

An Abstract of the Thesis of

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Title: Hopelessness and Locus of Control in Relation to Success on Parole

Abstract approved: Cooper B. Holmes

This study sought to determine any relationship that might exist between parolees' degree of hopelessness and their subsequent success on parole. Secondly, the relationship between locus of control orientation and success on parole was examined. To assess these variables, the Beck Hopelessness Scale and the Adult Nowicki-Strickland Internal External scale were administered to 50 participants. The comparison groups were comprised of the upper and lower 30% of scorers on each scale. It was hypothesized that those individuals with greater degrees of hopelessness and an external locus of control would be less successful on parole than those with lesser degrees of hopelessness and an internal locus of control. Success on parole was measured by the average number of parole violations received each month as determined by the chronological notes kept by individual parole officers. Two one-way analyses of variance revealed there were no significant differences between groups of high vs. low degrees of hopelessness or between groups of external vs. internal control with regard to success on parole. It is proposed that differences between the groups were not found because, while locus of control and hopelessness may be important individual psychological factors, neither of them take into account social support systems deemed necessary for desistance by past researchers. Furthermore, additional research is suggested; it is recommended that another method for assessing success on parole be used. The current study found that differences in the frequency of data entries and the amount of detail kept by each parole officer undermined the effort to gather clear, objective data.

**Hopelessness and Locus of Control  
in Relation to Success on Parole**

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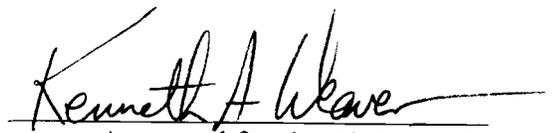
**A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Division of Psychology and Special Education  
EMPORIA STATE UNIVERSITY**

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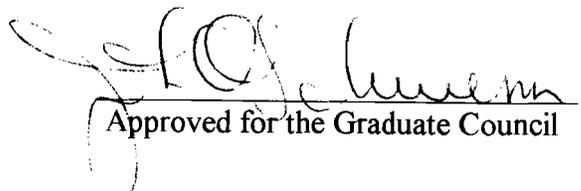
**In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements of the Degree  
Master of Science**

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**by  
Laura Turner-Gering  
May 1997**



Approved for the Division of  
Psychology and Special Education



Approved for the Graduate Council

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## Chapter I

### Introduction

It is a well known fact that prisons in the United States are becoming overcrowded. The crime rate is ever increasing and new methods have been developed to monitor offenders within society due to insufficient space in the prison system. Unfortunately, many of those within the penal system are re-offenders. Rates of recidivism are extremely high among offenders, indicating the lack of rehabilitation occurring within the prisons.

Many offenders start their criminal career as adolescents. In most cases, they are continuing a pattern that has emerged within the family system. Criminal activity has been present throughout generations and spending time in prison is an accepted part of life: throughout a child's life, parents, grandparents, and siblings may have been sporadically absent from the home due to time spent incarcerated.

Offenders often are involved with drugs; this may include both use and sales. Many crimes are committed while under the influence of drugs or for the purpose of obtaining drugs. Violent crimes committed against other drug offenders to protect sales markets are common. Many offenders have been exposed to drugs throughout their childhood; drugs have become a way of life. Some offenders experience the effects of drugs even before birth. They are born addicted to various drugs due to their mother's substance use during pregnancy. This may increase their vulnerability for drug use throughout their lives. In addition, parents who use drugs typically do not employ effective parenting skills, and at the very least, children are often neglected.

Another aspect of life for many offenders is poverty. Often the product of single parent families, with several siblings, offenders lack an organized environment in which to develop. Resources are unavailable to them and they learn to adapt in socially unacceptable ways. Society has often treated these future offenders as social "misfits" and they in turn, fulfill these expectations.

## Literature Review

The controversy regarding determinism versus free will has been long standing. While no clear consensus has been reached regarding the degree of determinism and free will, offenders frequently state that the course of their life has been predetermined. Bayse, Allgood, and Van Wyk (1992) cited occasions in which offenders who viewed control as external referred to higher powers such as God in the determination of their future. In response, these researchers suggested Biblical references to Exodus 4, II Samuel 11, and Mark 14. These instances are the slaying of the Egyptian by Moses, adultery committed by David, and the betrayal of Jesus committed by Judas. These examples were used to challenge the naive implication that God has predetermined offenders' futures and is the source of their behavior. Bayse, et al. explained that God allowed the choice to be made, but emphasized that the behavior was followed by a naturally occurring consequence. Many times, offenders view death as the individual's "time to go." They fail to recognize that although death is imminent, individual choices can influence the time of death. Subtle changes in lifestyle pertaining to such areas as diet and exercise can significantly increase the expected life span. More obvious behaviors in which offending populations often engage include events such as drive-by shootings and excessive drug use. These behaviors significantly increase the probability of injury and even death. For instance, gang membership increases the number of violent acts in which one is involved (e.g., fights, shootings, stabbings). Criminal behavior increases the probability that one will become involved in violence. Many injuries and deaths can be prevented by individuals making good decisions about their behavior.

Locus of control is one measurable trait that addresses the degree to which individuals feel responsible for their circumstances in life. Embracing a free will perspective are those who adopt an internal locus of control. On the other hand, viewing life as controlled by external factors (e.g., luck, fate, higher powers, powerful others) represents an external

locus of control; individual choices are thought to be irrelevant to the consequences that follow.

