

# How do people find meaning after retirement from full time work? A research study using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

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# My Background

Chartered Psychologist

Author: 8 books include Find Work at 50+

121 Career Work

Pre-Retirement Seminars

Assessment Consultant

Media Spokesperson





Introduction to my  
research focus;  
why this topic?



# My research – influenced by:

- Rites of Passage
- Vision Quest
- What gives people purpose after full-time work
- How do people find meaning






Extended Systematic Literature Review:  
**What are the individual psychological factors that impact a positive adjustment to retirement?**

- Changes in retirement: no longer a fixed retirement date; less certainty over pension levels
- Pre-Retirement Seminars focus mainly on finances
- Retirement transition research focuses on finances and health
- Little detail on psychological factors





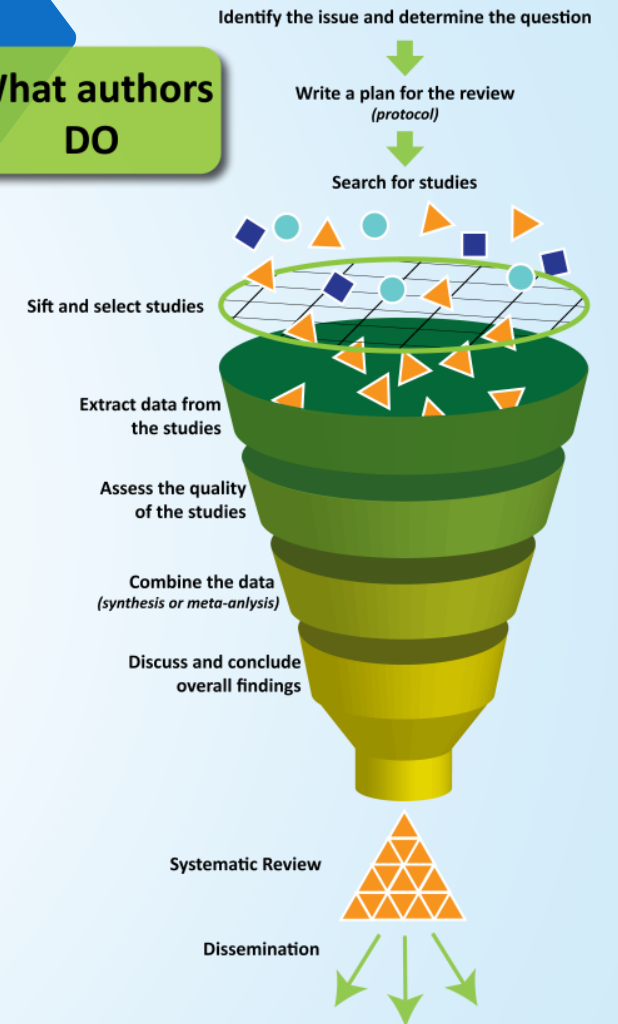
## Background research and evidence

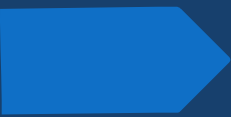
- ➔ Taylor and Cook (1995)
- ➔ Moen (1996; 2003)
- ➔ van Solinge and Henkens (2008)
- ➔ Shultz and Wang (2011)

# Systematic Literature Review

## What authors DO

- Much research is looking at retirement adjustment in a broad sense.
- This systematic review focused on one specific area – psychological factors.
- **Exclusion:** people who retire earlier due to redundancy and a failure to get another job, or for health reasons, or to take up caring duties.
- These factors are outside the control of the individual and may negatively influence the retirement adjustment as they had not entered retirement voluntarily.





## The stages of my Systematic Review

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Scoping out my research idea – reading articles, summarising, listing inclusion/exclusion criteria

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Getting in a pickle with writing up the SLR protocol

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Research idea changed from unretirement to finding meaning in life after retirement

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**SLR Question:** What psychological factors impact a successful adjustment in retirement?

