

Fundamentalism Predicts Intelligence Over General Religiosity

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Abstract

The current study aimed to address the relationship between religiosity and intelligence. Undergraduates were given an intelligence test and then completed measures of general religiosity and religious fundamentalism. Results indicate that once religious fundamentalism is taken into account, there is no relationship between religiosity and intelligence.

Introduction

Previous research conducted on the relationship between religiosity and intelligence is inconsistent and methodologically flawed. For example, there is a clear correlation between lower religiosity and higher intelligence in the studies on a group of adolescent Jewish boys (Franzblau, 1934), for highly intelligent adults (Foy, 1976), in one study of college students (Clark, 2004), and in a large sample of US adults (Lewis, Ritchie, & Bates, 2011). In contrast, no relationship was found in studies of adolescent Christian boys (Francis, 1998) or a different study on college students (White, Scott, & Lack, 2010). The current study aimed to directly assess the question of the relationship between religiosity and intelligence using direct measures of both intelligence and religiosity. It was predicted that high levels of religious fundamentalism would show low levels of intelligence. It was also predicted that there would be no relationship between general religiosity and intelligence once religious fundamentalism was taken into account.

Method

Participants

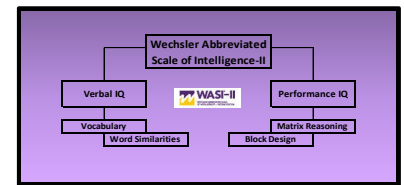
- GENDER. 32.9% were male; 67.1% were female
- AGE. Range 18 to 66; (M = 21.42; SD = 6.73)
- ETHNICITY. 63.0% were White; 15.1% were Black or African American; 4.1% were Native American or Alaska Native; 8.2% were Asian; 5.5% were "Other"; and 4.1% chose not to answer.
- RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION. 63.0% were protestant; 6.8% were Catholic; 2.7% were Buddhist; 9.6% were "Other"; and 15.1% selected "None."

Procedure

Undergraduates, recruited via Sona-Systems, participated in this research project for course credit. Research assistants administered the Wechsler Abbreviated Scale of Intelligence, second edition (WASI-II) to each participant. Subsequently, participants responded to questionnaires addressing demographics, general religiosity, religious fundamentalism, and strength of religious faith.

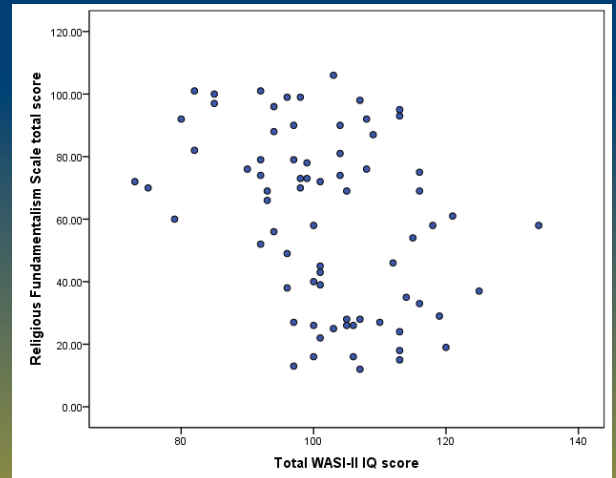
Measures

- Wechsler Abbreviated Scale of Intelligence
 - Verbal
 - Performance
- Religious Fundamentalism Scale
- Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Scale



Results

- Mean verbal IQ was 101.88 (SD = 12.43),
- Mean performance IQ was 101.26 (SD = 12.31)
- Mean full-scale IQ was 101.81 (SD = 11.71).
- A multiple hierarchical regression was performed with full-scale IQ as the criterion.
 - On Step 1, religious fundamentalism (M = 59.73, SD = 28.07) was entered as the only predictor, $R^2 = .13$, $F(1, 71) = 11.03$, $p = .001$. Religious fundamentalism significantly predicted full-scale IQ, such that as religious fundamentalism increased, IQ decreased, $\beta = -.37$, $p = .001$.
 - On Step 2, strength of religious faith was entered.
- The overall model was significant,
 - $R^2 = .17$, $F(2, 70) = 7.38$, $p = .001$,
 - But strength of religious faith did not predict IQ,
 - $\beta = -.36$, $p = .07$, R^2 change = .04.



Discussion

Previous research conducted on the relationship between religiosity and intelligence has been methodologically flawed, inconsistent, and muddy. The current study aimed to fix these gaps in the literature by examining intelligence using a standardized measure of intelligence and a direct measure of both religiosity and religious fundamentalism. The results indicated that our predictions were supported. Religious fundamentalism negatively predicts intelligence, such that as religious fundamentalism increases, intelligence decreases. However, overall religiosity does not predict intelligence once religious fundamentalism is taken into account. These results suggest that there is no significant relationship between religiosity and intelligence.

The results from this study have implications for religious institutions as well as non-religious groups. The lack of a relationship between religiosity and intelligence confirms that the process of deconversion, or conversion, does not have an influence on overall intelligence. These results indicate that intelligence remains relatively stable over time. While religious fundamentalism is associated with lower intelligence, this does not hold true for all general religiosity.

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