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ABSTRACT

Externality (sense of powerlessness), as measured by Rotter's (1966) I-E scale, has been theoretically and empirically associated with low socioeconomic status and a history of insufficient reward. Recently, however, externality among white college students has been increasing. The present study sought to demonstrate the relationship of externality to a variety of measures designed to reflect adherence to new-left ideology. Subjects were 33 males and 39 females randomly selected from the total student population of a highly selective liberal arts college. Subjects were personally contacted by interviewers and responded to a questionnaire containing Rotter's I-E scale, a new-left ideology scale, a check-list of legal and illegal sociopolitical activities, and a drug use scale. Significant positive correlations revealed externality as one component of an interrelated network of new-left beliefs, attitudes, and behavior. The relationships held only for male subjects and for those items on the I-E scale representing beliefs in personal control. Processes by which white male college students, females, and members of minority groups arrive at a sense of powerlessness are discussed in terms of reference-group identification, Rotter's social learning theory, and factors of personal adjustment. (Author)

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EXTERNAL LOCUS OF CONTROL: A FACE OF
NEW LEFT IDEOLOGY¹

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A series of anecdotal observations of students at a liberal arts college served to stimulate the idea of the present study. While participating as a discussion leader in an interdisciplinary course in social problems (e. g. , poverty, racism, war, etc.), the author observed frequent expressions of despair and pessimism which were rarely if ever countered by opposing views. In fact, students spontaneously emitted statements which closely paralleled those found on standard measures of alienation and anomia (Dean, 1961; Simpson & Miller, 1963).

The course also involved a series of give-and-take lectures and faculty-student "teach-ins." During these sessions some faculty and students occasionally took a hopeful posture with respect to future solutions to social problems. This approach generally met with a cool reception at best and at times generated noticeable hostility in some students. The more vociferous arguments against optimism frequently took the form that the "establishment" was too unresponsive, American society too "sick," the industrial-military complex too powerful, political figures too corrupt, etc. , for any program of social change to be effective. In short, many of the reasons that are given by youth to justify social protest activity and the formation of a "counter culture" were also employed to argue against the idea that something can be done to effectively cope with social problems. It seemed clear that many students felt that it was useless to attempt social change.

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To determine the depth to which the students ($N = 19$) felt a sense of powerlessness, the Internal-External Locus of Control (I-E) scale was administered (Rotter, Seeman, & Liverant, 1962). Briefly, the I-E scale was designed to measure the degree to which an individual generally believes that his own behavior is responsible for important happenings in his life versus the extent to which he characteristically feels that events which affect him are controlled by powerful external forces (e.g., luck, fate, social institutions, etc.). In the research literature, subjects who embrace the former outlook are said to be internals, those who accept the latter view are called externals.

The students' scores ($\bar{X} = 17.4$) definitely put them in the "external" category, at least two standard deviations more external than any of the samples reported in Rotter's (1966) review. Moreover, two other discussion groups ($N = 37$) sampled yielded virtually identical results ($\bar{X} = 16.9$).

Since only the sophomore class was involved in the social problems course, a sample of freshmen and juniors ($N = 118$) were given the I-E scale to determine whether or not the extreme externality among the sophomores was a function of the course experience. The I-E scores for this sample were considerably lower ($\bar{X} = 11.4$) than the sophomores', but still significantly higher than normative data on I-E scores gathered from a variety of sources (Hersch & Scheibe, 1967; Rotter, 1966). Thus it appeared that the course did play a role in increasing feelings of powerlessness, but the scores obtained from students not exposed to this influence indicated a higher degree of externality than would be expected.

These anecdotal observations are of theoretical interest, since a sense of powerlessness has typically been associated with lower socioeconomic and minority group members rather than with persons who enjoy a privileged position in society. In fact, one of Rotter's (1966) theoretical assumptions is that patterns

of reinforcement shape generalized expectancies for future reinforcements. This particular hypothesis has little difficulty accounting for a sense of powerlessness among the socially disadvantaged, but an examination of the histories of the students in the discussion group revealed outstanding academic achievement, superior intellectual aptitude, and relatively high socioeconomic background.

