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Fundamental Religion and Locus of Control

Elizabeth Cooley
Carroll College, Helena, MT

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Fundamental Religion and Locus of Control

Elizabeth A. Cooley

Carroll College

Running Head: Religious Locus of Control
This honors thesis has been approved for the Department of Psychology by:

Thomas W. Hamilton, Director
Associate Professor of Psychology

J. Bailey Molineux, Ph.D., Reader
Associate Professor of Psychology

John W. Hart, Ph.D., Reader
Associate Professor of Theology

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Abstract
Locus of control within fundamental religious groups was studied. The fundamentalists' seemingly paradoxical belief in both internal and external locus of control was explored in a discussion of the history, theology and personality of fundamentalism. An empirical study compared locus of control in fundamental and liberal religious populations. On a religious revision of Rotter's Internal-External locus of control scale, fundamentalists were found to be significantly more external than liberals. This finding supports the theory that fundamentalists have a belief in an external locus of control. The results also support the idea that locus of control measures can be effectively adjusted for use with religious populations.
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Fundamental Religion and Locus of Control

Western Protestant fundamentalism is a multifaceted belief system that has generated curiosity and controversy both within and outside of religious circles. The fundamentalist phenomenon has attracted psychologists who have attempted to quantify and qualify fundamentalism in order to understand it as a broad movement as well as an individual experience. My own research represents yet another effort to peer into the underpinnings of fundamentalism. Specifically, I have explored what relationship, if any, exists between the fundamentalist religious stance and the individual's perception of control in the world. In other words, are the events and situations that happen in every day life thought to be a result of personal actions and behaviors, or are they more likely the result of external circumstances or forces? Whether events are perceived by the fundamentalist as being under the control of the individual or the result of forces outside of the individual is the central question I addressed.

Within psychology, the perception of the extent of personal control over life's events is referred to as internal-external (I-E) locus of control. Internal-external refers to the perceived location of control as residing within or outside of the individual (Geis, 1978, p. 197). For example, those who hold a belief in external locus of
control might say that getting a job is a result of being in the right place at the right time. Those with a belief in internal locus of control, on the other hand, would be more likely to say that working hard and taking advantage of opportunities will lead to a job. Because of the tenacious reciprocal interaction between the fundamentalist's religious beliefs and his or her behavior, the study of locus of control within fundamentalist groups is complex. As this study will show, past research has often been inconclusive and at times appears contradictory; sometimes describing members of conservative religious groups as internal, and other times describing them as external.

In order to understand the results of previous work, and to explore why contradictions might exist in the literature, I will examine the relationship between a given person's locus of control and his or her fundamentalist outlook by briefly reviewing (A) the pertinent aspects of the psychology of religion; (B) the locus of control construct; and (C) the history, theology and personality of fundamentalism. I will also present information that I obtained through an empirical study comparing fundamentalists and liberals on locus of control.
The Psychology of Religion

Any exploration of religion from a psychological vantage point must be entered into with considerable respect for the complex and highly personal nature of religion. To this end, Batson and Ventis (1982, pp. 14-16) discuss three difficulties with which psychologists have to contend in their study of religion. The first problem is in regard to the sanctity of the subject matter. Religious beliefs are eminently central to people's lives, and researchers are compelled to act with the utmost responsibility and respect toward their subjects in any endeavors to understand their spiritual beliefs.

The second difficulty psychologists face in their study of religion involves an examination of their own motives. As Batson and Ventis explain, many researchers are, by way of scientific investigation, engaged in an attempt to either extol the virtues of religion or conduct a smear campaign against religion. Researchers may have difficulty conducting truly objective studies in this field because of their own religious beliefs.

The third problem Batson and Ventis discuss is how best to approach the psychological study of religion: phenomenologically or empirically. Spilka, Hood and Gorsuch refer to this as either a subjective or objective approach to the psychology of religion (1985, p. 322). A phenomenological, or subjective investigation focuses on the
other worldly aspects of spiritual beliefs, relying on reflective, intuitive and qualitative methods. An empirical investigation, on the other hand, uses objective, quantitative methods often expressed in statistical-type statements. It is not surprising, given that religion both permeates and transcends everyday life, that researchers have difficulty deciding how best to assess and report religious experience.

In spite of these difficulties, a substantial body of research exists on the psychology of religion. The preeminent early work in this area was done by William James (1842-1910) who published *The Varieties of Religious Experience* in 1902. James used a clinical approach in his discussion on the uniqueness of religious and moral experience. According to Heiswig, James helped crystallize the tension between the empirical and introspective analyses that now characterizes the psychology of religion (1987). James' work has influenced and served as a reference point for much of the study that has been done through the years. Probably the most profound insight James gives is his description of the religious experience in a manner that most people can understand. His use of ordinary language rather than psychological terminology is both a strength and a frustration to his successors.(Byrnes, 1984, ch. 2).

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and Carl Jung (1875-1961) both developed theories on the psychology of religion which focused on unconscious conflict as a basis for religious belief. Freud's concerns were with the formation of beliefs and ethical behavior. He viewed
religious beliefs and rituals as projections of unconscious conflicts in which an individual is attempting to suppress and contain anti-social desires. Freud saw religion, like many other components of life, as a result of the libido instinct. Jung, on the other hand, represents what might be a more positive, health oriented approach to religion. He saw religious belief as part of the human's natural predisposition toward wholeness, an expression of the inclination within individuals to move toward unity and individuation (Heiswig, 1987; Byrnes, 1984, ch. 3).

