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# The Effects of Locus of Control & Victim Responsibility Upon Helping Behavior

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Fritzo,  
Jerri Ann  
1978

THE EFFECTS OF  
LOCUS OF CONTROL AND VICTIM RESPONSIBILITY  
UPON HELPING BEHAVIOR

A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Faculty of the Department of Psychology  
Western Kentucky University  
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

by  
Jerri Ann Fritzo  
July 1978

THE EFFECTS OF  
LOCUS OF CONTROL AND VICTIM RESPONSIBILITY  
UPON HELPING BEHAVIOR

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UPON HELPING BEHAVIOR

Jerri Ann Fritzo                      July, 1978                      64 Pages  
Directed by: S.G. McFarland, E. Dotson, and C.C. Layne  
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Previous research has suggested that external locus of control and victim responsibility influence individuals' helping behavior (Lerner & Reavy, 1975; Phares & Lamiell, 1975; Phares & Wilson, 1972). The present study investigated the relationships between locus of control and helping behavior in a situation where the victim was or was not responsible for her predicament. A locus of control scale was administered to 67 male and 93 female undergraduates at Western Kentucky University. Subjects were assigned to one of the responsibility situations in which they could volunteer to help a graduate student with either none, one, two, three, or four one-half hour experimental sessions. The results of the ANOVAs and chi squares for each sex indicated that locus of control and responsibility attribution were not significantly related to number of helping sessions volunteered or to the proportion of subjects' helping.

## Introduction

Since the early 1960's, behavioral scientists have shown an expanding interest in the study of altruism. Many attempts have been made to identify background, situational, and personality variables which predict helping behavior. While a number of situational determinants of altruism have been identified, few clear statements can be made about the effects of personality variables upon helping. The results in this area have generally been nonsignificant and/or inconsistent from study to study (Krebs, 1970). Gergen, Gergen, and Meter (1972) have suggested that perhaps no personality trait affects altruism across all possible situations, but that many personality characteristics may affect particular forms of helping and that the effects of different personality variables upon helping depend upon the particularities of the situation. For example, Gergen et al. found that nurturance was related to volunteering to counsel high school students but was not related to volunteering to help with research on unusual states of consciousness. Similarly, the need for change was related to volunteering to help with research but was unrelated to volunteering to counsel high school students.

Several studies to date have examined the effects of internal versus external locus of control upon helping

behavior. The studies have reported contradictory findings: some suggest that internally controlled individuals help others more than external individuals, while other studies suggest that external individuals volunteer more help. Midlarsky (1971) and Midlarsky and Midlarsky (1973) found that internal subjects helped more than external subjects in some situations. These authors hypothesized that the greater helping by internal subjects was due to their confidence in their capacity to help effectively, in contrast to external subjects' feelings that their self-sacrifice would be useless since fate and luck determine events. However, Lerner and Reavy (1975) found that external subjects sometimes help more than internally controlled subjects. Several authors (Phares & Lamiell, 1975; Phares & Wilson, 1972) have hypothesized that the internal subjects may help less than external subjects since the internal subjects view others as well as themselves as responsible for their circumstances.

The present study examined the relationship between locus of control and helping behavior in a situation where the victim was either clearly responsible or not responsible for her predicament. The situations were designed so that all subjects would feel confident in their ability to help effectively.



## Locus of Control and Altruism: A Review of the Literature

The measurement of locus of control and the research investigating the nature of internal versus external control are reviewed in the present chapter. Specifically, the relationship between locus of control, responsibility attribution, and helping behavior are discussed.

### The Measurement of Locus of Control

The concept of locus of control of reinforcement was developed by Rotter (1954, 1966) as a continuum that has at one extreme persons who believe that reinforcement is a function of their own behavior (internals) and at the other extreme those who feel that reinforcement is caused by forces outside of their control (externals). The definition of internal-external control which has guided much of the research in this area is the following:

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 because of the great complexity of the forces surrounding him.... we have labeled this a belief in external control. If the person perceives that the event is



contingent upon his own behavior or his own relatively permanent characteristics, we have termed this a belief in internal control (Rotter, 1966, P.1). Phares (1957) made the first attempt to develop a scale to measure individual differences in locus of control. The instrument was presented in a Likert scale format and consisted of 13 skill items (belief that reinforcement is determined by skill) and 13 chance items (belief that reinforcement is determined by chance), derived from prior notions about the nature of skill versus chance situations, common sense, and from reworded items from authoritarianism scales. Phares expected that subjects who endorsed more chance items, apparently reflecting their belief in external control, would behave similarly to subjects in a situation designed to make them believe that the outcome of the task was due to chance, and that those who chose the skill items, apparently reflecting their belief in internal control, would behave similarly to subjects in a situation where they were made to believe that success was dependent upon their ability. The results showed that predictions from the "external" items approached significance. Specifically, subjects endorsing external items tended more often to shift their expectancy of positive or negative reinforcement without apparent reason, which is characteristic of subjects' behavior in situations where success is attributed to luck.

James (cited in Rotter, 1966) revised Phares' scale and found that subjects scoring in the external direction

on the James I-E Scale tended to perform an experimental task as though they had been told that success was due to luck. The internal scorers behaved as expected of subjects who had been told that success on a task was dependent on skill.

Phares' scale was again revised by Rotter (1966) and became popular as the Rotter Internal-External Control Scale (I-E Scale). Rotter believed that perceived locus of control was best measured by sampling different life areas, so the revised scale contains items relating to academic recognition, love and affection, dominance, social-political events, and general life philosophy. The I-E Scale consists of 23 forced-choice items pairing internal beliefs with external beliefs. Six filler items are used to partially disguise the purpose of the task. Rotter reported that the internal consistency of the I-E Scale ranged from .65 to .79. Test-retest reliabilities for several samples of subjects ranged from .48 to .84 (Hersch and Scheibe, 1967; Rotter, 1966).