Presumably different variables may be operating in the process by which socially deprived versus affluent individuals arrive at a belief in external control. In Rotter's (1954) social learning theory the potential for a particular behavior is viewed as a function of the expectation that engaging in that behavior will lead to a desired goal (called a reinforcement value). For example, some of the traditionally dominant reinforcement values in American society are wealth, recognition-status, social power, etc. It is understandable why a sense of powerlessness would result from a situation in which routes of accessibility are closed to culturally valued success goals (Merton, 1957). On the other hand, it is unlikely that reasonably competent and relatively affluent students should experience a sense of powerlessness because they view themselves as ill equipped to compete successfully for standard, social reinforcements.

It may be, however, that many college students today view as meaningful reinforcement values which differ from traditional success goals. In fact, the philosophy of the "counter culture" stresses the undesirability of American standards of success (Roszak, 1969). For example, instead of authority, competition, wealth, and social grace, new-left ideology emphasizes freedom, cooperation, equality, and spontaneity (Flacks, 1967). These and other values in the counter culture can be viewed as a set of desirable goals or reinforcement values that are, by American standards, nontraditional. Moreover, many of the goals new-left advocates deem desirable (e. g. , an end to the war, social justice, meaningful

interpersonal relationships) do not easily lend themselves to immediate gratification. Thus it is possible that a sense of powerlessness could be felt in relation to such nontraditional reinforcement values.

Based on the theoretical considerations and empirical data thus reviewed, the present study sought to relate a belief in external control to new-left ideology. New-left ideology was operationalized as a rejection of traditional cultural beliefs, acceptance of new-left beliefs, use of drugs, and endorsement of and participation in legal and illegal sociopolitical protest activities. The last prediction is interesting, since the opposite relationship has been hypothesized and, in fact, supported; i. e., internality rather than externality has been associated with commitment to social action (Gore & Rotter, 1963; Strickland, 1965).

Method

Subjects. Subjects were 33 male and 39 female students randomly selected from the total student body (N = 1050) of a highly selective liberal arts college. (Initially 87 subjects were included, 15 were eliminated for failing to complete the entire questionnaire.) The sample consisted of 47 per cent freshmen, 17 per cent sophomores, 19 per cent juniors, and 17 per cent seniors. Seven per cent reported majoring in language, 16 per cent natural science, 36 per cent social science, 39 per cent humanities, with 2 per cent undecided. Reports of father's occupation and education revealed that subjects were homogenous with respect to socioeconomic background, roughly middle and upper-middle class.

The Measures

Locus of control. The I-E scale was employed to measure beliefs in internal versus external control. The scale contains 23 pairs of items (plus six fillers) and was designed to force the subject to choose between "internal" and "external"

statements. The final score is determined by simply summing the number of external statements chosen. The possible range of scores is from 0 (all internal) to 23 (all external). Standard reliability, validity, and normative data are presented in Rotter's (1966) review article.

New-left ideology. Fourteen items were especially designed or selected from other sources to assess beliefs that by virtue of acceptance or rejection are reported to reflect, in part, new-left ideology (Flacks, 1967; Smith, 1969). These beliefs center on such things as the legitimacy of authority, the value of competition and the work ethic, the desirability of equality, the validity of social etiquette, and the nature of freedom. The measure was not intended to be comprehensive, but rather to capture a representative sample of beliefs about which conservative and new-left advocates differ. The items were rated on a 5-point Likert type scale. Scores had a possible range of 14 (most conservative) to 70 (most liberal). Each item is presented below together with its correlation with the total score (item value excluded from total score in correlation). All correlations were significant beyond the .01 level except item 12 ($p < .05$).

1. I find it easy to stick to a certain schedule, once I have started it. (-.31)
2. Obedience and respect for authority are among the most important virtues children should learn. (-.69)
3. The most important qualities of a real man are strength of will and determined ambitions. (-.45)
4. Participation in intensive competition is important because it trains individuals to face the problems of everyday living. (-.68)

5. If I had to make the choice between being an artist and a successful businessman, I think I'd choose to be an artist. (+.51)
6. Radical agitators and propagandists should be allowed to speak publicly in parks and streets. (+.51)
7. Participation in intensive competition is desirable because it develops leadership. (-.68)
8. The wealth of the rich should be more uniformly distributed among all the people. (+.44)
9. Pupils who are tardy should be compelled to make-up time so as to learn the habit of being on time when they grow older. (-.49)
10. I believe that promptness is a very important personality characteristic. (-.43)
11. We should oppose the more even distribution of wealth since it is likely to stifle individual initiative. (-.55)
12. Pupils should study only those subjects they like. (+.29)
13. The trouble with many people is that when they find a job they can do well, they don't stick with it. (-.48)
14. A person who has bad manners, habits, and breeding can hardly expect to get along with people. (-.48)

