Post-retirement Career Planning

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Introduction

Post-retirement career planning refers to the planning process to actively engage in career-related activities after formal retirement entry. From an historical perspective, the nature of retirement has changed in many industrialized countries during the last century. Before 1900, retirement did hardly exist because people worked as long as they were able to work or the formal retirement age was well beyond life expectancy. In the first half of the 20th century, retirement became a statutory opportunity due to the introduction of social security. Until 1980, male workers were striving towards earlier retirement, while female workers were delaying their retirement. From 1980 to 2000, the decline of men's retirement age continued due to social and economic conditions. From 2000 onwards, the situation of retirement is on the move driven by population aging and economic uncertainty. (Shultz & Wang, 2011) Nowadays, the term retirement refers to a pension receiving state that in many cases involves the dissociation from the main employment but generally allows further work engagement. Although retirement has long been seen as a phase of complete disengagement from work, it has been recently reconceptualized as late career development stage based on (more or less) voluntary engagement in career-related activities (Kim & Hall, 2013; Wang & Shi, 2014). In many industrialized countries, demographic changes and economic conditions have caused a political shift from an agenda of early retirement towards an agenda of extending working lives that lay the foundations for individual post-retirement career planning in the contemporary society.

The chapter provides an overview of post-retirement career planning from an individual perspective. After covering career development across the life span, post-retirement careers will be discussed in terms of its social cognitive foundations and in terms of its planning process. In addition, relevant antecedents of post-retirement career planning will be introduced with regard to their proximity to career-related behavior. This will be

followed by a discussion of empirical support for post-retirement career planning and an outlook for future directions.

Career Development across the Life Span

Career refers to the development of vocational interests, decisions, and behavior over the life span. The life-span, life-space theory of careers (in the literature also named as theory of vocational development, career development theory, and developmental self-concept theory; Super, 1953) combines the approach of having multiple roles in life (i.e., life-space) with the approach of individual development of career paths (i.e., life-span).

Life-space Approach

The approach of life-space of career development refers to the room that people take for their career while living their life. The life space is based on the constellation of different social positions that drive people to occupy multiple roles in life. For example, a person takes the role of being a spouse, father, grandfather, brother, friend, golfer, and volunteer next to his occupational role. Although the work role is a significant role in contemporary society, it is only one among many others. Further, the multiple roles people occupy interact with each other with regard to the resources (e.g., energy, time, and money) that people have. Referring to the previous example, the person's choice whether to continue working in retirement is based on circumstances related to the constellation of his different social positions. For example, with the birth of his grandchild, he may have fewer resources available for his work role than before. In addition, the allocation of resources between the different roles depends on the meaning that each role provides to people's lives.

Life-span Approach

Career development involves several transitions from one life stage into another. Figure 1 shows the ladder model of life-career stages and development tasks referring to the

approach of career development across the life-span. Based on the sequence of life stages (i.e., growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and disengagement or reengagement), there are different task-related sub stages relevant in a prototypical pattern of career development.