Several studies have investigated the generalizability and multidimensionality of the I-E Scale. Mirels (1970) found two factors within the Rotter Scale: (a) a belief concerning felt mastery over the course of one's life, and (b) a belief concerning the extent to which individuals can exert impact on political institutions. Collins (1974) separated the forced-choice items of the I-E Scale into a 46 item Likert scale and examined the factor structure of



the scale. Four factors resulted from the factor analysis: (a) belief in a difficult world, (b) belief in an unjust world, (c) belief in an unpredictable world, and (d) belief in a politically unresponsive world. Duffy, Shiflett, and Downey (1977) replicated Collins' 1974 research with a sample of Army reservists and found the same four factors plus a fifth factor: belief in an unfriendly world.

The Rotter I-E Scale has been used in most studies of locus of control. However, other measures of internal-external control have been developed. Nowicki and Duke (1974) believed a more unidimensional measure of locus of control was needed. They constructed a 40 item yes-no scale (ANS-IE) which measures locus of control in relation to achievement behavior.

Levenson (1974) further revised the six-point Likert format of the I-E Scale by adding items written with the purpose of measuring internal control, control by powerful others, and control by chance as separate locus of control subscales. Levenson's rationale for including an internal control subscale was that a person who feels that he himself is not in control is cognitively and behaviorally different from one who believes that chance is in control. The factor analysis supported Levenson's hypothesis that the three subscales are separate factors within the Levenson scale.

Levenson (1974) demonstrated the improved predictive utility of her locus of control scale when separated into subscales. Political involvement was successfully predicted

from the control by chance scale, while neither the internality scale nor the control by powerful others scale contributed to the prediction.

At present, then, researchers disagree on exactly what and how many constructs the locus of control scales measure. McFarland (Note 1) suggests that present scales measure one's perception of his/her locus of control rather than his/her preference for control. Thus, several factors of locus of control may exist which are unidentified. One goal of the present study is to perform a new factor analysis on subjects' responses to items from the Levenson, Rotter, and McFarland locus of control scales to determine if independent factors of locus of control exist for this sample.

#### Internal-external Control and Responsibility Attribution

One may infer from the general nature of locus of control that, "internally oriented individuals not only see themselves as responsible for events but they attribute self-control to the behavior of others and see them as responsible for their own behaviors as well" (Phares, 1976, p. 102-103). Similarly, externals tend to attribute less responsibility to others, just as they do to themselves. Several studies have supported this hypothesis. DeCharms, Carpenter, and Kuperman (1965) found that both internal and external subjects perceived heroes in stories as origins of their behavior and saw coerced characters as pawns. However, internal subjects perceived the hero as relegating more



for his/her situation, one may infer that internally controlled persons should provide less help than external subjects to persons who are responsible for their own circumstances.

A few studies have investigated the relationship between locus of control and altruism, but most have hypothesized the opposite: that external subjects will exhibit fewer altruistic acts than internal subjects. Midlarsky (1968), in a review of the literature pertaining to aiding, felt that Rotter's concept of locus of control suggests that external individuals will be less likely to help others than will individuals who believe in their internal capacity to control events. Helping behavior may be hindered by the external individual's feelings that his self-sacrifice will not be effective. Persons who feel unable to control their own lives may think that, "even the most skilled behavior on his part will be of little value in a world in which chance is the major determinant of events" (Midlarsky, 1968, p.239).

Midlarsky designed a study to explore the antecedents of aiding under stress, where aiding is operationally defined as, "behavior in which one voluntarily accepts certain undesirable consequences in order to reduce the effect of these consequences incurred by another" (Midlarsky, 1971, p.132). Eighty male undergraduates were told that they were participating in an armed forces research project designed to develop skilled behavior tests for pilots. Each subject

responsibility to others under both conditions than did external subjects. Phares and Wilson (1972) and Sosis (1974) have shown that internal subjects attribute significantly more responsibility to the drivers in automobile accidents than do externally controlled subjects. Phares and Lamiell (1975) asked subjects to read case histories of a welfare recipient, a Korean War veteran, and an ex-convict. Internal subjects felt that the recipients were significantly less worthy of help, sympathy, and money than did external subjects. These results are consistent with Phares and Wilson's (1972) hypothesis that internals see others as well as themselves as responsible for one's own circumstances. These results suggest that locus of control may play an important role in individual differences in altruistic and helping behaviors; specifically, they suggest that internally controlled individuals may be less altruistic than externally controlled individuals.

#### Locus of Control and Altruism

Substantial evidence shows that people help more in situations where the recipient is viewed as not being responsible for his/her own circumstances (Krebs, 1970; Piliavin, Rodin, and Piliavin, 1969; Schopler & Mathews, 1965; Schwartz & Clausen, 1970). Since internally controlled subjects attribute more responsibility to others than do external subjects, especially where the person's guilt is reasonably obvious, and since persons tend to aid another less when the latter is seen to be personally responsible



worked on a motor coordination task in the presence of another person, who was actually the experimenter's accomplice. Upon beginning each task the subject received an electrical shock. Subjects were told that if one finished before the other, he could help his partner if he wished. Whenever a subject helped his partner, he received a shock as if it were his own task. Midlarsky hypothesized that internal subjects, as measured by a 16-item true-false scale of fatalism, would be more likely than external subjects to help their partners. The hypothesis was supported. The results indicated that internal locus of control is associated with aiding where costs to the aider are high, and material reward is nonexistent. Studies prior to this had shown that internality is related to involvement in social movements that may result in help to distant or abstract people, and to participation in social movements in which the subjects stood to benefit from their own efforts (Gore & Rotter, 1963). Midlarsky's study extended the findings of prior studies by indicating that internal subjects will also help more than external subjects in immediate face-to-face situations even when they can expect little material reward.

In a similar study, Midlarsky and Midlarsky (1973) administered a questionnaire, which was adapted from the I-E Scale, to all subjects. Again they found that internal locus of control was significantly associated with helping. The authors suggested that helping behavior on the part of

the internal subjects may be a reflection of the belief held by internally controlled subjects that they are capable of influencing outcomes. The internal controller may be more highly motivated to help than the external subject since he sees himself as more powerful and efficacious.

