

Measuring The Prosocial Personality

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Introduction

Measuring Prosocial Personality 2

Research on the factors responsible for prosocial¹ actions has a fairly long history in personality and social psychology. Indeed, one of the earliest large-scale personality research projects in the United States was Hartshorne and May's Studies in the Nature of Character, published in 1928 (followed by volumes in 1929 and 1930). Hartshorne and May sought to determine whether children's propensities to engage in prosocial behaviors (i.e., helpfulness, honesty and self-control) were due to enduring personal characteristics or were the result of specific situational constraints and demands. Hartshorne and May reported modest correlations across their numerous measures of prosocial behaviors and, thus, concluded that prosocial actions were largely situationally determined. Although some disputed this conclusion (see Rushton, 1981, for example), the "situationist" perspective almost totally dominated research on the causes of prosocial actions at least through the 1970's.

There were, to be sure, studies that investigated whether personality variables were associated with individual differences in prosocial behaviors. But they were relatively few in number, and their findings provided little support for the premise that there were stable individual differences in such actions. According to Gergen, Gergen, and Meter (1972), personality research on prosocial behavior had produced, "... a quagmire of evanescent relations among variables, conflicting findings, and low order correlation coefficients." (p. 113). It is, thus, not

surprising that in their comprehensive monograph on bystander intervention, Piliavin and her associates concluded that the search for the "altruistic personality" had been futile (Piliavin, Dovidio, Gaertner, & Clark, 1981).

In the 1980's, however, the situationist zeitgeist began to wane somewhat, and an increasing number of researchers began to report significant and replicable individual differences in the willingness to offer help to a distressed person (e.g., Davis, 1980; Penner, Escarrez, & Ellis, 1983; Rushton, Chrisjohn, & Fekken, 1981). It is this latter body of work that provided the theoretical and empirical background for the present effort.

As suggested above, we are certainly not the first researchers to study the personality correlates of prosocial actions. Therefore, we began the development of our measure by turning to the existing research literature. Our goal, however, was not to find the best single scale, but rather to identify several different personality measures that reliably predicted prosocial actions. We did this for two reasons. First, we wanted to learn about the structure of the prosocial personality by examining the intercorrelations among the measures. Second, we wanted to create an instrument that would predict a broad range of prosocial reactions and behaviors. Following Gergen et al. (1972), we believed that prosocial behavior was too complex to be adequately predicted by a single personality characteristic.

The Development of the Prosocial Personality Battery (PSB)

We began the development of the PSB by using electronic databases (e.g., PsychLit) and manual literature searches to identify all personality scales that previously had been found to correlate with prosocial affects, cognitions, and actions (most commonly helping). There were many such scales, but we only considered those that met a second selection criterion -- there must be a theory or model of helping that would explain why the personality characteristic measured by this scale was associated with prosocial tendencies. Thus, for example, measures of empathy were included because almost every major theory of why people offer aid identifies empathic reactions as a crucial mediational variable (see Batson, 1991; Davis, 1994; Schroeder, Penner, Dovidio, & Piliavin, in press). Measures of Machiavellianism, however, were excluded because no theory of helping exists that explains why this trait would affect prosocial responses. Our selection strategy produced an initial version of the battery that included the scales described in Table 1, plus Mehrabian and Epstein's (1972) Empathic Tendencies Scale, Spielberger, Kling and O'Hagen's (1978) Sociopathy Scale, and items concerned with Kohlberg's (1984) theory of moral reasoning.

With the exception of moral reasoning, the scales in each component of the PSB are fairly well-known and are described in

detail elsewhere (see Table 1). Therefore, here we will only discuss the moral reasoning component. We decided to include items that measured moral reasoning because some researchers (e.g., Dyck, Batson, Oden & Weeks, 1989) had found that moral reasoning items predicted subjects' willingness to help a distressed person, and there were good theoretical explanations of why moral reasoning should be related to prosocial behavior (Eisenberg, 1982). Thus, we included items that assessed different levels of reasoning in Kohlberg's and in Gilligan's theories (1982) of moral development².

