiros, Miami University, author of *Narrative Gerontology in Research and Practice*