

Altruism in Contemporary America:  
A Report from the National Altruism Study

Tom W. Smith

National Opinion Research Center/  
University of Chicago

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## Introduction

Altruistic behaviors and values have been widely studied throughout the arts and sciences from philosophy to neuroscience. Even within the social sciences there have been very diverse research traditions within economics, psychology, political science, sociology, and related disciplines (Batson, 1991; Batson, 1998; Eisenberg, 1986; Kangas, 1997; Penner, 1995; Piliavin and Charng, 1990; Rose-Ackerman, 1996; Sawyer, 1966; Staub, et al., 1984; Wispe, 1978; Wrightsman, 1974). But in recent years in both psychology and sociology research on altruism has been declining (Batson, 1998). The Fetzer initiative on Scientific Research on Altruistic Love and Compassionate Love provides an opportunity both for revitalizing social-science research on altruism and for interdisciplinary synergy in the study of altruism.

One of the main limitations of social-science research on altruism is that most research has been based on very restricted, small, non-representative samples, mostly of undergraduate students.<sup>1</sup> While work with student, convenience samples can be very useful, especially when experimental designs are utilized, they suffer from serious, external-validity problems and do not tell social scientists and others about the extent of behaviors and values in society-at-large. To expand knowledge about the level, nature, and associates of empathy and altruism in American society, measures of these constructs were placed on a national, full-probability sample of adult Americans.

Three aspects of altruism were examined: altruistic values, altruistic behaviors, and empathy. We think of altruism as both values/preferences and behaviors "motivated mainly out of a consideration for another's needs rather than one's own" (Piliavin and Charng, 1990; p. 30) and that altruism "provides benefits to its recipients but also provides no benefits to the actors and even incurs some costs" (Howard and Piliavin, 2000, p. 114). Empathy was examined in addition to the direct altruism measures because as Batson (1998, p. 300) has noted, "the most frequently proposed source of altruistic motivation has been an other-oriented emotional response congruent with the perceived welfare of another person -- today usually called empathy."

This report first discusses the items that are used to measure

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<sup>1</sup>Some prosocial behaviors, such as giving and volunteering to organized groups, have been examined in large-scale, national studies such as the Giving and Volunteering Surveys by Independent Sector and on the 1996 General Social Survey. But most research on empathy and altruism has been restricted to small samples of students. For example, in the bibliography by Post and others (2002), 43 studies were exclusively based on students, 3 on students plus some others, 8 on people in various types of voluntary associations, 3 on twins, 3 on other convenience samples, and two on state-wide probability samples. Their sample sizes were less than 100 (21), 100-199 (19), 200-499 (13), and 500+ (9).

empathy, altruistic values, and altruistic behaviors. Second, it describes the five scales that are constructed from the items. Third, it examines the bivariate associations between these scales and other measures. Specifically it a) considers two validating measures, b) looks at how empathy and altruism vary across socio-demographic groups, and c) tests various hypotheses about how empathy and altruism are related to other measures. The principal hypotheses examined are that empathy and altruism will be greater among:

- 1) those who are socially and civically engaged.
- 2) those who see interpersonal, social obligations between people.
- 3) the religious rather than the non-religious and that among the religious they will rise with level of involvement.
- 4) those with higher psychological and physical well-being.
- 5) those who are not misanthropic.
- 6) those less fearful of crime and victimization and with a less punitive attitude towards crime and criminals.
- 7) those supporting more spending for social-welfare programs and the expansion of government policies to assist disadvantaged groups.

Finally, a series of multivariate models are tested to see how the socio-demographics and other variables work controlling for the others.

#### Data

The NAS was administered on a random half of the 2002 General Social Survey (GSS). The GSS is an in-person, full-probability sample of adults living in households in the United States. It had a response rate of 70.1% and 1366 completed cases. For a full description and methodology of the 2002 GSS see Davis, Smith, and Marsden, 2003.

