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A Study of the Correlation Between Coping Strategies and Locus of Control

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**A Study of the Correlation Between Coping Strategies
and Locus of Control.**

Joyce Everett, B.S.

An Abstract Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
Lindenwood University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Masters of Art

2000

Abstract

This study explores the relationships between gender, locus of control and coping strategies. The Ways of Coping Questionnaire and Levenson's IPC scale were distributed to employees at a social service agency and at a graduate school in the Midwestern United States. The study consisted of 26 males and 26 females who volunteered to participate by returning the completed instruments. A t-test was conducted, and gender differences in locus of control and coping strategies were analyzed. No significant differences were found between locus of control and gender and gender and coping strategies. A Pearson r correlation was completed to determine a direct relationship between how individuals cope and their locus of control. The results indicate a significant relationship between escape-avoidance coping when correlated with locus of control. Implications of the results, and gender differences are discussed.

**A Study of the Correlation Between Coping Strategies
and Locus Of Control.**

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University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Masters of Art

2000

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Dedication

To my parents, Joe & Jan Everett.

I am who I am today because of their constant love, support and understanding. Without them, I don't think I would have made it this far.

And to my grandparents,

I know they are looking down on me today, smiling.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

“Coping refers to the thoughts and acts used by individuals to manage the internal or external demands or both that tax or exceed his or her psychological resources” (Bouchard & Sanbourin, 1997, p. 410). Everyday individuals cope with different issues occurring in their lives, and each person differs in how he or she copes. Some individuals use single coping efforts, while others use multiple coping efforts in dealing with a given problem.

Folkman and Lazarus (1988) refer to coping as the process of changing behavioral and/or cognitive efforts that are viewed by the individual as stressful. Recurring strains may require people to cope in a way that seems to be different from the way they respond to sudden traumatic events.

Certain situations may cause a person to turn to outside forces to cope with the stressful situation, while others look to their inner thoughts and beliefs to deal with the situation. Those with an internal locus of control believe they have control over the events in their lives. For example, an individual who believes he or she has control over self, would be seen to have more of an internal locus of control. Yet according to Hoffman and Levy-Shiff (1994) this may cause personal anxiety. Those with an external locus of control believe that outside forces have the control. For example, one who is addicted to a mood-altering chemical

may turn to his or her drug of choice when problems in life become too extreme to handle and thus show an external orientation.

In 1973, Levenson proposed that locus of control may not be this simplistic and unidimensional. She believed the construct to be continuous and multidimensional, spanning three levels of locus of control: internal, powerful others, and chance. Each could simultaneously exist within an individual at varying degrees.

The belief that control resides internally or externally is distinguished from the expectation that good or bad outcomes will occur. Levenson (1974) thought that externality comprised two dimensions: luck and powerful others. Many believe that good outcomes depend on luck and that luck tends to go their way. Others believe that good outcomes depend on the actions of powerful others and that powerful others are on their side. Levenson (1973) developed her own scale, which tested for locus of control on these three levels, and then looked at the relationship among the levels, rather than attempting to place locus of control in a definitive category.

“The general belief that one has control over the outcomes of life situations as well as a belief that one has control over specific stressful encounters is correlated to one’s efforts and tenacity in coping with stressful encounters” (Henderson & Kelbey, 1992, p.126). Individuals who generally believe they are in control of the events of their lives (an internal locus of control orientation) experience more success in coping

with stressful situations than do individuals who attribute the outcomes of the events in their lives to outside sources such as fate or luck (Amrhein, Bond & Hamilton, 1999; Utsey & Ponterotto, 2000).

Statement of Purpose

The intention of this study is to explore the relationship between locus of control and coping. For the purpose of this study, locus of control will be defined according to Levenson's view, as a multidimensional construct, incorporating internality, powerful others and chance. Coping will be defined according to the Ways of Coping Questionnaire, which focuses on two general functions of coping, problem-focused and emotions focused. Coping and locus of control will be measured and then correlated against each other to determine if a significant relationship exists. Gender and coping along with gender and locus of control will be explored to determine if a significant relationship exists.

Statement of the Hypothesis

The primary research question is whether coping and locus of control are correlated. A question that is linked to this is whether or not gender affects how the individual copes with stressful situations, and whether or not there is a gender difference in locus of control. The null hypothesis is that they are not correlated. For this particular study, three hypotheses were explored.

- 1) Is there a significant gender difference in locus of control?

It was hypothesized that, there would be a significant difference between locus of control and gender. Following this, the null hypothesis was that there would be no significant difference between gender and locus of control.

2) Is there a significant gender difference in coping?

It was hypothesized that, there would be a significant difference between coping and gender. Following this, the null hypothesis was that there would be no significant difference between coping and gender.

3) Is there a correlation between coping and locus of control?

