

# Chapter 13

## Adjustment Processes in Bridge Employment: Where We Are and Where We Need To Go

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The meaning of retirement has shifted dramatically in the past several decades for a number of reasons. In general people are living longer than ever before, and advances in medical science have resulted in overall higher levels of physical wellbeing across the life-span (Salomon et al., 2013). Additionally, social safety nets in the form of government-funded retirement systems are becoming scarcer, and the retirement age in countries with such systems is being systematically rolled forward to account for labor market shortages and resulting monetary shortfalls (Pinera, 2004). Similarly, the dissolution and defunding of employer-sponsored retirement plans and pension programs has been universally noted (Munnell, 2006). Such factors have driven the economic need to maintain employment later into one's life (e.g., Mayhew, 2009; Munnell & Sass, 2008), and recent global economic conditions have likewise compelled people to work longer (Copeland, 2009; Draut & McGhee, 2004). Given this, an increasing number of people are delaying full retirement in favor of continued work participation (See also Chap. 12 of this volume). While the focus of the present chapter is on paid bridge employment, active work participation for retirees can take numerous

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forms, both paid and unpaid (e.g., Volunteerism, Dorfman & Kolarik, 2005; Kim & Feldman, 2000; Okun & Schultz, 2003, See also Chap. 11 of this volume).

Continued engagement in paid work into one's retirement can be abstracted in multiple ways. In the United States, for example, the traditional view of retirement as immediate and outright labor force withdrawal is quickly becoming non-normative (Cahill, Giandrea, & Quinn, 2006; Cahill, Giandrea, & Quinn, 2013). For a majority of older workers, retirement is a staged or gradual process that may involve reducing work hours (i.e., "phased retirement") or changing from full-time to part-time job roles (i.e., "partial retirement"). Bridge employment is so called because it "bridges" the gap between full participation in one's career role, and total withdrawal from the workforce. As such, conceptualizing the myriad of forms of post-retirement workforce participation within the broader concept of bridge employment captures the various ways in which individuals make this transition.

This idea is reflected in various formal definitions of bridge employment – for example, Shultz and Wang (2011) differentiate various forms of bridge employment, including career bridge employment (i.e., bridge employment in one's career field) versus bridge employment in a different field, and volunteerism. Similarly, Van Solinge (2012) notes that the term "bridge employment" is often used as a catchall for various forms of post-retirement work participation. For example, bridge employment may vary in terms of involvement (e.g., full- or part-time work), field and type of work (e.g., working in the same or different fields, in the same or different jobs) and contract arrangement (i.e., salaried, wage-earning, or self-employment). Furthermore, bridge employment can be part-time or seasonal, it can entail a change in occupation or industry, and it can even involve a switch in job type, such as from wage- to self-employment (Giandrea, Cahill, & Quinn, 2008, See also Chap. 14 of this volume).

While trends regarding bridge employment participation are notable in the United States, it is important to realize that bridge employment is a relatively new concept for stakeholders in some countries, especially those with a history of more or less rigid formal retirement requirements (i.e., mandatory retirement age). However, more and more, such countries are implementing policies that relax constraints on the mandatory retirement age to accommodate increased work longevity, including bridge employment arrangements (See European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions [EFILWC], 2012).

Given the trends in aging and work participation noted above, it should not be surprising that there is accumulating research attention addressing how to maintain and develop a sustainable older workforce that is able to meet labor market demands (De Lange, Van Yperen, Van der Heijden, & Bal, 2010; Hedge, Borman, & Lammlein, 2006; Schalk et al., 2010; Shultz & Wang, 2011). While previous research has addressed the various reasons why older workers may retire early (e.g., Beehr, Glazer, Nielson, & Farmer, 2000; Shultz, Morton, & Weckerle, 1998), the scholarly literature in this area has yet to adequately address the psychological adjustment process that facilitates older workers' intention to continue working with adequate capacity beyond their normative *or* statutory retirement age (Wang & Shultz, 2010).

In this chapter, we focus on the current state of our understanding of adjustment processes for bridge employees with an eye towards future research concerns. To set the stage for this chapter, we will first review agentic and life-course perspectives on the adjustment to bridge employment, and derive a definition of successful adjustment to bridge employment that borrows from these complementary viewpoints. Next, we will discuss contextual conditions and “other” factors that affect adjustment to bridge employment. Then, because of their broad applicability for understanding psychological adjustment in general, we will provide an overview of the applicability of life-span and self-regulatory theoretical perspectives for understanding adjustment for bridge employees. Stemming from this, we also introduce and advance a model (see Fig. 13.1) of the psychological mechanisms that underlie the bridge employment adjustment process. Finally, we will tie our discussion together with our vision of an updated research agenda for the future.

