REVISED RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM SCALE

Reference:

Description of Measure:
This revised version of Altemeyer and Hunsberger’s original Religious Fundamentalism Scale (see Religious Fundamentalism Scale on this website) aimed to improve the original in two ways: (1) Measure all aspects of fundamentalism as best as possible and (2) Shorten it. Thus, the revised version has only 12 statements, is more internally consistent, and broader. Respondents answer each item on a 9-point scale.

Abstracts of Selected Related Articles:

Five studies of university students and their parents were carried out to investigate the relationships among right-wing authoritarianism, various indices of religious orientation, and prejudice. Measures of religious fundamentalism, and religious quest, developed for this research, proved to be psychometrically sound, and were good discriminators between prejudiced and unprejudiced persons, across a variety of different measures of prejudice and authoritarian aggression. Scores on both Religious Fundamentalism and Religious Quest scales also were correlated strongly with right-wing authoritarianism and the Christian Orthodoxy scale, although orthodoxy itself tended not to be correlated with prejudice. Apparently, religious fundamentalism and nonquesting are linked with authoritarianism and prejudice toward a wide variety of minority groups. Possible explanations for these relationships are discussed.


In this article, I extend the work of Altemeyer and Hunsberger (1992) on religious fundamentalism to several non-Christian groups. The psychometric properties of the Religious Fundamentalism scale remained strong among small, self-selected samples of adults from Muslim, Hindu, and Jewish backgrounds. Also, as in past research with persons from Christian backgrounds, correlations from .42 to .74 emerged among scores on the Religious Fundamentalism, Right-Wing Authoritarianism, and Attitudes Toward Homosexuals scales (Altemayer and Hunsberger, 1992). That is, the religious fundamentalists within each of four religious groups tended to be authoritarian and to have hostile attitudes toward homosexuals. Within the limitations of the present samples, the findings provide initial evidence that fundamentalists in many religions may tend to be authoritarian and hostile toward homosexuals, that religious fundamentalism may consist of essentially the same attitudes in these four major religious groups, and can be measured with some efficiency with the Religious Fundamentalism scale.

Psychologists have tended to view religion from a distance as a global, undifferentiated, stable process that is largely good or largely bad. This article presents a more fine-grained analysis of religion and its implications for well-being, positive and negative. The empirical literature points to five conclusions. First, some forms of religion are more helpful than others. Well-being has been linked positively to a religion that is internalized, intrinsically motivated, and based on a secure relationship with God and negatively to a religion that is imposed, unexamined, and reflective of a tenuous relationship with God and the world. Second, there are advantages and disadvantages to even controversial forms of religion, such as fundamentalism. Third, religion is particularly helpful to socially marginalized groups and to those who embed religion more fully in their lives. Fourth, religious beliefs and practices appear to be especially valuable in stressful situations that push people to the limits of their resources. Finally, the efficacy of religion is tied to the degree to which it is well integrated in the individual's life. These conclusions belie stereotypes or simple summaries about religion. Instead, they suggest that religion is a richer, more complex process than psychologists have imagined, one that has the potential both to help and to harm. Questions about the general efficacy of religion should give way to the more difficult but more appropriate question, How helpful or harmful are particular forms of religious expression for particular people dealing with particular situations in particular social contexts according to particular criteria of helpfulness or harmfulness?

**Scale:** Please contact Dr. Altemeyer directly concerning permission to use items.