If James, Freud and Jung represent the beginnings of a psychology of religion, Gordon Allport represents the merging of this subject with the scientific approach of modern psychology. Much of the empirical research currently being done in this field shows the influence of Allport's work. He understood that the individual ultimately transcends quantitative analysis or abstract theory. At the same time he developed theories and empirical instruments that continue to occupy an important position in the psychological study of religion (Heisman, 1987). Perhaps Allport's most noteworthy theory is his idea of intrinsic versus extrinsic religious motivation. This idea refers to whether people use their religion for personal gain, or whether they live their religion for its own sake. In other words, is religion a means or an end (Batson and Ventes, 1982, p. 143; Spilka et al., 1985, p. 18)?

Allport's intrinsic-extrinsic scale represents one facet of the answer to the broad question asked by religious psychologists: what do people get from religion? The current prevailing response is that,
through their religious beliefs, people assign reason and order to life's events. By so doing they gain meaning and sensibility in an otherwise chaotic, unpredictable life. This concept is referred to in literature as attribution theory (Spilka et al, 1985, p. 20). Simply put, religious beliefs allow individuals to make sense of what happens in life. Attributions are a response to the human need to know, to understand. Belief in a personal, interested God, for example, might allow one person to feel significant in an otherwise alienated existence. A second individual might make sense of catastrophe by understanding it as an unavoidable, unexplainable part of life. A third person will feel compelled to find some good in catastrophe. All three people are attributing meaning and sense to the happenings of life. How and why persons form and use attributions is the primary question toward which the psychology of religion is directed. What factors influence individual attributions, and how do they help people cope with life?

Spilka et al. suggest that many elements influence the making of attributions, including different dispositional factors or personality characteristics and traits. According to these authors, individual belief in internal or external locus of control is one of these factors (p. 25). Whether individuals see themselves as agents of control over their own destinies or as players in a game largely beyond their control will affect the sorts of attributions they form. Therefore, understanding the individual's belief in locus of control might contribute to understanding that person's religious beliefs. Before
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exploring the fundamentalist in this light, however, it is necessary to
discuss the locus of control construct more thoroughly.
The Locus of Control Construct

Internal-External locus of control refers to a personality dimension that was first described by Julian Rotter (1966). According to Rotter, individuals have varying beliefs about how responsible they are for the events that happen in their lives. Those persons described as having an internal locus of control tend to believe that their fate is in their own hands. Their successes as well as their failures are largely the result of their own actions. Conversely, individuals described as having an external locus of control tend to believe that what happens to them is mostly the result of external factors such as chance, luck or powerful others (Geis, 1978, pp. 196-198).

Rotter devised a scale to measure the extent to which individuals exhibit a belief in internal or external locus of control. Each item on the scale requires subjects to choose either an internal or an external response. One question, for example, asks subjects to choose either (A) When I make plans, I am almost certain that I can make them work; or (B) It is not always wise to plan too far ahead because many things turn out to be a matter of good or bad fortune anyhow. Rotter said regarding his I-E scale:

A careful reading of the items will make it clear that the items deal exclusively with the subjects' belief about the nature of the world. That is, they are concerned with the subjects'
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expectations about how reinforcement is controlled. Consequently, the test is considered to be a measure of a generalized expectancy (1966).

Rotter described locus of control as one of the variables which affects individuals' choices. He proposed that, based on past experiences and reinforcements, individuals develop expectations about whether or not their behaviors are the cause of subsequent events. He referred to this expectancy as internal-external locus of control. For example, a young girl with an abusive mother finds that, no matter what she does, her mother continues to abuse her. The girl's inability to prevent abuse is generalized to other situations and she eventually develops a belief that her own behavior does not mediate the rewards and punishments she experiences in life. She has developed a belief in an external locus of control. Another child's father takes her out for a treat every Saturday afternoon, provided the child has done her chores. If she fails to do her work, her father does not take her out. This child is beginning to understand that what happens in her life is often contingent upon her own behavior. She is developing a belief in internal locus of control. According to Rotter, a belief in internal or external locus of control is one of the variables that affects decision making and problem solving throughout life.

Originally, locus of control was not described as a generalized personality characteristic. I-E locus of control was seen as a single variable which helped to explain how people make choices. With the
development of various scales to measure the construct, however, locus of control has come to be viewed as a personality trait or a typology (Lefcourt, 1982, p. 3). Appropriately or not, both internal and external locus of control have come to be associated with particular personality characteristics.

Internal locus of control has been paired with potency, assertiveness, effectiveness and the ability to resist influence (Corsini, 1984). According to Lefcourt, one of the most demonstrated and significant characteristics of persons displaying internal locus of control is their ability to resist the influence of others. Internal locus of control has been correlated with less likelihood to conform to consensual judgment of others and less tendency to conform to opinions of higher status other persons (Crowne & Liverant, 1963; Ryckman, Rodda & Sherman, 1972, respectively, cited in Lefcourt, 1982, ch. 4). Lefcourt wrote that internal locus of control can act as a bulwark against the unquestioning submission to authority.

Studies have shown that those with an internal locus of control make use of cognitive activities that support a sense of personal causation rather than abdication of responsibility. Internal locus of control has been correlated with seeking out and using pertinent information. Not only do those with internal locus of control gather more information, but they tend to make better use of their information than do those with external locus of control (Seeman and Evans, 1962; Davis and Phares, 1967; Phares, 1968; all cited in Lefcourt, ch. 4). As
Lefcourt writes, "an internal locus of control seems to be a sine qua non of being able to steer oneself more clearly and appropriately through the vagaries and confusions of different situations."