### **13.1 Agentic and Life-Course Perspectives on Adjustment to Bridge Employment**

No matter what form bridge employment takes, it is important to note that the decision to remain employed in some capacity past one’s normative retirement age implies a degree of self-determined agency. That is, it is primarily the individual – working within various constraints of the organization or other external forces – that drives the decision to either remain employed or seek out post-retirement employment opportunities. This structured view of human agency is consistent with life-course perspectives on adult development (e.g., Elder & Johnson, 2003; Elder, Johnson, & Crosnoe, 2003; Setterson, 2003), which suggest that individual’s choices and actions occur within the boundaries that are imposed upon them by their social environments. Moreover, traditional perspectives have conceptualized retirement adjustment as a relatively homogeneous process across people (e.g., Atchley’s, 1976 “Stage Theory of Retirement Adjustment”). However, adjustment to retirement can vary both between people, but also within people, over time (e.g., Wang, 2007). Thus, the agentic perspective on bridge employment primarily adopted here allows for the natural heterogeneity in the retirement and bridge employment experiences of individuals to be accounted for.

Interestingly, socio-gerontological perspectives on the application of life-course theory to bridge employment adjustment conceptualize engagement in bridge employment as an indicator of adjustment in and of itself. Such perspectives view retirement as an important life-course event that marks the start of the “Third Age” – a life stage in which working and one’s career role is no longer dominant (e.g., Laslett, 1989, 1996). During this stage of the life-course, individuals must acclimate and adapt to various life changes that accompany the work-to-retirement transition and seek to achieve psychological comfort with their retirement life (e.g., Moen, 1995). This adjustment process is not uniform across people, and

retirement may have much more of an impact on some individuals than others – a sentiment similarly reflected by the agentic adjustment perspective. As a result, adjustment is more difficult in some cases than in others, and continued work participation – including bridge employment, but also partial or phased retirement – may be one of the coping strategies applied in service of retirement adjustment (e.g., Zhan, Wang, Liu, & Shultz, 2009).

The life-course perspective further suggests that the decision to continue working after retirement from one's career job might itself represent a facet of adjustment. Bridge employment offers older adults the opportunity to ease a potentially difficult retirement adjustment process by preventing abrupt role or income loss (e.g., Kim & Feldman, 2000). Empirically, one would expect that persons for whom work is more central to their life will be more likely to engage in bridge employment than persons for whom work is a less central aspect (Van Solinge, 2012). The same holds for persons for whom retirement goes together with greater financial drawback (Shultz, 2003).

Considering this socio-gerontological life-course perspective against the psychological perspectives offered here leads to the idea that there are complementary differences in the way that adjustment processes associated with bridgework are conceptualized, understood, and studied across various disciplines (i.e., psychological adjustment *to* bridge employment vs. bridge employment as a mechanism of adjustment *itself*). However, common to these views is the notion that individuals experience adjustment to bridgework differently in light of intrapersonal differences and environmental contingencies. Central too is the notion that individuals play an essential role in their own developmental course during the adjustment process.

### 13.2 Defining Successful Adjustment in Bridge Employment

The general retirement literature often defines adjustment in terms of a process through which retirees *acclimate* to the life changes that accompany the work-to-retirement transition, and the accompanying processes by which such individuals achieve *psychological comfort* in their retirement life (cf. Van Solinge & Henkens, 2008). Defining psychological adjustment for bridge employees requires a slightly more nuanced lens, however. Specifically, bridge employees experience both the process of withdrawing from career roles and the experience of assuming new bridge employment roles. Defining adjustment for bridge employees thus requires a consideration of both the *dynamics* (e.g., as outlined by the SOC perspective, Baltes, 1997; Freund & Baltes, 1998) of the transition from full work engagement to bridge employment engagement along with the *maintenance* (e.g., as outlined by the Continuity Theory perspective, see Atchley, 1989) of successful engagement in work.

Baltes and Rudolph (2012) provide a comprehensive definition of successful retirement that notes three interrelated indicators of retirement success: (1) adaptation to

new and changing conditions that result from the transition from work to non-work roles, (2) disengagement from work roles that does not result in physical or psychological disturbance, and (3) one's general perceived successfulness of retirement. By expanding these criteria slightly, a definition of successful adjustment in bridge employment can be derived, such that successful bridge employees' experiences are defined by: (1) positive adaptation (i.e., a function of appropriately managing the gains and losses associated with the *dynamics* of the transition to a bridge employment role), (2) maintenance of both physical and psychologically-based aspects of work ability (e.g., successfully continuing to manage job demands while *maintaining* high levels of actual and perceived functional capacity; Ilmarinen & Tuomi, 2004), and (3) the perception and experience of continued success in bridge employment roles. Note that in particular, this definition emphasizes the importance of managing dynamics of the process of adjusting to bridge employment, but also considers that the maintenance of prior levels of performance is key to sustained employability in bridge employment roles.