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Learning how to use databases and sift down

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Registering my protocol with Campbell

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Analysis and writing up the SLR



# SLR Search

## 24 Psychological Factors:

- ▶ Self-efficacy; Personality; Resilience; Motivation; Attitudes; Beliefs; Optimism; Subjective well-being; Well-being; Well being; Life satisfaction; Quality of life; Attitudes; Psychological health; Personal sense of mastery; Locus of control; Positive attitude; Extraversion; Agreeableness; Social integration; Mattering; Generativity; Hope; Future time perspective; Personal growth; Ego development; Planning for retirement; Retirement attitude; Psychological antecedents; Retirement decision attitudes; Retirement adjustment predictors

AND **Retirement OR Retir\*** (to cover retiring or retire – related to retirement)

AND adjustment

## 5 databases:

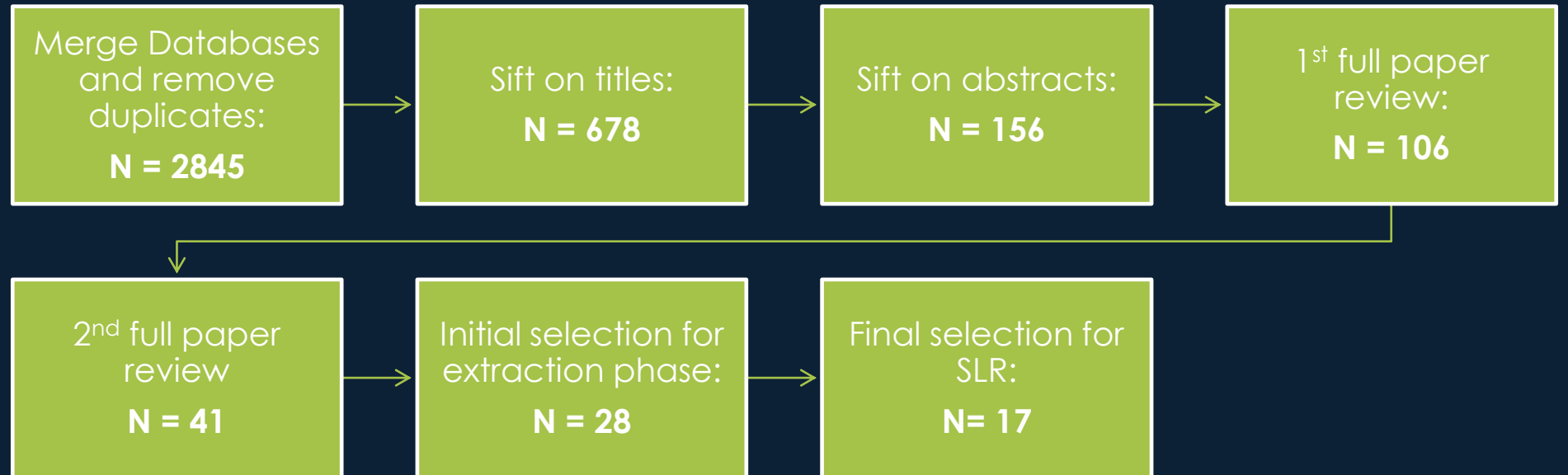
- ▶ Scopus; PsychInfo; Psych Articles; Academic Search Complete; Business Source Premier

## Plus, doctoral theses and grey literature

- ▶ using specific websites such as The Centre for Ageing Better, Institute for Employment Studies, Work Foundation, CIPD and Age UK



# Numbers





## Systematic Literature Review: 17 studies

- ▶ **5 papers covered personality** using NEO-PI-R or similar. Overall, the personality characteristics of high extraversion, low neuroticism, and agreeableness were associated with retirement satisfaction and predicted volunteering.
- ▶ **2 papers looked at values** and specifically passion.
- ▶ **6 papers explored how psychological factors of autonomy, perceived control (self-efficacy), self-esteem, mastery, optimism, and low stress** will predict psychological well-being in the adjustment to retirement.
- ▶ 3 papers took a **generalised view** of psychological factors.
- ▶ Plus a mixed methods study looked at calling.





