

I'm old enough and I'm young enough: Semi-retirement and career

Qualitative research into the relationship between career and retirement

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Background

Worked for many years in voluntary sector

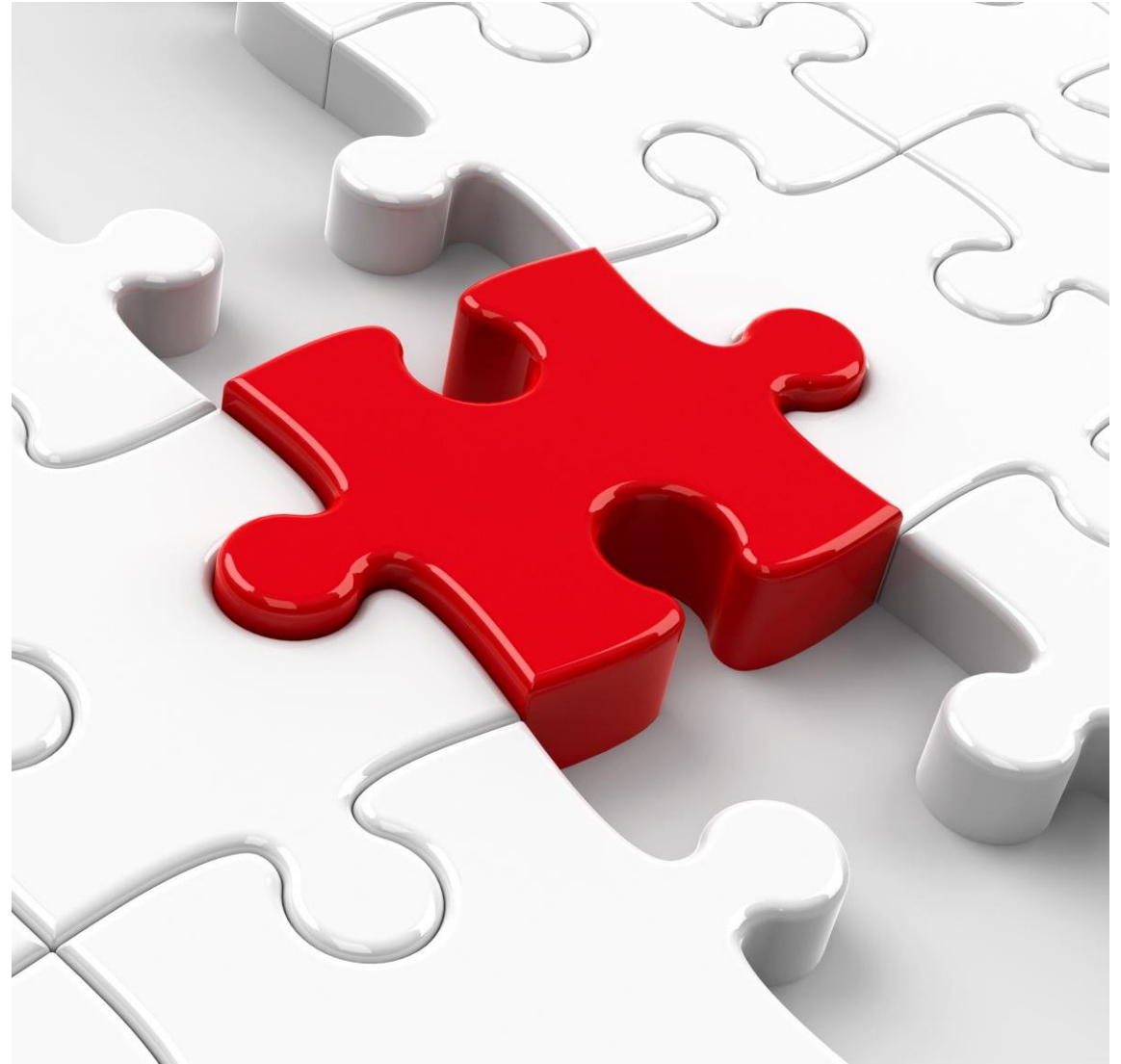
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graph TD; A[Worked for many years in voluntary sector] --> B[Often encountered recently retired volunteers]; B --> C[Retirement decisions are career decisions – re how to spend time];
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Often encountered recently retired volunteers

Retirement decisions are career decisions – re how to spend time

Impact

- Few qualitative studies re retirement and career (Mazumdar et al 2021)
- Changing landscape of retirement and changing needs of older workers
- Important questions re workforce needing older workers, older workers needing work and the interaction between
- Practical support – how can practitioners best help?