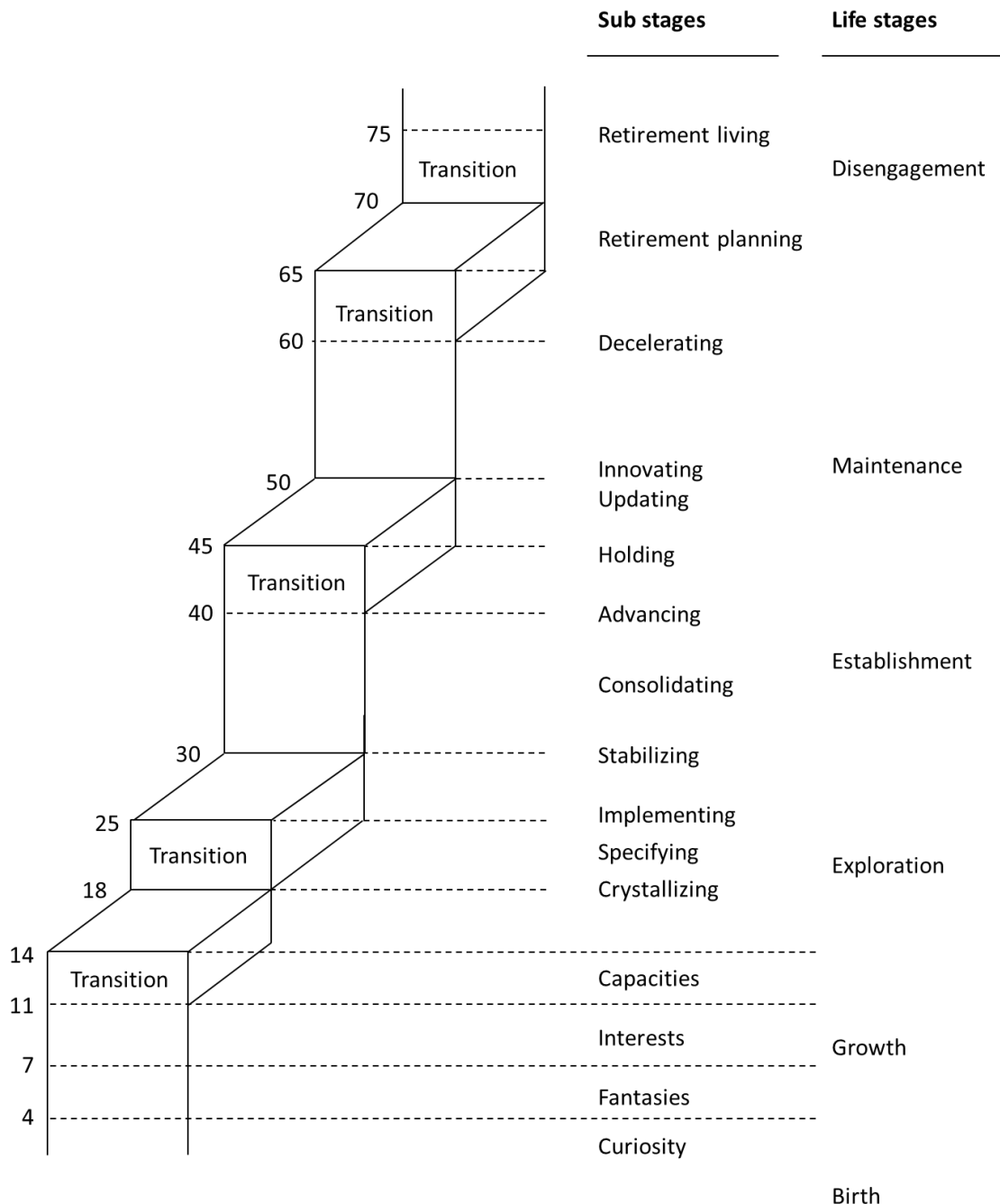**Figure 1.** The ladder model of life-career stages and development tasks; Source: Life stages and substages based on the typical developmental tasks, with focus on the maxicycle. From D. E. Super (1990). A life-space, life-span approach to career development. In D. Brown (Ed.), Career choice and development (2nd ed.; p.214). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Copyright by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

Growth

The growth stage (approximately from ages four to thirteen) refers to the career development tasks involving curiosity, fantasies, interests, and capacities to answer the question "Who am I?" During this stage children learn to gain control over their own life, make decisions and increase confidence in their own abilities. At the same time, children experience to get along with other children and adults guiding them to balance cooperative and competitive behavior in order to achieve their aims and keep up relationships to others. Further, time becomes a relevant factor that leads children to develop a future-orientation. Overall, the growth stage helps a person to set the foundations for his or her vocational self-concept.

Exploration

The exploration stage (approximately from ages fourteen to twenty-four) refers to the career development tasks crystallizing, specifying, and implementing a vocational choice and preparing work-role entry. In a first instance, exploration involves the imagination of possible selves in varying occupational contexts. This reflection of preferences is followed by the transfer of privately experienced vocational self-construct into educational and occupational choice. Finally, the exploration stage is completed by implementing choice through the means of selecting a training, preparing, and obtaining a specified occupational position.

