

Calibrating Your Locus of Control

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TECHNICAL PRESENTATIONS

PROJECT 2: THE PROPOSAL

What is locus of control?

What is locus of control?

- How much control you believe you have
- ***Internal*** locus means you believe you are in control
- ***External*** locus means you believe external factors are in control (people, situations, etc.)

What are attributions?

- **Attributions** are how you explain phenomena
- Related to locus of control
- How do you explain your actions? Others'?
- When do you attribute to situational factors?
Dispositional factors?

Attributions and loci of control

- Scenario: Bad performance evaluation
- **Internal** locus: Might attribute to not working hard enough
- **External** locus: Might attribute to supervisor being a jerk

Personal connection

- Do you have a friend or coworker who cannot take personal responsibility? (external locus)
- Others might blame themselves even for things that aren't their fault (internal locus)
- How is your locus of control **calibrated**?

What is calibration?

What is calibration?

- *Calibration* often refers to exam predictions.

Perfect calibration would be believing you'll get a 90% grade on an exam and getting 90%.

Very bad calibration would be predicting 90% and getting 20%.

- Applying calibration to locus of control is new?

Locus of control & calibration

- Having an **internal** locus of control = better?
- Calibration is situational
- Some things truly are out of your hands
- Others aren't
- Recognizing the difference = important

How do you calibrate your
locus of control?

Calibrating your locus of control

- Different situations call for different loci of control
- One way to recognize good calibration is through case studies

Debunking the myth that
internal loci of control are
always superior

Case Study: Samantha

- Samantha has an boyfriend who is verbally and mentally abusive. He becomes enraged if she doesn't cook him dinner or if she hangs out with pre-existing male friends.
- Samantha has an **internal locus of control** regarding his behaviors. She blames herself for failing to meet his expectations, and continues “improving.”

Case Study: Samantha

- In Samantha's situation, is an internal locus appropriate (i.e., accurately calibrated)?
- **NO**
- To the outsider, severance is the obvious solution. Samantha does not actually have control over her boyfriend's behavior. Blaming herself is an example of **inaccurate calibration**.

When an internal locus is wrong

- When is an **internal** locus of control **inappropriate**?
- *Problems you inherited, figuratively or literally*
- *When the “ball is in their court,” so to speak*
- *Discrimination and institutionalized bias*
- *Circumstances left to chance or others’ actions*
- *When you are the victim (to an extent)*

Example: Driving a car

- Driving involves your actions and others' actions
- Like most real-life situations, having a wholly internal or external locus of control is inaccurate
- An excellent driver might avoid dangerous situations, thereby exhibiting internal locus of control
- However, even an excellent driver can still be injured or killed by another reckless or malicious driver

When an external locus is wrong

- When is an **external** locus of control **inappropriate**?
- *Problems with self-regulation*
- *Failure to follow directions*
- *Unhappy with bad choices*
- *Sunk-cost fallacy*
- *Whenever you can change the situation if you try*

A framework for calibrating locus of control

Calibration framework for locus

- We can derive a framework based on logic
- List the factors in and out of your control
- Consider the proportions
- Think outside the box—don't be constrained

Example: Bad job [**external** / **internal**]

- Need the money
- Superiors are rude
- Expectations unrealistic
- Work environment sucks
- High turnover
- Business model sucks
- Health problems
- Spend less / save more
- Can complain / quit
- Keep a journal
- Negotiate or quit
- Employees have agency
- Make it better
- Avoid somaticizing

Calibration framework for locus

- Framework is iterative
- Look at your past choices and experiences
- Adjust and calibrate better next time
- Avoid needlessly sacrificing control
- Examples of needless sacrifice: not keeping an emergency fund, saying “yes” to crap

Concluding thoughts

A new model for locus of control

- I could find no search results combining calibration and locus of control
- Generally, locus of control has been looked at simplistically with internal = good; external = bad
- But, life is nuanced
- Check your attributions
- **Question the premise**

Q & A

3–5 minutes