### ***13.2.1 Outcomes of Successful Adjustment to Bridge Employment***

Further considering this definition of successful adjustment to bridge employment naturally leads to the need to define the possible consequences of successful bridge employment adjustment. Indeed, this conceptualization lends itself to two broad categories of outcomes associated with successful adjustment to bridge employment. First, both objective and subjective *indices of sustained work performance* and *engagement* should serve as indicators of positive adaptation and the maintenance of work ability; indeed, continued employment participation might be the ultimate criterion for successful psychological adjustment to bridge employment. Second, more general forms of *subjective success criteria* (e.g., psychological success) should be considered as indicators of positive adaptation (see Van Solinge & Henkens, 2008). Included here too should be considerations of subjective well-being and life satisfaction. Furthermore, if we assume that successful adjustment is an objective phenomenon, we should consider one's perceived success in the adjustment process here too. To serve as an organizing framework, Table 13.1 provides a non-exhaustive list of example indicators of successful adjustment to bridge employment.

Now that we have better conceptualized successful adjustment to bridge employment in terms of processes and outcomes, we can subsequently turn our attention to a discussion of the various theoretical perspectives that explain the potential for experiencing positive adjustment to bridge employment. To this end, we will briefly review psychological life-span perspectives on adjustment processes in bridge employment. Then, we will turn our attention to a broader theoretical framework – self-regulation – to begin outlining how the adjustment process might vary on the basis of individual differences in regulatory focus. First, however, it makes sense to

**Table 13.1** Example outcomes of successful adjustment to bridge employment

Sustained work performance	Examples
Objective indices of sustained work performance	
Production/performance data	Waldman and Avolio (1986)
Active work participation (e.g., development)	Mauer (2001)
Participation in bridgework itself	Zhan, Wang, Liu, and Shultz (2009)
Subjective indices of sustained work performance	
Performance ratings	Murphy and Cleveland (1995)
Work engagement	Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter, and Taris (2008)
Work ability	Ilmarinen and Tuomi (2004)
Continuance intentions	Armstrong-Stassen and Ursel (2009)
Subjective success criteria	
Examples	
Psychological success	Mirvis and Hall (1994)
Well-being	Kim and Moen (2002)
Life satisfaction	Shultz, Morton, and Weckerle (1998)
Perceived success	Baltes and Rudolph (2012)

consider the broader network of contextual influences that have an impact on successful adjustment to bridge employment, and on existing research that has addressed adjustment to bridge employment in general.

### 13.3 Contextual Conditions for Adjustment to Bridge Employment

Turning to the broader literature on adjustment processes at work, we can conceptualize several contextual conditions that might affect the adjustment process for bridge employees. These contextual conditions can be broadly classified into both *resources* and *demands* (see also Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Contextual resources include those factors that facilitate positive adjustment at work in general, such as specific supportive HR practices aimed at facilitating flexibility in the way that people approach their work (e.g., Kooij, Jansen, Dikkers, & De Lange, 2010; McNamara, Pitt-Catsouphes, Brown, & Matz-Costa, 2012; Ollier-Malaterre, McNamara, Matz-Costa, Pitt-Catsouphes, & Valcour, 2013) and social support (e.g., Fisher, 1985; Viswesvaran, Sanchez, & Fisher, 1999). Contextual demands include factors such as the work setting and type of work being performed, but also other possible sources of strain including job demands (e.g., Fernet, Guay, & Sénécal, 2004; Sargent & Terry, 1998; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) and the challenges of balancing work and non-work roles (e.g., Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

Often, contextual resources can be invoked or applied to better manage contextual demands. For example, HR practices that specify flexible work options can be beneficial in coping with competing demands between work and non-work roles (e.g., Baltes, Briggs, Huff, Wright, & Neuman, 1999), and social support can offset negative job demands (e.g., Bakker, Demerouti, & Euwema, 2005; Van Yperen & Hagedoorn, 2003) and work-family conflict (Michel, Mitchelson, Pichler, & Cullen, 2010). Indeed, these relationships suggest that a “fit” between contextual resources and contextual demands is key to understanding how adjustment occurs in general.

### **13.4 Where We Are: Research on Psychological Adjustment to Bridge Employment**

Given the ubiquity of bridge employment, and the prevalence of research concerning retirement adjustment in general, it is unfortunate that there is relatively little existing research that specifically addressed adjustment processes in bridge employment. Despite this, some empirical investigations have addressed this issue, and conceptualized adjustment in various ways (e.g., satisfaction, psychological well-being, health outcomes). For example, Kim and Feldman (2000) found that individuals who engaged in bridge employment experienced higher levels of retirement satisfaction and life satisfaction. Furthermore, co-engagement in both bridge employment and volunteer roles was found to positively facilitate adjustment (see also Dorfman & Kolarik, 2005). Similarly, Wang (2007) found that engagement in bridge employment was positively associated with psychological wellbeing. Finally, Zhan et al. (2009) found that engagement in bridge employment was associated with more positive physical and mental health outcomes.