It was hypothesized that, there would be a significant correlation between locus of control and gender. Following this, the null hypothesis was that there is no significant correlation between coping and locus of control.

For this study, it was expected that those who score high on internal locus of control are more likely to use self-control when coping. It was also expected that those who score high on powerful others are more likely to use escape-avoidance strategies.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

The literature looked at is related to the study of coping, locus of control and how they correlate. The majority of the literature defines locus of control either by Levenson's multidimensional view, or Rotter's unidimensional view. The majority of literature defines coping strategies as Folkman and Lazarus (1988) have either problem-focused or emotion-focused types.

Locus of Control

Locus of Control is described as, "... the way a person perceives the relation between his or her own efforts and the outcome of an event" (Wenzel, 1993, p. 495). One of the earliest locus of control researchers, Julian Rotter (1966), believed that individuals have either an internal or external locus of control (LOC). People with a more internal LOC tend to believe that individual ability, effort, and self-reliance are the determinants of task outcomes. In contrast, those with a less internal, or external, LOC tend to attribute task outcomes to forces outside their control. Therefore, reinforcements following an action will be understood by individuals with a belief in external control as a direct consequence of luck, chance, or fate, whereas individuals with a belief in internal control will perceive these same reinforcements as being dependent on their own ability or behavior (Hong & Bertenstein, 1982).

For behavior change to occur, however, the reinforcement must be of value to the person. "People who have an internal locus of control (or sense of a personal control) seem to function more adaptively in many ways than do people who have an external locus of control" (Carver, 1997, p. 580) and hence may have a more adaptive coping strategy. They are more likely to be alert and gather information that bears directly on future behaviors.

Individuals with an internal locus of control experience reinforcements of value as more meaningful or influential to them because they believe they have control over reinforcements. To increase or decrease the reinforcements, they change their behavior. On the other hand, individuals with an external locus of control are less likely to change their behavior because they do not believe that changing their behavior would have an effect on the reinforcement. Instead, they believe that what happens to them is primarily due to luck, chance, fate, or powerful other forces (Hong & Bartenstein, 1982).

"Rotter (1966) hypothesized that there are individual differences in the locus of control variable, that locus of control is important in comprehending learning processes, and that locus of control influences behavior in many situations" (Ang & Chang, 1999, p. 527). Baron and Eisman (1996) noted that individuals who believe that they can control events would be less affected by disaster than individuals who do not

believe they can control outcomes as well as those who have lost the belief in their ability to prevent disaster.

Gender differences in LOC

Research concerning the relationship between locus of control and gender has produced differing results. Either no differences are found, or women are found to be more external than men. A study by Bishop and Soleman (1989) looked at locus of control at varying points in men's and women's careers. Using Rotter's I-E scale, older women (over the age 29) were found to be more external than their male counterparts. Researchers speculated that this difference may be attributed to the older women's experience in the workforce, and this experience has taught them how to cope with the necessity of submitting to male supervisors in order to be successful.

A study by Lufi and Tenenbaum (1993) looked at locus of control of children from kibbutz. "Locus of control (LOC), anxiety, and persistence in everyday life events are personality traits that are believed to be strongly affected by the kibbutz child-rearing system" (p. 195). Using the LOC for children scale (Nowicki & Strickland, 1973) the means indicated that on average, city children were more externally oriented than were their kibbutz counterparts. "The city girls, however, were the most externally oriented, while kibbutz girls the most internal, with no difference between boys in the city and kibbutz" (p. 196). The results indicate that children of the kibbutz perceived that they took more control

over everyday events more than their city counterparts. This difference was attributed mainly to gender characteristics, that is, “girls from the city were most external and girls of the kibbutz most internal in their perception of taking responsibility over life events” (p. 197).

Burger and Solano (1994) studied undergraduate students over a 10-year period of time. They reported that female scores on the Desirability of Control Scale, increased over time, whereas the males scores did not significantly differ. The author speculated that the feminine increase for control might be a result of changes in society, for example, the increase in the number of women in the workforce. Therefore women in this study are seen as having an increase in desire of control, which can be attributed to using positive coping strategies, by completing tasks under the supervision of a male counterpart.

Conversely, DeBrabander and Bome (1990) found that females scored higher externally than the male undergraduate students when administered the Rotter I-E Scale. The authors suggested the possibility, based on their statistics, that the Rotter scale does not accurately measure the female understanding of control. In other words, they believe females may answer questions in what they perceive as the socially acceptable way, therefore reflecting greater dependence and helplessness. “Those answers are a reflection of the general perception that in most societies women are more dependent than men on external factors” (p. 272). The authors propose that the Rotter scale may have a different meaning for

women than it does for men. In other words, items on the Rotter scale may be leading women to answer externally than perhaps they actually are. Secondly, not having external distinctions, such as powerful others or chance, fed into the external items may be masking the item's intent.

