

# Commentary

## THE HOPE OF FUNDAMENTALISTS

Sheena Sethi<sup>1</sup> and Martin E P Seligman<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Stanford University and <sup>2</sup>University of Pennsylvania

In "Optimism and Fundamentalism," we (Sethi & Seligman, 1993) indicated that members of the fundamentalist faiths (e.g., Muslims, Orthodox Jews, and Calvinists) are more optimistic than members of moderate faiths (e.g., Conservative Jews, Catholics, Lutherans, and Methodists), who are in turn more optimistic than members of liberal faiths (e.g., Reform Jews and Unitarians). Following the recommendation of Kroll (this issue, pp 56-57), we now present the data about which dimensions led to greater optimism with more fundamentalism.

There are three dimensions of explanatory style: internality, stability, and globality. Kroll asks if the differences with fundamentalism still hold when internality is excluded. There are two widely used statistics of the data that exclude internality: Hopefulness (HP) is derived through summing dimensions of stability-instability and globality-specificity for positive events within the Attributional Style Questionnaire (ASQ). The hopelessness (HN) score sums across these dimensions for negative events. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed significant differences among the fundamentalists, moderates, and liberals in their HP scores for positive events,  $F(2, 601) = 6.32, p < .002$ . The mean HN score for negative events also showed significant differences among the fundamentalists, moderates, and liberals,  $F(2, 601) = 2.65, p$

$< .007$ . As shown in the paired comparisons of Table 1, fundamentalists had significantly higher HP scores than moderates and liberals, while liberals had significantly higher HN scores than fundamentalists. These findings indicate that even after internality-externality is removed, fundamentalism is associated with higher levels of optimism and hope.

A separate analysis was conducted on the third dimension of the questionnaire, internality-externality. ANOVA indicated that the internality score for negative events (IN) significantly differed across the three groups,  $F(2, 601) = 10.96, p < .00001$ . As Table 1 shows, fundamentalists and moderates had more optimistic IN scores than liberals. This result suggests that fundamentalists and moderates are less likely to attribute their failures to themselves. The internality score for positive events (IP), however, did not differ across the fundamentalists, moderates, and liberals,  $F(2, 601) = 0.01, n.s.$  This finding suggests that fundamentalists are no more likely than moderates and liberals to attribute their successes to themselves.

So the greater optimism among fundamentalists stems from three factors. Fundamentalism is associated with more hopefulness and less hopelessness. Fundamentalism is also associated with less personal blame for negative events.

### REFERENCES

- Sethi, S., & Seligman, M. E. P. (1993). Optimism and fundamentalism. *Psychological Science*, 4, 256-259.

Address correspondence to Sheena Sethi, Department of Psychology, Stanford University, Jordan Hall Bldg 420, Stanford, CA 94305-2130.

**Table 1** Differences in optimism

Group	CPCN	CP	CN	HP	HN	IP	IN
Fundamentalists	3.16 <sup>a</sup> (2.84)	15.59 <sup>a</sup> (2.05)	12.43 <sup>a</sup> (2.62)	11.63 <sup>a</sup> (2.18)	8.27 <sup>a</sup> (2.32)	3.7 <sup>abc</sup> (2.16)	3.89 <sup>a</sup> (2.5)
Moderates	1.95 <sup>b</sup> (3.17)	14.34 <sup>b</sup> (2.72)	12.42 <sup>ab</sup> (2.29)	10.55 <sup>b</sup> (2.19)	8.5 <sup>ab</sup> (1.91)	3.73 <sup>bc</sup> (2.25)	3.9 <sup>ab</sup> (1.6)
Liberals	1.01 <sup>c</sup> (3.27)	13.97 <sup>bc</sup> (2.66)	12.96 <sup>b</sup> (2.75)	10.33 <sup>bc</sup> (2.15)	8.81 <sup>b</sup> (2.04)	3.64 <sup>ac</sup> (1.57)	4.17 <sup>c</sup> (1.3)

*Note.* Standard deviations are in parentheses. CPCN = Composite positive minus composite negative ASQ score for individuals, higher score means more optimism (possible range +18 to -18). CP = composite ASQ score for positive events, higher score means more optimism (possible range 3-21). CN = composite ASQ score for negative events, lower score means more optimism (possible range 3-21). HP = summation of the dimensions of stability-instability and globality-specificity for positive events in the ASQ, higher score means more optimism (possible range 2-14). HN = summation of the dimensions of stability-instability and globality-specificity for negative events in the ASQ, lower score means more optimism (possible range 2-14). IP = third-dimension internality-externality ASQ score for positive events, higher score means more optimism (possible range 1-7). IN = third-dimension internality-externality ASQ score for negative events, lower score means more optimism (possible range 1-7). Within each column, means that share a common superscript do not differ significantly. The alpha used was  $p = .05$ . Data for individual religions can be obtained from the authors.