Sociopolitical protest. The degree to which subjects were willing to participate in activities on behalf of a political or social objective as well as reports of past behavior was assessed by means of a 35-item check list. The items were selected from an initial pool of 75 activities by employing a Thurstone like pro-

cedure and four judges. Judges assigned a mild (1)-severe (7) scale score to each activity and classified it as legal or illegal. Only those items with the best inter-judge agreement were retained. Examples of mild versus severe legal and illegal activities are as follows:

I would vote in an election. (mild-legal)

I would talk personally with government officials. (severe-legal)

I would give protection and comfort to people sharing my views
even while they were disobeying the law. (mild-illegal)

I would kill hostages if need be. (severe-illegal)

Each subject received a "willingness" and actual sociopolitical activity score by summing the scale values for each item checked. Scores could range from 0 (no activity checked) to 137 (all activities checked.)

Drug usage. Reported frequency of use of the following drugs was assessed.

(a) marijuana; (b) psilocybin, mescaline, LSD; (c) barbituates ("downs"); (d) amphetamines ("speed"); (e) heroin, cocaine, morphine ("hard stuff"). The response alternatives were: (a) once or more a week, (b) once or more a month, (c) once every two months, (d) once every six months, (e) once a year, (f) never. Scores for each drug classification ranged from 1 (never) to 6 (once or more a week).

Procedure. Thirty students enrolled in a research oriented course in personality theory served as interviewers. Three subjects were randomly assigned to each interviewer. Interviewers were instructed to personally contact each of the subjects and to briefly explain their task, emphasize the research nature of the project, and assure anonymity of respondents. In no case did a subject refuse to participate, although three subjects could not be located. Subjects responded to the questionnaires in the same order in which the measures were described above.

Results

Pearson correlation coefficients along with means and standard deviations for each measure are presented in Table 1. Correlations are presented separately for males and females, since important sex differences among the interrelationships were obtained.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Males. As can be seen in the upper triangular matrix in Table 1, males who scored toward the external end of the I-E scale were also likely to score high on new-left ideology ($p < .05$), marijuana usage ($p < .01$), willingness to endorse illegal sociopolitical protest activities ($p < .05$), and reported participation in legal political action ($p < .05$). Externality was not related to willingness to engage in legal action; however, 97 per cent of the subjects reported some form of past involvement in legal sociopolitical activity and 97 per cent indicated a willingness to exercise themselves in legal activity in the future. ^{IN ADDITION} ~~Moreover~~, 63 per cent disclosed a willingness to employ some form of illegal activity, although only 36 per cent reported that they had, in fact, participated in such activities. Moreover, none of the illegal activities reported fell within the "severe" range. Due to the small number of subjects reporting actual illegal protest, the measure was not included in the correlation matrix. It was, however, interesting to note that of the 11 subjects who reported illegal participation, 9 scored as externals (above the median).

Similarly, few subjects reported use of drugs other than marijuana, but of those that did 70 per cent scored as external. Drugs and percentage of subjects who reported use were as follows: hallucinogens (20 per cent), amphetamines

(19 per cent), barbituates (14 per cent), heroin (3 per cent). The frequency of usage tended to bimodal, i. e., either relatively frequent or infrequent. Marijuana was reported used by 49 per cent of the respondents with the following frequency: once or more a week (6 per cent), once or more a month (25 per cent), once every two months (9 per cent), once every six months (9 per cent), once a year (0 per cent), never (51 per cent). Subjects were dichotomized at the median into internals versus externals and classified as users versus nonusers of marijuana. A chi-square comparison corrected for continuity revealed that users were also likely to be classified as external, nonusers internal ($\chi^2 = 6.84$, $df = 1$, $p < .01$). An additional chi-square comparison showed that marijuana use was also associated with high scorers on the new-left scale ($\chi^2 = 9.78$, $df = 1$, $p < .005$). These statistics are consistent with the interrelationships in Table 1.

