

COLLEGE STUDENTS' BELIEF IN PERSONAL CONTROL, 1966-1970

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In recent years young adults, especially college students, have seemingly come to feel increasingly alienated from society (e.g. 1), powerless, and controlled by factors external to themselves, as manifested in war protests, drug usage, the hippie cult, etc. The present brief report offers empirical evidence supporting this impression.

Method. The Rotter Internal-External Control Scale (I-E Scale) was administered to four groups of students in introductory psychology at the University of Oklahoma during 1966-1970 as shown in Table 1.

Results and discussion. We see from Table 1 a total increase of

TABLE 1. SCORES ON THE ROTTER INTERNAL-EXTERNAL CONTROL SCALE BY COMPARABLE GROUPS OF STUDENTS, 1966-1970

Time of testing	N	Males		Females		
		Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
December 1966	40	7.60	4.07	43	7.42	3.98
December 1967	138	9.11	4.11	127	9.02	3.57
October 1969	36	8.22	4.69	44	9.27	3.42
May 1970	95	9.76	4.04	74	10.38	3.80

over 2 points toward belief in external control (powerlessness) for men, and of nearly 3 points for women. One-way variance analysis with unequal Ns shows these increases to be significant across the four periods (for men: $F = 3.01$; $df = 3,305$; $p. < .05$; for women: $F = 6.70$; $df = 3,284$; $p. < .01$). While our 1966 scores are comparable to those at other midwestern universities at that time, the 1970 scores are higher than those of any college group in 1966 and of a general sample (2). The Kent State events just prior to the last data collection undoubtedly increased a trend which was, however, already previously established. Any generalization from these data to a more general trend in society is of course speculative.

REFERENCES

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2. ROTTER, J. B. Generalized expectancies for internal versus external control of reinforcement. *Psychol. Monogr.*, 1966, 80(1) (Whole No. 609).

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