Schwartz (1974) examined the effects of awareness of consequences, responsibility ascription, and locus of control on helping behavior. Awareness of consequences and responsibility ascription significantly increased volunteering by female college students, while scores on the I-E Scale were not related to helping. Schwartz concluded that locus of control does not influence helping when helping is defined as "acting with the intention to improve another's status" (Schwartz, 1974, p.63). In view of Midlarsky's (1971, 1973) research, however, locus of control does appear to be related to helping when the activity that helps also enables the helper to demonstrate his competence or achieve his own goals through controlling his environment.

The work of Midlarsky (1971) and Midlarsky and Midlarsky (1973) suggests that internally controlled subjects are more helping than external subjects due to the internal subjects' belief that they are capable of influencing outcomes. In contrast, Phares and Wilson (1972) and Phares and Lamiell (1975) hypothesized that internal subjects may be less helping than external subjects since the internally controlled subjects are more likely to blame the victim for his/her circumstances. Phares (1976) proposes that the



differences may be attributed to: (a) the face to face nature of Midlarsky's situations as opposed to the impersonal judgemental situations used by Phares and his associated, or (b) the competence-achievement behavior that Midlarsky's helping situation probably engaged (aspects on which internal subjects would normally be expected to be superior). Further research seems necessary to determine the relationship between locus of control and helping behavior. If internal subjects hold others more responsible for their circumstances, they are less likely to be generous or altruistic toward them. However, the greater competence and action orientation of the internal subjects may influence them in offering more help to others. In conclusion, it is likely that the nature of the situation plays an important role in determining the influence of locus of control on altruistic behavior.

Lerner and Reavy (1975) hypothesized that the link between the perception of need and intervention is the observer's judgement of the deservingness or justness of the victim's fate. If the victim deserves his fate because of his own failures then the observer often feels little necessity to help. The authors suggested that if one wished to increase the likelihood that people will respond to someone in need, one must be sure that the internal subjects do not blame the victim and that the external subjects are given a sense of competence and power enabling them to affect the victim's outcome. The authors designed two studies to investigate the relationship between locus of control and

helping behavior as mediated by the perceived cause of another's need. The amount of work each subject completed was the dependent variable in a 2 (direct versus indirect help situation) X 2 (competent versus incompetent supervisor) X 2 (internal versus external control of subjects) design. The supervisor was described to subjects as either having been overpaid (competent) or underpaid (incompetent) due to the productivity of his workers in the past. Internal subjects helped more often in a direct help condition (when they were told that their supervisor would get a commission for every piece of work the subject completed) than in an indirect help condition (when subjects were told that their supervisor could win a \$5.00 prize if the subject does more work than any other worker), but external subjects were relatively constant in their performance in both direct and indirect conditions. However, internal subjects' helping behavior was not related to their perceptions of supervisors' competence, while the external subjects helped the competent supervisor more than the incompetent supervisor.

In a second study, the subjects were given additional information about the supervisor to increase the probability of viewing the supervisor as competent or incompetent. Again, the external subjects' helping behavior reflected their perception of the supervisor's competence. The internal subjects exhibited little helping behavior regardless of their supervisor's perceived competence. The authors



were unable to explain the internal subjects' behavior, but they have inferred from the results that, "the internal person is more likely to be a blaming and condemning observer of those who are deprived or suffering in our society" (Lerner & Reavy, 1975, p.18).

In conclusion, two mediator variables appear to affect the relationship between locus of control and helping behavior: competence and responsibility attribution. In circumstances where subjects' capacity to help is ambiguous, internal subjects help more than external subjects because they have greater confidence in their capacity to help effectively. In contrast, internal subjects attribute greater responsibility and blame to individuals than do externals in situations where the individual is clearly responsible for his/her predicament, thus helping less than the external subjects. In view of these inconsistent results concerning locus of control and helping behavior, two specific research questions remain to be answered: (a) the manner in which people project their own locus of control beliefs onto others or attribute responsibility to others, and (b) the nature of the relationship between locus of control beliefs and willingness to help others in a variety of settings (Phares, 1976).

The present study investigated the relationship between locus of control and helping behavior in a situation where the victim was either clearly responsible (self-responsibility) or not responsible (environment-responsibility)

for her own circumstances. The situations were designed so that all subjects would feel competent in their ability to help. It was hypothesized that: (a) the difference in the amount of helping between the self-responsibility condition and the environment-responsibility condition would be greater for the internal locus of control subjects than for the external subjects, since internal subjects should differentiate more between the responsibility of others in these two conditions than should external subjects, (b) internal subjects would help more in the environment-responsibility condition than in the self-responsibility condition, since internal subjects tend to blame and not help others who are responsible for their predicament, (c) there would be no difference between the amount of helping by internal and external subjects in the environment-responsibility condition, since neither internal nor external subjects tend to blame individuals who are not responsible for their predicament, and (d) external subjects would help more than internal subjects in the self-responsibility condition, since external subjects tend not to blame others for their circumstances, even when they are clearly responsible for their predicament.

Sex differences in relation to locus of control and helping behavior were also investigated in the present study. Since the majority of locus of control studies have not found significant differences between male and female locus of control scores (Phares, 1976) and most studies of helping



behavior with adult subjects have failed to find significant sex differences (Krebs, 1970), it was hypothesized that there would be no sex differences in locus of control and helping behavior in either of the responsibility attribution situations.

## Method

### Subjects

The subjects were 189 students from all freshman and sophomore level May Term classes at Western Kentucky University whose instructors agreed to participate in the study. Two classes were eliminated from the final analysis due to instructors' comments which appeared to influence the subjects' willingness to help. The final group of subjects consisted of 67 male and 93 female students whose ages ranged from 17 to 36 years of age.