Establishment

The establishment stage (approximately from ages twenty-five to forty-four) refers to the career development tasks stabilizing, consolidating, and advancing the vocational self-concept in order to build a secure work-role. Stabilizing implies settling into the new position by assimilating to the work culture and fulfilling central job duties. This again facilitates consolidating the position by demonstrating sustained work, productive work attitudes, and positive co-worker relations. At the final point of the establishment stage, people eventually

pursue new levels of responsibility in order to move ahead to higher level positions inside or outside their work organization. Successful establishment yields to a consistent integration of the self-concept into the occupational role, which leads, besides earning a living, to higher levels of meaning in life.

Maintenance

The maintenance stage (approximately from ages forty-five to sixty-five) refers to the career development tasks holding, updating, and innovating of the established position. For the majority of people, the transition from the establishment to the maintenance stage is characterized through the clarification of the satisfaction with the current work-role and the critical examination of relevant work goals with regard to the future direction. At this point, people either decide to stay in the current position and therefore, enter the maintenance stage, or change their vocational orientation and therefore, recycle earlier stages of career development (i.e., the exploration and/or establishment stage). With entering the maintenance stage, people hold on their secured position and maintain job proficiency and work achievements. Further, this stage involves updating professional skills and knowledge in order to enhance job performance. At the same time, discovering new challenges and innovating the way of doing tasks helps preventing job dissatisfaction and hence, decreases the likelihood of mid-career changes or career plateaus.

Disengagement or Reengagement

The disengagement stage (in Super's model approximately from ages over sixty-five) refers to the career development tasks of deceleration, preparation, and transition to retirement. During this stage, a majority of people experience lower levels of energy and interest for the work-role, which leads to slowing down on the job, reducing work hours, and passing over tasks, skills, and knowledge to the younger work generation (Hartung, 2013). Eventually, this leads to a complete separation of self-concept and work, requiring new life

structures for people entering retirement. However, the prototypical pattern of career development becomes less meaningful with higher ages because the variety of possible development paths increases. As a consequence, disengagement can become reengagement. As it has been already mentioned in the introduction, retirement can also be a late career development stage, which does not necessary yield towards a separation of self-concept and work but rather to retaining the work-role identity. As people have often worked for their whole life, their self-concept may be closely tied to their work-role driving them to continue working after formally entering retirement (Feldman, 1994).

Post-retirement Career

Retirement is an enduring process that involves the planning to actively engage in career-related activities that often begins before entering retirement (Wang, Olson, & Shultz, 2013). There are a variety of factors that determine this planning process and influence retirees' decisions whether to engage in career-related activities or not. With formally entering retirement, people may continue working or volunteering as they have done before or they create new opportunities for themselves and take up new responsibilities of societal participation and productive engagement. Career-related activities include post-retirement employment (also named bridge employment), which refers to paid work inside or outside the (pre-retirement) career field (Gobeski & Beehr, 2009). There are different employment forms, including working for the same employer, for a new employer, or going into business for oneself (Shultz, 2003). Also, post-retirement volunteering has been noted to be an important form of productive engagement after retirement entry. Post-retirement volunteering includes formal activities that benefit civic organizations (e.g., managing a charity institution for cancer research) or informal activities that benefit family and friends (e.g., care of a disabled person). In real life settings, often a combination of different career-related activity patterns including both post-retirement employment and volunteering can be found.

Social Cognitive Foundations of Post-retirement Career Behavior

Interaction between Person, Environment, and Behavior

Over 20 years ago, Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994) have formulated the social cognitive career theory to explain the process of interest development, decision-making, and performance attainment of career behavior across the life span. The career process model builds on Bandura's (1986) general social cognitive theory that states a triadic reciprocity between person, environment, and behavior. Triadic reciprocity implies the bidirectional influence of three elements, which are the (a) personal factors that consist of internal capabilities, such as cognitive, emotional and physical resources; (b) the environmental factors, such as external resources and surrounding conditions; and (c) the behavioral factors that consist of actions and decisions (rather than attributes and capabilities) of the person. This three-way mechanism goes beyond previous theoretical approaches that often described behavior as a result of the interaction between personal and environmental factors, $B = f$ (P ↔ E). However, it is important to note that the actions and decisions people take alter environmental factors and draw back on their affect, thoughts, and influence subsequent behavior (Bandura, 1986).

