Locus of control and how it affects independent behaviour

- By the end of the lesson, the expected learning targets are:
  - To be able to define the term ‘locus of control’ (All)
  - To be able to identify and describe the difference between an internal and an external locus of control (All)
  - To be able to explain how locus of control can affect independent behaviour (Most)
  - To be able to hypothesise whether historical figures who brought about social change had an internal or external locus of control (Few)
Independent behaviour: Personality

- Rotter (1966) developed a questionnaire to measure a personality characteristic called locus of control.
- It indicates how much personal control people believe they have over events in their lives.
- The questionnaire involved choosing between paired statements like these ones:

1.) Misfortune is usually brought about by people’s own actions
2.) Things that make us unhappy are largely due to bad luck.
Internal locus of control

- If you agree with the first statement, you have an internal locus of control.
- This is categorised by a belief that what happens in your life results from your own behaviour or actions.
- E.g. if you did well in a test you might put it down to how much work you did for it.

Sample items from Rotter’s Locus of Control Scale

Respondents are asked to select a or b – whichever statement they agree with.

2  a Many of the things in people’s lives are partly due to bad luck.
    b People’s misfortunes result from the mistakes they make.

4  a In the long run people get the respect they deserve in this world.
    b Unfortunately, an individual’s worth often passes unrecognised no matter how hard he or she tries.

28 a What happens to me is my own doing.
    b Sometimes I feel that I don’t have enough control over the direction my life is taking.

2a, 4b and 28b are examples of an external locus of control; 2b, 4a and 28a are examples of an internal locus of control.
External locus of control

- If you agree with the second statement, you have an external locus of control.
- This is a belief that events are **caused by external factors**, like luck or the actions of others.
- E.g. if you did well in a test you might put it down to good questions coming up, or a lenient examiner.
Independent behaviour explained?

- People with an internal locus of control feel a stronger sense of control over their lives than people with an external locus of control.

- This means that they are more likely to exhibit independent behaviour. (What historical figures might have had an internal locus of control?)

- People with an external locus of control may be more likely to conform.

- This PowerPoint has been podcasted and is available from the student shared drive.
Progress check!

- Using the record card I have just distributed, please write at least 2 things you know now (about social influence) that you didn’t know when you walked through the door.

- Aids to memory: Can you define what locus of control is? Can you identify and describe the difference between an external and internal locus of control?
Using your record card I would like to you to write ‘yes’, ‘unsure’ or ‘no’ to the following questions.

Can you give a definition of locus of control?

Do you understand the difference between internal and external locus of control?

Do you understand how locus of control can affect independent behaviour?

Do you know at least 1 historical figure who would have displayed an internal locus of control?

Can you take this away and start planning your homework?