

## RESEARCH METHODS AND INSTRUMENTS

*Under this heading appear short notes reporting research involving specific techniques or measures of relevance for collecting data in developmental or clinical research. The notes are not intended to include validity or reliability information about extant standard measures or to include other matters more appropriate for a test manual.*

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### MATERNAL ANTECEDENTS OF CHILDREN'S MULTIDIMENSIONAL LOCUS OF CONTROL BELIEFS\*

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Considerable importance is attached to locus of control (LOC) in personality functioning,<sup>1</sup> and research has concentrated more on its effects than its determinants. For the latter, a uniform paradigm is typically used: Individuals complete LOC scales, and then complete LOC and/or child-rearing scales as they imagine their parents would have. Such studies link children's internality consistently with congruent parental LOC orientations and protective child-rearing styles.<sup>2</sup> However, their external validity is limited. First, college students are investigated almost exclusively. Yet multiple determinants might act on their LOC beliefs, whereas maternal factors would be more influential for younger children. Second, social desirability and demand characteristics may confound Ss' projections of their parents' LOC beliefs. Third, such research has relied mainly on unidimensional LOC beliefs, although greater predictive validity accrues to more specific, multidimensional beliefs.

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<sup>1</sup> Lefcourt, H. M. *Locus of Control: Current Trends in Theory and Research*. Hillsdale, N. J.: Erlbaum, 1976.

<sup>2</sup> Macdonald, A. P. Internal-external locus of control: Parental antecedents. *J. Consult. & Clin. Psychol.*, 1971, **37**, 141-147; Nowicki, S., & Segal, W. Perceived parental characteristics, locus of control orientation and behavioral correlates of locus of control. *Devel. Psychol.*, 1974, **10**, 33-37.

White school children (74 boys, 74 girls;  $\bar{X}$  age = 120.09 months,  $SD = 12.97$ ) completed the children's LOC scale.<sup>3</sup> Their mothers completed the LOC scale and Maryland Parent Attitude Survey (MPAS).<sup>4</sup> Principal components factor analyses with varimax rotation of the children's scale yielded two acceptable factors (Personal Action and Luck); five factors emerged from the adult LOC scale labelled, respectively, Belief in a Predictable, Difficult, Politically-Responsive, Just, and Controllable World. The MPAS was not factor analyzed as research shows that the four constructs derived—Protective, Rejecting, Indulgent, and Disciplinarian rearing style—are valid.<sup>5</sup>

Pearson correlations were then computed between maternal LOC orientation and child-rearing style and the children's LOC indices. Three findings of some import emerged. First, a protective child-rearing style in mothers was related to children's external LOC (Personal Action,  $r = .18$ ,  $p < .05$ ; Luck,  $r = .23$ ,  $p < .01$ ). However, this phenomenon may be expected, as protective mothers afford less opportunity for their children to engage in self-initiated behaviors. That the present study used maternal self-report rather than college students' projections thereof may account for these contradictory findings. Second, only the Predictable World belief was related consistently to children's LOC (Personal Action,  $r = .18$ ,  $p < .05$ ; Luck,  $r = .14$ ,  $p < .05$ ), which indirectly supports the importance of modeling influences in determining such beliefs. Third, the importance of assessing specific beliefs and self-reported child-rearing styles is emphasized.

However, these results cannot establish causality. Moreover, the use of regression analyses would enable the partialling out of the respective contributions of each of the predictor variables. Finally, direct observations of maternal behavior could be used in predicting children's LOC beliefs more specifically.

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<sup>3</sup> Nowicki, S., & Strickland, B. R. A locus of control scale for children. *J. Consult. & Clin. Psychol.*, 1973, **40**, 148-153.

<sup>4</sup> Collins, B. E. Four components of the Rotter Internal-External Scale: Belief in a difficult world, a just world, a predictable world and a politically responsive world. *J. Person. & Soc. Psychol.*, 1974, **29**, 381-391; Pumroy, D. K. Maryland Parent Attitude Survey: A research instrument with social desirability controlled. *J. of Psychol.*, 1966, **64**, 73-78.

<sup>5</sup> Brody, J.P. Relationship between maternal attitudes and child behavior. *J. Personal. & Soc. Psychol.*, 1965, **2**, 317-323; Brody, J. P. Maternal child-rearing attitudes and child behavior. *Devel. Psychol.*, 1969, **1**, 66.