Locus of Control. The degree of control perceived in one's life is referred to as locus of control. This construct was developed by Rotter (1966) who conceptualized perceptions of control as being internally or externally oriented. This perception was viewed as a matter of degree rather than as a dichotomous relationship. Locus of control has become a widely accepted concept and various tests have evolved to ascertain this trait in individuals. Rotter argued that the general perception of control may not apply to all situations equally and each situation should be assessed individually.

In concordance with this theory, Pugh (1992) developed the Prison Locus of Control Scale for use with incarcerated populations. Using a sample of male inmates from a medium security prison, Pugh developed a 20-item questionnaire to assess locus of control. The score is determined by the number of externally oriented responses and may vary from 0-20. Low scores indicate internal locus of control while high scores are indicative of external control. Pugh found the scale measured four dimensions of control: powerful others, predictability, self efficacy, and a fourth unidentified factor (Factor 4). He further revised this instrument by discarding items that did not contribute to the incremental validity of the scale (Pugh, 1994). Validating the Prison Locus of Control Scale with other instruments, Pugh found inmates' scores correlated as predicted with other construct measurements:  $r = -.68$  with prison control;  $r = +.74$  with perceived stress;  $r = +.69$  with general contentment;  $r = +.53$  with State-Anger; and  $r = +.57$  with Trait-Anger. Each of these correlations was significant ( $p < .001$ ). Other studies indicated comparable results. MacKenzie and Goodstein (1986) found internally oriented inmates experienced fewer problems associated with incarceration and had better problem solving skills. Additionally, they found recidivism rates were lower for these inmates. Further analysis indicated internally oriented inmates had fewer stress related problems. Bayse et al. (1992) found similar results. Their study indicated inmates with perceptions of internal

control demonstrated greater learning about the attainment of parole than those with perceptions of external control. Stronger internal control therefore leads to greater potential for effectiveness in the social environment. Ultimately, the result is increased success and personal satisfaction.

Zamble and Porporino (1988) also developed a prison specific measure of locus of control based on the assumption that inmates' perceptions are significantly different than those of non-offenders. The degree to which locus of control remained constant after release from prison was not reported. As suggested by Rotter (1966), locus of control may be situation specific. Logically, an external locus of control may be more pronounced in a prison setting where opportunities for offenders to make choices regarding their futures are limited. It is important to increase our knowledge regarding the extent to which these individuals continue to embrace an external locus of control after release from prison.

The Bureau of Justice statistics (cited in Hunter, 1994) indicated many prisoners were drug users at the time of their arrest. In fact, the rate of drug use was seven times that found in the general population. In addition, many crimes were drug related offenses; more than one third of crimes were committed to obtain money for drugs. The Bureau also reported 61% of parolees who have a drug history violate parole, more than twice as many as those with no known drug use. Sixty-two percent of inmates acknowledged being drug users prior to arrest. Although this was the majority of inmates, only 11% received drug and alcohol treatment while in prison. Hunter (1994) stated a prerequisite to discontinuing drug use was belief in efficacy. Inmates tend to believe they are passive victims of their surroundings and events, thus, they are externally oriented. They believe that personal outcomes are the result of outside forces rather than the direct result of their own decisions and behavior. It is important for inmates to develop a sense of internal control as this gives them the capacity to change their lives.

Bayse et al. (1992) reported two variables that enable inmates to circumvent the rehabilitation process were narcissism and external locus of control. They found narcissistic tendencies to be among the most salient characteristics of inmates. The authors found support regarding their hypothesis that a positive correlation would exist between final examination and internal control scores following an educational program. With 63 inmates from a medium security prison, the authors found scores on the Internal Control Index (ICI) were significantly positively correlated with final examination scores regarding educational material. Selfism Scale scores, which indicate narcissistic tendencies, were significantly negatively correlated with final exam scores. Individuals who maintained a narcissistic demeanor scored lower on the final exam. No significant correlation was found between narcissism and internal control, however. Forty-one percent of the inmates in their study scored in the lowest 25% of ICI test norms for men, suggesting the majority of inmates were externally controlled. The authors believed this, in turn, led to feelings of powerlessness. Bayse, et al. suggested stressing external deterrents of crime may be more effective than stressing internal deterrents for these individuals.

Wright, Holman, Steele, and Silverstein (1980) hypothesized internally controlled individuals participate in increased amounts of cognitive work to prepare for mastery, exerting more control than externally controlled individuals. They believed internally oriented individuals may attribute failures internally, and externally oriented individuals may attribute failures externally; however, both groups attribute success internally. Their study involved male participants who were entering a reformatory incentive program for the first time. The goal of the program was for each participant to manage life responsibly. This included keeping their rooms clean, settling disputes responsibly, using free time constructively, getting to work on time, and maintaining reasonable productivity. Reinforcements were earned, including the privileges of wearing their personal clothes, receiving additional free time, having time away from the institution, and earning more comfortable living quarters. The variables measured were locus of control, interpersonal

trust, action taking, social desirability, expectancy of failure, and the importance of success for each individual. Movement through the system could be made only by request or disciplinary actions. Ultimately, 89% of participants moved from level 1 to level 2; 59% moved through all 4 levels. After each movement, attributional measures were taken. The researchers concluded that attrition was due to individuals focusing on the first success or failure. They found internally controlled individuals were better than those externally controlled in manipulating their environment to obtain quicker improvements in their living conditions. Internally controlled individuals were also found to attribute success to ability and less to luck, fate, and others than those who were externally controlled.

