

1951

Statements of Cynicism Rated by College Students

Martin F. Fritz
Iowa State College

Let us know how access to this document benefits you

Copyright ©1951 Iowa Academy of Science, Inc.

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/pias>

Recommended Citation

Fritz, Martin F. (1951) "Statements of Cynicism Rated by College Students," *Proceedings of the Iowa Academy of Science*, 58(1), 345-349.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/pias/vol58/iss1/42>

This Research is brought to you for free and open access by the Iowa Academy of Science at UNI ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Proceedings of the Iowa Academy of Science by an authorized editor of UNI ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uni.edu.

Statements of Cynicism Rated by College Students

By MARTIN F. FRITZ

The investigation of cynicism by means of testing procedures has been described before the Psychology Section of the Iowa Academy of Science at previous meetings (see references). This paper is a report of a further study of cynicism using the sixty-five items of the short-form of the so-called Practical Policy Test (3). The problem was to determine how strongly cynical these items would be considered to be when the subject does not think of them as applying to himself but attempts to evaluate them "objectively". In other words, what statements are considered by college students as expressing the most intense degree of cynicism?

Each subject was given a set of the 65 items printed on separate strips of paper, along with five letter-size envelopes numbered and typed so each would constitute one unit of the "Scale for Judgments". A typewritten set of instructions was given each person which read as follows:

RATING OF CYNICAL STATEMENTS

These statements are all concerned with *cynicism* which may be defined as "contemptuously distrustful of human nature."

You are to judge each statement as to how strongly cynical it appears to you. *Do not apply the statement to yourself* but judge it as *objectively* as you can according to the following scale:

SCALE FOR JUDGMENTS

- 0—*Not* cynical—might even be a little the opposite of cynical—maybe neutral.
- 1—Very slightly cynical—just a touch of cynicism.
- 2—Somewhat cynical—perhaps fairly cynical but not very strongly so.
- 3—Strongly cynical—decidedly so.
- 4—Most cynical—extremely cynical—about as strong a statement as can be made.

This is an investigation to find out what statements people consider most cynical. Remember, this is not an attempt to check up on you personally, so be objective.

Pay no attention to the numbers on the slips. They are only for the purpose of making a record.

Method: Place the envelopes on a table in front of you arranged in order (0, 1, 2, 3, 4) from left to right. As you read the statements, one by one, drop each on the envelope where you think it belongs. When through, place each group of statements in its own envelope.

Do not try to make any special distribution. An envelope may contain many, only a few, or even none. Judge each statement on its merit.

The statements taken from the short-form of the Practical Policy Test are:

1. Any time that anyone offers to sell you something at less than the usual price—watch out!
2. If you don't look out for yourself, nobody else will.
3. They say that all men are equal before the law, but I don't believe it.
4. It is difficult for me to imagine an honest politician. He may mean very well when he starts out, but it is probable that he will not stay that way.
5. Money may be the "root of all evil", but give me more root and I'll take a chance on the evil.
6. The average individual who works for some big corporation is nothing more than a slave.
7. I wouldn't trust one of these "hale and hearty" fellows who slaps people on the back and says jovially, "how's the old boy today?"
8. Anyone who believes in "humanity" just lacks a little by way of understanding how the world is run.
9. Clergymen, with very few exceptions, get through life pretty easily, that is to say, they have what we would ordinarily call a "soft" job.
10. It is my opinion that there is very little chance of permanently eliminating war from this world.
11. Labor unions are out to get all they can for themselves.
12. "Blow your own horn" because nobody else will blow it for you.
13. If you lend money to your friends and relatives, they will consider you just "an old Shylock" when you ask for its return.
14. Although elections in America are democratic, the people do not have as much voice in the government as they think they do.
15. I get awfully tired of listening to ranting and raving of conservatives as well as radicals. They're both "off the track".
16. Although the average big industrial corporation renders valuable service, you certainly pay for it plenty.
17. It is silly to get too much excited about the conditions of "hill billies" and uneducated people. They probably are happier than we are.
18. You can get yourself elected to almost any public office if you have enough money.
19. I would rather be smart and "crooked" than dull and honest.
20. For the most part, our laws are made to protect the rich.
21. Life is just a merry-go-round ride. It is simple-minded to think that we are going anywhere.
22. The average big industrial corporation certainly does "fleece" the public—just a bunch of "crooks".
23. Thoughtfulness of others is the "bunk". Sooner or later you will be taken advantage of.
24. Great fortunes, with very few exceptions, have been built up by exploiting the poor.
25. Human nature is such that if you "give a man an inch", he will "take a mile".
26. Conscientious hard work is not a very good explanation of why most men go as far as they do. (Mostly luck, "pull", etc.)
27. Labor leaders are just a bunch of racketeers. They are getting all they can out of it for themselves.