#### Levels of Empathy and Altruism

##### Empathy

There are two empathy batteries. The first is the seven-item Davis Empathy Scale (Davis, 1994). As Table 1 shows, a solid majority of Americans indicates that the empathic response to each item describes themselves: 80% say they feel protective of someone being taken advantage of, 75% are often touched by things that

happen, 73% describe themselves as "a pretty soft-hearted person," and 71% often have tender, concerned feelings for the less fortunate. In addition, 73% say not feeling pity for the unfairly treated does not describe them, 61% that not being disturbed by the misfortunes of others is not typical, and 59% indicate that not feeling sorry for people having problems does not describe them. Full item wordings are given in Appendix A: 1. Empathy.

The second consists of two-items from the daily spiritual experience scale (Underwood, 1999). A majority of 57% report accepting others "even when they do things I think are wrong" on most days or more often, 23% on only some days, and 20% just once in a while or less often. A plurality of 43% feel selfless caring for others on most days or more often, 24% on only some days, and 33% just once in a while or less often. For full item wordings see Appendix A: 2. Acceptance and Selflessness.

Two scales were constructed from these sets of items. The Davis Empathy Scale (DES) has seven items with values running from 7 (for someone giving the least empathic response to all items) to 35 (for the most empathic). The mean for the total population is 27.9 and the sample size is 1329. The inter-item correlations average .308 and Cronbach's reliability coefficient is .76.<sup>2</sup>

The second, the Extended Empathy Scale (EES), adds the items on selflessness and acceptance to the DES items for a battery with nine items with values running from 9 (for someone giving the least empathic response to all items) to 45 (for the most empathic). The mean for the total population is 34.7 and the sample size is 1301. The inter-item correlations average .277 and Cronbach's reliability coefficient is .77.<sup>3</sup>

### Altruistic Values

Four items measure altruistic values (Nickell, 1998; Webb, Green, and Brashear, 2000). As Table 2 shows, 89% agreed that people should be willing to help the less fortunate with 2% disagreeing, 75% agreed that assisting those in trouble is personally important and only 6% disagreed, 46% disagreed that people "need to look after themselves and not overly worry about others" with 32% agreeing, and 23% disagreed that the needy should help themselves rather than depend on others with 53% agreeing with this sentiment. Items wordings are given in Appendix A: 3. Altruistic Values.

With the items reverse coded as needed, the four-item Altruistic Value Scale (AVS) runs from 4 (for someone giving the least altruistic response to all items) to 20 (for the most altruistic). The mean for the total population is 14.0 and the

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<sup>2</sup>Items a, c, f, and g were reversed coded to give the empathic responses the high scores.

<sup>3</sup>The two acceptance and selflessness items were both reversed coded. The two items themselves correlate with each other at .38.

sample size is 1339. The inter-item correlations average .24 and Cronbach's reliability coefficient is .56.<sup>4</sup>

### Altruistic Behaviors

There are two altruistic behavior batteries. The first consists of 11 items asked as part of the NAS. These items were based on the various baseline studies (Amato, 1990; Johnson, et al., 1989; Khanna, et al., 1992; Rushton, Chrisjohn, and Fekker, 1981a and 1982b; Smith, 2000). The second consists of a similar set of four items asked as part of the International Social Survey Program (ISSP) module on social networks. These 15 items are presented together in Table 3. It shows that a majority of Americans performed 8 of the 15 altruistic acts during the last year, that 6 actions were carried out by 40-47%, and only one activity was relatively infrequent with only 16% giving blood. In terms of estimated number of times an activity was done in the last year, talking to a depressed person was the most common of these altruistic behaviors (24 times per annum). This was followed by helping others with housework (17 times), allowing someone to cut ahead in line (11 times), giving directions (11 times), giving money to charity (10 times), volunteering (6 times), helping the homeless (6 times), assisting someone find a job (5 times), taking care of things for someone away (4 times), giving up a seat (four times), lending money (3 times), carrying belongings (3 times), loaning items (3 times), returning extra change (2 times), and giving blood (less than 1 time). The item wordings are given in Appendix A: 4. Altruistic Behaviors.