In a study with 50 African-American, habitual offenders, O'Sullivan (1987) hypothesized participants experienced greater degrees of external control than non-offenders. Additionally, he hypothesized external orientation was positively correlated with dissatisfaction in life. Lastly, he hypothesized externally controlled individuals relied on crime as a means of gaining control more than individuals who are internally controlled. Using a standardized measure of internal versus external locus of control, O'Sullivan found externally controlled individuals expressed more feelings of frustration and helplessness. Evidence supporting the hypothesis that offenders had a greater degree of external orientation than non-offenders was mixed. When compared with Caucasian undergraduates, offenders were found to be significantly more externally oriented, however, when compared to Caucasian community adults, no significant difference was found. When compared to African American undergraduate college students, offenders were found to be less externally oriented than the control group.

In studies by Livingston (1986), attributions of juvenile offenders for both pro- and antisocial behavior were investigated by assessing their judgments on dimensions of responsibility for self and others. It was discovered externally controlled offenders attributed acts of self and others, both prosocial and antisocial, to luck more than those who were internally controlled. They also indicated less perceived freedom in determining

behavior. Livingston found externally oriented individuals attributed antisocial behavior to luck more than they attributed prosocial behavior to luck when comparing groups of extremely externally controlled individuals to a group of extremely internally controlled individuals. He, therefore, concluded that external beliefs served as a defense mechanism for some offenders. He speculated that programs designed to increase beliefs in internal control resulted in increased acceptance of responsibility for antisocial and prosocial acts.

In assessing incentives to cease criminal behavior, Gupto (cited in Bayse et al., 1992) identified external and internal deterrents to crime. Fear of injury and getting caught were assumed to be external deterrents while personal standards and conscience were identified as internal deterrents. Gupto maintained rehabilitation would not occur until locus of control was perceived internally. He suggested instructing the offender with statements that create awareness of crime's impact on others. Subsequently aroused would be a sense of guilt and self-disgust. Prison, as the result of the decision to commit crime, should be emphasized. Through education, changing the orientation of control was feasible.

In 1984, Griffith (cited in Bayse, et al. 1992) found inmates viewed the completion of rehabilitation programs in prison as controlled by the administrative leaders. He charged that before rehabilitation could be effective, inmates must be taught that success depends on their fulfillment of predetermined requirements; furthermore, a prerequisite to learning was the ability to perceive personal control over the successful completion of prison programs. Bayse et al. found powerlessness, with an external locus of control, decreased inmates' motivation to complete rehabilitation programs. Externally controlled inmates perceived rewards and punishments as given at the discretion of authorities instead of as a result of their behavior. To change the external locus of control, Bayse, et al. stated it was necessary to demonstrate to inmates that they have the power to complete rehabilitation courses. They further stated courses must be structured (e.g., required assignments, no tardiness). The enforcement of rules provided a model of internal control within the context of submission to prison control. During the study, the authors found a 10-point

increase on the final examination after posing several questions at the onset of the educational program. They began by asking, "Who determines if you pass this course?" When inmates answered the instructor determines this, the researchers asked a series of questions: "Can you make it to class on time? Can you do the homework? Can you study enough to make 70% on the final exam?" (All examination material was reviewed in class.) Following these questions, they asked again, "Who determines if you pass this course?" In this manner, the inmates were advised of the control they had over the outcome. The results of this study indicated education resulted in fewer disciplinary problems and a decreased rate of recidivism.

Bayse et al. (1992) also suggested several other methods for influencing the development of internal control. Simply reframing language, introducing the concept of "earning" to inmates, challenged the idea that consequences are "given." Another approach was to have inmates tape record descriptions of their criminal deviancies and, through group discussion, identify cognitive distortions. This process should be repeated until the tapes are free of distortion. When attempting to influence an offender's external locus of control, Bayse, et al. emphasized the need to change narcissistic tendencies as well. Failure to do so inadvertently leads to the development of internal control with only regard for the self. In their study, education in these two areas resulted in fewer disciplinary actions. A third approach suggested was the implementation of a Neighborhood Watch program within the facility. This approach entailed the development of a system for dealing appropriately with transgressions and inmates were individually responsible to follow this plan.

Bayse, et al. (1992) cited dysfunctional families as being associated with the development of externally controlled individuals. In many cases, criminal behavior was a continuation among the generations of a family. The majority of offenders had been physically, sexually, or emotionally abused as children. This was particularly true for sex offenders. O'Sullivan (1987) speculated that although crime is typically considered to be a

maladaptive behavior, it may be more appropriately viewed as an adaptive behavior attempting to increase the sense of personal control for offenders.

The prison environment may only contribute to the offender's external orientation. Rehabilitation needs to occur if the offender is to form healthy relationships in the future. Once criminal activity has ceased, Sommers, Baskin, and Fagan (1994) reported that new relationships are important in sustaining a new lifestyle; the probability of desistance decreases if the offender continues associations in the world of drugs and crime.

In research conducted by Benson (1991), locus of control was found to be significantly related to trait anxiety; inmates who were internally controlled had lower levels. Behaviorally, this resulted in approximately one less disciplinary write-up than those who were externally oriented. No significance was found in an attempt to measure the predictive ability of the interaction between locus of control and trait anxiety. The most accurate predictor of positive and negative behavior in prison was age. Older offenders had approximately 1.5 fewer disciplinary reports than did younger offenders. This was consistent with results of a study conducted by Cusson and Pinsonneault (1986). It was found older offenders estimated the probability of punishment much higher than did their younger counterparts. There was no evidence that offenders' perception of control or degree of hopelessness had changed at the point of desistance--only their behavior. As estimates of punishment probability increase, criminal activity decreases. In 1985, Blumstein (cited in Sommers et al., 1994) reported most criminal careers are not long, and even those which follow a natural course, eventually cease criminal behavior. Le Blanc and Frechette (1989) reported the cessation of criminal behavior tended to be episodic with succeeding intervals between criminal activity lengthening. Intervention during this period may shorten the criminal career and spare individuals that have been the victims of crime. By the time natural cessation has occurred, damage has usually been done to society and to the individual. Furthermore, during this time, offenders have usually modeled negative behavior for future generations of offenders.

