

**Exploring Dynamics in Career Self-Management: A Random Intercept Cross-Lagged
Panel Model of Protean Career Orientation, Career Management Behaviors, and
Subjective Career Success**

Madeleine Haenggli^a, Andreas Hirschi^b, Cort W. Rudolph^c, and José Maria Peiró^d

^aPostdoctoral Researcher; University of Bern, Institute for Psychology, Work and
Organizational Psychology, Fabrikstrasse 8, 3012 Bern, Switzerland;

madeleine.haenggli@psy.unibe.ch

^bUniversity of Bern, Institute for Psychology, Work and Organizational Psychology,
Switzerland

^cSaint Louis University, Industrial and Organizational Psychology, St. Louis, MO, USA

^dUniversity of Valencia & The Valencian Institute of Economic Research (Ivie), Valencia,
Spain

Nowadays, careers are less structured and predictable due to increasing dynamics in the labor market. Consequently, career-related research has shifted toward a more dynamic and proactive perspective on career development. Several career-related constructs have been advanced to understand these and related phenomena.

For example, researchers have paid increasing attention to factors that promote the attainment of subjective career success (SCS; Spurk et al., 2019), referring to the individual evaluation of achieving personally meaningful career outcomes (Ng et al., 2005; Spurk et al., 2019). Moreover, the need for individuals to take responsibility for their own career development (e.g., Lawrence et al., 2015) increases the importance of career self-management behaviors (Lent & Brown, 2013). Career self-management (CSM) is defined as “a process by which individuals develop, implement, and monitor career goals and strategies” (Greenhaus et al., 2010, p. 12). Complimenting SCS and CSM, the notion of protean career orientation (PCO;

Hall, 1996; Hall et al., 2018) has gained importance in the literature. PCO is “characterized by the exercise of self-direction and an intrinsic values orientation in the pursuit of psychological success” (Hall et al., 2018, p. 130).

In the existing research, PCO and CSM are typically treated as antecedents of SCS (Spurk et al., 2019). However, there is growing recognition of the need to consider the possibility that many variables typically treated as antecedents of career success might also be outcomes of success (Spurk et al., 2019). Although the positive relations between a PCO, CSM, and SCS have often been demonstrated (e.g., Herrmann et al., 2015; Seibert et al., 2001; Spurk et al., 2019) researchers have mainly focused on general levels of these variables and investigated differences between persons.

To address this issue, we investigated 574 employees and tested a random intercept cross-lagged panel model to focus on within-person dynamics of PCO, CSM, and SCS across four timepoints while accounting for stable between-person differences. Specifically, by using a self-regulation perspective, we conceptualize PCO as an internal goal standard (i.e., the desire to be self-directed and values-driven in one’s career), which directs career behaviors to attain these goals (i.e., promoting engagement in career self-management). Applying the implication of feedback loops proposed by self-regulation theories, the achievement of a satisfactory individual state (i.e., SCS) can have a reinforcing impact on an individual’s career orientation (i.e., protean career orientation), and motivate engagement in behaviors that help to attain career goals (i.e., CSM behaviors).

In line with previous studies, we found support for the notion that the between-person components of PCO, engagement in CSM, and SCS are positively related. When considering within-person components, the findings partially support the notion that increases in PCO predict subsequent increases in CSM over time. Additionally, increased PCO and SCS predicted further increases in the same respective states. The study highlights the importance of distinguishing stable trait-like components (i.e., between-person levels) from state-like

components (i.e., within-person levels). We offer several relevant insights on the dynamics of PCO, engagement in CSM, and SCS at a within-person level over time.

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