Research questions

RQ1 How do people experience semi-retirement and use this period to make decisions about the future?

RQ2 Do participants feel that semi-retirement is a life stage or a role transition?

Literature review

- Changing landscape of retirement (Sargent et al 2013)
- Retirement not seen as part of career with exception of developmental approach which does mention retirement as 'decline' (Super 1980) later renamed to 'disengagement' (Super et al 1996)



Literature review

Last 10 years, a proliferation of terms:

- ‘encore career’ (Luke et al 2016) ,
- ‘bridge employment’ (Lytle et al 2015),
- ‘silver work’ (Maxin and Deller 2010)
- ‘late career’ (Wang and Wanberg 2017)
- ‘un-retiring’ (Maestas 2010)
- ‘active aging (Simova 2010)’
- ‘positive aging’ (Newman 2011),
- ‘second career’ (Learning and Work Institute 2017)

Need for qualitative study which looks at needs of current cohort and take up of paid work



Method

Qualitative research, thematic analysis

13 interviewees all 55+, semi-retired by choice via snowball sampling

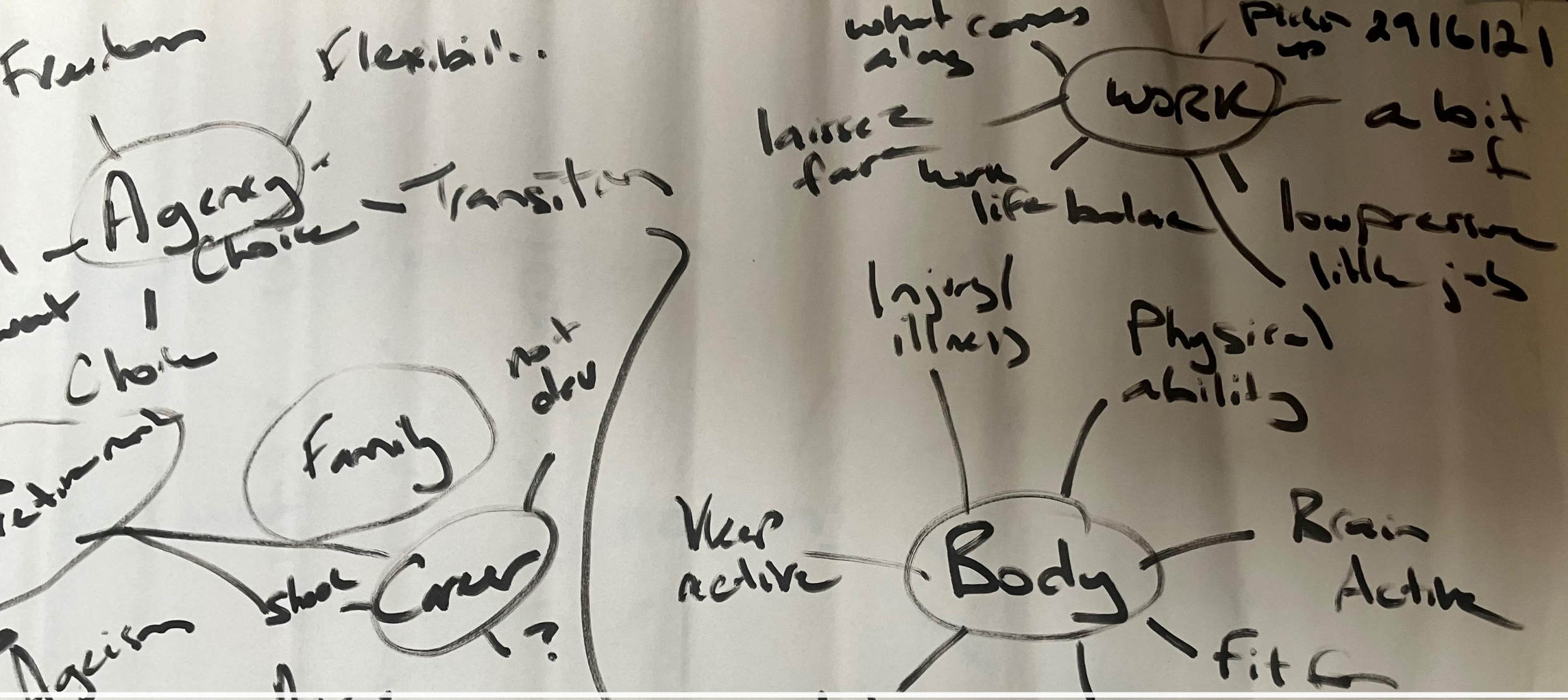
Frequency table

Separated names from participants (T1:T13)

Thematic Analysis phases

Phases of Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006)

1. Familiarizing yourself with your data	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
: 3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis



Sketching it out

CODE	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9	T10	T11	T12	T13	
Age and stage	160,	108	177	100	303	263	71	81	607		252	104	310	
	420	132	180	162	309	317	136	105	655		274			
	426	134	340		324	424	249	143			415			
		138					262	213			421			
		160					339	279			428			
		216						371						
	224													
Positive re semi retirement	288	256	204		121	446	103			165	92	429	215	
			223		127		278			497	232	528		
			312		149		288				327	572		
											373			
											641			
Freedom/choice/agency	248,	152	92		303	227	109	59	115	206	146	401	179	
	272,	207	101			300	239					423	226	
	298	281	204			310	249					539	229	
	328,	284	214			423	279					550	230	
	335,	312	294			449	283					581	241	
	340,	314	331			503	287					616	268	
	344	346										622	311	
	385											649		

Frequency Table

Extracts

T	Age and Stage	Choice, Agency	A bit of work	Question of career	Busy/occupied	Positive re semi retirement
T1	<p>160 Again, at my age , but yeah, it was. It's very, it's a very physically demanding job</p> <p>420 And I suppose I feel secure because I know I've reached the stage where I've got a nice house. I haven't got a mortgage, I haven't got debts, I can – I've got a pension , thankfully, to look forward to and so long as there's no catastrophes it just feels like that's what's happening already if you know what I mean.