

1948

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Recommended Citation

Fritz, Martin F. (1948) "A Short-form Test of Cynicism," *Proceedings of the Iowa Academy of Science*, 55(1), 319-322.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/pias/vol55/iss1/44>

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A Short-form Test of Cynicism¹

MARTIN F. FRITZ

Papers concerned with an extensive study of cynicism and idealism have been given before the Iowa Academy of Science at several previous meetings. Since descriptions of the project along with statistical analyses have already been given, these will not receive detailed consideration here.²

Tests measuring cynicism and idealism would constitute a contribution to the study of certain phases of personality which have received very little consideration up to the present time. The original investigation made use of a test involving 200 items and this report describes a reduction to a short form by means of certain rational statistical procedures. The reduction was made wholly on the basis of the cynical scores of 400 subjects (270 women and 130 men). idealistic scores are to be given separate treatment since the correlations between the cynical and idealistic scores are low enough (-0.608 for women and -0.642 for men) to suggest that the two characteristics are not always mutually exclusive and quantitatively opposite to each other. In other words, with such correlations it is possible for the same subject to show, for example, considerable cynicism and also considerable idealism at the same time.

The two criteria used for selecting the items to be placed in the short form were, (1) the 50 items showing the highest bi-serial r with total score on the long form of 200 items, and (2) the 50 items showing the greatest per cent differentiation between the one-fourth most cynical and one-fourth least cynical scores on the long form. This method of selection resulted in drawing 65 items (from the original 200) with only 15 items not common to both criteria (bi-serial r and per cent difference). The 65 items which are being published as a copyrighted test are listed below. The figures in the first column are the bi-serial correlations; the figures in the second column are percentages of differentiation; and the third column simply shows the serial numbers of the items in the list. The final list is not in ascending or descending order for either the bi-serial correlations or the per cent differences because the items are "scrambled" to avoid the "halo effect" of having similar items too close together.

Items in the short-form test of cynicism.

First column shows the bi-serial correlations.

Second column shows per cent differentiation.

- | | | | |
|------|-----|----|---|
| 0.43 | 38% | 1. | Any time that anyone offers to sell you something at less than the usual price—watch out! |
| 0.36 | 35% | 2. | If you don't look out for yourself, nobody else will |
| 0.48 | 48% | 3. | They say that all men are equal before the law, but I don't believe it. |

¹This paper reports a part of a study for which a Grant in Aid was received from the Iowa Academy of Science.

²See the reports of Martin F. Fritz and Charles O. Neidt in the Proceedings of the Iowa Academy of Science, volumes 53 and 54 for 1946 and 1947.

- | | | | |
|------|-----|-----|--|
| 0.43 | 41% | 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. |
| 0.48 | 47% | 5. | Money may be the "root of all evil", but give me more root and I'll take a chance on the evil. |
| 0.64 | 40% | 6. | The average individual who works for some big corporation is nothing more than a slave. |
| 0.45 | 40% | 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?" |
| 0.50 | 16% | 8. | Anyone who believes in "humanity" just lacks a little by way of understanding how the world is run. |
| 0.51 | 23% | 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. |
| 0.47 | 38% | 10. | It is my opinion that there is very little chance of permanently eliminating war from this world. |
| 0.46 | 51% | 11. | Labor unions are out to get all they can for themselves. |
| 0.40 | 40% | 12. | "Blow your own horn" because nobody else will blow it for you. |
| 0 48 | 42% | 13. | If you lend money to your friends and relatives, they will consider you just "an old Shylock" when you ask for its return. |
| 0.57 | 54% | 14. | Although elections in America are democratic, the people do not have as much voice in the government as they think they do. |
| 0.41 | 39% | 15. | I get awfully tired of listening to ranting and raving of conservatives as well as radicals. They're both "off the track". |
| 0.49 | 48% | 16. | Although the average big industrial corporation renders valuable service, you certainly pay for it plenty. |
| 0.37 | 36% | 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. |
| 0.61 | 56% | 18. | You can get yourself elected to almost any public office if you have enough money. |
| 0.58 | 24% | 19. | I would rather be smart and "crooked" than dull and honest. |
| 0.58 | 24% | 20. | For the most part, our laws are made to protect the rich. |
| 0.51 | 18% | 21. | Life is just a merry-go-round ride. It is simple-minded to think that we are going anywhere. |
| 0.63 | 32% | 22. | The average big industrial corporation certainly does "fleece" the public—just a bunch of "crooks". |
| 0.49 | 21% | 23. | Thoughtfulness of others is the "bunk". Sooner or later you will be taken advantage of. |
| 0.49 | 43% | 24. | Great fortunes, with very few exceptions, have been built up by exploiting the poor. |
| 0.59 | 59% | 25. | Human nature is such that if you "give a man an inch", he will "take a mile". |
| 0.70 | 42% | 26. | Conscientious hard work is not a very good explanation of why most men go as far as they do. (Mostly luck, "pull", etc.) |
| 0.50 | 48% | 27. | Labor leaders are just a bunch of racketeers. They are getting all they can out of it for themselves. |
| 0.50 | 36% | 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. |
| 0.51 | 23% | 29. | About 90% of our education at the present time is a sheer waste of time. |