A total overview of Table 1 reveals that, for males, all of the intercorrelations with two exceptions were significant, suggesting a cluster of interrelated beliefs, attitudes, and behavior. The exceptions noted above were the lack of a relationship between I-E scores and willingness to endorse legal protest activity and the marginally significant correlation between the latter measure and reported marijuana use.

Females. Although the mean I-E score for females was higher than that of males, it was not significantly so in accord with the more conservative two-tailed test ($t = 1.82$, $df = 70$). Differences between sex did not approach significance on any of the other measures.

An inspection of the lower triangular matrix in Table 1 reveals that, unlike for males, locus of control was not significantly related to any of the other measures, although a positive relationship between I-E and new-left ideology and a negative relationship between I-E and legal willingness nearly reached significance.

The measures which appeared as interrelated for females were new-left ideology, marijuana usage, past legal involvement, and willingness to employ illegal means of protest. Legal willingness correlated only with reported legal action and illegal willingness. In fact, it was interesting to note that new-left ideology did not correlate with legal willingness, since for males it was I-E scores rather than new-left beliefs which were unrelated to endorsements of legal political activity. In general, however, correlations were in a direction similar to those obtained for males.

A large percentage (92 per cent) reported past participation in legal activities; 100 per cent indicated a willingness to use these processes again. The percentage of females reporting actual involvement in illegal protest activities was lower (16 per cent) than that of males (36 per cent), but the difference was not significant ($\chi^2 = 2.27$). Of the six subjects reporting illegal involvement, 5 were above the median on new-left ideology and all scored toward the external end of the I-E scale. Females were as likely as males to indicate some willingness to employ illegal means of protest (63 per cent and 64 per cent of the females and males, respectively).

As was the case for males, few females reported extensive use of hallucinogens (19 per cent), amphetamines (20 per cent), barbituates (20 per cent), and heroin (11 per cent). Of those reporting use, hallucinogens and amphetamines tended to be used either frequently or infrequently, but most indicated frequent use of barbituates (once or more a month) and infrequent (once a year) use of heroin. Marijuana use was higher for females (64 per cent versus 49 per cent), but not significantly so ($\chi^2 = 1.19$). The following frequencies of marijuana use were recorded: once or more a week (3 per cent), once or more a month (38 per cent), once every two months (9 per cent), once every six months (9 per cent), once a

year (⁵ per cent), never (36 per cent). A chi-square comparison revealed that belief in internal versus external control was not significantly associated with use of marijuana ($\chi^2 = 1.55$), but subjects above the median new-left score were significantly more likely to be users than nonusers ($\chi^2 = 4.3$, $df = 1$, $p = <.05$), thus paralleling the relationships in Table 1.

Personal versus political control. Since factor analytic studies of the I-E scale have revealed two factors (Gurin, Gurin, Lao, & Beattie, 1969; Mirels, 1970), separate analyses were conducted for each factor. According to Mirels (1970), "items loading high on Factor I concern the respondent's inclination to assign greater or lesser importance to ability and hard work than to luck as influences which determine personally relevant outcomes . . . In sharp contrast, most of the items loading high on Factor II focus on the respondent's acceptance or rejection of the idea that a citizen can exert some control over political and world affairs. [pp. 227-228]."

Interestingly enough, Factor I was unrelated to Factor II (males, $r = .03$; females, $r = .23$). All of the correlations between Factor I and the other variables followed the same direction and significance for both males and females as those for total I-E, with the single exception that for males the correlation between Factor I and illegal willingness did not reach significance ($r = .23$). On the other hand, for males none of the correlations between Factor II and the other variables was significant. For females a negative correlation between Factor II and endorsement of legal action was the only significant relationship found ($r = -.34$, $p = .05$). Thus, it was the factor said to represent personal control which contributed to the overall relationships between I-E and the other measures.

Discussion

For male subjects in this study, a sense of powerlessness, as measured by the I-E scale, was one component of an interrelated network of reported beliefs and behavior. Males who scored toward the external end of the I-E scale were also likely to reject traditional cultural values, accept new-left views, use marijuana, report past involvement in political activities, and to endorse the use of illegal means of protest. Of the two factors contained in the I-E scale (Mirels, 1970), Factor I, beliefs in personal control, correlated with the measures reflecting new-left ideology. The second factor, beliefs in political control, was unrelated to Factor I and all other measures.