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Insert Table 1 about here

The initial version of the PSB contained 128 items, making it desirable to reduce the length of the battery. Because all of the scales were equally reliable, we examined their relative validities. To do this we correlated scale scores with a criterion variable based on responses to the Helping-Orientation Questionnaire developed by Romer, Gruder and Lizzardo (1986). This measure presents hypothetical situations in which another person is in need of help and respondents must choose between different kinds of responses: "altruistic helping" -- helping with no expectation of a tangible reward; "reciprocal helping" -- helping in exchange for some tangible reward; and a "selfish"

response -- helping one's self at the expense of the person in need.

Penner and Craiger (1991) gave the PSB and Romer et al.'s scale to 155 undergraduates. Total "altruistic" helping scores (i.e., the number of "altruistic" responses a subject chose), and total "selfish" scores were derived from Romer et al.'s scale. The scores were correlated with the subject's scores on the seven scales/subscales and the moral reasoning items contained in the original PSB. We retained only those scales that had their highest positive correlation with the altruism score and their highest negative correlation with the selfishness score.

Using this criterion, we eliminated the Empathic Tendencies scale, the Sociopathy scale, and the Kohlberg moral reasoning items. These initial analyses also disclosed that although the Gilligan moral reasoning items did meet the selection criterion, they were difficult for some subjects to complete because they required a respondent to read a fairly long and complicated paragraph. Also, because they were single items, they were less reliable than the other portions of the PSB. Therefore, these items were each recast into four shorter, Likert-format items that correlated substantially with the original items. The PSB, at this point, contained 77 items.

An independent sample was used to further refine and shorten the PSB. The PSB and the Romer et al. measure were given to 417 more undergraduates, and correlations for individual items were

examined. Items were retained if, in both samples, they correlated at least: a) .15 with both the total altruism and total selfishness scores; and b) .20 with the total score on the scale to which they belonged. This produced the current 56-item version of the PSB presented in Table 1.

Factor Structure of the PSB

The 56-item PSB was subjected to an initial principal axis factor analysis with a "Promax" (oblique) rotation (see Penner & Craiger, 1991). According to the multiple criteria suggested by Coovert and McNelis (1988), one-, two- or three- factor solutions were equally appropriate. A two-factor solution, however, provided much more theoretically coherent and interpretable factors than did the other solutions. The two factors are presented in Table 2. There are no scales that load more than .30 on both factors.

We have labeled the first factor, "Other-oriented Empathy". People who score high on this factor are likely to be predisposed to experience both affective and cognitive empathy, and to feel responsibility for and concern about the welfare of others. The Other-oriented Empathy factor primarily concerns prosocial thoughts and feelings. We have labeled the second factor, "Helpfulness". People who score high on the Helpfulness factor report a history of being helpful and are unlikely to experience self-oriented discomfort when another person is in extreme distress (i.e., a negative loading for Personal Distress).

Whereas the first factor appears to primarily assess cognitions and affect, the second factor, Helpfulness, appears to primarily assess behavioral tendencies.

The PSB has been given to multiple samples within and across three universities located in different regions of the United States, a small sample of community volunteers, and 200 employees of a large retail store. The factor structure of the PSB was essentially invariant across the different samples. The correlation between the two factors ranged from .25 to .40. Women scored significantly higher than men on the first factor and men scored significantly higher than women on the second, but the factor structure replicates exactly across gender. Neither total scores on the factors nor factor structure varied as a function of the respondent's age.

Psychometric Properties of the PSB

The alpha coefficients for the two factor scores were both in excess of .80. The three-week test-retest reliabilities for the Other-Oriented Empathy factor and the Helpfulness factor were .77 and .85, respectively. In all the samples, significant correlations were found between scores on the Other-oriented Empathy factor and a short-form version of the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Strahan & Gerbasi, 1971). The Helpfulness factor was uncorrelated with social desirability. The significant correlations between the first factor and social desirability merit some discussion.

In interpreting this relationship, it is important to remember that scores on social desirability measures reflect more than just a situationally induced tendency to manage one's impression by giving self-flattering responses (Paulhus, 1989). Crowne and Marlowe (1964) suggested that high scores on their scale reflected, in part, the desire to win the approval of others, or a high need for social approval. More recently, Paulhus has argued that high scores on this scale may partially reflect the respondent's honest (but perhaps biased) self-belief that he/she is a good person who typically engages in positive actions.