Despite these few studies, the lack of a distinct research agenda in this area means that evidence in support of adjustment processes for bridge employees often has to be gleaned from the results of studies aimed at studying other consequences of bridge employment, general issues surrounding work participation for older workers, or adjustment to retirement in general (cf. Van Solinge 2012; Wang, Henkens, & Van Solinge, 2011). For example, Warr, Butcher, Robertson, and Callinan (2004) observed results similar to those of Kim and Feldman (2000) regarding continued work participation and well-being in a sample of older workers. Additionally, in a study of the motivations for bridge employment, Dendinger, Adams, and Jacobson (2005) investigated the role that various meanings of working (i.e., social, personal, financial, and generative) have on job satisfaction and retirement attitudes for bridge employees. When controlling for general socio-demographic factors, working for generative reasons was positively associated with both job satisfaction and retirement attitudes for bridge employees. This is consistent with prior work concerning the development and construction of meaning at work for older workers (e.g., Mor-Barak, 1995), which has intuitive links to the adjustment processes discussed here.

## 13.5 Psychological Life-Span Theories and Adjustment Processes in Bridge Employment

Broadly, life-span development theories can be classified by their emphasis on the management of gains and losses, the maintenance of coherence and a sense of control, and an appreciation for the role of temporal horizons across the life-course. The theories reviewed below (Selective Optimization with Compensation, Motivational Theory of Life-Span Development, and Socio-Emotional Selectivity Theory) reflect these general themes.

### 13.5.1 *Baltes' Selective Optimization with Compensation Model*

Across the life-span, humans experience both developmental gains (e.g., skill acquisition) and losses (e.g., decreased cognitive functioning). As we approach the end of the life-span, it is common for such losses to outweigh gains (e.g., Baltes, 1997). Managing gains and losses often represents a tradeoff, and the Selective Optimization with Compensation Model (SOC; Baltes & Baltes, 1990; Baltes, 1997) represents a framework for understanding how people approach and manage the tradeoffs that are associated with increased losses relative to gains.

According to the SOC model, individuals respond to age-related declines in functioning by prioritizing specific goals. This is accomplished by optimizing the process of selectively dividing effort and resources towards goal accomplishment. At the same time, individuals compensate for their experienced losses in a number of different ways (e.g., relying on others; using technology). SOC can thus be defined by a set of adaptive coping strategies that explain how individual select goals, devise the means to optimize their efforts toward such goals, and compensate for experienced losses as a means of attaining success in goal pursuit.

SOC has been applied to the retirement context (see Baltes & Rudolph, 2012) to explain retirement adjustment and decision-making processes, as well as the potential for SOC strategies to extend the work longevity of older workers who wish to remain active in the labor market. Indeed, SOC has been directly linked to the maintenance of job performance among older workers (Zacher & Frese, 2011). Recently, Löckenhoff (2012) proposed that SOC could provide the bases for understanding adjustment to bridgework, particularly with respect to the shift between full- and part-time employment. Specifically, Löckenhoff (2012) argues that individuals who adopt optimization-like adaptive coping strategies may be less likely to fully disengage from paid work when compared to individuals who rely on compensatory coping strategies. Importantly, there is some research that has suggested that SOC coping strategies could be trained and developed (Zacher & Frese, 2011).



### ***13.5.2 Heckhausen and Schulz's Motivational Theory of Life-Span Development***

As delineated by the life-course perspective mentioned previously, the maintenance of a sense of agency and control are key psychological indicators of successful retirement adjustment, and likewise important to take into account when considering adjustment processes in bridge employment. To this end, Heckhausen and Schulz's Motivational Theory of Life-Span Development (See Heckhausen, Wrosch, & Schulz, 2010) can be applied to understand how one's sense of agency and control is maintained across the life-course. According to Heckhausen and Schulz (1995), individuals approach the challenges associated with developmental declines through both primary control strategies (i.e., changing their environment) and secondary control strategies (i.e., changing their internal states). This theory suggests that both strategies are used in tandem, but that primary control strategies are engaged whenever possible. People are more likely to engage in secondary control strategies to maintain functioning when primary control is limited by a lack of personal resources or environmental contingencies (Heckhausen et al., 2010). Therefore, the application of secondary control mechanisms can serve a compensatory purpose by enabling individuals to maintain a personal sense of control and agency.