There is evidence that the relationship between externality and new-left ideology was not due to some artifact of the present study. Recently Silvern and Nakamura (1971) investigated the relationships between locus of control, acceptance of "counter culture" beliefs, political views, and reports of political activity. The study is especially instructive, since, in contrast to the present investigation, it was conducted in a different section of the country, utilized subjects at a large university, and employed different means of measuring new-left ideology and sociopolitical action (drug use was not assessed). The findings of the Silvern and Nakamura (1971) study closely parallel those of the present investigation. For example, they too found that overall political behavior, participation in protest activities, acceptance of counter culture beliefs and left-wing views all correlated positively with externality for male subjects, but not for females. Moreover, as was the case in the present study, they also reported that the relationships between I-E and the other variables held for the factor reflecting personal control, but not political control.

The findings of the present study and the results of the Silvern and Nakamura

(1971) study suggest that externality among many white college students is related to a sense of disaffection with established cultural beliefs. Other research offers additional support for this hypothesis. For example, recently Mirels and Garret (1971) found that I-E scores correlated negatively with scores on a scale designed to measure beliefs in the Protestant Ethic. From another perspective, Tolar and Le Blanc (1971) reported a positive relationship between belief in external control and a sense of alienation. In view of the present study, these findings suggest that externals in comparison to internals not only devalued traditional conceptions of work and success, but were cynical in general about the structure of society.

Since the present study was conducted in the context of a highly selective liberal arts college and subjects were homogenous with respect to middle- and upper-middle-class status, it was not surprising that many displayed characteristics associated with new-left ideology. Such views and behavior among college students have become more frequent over the past few years. Indeed, there are those who consider the proliferation of a "counter culture" as indicative of a cultural revolution (Reich, 1970). It is interesting to note, however, that I-E scores have also reflected increasing externality among college students in recent years (Rotter, 1971). In fact, it is not uncommon to find mean I-E scores in recently published studies that are considerably more external than normative data collected in the mid and early 1960's. (McArthur, 1970; Silvern & Nakamura, 1971; Warehime & Foulds, 1971).

Silvern and Nakamura (1971) and Thomas (1970) have suggested that ideological and political biases operate to influence "internal" and "external" choices on the I-E scale. In fact, internality has been associated with conservative views of both adults and students. For example, as part of a more comprehensive study, Thomas (1970) working with upper-middle-class students and their parents, found

that I-E scores successfully discriminated between conservative and liberal political views. Beliefs in internal control, however, were more strongly related to a conservative position than externality was to a liberal orientation. As a result of this finding, Thomas questioned the wisdom of conceptualizing the I-E scale strictly as a personality measure, since beliefs in control may be significantly influenced by reference groups, especially those with a conservative bias.

The "counter culture" as a reference group can conceivably operate to influence choices on the I-E scale much the same way. Since new-left ideology is typically critical of society's work ethic, norms of success, and unresponsiveness to human problems, it contains within it implications for personal standards of conduct and ideals for society in general. Thus, new-left views reflect an external bias for both beliefs in hard work and success (personal control) and the responsiveness of governmental institutions (political control) i. e. , for both factors of the I-E scale reported by Mirels (1970).

The fact that in the present study the personal control factor rather than the political control factor had predictive utility and that the factors were unrelated suggest that the nature of these factors merits additional research attention. It should be noted, however, that Silvern and Nakamura (1971) did report a significant correlation between the two factors, although the relationship was not strong ($r = .26$). Moreover, the political control factor contains only five of the 23 items on the I-E scale which may, in part, account for the poor relationship between it and the personal control factor. Furthermore, the content of the political control items may be unrelated to conservative or new-left orientations. In other words, an individual holding either political viewpoint may be as likely to agree that there will always be wars or that most of us cannot understand or control world affairs.