It seems reasonable to propose that individuals who are other-oriented and empathic may possess both of these characteristics. That is, they may desire the approval of others and have a "positivistic bias" about the kind of person they are. Thus, although this factor's correlation with social desirability is of some concern, it may say more about the relationship between certain general personality dispositions and prosocial personality orientations than it does about the validity of scores on the Other-oriented Empathy factor. In this context, it bears mentioning that in several of the studies described below social desirability was partialled out of significant correlations between the Other-oriented Empathy factor and the criterion measure of interest. In no instance, did this result in a significant decrease in the size of the zero-order correlation.

Cognitive, Affective and Behavioral Correlates of PSB Scores

In this section, we discuss the results of several studies that have examined how each of the PSB factors are related to prosocial thoughts, feelings and actions. Gender differences are not discussed because gender did not moderate any of the results reported below.

Cognitive Correlates

Costs of helping. According to one of the major theories of bystander intervention, the arousal: cost-reward model (Piliavin et al., 1981, Dovidio, Piliavin, Gaertner, Schroeder, & Clark, 1991), people usually engage in a decision process before they offer help. The ultimate decision to help is greatly influenced by a potential helper's estimates of the costs of offering help and the costs of not offering help. As the cost of helping increases, the likelihood that a bystander will intervene decreases. Penner and Fritzsche (1993b) investigated how prosocial personality tendencies affected such cost estimates. They presented 320 subjects with four hypothetical situations in which someone needed help (e.g., a disabled person who needs help crossing a street). In each situation, subjects were asked to estimate how much it would "cost" them to help the person in need. An average cost estimate across the four situations was computed and correlated with scores on each of the factors. Penner and Fritzsche predicted that prosocial personality characteristics would correlate negatively with estimates of the

cost of offering help. Other-oriented Empathy correlated $-.21$ and Helpfulness correlated $-.31$ with the cost estimates (both p 's $< .001$)

Helping Decisions. Fritzsche and Penner (1992) presented 344 subjects with 50 scenarios. In all scenarios, subjects were asked to place themselves in the role of someone who had been asked for psychological help by a depressed friend. After reading a scenario, subjects indicated how likely they would be to offer help. Other-oriented Empathy and Helpfulness both correlated significantly with the subjects' average responses across the 50 scenarios (r 's = $.30$ and $.18$, $p < .001$).

Fritzsche and Penner's primary interest, however, was not in the correlations but rather in how subjects made their decisions about whether they would offer help. Specifically, we investigated whether prosocial personality tendencies would moderate the influence of the costs manipulated in the scenarios on the subjects' helping decisions. To do this, we employed a technique known as policy capturing (Slovic & Lichtenstein, 1971). In brief, policy capturing can be used in situations in which a person makes the same decision or judgment a number of times. Each decision is based on a "profile" that contains variables relevant to the decision, but the values of the variables change across the profiles. In this study, three costs of helping and three costs of not helping were factorially manipulated to create 64 different scenarios. (There were two

values for each cost; see Otten, Penner & Waugh, 1988.) After reading each scenario, subjects indicated the likelihood they would offer help.

Because we knew the values of the six variables when each decision was made, we could generate a within-subject regression equation in which the predictors were the variables manipulated within the profiles and the criterion was the decision. If the regression equation produced a substantial R^2 , we concluded that we had "captured" the person's policy. That is, the decision-making process can be described by the multiple regression. Following convention, the criterion we set for a "captured" helping decision was an R^2 of .50 or greater. Eighty-four percent of the subjects' regression equations met this criteria.

The regression weights for two of the three costs of not helping differed significantly as a function of the subjects' scores on the two PSB factors. That is, the impact of the costs on the subjects' helping decisions was moderated by individual differences in prosocial personality characteristics. Apparently, prosocial personality characteristics affect not only how people estimate the costs associated with helping but how these costs affect decisions about helping as well.