## SLR Findings

- **Maura and Chapman (2018)** identified that it may be down to having a proactive personality.
- **Burr, Santo and Pushkar (2011)** state that it may be due to values e.g. Autonomy.
- Mastery was identified as being down to a sense of personal control to deal with the changes associated with retirement (**Donaldson, Earl, & Muratore, 2010; Topa, 2015**).
- **Duffy, Torrey, and England (2017)**, suggested that calling could also have a significant impact.

## Why my study is needed

- ▶ **The SLR studies focused on psychological factors in retirement**, however the included studies are limited.
- ▶ Many times, psychological factors formed one small measure within a study.
- ▶ What was missing was the meaning to the individual, and understanding of their life choices, their intrinsic and internal motivation, what gives them drive.



# Qualitative research on meaning and retirement

Just 9 studies and none were  
relevant







## Aims and objectives

The aim of my study is to identify how people find meaning after retirement from full time work.

Grounded theory, Narrative Psychology, Thematic Analysis, Participatory Action Research, Ethnographic, Discourse Analysis, Case Study, were considered ...

# Research Study Methodology

Using Interpretative  
Phenomenological Analysis



The research is looking deeper ...

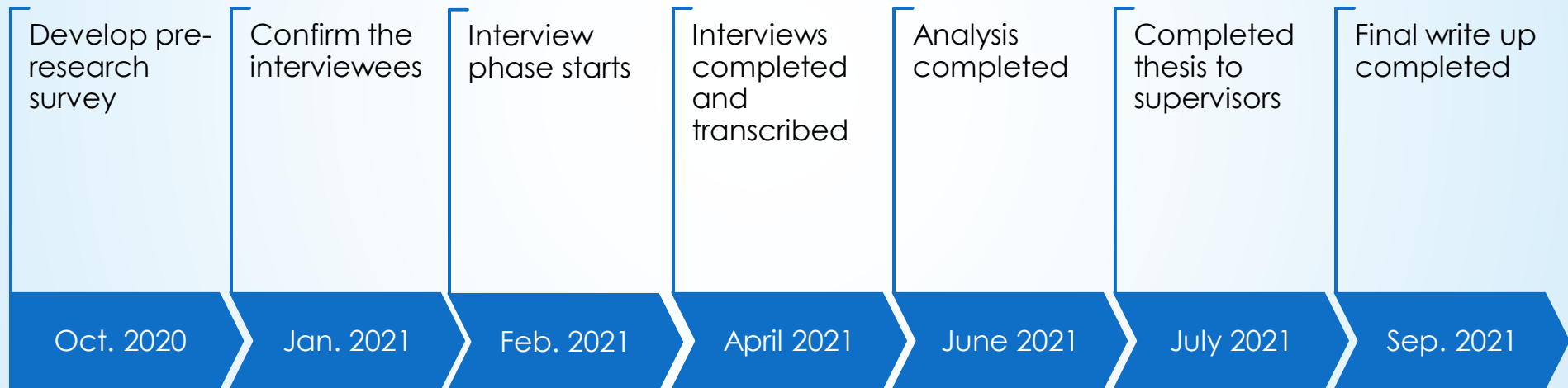
into the lived experience of those who self-identify as people who have found meaning in life after retirement, people with internal drive at this stage in life.

It seeks to understand if they have always had this feeling of meaning, or calling or drive and to see if they recognise themselves as being someone with specific personality characteristics, with specific values, and for how long have they noticed this.





# Timescales



# IPA Interviewing

- ▶ **Interview schedules should be short**, starting with broad, general questions that allow the participant to set the parameters of the topic, not the other way around. (Smith, Flowers & Larkin 2009)
- ▶ Encourage the person to speak about the topic with **as little prompting from the interviewer as possible** (Smith & Osborn 2003)
- ▶ This means the researcher does not impose their understanding of the phenomenon on the participant's narrative.



# Original themes

- ▶ What aspects of personality have supported them, post-retirement?
- ▶ To what extent are they driven by values?
- ▶ Do they consider they have a calling? When did they get this calling?
- ▶ Looking back over their earlier life and working life how does this relate to where they are now?
- ▶ Do they have a plan, a sense of direction for the coming years?





# Dissemination

## TO

- Employers
- Policy makers
- Individuals

## HOW

- Conferences
- Articles
- Online forums