In contrast, external locus of control has come to be associated with helplessness and passiveness. Individuals who express belief in an external locus of control have been found to be more susceptible to influence than those displaying a belief in internal locus of control, especially when confronted with high sources of prestige (Crowne & Liverant, 1963, cited in Lefcourt). Geis explains that psychologists initially viewed external locus of control as less healthy than internal locus of control. She points out, however, that some studies have shown that external control should be separated into belief in control by chance, fate, or luck on the one hand and powerful others on the other hand. While belief in luck, chance and fate may lead to passivity and helplessness, belief in powerful others as agents of external control may lead to efforts to regain control from those others. For example, those who are economically disadvantaged may be realistic in their belief that the "system" is largely in control of their lives. By fighting the system, however, they may regain some sense of personal control. In this regard, not all individuals with a belief in external locus of control should be seen as maladjusted (1978, pp. 196-198).

Since Rotter's initial work with the locus of control construct, other researchers have refined the concept, adding specialized scales in an attempt to further understand locus of control. Multidimensional
scales have been developed to analyse various agents of external control, that is, what agents other than the self affect what happens in life. Examples of these are the Reid-Ware Three-Factor Internal-External Scale which measures self-control, social systems control and fatalism and Hannah Levenson's three factor measure of locus of control that consists of internality, control by powerful others, and control by chance (Lefcourt, 1982, ch. 11). These and other variations of Rotter's I-E scale were developed in part to isolate and measure specific agents or sources of external control.

Along with chance, political and social systems, and powerful others, researchers have looked to religious systems as possible agents of external control. Psychologists have attempted to discover correlations between various aspects of religiousness and internal-external locus of control. One dimension of religiousness that has received attention in this regard is fundamental versus modern religious beliefs. In order to explore the relationship between locus of control and fundamental versus modern stance, it is necessary to examine the nature of fundamentalism.
For the purposes of this discussion, "fundamental religion" will mean Western Protestant Fundamentalism rather than a broader understanding of fundamentalism which would include, for instance, Islamic fundamentalism. While many denominational groups contain fundamentalist subgroups, this discussion will focus on Protestant fundamentalism as represented by persons such as Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, who might be called moderately fundamental. There are those who are more extreme than Falwell and Robertson, and there are those who are less extreme. For example, while Falwell refers to himself as a fundamentalist, some of his more extreme fundamentalist critics call him a compromiser, (Cox, 1984, p.34). The difficulty of deciding who is fundamentalist and who is not appears throughout the literature on fundamentalism and will be explored more thoroughly in the following sections. One author wrote that any definition of religion is likely to be satisfactory only to its author (Yinger, cited in Spilka et al., p. 4). This may be especially true in the case of fundamental religion.

The Fundamentalist Movement

What is now referred to as fundamentalism was originally a response to two 19th century developments: higher criticism and
Darwinism. Higher criticism refers to a method of interpreting the Bible in which science and reason are used in the interpretation of scripture, even at the expense of belief in an inerrant Bible. Darwinism refers to the earliest description of evolutionary theory. Darwin's theory was seen as a threat to the literal interpretation of scripture because his explanation of creation was thought to differ considerably from Biblical accounts of creation. Darwinism and higher criticism, because of their reliance on scientific methods and discovery, were seen as an attack on the orthodox beliefs held dear by many Americans. Central to the hostility directed toward these movements was the supposition by traditional religious groups that acceptance of the claims of higher criticism or Darwinism meant a rejection of the Bible. Protecting the truthfulness of the Bible became the primary focus of many orthodox religious groups. In 1902 the Bible League of North America was established to "meet and counteract the current destructive teaching concerning the truthfulness, integrity and inspiration of the Bible as the word of God" (Furness, cites Bible Student & Teacher, 1908). In 1910 The Fundamentals, a set of twelve small pamphlets which condemned higher criticism & Darwinism, was published. These pamphlets contained the doctrines that are the basic tenets of fundamental religious belief: belief in the infallibility of scripture; belief in the virgin birth of Jesus; belief in substitutionary atonement for sin; belief in the bodily resurrection and second coming of Jesus (Furness, 1954, pp. 12-16). Eventually 3,000,000 copies of
The Fundamentals were distributed, and from that publication fundamentalism derived its name (Pelikan, 1990, p. 3).

The vehemence with which fundamentalists stood against modernism linked their theological beliefs to a defensive, militaristic stance toward society which many observers of religious movements continue to associate with the most extreme sector of fundamentalism today. Perhaps that association explains the discomfort many feel with the term "fundamentalist." Barr explains that the people whom others call fundamentalists would generally wish to be known by another term altogether, thinking of themselves as just "Christians" or "true Christians" (1978, pp. 2-4). He explains that the word fundamentalist carries the suggestion of narrowness, bigotry, and sectarianism, an image many wish to shed.