Based on the dynamic interplay of person, environment, and behavior, the social cognitive career theory that is crucial for post-retirement career planning, emphasizes on self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals as cognitive-person variables that enable the person to act as an agency of self-directed career behavior. These cognitive-person determinants involve different self-reflective and self-regulatory processes that are central for career development after formal retirement entry.

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to a person's belief about one's own capabilities to deal with a situation and take action that are appropriate for the accomplishment of self-directed goals

(Lent & Brown, 2013). Beliefs about the own self-efficacy determine a person as proactive agent within his or her own motivational orientation (Bandura, 1986). The concept of self-efficacy is a dynamic set of beliefs linked to particular career and performance domains rather than being a global or unitary trait as self-esteem (i.e., the overall evaluation of self-worth), as can easily be confused. A person might, for instance, have strong self-efficacy beliefs about his or her ability to interact with different types of people (i.e., social task) but feel less competent at manual or technical tasks (Lent, 2013). Further, there are different forms of self-efficacy, *task-specific efficacy* (i.e., the belief about one's capability to fulfil career-related requirements, such as having relevant work experience and knowledge), *coping efficacy* (i.e., the belief about one's ability to cope with career-related obstacles, such as age discrimination at work), and *process efficacy* (i.e., the belief about one's capability to guide the retirement transition, including post-retirement career preparation, retirement entry, role shift, and the adjustment to retirement), that are relevant to post-retirement career planning.

Outcome Expectations

Outcome expectations refer to a person's anticipation of the likely consequences of one's behavior. With regard to post-retirement career planning, these outcome expectations possibly involve the anticipation of *physical* (e.g., additional income), *social* (e.g., intergenerational contact, approval from others), and *self-evaluative* (e.g., self-satisfaction, work-role identity) outcomes, that are likely to influence career-related decisions. Taken together, the two mechanisms of self-efficacy and outcome expectations can be transferred into the general questions "can I do this?" and "if I try, what will happen?"

Personal Goals

Another relevant instance of self-regulatory behavior that is central to post-retirement career planning is goal setting. People are more than mechanical performers following environmental forces but proactive agents that use personal goals as guiding principles to

systematically take a course of action in order to achieve desired outcomes (Bandura, 1986).

Personal goals refer to one's intention to engage in particular behavior in order to produce a

certain outcome (Lent, 2013). Goals can be distinguished in *choice goals* (i.e., the type of

behavior that one plans to pursue) and *performance goals* (i.e., the quality or level of

performance that one wished to achieve related to the chosen type of behavior). Further, goals

vary in specificity and proximity to the actual behavior (Lent & Brown, 2013). In the context

of post-retirement career planning, goals can be further divided into general career goals and

specific intentions. While general career goals refer to occupational aspirations that exist

independent of commitment or real considerations, specific intentions refer to the concrete

willingness to take career-related actions.

Post-retirement Career Planning Process (or Career Self-Management Process)

The core process of post-retirement career planning describes how self-efficacy,

outcome expectations, and goals are related to action and outcome attainment. Figure 2

provides an overview of the entire process of career self-management including the core