- 0.60 26% 30. I think that most wealthy people have come by their wealth dishonestly.
- 0.54 20% 31. If you want to get anywhere, pay very little attention to the feelings of other people.
- 0.46 43% 32. If you have money, you can do just about anything you like.
- 0.42 38% 33. Nature intended for us to look out for ourselves first.
- 0.49 30% 34. Most women marry because they think it will be easier than getting a job and working.
- 0.57 35% 35. Bankers, in general, are only interested in making money, regardless of the welfare of the depositors.
- 0.52 52% 36. Every man in public office has a good possibility of becoming a "crook".
- 0.42 36% 37. Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow you die.
- 0.63 30% 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.
- 0.63 42% 39. It is a pretty good policy to "trust a man about as far as you could throw a bull by the tail".
- 0.59 51% 40. 99% of big business corporations will use bribery, lawyers' tricks, and everything else to make money.
- 0.62 37% 41. All you need is the "gift of gab" in order to be elected to an office in the United States.
- 0.53 47% 42. The country is full of "educated fools" who have graduated from college.
- 0.50 36% 43. "Soak the rich" sounds like a good policy to me.
- 0.53 46% 44. Human beings are fundamentally selfish.
- 0.50 46% 45. Complete prohibition (of liquor) is just a good way to make people into a lot of law-breakers.
- 0.65 47% 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.
- 0.43 41% 47. People who won't play cards on Sunday are narrow-minded.
- 0.59 52% 48. I think that most millionaires have had to be "crooked" at least a part of the time.
- 0.56 48% 49. I would say that perhaps as much as half of our tax money finds its way into the pockets of grafters.
- 0.68 40% 50. In this "game" called life, it is best to do the other fellow before he does you.
- 0.53 52% 51. You can depend on it that business will charge all the public will stand.
- 0.55 55% 52. Politics is a racket. To call it a form of "legalized crookedness" would be a pretty good description.
- 0.59 34% 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.
- 0.70 72% 54. If you "turn the other cheek" you will merely get hit again.
- 0.66 35% 55. Most millionaires are just clever crooks who have taken advantage of the "breaks".
- 0.61 27% 56. I think it is very near the truth to say that an honest man will not run for public office.
- 0.59 25% 57. Making personal loans to other people is just about equivalent to pounding your money down a rat-hole.
- 0.59 25% 58. All this control of business by the government is just so politicians can show their power.
- 0.47 42% 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.

- 0.49 21% 60. You will have a lot less grief if you will look upon every agent or salesman as a crook.
 0.65 53% 61. The average American is just a money-grabber.
 0.58 37% 62. "Every man for himself and the devil take the hind-most" sounds like good sense to me.
 0.57 58% 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.
 0.44 37% 64. I think that there is a good chance that the human race will simply destroy itself someday.
 0.62 38% 65. "Apple polishing" will get you farther than hard work.

One indication that the reduction has been successful is the fact that the correlation between the short form (65 items) and the long form (200 items) is 0.949 for the 400 subjects used in the study. Even allowing for a certain amount of spurious correlation, it seems unlikely that the 135 items dropped out would in any important degree change the relative standing of any of the subjects.

There is still another line of evidence to indicate that the short form is a fairly accurate representation of the long form. The one-fourth most cynical women (67 cases) as measured by the long form were also the one-fourth most cynical women on the short form with only 4 exceptions. The one-fourth most cynical men (32 cases) on the long form were also the one-fourth most cynical men on the short-form with only 3 exceptions. At the other end of the distribution, the one-fourth least cynical women (67 cases) as measured by the long form were also the one-fourth least cynical women on the short form with 5 exceptions. The same situation for men (32 cases) involved only 4 exceptions. From this it can be seen that the same individuals were placed either in the highest or the lowest quarter of the distribution, with but few exceptions, by both the long and short form of the test.

SUMMARY

A 200 item test of cynicism was reduced to a 65 item test by selecting the 50 items having the highest bi-serial correlations with total score and also the 50 showing the greatest per cent of differentiation between the one-fourth highest scores and the one-fourth lowest scores. Use of these two criteria resulted in the selection of 35 items which were identical and 15 more for each criterion which were not identical. The correlation between the long and the short form was found to be 0.949. With but few exceptions, the same individuals were placed in either the highest or the lowest quarter of the distribution by both forms of the test.

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