Perhaps the most obvious example of the problem of defining fundamentalism is seen in the often fuzzy distinction between fundamentalism and evangelicalism. Researchers generally agree that fundamentalists and evangelicals maintain similar theological beliefs. J.D. Hunter, Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Virginia, demonstrates this point in his book, American Evangelicalism, (1983) as he develops evangelicalism within the same theological and historical traditions as fundamentalism, making no differentiation between the two groups until the emergence of neo-evangelicalism in the 1940's (ch. 3). Harvey Cox, Professor of Divinity at Harvard Divinity School, reiterates this when he explains that, while there are
differences between fundamentalism and evangelicalism, the differences are by and large not ones of theology, (1984, p. 46). Both Cox and Hunter see the primary difference between fundamentalists and evangelicals as being one of posture toward modernism. While the theology and message of the two groups are almost identical, fundamentalists have historically maintained a negative stance toward the modern world. In the 1940s, the evangelicals demonstrated a more positive trend in which separatism remained important, but was defined in more positive terms. Instead of focusing on a sinful world which must be avoided, evangelicals concentrated on proving the superiority of their faith, providing more appealing reasons for remaining separate from modernism (p.48).

At the same time that Hunter makes this distinction, he also indicates that it is difficult to determine clear types in the discussion of typologies within evangelicalism. He refers to Quebedeaux's construct which is based on the various demeanors which evangelicals exhibit toward the modern world. Quebedeaux includes separatist fundamentalists, open fundamentalists, establishment evangelicals, new evangelicals and young evangelicals (p. 9). While the distinguishing differences between the groups tend to be somewhat arbitrary and unclear, Quebedeaux's construct does provide a useful model for understanding the relationship between fundamentalism and evangelicalism.
Clark Pinnock, Professor of Systematic Theology at McMaster Divinity College, describes two subgroups he sees as existing within fundamentalism. One subgroup is strict and separatist, insistent on maintaining an uncompromising stance against any hints of modernism. The other subgroup is an open fundamentalism, which holds theological doctrines similar to the doctrines of the separatist group, but is more open about education and more self critical, a kind of modern expression of fundamentalism (1990, pp. 43-46). In Pinnock's opinion, it is difficult to establish the difference between open fundamentalism and evangelicalism.

George Marsden, Professor of the History of Christianity in America at the Divinity School, Duke University, believes that evangelical practice has three aspects. (1) Evangelicals maintain a belief in the Bible as the inerrant and authoritative word of God. (2) Evangelicals claim that salvation is possible only through Jesus. And (3) Evangelicals witness to others about their beliefs. According to Marsden, fundamentalists hold these same beliefs, but actively fight against other theologies (1990, p. 23). In his opinion, this militant stance is one of the leading features that distinguishes fundamentalism from other forms of revivalist evangelicalism. In spite of this predominant distinguishing feature, other researchers are less able to differentiate between the two groups so readily. In Barr's opinion, the question of whether individuals are fundamental or conservative evangelical is almost one of terminology. According to
him, while the vocabulary may differ, the beliefs and practices remain similar (p.3).

Kathleen Boone (1989) explains that, while there are things in the evangelical outlook that are bound to offend the fundamentalist and vice versa, overall there is a great deal of common ground within the two groups. In her opinion, fundamentalism and evangelicalism are a single discourse, arising from belief in the sole authority of an inerrant Bible, called fundamentalism (p. 10). While the expression “fundamental” might be aversive to many, she argues that any choice of terminology will offend somebody. Some do not wish to be categorized by the expression “evangelical” any more than others prefer to be called “fundamental”. Clearly, evangelicalism and fundamentalism are not the same. They can, however, be understood as being members of the same family.

The Fundamentalist Theology and Personality

So far the description of fundamentalism has focused on the movement itself. In order to explore the relationship between fundamentalism and locus of control, however, it is necessary to examine the theology and personality of fundamentalism. The term “personality” alludes to the idea that within fundamentalism there exists not only a set of theological beliefs, but also a particular way of thinking about and acting upon those beliefs. Boone points this out when she refers to fundamentalism as a tendency, or a habit of mind, rather than simply a movement or phenomenon (p. 10). Therefore, it is
important to understand that fundamentalism is not just a group of individuals defending a set of theological beliefs; it is also a very particular personal demeanor which is associated with those beliefs.

The attitudes and actions associated with fundamentalism create the unique image that comes to mind for many people when they hear the word "fundamentalist." Because the demeanor is so closely intertwined with religious beliefs it is impossible to isolate the fundamentalist's personality from his or her theology and spiritual creeds. For this reason, a study of locus of control in fundamentalists must be set in the context of their beliefs. How does their spirituality demonstrate an internal or external locus of control?

In order to respond to this question it is essential to understand the extent to which the fundamentalist's belief in God permeates every facet of his or her life. The individual thoroughly and persistently defers to the authority of God in almost every aspect of life. Inherent in this constant deference is the assumption that God is ultimately in charge and therefore must be consulted and obeyed in regard to even the smallest details of life. In this sense God might be understood as being an external agent of control in the fundamentalist's life.

While the fundamentalist undeniably sees God as fully in control of life's events, the individual's behavior very definitely affects his or her relationship with God. For example, in order to know and do God's will, the fundamentalist relies on activities such as praying, reading the Bible and participating in church activities. When these activities
are carried out, the fundamentalist believes that he or she is maintaining a healthy relationship with God. If, however, the individual chooses a life of sinfulness instead of righteous Christian behavior, the relationship with God is disrupted. From this vantage point it is obvious that, while God is ultimately in charge, the individual shares responsibility with God for what happens in his or her life.

