

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA  
INTERNAL-EXTERNAL LOCUS OF CONTROL  
AND ETHNIC STEREOTYPING

by  
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the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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## Abstract

This study extended Rotter's (1966) locus of control construct and scale to the area of ethnic stereotyping. Three separate samples, 88 summer introductory students, 67 regular session introductory students, and 59 upper level students were administered Rotter's (1966) I-E scale, Edwards (1957) Social Desirability Scale, a modified version of the Katz and Braly (1933) stereotype assessment technique and a familiarity measure. Results did not yield any I-E differences in stereotyping intensity. Familiarity information in reference to the nationalities had a significant effect indicating that low and highly familiar groups receive the most intense stereotypes. Furthermore, results indicated that university students endorse many traditional ethnic stereotypes with a high level of intensity.

These results have been discussed with reference to the lack of I-E differences, the kernel of truth controversy in stereotyping, and the information processing paradigm. The data indicate that stereotyping appears to be a very powerful phenomenon in our culture possibly overpowering many personality differences.

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## CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

In the past, Rotter's (1966) locus of control construct has been related to such personality and behavioral dimensions as conformity (e.g., Odell, 1959), insightfulness and information seeking behavior (e.g., Davis & Phares, 1967), resistance to influence attempts (e.g., Biondo & MacDonald, 1971) and dogmatism (e.g., Clouser & Hjelle, 1970). It has not, though, been investigated with respect to the variable of ethnic stereotyping. This application is proposed to be a logical extension of I-E research and constitutes the major emphasis of the present study.

The locus of control construct is traced in its development from social learning theory and subsequently discussed in terms of its relationship to variables relevant to stereotyping behavior. Stereotyping itself is also discussed with the major emphasis on measurement and operationalization. Furthermore, the variable of familiarity is related to stereotyping intensity.

#### Social Learning Theory and Locus of Control

Social learning theory has developed as a molar theory with the purpose of integrating stimulus-response and cognitive theories in psychology. It attempts to look at both the acquisition of personality characteristics and cognitive processes as well as emphasizing content. Julian B. Rotter (1954) developed a version of social learning theory that focuses on the interaction of the person with his meaningful environment as the important unit of investigation.

Rotter's social learning theory is strongly learning oriented and does not require constructs from outside the field of psychology for explanation. Furthermore, it is based upon the empirical law of effect (Thorndike, 1935) and the expectancy of reinforcement. These two foundations of the theory indicate how the theory attempts to integrate learning and cognitive approaches to behavioral analysis. Drive reduction, defined as the reduction of a drive upon reinforcement, is avoided in social learning theory which maintains that behavior is too complex for such a simplistic approach. "A stimulus complex has reinforcing properties to the extent that it influences movement toward or away from a goal" (Rotter, Chance & Phares, 1972, p. 9). In this matter, the theory allows for such cognitive components as love or the need for recognition to cite but a few examples. In predicting the direction of behavior, the needs (person directed) and/or the goals (environment directed) are important as a function of the person interacting with his environment.

The second foundation of social learning theory lies in expectancy or the anticipation that reinforcement will occur. Behavior is not only a function of the importance of the goal, but also of the probability of attaining the goal. It may be very important for John to finish college and receive a degree but due to a lack of ability he continually fails. According to social learning theory, John's behavior should soon reflect this as a function of his low expectancy of attaining his goal with a possible

result being the abandonment of his education pursuits or unreal behavior, ignoring the reality of the situation.

The prediction of behavior in a particular situation employs the concepts of behavior potential, expectancy, and reinforcement value. This can be presented in the mathematical formula:

$$BP = f (E \& R.V.) \quad (\text{Rotter, Chance \& Phares, 1972})$$

This may be read: The potential for the emission of one form of behavior (BP) in contrast to other available alternatives is a function of expectancy (E) and reinforcement value (R.V.). Expectancy is the subjective concept of the probability of occurrences of reinforcement as a function of a particular behavior. The reinforcement value refers to the individual's reinforcement preference, assuming that there exists an equal opportunity to attain alternative reinforcements. This formula though deals only with the prediction of behavior in particular situations, and depends upon very specific reinforcements.

In order to extend behavioral prediction from a particular situation to a more general form of prediction covering varied and diverse situations it is necessary to use the new concepts of need potential, need value and freedom of movement (Rotter, Chance & Phares, 1972). This applies to settings where behavior is dependent upon more than a single specific reinforcement in order for it to occur. Thus interest now can be focused on more general dimensions. Locus of control is one such dimension that will be shown to involve this prediction over varied situations.