### Instruments

The Rotter Internal-External Locus of Control Scale, five items from Levenson's Internal Control Scale (1974), and twelve items developed by McFarland specifically for this study to measure the desire to be internally controlled were administered to all subjects to determine each subject's locus of control of reinforcement (Appendix A). The usual forced-choice format of the I-E Scale was changed to a six-point Likert scale. Collins (1974) found a correlation of .82 between the sum of the agreement with the 46 items in the Likert format (scored for externality) and the number of external alternatives chosen in the forced-choice format of the I-E Scale, which was the maximum correlation found

possible assuming both tests had reliabilities of .90. Collins concluded that the Likert and forced-choice formats are essentially identical as measures of locus of control.

#### Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted during the spring semester in order to develop experimental procedures which would adequately manipulate responsibility attribution. Two introductory psychology classes were told that the experimenter, a graduate student in psychology, desperately needed volunteers to participate in a perception experiment. One class, consisting of 26 students, was told that the experimenter was late in completing the project because the company from which the necessary equipment was ordered had lost the shipment and had been very uncooperative in replacing the order (environment-responsibility condition). The other class, consisting of 20 students, was told that the experimenter was late in completing the project because the graduate student had forgotten to order the equipment (self-responsibility condition). Each student was given the opportunity to indicate on a response sheet whether they would volunteer to help for one, two, three, four, or five one-half hour experimental sessions. Failure to return the response sheets indicated that the subject did not volunteer. Forty-seven percent of the students in the environment-responsibility condition volunteered to help, while only 15% of the students in the self-responsibility condition volunteered,  $\chi^2 (1) = 3.364, p < .10$ .



Students were also asked to rate the responsibility of the graduate student for her situation and the believability of the situation, each on a scale from one to seven. The average responsibility ratings were 3.9 by students in the environment-responsibility condition and 5.7 in the self-responsibility condition. The average believability ratings were 5.2 in the environment-responsibility condition and 5.25 in the self-responsibility condition. As a result of the pilot study, the situations described above were slightly revised in order to further separate subjects' perceptions of the graduate student's responsibility in the two conditions and to further enhance the believability of the situations. The revision described the loss of equipment in the environment-responsibility condition in more detail.

#### Procedure

On the first day of May Term classes, the instructor of each class read standardized instructions and administered the locus of control scale. Approximately four days later, the experimenter went to each class and requested students to volunteer to participate in a psychology experiment. One-half of the classes were arbitrarily assigned to the environment-responsibility condition and the other half were assigned to the self-responsibility condition. The scripts that the experimenter recited for each of the responsibility conditions are given in Appendix B. After the appropriate script was recited, a response sheet was passed out to each

student on which subjects indicated if they would participate in either one, two, three, or four one-half hour experimental sessions. When the response sheets were returned, the experimenter explained briefly the purpose of the research and promised that the results would be shared with all classes. During the final week of May Term, a written debriefing and explanation of the results was given to each instructor to present to the classes (Appendix C).

As a manipulation check, several classes were given a short questionnaire prior to the debriefing. The questionnaire asked subjects to: (a) rate the degree of the graduate student's responsibility for her predicament on a scale from one (not responsible) to seven (very responsible), (b) rate the believability of the situation from one (not believable) to seven (very believable), (c) explain any doubts about the reality of the situation, (d) state if the subject perceived any connection between the attitude questionnaire and the classroom situation, and (e) explain why the subject did or did not volunteer to help the experimenter.

Twenty-eight subjects in the environment-responsibility condition and 34 subjects in the self-responsibility condition responded to the questionnaire. The average responsibility ratings were 3.07 in the environment-responsibility condition and 5.41 in the self-responsibility condition. An independent t-test for mean differences between the two conditions was significant, t



(60) = 5.652,  $p < .001$ . Thus, the responsibility conditions were effectively manipulated in the desired directions, but the mean ratings were not as separated as had been expected. The average believability ratings were 5.79 in the environment-responsibility condition and 6.12 in the self-responsibility condition. The mean believability ratings for the two conditions were not significantly different,  $t(60) = .993$ ,  $p > .10$ , indicating that the believability of the situations were approximately equivalent under both conditions. Eighty-nine percent of the subjects in the environment-responsibility condition and 85% in the self-responsibility condition perceived no connection between the administration of the locus of control scale and the classroom presentation.

#### Data Analysis

Subjects' responses to the locus of control scale were factor analyzed due to past research which suggested the multidimensionality of the Rotter I-E Scale (Collins, 1974; Duffy et al., 1977; Levenson, 1974; Mirels, 1970). Prior to the factor analysis, the author decided that if the resulting factors were independent and uncorrelated, then one or more of the factors would be chosen as the independent variable indicating subjects' locus of control. However, if the factors were highly correlated, then the total locus of control score would serve as the independent variable. The author also decided that an uncorrelated t-test would be performed to determine whether any significant differences



existed between male and female locus of control scores in the present study and that the results would be used to determine the appropriate analysis of variance procedures. If no significant sex differences existed, a 2 (sex) X 2 (self versus environmental responsibility) X 2 (internal versus external locus of control) ANOVA would be performed with the number of one-half hour sessions for which subjects volunteered to participate as the dependent variable. Should significant differences exist between male and female scores, a separate 2 X 2 ANOVA would be conducted for each sex. Two 2 X 2 chi-squares were performed to determine whether any differences existed between the proportion of subjects that helped for each sex as a function of locus of control and responsibility condition. The independent variables in the chi-square analyses were the same as those in the ANOVAs. The chi-square dependent variable was whether the subject did or did not volunteer to help rather than the number of helping sessions volunteered by each subject. A final chi-square was performed to determine whether any sex differences existed in the proportion of males and females who volunteered to help.

## Results

A principle components analysis with varimax rotation was performed, limiting the number of factors to six. The number of subjects in the present study limited the maximum number of factors to six and the number of factors proposed from the Rotter I-E Scale, the Levenson Internal Scale, and McFarland's desire for control items also suggested that six interpretable factors should emerge in the analysis.