Certainly the cessation of criminal activity is one goal, however, the ex-offender, many times, continues to rely heavily on the government. Often, they do not become productive citizens, and due to health concerns, lack of education, and other disabilities, many are supported by government assistance. Rehabilitation and education are clearly necessary.

Hopelessness. Hopelessness is the perception of having no possibility of solution; a problem which is impossible to solve. According to Stotland (1969), hopelessness is a product of negative cognitive schemas that include negative expectancies about both the short- and long-term future. Hopeless individuals tend to believe (a) nothing will turn out right for them, (b) they will never succeed at their attempts to achieve their goals, (c) important goals will never be attained, and (d) their worst problems will never be resolved. This definition corresponds to the third component of Beck's negative triad in his cognitive model of depression. This component includes (a) a negative self-image, (b) a negative view of present functioning, and, (c) a negative view of the future (Beck & Steer, 1988).

The state-of-mind model suggests hopelessness is the result of interaction between negative events and certain cognitive mediators. Characteristic of the state of mind is low perceived problem solving effectiveness, cognitive rigidity, and perceived alienation. As the intensity of these qualities increases, hopelessness increases. The state of mind model views hopelessness as part of a state dependent memory, learning, and behavior system (Bonner & Rich, 1992). This model suggests suicide intent and action are activated through a hopeless state of mind. In fact, the authors found hopelessness to be a better predictor of suicide than depression.

A 1994 study found scores on the Beck Hopelessness Scale (BHS) were useful in predicting suicidal behavior (Rifai, George, Stack, Mann, & Reynolds, 1994). In fact, the BHS was found to be 1.3 times more useful in predicting suicide than depression. The authors also found individuals with high scores of hopelessness were more likely than individuals with low scores of hopelessness to drop out of treatment prior to completion. Hopelessness as assessed by the BHS has also been shown to correlate significantly with

scores from the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-2 which measure depression, low self esteem, self alienation, lack of ego mastery, and negative treatment indicators (Thackston-Hawkins, Compton, & Kelly, 1994). Each of these constructs is logically related to hopelessness and contributes to a sense of powerlessness. Steer, Kumar, and Beck (1993) found when controlling for measures of depression, hopelessness remained significantly correlated with suicidal ideation. Correlations were also significantly higher with scores of depression than with scores of anxiety. Williams (1986) suggested that low levels of hopelessness in suicide attempters were related to interpersonal conflicts but those attempters with high levels of hopelessness were attempting to escape their problems.

In a study by Bonner and Rich (1992), volunteer, male, pretrial inmates were questioned regarding their degree of hopelessness. Of 146 inmates, 8% reported no hopelessness, 59% reported small degrees of hopelessness, 21% reported moderate amounts of hopelessness, and 12% reported high levels of hopelessness. Of the same sample of 146 inmates, 23% reported no suicidal ideation, 28% expressed low intent, 20% indicated moderate intent, 29% reported high intent. The authors found that 51% of the variation in suicidal ideation was due to irrational beliefs and loneliness interacting with jail stress. This was most predictive of suicide ideation scores. Characteristics of suicidal ideators were as follows: (a) they perceived jail as stressful and threatening, (b) they tended to be lonely and alienated, (c) they possessed irrational beliefs and unrealistic expectations about life, (d) they tended to have a rigid thought process, (e) they lacked reasons for living, and (f) they experienced depression and hopelessness about the future. Correlations were found between hopelessness and several related concepts:  $r = +.58$  with lacking problem solving skills;  $r = +.43$  with social alienation;  $r = -.63$  with reasons for living;  $r = +.32$  with rigid and irrational beliefs; and  $r = +.36$  with jail stress. It was concluded that those who viewed themselves as ineffective problem solvers, lonely and isolated, having few adaptive resources or reasons for living, and tending to be unrealistic

and rigid in thinking, appeared to be vulnerable to repeated exposures of negative life stress. This, therefore, increased the risk for developing negative life expectancies and ultimately, hopelessness. Repeated exposure to negative life stress increases the risk for developing negative life expectancies and therefore, hopelessness. This appears to be a view commonly held by the offending population.

Another indicator of hopelessness within correctional systems is the high rate of suicide. Not only is suicide ideation common, completed suicide is the leading cause of death in county jails and other correctional facilities. Depending upon the facility, between 25% and 75% of deaths within these institutions occur due to suicide (Bonner & Rich, 1990). It is apparent that offenders are troubled individuals in need of treatment.