Clearly, exploring locus of control within fundamentalism is complicated. Locus of control is normally described as a somewhat dichotomous quality: individuals are thought to display belief in either an internal or external locus of control. In fundamentalism, however, a belief in both internal and external locus of control is possible. Individual behaviors are internally chosen and directed toward an external agent of control. The following discussion will demonstrate that God and the individual are both agents of control within fundamentalism. Specifically, fundamentalist beliefs about the Bible, prayer, and the second coming of Christ will be explored in order to understand how both an internal and external locus of control might be found in fundamentalist congregations. Because belief in the inerrancy of scripture is central to fundamentalism, the role of the Bible will be discussed first.

The fundamentalist movement began as a defensive organization developed to protect the Bible as the inerrant, sole, authoritative word of God. Inerrancy is the belief that the Bible, as the word of God, is free of errors, contradictions, paradoxes or inconsistencies. Every
word can be firmly trusted and believed (Sandeen, ch. 5). This basic

tenet is the distinguishing mark of fundamentalism and permeates
every aspect of fundamental religion. To the fundamentalist, because
the Bible is God's word, reliance on the minute details of scriptures is
tantamount to reliance on God.

James Barr, Professor of the Interpretation of Holy Scripture at
Oxford University, explains that this trust in the Bible as God's
authoritative word offers the fundamentalist absolute objectivity. Barr
writes that for many Christians:

there is indeed an objective reality which is the authority
standing over against them, but for them the objectivity is to be
found in Christ as a person and not in the Bible; for
fundamentalists the objectivity lies in the Bible. Faith in
Christ cannot be considered grounded in objectivity unless the
principle of biblical authority is fully conceded....the fact that a
man says he believes in Christ does not seem objective to
them, you can't trust that or rely on it, but if he believes in the
Bible as infallible and inerrant then that seems to lend
objectivity (1978, p. 312).

According to Barr, for the fundamentalist objectivity comes to mean
that truth is not in people. To gain reliable objectivity, it is necessary
to look to something beyond the realm of human personal life. While
the writers of scripture were themselves persons, Barr explains that
the fundamentalist does not trust them on that basis. He or she trusts
them because what they wrote was divinely inspired by God. Barr's position is that inerrancy of scripture is one of the devices that makes the Bible into an objective reality that stands over against human thoughts and opinions.

The insistence on a source of objective truth completely separate from the individual may be a response to the notion that humans are characterized by sinfulness. Barr describes this concept of sinfulness as an emphasis not on a list of particular sins, but on a universal and almost metaphysical character of sin (p.26). This idea is commonly referred to as the doctrine of original sin (Fox, 1983, pp. 9-29). According to those who hold this view, people do not just commit sins, they are sinful in nature. Perhaps this understanding of human sinfulness causes fundamentalists to resist placing trust in themselves, preferring instead to turn to other sources of authority, in particular the Bible.

J. Gresham Machen, the last of the Princeton theologians associated with the fundamentalist movement in the early 1900s sums this perspective up succinctly when he writes, "Christianity is founded on the Bible. [Christian] Liberalism on the other hand is founded on the shifting emotions of sinful men" (cited in Boone, p. 23). Jerry Falwell echoed this statement in 1981 when he wrote:

In our attempt to rally a diversity of morally conservative Americans together in Moral Majority, we were convinced that millions of people were fed up with the fruits of liberalism
both in politics and in religion. I am well aware that it is unpopular in some circles to equate the two. But I say that they must be viewed as cousins of the same family because both rest upon the same foundational presupposition of the inherent goodness of mankind. The ultimate product of theological liberalism is a vague kind of religious humanism that is devoid of any true Gospel content (cited in The New Religious Right, p. 23).

Falwell obviously does not believe in the inherent goodness of humankind but rather sees humans as essentially sinful. Rather than trusting flawed humans, he and other fundamentalists look to the Bible in order to find a reliable, objective source of truth.

Mortimer Ostow, Visiting Professor of Pastoral Psychiatry at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, explains that the need to consider scripture inerrant and to subscribe to a fixed and rigid creed suggests a reluctance to tolerate doubt, uncertainty and ambiguity. In his view, insistence on the Bible as the absolute, objective source of truth may offer fundamentalists a certainty which is appealing in an uncertain and unpredictable world (1990, p.101). Ostow's analysis of the psychological gain from belief in an inerrant Bible fits well with attribution theory. As Spilka et al. explain in their discussion of attribution theory, religion provides meaning and allows individuals to "make sense out of an unpredictable life" (1985, pp. 12-13).

Lack of trust in the self and the need for certainty and predictability are the two components of fundamentalism that suggest
that a belief in an external locus of control might be found in fundamentalist populations. The previous discussion on locus of control pointed out that two key characteristics of persons displaying internal locus of control are (1) the ability to resist influence; and (2) the ability to resist conforming to the judgments and opinions of others. In order to resist the influence of others and follow one's own inclination, self-trust must be present. One would not expect to find individuals with self-trust, individuals who display an internal locus of control, to be comfortable in fundamentalism where self-trust is disparaged.

The fundamentalist need for predictability also leads one to expect a belief in external locus of control in fundamentalist populations. It is reasonable to theorize that the less predictability an individual finds in life, the more he or she might be drawn to the highly structured belief system of fundamentalism. If the desire that fundamentalists demonstrate for certainty is in part due to a sense of unpredictability about life, one would expect to find that expressed in the external direction on a locus of control measurement. External locus of control is, after all, indicative of a belief that events are beyond the control of the individual and that predictability is not a function of the individual's actions.