Affective Correlates

Reaction to another's distress. Penner and Fritzsche (1993a) presented 155 subjects with the four bystander intervention situations mentioned earlier (e.g., a disabled person needing

help) and asked them to rate the extent to which they would experience each of 16 emotions in each situation. The emotions were grouped into four different affective reactions: Sympathetic Concern for the person (e.g., "compassionate"), Personal Discomfort, (e.g., "worried"), Positive Affect (e.g., "pity"), and Negative Affect (e.g., "irritated"). Batson (1991) reported that the first two affective reactions were positively associated with bystanders' willingness to actually intervene on behalf of an distressed individual³. Using a simulation methodology, Weiner (1980) found positive correlations between Positive Affect and helping, and negative correlations between Negative Affect and helping. We predicted that both factors would correlate positively with the first three reactions and negatively with the last one (i.e., Negative Affect).

This prediction was substantially confirmed for the Other-oriented Empathy factor; it correlated +.42 with Sympathetic Concern, +.31 with Positive Affect and -.27 with Negative Affect. The Helpfulness factor correlated significantly with Sympathetic Concern (+.20) and Positive Affect (+.19) (p 's < .01, n = 173).

Using multidimensional scaling (MDS, Kruskal & Wish, 1978), we also explored how differences with respect to prosocial personality characteristics might affect the interrelations among the four affective reactions. Subjects were divided into the top and bottom thirds of the distribution on each of the PSB factors, and then distance matrices for the affective reactions (collapsed

across situations) were constructed. There were differences between the two groups of subjects in the structure of their emotional responses to a person in distress. These are presented in Figures 1a and 1b. In the figures, the horizontal axes represent a positive versus negative emotions dimension; the vertical axes represent self-oriented versus other-oriented emotions dimension. The symbols represent the four groups of emotions described above; borders are drawn around emotions in the same group. The positions of the symbols can be best understood as their relative distances from one another on the two dimensions.

Insert Figures 1a and 1b about here

The location of Personal Discomfort (PD) differed between people who scored low and people who scored high on the Other-oriented Empathy factor. Among people low on the factor (Figure 1a), Personal Discomfort (PD) was located toward the self-oriented pole of the self-other dimension, while Sympathetic Concern (SY) and Positive Affect (PA) were located toward the other-oriented pole of this dimension. However, among people high on the factor (Figure 1b), Personal Discomfort was located on the other-oriented side of this dimension and its location was

essentially the same on the dimension as the locations of Sympathetic Concern and Positive Affect.

The figures suggest that all people may experience Personal Discomfort when another person is in distress. But among people who score low on the Other-oriented Empathy factor this discomfort is likely to be a self-centered reaction to another person's problems. Among people who score high on this factor, this discomfort is likely to be experienced as an other-oriented response to another person's distress rather than a self-oriented reaction to an unpleasant situation. One can speculate on the effects of these different affective structures on helping. The arousal: cost-reward model of helping proposes that bystanders are aroused by distress in another person and will attempt to reduce this arousal in the most cost efficient way possible. If the costs for helping are high, bystanders may reduce their arousal by leaving the scene, but if the costs of not helping are high, they will typically reduce their arousal by helping. Other-oriented Personal Discomfort, tied together with sympathy and positive affect, would raise the cost of not helping, making it more likely that a bystander would intervene.

Behavioral Correlates

Helping. Penner and Fritzsche (1993b) administered the PSB to 74 undergraduates. Approximately four weeks later, the students responded to a 20-item, self-report questionnaire concerned with specific helping behaviors over the past four

weeks (e.g., helping another student find a classroom, filling in for a co-worker who had to miss work). The students indicated how often they had engaged in each behavior (from "Did Not Do" to "Did More Than Twice"). The scale had a coefficient alpha of greater than .80, and scores on the scale were unrelated to scores on the short-form social desirability scale.

We were interested in how well factor scores predicted helping over the month period of time. Although the correlations were in the expected direction, Other-oriented Empathy scores failed to correlate significantly with either the total amount of helping (i.e., the number of helpful behaviors times the frequency of each behavior) or the number of helpful behaviors. The correlations for Helpfulness were significant, $r = .33$ for total amount of helping and $r = .39$ for number of helpful behaviors (p 's < .05). Penner and Menon (1993) and Poindexter (1994) replicated this study and also found significant correlations between the Helpfulness factor and self-reports of prosocial behaviors.