There is also the possibility that much goal directed behavior on the part of

new-left advocates is often frustrated, thus creating feelings of powerlessness. The theoretical implication in terms of Rotter's (1954) social learning theory is that new-left ideology includes, within its framework, among other things, a unique set of reinforcement values which are relatively difficult to attain. For example, many of the personal goals considered desirable among new-left adherents lack well defined criteria for success. Consequently, it is often difficult to consistently specify whether or not progress is being made with an eye to self-actualization, personal growth, or "authentic" interpersonal relationships. Moreover, behaviors (dress, language, etc.) employed in the service of such aspirations may frequently generate aversive consequences in the form of being "hassled" by members of other, more conventional, reference groups. Similarly, an individual who engages in action with an aim to improve environmental quality, bring about peace in Vietnam, and establish social justice is more likely to meet with punishment than reward. According to Rotter's theory, such experiences should influence situation specific and generalized control expectancies. In the present study, if a subject scored high in powerlessness he was also likely to have engaged in prior legal political activity and to personally endorse the future use of illegal means of protest. It was not possible, however, to predict from his powerlessness score whether or not he would endorse the use of legal political action. Although a negative correlation between externality and legal willingness would have offered favorable evidence for the frustration hypothesis, the near zero correlation between these variables suggests the need for more research into the effects of participation in political action on the specific and generalized expectancies of new-left advocates. For example, rather than being goal directed, protest activities may come to serve a defiant or expressive purpose or reflect a preference for high risk behavior (Silvern & Nakamura, 1971).

In review, it is possible that control expectancies can be determined by both the content of an ideology and experiences of success and failure with respect to the implementation of the ideology. For any given subject, a knowledge of which process exerts the greatest influence on I-E choices has implications for predicting behavior, including changes in control beliefs. As mentioned in the introduction, the course in social problems had the effect of increasing externality and McArthur (1970) has reported that the draft lottery influenced I-E scores among those college students it affected. Further research is needed to determine if, for example, control expectancies based on reference group identification are more subject to influence than those shaped by personal experiences of success and failure.

The fact that, for females, beliefs in control were not significantly related to new-left ideology suggests that the meaning and origins of externality for females may differ from that of males. In fact, there is evidence that perceived locus of control for females as compared to males is more strongly related to factors of personal adjustment (Platt, Pomeranz, Eisenman, & DeLisser, 1970; Warehime & Foulds, 1971). At any rate, the importance of analyzing locus of control data separately for males and females is emphasized.

In spite of the fact that an enormous amount of research has been conducted on locus of control, little is known about the nature of externality. It appears likely that those who score towards the external end of the I-E scale may do so for different reasons. For many white male college students, externality may be mainly a consequence of the ideological influence of new-left beliefs and a sense of frustration over failure to realize success within the context of a set of nontraditional, but personally relevant reinforcement values. For females, interpersonal relationships, role conflicts, self-esteem and other variables relating to personal

adjustment may be the major factors determining beliefs in control. For blacks and members of other minority groups, a sense of powerlessness may grow out of conditions in which discrimination blocks access to traditionally defined and personally desired reinforcement values (Gurin, Gurin, Lao, & Beattie, 1969).

A knowledge of the process by which individuals arrive at choices on the I-E scale may be necessary to predict the meaning, influenceability, and behavioral ramifications of internal and external beliefs. For example, in the present study externality was related to social action for white male college students, but blacks were the subjects in the studies which reported internality associated with commitments to social action (Gore & Rotter, 1963; Strickland, 1965). The relative contributions of reinforcement history, reference group identification, personally accepted values, and factors of personal adjustment to beliefs in control suggest a concept of relative externality.

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Footnotes

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TABLE 1
Intercorrelations of Measures for Males and Females

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. I-E		.36*	.47**	-.02	.40*	.34*
2. New-Left	.28		.46**	.34*	.51**	.36*
3. Marijuana use	.18	.50**		.32	.40*	.42*
4. Legal willingness	-.29	.17	.09		.38*	.40*
5. Legal action	-.03	.47**	.45**	.38*		.50**
6. Illegal willingness	.19	.46**	.42**	.30*	.38*	
Males ($n = 33$) \bar{X}	9.87	51.0	1.73	33.37	14.27	10.00
S. D.	3.74	8.75	1.89	12.35	9.66	10.07
Females ($n = 39$) \bar{X}	11.59	53.3	2.18	35.80	16.76	8.48
S. D.	4.12	9.17	1.82	10.35	9.51	8.35

Note: Correlations for males are in the upper matrix, females in the lower.

* $P < .05$ (two-tailed)

** $P < .01$ (two-tailed)