</p> <p>426 And um I don't know, I don't know whether – it certainly hasn't been planned right from the outset goes and I suppose I look at some friends who are still struggling away and working five days a week and longer .</p>	<p>231 so time to me, time is definitely more precious. I think you know when you've been around the block a bit and lived a bit and just see what happens to other people in their lives , you realise actually there are so many things which I find enjoyable . I, you know, I bought my house when I've had a I had a small flat before which I never did anything with – then I lived with somebody else in his house and it was – it always felt like his house and his garden. Even for, you know, a number of years. And I bought this, but I think it's really lovely house and I want to enjoy it and do the garden . Um – I have friends all round the country and the world really. I did a lot of travelling when I was younger. I don't feel like I want to jump on cruise ships or you know go to</p>	<p>252 I've managed to stash a few bob and things you know so financially I'm OK. I need to work a little bit but I can do some gardening again. I can do you know? Just odds and ends . And I can turn my hand to you know loads of admin type stuff in all the schools and colleges. Maybe I'm being a bit brazen but I'm confident I could find myself something you know – 15 hours a week – that's probably all I'd need probably . That's all I'd want as well.</p> <p>257 I've done all sorts of things in the past too – and</p>	<p>282 That's an interesting question because my overall career I've even struggled to call it a career . I just think I've – I don't feel I've fallen into one particular vocation although lots of what I've done has been very transferrable. I feel like I played around with different jobs and roles and I very much pick them up and cast them aside when I've had enough. Which I don't know – is that what you should do ? I don't know.</p> <p>291– I feel much more excited. I think there was a point yeah when I was teaching and in my 30's – I was single then I</p>	<p>209 And I think just knowing that this project does have and end at some point and um, yeah, I think I just need to get the grey matter working and I need to get that post grad loan in before I'm too old</p> <p>246 And then again as I said, doing this Master's and you know just a little bit of brain stimulation</p>	<p>. I don't know whether I'd do that again but I actually feel quite excited about the years I've got ahead of me now.</p> <p>424 I suppose I look at some friends who are still struggling away and working five days a week and longer . You know, especially people in the education profession. I just think – oh my. I just feel really glad I'm not having to do that any more</p>