Volunteering. Penner and Fritzsche (1993b) sent the PSB to volunteers for a charity that serves homeless individuals and families⁴. Volunteers were asked to anonymously complete the PSB and answer a few questions about their demographic characteristics and involvement with the charity. At the time of the study, approximately 90 individuals were listed as volunteers for the charity; 74 (82%) of them returned their

questionnaires; 68 of these were usable. Volunteers' scores on the two factors were compared with scores of subjects who indicated that they had not worked as a volunteer for any charity in the last month. Volunteers scored significantly higher than did nonvolunteers on both factors.

Within the volunteer sample, we divided the respondents into: a) those who had worked for the charity for less than six months and those who had worked for more than six months; and b) those who only worked for this charity and those who worked for any other charities as well. Volunteers who had worked for more than six months scored significantly higher on both PSB factors than did those who had worked for less than six months. Volunteers who worked for multiple charities scored significantly higher on the Helpfulness factor than did those who only worked for this charity.

Sibicky et al. (1994) administered the PSB to college students who had been offered the opportunity to volunteer for various projects. Scores on Other-oriented Empathy and Helpfulness were both significantly correlated with intention to volunteer.

Employee Behaviors. Midili (1994) administered the PSB to employees of a large retail chain and obtained anonymous self-reports of prosocial employee behaviors (e.g., giving a customer special attention). Both factors of the PSB correlated significantly with these self-reports.

Correlations with other Dimensions of Personality.

To more fully understand the prosocial personality it is necessary to place it within the context of other aspects of personality. Of special importance is how the prosocial personality, as measured by the PSB, is related to more basic dimensions of personality.

Currently, one of the most popular models of personality structure proposes that personality is comprised of five domains: (the "Big Five"): Neuroticism, Extroversion, Openness (or Intellect), Agreeableness and Conscientiousness (see Costa & McCrae, 1992; Digman, 1990; Goldberg, 1993). Associated with each of these domains are several facets; these are more focused and concrete personality characteristics. For example, according to Costa and McCrae, the facet, excitement-seeking, is part of the Extroversion domain. It would seem reasonable to expect significant relationships between the factors in the PSB and some of the Big Five domains. For example, according to Graziano and Eisenberg (1994), prosocial individuals should score high on measures Agreeableness. (Indeed, in Costa & McCrae's measure of the Big Five, altruism is one of the facets of Agreeableness). Thus, one would expect that both the Other-Oriented Empathy and Helpfulness factors would be positively related to Agreeableness.

Penner and Fritzsche (1993b) have examined the correlations between scores on the PSB and the "Big Five" personality dimensions as measured by the Revised NEO Personality Inventory

(NEO PI-R; Costa & McCrae, 1992). They found a substantial correlation between Agreeableness and the Other-oriented Empathy factor, $r(249) = .52, p < .001$, but the correlation between Helpfulness and Agreeableness was .11 (ns).

Another complementary conceptualization of the basic structure of personality has been proposed by Wiggins (1991). He argues that personality characteristics manifest themselves primarily in interpersonal styles. Wiggins posits that the two basic dimensions of interpersonal style are Dominance (also called Agency -- a concern for "mastery and power which enhance and protect (the individual)"; Wiggins, 1991) and Nurturance (also called Communion -- a concern for "intimacy, union, and solidarity with (other people)"; Wiggins, 1991). Using a circumplex model, Trapnell and Wiggins (1990) proposed there are eight interpersonal styles (or octants) that represent the combination of different levels of the two basic dimensions. For example, an arrogant interpersonal style would be characteristic of someone who is relatively high on the Dominance dimension and relatively low on the Nurturance dimension.

We expected that the two factors on the PSB would be related to the Nurturance dimension of Wiggins' circumplex model. Freifeld (1993) and Poindexter (1994) tested this prediction by examining the correlations between the PSB factors and interpersonal styles as measured by the Interpersonal Adjectives Scale-Revised (IAS-R; Trapnell & Wiggins, 1990)⁵. Freifeld found

that Nurturance correlated significantly with both factors, but the correlation for Helpfulness, $r(212) = .23$, $p < .01$, was significantly smaller than the correlation for Other-oriented Empathy, $r(212) = .52$, $p < .001$. Additionally, Helpfulness also correlated significantly with Dominance, $r(212) = .34$, $p < .001$. Poindexter (1994) also found a significant correlation between Other-oriented Empathy and Nurturance was $.61$, (108) , $p < .01$, but Helpfulness was unrelated to Nurturance, $r(108) = .01$, ns. Perhaps more interestingly, she also found a significant correlation between the Helpfulness factor and Dominance, $r(108) = .34$, $p < .01$.