Other studies attest to the importance hopelessness has in the lives of individuals. Rideout and Montemuro (1986) assessed related constructs, specifically measuring hope, morale, and adaptation in 23 patients with heart failure. Of statistical significance, they found hopelessness was inversely related to morale and social functioning. Similarly, Lubasko, Moore, Stambrook, and Gill (1994) found that individuals who experienced brain injury and did not return to their pre-injury level of employment had higher scores on the BHS than did others. In a random sample of 396 normal Irish adults, Greene (1981) found hopelessness increased as socioeconomic status decreased. He also found individuals who were widowed, divorced, or separated reported greater degrees of hopelessness than did those who were married. Differences among these groups were small, however, and explained less than 12% of the variance. A significant discovery was that BHS scores for normal adults were less than BHS scores for suicide attempters by approximately one standard deviation. Beck, Steer, Kovacs, and Garrison (1985) also found a significant difference between the BHS means of suicidal groups ( $M = 13.27$ ,  $SD = 4.43$ ) and nonsuicidal groups ( $M = 8.95$ ,  $SD = 6.05$ ) in a 5- to 10- year follow-up study of hospitalized patients. This supports the idea that hopelessness is related to suicide and both appear to be prevalent in offending populations. Gaining insight into the development

of hopelessness may lead to effective prevention methods for these individuals. It may also be significant in treating other mental disorders as well.

Fogg and Gayton (1976) have suggested further components of hopelessness. In their research with an earlier version of the BHS, they found scores correlated negatively with scores from the Edwards Social Desirability Scale (ESDS) ( $r = -.64$ ). This led them to suggest that measuring hopelessness may measure, in part, the tendency of individuals to describe themselves in a socially undesirable manner. Linehan and Nielsen (1981) found similar results measuring the attitudes of 196 male and female shoppers. ESDS scores were also negatively correlated;  $r = -.67$  ( $p < .001$ ). These results are congruent with the concept of hopelessness and its relationship to the third component of the depressive triad presented by Beck.

Lastly, hopelessness appears to be a universal property. Since its development, the BHS has been translated into several languages. Studies using these translations have yielded results similar to the ones mentioned previously. Specifically, results indicating three factors similar to those found in the United States were established. These were (a) loss of motivation, (b) certainty about the future, and (c) future expectations. Levels of hopelessness correlated highly with scores on purpose in life and existential well-being (Beck, Kovacs, & Weissman, 1975). These results are consistent with results obtained by the English version.

### Summary

Crimes committed by individuals who have been released from prison are numerous making it evident that rehabilitation is not occurring in prison. Society contends criminals need to "pay" for their crime yet rehabilitation is forgotten in the process. The result is a "revolving door" prison system. Rehabilitation is a more efficient method for punishing criminals which requires more effort from the offender than just "doing time."

Rehabilitation may ultimately lead to a reduction in crime. Costs of prosecuting and incarcerating criminals will be decreased which will permit public funds to be used for

more positively oriented programs. In addition, criminals may become productive members of society, allowing them to become self sufficient. This will reduce the burden on the government for supporting these individuals. With the introduction of adaptive methods for coping and alternative lifestyles, offenders will be given an opportunity which most have never had.

The proposed research is intended to further knowledge in the perpetuation of maladaptive criminal behavior. Ideally, it will provide a link to developing effective methods of intervention. Regardless of the outcome, direction will be given for related research in the future. In the past, research has focused on the attitudes of individuals who are incarcerated, however, research on the attitudes of these individuals after release is sparse. Many researchers have hypothesized that the controlled environment of prison fosters an external locus of control. The proposed study intends to assess locus of control in these individuals after leaving the prison environment. The present study hopes to determine: 1) Does the extent of parolees' hopelessness influence their success on parole? 2) Does orientation regarding locus of control influence an individual's success on parole?

## Chapter II

### Method

#### Participants

The population of interest included individuals who had been incarcerated and were subsequently released to parole supervision. It was believed there are characteristics common to the offender that may contribute to excessive criminal behavior.

The sample consisted of individuals who were on parole in Kansas, regardless of specific crime, under the supervision of the Wichita State Parole Office and living within the Wichita area. Individuals on the list who had not been incarcerated in prison, such as those serving time on probation or in a county jail, were not included. Identifying information was not analyzed in the selection process, although it was expected that this sample would provide a relatively representative view of the larger target population of all individuals paroled from prison.

A list of potential participants was obtained from the Wichita State Parole Office. Names were selected from the list until 50 participants agreed to participate. The number of individuals who did not participate, either due to refusal or failure to attend testing as scheduled, may indicate the degree of bias which may be present in the results.

Of the 79 parolees contacted, 17 declined participation while 12 who agreed to participate did not attend the testing session. Of the 50 individuals who completed the testing process, 56% were African-Americans, 42% were Caucasians and 2% were of unspecified ethnicity. Fourteen percent of participants were women and 86% were men. Ages ranged from 22-49 years; the mean age of participants was 33.78 years ( $SD = 6.98$ ).

Groups were formed by taking the highest and lowest 30% of scorers from each scale. This resulted in  $n = 16$  for the high hopelessness group,  $n = 15$  for the low hopelessness group,  $n = 17$  for the externally controlled group, and  $n = 15$  for the internally controlled group.

## Instruments

The instruments used in this study have been used extensively in previous research. To assess hopelessness, the Beck Hopelessness Scale (BHS) was used. This is a 20-item scale that requires participants to answer true or false to each item. Scores range from 0-20; low scores indicate a low degree of hopelessness while high scores indicate high levels of hopelessness. The BHS Manual (1988) reports assessing face validity of items on the BHS by asking clinicians to rate each item with respect to hopelessness. In assessing concurrent validity, clinicians' ratings of hopelessness within their hospitalized patients correlated with BHS scores;  $r = .74$  ( $p < .001$ ).

The BHS was validated by other means as well. Factorial analysis revealed three components in the BHS that are constructively related to hopelessness: 1) feelings about the future, 2) loss of motivation, and 3) future expectations (Beck, Resnik, & Lettieri, 1974). As reported by the BHS Manual, BHS scores have been found to correlate with the Pessimism rating on the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI);  $r = .63$  ( $p < .001$ ). BHS scores correlated with BDI scores from .46 to .76 across clinical samples. After accounting for the Pessimism rating, these correlations decreased slightly.