career planning process in shaded boxes and its proximal and distal antecedents in white
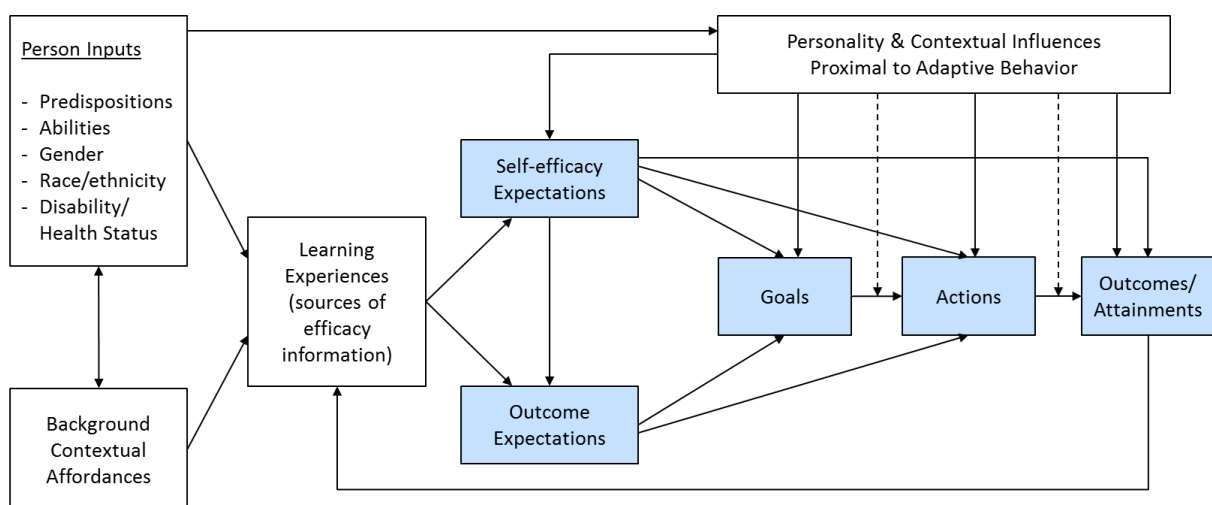
boxes.

Figure 2. The process of career self-management; Source: Model of career self-management. From R. W. Lent & S. D. Brown (2013). Social cognitive model of career self-management: Toward a unifying view of adaptive career behavior across the life span. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 60, p. 562. Adopted from: Toward a unifying social cognitive theory of career and academic interest, choice, and performance. From R.W. Lent, S.

Note: Direct effects are indicated with solid lines; moderator effects (where a given variable strengthens or weakens the relationship between two other variables) are indicated in dashed lines.

In the core process of career planning, self-efficacy and outcome expectations are the initial antecedents of career-related behavior. As can be seen in the process model, the two factors promote actions directly and indirectly through goals. The way self-efficacy and outcome expectations influence career behavior depends on the certainty of outcome attainment. Under certain conditions (i.e., a high level of performance guarantees appointed career outcomes), self-efficacy is the predominant mechanism in determining career-related behavior and outcome expectations are of lower importance. While under uncertain conditions (i.e., career outcomes are only loosely bound to the level of performance), outcome expectations are of crucial relevance for career behavior. For example, when an employee has worked for over 20 years for a company with a consistently high level of performance, he might be offered to continue working after retirement entry. However, due to company's skepticism regarding the work ability of the employee, the opportunity to continue working is uncertain. This means that the employee's self-efficacy but also his outcome expectations are highly relevant in order to set goals that help attaining outcomes. Therefore, when the employee beliefs that he can convince the company to hire him after retirement based on his capabilities and work experience (i.e., positive outcome expectations), the employee will (indirectly) be more likely to be hired. However, when the employee beliefs that the company will not be interested in him due to company's negative views on older workers (i.e., negative outcome expectations), the person will have lower chances to be actually hired independent from his believed capabilities to continue working in retirement.

That goals or intentions determine behavior has been proposed by various theories, such as the theory of planned behavior, social cognitive theory, or goal setting theory. These theories also emphasize on particular qualities that are important for goals in order to be

effective behavioral determinants. Referring to these qualities, goals should be explicit, specific, openly stated, in line with personal values, and proximal to actual behavior (Lent & Brown, 2013). Taken together, self-efficacy, outcome expectations and goals are relevant determinants of career-related actions. Further, goal-directed actions are more likely to promote desired career outcomes. For example, a person, who is actively seeking for a job after formal retirement entry will be more likely to obtain a job compared to someone, who is communicating his retirement situation neutrally without his career aspirations. In addition, self-efficacy is also directly linked to outcome attainment through its important role of facilitating, organizing and persisting career-related behavior.

Antecedents of Post-retirement Career Planning

Antecedents of post-retirement career planning can be distinguished in proximal antecedents that directly influence the core elements of post-retirement career planning (i.e., goals, actions, and outcome attainments), while distal antecedents are seen to indirectly influence post-retirement career planning by the means of learning experience that convey in self-efficacy and outcome expectations (as initial antecedents of post-retirement career planning).

