



Childhood intelligence predicts voter turnout, voting preferences, and political involvement in adulthood: The 1970 British Cohort Study

Ian J. Deary^{a,*}, G. David Batty^{a,b}, Catharine R. Gale^c

^a Medical Research Council Centre for Cognitive Ageing and Cognitive Epidemiology, Department of Psychology, University of Edinburgh, 7 George Square, Edinburgh EH8 9JZ, UK

^b Medical Research Council Social and Public Health Sciences Unit, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, 4 Lilybank Gardens, Glasgow G12 8RZ, UK

^c Medical Research Council Epidemiology Resource Centre, University of Southampton, Southampton General Hospital, Southampton SO16 6YD, UK

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 26 May 2008

Revised 5 September 2008

Accepted 5 September 2008

Available online 5 October 2008

Keywords:

IQ

Intelligence

Voting

Democracy

Politics

Political party

1970 British Cohort Study

ABSTRACT

Little is known about the association between measured intelligence and how people participate in democratic processes. In the 1970 British Cohort Study, we examined the association between childhood intelligence and, at age 34: whether and how people voted in the 2001 UK general election; how they intended to vote; and whether they had taken part in other political activities. People with higher childhood intelligence were more likely to vote in the 2001 election (38% increased prevalence per SD increase in intelligence), and were more likely to vote for the Green Party and the Liberal Democrats (49% and 47% increased prevalence per SD increase in intelligence, respectively). The intelligence-Green party voting association was largely accounted for by occupational social class, the intelligence-Liberal Democrat voting association was not. Similar associations between intelligence and preference for the Green Party or Liberal Democrats were found as regards voting intentions, but neither of these associations was accounted for by occupational social class. People with higher childhood intelligence were more likely to take part in rallies and demonstrations, and to sign petitions, and expressed a greater interest in politics (40%, 65%, 33%, and 58% increased prevalence per SD increase in intelligence, respectively).

© 2008 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Democracy as a political system allows—indirectly through elections—the whole adult population to be involved in the government of the nation. The involvement includes the regular selection of elected representatives, and the other legal means by which politically relevant concerns may be voiced (attending demonstrations, signing petitions, etc.). Liberal democracy involves stability and change. Stability includes the enduring aspects of the legal, financial, educational and other institutions of the society. None of these is

entirely fixed; they evolve and, ultimately, suggestions for change can be traced to the decisions made by the electorate concerning their choice of their representatives and their decisions to become involved and press for societal changes in other ways. At the between-country level of description, intelligence has been reported as relevant to democracy, rule of law, and political freedom (Rindermann, 2008). Here, we investigate how individual differences in psychometric intelligence are associated with engaging in democratic processes.

Political scientists have a strong interest in individual differences in voting behaviors, because decisions made by the electorate are so important for societies. Most research to date has concentrated on whether or not people vote in elections. The favoured explanatory variables for people's participation in voting include political interest, civic duty and, especially relevant here because of its association with cognitive ability, education (Nie, Junn, & Stehlik-Barry, 1996).

* Corresponding author. Medical Research Council Centre for Cognitive Ageing and Cognitive Epidemiology, Department of Psychology, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh EH8 9JZ, UK. Tel.: +44 131 650 3452; fax: +44 131 651 1771.
E-mail address: i.deary@ed.ac.uk (I.J. Deary).

However, the cause of the association between deciding to vote and educational attainments has been questioned, with the possibility that the underlying causal variable is cognitive ability (Denny & Doyle, 2008; Hauser, 2000; Herrnstein & Murray, 1994, pp. 258–263). Surprisingly, it is only recently that psychological individual differences have been considered relevant to democratic participation and decision-making. Hauser's (2000) empirical results with three USA datasets led him to conclude that, "researchers will lose little if they ignore cognitive ability as a direct causal factor when formulating models of civic participation" (p. 581). However, Denny and Doyle (2008) criticised Hauser's (2000) data on two counts: the cognitive ability tests were inadequate in two of the studies, and cognitive data were always collected in adulthood or when people had finished, or were about to finish, high school. Their study of the United Kingdom's 1958 birth cohort suggested that the association between education and voting was weak, and that cognitive ability measured at age 11 years was a much stronger contributor to the decision about whether or not to vote in the 1997 General Election when the subjects were almost 40 years old (Denny & Doyle, 2008). These authors made a strong case for seeking other data sets containing childhood intelligence and voting information, so that cognitive ability measures that were recorded prior to educational attainments could be used to examine voting behavior. Specifically, they recommended that future research might use data from the 1970 British Cohort Study, which is what we have done in this report.