The results of the factor analysis showed that the six factors fit neatly into the anticipated structure. Table 1 presents the five highest loading items for each factor. Factor I indicated a belief in a difficult versus an easy world, which resembles Collins' first factor of the I-E Scale in his 1974 study. Factor II was defined by McFarland's items measuring the desire for internal or external control. The third factor was comprised of items which loaded on Collins' factor of the belief in a predictable versus an unpredictable world. Factor IV resembles Levenson's (1974) Internal Control factor. The fifth factor was similar to Collins' factor of belief in a politically responsive versus unresponsive world. Factor VI consisted of items which pertain to a belief in a just versus an unjust world, which is similar to Collins'

Table 1

Factors Influencing Locus of Control

- Factor I: Belief in a Difficult versus an easy World
- Item 37: Most people can't realize the extent to which their lives are controlled by accidental happenings. ( $\underline{r} = .53$ )
- Item 23: It is not always wise to plan too far ahead because many things turn out to be a matter of good or bad fortune anyhow. ( $\underline{r} = .53$ )
- Item 36: Many times I feel I have little influence over the things that happen to me. ( $\underline{r} = .51$ )
- Item 33: Many times we might just as well decide what to do by flipping a coin. ( $\underline{r} = .50$ )
- Item 34: Sometimes I feel that I don't have enough control over the direction my life is taking. ( $\underline{r} = .50$ )
- Factor II: Desire for Internal versus External Locus of Control
- Item 53: I like to participate in important decisions. ( $\underline{r} = .67$ )
- Item 61: I feel good when I have to make important choices. ( $\underline{r} = .60$ )
- Item 55: I enjoy making important decisions concerning my future. ( $\underline{r} = .60$ )



## Table 1-continued

- Item 57: I prefer work where I have to make decisions over work which is routine.  
( $\underline{r} = .52$ )
- Item 63: I enjoy being responsible for my actions. ( $\underline{r} = .50$ )
- Factor III: Belief in a Predictable versus an Unpredictable World
- Item 28: Becoming a success is a matter of hard work, luck has little or nothing to do with it. ( $\underline{r} = .73$ )
- Item 44: In my case getting what I want has little or nothing to do with luck.  
( $\underline{r} = .59$ )
- Item 13: Getting people to do the right thing depends on ability; luck has little or nothing to do with it. ( $\underline{r} = .57$ )
- Item 21: It is impossible for me to believe that luck or chance plays an important role in my life. ( $\underline{r} = .49$ )
- Item 11: There really is no such thing as "luck."  
( $\underline{r} = .47$ )
- Factor IV: Internal Control
- Item 20: I am usually able to protect my personal interests. ( $\underline{r} = .58$ )
- Item 49: What happens to me is my own doing.  
( $\underline{r} = .57$ )

## Table 1-continued

- Item 6: My life is determined by my own actions.  
( $\underline{r} = .55$ )
- Item 35: When I make plans, I am almost certain  
to make them work. ( $\underline{r} = .51$ )
- Item 48: When I get what I want, it's usually  
because I worked hard for it. ( $\underline{r} = .51$ )
- Factor V: Belief in a Politically Responsive versus  
Unresponsive World
- Item 15: With enough effort we can wipe out  
political corruption. ( $\underline{r} = .58$ )
- Item 47: One of the major reasons we have wars  
is because people don't take enough  
interest in politics. ( $\underline{r} = .46$ )
- Item 9: By taking an active part in political  
and social affairs the people can  
control world events. ( $\underline{r} = .43$ )
- Item 14: In the long run people are responsible  
for bad government on a national as  
well as a local level. ( $\underline{r} = .44$ )
- Item 19: The average citizen can have an  
influence in government decisions.  
( $\underline{r} = .42$ )
- Factor VI: Belief in a Just versus an Unjust World
- Item 40: The idea that teachers are unfair to  
students is nonsense. ( $\underline{r} = .50$ )

## Table 1-continued

- Item 42: People are lonely because they don't try to be friendly. ( $\underline{r} = .48$ )
- Item 45: People who can't get others to like them don't understand how to get along with others. ( $\underline{r} = .43$ )
- Item 38: In the case of the well prepared student there is rarely if ever such a thing as an unfair test. ( $\underline{r} = .42$ )
- Item 43: How many friends you have depends on how nice a person you are. ( $\underline{r} = .41$ )



remaining factor.

The correlation matrix for the six factors as defined by the highest loading five items for each factor is shown in Table 2, including corrections for attenuation. The correlations corrected for attenuation range from .235 to .521. A second order principle components analysis of the factors revealed one second order factor. The decision was therefore made that subjects' total locus of control scores would be used as the locus of control measure in the present study, since this total score best reflected the total personality construct of locus of control.

In order to select items which best contributed to the reliability of the total locus of control scale, item-total correlations which did not contribute to the overall reliability of the scale were eliminated. The final locus of control scale used in this study consisted of 45 items and had a total alpha reliability of .86 (marked in Appendix A).

The t-test comparing mean differences between male and female locus of control scores revealed that significant sex differences existed among subjects,  $t(216) = 2.48$ ,  $p < .05$  (Table 3). Males scored in the more external direction as compared to females. Since significant differences were obtained between male and female locus of control scores, separate analyses of variance were conducted for each sex. Subjects scoring above the median for their sex on the locus of control scale were classified as external

Table 2  
Correlation Matrix Between Factors on the Locus of Control Scale

Factor I	Factor II	Factor III	Factor IV	Factor V	Factor VI
Difficult vs. Easy World	Desire for Internal Control	Predictable vs. Unpredictable World	Perception of Internal Control	Politically Responsive vs. Unresponsive World	Just vs. Unjust World
Factor I					
1.000	0.241 (.318)*	0.286 (.394)	0.258 (.359)	0.148 (.235)	0.173 (.264)
Factor II	1.000				
		0.328 (.423)	0.339 (.443)	0.222 (.325)	0.195 (.283)
Factor III		1.000			
			0.364 (.483)	0.271 (.411)	0.397 (.604)
Factor IV			1.000		
				0.310 (.479)	0.294 (.521)
Factor V				1.000	
					0.300 (.521)
Factor VI					1.000

\*Correlations in parentheses are corrected for attenuation

Table 3  
Means, Standard Deviations, and T-tests  
for Locus of Control Scores as a Function of Sex

Males ( <u>n</u> =101)		Females ( <u>n</u> =117)		<u>t</u>	Total ( <u>n</u> =218)	
<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>		<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
181.57	22.38	174.32	20.72	2.48*	177.68	21.76

\* $p < .05$ , two-tailed test of probability



controllers and those scoring below the median were classified as internal controllers.