Contextual Factors and Personality as Proximal Antecedents

Contextual factors can serve as proximal antecedents for career-related behavior as can be seen in Figure 2. Among contextual factors, there are objective features and perceived features of the environment that are likely to facilitate, restrict or override other factors (e.g., personality) involved in post-retirement career planning. In the eye of the beholder, support, opportunities, and barriers often vary in its importance to career-related behavior, which highlights the active and phenomenological function of people to interpret contextual factors around them (Lent et al., 1993). Environmental support (e.g., financial or social support), the absence of barriers (e.g., good working conditions such as low physical demand and low work

stress), and other work-related factors (e.g., career attachment, intrinsic work motivation or job satisfaction) support post-retirement career planning in a way that they directly influence outcome attainment and indirectly through self-efficacy, personal goals and career-related actions that again convey in outcome attainment (Lent & Brown, 2013).

Further, opportunity structures are seen to be highly relevant contextual factors shaping career-related behavior. Often sufficient socioeconomic and educational conditions allow people to convey their interests into personal career goals. However, interests and career choices are not necessarily linked to each other. As people working in a coal mine do not only work for simple pleasure but to fulfill their financial need, older people may decide for the same financial reason to continue working in retirement. Some people are in the favorable position to choose their career option based on their special abilities, interests, and skills, while others are in the rather unfavorable position to have to take any job that is available for money. Opportunity structures (not only in terms of financial need) are, therefore, a major issue in determining post-retirement career planning (Lent et al., 1993).

In addition to contextual factors, certain personality dimensions are proximal antecedents for career-related behavior. Personality refers to a relatively stable set of dimensions (i.e., traits) that are seen to constitute people's endogenous basic tendencies of acting, feeling, and thinking (Brown & Hirschi, 2013). In particular, conscientiousness (i.e., being responsible and self-disciplined) and as one of the Big Five factors of personality may be relevant for career-related behavior, such as planning and persistence (e.g., while searching for a job after formal retirement entry). Also, other personality dimensions may facilitate career-related behavior with regard to networking or interviewing. Agreeableness (i.e., being cooperative and loyal) and extraversion (i.e., being action-oriented and enthusiastic) may facilitate engaging in social interactions, while emotional stability (i.e., being calm, stable, and relatively free from persistent negative feelings) may help coping with ambiguous situations. Further, openness to experience (i.e., being curious and imaginative) may facilitate

career-related behavior that involves imagining or deliberating different (unconventional) career-choice or problem-solving options (Lent & Brown, 2013).

Learning Experience as Mediator of Distal Antecedents

Self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations do not operate in a social vacuum but rather function in interaction with other person inputs and their particular environments, such as genetic predispositions, specific abilities or disabilities and physical health, gender, ethnicity (or race), and socioeconomic conditions. At this point, it is important to highlight that these person inputs influence career-related behavior mainly indirectly through learning experience of cultural socialization that again transfer to self-efficacy and outcome expectations. In this regard, learning experience refers to four types of information, which are personal achievements, observational learning and modeling, social encouragement and influence, and physiological and affective states.

To clarify the role of learning experience, gender, as one aspect of the person, may help to illustrate the psychological and social effects that arise with regard to career-related behavior. Gender affects career development at multiple stages, especially through the social-cultural reactions it evokes from the environment during the growth and exploration stage but also during later stages. For instance, gender can influence the context children acquire the foundations for their self-efficacy and outcome expectations due to role socialization processes. Early gender role socialization is likely to bias the access to certain experiences that are necessary in order to gain strong self-efficacy beliefs and positive outcome expectations in areas seen as rather typical for male (e.g., science) or typical for female (e.g., care). However, after the initial career choice is made, people are able to change or revise their career paths as they operate as proactive agents in a dynamic environment (Lent, 2013).

With regard to post-retirement career planning, learning experiences that are made in earlier stages but also during the current stage of career development are crucial for the decision whether one continues to work after formally entering retirement As can be seen in

Figure 2, previous outcome attainments are relevant to stabilize (or revise) the self-efficacy and outcome expectations by forming a feedback loop through the means of learning experience. In addition, the role of person inputs is persistent within the current stage of career development (i.e., disengagement or reengagement) as older people face certain age-related role socialization processes. From the environment, for instance, physical deprivation and declining work ability are perceived as general law of aging that leaves no room for individual escape. This overall rather negative image of aging might lower opportunities to gain access to certain experiences that are necessary in order to gain strong self-efficacy beliefs and positive outcome expectations in order to continue working in retirement.