Basically, need potential, need value and freedom of movement are broader classifications of behavior potential, reinforcement value and expectancy used in the previously explained approach to prediction in particular situations. This approach is more generalized and less specific than the situational approach. The term need potential refers to "the mean potentiality of a group of behavior potentials" (Rotter, Chance & Phares, 1972, p. 11). Need value is defined as the mean preference value of a set of functionally related reinforcements. This can be viewed as essentially the same as reinforcement value but on a more encompassing level than reinforcement value. Finally, freedom of movement, similar to situational expectancy, refers to the anticipation of satisfaction as a function of employing a set of behaviors directed at a set of potential reinforcements. Generalized expectancies for particular behaviors which in turn lead to particular reinforcements define a need. These generalized expectancies extend across different need areas (Rotters, 1967).

Two forms of "generalized" expectancies discussed by Rotter (1954) are interpersonal trust and locus of control. Man, being a social animal, tends to categorize on many dimensions of which these are two. To trust in an individual or not can be a characteristic that generalizes across situations and thus be important for subsequent behavior. The valence of this characteristic depends upon the person's learning history. Similarly, one's belief in whether the events in one's life are a consequence of his behaviors or unrelated to his behaviors can also generalize

across situations (Rotter, 1966, 1975). This latter dimension, locus of control, shall be looked at in more depth.

### Locus of Control

The degree to which a person feels that his reinforcements are under his own control will influence the way in which an individual interprets events and reinforcements that occur with respect to himself. Rotter (1966) introduced the terms internal and external control to differentiate individuals on the degree to which they feel in control of their reinforcements. Internal control refers to the perception that an "event is contingent upon (one's) own behavior" (Rotter, 1966, p. 1). If the reinforcement following an action is perceived as "not being entirely contingent upon (one's) actions, then...it is typically perceived as the result of luck, chance, fate; as under the control of powerful others" (Rotter, 1966, p. 1). This perception refers to an external locus of control. Rotter (1966) hypothesized that an individual's generalized expectancy pertaining to causal relationships would have an effect on numerous behaviors in diverse situations as well as being related to many personality dimensions. Evidence strongly supports this (e.g., Joe, 1971; Prociuk & Lussier, 1975).

### The I-E Scale in Relation to Ethnic Group and Personality Differences

Ethnic group differences. Negroes and lower social-economic class members have been shown to generally feel in less control of their reinforcements (Battle & Rotter, 1963;

Lefcourt & Ladwig, 1965, 1966). Scott and Phelan (1969) found more internality among unemployed whites than Mexicans or Blacks. Furthermore, Tyler and Hobsinger (1975) report data indicating that rural American Indian children are more external than American white children. These data are intuitively logical. Oppressed or less fortunate individuals who do not have the opportunity to maintain good health or receive an education, should indeed be externally oriented. Very few reinforcements are in their personal control under these circumstances. Hsieh, Shybert and Lotsof (1969) found higher externality among American Chinese and Hong Kong Chinese in contrast to American whites. The authors explain this cultural difference in terms of the "situation-centered" Chinese personality in a culture where status quo and kinship are very important.

Personality differences. Hersch and Schiebe (1967) found several relationships among locus of control and the California Personality Inventory (CPI) as well as the Adjective Check List (ACL). On the ACL internals saw themselves as asserting, achieving, powerful, independent, industrious, and effective. Externals categorized themselves as powerless, inactive, and non-achieving. On the CPI, internals scored higher on the dominance, tolerance, sociability, good impression and well being scales than did externals. Gough (1974) recently replicated these findings pertaining to the CPI with a sample of 361 individuals. Scott and Severance (1975) found similar results using the CPI and MMPI in a non-academic environment. Their sample consisted of males, heterogeneous in age and education level. Externals have been

found to report more aggressiveness (Abramowitz, 1969), hostility (Williams & Vantress, 1969; Tolor & Leblanc, 1971), and to be more prone to attempt suicide (Williams & Nickels, 1969) than internals.

Extensive work on self esteem has yielded evidence indicating that internals have a more positive self concept and have generally a higher level of self esteem (Fish & Karabenick, 1971; Ryckman and Sherman, 1973; Hannah, 1973, Organ, 1973). Externals tend to be larger risk takers (Julian, Lichtman & Ryckman, 1968), lack self confidence (Tolor & Reznikoff, 1967), and believe more in the supernatural (Scheidt, 1973) than internals. Furthermore, several studies suggest that internals see themselves and others as more responsible for the outcomes of their behaviors (Sosis, 1974; Phares & Lamiell, 1975) and use humor of many forms (superiority humor, tension-relief humor, and social humor) to reflect lack of involvement in a task when they receive negative feedback (Lefcourt, Sordoni & Sordoni, 1974; Lefcourt, Antrobious & Hogg, 1974).

