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## Cultural Differences in Locus of Control Beliefs in Two Indian Societies

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**ABSTRACT.** The present study investigated the pattern of locus of control beliefs among members of the Muria and Halba ethnic groups ( $N = 240$ ) of Central India. Murias have a dormitory-type institution called *Ghotul* for cultural training that provides for intimate interaction between boys and girls, but the Halba have no such institution. The results indicated a significant interaction of culture, age group, and gender. Girls were found to be more internal than boys, and Muria girls became more internal with advancing age, whereas Halba girls showed the opposite trend.

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CROSS-CULTURAL STUDIES (Buriel, 1981; Chiu, 1988; Dean, 1984; Heaven, Rajab, & Bester, 1986; Kishor, 1983; Kureshi & Husain, 1981; Mirowsky & Ross, 1984; Padilla, Wagatsuma, & Lindholm, 1985; Young & Shorr, 1986) suggest that the pattern of locus of control beliefs involves different patterns of salience across diverse cultures. The present study explored the differences in the Muria and Halba ethnic groups residing in the Bastar region of central India.

One of the cultural peculiarities found among the Muria is a dormitory-like institution called *Ghotul*. According to Elwin (1947), *Ghotul* provides training to unmarried boys and girls essential for leading adult life in accordance with their cultural norms, values, and sanctions. Boys and girls interact freely and even sexually with their peers, which leads to a high level of intimacy in interpersonal relations. Also, the girls share a larger amount of responsibility than the boys in earning the resources for their livelihood. This

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pattern of socialization and peer-group influence makes Muria girls relatively more self-reliant. Halbas have no such institution. They live in a society in which men dominate and women perform the household work and child-rearing.

Against this background, it was predicted that Muria girls would be more internally controlled than Halba girls and that Halba boys would evince greater internality than Muria boys. It was also expected that these differences would accentuate with age.