Thus, the Other-oriented Empathy factor showed the expected pattern of correlations with more basic dimensions of personality, but the Helpfulness factor did not. Scores on the latter factor appear to be more strongly and consistently related to dominance than to the "other-oriented" aspects of personality structure such as agreeableness and nurturance. However, the data reported in the previous section strongly suggest that people who score high on the Helpfulness factor are consistently predisposed to engage in actions that benefit other. These findings seem contradictory and require some further consideration.

Graziano's and Eisenberg's (1994) discussion of the personality correlates of prosocial actions may provide a possible explanation of this apparent paradox. They suggest that individuals are unlikely to engage in prosocial actions unless

they believe that their attempts to help others will be effective. There are data that indicate people who score high on the Helpfulness factor would be inclined to hold such beliefs. For example, Penner and Fritzsche (1993) found significant, positive correlations between Helpfulness and assertiveness and self-confidence, as measured by both the NEO PI-R and the IAS-R. Additionally, Penner and Menon (1993), Poindexter (1994) and Midili (1994) have all found small but significant correlations between scores on the Helpfulness factor and a sense of self-efficacy (as measured by Paulus' (1983) Spheres of Control scale). (In all instances, the comparable correlations for the Other-oriented Empathy factor were smaller and usually nonsignificant.)

These findings lead to two conclusions about how the prosocial personality is related to prosocial behavior. The first is that the Helpfulness factor may be a better predictor of prosocial behavior than the Other-oriented Empathy factor because a sense of self-confidence and of self-efficacy, which are more strongly associated with the former factor than the latter one, may play a critical role in whether or not a person decides to act prosocially. This would suggest that the relationship between Other-oriented Empathy and prosocial behavior would be stronger among people who believe in their self-efficacy than those who do not. Penner and Menon (1993) tested this proposal and found self-efficacy did moderate the relationship between Other-Oriented

Empathy and helpfulness in the expected manner. This finding was replicated by Poindexter (1994).

The second conclusion is appreciably more speculative, but perhaps more intriguing. We would suggest that there may be individuals who consistently engage in prosocial actions not because of what it does for other people but because of what it does for them. More specifically, helping may be a way for them to demonstrate their self-efficacy and perhaps even their mastery over their environment. In some people, these motivations for helping may be as strongly associated with prosocial behavior as are the motivations that are based on concern for the well-being of others.

One very interesting theoretical and practical question that can be addressed using the PSB is how do these two quite different motivations for helping (i.e., concern for others and demonstrating self-efficacy and mastery) jointly determine prosocial behavior? That is, do they each account for unique variance in prosocial actions or does the interaction between them provide the best predictor of whether or not a person will act prosocially.

Conclusions

The PSB appears to provide a reliable and valid measure of the prosocial personality. The factor structure of this instrument was essentially invariant across several different samples. The pattern of covariation among the scales/items

contained in the PSB did not appear to differ as a function of the respondents' gender, age, educational background or the region of the country in which they lived. The two factors, Other-oriented Empathy and Helpfulness were internally consistent and temporally stable. Whereas many of the individual personality traits that are associated with one aspect of prosocial reactions are not associated with other aspects, the two factors that underlie the PSB were associated with a rather wide range of prosocial thoughts, feelings, and actions. However, before we conclude our discussion of this instrument, there is one more issue to be considered. It concerns the generalizability of these findings, especially the factor structure of the PSB. Most of the findings that have been reported come from college students and all of the studies were conducted in the United States. Is there any reason to believe that we are discussing a personality structure that is associated with prosocial reactions with other populations and other settings?