Therefore, belief in the inerrancy of scripture is one factor related to the expectation of external locus of control in fundamentalist groups. It is important to remember, however, that the
Bible itself is not the external agent of control. The Bible is trusted for only one reason: it is the authoritative word of God. The individual's role is to study the scriptures in order to know exactly what it is God says and wants. While deference to the authority of God might be displayed as external locus of control, individual responsibility to study the Bible would be displayed as internal locus of control within fundamentalist groups. God is looked to as the ultimate source of authority in all matters, but the individual is responsible for seeking God through the Bible. Elements of both internal and external locus of control coexist in this powerful relationship between belief and behavior.

Another aspect of fundamentalism which supports the expectation of finding a belief in both internal and external locus of control is reliance on prayer. Prayer accompanies every move of the fundamentalist, who is fearful of the consequences of acting outside of the will of God. Prayer changes things: decisions are made, people are saved, money is gotten. Believers can ask God to do things (Boone, 1989, pp. 92-93; Barr, 1978, p. 32). Perhaps even more than the belief in an inerrant Bible, prayer exemplifies the interaction between the fundamentalist's beliefs and behaviors. God, as an external agent of control, is being prayed to, yet there remains a firm understanding that prayer is a personal responsibility and choice. Once again, the individual is expected to behave in a particular manner in order to be a responsible Christian. It is difficult to measure locus of control in an
individual who, by praying about the smallest details of life, is exhibiting a belief in both an external and internal source of control over life's events.

The eschatology of fundamentalism is perhaps the clearest example of why one would expect to find a belief in external locus of control among fundamentalists. The belief that Jesus is going to return to earth soon and establish his kingdom is one of the fundamentals of the faith. Harvey Cox refers to this belief in the imminent second coming of Christ as one of the reasons that fundamentalists have not involved themselves in correcting social problems. If Jesus is going to come soon and fix everything, why bother attempting to make changes now? According to Cox, this type of fatalism produces a cynical sense of powerlessness, or what he calls a religious pathology. The prevailing attitude becomes ‘if it's going to happen, let it happen soon’ (1984, pp. 44-65). The fundamentalist belief in the imminent second coming of Christ is the most obvious example of God as an external agent of control within fundamentalism. Therefore, the eschatology of fundamentalism contributes to the expectation of finding a belief in an external locus of control within fundamentalist groups.

Assessing locus of control in a fundamentalist population is a complicated task. One problem is that it is impossible to measure the magnitude of unpredictability and lack of internal locus of control experienced by fundamentalists separate from the certainty and control provided them by their religious beliefs. In other words, measuring
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pure locus of control in fundamentalist groups, aside from the influence of their religious beliefs, is not possible. Once the highly structured religious system is in place, predictability and control are in place. God, as an external agent of control, offers internal control to the individual who establishes a relationship with God through salvation and Christian behavior. The relationship is mutually maintained by grace, forgiveness and revelation on God's part and behaviors such as prayer, Bible reading, and other Christian activities on the individual's part. The fundamentalist's belief that God and the individual share responsibility for what happens in life explains the contradictory results found in empirical studies on locus of control within fundamentalist groups.
Fundamentalism and Locus of Control: An Empirical Study

The belief in both internal and external locus of control within fundamentalism might explain some of the inconclusive or contradictory results found in the literature on locus of control and religious populations. Many researchers have been unable to establish a relationship between locus of control and religious belief. Benson and Spilka (1973) predicted that those who indicated belief in a controlling, powerful, demanding God would be likely to report an external locus of control. They found, however, that locus of control was unrelated to beliefs about a controlling God. Sexton, Leak and Toenies (1980) predicted that individuals with strong certainty of belief would be inclined toward an external locus of control because of their belief in a God who influences the details of daily life. However, no correlation between certainty of belief and locus of control score was found. Randall and Derosiers (1980) were also unable to link locus of control to religious belief in their study on supernaturalism and locus of control. These results demonstrate that, in spite of researchers predictions, it has been difficult to find a correlation between religious beliefs and external locus of control.

Not all studies on religious belief and locus of control, however, have been so inconclusive. Furnham (1982) found that, as predicted, fundamental clergy tested more internal than did liberal clergy.
Jackson and Coursey (1988) argued against the notion that belief in God means relinquishing personal control, particularly within the black culture. They found, as they had predicted, that their Black Baptist sample tested internal on Rotter's I-E scale.

The question, then, is why would fundamentalists, who exhibit a strong belief in God as an external agent of control, display only internal locus of control scores. One possibility is that the forced choice format of many I-E scales does not allow for the possibility of a continuum on which both internal and external locus of control might be demonstrated. Individuals are forced to choose between two dichotomous possibilities: internal or external. For example, Rotter's scale requires subjects to choose between (A) In my case getting what I want has little or nothing to do with luck; and (B) Many times we might just as well decide what to do by flipping a coin. Why then have fundamentalists historically chosen internal responses, when the existence of an external agent of control seems apparent?

Gabbard, Howard & Tageson (1986) suggest that fundamentalists might choose against the external agents of control typically identified on I-E scales. In other words, they might be reluctant to state that chance, fate or luck play a role in a world controlled by God. In order to avoid choosing those answers they are necessarily directed toward internal choices, whether or not they believe in an internal locus of control. Gabbard et al. addressed this problem by designing a religious revision of the Rotter I-E scale. They replaced words such as "luck",

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"chance" and "fate" with words like "supernatural" or "spiritual forces." For instance, they reworded the item from Rotter's I-E scale so that it reads: (A) In my case getting what I want has little or nothing to do with spiritual guidance; and (B) Many times we might just as well decide what to do by relying on powerful others. When they administered their revised Rotter I-E scale to a fundamentalist population and a college population, they found that subjects in the highly religious population tested significantly more external on the revised scale than on the standard Rotter I-E scale. Their results demonstrated the usefulness of adjusting locus of control scales to make them appropriate for subpopulations.