## Method

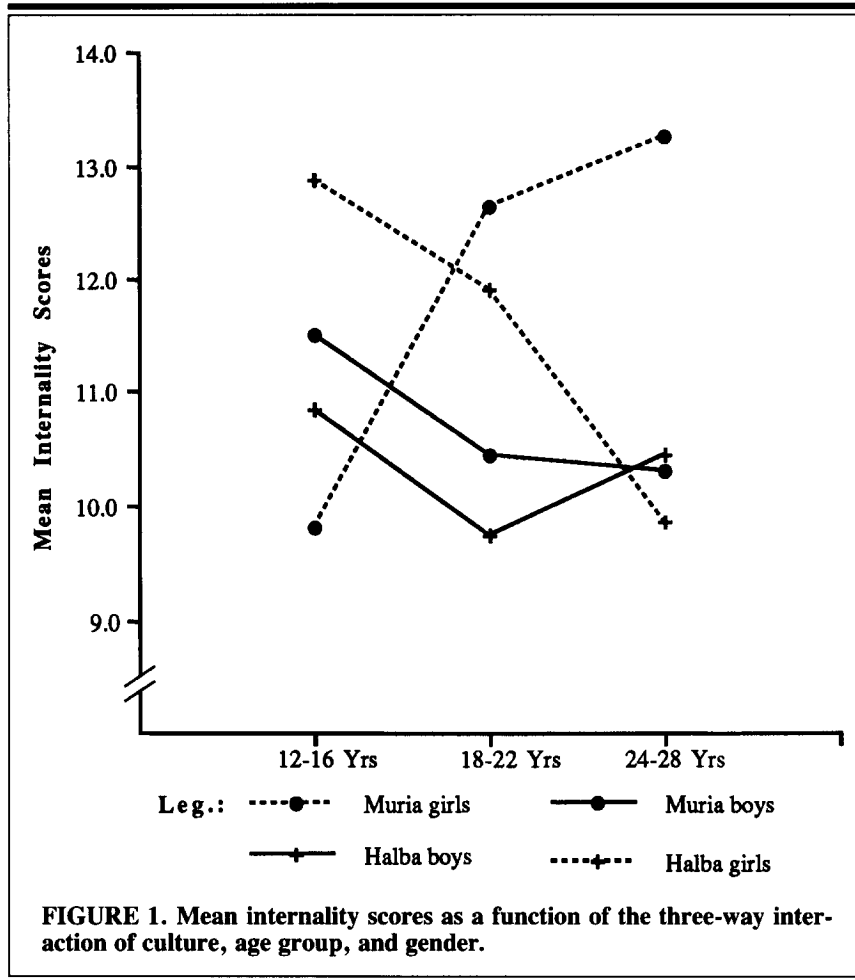
### *Subjects*

A sample of 240 subjects was randomly selected from both sexes of the Muria and Halba residing in Narainpur in the Bastar district of central India. It was observed that participation in Ghotul among the Muria starts from 12 to 14 years and continues until their marriages, that is, up to 24 to 28 years. Therefore, three different age groups, 12 to 16 years, 18 to 22 years, and 24 to 28 years, were included. These groups formed a  $2 \times 3 \times 2$  (Culture  $\times$  Age Group  $\times$  Gender) factorial design with 20 subjects in each cell.

### *Measure*

A culturally appropriate measure was developed for this study (Singh, 1986). Items were taken from the real-life situations of the ethnic groups, including internal elements like effort, ability, hard work, initiative, and personal behavior and external elements like luck, chance, God's grace, wealth, auspiciousness, and so forth. The measure contained 16 scored items, for example, "A poor person can attain prosperity (a) by his own efforts or (b) with the help of the government" and "A farmer in a village has produced more in the fields than the others due to (a) his fate or (b) his efforts"; it also contained 6 filler items, for example, "If a man gains an excessive amount of money (a) he becomes happier or (b) he engages in worthless activities." Each measure had two alternatives indicating internality or externality. The response indicating internality was given a score of 1, and a score of 0 was given to the responses indicating externality. Hence, the maximum score was 16 and the minimum was 0. Test-retest reliability of the measure after 6 months was estimated at .87. The concurrent validity of the test has been established by correlating its score to the score on the scale developed by Valecha, Sridhar, and Nandgopal (1980),  $r = .75$ .

The measure was administered to the subjects individually. Because they were illiterate, the measure was used as an interview with the help of an interpreter.



### Results and Discussion

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) of scores on the measure of control beliefs revealed a significant main effect of gender,  $F(1, 228) = 7.56, p < .01$ , with greater internality among girls ( $M = 11.63$ ) than boys ( $M = 10.47$ ). The main effects of culture  $F(1, 228) = .81, p > .05$ , and age group,  $F(2, 228) = 1.27, p > .05$ , were not significant. However, the three-way interaction of culture, age group, and gender was significant,  $F(2, 228) = 6.78, p < .01$ . Figure 1 shows that with advancing age, internality scores of girls increased among Murias and decreased in the Halba group. In contrast, the

scores of Halba boys were highest in the 12- to 16-year age group and lowest in the 18- to 22-year age group. In the 24- to 28-year age group, different patterns emerged for boys, with an increase in internality scores among the Halba and some decrement among the Muria.

Past research provides evidence to the effect that knowledge of and a positive attitude toward environment (Chitwood, 1977), active involvement in recreation (Nowicki & Schneewind, 1982), and emphasis on freedom in socialization (Krampen, 1982) are conducive to the development of internality. It has also been demonstrated that undersocialization (Roine, Roger, & Venables, 1982) and a normative life (Cole & Cole, 1977) make individuals external or less internal. As stated earlier, the socialization process for Muria girls involves many factors that contribute to internality. Halba girls, on the other hand, undergo a different pattern of socialization. They do not share the responsibilities for the family; they are dependent members and therefore do not make independent decisions. As a result, they gain less experience in coping with stressful situations, which may make them less internal.

Among Muria boys, it appears that training for cooperative and normative life in Ghotul makes them less internal with advancing age. Halba boys also showed normative behavior in various social activities. In the absence of an institution like Ghotul that has relatively greater influence on its members than the family, the effect of the family becomes dominant in the Halba, and boys therefore are dependent on their family until they are married. After marriage (i.e., from 24 to 28 years), some responsibilities for the family are given to them, which may make Halba boys somewhat more innovative. It seems that these influences make Halba boys less internal before their marriage (up to the age of 18 to 22 years), but they showed somewhat greater internality after.

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