

LOCUS OF CONTROL AS RELATED TO PERSONALITY  
VARIABLES IN SPECIAL ADOLESCENT POPULATIONS

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## Abstract

Locus of control refers to the individual's perception of the degree to which he controls the outcome of events in his life through his own behavior. Locus is further defined and related concepts discussed. Literature is reviewed, exploring determinants in the development of personal locus. Differential descriptions of the Internal and External individual are outlined, according to studies on locus as it affects personality and social-interactions. Delinquent, socially maladjusted and dependent-neglected adolescents were tested and significant differences in locus and personality characteristics examined. Final discussion is directed to implications of the results of this study with regards to the needs of the children and the suggested role of the institution.

### Acknowledgements

Internal locus orientation impels me to claim personal responsibility for this paper. At the same time, external awareness elicits the expression of appreciation to those who have propelled me toward this goal. Dave Skinner of Valencia Community College, who initiated my interest in psychology; Dr. Dan Hale; and my F.T.U. faculty committee have all been most helpful and supportive. Special thanks go to Dr. Burt Blau, a stimulating mentor whose persistent prodding and high standards I respect and value. I am keenly aware of the un-failing approval and patience of my husband, Laird, who encouraged my academic adventure.

This paper is dedicated to Dr. Bruce V. Moore, with a daughter's admiration and affection.

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There has been considerable recent interest in locus of control as a psychological concept, both as a measurable individual personality factor and as a factor related to current social problems. Locus research is appropriate to children at the Orange County Parental Home in both applications. This paper is concerned with the theoretical causes of Internal-External orientations and the resulting personality variables, especially with regard to socially maladjusted youth from the lower socio-economic level.

Internal locus of control refers to one's perception of a causal relation between his behavior and his ability to effect subsequent reinforcement or punishment. External locus of control refers to one's belief that the outcome of a situation is controlled by external factors such as luck or other people or powers. Rotter (1966) states:

A perception of causal relationship need not be all or none, but can vary in degree. When a reinforcement is perceived by the subject as following some action of his own but not being entirely contingent upon his action, then, in our culture, it is typically perceived as the result of luck, chance, fate, as under the control of powerful

others, or as unpredictable....we have labeled this a belief in external control. If the person perceives the event is contingent upon his own behavior or his own relatively stable characteristics, we have termed this a belief in internal control. (p. 261)

Phares (1976) speaks of locus as a continuum, with persons who feel they control the occurrence of reinforcement through their own behavior (internals) at one extreme, and those who feel reinforcement occurs independently of their actions (externals) at the other extreme. He points out that locus of control may be seen either as a narrow expectancy in a specific situation or as a relatively stable characteristic, and that this may vary with the situation. Generally, the internally oriented individual believes he has personal mastery over his own life's course, and also some individual capability of influencing political institutions (Mirels, 1970). Feeling he has responsibility for himself and that he can have an effect on his environment, the internal person is apt to be achievement-oriented and active. On the other hand, the externally-oriented individual is inclined to be passive and dependent, seeing himself either as the pawn of powerful other people or the helpless victim (or fortunate favorite) of fate. In greatly simplified terms, internal locus of control is waking



























































































































