First, we should note that Carlo et al. (1991) independently proposed a structure for the prosocial personality that is quite similar to the one we have proposed. However, they also used college students as their subjects. Other, more compelling, evidence concerning the generalizability question may come from a study of the "altruistic personality" conducted by Oliner and Oliner (1988). Using historical records, the Oliners identified over 200 individuals who had rescued Jews during the campaign of

genocide against Jews in Europe in the 1930's and 1940's. The Oliners administered numerous personality tests to these "rescuers" and to people who were matched with them on several demographic characteristics (e.g., age, place of residence during the holocaust), but who had not attempted to rescue any Jews. The Oliners did find some personality differences between the two groups, but it must be noted that the rescuers were interviewed 35 to 40 years after they had been publicly identified as heroes and altruists. Thus there is the distinct possibility that such public acknowledgements produced the rescuer-nonrescuer personality differences rather than vice versa. It was for this reason that we did not use the Oliners' results when we were originally selecting personality scales for inclusion in the PSB. Now, however, let us compare the factors that underlie the PSB to the Oliners' descriptions of the rescuers. According to S. Oliner, the rescuers, "... were definitely more empathic ... (and) ... had a strong sense of personal and social responsibility--a norm-based belief about how they should act" (quoted in Hunt, 1990; p. 203). This sounds very much like the Other-oriented Empathy factor. But were there other characteristics that distinguished the rescuers from the nonrescuers? The Oliners reported that the rescuers, "... felt they could control events and shape their destinies ... (and had a) stronger sense of personal efficacy ... " (1988, p. 177; italics added). This sounds a great deal like the personality

characteristics associated with the Helpfulness factor. The substantial convergence between two independent investigations of the prosocial personality, using different methodologies, quite different samples of subjects, and very different kinds of helping gives us good reason to believe that the factors measured by the PSB may represent a general prosocial personality structure.

Although there is always one more study to be done, it would appear that the PSB is a useful tool in the study of prosocial behavior. It provides us with a means to understand how personality traits affect prosocial thoughts, feelings and actions, and more generally, how personality traits interact with situational factors to jointly determine social behavior.

Authors' Note

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Footnotes

¹ There is considerable controversy in the research literature over the motivational mechanisms that underlie prosocial behaviors. Part of this debate concerns whether the personality traits included in our battery are associated with altruistically or egoistically motivated helping (See Batson, 1991; Carlo et

al., 1991). Therefore, we have chosen to label the personality characteristics of interest as the "prosocial" rather than "altruistic". The nature of the motivational mechanisms that underlie helping is an important theoretical issue, but it is tangential to the major focus of this chapter -- measuring the personality characteristics associated with prosocial feelings, cognitions, and behaviors.

² These items were kindly provided to us by C. Daniel Batson.

³ Batson called the affective reactions Empathic Concern and Personal Distress. We have changed the names to Sympathetic Concern and Personal Discomfort to avoid confusion with the subscales in Davis' empathy scale. In studies of bystander interventions, Batson has found that Empathic Concern is associated with helping even when it would be easy not to help a person; Personal Distress is associated with helping when it would be difficult not to help.

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⁵ The authors are grateful to Psychological Assessment Resources Inc. and to J. Wiggins for permission to use these instruments.

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Table 1

The Prosocial Personality Battery

Components

1. Ascription of Responsibility (original items from Schwartz & Howard, 1982): the tendency to accept responsibility for the consequences of one's actions.

15 items alpha: .77

2. Empathy (original items from Davis, 1980)

Empathic Concern: the tendency to experience other oriented feelings of sympathy and concern for unfortunate others.

7 items alpha: .78

Perspective Taking: the tendency to spontaneously adopt the psychological viewpoint of another person.

7 items alpha: .74

Personal Distress: the tendency to experience self-oriented feelings of personal anxiety and unease in tense interpersonal situations.

5 items alpha: .76

3. Moral Reasoning

Other-oriented Moral Reasoning: the tendency to focus on the best interests of others when making moral decisions.

4 items alpha: .51

Mutual-concerns Moral Reasoning: the tendency to consider the best interests of all affected parties when making moral decisions.

4 items alpha: .63

4. Helpfulness (original items from Rushton et al. 1981): the tendency to provide help to needy individuals and groups of individuals.

14 items alpha: .83

Total = 56 items

Table 2

Factor Structure of the Prosocial Personality Battery
(N = 1064)

	Other-oriented Empathy	Helpfulness
Empathic Concern	.67	-
Ascription of Responsibility	.48	-
Other-oriented Moral Reasoning	.46	-
Perspective Taking	.43	-
Mutual-concerns Moral Reasoning	.39	-
Personal Distress	-	-.50
Self-reported 'Altruism'	-	.39

Figures 1a and 1b

Images not available