28. Most immigrants who come to the United States are coming just to get all they can out of the good old U.S.A.
29. About 90% of our education at the present time is a sheer waste of time.
30. I think that most wealthy people have come by their wealth dishonestly.
31. If you want to get anywhere, pay very little attention to the feelings of other people.
32. If you have money, you can do just about anything you like.
33. Nature intended for us to look out for ourselves first.
34. Most women marry because they think it will be easier than getting a job and working.
35. Bankers, in general, are only interested in making money, regardless of the welfare of the depositors.
36. Every man in public office has a good possibility of becoming a "crook".
37. Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow you die.
38. Whenever I pass the estate of a very wealthy person (where I see a big house, servants, fine cars, and all that) I just can't help but think he must have been somewhat "crooked" to get it all.
39. It is a pretty good policy to "trust a man about as far as you could throw a bull by the tail".
40. 99% of big business corporations will use bribery, lawyers' tricks, and anything else to make money.
41. All you need is the "gift of gab" in order to be elected to an office in the United States.
42. The country is full of "educated fools" who have graduated from college.
43. "Soak the rich" sounds like a good policy to me.
44. Human beings are fundamentally selfish.
45. Complete prohibition (of liquor) is just a good way to make people into a lot of law-breakers.
46. "A fool and his money are soon parted." I would just as soon take it away from him, because if I don't the other fellow will.
47. People who won't play cards on Sunday are narrow-minded.
48. I think that most millionaires have had to be "crooked" at least part of the time.
49. I would say that perhaps as much as half of our tax money finds its way into the pockets of grafters.
50. In this "game" called life, it is best to do the other fellow before he does you.
51. You can depend on it that business will charge all the public will stand.
52. Politics is a racket. To call it a form of "legalized crookedness" would be a pretty good description.
53. Laborers for the most part, are just too dumb to know any better. If they don't get along, it is due to their own stupidity.
54. If you "turn the other cheek" you will merely get hit again.
55. Most millionaires are just clever crooks who have taken advantage of the "breaks".

56. I think it is very near the truth to say that an honest man will not run for public office.
57. Making personal loans to other people is just about equivalent to pounding your money down a rat-hole.
58. All this control of business by the government is just so politicians can show their power.
59. Any person who believes too strongly in honesty is probably just a bit naive (simple) about this practical world in which we have to live.
60. You will have a lot less grief if you will look upon every agent or salesman as a crook.
61. The average American is just a money-grabber.
62. "Every man for himself and the devil take the hind-most" sounds like good sense to me.
63. I would say that more than 90% of the people would not hesitate to be more or less "crooked" if they were absolutely certain that no one would find out about it.
64. I think that there is a good chance that the human race will simply destroy itself some day.
65. "Apple polishing" will get you farther than hard work.

Considerable variability from one subject to another was found, some tending to rate all the items rather high on the scale, while others would place a greater proportion lower on the scale. Only one statement, number 14, failed to receive any placements at the highest value. On the other hand, 44 statements received at least one vote for the lowest position, zero cynicism, while at the same time being placed at the other end, most or extremely cynical, by other raters. This raises an interesting question as to why it is that one person sees no cynicism in a statement while someone else sees it as decidedly cynical. Perhaps this suggests that cynicism is a highly specific and highly personal situation and that its measurement would be best accomplished by a wide sampling of discrete situations.

When all ratings were combined, the statement judged to be most cynical was number 50, with a "scale value" of 3.5, while number 10 had the lowest "scale value" of 1.5. Twenty-three statements, (nos. 50, 22, 23, 60, 52, 40, 39, 27, 31, 57, 62, 20, 53, 46, 55, 21, 28, 34, 11, 18, 58, 61, 30) had a "scale value" of 3.0 or better, while 9 statements (nos. 10, 47, 5, 17, 14, 16, 15, 33, 45) had a "scale value" of 2.0 or lower. While 42 subjects are probably not enough to give high reliability for the "scale values", it is extremely unlikely that many inversions would occur (high items moving to the bottom and low to the top) were several hundred more ratings to be secured.

SUMMARY

Forty-two college students rated 65 statements as to the degree of cynicism involved. They were asked to judge "objectively", without applying the statement to themselves, using a 5 point "scale" ranging from 0 (no cynicism) to a value of 4 (most or extremely cynical). Wide variability was found from person to person. The combined or group judgments gave "scale values" for the statements ranging from 1.5 to 3.5.

References

1. Fritz, M. F. A test study of cynicism and idealism. *Iowa Acad. Sci. Proc.*, 1946. 53:269-272.
2. Fritz, M. F. Co-variation of cynicism and idealism. *Iowa Acad. Sci. Proc.*, 1947. 54:231-234.
3. Fritz, M. F. A short-form test of cynicism. *Iowa Acad. Sci. Proc.*, 1948. 55:319-322.
4. Neidt, C. O. The relation of cynicism to certain other variables. *Iowa Acad. Sci. Proc.*, 1946. 53:277-283.
5. Neidt, C. O. Selection of the optimal scoring plan for the Fritz test of cynicism. *Iowa Acad. Sci. Proc.*, 1947. 54:253-262.
6. Neidt, C. O. and Fritz, M. F. Relation of cynicism to certain student characteristics. *Educ. and Psychol. Meas.*, 1950. 10:712-717.

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY AND
THE TESTING BUREAU
IOWA STATE COLLEGE