The Rotter scale was administered by Smith, Dugan, and Trompenaars (1997) to male and female business organization employees, analyzing locus of control, gender and occupational status. Results showed females and lower-status employees tend to score more externally. Secondly, the results found that women on all levels were more likely to look at chance as a controlling factor than were their male counterpart.

Jenson, Olsen, and Hughes (1990) hypothesized that members of a lower class, females and the elderly would have a more external perception of locus of control. The subjects were chosen from nine Western European countries in an attempt to discern whether or not the society in which one lives affects locus of control. They developed their own locus of control instrument, based on Rotter's definition. The results supported their theory that lower class, females and the elderly had a more external LOC.

Bhattacharya and Husain (1985) tested locus of control in undergraduate students in India and London. They administered the Levenson scale, finding that females were more external than males. This outcome could be based on how males are reared differently from females.

The researchers stated, "Boys are more internally controlled since they are supposed to face more challenging situations in life" (p. 170).

Wenzel (1993) used Levenson's scale to examine the relationship between locus of control and gender on participants in a job-training program. In this study, it was hypothesized that women, more often than men, believe that powerful others exert control over their lives. However, results did not show this to be true. No gender differences were found.

Hong and Bartensein (1982) also used Levenson's IPC scale to test locus of control in Australian high school students. No gender differences were found. Here the researchers hypothesized that this could have been due to the fact that the students were from same-sex schools. Thus their coping strategies were similar, as there was not competition between girls and boys and students were seen as having more of an internal LOC.

Coping

"Coping strategies are behaviors that occur after stressors have been engaged" (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978, p. 5). Although the use of coping strategies can be an important component of adjustment, acquiring and developing sufficient levels of coping resources are important because of the perceptual nature of stress. Individuals who perceive themselves as having adequate levels of coping resources are less likely to become stressed in the first place, because they tend to view demands as healthy challenges rather than unpleasant stressors (Greenglass & Burke, 1991). Once an individual has become stressed, coping resources also serve as the

foundation for coping strategies used to lessen or negate the costs of dealing with demands (Wheaton, 1983).

Stress is defined as “a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well being” (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988, p. 6). Coping is defined as “constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and /or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person” (Folkman, 1984, p. 841). Managing demands may include attempts to master the environment or to minimize, avoid, tolerate, or accept stressful conditions.

“Stress is inevitable, and reaction to stress, or coping behavior, may distinguish successful from unsuccessful people” (Ogus, 1992, p. 113). How people cope with stress depends on how they look at themselves. Researchers have used various self-related constructs to explain why and how people cope differently, and that coping behavior is affected by the way people view themselves as well as by the way they view stress. The way that people view stress was found to be more influential than the actual stress itself (Folkman, 1984).

According to Poon and Lau (1999), coping behavior is characterized by planning for problem solving and positive appraisal, seeking social support and escape-avoidance. People who use the coping style of planning for problem solving have an internal mobilization,

whereas someone who is more adapted to seek social support is viewed as having an external mobilization. “Copers of this style try to talk to someone about their problems or try to ask for help. Possibly, the mobilization of external coping resources occurs when internal resources are insufficient and external resources are accessible” (p. 645).

Individuals who escape or avoid situations refuse to accept reality, or avoid being with people.

The underlying objective of coping is to turn negative events into positive ones. Therefore, how people look at positive life events is also important in the coping process. “Even for people with desirable coping styles, internal coping resources may sometimes be inadequate, and seeking other’s support may still be necessary” (Poon & Lau, 1999, p. 648).

Bar-Tar and Spitzer (1994) suggested that it is possible to conceptualize reappraisal as the comparison between the use of particular coping strategies and the perception of their helplessness. The more an individual uses coping strategies, the more control over the situation he or she has. Therefore, in all likelihood, these reappraisals reduce psychological distress. If, on the other hand, their coping efforts seem ineffective, then individuals may understand both the threat posed by the situation and their difficulty in coping with it. In this case, individual stress as well as psychological distress can be expected to increase. “A wide variety of research suggests that coping or problem-solving activities

play a role in physical and psychological well-being when people are confronted with negative or stressful event” (Cook & Heppner, 1997 p. 906).

Gender Differences in Coping

Folkman and Lazarus (1988) support gender differences in coping with stressful encounters, and these differences are often confounded by differences in the types of stressors encountered. Bar-Tel and Spitzer (1999) found that men use problem-focused coping and direction, whereas women are more likely to seek social support and to focus on and vent emotions. In general, men and women tend to use different coping methods.

Weist, Freedman, Paskewitz, Proescher and Flaherty (1995), found that girls use problem-focused coping, whereas boys tended to use social support when dealing with stress. Girls were found to use social support when facing problems at school, while boys tend to confront the situation. In a study looking at married couples, women were viewed as seeking social support, whereas men used escape-avoidance when dealing with marital conflict (Bowman, 1990).

Utsey and Ponterotto (2000), also found gender differences to exist. Females utilize social support coping strategies, while males avoid situations. The authors suggested that the differences between males and females and the certain ways of coping might be related to both self-esteem and satisfaction with life.

LOC and Coping

According to research done by Poon and Lau (1999), there is a relationship between gender, locus of control and coping. Boys who scored high on internal locus of control tended to use planful problem solving and positive appraisal. A correlation was found between sex and seeking social support. Students with high external locus of control tended to seek more social support when they faced problems. Students who scored low on powerful others scale tended to use the escape-avoidance strategy when coping with stress. "Escape-avoidance was also characterized by great self-concept discrepancy because nearly all structure coefficients of the discrepancy variables were positive" (p. 644).

In a study with urban youth experiencing stress, the results indicated that, "locus of control and coping serve important functions in mediating or moderating psychological and social outcomes for inner city children and adolescents" (Weist et al., 1995 p. 707). Elliot (1996) supported his hypothesis that children who have self-control are more internal, whereas those who were external tended to be more self-efficient.

Roback, Rabin and Chapman (1988) hypothesized that they would find no gender differences between male and female medical students. The author's felt that these females, as medical students, would utilize needed coping strategies to adjust to the overwhelming experience of medical school. The Rotter scale was administered to the male and female students, and, contrary to their hypothesis, the females score significantly

higher externally than the males. The authors postulated that the female medical students may have initially been internal, but upon entering medical school and becoming a minority, they found it more functional to adopt an external position.

In summary, past research comparing locus of control with gender, gender with coping, and coping and locus of control has produced varied results. In gender comparisons, when there are differences, usually males are found to be more internal. In coping comparisons, when there are differences, women tend to utilize social seeking coping strategies, while men usually escape or avoid situations. Locus of control and coping comparisons, when there are differences, internalized males use planful problem solving and positive reappraisal strategies.

There is also some debate on which instrument, Levenson's or Rotter's, is the most effective in determining gender in the locus of control construct. Most studies that have found gender differences have used Rotter, although most research finds Levenson's approach more beneficial to use when investigating gender differences. Due to the differing array of results that have come from the studies of Locus of Control and coping, further study is warranted.

Most studies investigating coping and locus of control ultimately focus on women as being more external. Even though fewer studies find gender differences when Levenson's scale is used, it is believed to better represent the feminine measure of control. It should be restated that the

studies using Levenson that found no differences tested very specific populations. This could have biased the results. Therefore, it would be beneficial to use Levenson's scale and the Ways of Coping questionnaire on a group of individuals encompassing males and females, and a wide variety of ages, to see if coping styles in women differ from those of males.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Participants

Subjects for this study were drawn from a population of individuals who were enrolled in a graduate program or who were working at a social service agency in the Mid-Western United States. Packets, including the instruments and a letter of explanation of the study were distributed to 70 subjects within the graduate program and social service agency (See Appendix). Fifty-two were returned. All participation was completely voluntary.

The sample included 26 males and 26 females, whose age ranged from 18-63, with the mean age 35.5. Of the twenty-six males in the sample, the ages ranged from 18-63. The mean age was 32.77. Of the twenty-six females in the sample, the ages ranged from 21-60. The mean age was 38.23.

For the purpose of this study, convenient sampling was used. Concerns with regard to bias in the sample were that all individuals were either enrolled in a graduate program or currently employed in the social services field, and only those who were motivated to participate in the study did so.

Instruments

The Ways of Coping Questionnaire

The Ways of Coping Questionnaire is a 66-item instrument, which explores the coping style used by individuals when dealing with stress. Respondents are asked to think of the most stressful situation they have experienced in the past week and to rate themselves on a 4 point Likert scale to indicate the frequency with which they use each strategy ranging from 0 (does not apply or not used) to 3 (used a great deal). (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988)

Responses that are obtained by individuals on the Ways of Coping Questionnaire are scored on eight sub-scales, representing eight different styles of coping; 1) Confrontation describes aggressive efforts to alter the situation. 2) Distancing describes cognitive efforts to detach oneself and to minimize the significance of the event. 3) Self-control deals with efforts to regulate one's feelings and actions. 4) Seeking social support describes efforts to obtain informational, tangible, and emotional support. 5) Accepting responsibility acknowledges one's role in the problem and attempts to rectify the situation. 6) Escape-avoidance describes wishful thinking or escaping behaviors. 7) Planful problem solving describes deliberate, analytic problem-focused efforts to remedy the situation. 8) Positive reappraisal describes efforts to create positive meaning through personal growth (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988). These eight dimensions measure two general functions of coping. Problem-focused coping is

aimed at doing something to change the stressful situation for the better, whereas emotion-focused coping is aimed at regulating emotional distress.

There are two different methods for scoring the Ways of Coping Questionnaire. In the first method, raw scores are the sum of the subject's responses to items which comprise a given scale. In the second method, relative scores are computed which describe the contribution of each coping scale relative to all the scores combined. "The decision as to which set of scores to use depends on the information desired. Raw scores describe coping effort for each of the eight types of coping, whereas relative scores describe the proportion of effort represented by each type of coping" (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988, p. 15). For this particular study, the raw scores were used from each of the respondents. The higher the score the more often this particular coping style was used, and the lower the score the less used or needed was the coping style. The Ways of Coping Questionnaire is easy to administer and easy to score.

Internal consistency estimates of coping measures are generally low compared to the traditionally acceptable range. The Ways of Coping Questionnaire alphas range from .61 to .79 for all eight scales. Consistency estimates are not very strong, due to the small number of items in each scale. The questionnaire has face validity since the strategies described are those that individuals have reported to cope with demands of stressful situations. Evidence of construct validity is found in the fact that the results are consistent with the theoretical predictions,

namely, that: (1) coping consists of both problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies, and (2) coping is a process. That is, how people cope varies in relation to the demands and constraints of the context and also in relation to changes in those demands and constraints as an encounter unfolds (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988).

People vary their coping efforts depending on the situation. In this particular study, the situation that is causing stress in one's life is not the focus but how one copes with one's stress level and whether or not there is a relationship between locus of control and coping strategy.

The Levenson IPC Scale

The Levenson IPC scale is a 24-item instrument used to measure locus of control. Respondents are asked to answer each question according to a six-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 6 = strongly agree). These twenty-four statements are divided into three separate eight-item scales, internal, powerful others, and chance. The numeric answers for each of the three scales will be added, producing a total score for each scale. The scale yielding the highest score will then be interpreted as the domain that exerts the most influence for the respondent (Levenson, 1973).

The Levenson's IPC scale is easy to administer and easy to score. An individual who scores high on the internal scale expects to have control over his or her own life. A high score on the powerful others scale represent that an individual expects powerful others to have control over

his or her life. The chance scale indicates that an individual with a high score expects chance or luck to have control of his or her life (Levenson, 1974).

Internal consistency reliabilities for each scale range from .60 to .85 for the internal, .62 to .91 for powerful others, and .64 to .79 for chance (Hong & Bartenstein, 1982). Test-retest reliabilities over a one-week period were .64 for internal, .74 for powerful others, and .78 for chance (Levenson, 1974). Moderate correlation was found between the powerful others and chance scales; however, they negatively correlated to the internal scale (Levenson, 1974).

Procedure

In May and June of 2000, test packets were distributed to graduate students enrolled in the counseling program at a university in the Mid-Western United States, and also distributed to a local social service agency. Willing participants were asked to complete the instruments and return them in a sealed envelope by a specific date. The students at the university filled out their questionnaires and returned them in a sealed envelope to the teacher. At the social service agency, a box was set up for individuals to place the surveys once they had completed the questionnaire. Those individuals who chose not to participate were also encouraged to return the questionnaires to the box. The return box was centrally located for all employees and the surveys were collected at the

end of each business day. This method of return was chosen so that each subject's choices remained anonymous.

Data Analysis

- 1) Is there a significant gender difference in locus of control?

It was hypothesized that, there would be a significant difference between locus of control and gender. Following this, the null hypothesis was that there would be no significant difference between gender and locus of control. The test of significance used for hypothesis # 1 is the t-test. A t-test was conducted to determine whether or not there is a significant mean difference between genders in each of the three subscales using Levenson's IPC Scale (internal, powerful others, and chance). The probability is $p < 0.05$; the smaller the p-value, the more confidence that there is a gender difference in locus of control.

- 2) Is there a significant gender difference in coping?

It was hypothesized that, there would be a significant difference between coping and gender. Following this, the null hypothesis was that there would be no significant difference between coping and gender. The test of significance used for hypothesis # 2 is the t-test. A t-test was conducted to determine whether or not there is a significant gender difference in each of the eight subscales using Lazarus and Folkman's Ways of Coping Questionnaire (confrontation, distancing, self-control, seeking social support, accepting responsibility, escape-avoidance, planful problem

solving and positive reappraisal). The probability is $p < 0.05$; the smaller the p-value, the more confidence that there is gender difference in coping.

3) Is there a correlation between coping and locus of control?

It was hypothesized that, there would be a significant correlation between locus of control and gender. Following this, the null hypothesis was that there is no significant correlation between coping and locus of control.

Both instruments are measured at an interval level; therefore, the test of significance used for hypothesis # 3 is the Pearson r. The Pearson r was conducted to determine whether or nor there is a correlation between how individuals cope and their locus of control.

CHAPTER 4

Results

Locus of Control and Gender

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations for the three locus of control groups by gender. A t-test was run to determine whether or not there would be a significant mean difference between males and females in each of the three subscales. As shown in Table 1, a significant mean difference was not found between locus of control and gender.

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and t Values for the Three Locus of ControlSubscales by Gender

LOC Subscale	<u>Males</u>			<u>Females</u>			t
	n	Mean	SD	n	Mean	SD	
Internal	26	36.23	4.03	26	37.69	6.18	-1.010
PO	26	23.38	6.05	26	19.76	5.51	2.252
Chance	26	19.76	7.27	26	20.80	6.14	-.557

The null hypothesis was that there would be no significant mean difference between locus of control and gender. These results indicate failure to reject the null hypothesis, in that a significant mean difference was not found between LOC and gender.

Coping and Gender

Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations for the eight subscales of coping by gender. A t-test was run to determine whether or not there would be a significant mean difference between males and females in each of the eight subscales. A significant mean difference was not found between gender and coping.

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations, and t Values for the Eight Coping Subscales by Gender

Coping Subscale	<u>Males</u>			<u>Females</u>			t
	n	Mean	SD	n	Mean	SD	
Confrontive	26	6.92	3.41	26	6.65	3.38	.286
Distancing	26	6.15	2.74	26	5.07	2.86	1.388
Self-control	26	10.42	3.20	26	9.31	4.14	1.087
Social Support	26	8.38	4.99	26	9.11	3.48	-.612
Accept Response	26	4.46	2.87	26	4.11	2.72	.446
Escape-avoid	26	7.11	6.15	26	5.61	4.91	.972
Planful Problem	26	9.19	4.39	26	10.38	3.82	-1.045
+ Reappraisal	26	9.76	5.21	26	10.00	4.84	-.165

The null hypothesis was that there would be no significant mean difference between coping and gender. The results indicate failure to

reject the null hypothesis, in that a significant mean difference was not found between coping and gender.

Locus of Control and Coping

Table 3 shows the correlation between LOC and Coping. The Pearson r correlation was run to determine whether or not there would be a significant correlation between LOC and coping. A significant difference was found for escape-avoidance coping and internal locus of control, with a correlation significant at the 0.05 level. Also, shown in table 3 a correlation was found at the significance level of 0.01 for powerful others and chance when correlated with escape-avoidance coping. Internal LOC also correlated significantly with planful problem solving and positive reappraisal coping strategies, with a significant correlation at the 0.05 levels.

Table 3

Pearson Correlation between the Three Subscales of LOC and the EightCoping Subscales

Coping	<u>Internal</u>		<u>Powerful Others</u>		<u>Chance</u>	
	r	Sig. (p)	r	Sig. (p)	r	Sig. (p)
Confront	-.071	.618	.200	.155	.067	.635
Distant	-.074	.601	.130	.358	.136	.337
Control	.161	.254	.103	.467	.009	.951
Support	.056	.695	.077	.586	.066	.644
Accept	-.013	.928	.156	.271	.163	.250
Escape	-.285*	.040	.583**	.000	.529**	.000
Planful	.288*	.039	-.202	.152	-.212	.132
Reappraisal	.344*	.012	-.133	.346	-.221	.115

* correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

** correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The null hypothesis was that there would be no significant correlation between coping and locus of control. These results indicate, partial rejection of the null, in that a significant correlation 0.01 was found for powerful others and chance when correlated with escape-avoidance coping. Also, a significant correlation at the 0.05 level was found between internal locus of control and the following coping subscales; escape-avoidance, planful problem solving and positive reappraisal.

For this study, it was expected that those who scored high on internal LOC were more likely to use self-control when coping; however, according to the results there was not a significant correlation to agree with this expectancy. Also, it was expected that those who score high on powerful others are more likely to use escape-avoidance strategies, which was proven with a significant correlation at the 0.01 level ($r = .583$).

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

Locus of Control and Gender

The first hypothesis in this study was that there would be a significant mean difference between locus of control and gender. However, no support was found as men and women tended to not differ from one LOC scale to the other. Therefore, it cannot be stated that men or women are more internal or external than their counterpart.

These findings are different from those discussed in the literature review. Older women were found to be more external (Bishop & Eisman, 1989). DeBrabander and Bome (1990) found that females scored higher externally than males. "When differences are found, quite often the difference is within the external, or powerful others and chance, subscale" (Smith, Dugan & Trompanaars, 1997, p. 70). Looking at the mean differences between gender and powerful others, the difference is obvious, however, there was no significance found. Bhattacharya and Husain (1985), who found males to be more internal and females more external, speculate that it is related to males and females being socialized to want different levels of control. However, as mentioned earlier, this study tested a limited subject group.

Coping and Gender

The second hypothesis in this study was that there would be a significant mean difference between coping and gender. No support was

found, as men and women did not significantly differ in response to coping with stressful situations. Therefore, it cannot be stated that males or females cope differently than their counterpart.