Findings: Life stage

- Age or stage in life mentioned consistently
- Sub themes of end of life and being positive about semi retirement
- *'I'm at a stage in my life where I've done that, I really enjoyed my professional career, I've come to the stage in my life where um I want a different type of work life balance'* (T2)
- *'So I thought right - time now. How much of life is left. What do I want to do? What do I really want to do?'* (T7)
- *'But for myself, I'm really happy. I am much happier . I feel like I've got a life, and I didn't realise I didn't have one before.'* (T13)

Findings: Choice/ agency

- Criteria of being 'semi-retired by choice' but degree to which choice was important was striking as well as what was not wanted
- *'Well, I think when you're semi-retired, the things you are choosing to be is active and involved but on the things you want to do.'* (T12)
- *'That choice thing, but also, I think sort of being able to do things that I wasn't able to do previously. Yeah, because the career was too demanding.'* (T3)
- *Just as far as a career goes I think I'm where I want to be . I'm where I want to ... I am, I'm lucky enough that I can choose what I want. I don't want a full time job* (T7)

Findings: work as something to be taken up or left

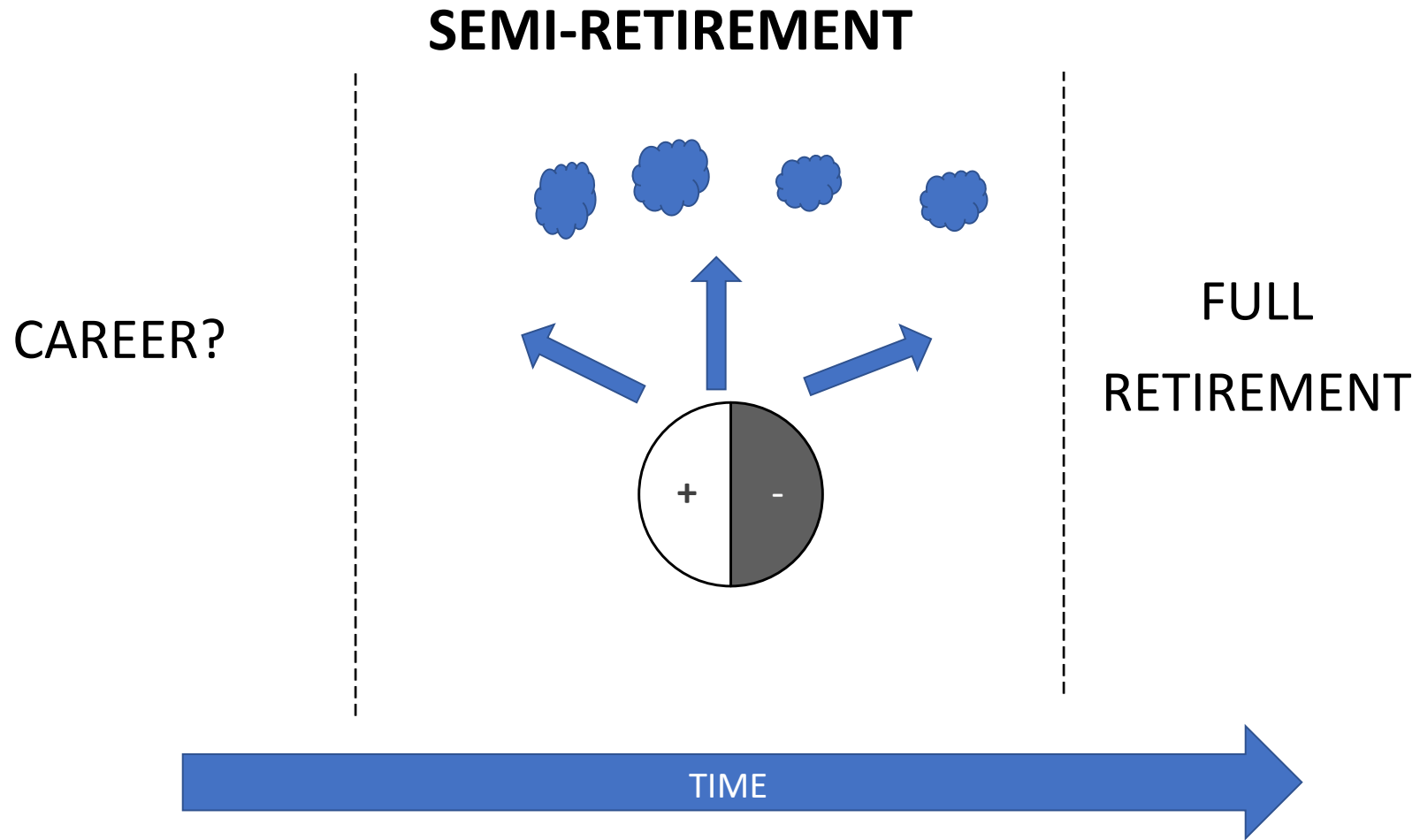
- Work as something little or disposable which could be picked up or put down
- *'just odds and ends' (T1), 'a bit of consultancy' (T2), 'foot soldier type work' (T3), 'bits and pieces' (T6,T9), 'that little admin job' (T7), 'a small job' (T8).*
- *'Yeah, I mean, I think I'll probably wait for something to wander in my path, rather than go and actively chase it - I think is quite a distinction' (T6)*
- *'If the work comes along, and I like the look of it, I take it. If it doesn't, then, you know, either it doesn't come or I don't like the look of it, then I don't do it. It's not a - there's not a plan. There's not a map.' (T3)*