The Beck Manual reports reliability among several different populations. For samples consisting of individuals with suicidal ideation, suicide attempts, alcohol dependency, heroin dependency, a single episode of major depression, recurrent episodes of major depression, and dysthymia, reliability across time was found to be .92, .93, .91, .82, .92, .92, and .87 respectively. Test-retest reliability was found to be .69 ( $p < .001$ ) when individuals with mixed diagnoses were sampled. Item-total correlations ranged from .06 to .73 although the majority of items had correlations greater than .50 for each sample, indicating internal consistency across clinical samples.

The Adult Nowicki-Strickland Internal-External (ANSIE) scale is a 40-item questionnaire requiring yes/no answers. There are no filler items and scores range from 0-40. Higher scores indicate a more external locus of control; likewise, lower scores indicate

a relatively internal locus of control. According to the author, S. Nowicki (personal communication, September 14, 1996), scores can only be interpreted relative to other scores. In accordance with Rotter's (1966) belief that locus of control is a matter of degree rather than a dichotomous event, there are no established cutoff scores indicating either an internal or external locus of control.

The ANSIE is accepted as a document that is easy to read making it appropriate for populations known to have lower levels of education. In research supporting the validity of the ANSIE, Dixon, McKee, and McRae (1976) found significant positive correlations between ANSIE scores and scores on the Social Interest Index and the Personal Orientation Inventory. Also supporting the validity of the ANSIE, Duke and Nowicki (1973) found that individuals with perceptions of internal control were more likely to be employed competitively and full time. Respondents who were unemployed and living in shelter environments were more likely to indicate an external locus of control.

In assessing the reliability of the ANSIE scale, Dixon et al. (1976) found test-retest reliability to be .83 while split half reliability ranged from .74 to .86. Internal consistency ranged from .01 to .60.

### Procedure

Approval to use human subjects was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of Emporia State University (See Appendix A). In addition, a research proposal was submitted and approved by the Kansas Department of Corrections. Subsequently, the Wichita State Parole Office released a list of all individuals currently on parole. Individuals from the list were approached by phone or during their regular visits to the parole office regarding their willingness to participate. Parolees who agreed to participate were given a choice of several administration dates.

At the time of administration, data collection began with each parolee receiving an Informed Consent Form (See Appendix B). This form explained the general purpose of the study as well as the process that participation would entail. The Informed Consent

Form stated that participants were allowed to ask questions regarding the study and could withdraw from the study at any time if they so desired. It also allowed the researcher to access the individual's parole records. To ensure that individuals understood the conditions of participation, this form was read aloud. Participants were also allowed to read the form to themselves concurrently. After signing the Informed Consent Form, the ANSIE was administered followed by the BHS. Questions were allowed for any difficulty in understanding the material.

Two groups were formed for each independent variable based on the BHS and ANSIE scores. These groups consisted of individuals with scores in the highest and lowest 30% of each scale; there were 15 participants in each group. These groups were then compared for differences in their success on parole.

To assess success on parole, data on the number of parole violations during the current parole term was gathered through the analysis of chronological records maintained by each parole officer. Documentation regarding the classification of parole violations (See Appendix C) was obtained from the parole supervisor in order to ensure accuracy in identifying parole violations addressed in the chronological records. Each individual's average number of parole violations per month was calculated by dividing the total number of violations by the number of months (rounded to the nearest whole number) since being released from prison. This number was rounded to the nearest tenth. The average number of parole violations per month rather than the total number of violations was utilized to control for differences in the length of time since paroled.

### Hypotheses

It was expected that those individuals presenting greater degrees of hopelessness would be less successful on parole than individuals who were less hopeless. Similarly, parolees embracing an external locus of control were expected to be less successful on parole than those maintaining an internal locus of control. The null hypothesis stated that

the number of parole violations would not differ across varying scores of hopelessness and locus of control.

### Statistical Design

Both the degree of hopelessness and the extent of external versus internal control were measured and treated as independent variables. The dependent variable was the degree of success on parole as measured by the average number of parole violations per month received during the most recent parole term. Both independent variables were assessed for influential effects they may have had on the dependent variable. For both independent variables, the statistical hypothesis was  $H_0: \mu_1 = \mu_2$ ;  $H_A: \mu_1 \neq \mu_2$ ;  $\alpha=.05$ .

For statistical analysis, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used. Two one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) were used to determine if any significant differences existed between groups.

## Chapter III

### Results

Because there are no suggested cutoff scores for either of the scales used, relatively high- and low-scoring groups for both the BHS and ANSIE were determined by taking the upper and lower 30% of scorers on each scale. This resulted in an upper cutoff of 7 for the ANSIE low scoring group and a lower cutoff of 12 for the ANSIE high scoring group. Rather than limit the group to 15 which would be exactly 30% of the total number of participants, all participants at the cutoff score were included in the groups. This was feasible because the actual number was very close to the target number of 15 participants per cell.

Similarly, the lower cutoff score for the high BHS scorers was 4 resulting in  $n = 16$ . The exception occurred in the group of low BHS scorers. A cutoff score of 1 would have resulted in 11 scores in the low scoring cell rather than 15. However, a cutoff score of 2 would have placed 27, over half the participants, in the low scoring group. To resolve this issue, 4 participants with a score of 2 on the BHS were randomly selected to be part of the 15 participants in the low scoring BHS group. See Table 1 for further clarification.