Research was limited in looking at the differences between coping and gender. The results are different from those discussed. According to the literature, (Bar-Tel & Spitzer, 1999; Weist, et. al., 1995) women tend to seek social support, while men's coping strategies vary more depending on the situation.

The questionnaire that was used for this present study could have been the cause of no significant differences. The results were obtained from each individual's response to the questions based on their own stressful encounter.

Locus of Control and Coping

The third hypothesis partially was supported by the literature and the results from this study. Therefore, it can be stated that individuals in this study, dealing or coping with stress more often use escape-avoidance strategies.

The results differ from the literature, (Poon & Lau, 1999) in the fact that more often escape-avoidance strategies were used when an individual was more external. Therefore, for this particular study, several individuals responded to questions that result in a correlation between their locus of control and escape-avoidance coping. The most important

reason for this would be the way that individuals define their stressful encounters.

Limitations

Finding no significant differences may have to do with the manner in which subjects were selected for the survey. Because members of the population were given the choice to participate in the task, only those members who wished to participate did so. Using a larger sample, and one not limited to graduate students and employees from a social service agency, would make it easier to generalize the results to a larger population. It should be mentioned that there was limited racial differences and the way that individuals defined their stressful encounter, may have effected the results of this study.

Recommendations

Although, vast arrays of results were found when researching these topics, further research is needed. It appears that many of the past studies done comparing locus of control with gender or coping are limited and the results cannot be generalized. A series of large, random studies comparing gender and coping with Levenson's locus of control construct may produce some truly workable results that would go along way in helping to better understand these constructs and their relationships.

Appendix 1

Letter of Explanation for the Study

Dear Participant,

I am a graduate student at Lindenwood University. To complete my graduate work and obtain my Master of Arts degree in Professional Counseling, I am required to conduct a research study. I have chosen to conduct a study exploring possible relationships between coping and locus of control. Your participation in my study would be greatly appreciated. By completing the enclosed materials, you would be granting your permission for me to use your responses in this study. The results of this study will be on file in the Lindenwood University Library following my completion.

No names are required; therefore your results will remain anonymous. Instructions are attached to each of the instruments. If you chose to participate, please complete the enclosed materials, and then return them to the original envelope and place in the completed box.

Your participation in this study is optional, and your choice to participate or not will remain anonymous. Thank you in advance for your participation.

Sincerely,

Joyce Everett

Appendix 2

Demographics

Today's Date _____

1. How old are you? _____

2. What is your gender? Check one:

_____ male _____ female

3. What is your race? Check one:

Caucasian American _____ African American _____

Asian American _____ Hispanic American _____

Native American _____ Bi-Racial _____

Other _____

Appendix 3

The Levenson IPC Scale

- 1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Somewhat disagree 3 = Slightly disagree
 4 = Slightly agree 5 = Somewhat agree 6 = Strongly agree
1. Whether or not I get to be the leader depends on my ability 1 2 3 4 5 6
 2. To a great extent my life is controlled by accidental happenings 1 2 3 4 5 6
 3. I feel like what happens in my life is mostly determined by powerful people 1 2 3 4 5 6
 4. Whether or not I get into a car accident depends mostly on how good a driver I am. 1 2 3 4 5 6
 5. When I make plans, I am almost certain to make them work. 1 2 3 4 5 6
 6. Often there is no chance of protecting my personal interest from bad luck happenings. 1 2 3 4 5 6
 7. When I get what I want, it is usually because I'm lucky. 1 2 3 4 5 6
 8. Although I might have good ability, I will not be given leadership responsibility without appealing to those in positions of power. 1 2 3 4 5 6
 9. How many friends I have depends on how nice a person I am. 1 2 3 4 5 6
 10. I have often found that what is going to happen will happen. 1 2 3 4 5 6
 11. My life is chiefly controlled by powerful other. 1 2 3 4 5 6
 12. Whether or not I get into a car accident is mostly a matter of luck. 1 2 3 4 5 6
 13. People like myself have very little chance of protecting our personal interests when they conflict with those of a strong pressure group. 1 2 3 4 5 6
 14. It's not always wise for me to plan too far ahead because many things turn out to be a matter of good or bad fortune. 1 2 3 4 5 6
 15. Getting what I want requires pleasing those people above me. 1 2 3 4 5 6
 16. Whether or not I get to be a leader depends on whether I'm lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time. 1 2 3 4 5 6

The Levenson IPC Scale (continued)

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Somewhat disagree 3 = Slightly disagree
 4 = Slightly agree 5 = Somewhat agree 6 = Strongly agree