Considerable research has evolved investigating the relationship between locus of control and anxiety. Externals have been found to generally exhibit more anxiety (Butterfield, 1964; Feather, 1967; Watson, 1967; Ray and Katahn, 1968; and Strassberg, 1973). Tolor and Reznikoff (1967) and Berman and Hays (1973) found that externals reported more overt death anxiety than did internals. Emmelkamp and Cohen-Kettenis (1975) report data indicating a positive relationship among externality, depression and phobic anxiety.

Furthermore, Himrichsen and Ross (1975) found that externals are more anxious than internals when in a low stress situation. Watson (1967) states, paraphrasing Mandler and Watson (1966), "individuals who score in the external direction on the locus of control (LC) scale will tend to be more anxious than those who score in the internal direction, because the latter group will more often appraise the world as one in which they can complete organized response sequences" (p. 91). Based upon these studies, internals appear to be less anxious, more capable of showing a constructive response set when necessary and less concerned with fear of failure than externals.

Locus of Control in Relation to Insight, Need for Control  
and Resistance to Influence

The evidence in the literature indicates that internals are generally less anxious about situations in which they become involved. One would expect therefore that internals would be more cautious and calculating in their ventures than externals (Lefcourt, 1972). Julian and Katz (1968) and Rotter and Mulry (1965) report evidence that internals require more time to make a decision than externals if the task is skill oriented or involves a difficult decision. The evidence here appears to indicate that internals are more insightful and attentive. Internals appear to know what is important to them and become particularly attentive when the task at hand involves using their skill and is not chance determined.

Davis and Phares (1967) found that internals showed greater information seeking behavior than externals. The subjects in this study were led to believe that they were to convince another individual on some issue pertaining to the Viet Nam War. The dependent measure of interest was the number of questions asked by the subject with regards to the person he was to influence and the number of questions asked about the experiment. One group of subjects was informed that skill was important in being successful. Another group received chance instructions about the same task and a third group received no instructions at all. In the skill group and the no information group, internals were more insightful and sought more information. No difference was found for the chance group. Phares (1968) found that externals in contrast to internals were not as effective in using previously learned information. Each subject had learned a series of information "bits" pertaining to facts about four males a week perviously. Subjects were then required to guess which of eight girls and ten occupations matched with each man and to indicate the reasons for their choice. The dependent measures here were number of reasons used and number of correct responses given. The results indicated that more correct responses and more reasons overall were found to be attributable to internals than externals. Similar results were found by Williams and Stark (1972) who used the number of questions about the experiment and the procedure as an operational definition of information seeking behavior. Pines (1973)

reported data indicating that internals respond better than externals to task opportunities involving originality. He also reported that internals used extra time given for the task more efficiently than did externals as evidenced by their organization.

Lefcourt, Lewis and Silverman (1968) found significant differences between internals and externals on attention related responses. Internals who perceived the task as skill oriented claimed to use more task relevant responses than when the task was perceived to be chance oriented. Small differences were found with externals. The dependent measure was decision time and internals were found to deliberate more in the skill situation than externals.

Several studies indicate that a variable that could be termed "perceptual sensitivity" is affected by the locus of control construct. Lefcourt and Wine (1969) looked at how internals versus externals use cues elicited from an individual with whom they are interacting for future behavior. The focus here was on insight and attentiveness. The task involved interacting with an individual who was extremely flighty in his eye contact and also interacting with a person whose eye contact was "normal". The authors hypothesized that internals would attend more to the quizzical target person due to the curiosity his behavior should have aroused. The results supported this hypothesis. Internals not only gazed at the "elusive" partner more than externals but they also looked at all interacting partners with a greater frequency. Ude and Vogler (1969) found

that internals were superior to externals in discovering the contingencies of reinforcement used in a light pattern task.

Ducette and Wolke (1973) found that on problem-solving tasks, internals appeared to pick up highly covert cues from the experimenters which indicated the rules involved in completing the tasks. This occurred when the experimenters emitted overt non-verbal cues as well as when they were instructed to give no cues at all. Ducette and Wolke (1974) found further supportive evidence for this "perceptual sensitivity" hypothesis in a study involving error detection. The task involved reporting errors in a written paragraph. Internals exhibited a more efficient scanning strategy than did externals (intensional task). They also used other information drawn from the paragraph more effectively (incidental learning task) than externals, although they were not informed that this information would be assessed.

Internals have also been found to desire a general environmental control (Phares, 1965; Seeman, 1963; Seeman & Evans, 1962) as measured by initiative and effort. Seeman (1963) found that internals recalled information relevant to their own personal control more so than externals. In a study by Phares (1965), internals and externals attempted to change the attitude of another individual and, as was hypothesized, internals were more successful at the task than externals. Julian and Katz (1966) found that internals desired personal control over control by a competent other in a task resulting in reward. Externals, in contrast were willing to rely on the competent other.