To a large extent, person inputs like abilities or disabilities and physical health, gender, and socioeconomic conditions affect the different aspects of career development (i.e., interest development, goal establishment, and activity planning) through processing a socially constructed reality that apparently operates in the background but yet, powerfully influence self-efficacy and outcome expectations by the means of learning experience. At times, this leads to skewed conclusions about certain interests, goals, and career-choices to be "right" for different types of people (Lent, 2013).

Empirical Support

For over 60 years of research, the life-span, life-space theory has attracted much attention from researchers. As a result, there is a wealth of empirical support highlighting the two approaches of life-span and life-space for career development. However, although there is an impervious layer of research on career development among young adults and adolescents, it has been criticized that there is too little attention for mid and late career development (Hartung, 2013). Especially with regard to post-retirement career planning, a more thoughtful and fine-grained investigation of the disengagement or reengagement stage seems appropriate to further understand and compass the needs of a worldwide aging population.

Also, the social cognitive career theory has gained much attention in career literature related to various work domains (e.g., leadership, job search behavior) as well as to different career development stages from young professionals to mid and late careers. A substantial body of research indicates the relevance of social cognitive variables (i.e., self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals) for career planning and development (Lent, 2013). In particular, self-efficacy has been found to predict career-related interest, choice, and outcome attainment to a substantial extent (Lent, 2013). Meta-analysis (i.e., a statistical technique that systematically combines the research findings of published and unpublished primary studies) revealed that self-efficacy and outcome expectations are directly as well as indirectly (through interests, goals, and action) related to outcome attainment (Brown et al., 2011; Lent, 2013; Sheu et al., 2010). Further, it has been found that contextual factors such as environmental support and barriers are relevant antecedents of career development. Although the direct effects of contextual factors on outcome attainment are relatively small, they persist to be central in strengthening or weakening the relationship between self-efficacy and outcome expectations with career outcomes (Lent, 2013; Sheu et al., 2010). In addition, contemporary empirical approaches (e.g., Wöhrmann, Deller, & Wang, 2014), have applied the social cognitive career theory firsthand to late career development, empathizing on the role of social cognitive variables for post-retirement career planning.

Future Directions

The chapter provided an insight to the key elements of post-retirement career planning from an individual perspective. The role of career development over the life span has been addressed with particular focus on the stage of disengagement or reengagement. Further, the process of post-retirement career planning was presented including its core elements and relevant proximal as well as distal antecedents. Special attention was provided to the social

cognitive variables (i.e., self-efficacy and outcome expectations) that promote people as proactive agents of post-retirement career planning along their own motivational orientation.

With regard to future directions of post-retirement career planning, two major issues should be addressed here. First, it is relevant to emphasize on the necessity for more research on the later stages of career development. As mentioned before, there has been too little research attention to mid and late career development. Considering population aging, it is of high relevance to consider the special challenges of late career development. Also, it could be stated that the ladder model of life-career stages and development tasks (as presented in Figure 1), needs to be adjusted with regard to the changing nature of work, aging, and retirement. A contemporary model for career development should allow back and forth jumping between different stages, and also enable returning from later to earlier stages of career development. Taken together, a more fine-grained investigation of the later career development stages seems to be crucial for further understanding of post-retirement career planning.

Second, another major issue to be addressed here is the consideration of the diverse nature of work regarding the significant role of choice. The favorable position to choose a career option based on special abilities, interests, and skills may lead people to perceive work as gain, while an absence of choice due to economic pressure may lead people to perceive work as pain. Promoting active aging that encourages older people to be productive for the sake of themselves, their families and communities, and the society as a whole, relies on a concept of work that is based on voluntary decisions to engage in post-retirement career activities. However, economic pressure may lead older workers to engage in precarious work that may help to prevent poverty but not necessary guarantee further individual benefits such as health and well-being. Future research should, therefore, investigate different types of work, in particular, the role of manual labor in post-retirement career planning.

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