Findings: Question of career

- Discomfort re idea of career, whether they had had one and whether it was relevant to semi-retirement
- *'That's an interesting question because my overall career I've even struggled to call it a career. I just think I've – I don't feel I've fallen into one particular vocation although lots of what I've done has been very transferrable.'* (T1)
- *'Well the problem I have is I still don't know what I'm going to do when I grow up'* (T9)
- *'To me, it's just work. It's just a job . It's not just a job that just isn't....the job. My husband has a career, and has always had a career and I've always felt like I was a supporting role to that.'* (T11)

Findings: divided emotions

- Positive: enjoyment, luck, optimism, passion, feeling valued, blessed, happy
- Negative: guilt, boredom, depression, anxiety, bitter, unconfident
- *'I don't know if other people will say that to you but I feel I'm not earning my crust . Um, doing my bit.....I feel a sense of guilt and I also feel like my mother would be disappointed.'* (T6)



Diagram

Discussion



Most would have described selves as working part time or consulting rather than semi-retired

Not bridge employment as most in same field

Life stage but not disengagement

Importance of choice echoes research re baby boomers (Kojola and Moen 2016)

Work taken or left not much mentioned in literature

Limitations and practice implications

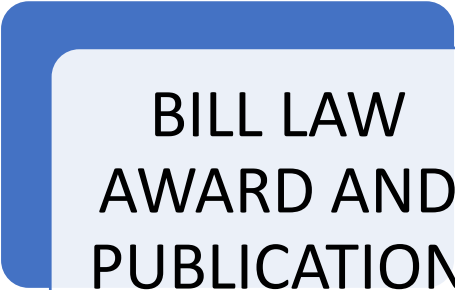
Limitations: largely white women and lack of representation of those without choice – future research?

The diagram consists of two circles connected by a right-pointing arrow. The left circle is orange and contains text about limitations. The right circle is grey and contains text about practice implications. The arrow is also orange and points from the left circle to the right circle.

Implications for practice: neither career nor retirement a comfortable fit for participants so how to phrase the offer?



Dissemination



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Any questions?

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