The mean number of helping sessions volunteered and the proportion of subjects volunteering by each group of male subjects are given in Table 4. The groups did not differ in their amount of helping as a function of internal versus external locus of control,  $F < 1.0$ , responsibility condition,  $F = 1.10$ , ns, or the interaction of these variables,  $F < 1.0$ . Similarly, the proportion of males who volunteered to help at all did not vary as a function of locus of control,  $\chi^2 (1) = 1.74$ , ns.

Table 5 shows the mean number of helping sessions volunteered and the proportion of subjects volunteering by each group of female subjects. The groups did not differ in their amount of volunteering as a function of locus of control, responsibility attribution, or the interaction of these variables; all  $F$ s were less than 1.0. The proportion of females who volunteered also did not vary as a function of the independent variables or of their interaction; all  $\chi^2$ s were less than 1.0.

In order to determine whether a more extreme separation of locus of control groups would affect the results of the analyses, an additional ANOVA and  $\chi^2$  was performed for each sex, classifying subjects scoring more than approximately one-half of a standard deviation above the median as external controllers and subjects scoring lower than approximately one-half of a standard deviation

Table 4  
 Mean Number of Helping Sessions Volunteered  
 and Proportion of Helping by all Male Subjects  
 as a Function of Locus of Control  
 and Victim Responsibility

	Internal Locus of Control ( $\leq$ 180)	External Locus of Control ( $\geq$ 181)
Self-responsibility Condition	% = 94	% = 70
	<u>M</u> = 1.71	<u>M</u> = 1.65
	<u>n</u> = 17	<u>n</u> = 20
Environment-responsibility Condition	% = 57	% = 64
	<u>M</u> = 1.26	<u>M</u> = 1.55
	<u>n</u> = 19	<u>n</u> = 11

Table 5  
 Mean Number of Helping Sessions Volunteered  
 and Proportion of Helping by all Female Subjects  
 as a Function of Locus of Control  
 and Victim Responsibility

	Internal Locus of Control ( $\leq$ 171)	External Locus of Control ( $\geq$ 172)
Self-responsibility Condition	% = 57	% = 53
	<u>M</u> = 1.44	<u>M</u> = 1.11
	<u>n</u> = 28	<u>n</u> = 19
Environment-responsibility Condition	% = 43	% = 69
	<u>M</u> = 1.17	<u>M</u> = 1.48
	<u>n</u> = 28	<u>n</u> = 19



below the median as internal controllers. The mean number of helping sessions and the proportion of helping for each extreme male group are given in Table 6. These groups still did not differ in their amount of helping as a function of the independent variables or their interaction; all  $F$ s were less than 1.0. Nor were there any significant differences among the extreme male groups in proportion of helping as a function of these variables; all  $\chi^2$ s were again less than 1.0.

The results for the extreme groups of female subjects were similar to those for the extreme male groups (Table 7). All  $F$ s between the number of sessions volunteered, and all  $\chi^2$ s between the likelihood of volunteering as a function of the independent variables were less than 1.0.

A final chi square resulted in no significant differences between the proportion of male and female subjects who offered to help,  $\chi^2 (1) = 1.54, \underline{ns}$ .

Table 6  
 Mean Number of Helping Sessions Volunteered  
 and Proportion of Helping by Extreme Male Groups  
 as a Function of Locus of Control  
 and Victim Responsibility

	Internal Locus of Control ( $\leq 171$ )	External Locus of Control ( $\geq 189$ )
Self-responsibility Condition	% = 100	% = 75
	<u>M</u> = 1.90	<u>M</u> = 1.90
	<u>n</u> = 11	<u>n</u> = 12
Environment-responsibility Condition	% = 56	% = 70
	<u>M</u> = 1.60	<u>M</u> = 1.70
	<u>n</u> = 11	<u>n</u> = 10

Table 7  
 Mean Number of Helping Sessions Volunteered  
 and Proportion of Helping by Extreme Female Groups  
 as a Function of Locus of Control  
 and Victim Responsibility

	Internal Locus of Control ( $\leq 162$ )	External Locus of Control ( $\geq 181$ )
Self-responsibility Condition	% = 77	% = 53
	$\bar{M} = 1.50$	$\bar{M} = 1.27$
	$n = 13$	$n = 15$
Environment-responsibility Condition	% = 42	% = 71
	$\bar{M} = .70$	$\bar{M} = 1.50$
	$n = 19$	$n = 17$



## Discussion

The results of the present study indicated that locus of control and responsibility attribution were not related to the number of sessions volunteered or to the likelihood that subjects would volunteer at all. Of the four main hypotheses proposed, only one, (c) there would be no significant difference between the amount of helping by internal and external subjects in the environment-responsibility condition, was supported. The hypothesis that there would be no sex differences in proportion of helping was also supported; however, significant differences did exist between male and female scores on the locus of control scale, indicating that the males in this study were more externally controlled as compared to females.

Even when the internal locus of control group was separated from the external group by almost one standard deviation, helping was not affected by locus of control. These findings contradict those cited earlier by Lerner and Reavy (1975). However, the present findings were consistent with Schwartz (1974) who also found no relationship between locus of control and helping behavior.

Although responses to the manipulation check indicated that subjects did differentiate between the responsibility conditions as the author had intended, the responsibility

conditions did not appear to affect the subjects' willingness to help. These results are inconsistent with the previous results obtained by Krebs (1970), Piliavin et al. (1969), Schopler and Mathews (1965) and Schwartz and Clausen (1970). The insignificant relationship between responsibility condition and helping is also inconsistent with the results of the pilot study conducted prior to the main study of this research; differences in the proportion of helping by subjects in the pilot study between the two responsibility conditions approached significance, even though responsibility attribution was less effectively manipulated in the pilot study as compared to the main study. An explanation for these results might be that the pilot study was conducted at the end of a semester when subjects had very little free time, while the main study was conducted in the beginning of May Term. When subjects have little free time, the deservingness of the victim may play a greater role in the likelihood of helping than when subjects have extra time available. When their own time is limited, subjects may be more selective in choosing a person worthy of their help.