Further evidence for the internal's desire to control his own behavior and life events comes from research on attitudes towards emotional versus physical disorders. It was hypothesized by MacDonald and Hall (1969) that internals would react more strongly to an emotional disorder than a physical disorder as it would decrease their level of personal control. Four forms of disabilities were rated by 50 healthy students in six personal-social areas. Internals viewed emotional disorders as more disabling than externals. MacDonald and Hall (1971) replicated this latter finding and also reported that externals found non-emotional disorders to be more debilitating than did internals.

Studies by Clouser and Hjelle (1970) and Sherman, Pelletier and Ryckman (1973) indicate that external control is positively related to dogmatism. According to Rokeach (1960), as the individual becomes more closed he becomes more defensive against anxiety and reliant "on arbitrary reinforcements derived from an external authority" (Clouser and Hjelle, 1970, p. 1006). An extension of this research on dogmatism could be to the area of susceptibility to influence as this also involves external authority.

Milgram (1963) demonstrated the power of influence and that complicity to even outrageous demands is a common phenomenon. Logically, locus of control should be related closely to this topic of influence and conformity. Internals, who feel in control of their reinforcement and desire this control, coupled with their insightfulness, should be resistant to attempts at persuasion and influence.

Odell (1959) reported a significant relationship between locus of control and Barron's (1953) Independence of Judgement Scale. Subjects high in externality were shown to exhibit more conforming behavior and to be less autonomous in their judgements than were internals. Also, Crowne and Liverant (1963) demonstrated locus of control effects in conforming situations using the traditional Asch perceptual discrimination. On being requested to bet on the accuracy of their predictions, externals tended to conform more to group consensus than internals. They found that low externals bet the same amount on both trials in which they conformed and did not conform. High externals, on the other hand, tended to wager less on trials where they made an independent judgement; thus indicating less confidence in their decisions.

Two studies using verbal conditioning paradigms (Getter, 1966; Strickland, 1970) found significant I-E differences. Getter (1966) found that externals were more capable of being conditioned, while Strickland (1970) reported that internals who were aware of the conditioning paradigm in effect reacted counter to this and thus were resistant to conditioning attempts. Gore (1963) investigated Rotter's (1966) claim that internals would resist subtle suggestion. Gore used the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) as her instrument with the length of story produced by the subject as the dependent variable. Three influence conditions were employed - overt (verbal reinforcements), covert (facial expressions and gestures), and no influence. She found that internals produced shorter stories in the covert influence condition but no further I-E differences were found that were significant.

The author suggested that perhaps internals will react only to subtle influence attempts, consistent with Rotter's (1966) theoretical position.

These results were further investigated by Biondo and MacDonald (1971) who also expected internals and externals to be differentially affected by influence attempts but questioned whether subtly was a necessary parameter. Gore (1962) stated "perhaps the externals perceived reinforcement in both the overt and the covert conditions to be under the control of others. This would be consistent with their generalized expectancies that control of events is due to forces outside themselves" (Gore, 1962, p. 409). Biondo and MacDonald (1971) state that to be consistent with the theoretical aspects of locus of control, internals should react to both influence attempts of an overt or a covert nature. The data from the literature on need for control (e.g., MacDonald & Hall, 1971) would also support such a prediction. Biondo and MacDonald (1971) contended that mild overt influence would produce less reactance in internals than subtle forms of influence. Also, though, they predicted that there would be more reactance for internals when influence was a) subtle b) overt and c) of relevance in terms of outcome. The experiment involved rating procedural changes in course grading on scales measuring the viability of the proposed change, the felt importance of the issue, and the felt competence of the researcher. Three levels of influence (none, low, and high) were manipulated via the instructional set. Subjects had been pretested on their opinions of the procedural change suggested

prior to the influence conditions. Collapsing across conditions, internals manifested reactance and externals conformed. More specifically, in the low influence condition externals conformed while internals did not change. However, in the high influence condition internals not only did not conform but exhibited reactance while externals again exhibited conforming behavior. In summary, externals conformed under both levels of influence while internals displayed reactance only under high influence. Elaborating on this further, Cherulnik and Citrin (1974) found that internals exhibited more reactance to a personal elimination of freedom in contrast to an impersonal elimination of freedom.

Doctor (1971), again, researching subtle forms of influence reported that internals were more resistant to influence of this form than were externals. The task employed in this study involved a sentence completion design where particular pronouns were reinforced under varying contingencies. Overall, externals accounted for the majority of the variance by evidencing significantly greater gains in performance than internals. Subsequent reports of awareness were used as a method of dividing the subjects into independent groups. Externals who were aware of the conditioning paradigm accounted for the effect in contrast to aware internals, controls and unaware subjects over both groups. These latter groups showed no significant change in frequency of reinforced responses over trials. Doctor's (1971) study again shows a resistance to influence, in this case subtle influence.