Statistical analysis revealed that there were no significant differences,  $F(2,47) = 1.1307$ ;  $p = .3314$ , between groups of high and low scorers on the BHS with regard to the number of parole violations. Scores on the BHS ranged from 0-12; the overall mean was 3.42 ( $SD = 3.07$ ). The mean of the high scoring group was 7.0 ( $SD = 2.94$ ). This group received an average of .40 parole violations per month ( $SD = .49$ ). The mean of the low scoring group was .93 ( $SD = .79$ ). The mean number of parole violations per month for this group was .41 ( $SD = .35$ ). Using  $t$  tests, it was determined that the mean BHS scores of these two groups were significantly different:  $t = -7.71$ ;  $p < .0001$ ;  $\omega^2 = .65$ . Data supported the null hypothesis indicating that hopelessness is not explicitly related to success on parole.

TABLE 1

Descriptive Statistics for Scale Scores and Average Parole Violations per Month

Group	M Score	SD	Score Range	n	M PV/month <sup>a</sup>	SD	PV/month Range
<b>BHS</b>							
High	7.00	2.94	4-12	16	.40	.49	0-1.5
Low	0.93	0.80	0-2	15	.41	.35	0-1.1
<b>ANSIE</b>							
High	15.12	3.90	12-24	17	.64	.93	0-1.0
Low	5.40	1.12	3-7	15	.45	.30	0-3.0

<sup>a</sup>Mean number parole violations per month

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Similarly, no significant differences were found in the number of parole violations among the ANSIE high- and low-scoring groups,  $F(2,47) = .5087$ ;  $p = .6045$ . The range of ANSIE scores was 3-24; the overall mean was 10.32 ( $SD = 4.61$ ). The average of the high-scoring group was 15.11 ( $SD = 3.90$ ). The average number of parole violations received per month for this group was .63 ( $SD = .93$ ). The average of the low-scoring group was 5.40 ( $SD = 1.12$ ). This group received an average of .45 ( $SD = .30$ ) parole violations per month. Again  $t$  tests indicated that the mean ANSIE scores for the low- and high-scoring groups were significantly different:  $t = -9.29$ ;  $p < .0001$ ;  $\omega^2 = .73$ . Data supported the null hypothesis stating that internally and externally controlled groups are not significantly different in the average number of parole violations received per month.

Because there has been a myriad of research regarding group differences on scores such as hopelessness and locus of control, Pearson product-moment correlations were calculated as well. The following correlations were calculated: BHS-gender, ANSIE-gender, BHS-age, ANSIE-age, BHS-race, ANSIE-race, BHS-parole violations, ANSIE-parole violations, and BHS-ANSIE. No significant correlations were found with the exception of the BHS and ANSIE scores;  $r = +.39$ ,  $p < .01$ .

## Chapter IV

### Discussion

Although the constructs of hopelessness and locus of control appear logically related to success on parole, data support the null hypotheses indicating they are not. While the mean scores of both the high and low groups on both scales were significantly different, the average number of parole violations received per month by each group did not differ for either factor. It seems other influential factors may be more germane to an individual's success on parole.

One possible explanation for the lack of influence on the dependent variable by the independent variables is while hopelessness and locus of control may be important psychological constructs individually, neither of them consider social or environmental factors. Past research has found strong support for the importance of social support in desistance from crime (Sommers et al., 1994). It is imperative that offenders terminate associations with those who take part in criminal lifestyles if criminal behavior is to cease. Those parolees with an external locus of control and high degrees of hopelessness may outperform those with opposing characteristics if they have a positive social support system. In fact, their external locus of control may allow them to be more positively influenced by outside sources than those internally controlled. The current research had no measure or consideration for the influence of social support. Future researchers may find controlling for social support explains a portion of the variance of success on parole as well as enhances the ability to detect differences between groups as measured on these two constructs.

Additionally, the results may support the belief that external and internal control are indeed situation specific (Pugh, 1992; Rotter, 1966). Although past research has shown inmates to be more externally oriented, the present research may indicate prison environments induce an external locus of control. Research regarding inmates after release

from incarceration is sparse and future research may confirm locus of control to be specific to the situation rather than to the individual.

There is also the possibility that those parolees who refused to participate or did not attend their scheduled testing session hold views very different from their counterparts who did indeed participate. This may have influenced the outcome of the results by having individuals with similar views being assessed. Also, a larger sample may provide greater variance within each of the variables, making differences more easily detected.

One area which may have undermined the assessment of the dependent variable was the measurement chosen to represent success on parole. It was found that parole officers differed greatly in the amount of detail they kept in their chronological notes. While some expressly noted parole violations, others were vague and it was difficult to discern whether a violation had occurred even with categorical guidelines. Another similar difficulty arose in discerning whether an on-going parole violation (i.e., drug use, not reporting, not paying restitution) should be counted only once or each time a parole officer noted it. While some parole officers recorded notes on regular intervals, others recorded only contact time. Those individuals who were less successful on parole seemed to have lengthy periods of on-going and more severe violations but there was no method to assess this. While this study assumed the number of parole violations would be an objective measure of success on parole, in fact, it lacked objectivity and definitive boundaries necessary for accurate measurement. For future research, a more accurate and precise measurement is recommended.

It is also recommended for future researchers that cutoff scores be established for each scale used to assess the independent variables rather than using a high and low percentage. The latter method resulted in some groups with very little variability while others had a much wider range of variability. Definitive cutoff scores would allow less variability within groups, establishing confidence that the groups are truly representative of those

individuals high and low in hopelessness as well as those internally and externally controlled.