According to responses on the manipulation check, only 7% of the environment-responsibility group and 9% of the self-responsibility group expressed any doubts in relation to the believability of the situation. Therefore, the believability of the situation did not appear to account for the lack of significant relationships between the responsibility

conditions and helping behavior. Very few of the respondents in either of the responsibility conditions perceived a connection between the administration of the locus of control scale and the classroom situation. The only recorded reasons for perceiving a connection between the two was that "both were psychology projects." It is unlikely that these perceptions would interfere or facilitate helping significantly.

Overall, 62% of the total population volunteered at least one helping session. Only one of the 59 reported reasons for helping or not helping mentioned the graduate student's responsibility as a reason for volunteering or not volunteering in either of the two responsibility conditions; one student in the environment-responsibility condition indicated that the reason he or she helped was because the need for help was not the graduate student's "fault." Other reasons for helping were: (a) the subjects could easily relate to the graduate student's predicament in both responsibility situations, (b) subjects were interested in learning about research investigating perception, (c) subjects had nothing better to do, (d) subjects felt the graduate student was really desperate and would appreciate their help, (e) that most of the other students seemed to help, and (f) subjects felt sorry for the student. The only reasons given for not offering help were either that the subject did not have the time or transportation.

In this study, it appears that the subjects readily



identified with the graduate student and her predicament, whether they saw her as being responsible or not responsible for it. Subjects stated that they hoped that had they been in the same situation other people would help them. Ability to relate to the problem appeared to supersede any blame or action dependent upon locus of control in influencing willingness to volunteer. Many of the subjects in both responsibility conditions were apologetic that they did not have the time to help in more sessions. If, in fact, internal subjects do hold others as well as themselves as responsible for their circumstances, they may not be so extremely blaming that they would not overlook some human errors, such as forgetting. Relationships between locus of control, responsibility attribution and helping behavior may exist as hypothesized; however, the ease in which the subject can place himself in the role of the victim seems to have a greater effect on willingness to help. Future studies in this area might consider the degree of subjects' identification with the victim as an independent variable affecting altruism by varying the personality traits of the victim and by varying the populations from which subjects would be selected. The hypothesized relationships between locus of control and responsibility attribution may exist in situations where subjects feel little empathy for the victim.

## Reference Notes

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Appendices



## APPENDIX A

### Locus of Control Scale

#### Instructions:

This is a questionnaire to find out how certain important events affect different people. The statements have been collected from different groups of people and represent a variety of opinions. There are no right or wrong answers to the questionnaire. For every statement there are large numbers of people who agree and disagree. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each statement as follows:

Blacken space 1 if you STRONGLY AGREE

Blacken space 2 if you AGREE

Blacken space 3 if you SLIGHTLY AGREE

Blacken space 4 if you SLIGHTLY DISAGREE

Blacken space 5 if you DISAGREE

Blacken space 6 if you STRONGLY DISAGREE

Please read each item carefully and be sure to indicate the response which most clearly corresponds to the way you feel. Some students will be contacted during May Term and asked to participate in a brief experiment. Therefore, it is necessary that you print your name, phone number, course title, and instructor's name on the top of the answer sheet. Your responses will be useless to the researcher without

this information.

Your personal responses will be kept confidential and will not be seen by anyone except the researcher. Your class will be provided with the results of this experiment at the end of May Term.

Please answer the items honestly and be sure to use only a pencil on the answer sheet.

1. People's misfortunes result from the mistakes they make.
2. I have found that what is going to happen will happen.
3. There will always be wars, no matter how hard people try to prevent them.
4. When I make plans, I am almost certain that I can make them work.\*
5. Most students don't realize the extent to which their grades are influenced by accidental happenings.\*
6. My life is determined by my own actions.\*
7. Unfortunately, an individual's worth often passes unrecognized no matter how hard he tries.\*
8. Many times exam questions tend to be so unrelated to course work that studying is really useless.\*
9. By taking an active part in political and social affairs the people can control world events.
10. There's not much use in trying too hard to please people, if they like you, they like you.
11. There really is no such thing as "luck."\*

12. In the long run the bad things that happen to us are balanced by the good ones.
13. Getting people to do the right thing depends on ability; luck has little or nothing to do with it.\*
14. In the long run the people are responsible for bad government on a national as well as a local level.\*
15. With enough effort we can wipe out political corruption.
16. Without the right breaks one cannot be an effective leader.\*
17. I can pretty much determine what will happen in my life.\*
18. In the long run people get the respect they deserve in this world.\*
19. The average citizen can have an influence in government decisions.\*
20. I am usually able to protect my personal interests.\*
21. It is impossible for me to believe that luck or chance plays an important role in my life.\*
22. As far as world affairs are concerned, most of us are the victims of forces we can neither understand, nor control.\*
23. It is not always wise to plan too far ahead because many things turn out to be a matter of good or bad fortune anyhow.\*
24. Who gets to be the boss depends on who was lucky enough to be in the right place first.\*



25. Getting a good job depends mainly on being in the right place at the right time.\*
26. Many of the unhappy things in people's lives are partly due to bad luck.\*
27. Trusting to fate has never turned out as well for me as making a decision to take a definite course of action.
28. Becoming a success is a matter of hard work, luck has little or nothing to do with it.\*
29. Capable people who fail to become leaders have not taken advantage of their opportunities.
30. Most misfortunes are the result of lack of ability, ignorance, laziness, or all three.
31. This world is run by the few people in power, and there is not much the little guy can do about it.\*
32. Most of the time I can't understand why politicians behave the way they do.\*
33. Many times we might just as well decide what to do by flipping a coin.\*
34. Sometimes I feel that I don't have enough control over the direction my life is taking.\*
35. When I make plans, I am almost certain to make them work.\*
36. Many times I feel that I have little influence over the things that happen to me.\*
37. Most people can't realize the extent to which their lives are controlled by accidental happenings.\*
38. In the case of the well prepared student there is rarely if ever such a thing as an unfair test.\*