Of note here, the Motivational Theory of Life-Span Development has been applied to career transitions for younger adults (e.g., Heckhausen & Tomasik, 2002; Poulin & Heckhausen, 2007), but has not been directly applied to research on bridge employment transitions. Prior work has suggested that the use of primary versus secondary control strategies in effortful goal pursuit depends on an individual's progress towards their goal, relative to their deadline for meeting the goal (See Heckhausen, Wrosch, & Fleeson, 2001). Before the deadline, primary goal strategies are more effective at maintaining a sense of well-being, whereas secondary control strategies tend to be more effective after a goal deadline has passed (Wrosch, Miller, Scheier, & de Pontet et al., 2007). To this end, Löckenhoff (2012) has suggested that retirement can represent an impending and salient deadline for career related goals. Here, we suggest that engagement in bridge employment may help individuals achieve unmet goals from their prior career roles. More specifically, it may be that bridge employment represents a control mechanism that individuals engage in to aid in the accomplishment of unmet career goals. For example, active involvement in work after retirement might work in either a primary (i.e., changing one's behavior through persistence) or secondary (i.e., changing one's attitudes, beliefs, or opinions through positive reappraisals) capacity in service of such unmet goals. To this end, Wrosch, Heckhausen, and Lachman (2000) suggest that persistence and positive reappraisals are control strategies that older adults engage in to maintain subjective wellbeing.

### ***13.5.3 Carstensen's Socio-Emotional Selectivity Theory***

Life events such as retirement can represent a transitory process that makes the passage of time particularly salient. Carstensen's (2006) Socio-Emotional Selectivity Theory provides a framework for understanding how people respond to the salience of time in the retirement process. According to Carstensen, people perceive temporal horizons in different ways, and individual differences in these perceived temporal horizons can have a profound impact on motivations and priorities. When time is perceived to be open-ended, people are more likely to prioritize positive, future-oriented goals (e.g., obtaining new skills through training; building broad social networks). On the other hand, when time is perceived to be limited, people are more likely to prioritize goals in terms of the present, particularly by seeking out emotionally rewarding relationships and experiences (see Carstensen, 2006; Charles, 2010). Considering the time leading up to retirement, people are likely to experience narrowing time horizons, however it is possible that bridge employment can represent a means of maintaining an open-ended time horizon.

## **13.6 Self-Regulation Based Theories and Adjustment Processes in Bridge Employment**

A core tenant of the various life-span development theories outlined above is that people actively adapt to changes in biological, psychological and social functioning by striving towards the maximization of gains (i.e., promotion/approach orientations) and the minimization of losses (i.e., prevention/avoidance orientations; see Higgins, 1997, 1998). As a function of losses in biological, physiological, mental and social reserves across the life-span, this self-regulated motivational process becomes more salient as we age (Heckhausen, 1997). These social-developmental self-regulation theories generally describe the process by which people seek to align their behaviors with appropriate goals or standards. Consequently, such theories align well with the lifespan perspectives on adjustment reviewed here.

### ***13.6.1 Overview of Self-Regulatory Processes***

Self-regulation is described by Baumeister and Heatherton (1996) as the extent to which people change or seek to control their own behavior according to their own predetermined goals or standards (see also Mischel, Cantor, & Feldman, 1996). Because agentic perspectives on social-cognitive development (e.g., Bandura, 1997, 2001; Brandstädter, 1992; Mischel, 1968) suggest that individuals are influenced by both internal (e.g., psychosocial and biological processes) and external stimuli (e.g., cultural, societal, or environmental), and their interplay, it is necessary to

understand how individuals self-regulatory actions influence their adaptation to changing environments (see also Baltes, 1997; Heckhausen, 1999; Magnusson, 1997).

Indeed, a great deal of theory and empirical support underlies the idea that people actively engage in various forms of self-regulation as a means of managing the experience of internal *and* external changes (e.g., Carver & Scheier, 1981, 1998; Baltes, 1987; Heckhausen, 1999). Not surprisingly, a variety of individual processes and resources can be classified as self-regulatory, including social comparisons (e.g., Heidrich & Ryff, 1993; Wood, Giordano-Beech, Taylor, Michela, & Gaus, 1994; Wood & Taylor, 1991), optimism (Armor & Taylor, 1998), maintenance of control (e.g., Bye & Pushkar, 2009; Skinner, 1995), emotional control (e.g., Bonanno, Papa, Lalande, Westphal, & Coifman, 2004; Gross, 1998; Scheibe & Zacher, *in press*), delay of gratification (e.g., Mischel, Cantor, & Feldman, 1996), self-efficacy (Bandura, 1996), and goal selection (e.g., Wrosch & Heckhausen, 1999). Given that goals are a central component of the developmental process, it should not be surprising that each of these self-regulatory processes relate somehow to the active management of individual goals. Because they direct energy and attention, and structure behavior towards particular ends, the importance of goals in the self-regulatory process cannot be overstated (e.g., Brandtstädter, 1998; Freund & Baltes, 1998, 2000; Gollwitzer & Bargh, 1996; Heckhausen, 1999).