One possible problem with the study by Gabbard et al. is that when they revised Rotter's I-E scale they retained its forced choice format. Therefore, the results they obtained from their college population might reflect a bias against religious external responses regardless of the students' belief in internal or external locus of control. The purpose of this study was to use a modified I-E scale to assess and compare locus of control in fundamental and liberal populations. It is predicted that fundamentalists will score more external than liberals on the revised locus of control scale.

Method

Subjects

147 adult Protestant church attenders served as volunteer subjects. The volunteers were from two denominations: Assembly of
God (fundamental) and United Church of Christ (liberal). 26 subjects failed to complete the survey according to the given directions and their surveys were not included in the data analysis. Of the remaining 121 subjects, 85 liberals and 36 fundamentalists were identified on the basis of denominational affiliation and responses to a religious beliefs questionnaire (See Appendix A). 18 of the fundamentalists were women and 18 were men; their ages ranged from 25 to 63. There were 29 men and 53 women in the liberal group, and their ages ranged from 15 to 79. (Three liberal subjects did not indicate sex).

Materials
In the current study, eight questions were chosen from a religious revision of Rotter's I-E scale. In an attempt to eliminate the possibility of a response bias, a Likert-type scale was used with four possible choices: strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, somewhat agree, and strongly agree. The questionnaire contained eight internal, eight external and eight filler items (see Appendix B).

The religious beliefs questionnaire was a four item forced-choice survey of beliefs associated with either fundamentalist or liberal religious ideology. The purpose of the religious beliefs questionnaire was to validate the religious orientation of the two experimental groups.

Procedure
During their Sunday morning services members of two church congregations were asked to participate in a student's research
Members of the liberal congregation received sealed questionnaires inserted in their Sunday morning bulletin two weeks following the initial request for participation. Members were asked to refrain from opening the surveys until after the morning service, at which time those interested in participating completed the questionnaires.

Subjects in the fundamentalist congregation were asked on Sunday morning to participate in the survey which was to be conducted that evening. Immediately following the evening service, those interested in participating received and completed the surveys. Participants in both groups were informed about the purpose of the study following the collection of surveys.

Results

Surveys were scored so that higher scores were indicative of an external locus of control and lower scores were indicative of an internal locus of control. The mean score for the liberal group was 42.72, S.D. 5.27. The mean score for the fundamentalist group was 46.11, S.D. 3.79. A t-test was performed to see if one group mean differed significantly from the other. As predicted, fundamentalist subjects scored significantly more in the external direction than did liberal subjects, t(d.f. 119) = 3.4964, p < .0005.
Discussion

In the present study fundamentalists scored significantly more external on a religious revision of Rotter's I-E locus of control scale than did liberals. These results support the theory that fundamental religious stance is correlated with a belief in external locus of control. When spiritual or supernatural powers are identified as agents of control (as opposed to chance, fate or luck) fundamentalists seem more willing to choose locus of control responses that are in the external direction. The fundamentalists' preference for very particular terminology was addressed earlier in the discussion on the inerrancy of scripture. That preference may be reflected in their unwillingness to identify generic factors, such as fate or chance, as external agents of control. Because correct terminology is so important to the fundamentalist, using religious revisions of the standard locus of control scales might be the most effective way to measure locus of control within fundamentalist groups.

While the present results support a belief in external locus of control within fundamentalism, these results do not invalidate the findings of previous studies. The discussion on fundamentalism demonstrated how thoroughly the fundamentalist believes that personal behavior affects his or her relationship with God. God is the ultimate authority, but the individual must act out his or her faith with Christian behaviors such as scripture reading, prayer, and church participation. Because individual responsibility is central to the
fundamentalist way of life, a belief in internal locus of control is as consistent with fundamentalism as is a belief in external locus of control.

External locus of control may mean something different for fundamentalists than it does for other groups who display a belief in external locus of control. Fundamentalists differ from other external-oriented groups in that the fundamentalist chooses to believe in God as an external agent of control. Many people who have a belief in external locus of control have not chosen that belief. For these people life experiences have led them to a belief that events in their lives are not contingent on their behavior. For example, victims of abuse have learned that outside forces have more control over their lives than they themselves do. They have not chosen that belief, they have learned it. Individuals with low socio-economic status face a reality where the system exerts more control over the events in their lives than they themselves do. Again, their belief in the system as an external agent of control results from their life experience rather than from a freely made choice. Fundamentalists differ in their understanding of external locus of control in that they choose God as an external agent of control. Their choice is an expression of belief in internal locus of control, as well as a decision to direct their personal control toward a higher, greater external agent of control.

External locus of control is generally associated with less desirable personality traits than is internal locus of control. Because
fundamentalists choose an external locus of control, however, the negative characteristics often associated with belief in external locus of control may not be present. For example, fundamentalists might not display the passivity and helplessness that is thought to accompany external locus of control in other groups. Their ability to manage stressful situations might be enhanced rather than weakened as a result of their belief that God and the individual share responsibility for life's happenings.