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## Appendix A

## APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL TO USE HUMAN SUBJECTS

This application should be submitted, along with the Informed Consent Document, to the Institutional Review Board for Treatment of Human Subjects, Research and Grants Center, Campus Box 4048.

1. Name of Principal Investigator(s) (Individual(s) administering the procedures):

Laura Turner-Gering

2. Departmental Affiliation: Psychology and Special Education

3. Person to whom notification should be sent: Laura Turner-Gering

Address: 2011 S. Greenwich Wichita, KS 67207 Telephone: (316)651-0913

4. Title of Project: Hopelessness and Locus of Control in Relation to Success on Parole

5. Funding agency (if applicable): not applicable

6. Project Purpose(s):

The purpose of this research is to determine if the qualities of hopelessness and locus of control are related to the degree of success on parole attained by former inmates. Previous research has shown that inmates tend to have an external locus of control and higher levels of hopelessness than the general population, however, research documenting these attitudes after release from prison is sparse. The results may be useful to those such as parole officers who are currently supervising these individuals.

7. Describe the proposed subjects: (age, sex, race, or other special characteristics, such as students in a specific class, etc.)

The proposed participants are individuals who have previously been incarcerated and are now under the supervision of the Wichita State Parole Office.

8. Describe how the subjects are to be selected:

A list of potential participants will be obtained from the Wichita State Parole Office. From this list, individuals will be approached by telephone regarding their willingness to participate. Only those who agree will be established as participants. The total number of those refusing will be acknowledged to indicate the degree of bias that may be present in the results.

9. Describe the proposed procedures in the project. Any proposed experimental activities that are included in evaluation, research, development, demonstration, instruction, study, treatments, debriefing, questionnaires, and similar projects must be described here. **Copies of questionnaires, survey instruments, or tests should be attached.** (Use additional page if necessary.)

Participants will be asked to complete the Beck Hopelessness Scale and the Adult Nowicki-Strickland Internal-External Locus of Control Scale. Due to copyrights of the aforementioned scales, copies cannot be attached.

10. Will questionnaires, tests, or related research instruments not explained in question #9 be used?

Yes  No (If yes, attach a copy to this application.)

11. Will electrical or mechanical devices be used?  Yes  No (If yes, attach a detailed description of the device(s).)

12. Do the benefits of the research outweigh the risks to human subjects?  Yes  No This information should be outlined here.

This research is not expected to propose any risk to human participants although the potential benefits are great. The results may provide valuable information for the Department of Corrections regarding teaching that may assist this population in reintegrating into society.

13. Are there any possible emergencies which might arise in utilization of human subjects in this project?  Yes  No Details of these emergencies should be provided here.

14. What provisions will you take for keeping research data private?

Individual information regarding participants will be identified only by the number assigned to the individual by the Department of Corrections. No names will be used. In addition, data collected will remain in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home.

15. Attach a copy of the informed consent document, as it will be used for your subjects.

**STATEMENT OF AGREEMENT:** I have acquainted myself with the Federal Regulations and University policy regarding the use of human subjects in research and related activities and will conduct this project in accordance with those requirements. Any changes in procedures will be cleared through the Institutional Review Board for Treatment of Human Subjects.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Principal Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Faculty Advisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix B

### Informed Consent Form

This study is being performed by a graduate student of Emporia State University. The purpose of this study is to explore a variety of attitudes held by individuals on parole within your area. Participation requires the completion of two questionnaires which should take no longer than 30 minutes. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time as participation is completely voluntary. All identifying information will be kept confidential and there are no anticipated risks or discomforts involved. Information obtained may lead to improved programs within the penal system. You are free to ask questions concerning the proposed procedure at any time.

The above document has been read to me and I understand that my participation in this study is completely voluntary. Furthermore, I understand that I may withdraw from this study at any time. In addition, I grant the researcher permission to access my personal file regarding information concerning parole.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Witness

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix C

### Violation Categories:

The following violations shall be considered category A violations which shall require prompt follow-up by the supervising officer and staffing with the parole supervisor:

1. Failure to make contact with the parole officer within 24 hours of release and subsequently to report as directed (absconding supervision);
2. Possession of a weapon or any violation where a weapon, violence, or threats of violence are present;
3. Being outside the assigned supervision district without permission (outside the normal travel radius or out of state);
4. Failure to pay restitution, supervision fees, or fines after it has been established that the offender is able but unwilling to pay;
5. Violation of any special condition.
6. Third or greater occurrence of one or more condition violation(s) that demonstrates an unwillingness to conform to the requirements of community supervision;
7. Any district court conviction occurring during the supervision period or any municipal court conviction for assaultive behavior;
8. Failure to report for two consecutive reporting periods; and/or
9. Two or more positive drug screens.

All violations other than those listed as category A shall be considered category B violations. Category B violations require documentation in the chronological record with follow-up by the supervising officer. Category B violations generally do not require a staffing with the supervisor except when revocation is the recommendation. Category B violations include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Changing jobs without notifying the supervising officer;

2. Being outside of the assigned supervision district (within the state) without permission;
3. Failure to report for a single reporting period.
4. Moving without notifying the supervising officer;
5. Any violation of law related to minor traffic infractions.
6. Failure to maintain steady employment; and/or
7. Other violations which do not indicate that the offender poses a serious risk to public safety.

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Laura Turner-Gering  
Signature of Author

May 9, 1997  
Date

Hopelessness and Locus of Control in  
Relation to Success on Parole  
Title of Thesis

Ray Cooper  
Signature of Graduate Office Staff Member

5-16-97  
Date Received