39. There is a direct connection between how hard I study and the grades I get.\*
40. The idea that teachers are unfair to students is nonsense.\*
41. It is hard to know whether or not a person really likes you.
42. People are lonely because they don't try to be friendly.
43. How many friends you have depends on how nice a person you are.
44. In my case getting what I want has little or nothing to do with luck.\*
45. People who can't get others to like them don't understand how to get along with others.
46. It is difficult for people to have much control over the things politicians do in office.\*
47. One of the major reasons why we have wars is because people don't take enough interest in politics.
48. When I get what I want, it's usually because I worked hard for it.\*
49. What happens to me is my own doing.\*
50. No matter how hard you try some people just don't like you.
51. Sometimes I can't understand how teachers arrive at the grades they give.
52. Important decisions frighten me. I sometimes wish I didn't have to make them.\*
53. I like to participate in important decisions.\*

54. I usually prefer to make my own decisions rather than to take someone's advise.\*
55. I enjoy making important decisions concerning my future.\*
56. I often prefer just to let things happen, rather than to work to control them.\*
57. I prefer work where I have to make decisions over work which is routine.\*
58. If I could give control of my life to a wise person. I would do so.
59. I usually prefer to take someone's advise rather than decide for myself.\*
60. I sometimes put off making difficult decisions because I am afraid that I will make the wrong choice.\*
61. I feel good when I have to make important choices.\*
62. I prefer work which is routine, where I don't have to make important decisions.\*
63. I enjoy being responsible for my actions.\*

\*Items used in the final measure of locus of control.



## APPENDIX B

### Responsibility Condition Scripts

#### Self-responsibility Condition:

My name is Jerri Fritzo and I am a graduate student in psychology. I am trying to complete a research project which was due last semester, but I am behind because I forgot to order the equipment I need for the study. The equipment is finally here and now I need to get 200 students to volunteer as subjects so that I can finish this research and graduate this summer. I need people who can volunteer for anywhere from one to four sessions, and each session will last one half hour.

The purpose of my research is to find out how different environmental conditions affect visual perception. During the sessions you will be asked to look at slides of objects and to make some judgements about them, such as size, color, and distance between objects.

Since there are very few students around during May Term, I am having very much difficulty finding enough subjects. I appreciate any help you can give me. Like I said, each session lasts only 30 minutes. Please fill out this sheet and indicate how many sessions you can volunteer for. I will contact the volunteers the beginning of next

week to set up a time schedule.

Environment-responsibility Condition:

This script was exactly as above except the following sentence replaced the above underlined sentence:  
I am trying to complete a research project which was due last semester, but I am behind because when I ordered the equipment when the project was assigned, the company lost my order and was very uncooperative when I have tried to request a new order.

APPENDIX C

Debriefing

To: All participating May Term Classes  
From: Jerri Fritzo  
Subject: The following is a brief explanation of the purpose and results of my thesis research. Please read or make available to the students in your class.

The purpose of my research is to look at the relationship between certain attitudes and helping behavior in two different situations. The attitude questionnaire you took measures Locus of Control of reinforcement. The results of the questionnaire show that some of you are Internal controllers, which means that you believe that you can determine and control most of what happens in your life. Others are External controllers, which means that you believe forces outside of your control determine what happens in your life.

When looking more closely at your scores on the Locus of Control Scale, I have found that there are six ways in which you believe you are internally or externally controlled.

1. Some of you believe that by your own actions you



can control what happens in your life and some of you believe that other forces control your life.

2. Some of you believe that the world is a difficult place to live in and that it is useless to make plans because other forces control what happens. In contrast, some of you feel that the world is an easy place to live in and that planning is worthwhile.

3. Several of you feel that the world is predictable and that with hard work people can achieve their goals. Others feel that the world is unpredictable and that luck is most important in determining success.

4. Some of you believe that all people can help to determine what happens in the world politically; others believe that only a few powerful people have control in politics.

5. Several of you feel that there is justice in the world and that people get what they deserve. Others believe that the world is unfair in rewarding people for their actions.

6. Finally, some of you enjoy making important decisions, and some of you would prefer others to make important decisions for you.

Several studies have examined how locus of control affects people's willingness to help others. The results of these studies have been inconsistent; some have shown that Internal controllers are more likely to help, some have shown that Externals are more likely to help, and some

studies show no differences in helping behavior.

In my research I am interested in finding out how locus of control affects helping behavior when the person needing help is either responsible or not responsible for his or her problem. Some of the classes were told that the graduate student forgot to order the equipment - in this situation we expected that you would feel that the student was responsible for being late with her project, and that you would be less likely to volunteer to help. The other classes were told that the company caused the late arrival of the equipment and in this situation we expected that you would not feel the student was responsible for being late with her project, and that you would be more likely to volunteer to help. I am also interested in finding out if locus of control and the two responsibility conditions act together to have some effect on your likeliness to offer help. I have hypothesized that there would be a greater difference in helping between the two situations for Internal controllers than for External controllers.

At this point I do not have the final analysis completed and cannot describe any effects that locus of control and the two situations might have had on your willingness to help. I do know that the majority of you who stated reasons for helping indicated that you helped because you hoped that people would help you if you were in a similar situation.

I am concerned that some of you might believe that

the purpose of my study was to trick you. This is not the case. I hope that the simple and brief deception involved is justified by the potential useful knowledge that can be gained about why and when people will help others. I believe that "helping" is a significant human problem and I hope that my research has not had a harmful effect on your willingness to help others or on your feelings about the behavioral sciences.

I very much appreciate the class time you gave up for my study. Thank you for being so cooperative. If you have further questions or would like to learn about the final results of my research, you can contact me or read the copy of my thesis which will be available by the fall semester in Cravens Library at W.K.U.

Sincerely,

*Jerri Fritzo*

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