One possible unhealthy response to belief in God as an external agent of control is that fundamentalists might underestimate their own ability to make positive changes in their lives. Situations that are less than ideal, such as job dissatisfaction or family problems, might be prayerfully tolerated rather than actively changed. Because fundamentalists' religious beliefs permeate every aspect of their lives, it might be difficult for them to determine what situations should be left to God and what situations should be taken into their own hands.

Another problem that fundamentalists might experience in regard to their belief in external locus of control is the perpetuation of lack of self-trust. Fundamentalists are called upon to trust the authority of the Bible, the authority of the church, the authority of God. They are not called upon to trust the authority of themselves, unless their views are consistent with the views of fundamental religion. As long as members of fundamentalist groups maintain their fundamentalist beliefs, they are not likely to experience the problems which lack of
self-trust generates. They simply defer to their religious beliefs when they need to.

If, however, a member of a fundamentalist group begins to relinquish his or her fundamental religious beliefs, he or she may experience problems. The individual who takes it for granted that his or her inclinations are not trustworthy is unlikely to exert much influence over the events that happen in life. In a cyclical fashion, those who do not make attempts to influence what happens to them are not likely to gain a sense that their inclinations are trustworthy. Those persons who leave fundamentalism might retain a residual lack of self-trust. Their fundamentalist background may leave them vulnerable to other authoritative systems which become for them new external agents of control.

Research with the locus of control construct in fundamentalist groups has provided psychologists with valuable insights into how fundamentalists' behaviors are related to their beliefs. For the fundamentalist, deferring to God does not necessarily mean losing the ability to affect what happens in life. Fundamentalist beliefs paradoxically allow the individual to maintain some control at the same time that he or she surrenders control. The fundamentalists' display of belief in both an internal and an external locus of control is not contradictory; it is an accurate assessment of how fundamentalists see themselves and God existing together in the world.
Perhaps the most compelling finding in the current research is that the locus of control construct can be successfully adjusted for use with particular subpopulations. Applying the locus of control construct effectively in a particular population requires researchers to question what a belief in external or internal locus of control specifically implies for that population. Who or what is the agent of control? Furthermore, is the relationship between the subject and the external agent of control chosen or not? By responding to these questions, and interpreting empirical results accordingly, researchers will gain an enhanced understanding of the locus of control construct as it applies to specific populations.
References


Appendix A

Spiritual Beliefs Questionnaire

For each question, please choose a single response which best describes your views. Please choose as quickly as possible, keeping in mind that there are no right or wrong answers. You may circle the letter which corresponds with your response. Thank you.

1. A. I believe that the Bible must be interpreted literally and is completely free of error.

B. I believe some of the Bible can be interpreted symbolically and may contain inaccuracies.

2. A. I believe that there are many ways to have a relationship with God.

B. I believe that in order to have a relationship with God an individual must be born again in Christ.

3. A. I believe that reading the Bible is the best way to know God's will.

B. I believe that prayerful reflection on my experiences is the best way to know God's will.

4. A. I believe that I have a spiritual responsibility to live in such a way that my beliefs are evident to those around me.

B. I believe that I have a spiritual responsibility to tell others why I live my beliefs.
Please provide the following information:

Age_____________ Sex_____________

Denominational Affiliation, if any__________________________

Please circle the world which best describes your religious viewpoints:

Evangelical  Modern  Traditional  Liberal  Conservative  Fundamental
Appendix B

Questionnaire

For each statement listed below, please choose the response which best fits your views. The responses are as follows: 1) strongly disagree; 2) disagree somewhat; 3) agree somewhat; 4) strongly agree. It is important to choose as quickly as possible, keeping in mind that there are no right answers. Please choose only one number for each statement. Thank you.

1. Many of the unhappy things in people's lives are partly due to the forces of spiritual powers.

2. Becoming a success is a matter of hard work, no other powerful forces are at work.

3. I have often found that what is going to happen will happen.

4. One should always be willing to admit his or her mistakes.

5. Who becomes the boss depends on who was fortunate enough or chosen to be in the right place first.

6. There is some good in everybody.

7. Many times we might just as well decide what to do by relying on spiritual forces.

8. Without God's help, one cannot be a truly effective leader.
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Heredity plays the major role in determining one's personality. 1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Getting a good job depends mainly on being in the right place at the right time. 1 2 3 4</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>People's misfortunes most often result from the mistakes they make. 1 2 3 4</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>Getting people to do the right thing depends mostly on ability: powerful spiritual forces have little or nothing to do with it. 1 2 3 4</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>In the long run, people get the respect they deserve in this world. 1 2 3 4</td>
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<td>14.</td>
<td>Capable people who fail to become leaders are not taken advantage of their opportunities. 1 2 3 4</td>
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<td>15.</td>
<td>Trusting to spiritual powers has often not turned out as well for me as making a decision to take a definite course of action. 1 2 3 4</td>
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<td>16.</td>
<td>It is usually best to cover up one's mistakes. 1 2 3 4</td>
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<td>17.</td>
<td>In my case getting what I want has little or nothing to do with spiritual forces at work. 1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Most people can't realize the extent to which their lives are controlled by supernatural happenings which humans can't understand. 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Many times I feel that I have little influence over the things that happen to me. 1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>A good leader expects people to decide for themselves what they should do. 1 2 3 4</td>
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21. It is difficult for me to believe that supernatural or spiritual forces play an important role in my life.

22. It is one's experiences in life which determine what they're like.

23. It is hard to know whether or not a person really likes you.

24. There really is no such thing as providence fortune.