We contend that the study of intelligence and political involvement should extend beyond the important topic of voter turnout, to include details of how, in addition to whether, people engage in elections, and whether they also take part in political and democratic activities outside of elections. Influences on how people vote include their occupational social class (Evans, 2000), and the political party that was in power when they reached the age at which they were eligible to vote (Tilley, 2002). One reason for exploring this issue further is that intelligence test scores are related to social attitudes. Social attitudes are embedded in the creeds of different political parties (see Appendix) and in the rationales of other, extra-parliamentary pressure groups seeking to bring about political change. People with higher mental test scores as children are more likely, as adults, to endorse liberal social attitudes (McCourt, Bouchard, Lykken, Tellegen, & Keyes, 1999, p. 987; Scarr & Weinberg, 1981, p. 400). Specifically, they are more likely to agree with attitude statements that are anti-racist, in favour of working women, are socially liberal, and are more likely to have trust in the fairness of the democratic process (Deary, Batty, & Gale, 2008). Thus, intelligence is, in effect, associated with different political attitudes, and it is important to discover if there are intelligence differences according to preference for particular political parties.

In summary, there is debate about the importance of intelligence in relation to whether people vote in elections, and there is currently little information on how people with different levels of intelligence choose to vote in elections, and to what extent they become involved in non-election activity in democratic systems. In the present study we extend the study of intelligence and its relevance to political matters by investigating the association between childhood intelligence

test scores and: whether people voted in the 2001 UK general election; reports of which parties they had voted for in the 2001 election, and which parties they would vote for currently; and participation in political activity outside of the normal election process. It is important to include information on occupation, because voting in the UK has traditionally been influenced by occupational social class (Evans, 2000). The study was based upon longitudinal data available from a large, representative UK study: the 1970 British Cohort Study.

2. Methods

2.1. Participants

The 1970 British Cohort Study is an ongoing longitudinal study that takes as its subjects the 17,198 live births occurring to parents residing in Great Britain between April 5 and 11, 1970. The present analyses primarily use data from 1980–1981, when study participants completed tests of cognitive ability at age 10 years (though we also use cognitive data from 5 years to test the consistency of the findings), and from 2004–5 when, at age 34 years, they responded to enquiries about their political attitudes and behaviors. In all, 14,875 children took part in the 10-year follow-up, 93% of those eligible to participate (alive and living in England, Scotland and Wales). Written, informed consent was given by parents. Testing took place in schools. Of 13,197 cohort members eligible to take part in the 34-year follow-up, 9665 (73%) agreed to be interviewed. In total, 6352 (66% of those interviewed) had data on cognitive ability at the age of 10 years, political attitudes and behaviors at age 34, and current occupational social class. Compared to these 6352 people, non-participants in the 34-year follow-up had a lower score on the tests of cognitive ability (IQ-type scale equivalent = 102.4 (14.3) vs 96.9 (15.3); $p < 0.001$).

2.2. Data collection at age 5 years

Testing of the children's mental ability took place in the children's homes. Four tests were used: the Human Figure Drawing Test, a Copying Designs Test, the English Picture Vocabulary Test and the Profile Test. The Human Figure Drawing Test was a modified version of the Draw-a-Man Test, devised by Goodenough (1926) and developed by Harris (1963). The drawings were scored using an adapted version of the Harris–Goodenough scale (Koppitz, 1968; Scott, 1968). In the Copying Designs Test, children were asked to make two copies of eight designs (Davie, Butler, & Goldstein, 1972). The English Picture Vocabulary Test is an adaptation of the American Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (Brimer & Dunn, 1968). In the Profile Test, children saw an incomplete profile of a head, were asked what it was, completed the drawing, and identified the parts. The correlations among the four tests are shown in Table 1. We carried out a principal components analysis of these four tests. Examination of the scree slope suggested the presence of a single component. The first unrotated principal component accounted for 45% of the total variance among the four tests. The factor loading of each of the tests on the first unrotated principal component was 0.71 for the Human

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات