

PHILOSOPHIES OF HUMAN NATURE ALTRUISM SCALE

Reference:

Wrightsman, L. (1964). Measurement of philosophies of human nature. *Psychological Reports, 14*, 743-751.

Description of Measure:

An assessment of one's philosophy of human nature, particularly dealing with beliefs about altruism. This scale is 1 of 6 subscales of the complete Philosophies of Human Nature scale which has a total of 120 items (Wrightsman, 1964). The other subscales are: 1.) Altruism (see the altruism and prosocial behavior section of this website). 2.) Independence, 3.) Strength of Will and Rationality, 4.) Complexity of Human Nature, and 5.) Variability in Human Nature. The Trustworthiness subscale is made up of 14 items, 7 positive and 7 negative. Respondents provide answers ranging from -3 (disagree strongly) to +3 (agree strongly).

Abstracts of Selected Related Articles:

Weller, L., & Benozio M. (1987). Homosexuals' and lesbians' philosophies of human nature. *Social Behavior and Personality: An International Journal, 15*, 221-224.

The study compares 57 homosexuals and 45 lesbians on six dimensions of beliefs about human nature. On only one dimension, altruism-selfishness, was a significant difference found. While there are no similar studies of the comparison of attitudes and values, the findings are consistent with the few personality studies which likewise reported no differences between homosexuals and lesbians.

Lupfer, M. & Wald, K. (1985). An exploration of adults' religious orientations and their philosophies of human nature. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 24*, 293-304

Do individuals of differing religious orientations also differ in their philosophies of human nature? This question was examined by interviewing a representative sample of the adult population of Memphis, Tennessee. Altogether, 359 adults were questioned about their religious beliefs and practices, their answers yielding scores on four religious dimensions: Christian Orthodoxy, Church Involvement, Devotionalism and Theocracy. Respondents were also administered a revised version of Wrightsman's Philosophies of Human Nature Scale which produced scores on five dimensions: Cynicism, Internal Locus of Control, Goodness, Complexity and Variability. These two sets of measures were submitted to canonical correlation analysis. Two significant correlations were revealed, providing empirical support for the contention that people's religious outlook and their views of human nature are linked. The first canonical correlation of .35 ($p < .001$) suggested that people who adhere to orthodox Christian tenets, who make a habit of private devotions, and who are active in their churches see others as basically altruistic and truthful, hard to



understand, and externally controlled. The second canonical correlation of .21 ($p < .01$) suggested that high levels of religious activism (in terms of participation in both church activities and private devotions) are associated with a belief in the uniformity of human nature. The demographic background of people exhibiting these patterns of belief was explored in an effort to interpret the correlations

Bègue, L. (2002). Beliefs in justice and faith in people: Just world, religiosity and interpersonal trust. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 32, 375-382

Fifty-eight French subjects (28 women and 30 men, 16–65 years) from diverse occupational status completed Belief in a Just World Scales for Self and Others [Lipkus, I. M., & Bissonnette, V. L. (1996). Relationships among belief in a just world, willingness to accommodate, and marital well being. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 22(10), 1043–1056.] Belief in Immanent and Ultimate Justice Scales [Maes, J. (1998). Immanent justice and ultimate justice: two ways of believing in justice. In L. Montada, & M. J. Lerner, Responses to victimizations and belief in a just world (pp. 9–40). New York: Plenum Press], and a measure of Interpersonal Trust adapted from Wrightsman [Wrightsman, L. (1991). Interpersonal trust and attitudes toward human nature. In J. P. Robinson, P. R. Shaver, & L. S. Wrightsman, Measures of personality and social psychological attitudes (pp. 373–412). New York: Academic Press]. Religious commitment was also measured. As hypothesized, results indicated that Belief in a Just World (BJW) for Self, BJW for Others and religious commitment were positively correlated with Interpersonal trust ($r=0.51, 0.54$ and 0.34). No gender differences appeared on any scale. A regression analysis indicated that BJW for Others and religious commitment accounted for 36% of explained variance in the prediction of interpersonal trust.



Scale:

Instructions:

Read each statement carefully. Then indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree by circling the number in front of each statement. The numbers and their meaning are indicated below:

-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
Disagree Strongly	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Slightly	Agree Slightly	Agree Somewhat	Agree Strongly

- 1.) Most people try to apply the Golden Rule even in today’s complex society.
- 2.) Most people do not hesitate to go out of their way to help someone in trouble.
- 3.) Most people will act as “Good Samaritans” if given the opportunity.
- 4.) “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” is a motto most people follow.
- 5.) The typical person is sincerely concerned about the problems of others.
- 6.) Most people with a fallout shelter would let their neighbors stay in it during a nuclear attack.
- 7.) Most people would stop and help a person whose car is disabled.
- 8.) The average person is conceited.
- 9.) It’s only a rare person who would risk his own life and limb to help someone else.
- 10.) It’s pathetic to see an unselfish person in today’s world because so many people take advantage of him.
- 11.) People pretend to care more about one another than they really do.
- 12.) Most people inwardly dislike putting themselves out to help other people.
- 13.) Most people exaggerate their troubles in order to get sympathy.
- 14.) People are usually out for their won good.

Scoring:

Items 1-7 are positively scored items. Items 8-14 are negatively scored (i.e., reverse-scored). Keep scoring continuous.

Note: the 14 items should be randomly mixed up before using this scale.