### 13.7 Self-Regulation and Adjustment in Bridge Employment

To date, there has been little empirical or theoretical application of self-regulation theory to understand adjustment processes in bridge employment. This is unfortunate, because research and theory both suggest that self-regulatory processes are an important antecedent of psychological adjustment (e.g., Mithaug, 1993), and adjustment theory is a primary foundation for understanding outcomes and processes associated with bridge employment (Adams, Prescher, Beehr, & Lepisto, 2002; Kim & Feldman, 2000; Wang, 2007; Wang et al., 2011; Wang & Shultz, 2010).

In order to understand how self-regulation aides in adjusting to bridge employment, it is helpful to first understand how individuals generally adjust and adapt to non-normative developmental experiences. As opposed to the timing of normative developmental experiences (e.g., forming a family, starting a career), non-normative developmental experiences are those experiences that deviate from generally accepted norms for the age-sequential order of developmental tasks (e.g., When considered from an age-graded and historical perspective, returning to a work role after retirement can be thought of as a non-normative developmental change). To this end, Wrosch and Freund (2001) apply a self-regulation perspective to adjustment for non-normative developmental changes. The authors use a resource perspective to argue that successfully navigating non-normative developmental changes requires the application of a greater degree of self-regulatory skills. Furthermore, they suggest that mastering non-normative developmental demands requires individuals to engage more actively to compensate for the lack of social structuring and normative orientation.

Adjustment processes are marked by numerous self-regulatory opportunities – that is, occasions to demonstrate self-regulatory mastery in addressing the challenges faced during adjustment. Research and theory has speculated that experiencing positive success in such activities can bolster one’s sense of self-efficacy through “...deviation-amplifying loops in which the positive, cyclic relationship between perceived efficacy and performance builds upon itself.” (Lindsley, Brass, & Thomas, 1995, p. 645). Building upon this notion of efficacy-performance spirals, we argue that successfully navigating the various challenges of adjustment can effectively bolster one’s sense of self-efficacy, and positively reinforce future actions toward positive adjustment through a similar cyclical reinforcement process. As Wrosch and Freund (2001) have outlined, adjustment to non-normative developmental demands, such as bridge employment, gives people the opportunity to actively manage self-regulatory resources in order to adapt to changing environments, and to successfully maintain levels of functioning within such environments. To the extent that individuals perceive that they can successfully exercise control over such changes, and experience positive results for their actions in such scenarios, the adjustment process is bolstered. Supporting this idea, Williams and Lillibridge (1992) suggest that perceptions of environmental controllability can lead people to exercise their self-efficacy strongly, whereas perceptions that an environment is uncontrollable may lead people to exercise weaker self-efficacy (p. 158).

Considering Higgins’ (1997, 1998) Regulatory Focus Theory, promotion-focused regulatory orientations generally underlie strategies that emphasize the pursuit of future gains and successes (Higgins, 1997; Scholer & Higgins, 2008). Given that adjustment represents a positive self-regulatory opportunity, it is possible that individuals with higher levels of promotion regulatory focus (i.e., those who encourage and emphasize their own opportunities for success) may more readily experience more positive adjustment to bridge work roles, as they are better suited to anticipate and adapt to changes while sustaining current levels of functioning. That is to say, promotion orientations may serve to ease the adjustment to bridge employment.

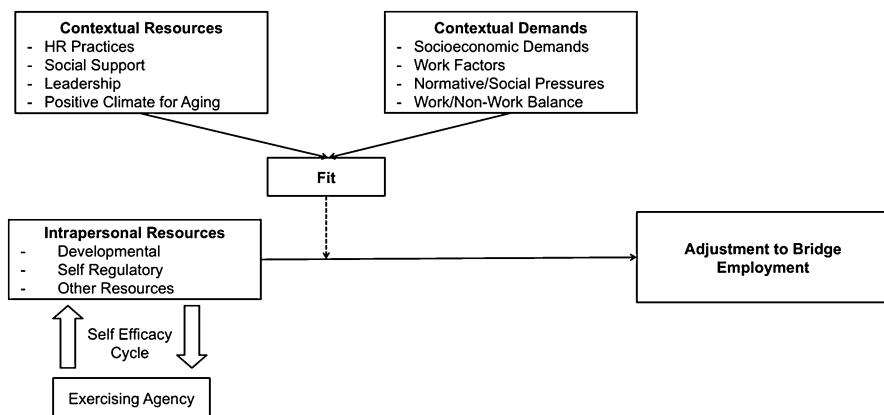
In contrast, prevention orientations generally underlie strategies aimed at avoiding losses or failures (Higgins, 1997). Consequently, people with stronger prevention orientations tend to focus more on the potential losses and limitations that may be encountered in the future, which are expected to be negatively related to opportunity-focused processes, such as adjustment to bridge employment. Similarly, applying a resources perspective (Hobfoll, 2001; Hobfoll & Shirom, 2001), prevention-focused individuals may avoid expending resources that may be needed to mitigate expected future losses. Given that working can represent a significant source of strain on such limited resources (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001), and the tasking nature of actively managing non-normative developmental changes, it is possible that individuals with higher prevention focus will experience slower rates of adjustment to bridge employment. One possible reason for this latency is that prevention-oriented individuals may be less likely to gain the positive benefits to their self-efficacy associated with actively approaching and experiencing success within the adjustment tasks surrounding the transition to bridge employment (e.g., Lindsley et al., 1995). It is worthwhile to note here too, that an alternative possibility exists regarding prevention orientation as a

mechanism for the maintenance of physical functioning. More specifically, prevention focused individuals may experience *positive* outcomes associated with the maintenance of physical functioning to the extent that they mitigate loss potentiating risk.

In summary, adjustment can generally be characterized as a set of self-regulatory opportunities for people to exercise control over their environments. Bridge employment represents a developmentally non-normative experience for people to demonstrate self-regulatory mastery and reap the benefits of exercising control over themselves, and their environments. To the extent that people successfully master the challenges encountered during adjustment, their sense of self-efficacy for adjustment will be improved, and the application of the effective self-regulatory strategies will be reinforced. Additionally, because promotion- regulatory focus is positively future-oriented, and emphasizes approaching gains over avoiding losses, promotion orientations may accelerate the rate of adjustment to bridge employment, particularly compared to prevention orientations. Furthermore, because one criterion for successful engagement in bridge employment roles is sustained participation, promotion-oriented self-regulatory strategies are more likely to be associated with general success in bridge employment roles.

### 13.8 A Model of Adjustment to Bridge Employment

Given the lack of a comprehensive theoretical model for studying the psychological adjustment processes in bridge employment, we have crafted a model of adjustment to bridge employment that considers the influence of both contextual resources and demands, and intrapersonal resources (see Fig. 13.1). Considering the research and theory outlined herein, this model conceptualizes intrapersonal resources (e.g., developmental, self-regulatory, and other resources) as primary antecedents of



**Fig. 13.1** A model of adjustment to bridge employment. *Note.* Dashed lined indicates a conditional (i.e., moderated) effect

adjustment to bridge employment. Consistent with Wrosch and Freund (2001) and Lindsley et al. (1995), the sustained use of such intrapersonal resources in service of adjustment is reinforced by an agentic cycle of successfully applying such resources.

In line with Heckhausen's concept of primary and secondary control strategies (e.g., Heckhausen et al., 2010; Heckhausen & Schulz, 1995) and demands-resources perspectives (e.g., Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), this model specifies that the degree of fit between contextual resources and demands have a conditional influence on the relationship between intrapersonal resources and adjustment. More specifically, under conditions of positive fit (i.e., better match between contextual resources meeting contextual demands), individuals are less likely to rely on intrapersonal resources to bolster adjustment to bridge employment. However, when contextual resources do not meet contextual demands, intrapersonal resources are more likely to drive adjustment processes. While not an exhaustive representation, Table 13.2

**Table 13.2** Resources and demands that influence bridge employment adjustment

Intrapersonal factors	
<i>Intrapersonal resources</i>	<i>Examples</i>
Developmental resources	
Selection, optimization, and compensation	Baltes (1997)
Primary and secondary control strategies	Heckhausen, Wrosch, and Schulz (2010)
Future time perspective	Carstensen (1992)
Self regulatory resources	
Self efficacy and agency	Bandura (2001)
Promotion and prevention focus	Higgins (1998)
Emotional regulation	Scheibe and Zacher (In Press)
Other intrapersonal resources	
Health and wellbeing	Shanas (1970)
Engagement	Halbesleben (2010)
Work motivation	Kooij et al. (2011); De Lange et al. (2010)
Employability	Van der Heijden et al. (2009)
Constructed work meaning	Mor-Barak (1995)
Job crafting	Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001)
Idiosyncratic deals	Rousseau, Ho, and Greenberg (2006)
Contextual factors	
<i>Contextual resources</i>	<i>Examples</i>
HR practices	Kooij, Jansen, Dikkers, and De Lange (2010)
Social support	Armstrong-Stassen & Ursel (2009)
Developmental/supportive leadership	Rafferty and Griffin (2006)
Positive climate for aging	Staudinger and Bowen (2011)
<i>Contextual demands</i>	<i>Examples</i>
Socioeconomic demands	Kim and Feldman (2000)
Work factors (e.g., Job setting, type, and demands)	Wang, Henkens, and Van Solinge (2011)
Normative and social pressures	Atchley (1989)
Work and non-work balance	Allen and Shockley (2012)

outlines examples of various intrapersonal and contextual resources and demands that could be represented within this general model framework.

To better understand the operation of this model, it is helpful to consider an illustration of the proposed bridge employment adjustment process. For example, to the extent that contextual resources, such as supportive HR Practices (e.g., flexible scheduling, work from home options) meet or offset certain job demands (e.g., physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and/or psychological effort or skills; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), the need to apply intrapersonal resource towards bridge employment adjustment should be minimized. However, the extent that such contextual resources fail to meet contextual demands, intrapersonal resources are far more likely to be engaged. For example, individuals may actively engage in adaptive coping behaviors specified by the SOC Model (e.g., selectively realigning goals within an existing hierarchy). To the extent that this adaptive coping successfully satisfies the resources-demands misfit that one encounters, the likelihood of using that strategy when encountering such misfit in the future is reinforced. Importantly, sustained engagement in bridge employment, along with other outcomes associated with positive adjustment, could be expected in either instance of contextual resource-demand fit. This notion highlights the need to comprehensively assess intrapersonal as well as contextual influences, and their conjoint influence to fully understand psychological adjustment to bridge employment.

### **13.9 Looking Forward: An Agenda for the Future**

The increasing numbers of people working during retirement years suggests that we are experiencing a fundamental change in the way work and retirement are organized in old age. This change is linked to a broader development where education, work, and leisure are increasingly parallel experiences instead of successive stages in the life-course. Studying work participation and retirement decisions, their antecedents, and consequences will continue to provide an important area for future research in an aging labor market. Our hope with these concluding thoughts is to provide some broad ideas for structuring future research around the idea of adjustment and bridge employment. These suggestions, along with those implicit in the model of adjustment to bridge employment offered here (see Fig. 13.1) should provide a path towards increased understanding of these complex issues.

With the imminent retirement of the baby-boom generation, increasing attention is being paid by employers and policymakers to strategies that could encourage older workers to extend their working lives. There is a wide belief that bridge employment – in addition to raising retirement ages – may be a forceful instrument in postponing the age at which workers finally leave the labor market. However, the extent to which engagement in bridge employment actually increases labor force participation has not received much attention in the literature, and it remains largely unknown whether bridge employment serves only as a brief transitional period

between early retirement and official retirement age, or if ties with the labor market are strengthened and extended beyond the age of 65. Indeed, a better understanding of the role of bridge employment in extending working lives is very relevant from a policy perspective.

As we have suggested here, conceptualizing adjustment to bridge employment requires consideration of both the *dynamics* of the transition from full work engagement to bridge employment engagement along with the *maintenance* of successful engagement in work. To this end, future research should focus on not only the dynamics of adjustment (e.g., changes that occur over time) but also on stable facets of the adjustment process. Given that the notion of sustainable employability is predicated on the maintenance and stability, it makes sense to focus on predictors of such stability (e.g., sustained personal autonomy; Ford et al., 2000) along with predictors of change (e.g., dynamics in health status; Seeman et al., 1994).

Furthermore, most of the empirical research on post-retirement employment has so far focused on identifying personal factors that predict retirees' decisions to return to the labor force. An evaluation of this literature reveals both consistent and inconsistent results. A consistent finding is that those who work in retirement are more likely to be male, healthy, better educated, and younger (e.g., Giandrea, Cahill, & Quinn, 2009; Maestas, 2007; Singh & Verma, 2003; Von Bonsdorff, Shultz, Leskinen, & Tansky, 2009; Van Solinge 2012). Findings regarding financial resources are, however, inconsistent. For example, Cahill et al. (2006) found that both workers with low and high retirement incomes were engaged in bridge employment. This U-shaped pattern implies that some may *want* to work in retirement, whereas others may *need* to. In general, there is a clear need to achieve more insight regarding the main motives (e.g., intrinsic or extrinsic) for engagement in bridge employment. These motives may play an important role in understanding the consequences – in terms of general well-being and life satisfaction – of bridge employment for the individual.

Finally, recent attention has been paid to the value of proactivity as a self-regulatory mechanism (e.g., proactive motivation – self-initiated efforts to bring about change in the work environment and/or oneself to achieve a different future; Parker, Bindl, & Strauss, 2010). Research has suggested that proactivity is an antecedent condition for initiating individualized attempts to shape or customize one's job tasks, work environments, and employment conditions through job crafting and idiosyncratic deals (e.g., Hornung, Rousseau, & Glaser, 2008; Tims & Bakker, 2010; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Given the proposed value associated with such active self-management strategies (e.g., bolstered work engagement and resilience; Tims & Bakker, 2010), future research should address the development of proactivity from a life-span perspective, and apply these ideas to studying adjustment processes. Indeed, there are natural linkages between the notion of proactivity and the adaptive coping strategies outlined by SOC (e.g., Baltes, 1997). To this end, one potentially useful criterion to consider may be adaptive job performance (e.g., Shoss, Witt, & Vera, 2012).

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