17. If important people were to decide they didn't like me,
 I probably wouldn't make many friends. 1 2 3 4 5 6
18. I can pretty much determine what will happen in my life. 1 2 3 4 5 6
19. I am usually able to protect my personal interests. 1 2 3 4 5 6
20. Whether or not I get into a car accident depends mostly
 on the other driver. 1 2 3 4 5 6
21. When I get what I want, it's usually because I worked hard for it. 1 2 3 4 5 6
22. In order to have my plans work, I make sure that they fit in with the
 desires of people who have power over me. 1 2 3 4 5 6
23. My life is determined by my own actions. 1 2 3 4 5 6
24. It's chiefly a matter of fate whether or not I have a few friends
 or many friends. 1 2 3 4 5 6

Appendix 4

Permission to make copies

**Ways of Coping Questionnaire
Test Booklet****Permission to reproduce up to
200 copies for one year starting
from date of purchase:
June 21, 1999**

Research Edition

Susan Folkman, Ph.D.

Richard S. Lazarus, Ph.D.

Distributed by **MIND GARDEN**

1690 Woodside Road Suite 202, Redwood City California 94061 (650) 261-3500

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The Ways of Coping Questionnaire

0 = Does not apply or not used 1 = Used somewhat 2 = Used quite a bit 3 = Used a great deal

- | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I just concentrated on what I had to do next – the next step. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 2. I tried to analyze the problem in order to understand it better. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 3. I turned to work or another activity to take my mind off things. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4. I felt that time would have made a difference –
the only thing was to wait. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 5. I bargained or compromised to get something positive
from the situation. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 6. I did something that I didn't think would work,
but at least I was doing something. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 7. I tried to get the person responsible to change his or her mind. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 8. I talked to someone to find out more about the situation. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 9. I criticized or lectured myself. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 10. I tried not to burn my bridges, but leave things open somewhat. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 11. I hoped for a miracle. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 12. I went along with fate; sometimes I just have bad luck. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 13. I went on as if nothing had happened. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 14. I tried to keep my feelings to myself. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 15. I looked for the silver lining, so to speak;
I tried to look on the bright side of things. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 16. I slept more than usual. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 17. I expressed anger to the person(s) who caused the problem. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 18. I accepted sympathy and understanding from someone. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 19. I told myself things that helped me feel better. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 20. I was inspired to do something creative about the problem. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 21. I tried to forget the whole thing. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 22. I got professional help. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |

0 = Does not apply or not used 1 = Used somewhat 2 = Used quite a bit 3 = Used a great deal

- | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 23. I changed or grew as a person. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 24. I waited to see what would happen before doing anything. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 25. I apologized or did something to make up. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 26. I made a plan of action and followed it. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 27. I accepted the next best thing to what I wanted. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 28. I let my feelings out somehow. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 29. I realized that I had brought the problem on myself. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 30. I came out of the experience better than when I went in. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 31. I talked to someone who could do something concrete
about the problem. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 32. I tried to get away from it for a while by resting or taking a vacation. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 33. I tried to make myself feel better by eating, drinking,
smoking, using drugs, or medications, etc. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 34. I took a big chance or did something very risky
to solve the problem. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 35. I tried not to act too hastily or follow my first hunch. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 36. I found new faith. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 37. I maintained my pride and kept a stiff upper lip. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 38. I rediscovered what is important in life. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 39. I changed something so things would turn out all right. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 40. I generally avoided being with people. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 41. I didn't let it get to me; I refused to think too much about it. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 42. I asked advice from a relative or friend I respected. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 43. I kept others from knowing how bad things were. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 44. I made light of the situation; I refused to get too serious about it. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |

Go on to next page

0 = Does not apply or not used 1 = Used somewhat 2 = Used quite a bit 3 = Used a great deal

- | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 45. I talked to someone about how I was feeling..... | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 46. I stood my ground and fought for what I wanted..... | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 47. I took it out on other people..... | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 48. I drew on my past experiences; I was in a similar situation before... .. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 49. I knew what had to be done, so I doubled my efforts
to make things work..... | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 50. I refused to believe that it had happened..... | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 51. I promised myself that things would be different next time..... | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 52. I came up with a couple of different solutions to the problem..... | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 53. I accepted the situation, since nothing could be done..... | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 54. I tried to keep my feeling about the problem from interfering
with other things..... | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 55. I wished that I could change what had happened or how I felt..... | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 56. I changed something about myself..... | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 57. I daydreamed or imagined a better time or place
than the one I was in..... | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 58. I wished that the situation would go away or somehow
be over with..... | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 59. I had fantasies or wishes about how things might turn out..... | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 60. I prayed..... | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 61. I prepared myself for the worst..... | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 62. I went over in my mind what I would say or do..... | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 63. I thought about how a person I admire would handle
this situation and used that as a model..... | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 64. I tried to see things from the other person's point of view..... | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 65. I reminded myself how much worse things could be..... | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 66. I jogged or exercised..... | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |

Stop Here.

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