

Authors: Dayuma I. Vargas Lascano, Harvey J. Krahn, Nancy L. Galambos, & Margie E. Lachman

Title: Personal control and post-secondary educational involvement from the late teens to middle adulthood: a 25-year longitudinal study

Abstract: Previous research shows that a stronger sense of personal control over one's own life is linked with better physical and psychological health and improved socioeconomic outcomes (Lachman & Weaver, 1998; Mirowsky & Ross, 1990). Educational attainment has been identified as a predictor of age differences in personal control (Mirowsky & Ross, 2007). However, there are few longitudinal analyses of the life course trajectory of personal control and its association with post-secondary education (PSE). This paper examines intraindividual change in personal control in a sample of 971 high school students surveyed seven times over 25 years, from the late teens (1985) to middle adulthood (2010), and analyzes the covariation between personal control and PSE involvement (years of full-time post-secondary education) over this period. Sense of personal control changed in a non-linear fashion across 25 years. Compared to participants with at least one parent with a university degree, those from non-university families showed lower baseline levels of personal control and less increase in personal control over the transition to middle age. Personal control had a positive effect on PSE involvement and not vice versa. Implications of patterns of change in personal control across time and their links to PSE involvement are discussed.