Two scales were made from these behavioral items. The Altruistic Behaviors Scale (ABS) uses the 11 items that were part of the NAS. Values range from 0 (for someone who did none of the altruistic acts during the last 12 months) to 825 (for someone who did all acts more than once a week during the last year). The mean for the total population is 58.8 and the sample size is 1315. The inter-item correlations on the original response scale average .155 and Cronbach's reliability coefficient is .67.<sup>5</sup> The second scale, the Altruistic and Helping Behaviors Scale (AHBS), consists of the 11 items in the NAS scale plus four similar items from the ISSP module. These four items differ from the 11 NAS items because a) they refer to things done "for people you know personally, such as relatives, friends, neighbors, or other acquaintances" which the former does not and b) they were asked only of people doing the ISSP supplement which reduced the sample size as indicated below. Values range from 0 (for someone who did none of the altruistic acts during the last 12 months) to 1125 (for someone who did all acts more than once a week during the last year). The mean for the

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<sup>4</sup>Items a and c were reversed coded to give the altruistic responses high values.

<sup>5</sup>See Table 3 on the coding of these items.

total population is 109.3 and the sample size is 1113. The inter-item correlations average .147 and Cronbach's reliability coefficient is .72.

### **Inter-Correlations of Empathy, Altruistic Values, and Altruistic Behaviors**

As anticipated, the empathy and altruistic scales are significantly associated to each other (Batson, 1998; Eisenberg, et al., 1989; Morgan, Goddard, and Givens, 1997; Piliavin and Charng, 1990; Post, et al., 2002; Romer, Gruder, and Lizzadro, 1986). Empathy is strongly related to altruistic values. DES and ESS correlate with altruistic values by .48 (prob.=.000) and .50 (prob.=.000) respectively. They are more moderately associated with altruistic behaviors. DES is correlated with the 11-item scale at .14 (.000) and with the 15-item scale at .19 (.000). Similarly ESS is correlated at .17 (.000) and .23 (.000) with the two behavior scales. Altruistic values are moderately related to altruistic behaviors: by .12 (.000) for ABS and .17 (.000) for AHBS.

The somewhat higher inter-scale correlations for ESS compared to DES and ABHS compared to ABS suggests that on average these longer versions have somewhat less measurement error and more reliability.

The comparatively modest associations between both empathy and altruistic values and altruistic behaviors reflect both the imperfect connection between values and attitudes and behaviors that prevails in general and particular difficulties in reliably measuring altruistic behaviors. First, for the many of the 15 activities doing the behavior depends on the specific opportunity to act occurring (e.g. being asked for directions, getting extra change, being asked to help when someone is away) or knowing someone who needs the help needed (e.g. finding a job, depressed, needing a loan). One has to have an opportunity for doing these good deeds before one can act altruistically and it is likely that exposure to such opportunities is largely unrelated to a person's likelihood to assist, so this is essentially a random factor that would attenuate associations with other variables (e.g. empathy and altruistic values). Second, many of the incidents asked about are relatively minor and difficult to recall and report accurately. Both forgetting and misestimating the occurrence of good deeds would also tend to reduce correlations. Third, altruistic acts are dependent to a notable degree on situational and contextual factors (Piliavin and Charng, 1990; Romer, Gruder, and Lizzadro, 1986). For example, the presence or absence of others, time pressures, and framing will all influence whether a particular individual will or will not engage in an altruistic behavior.

### **Distribution of Empathy and Altruism**

Overall the five empathy and altruism scales were associated with 54 other variables. Of these 270 comparisons 128 or 47% were statistically significant (Table 4). The number of statistically

significant associations were similar for the two empathy scales (each related to 27 variables), altruistic values (33), and ABHS (27), but the 11-item behavioral scale (ABS) was related to fewer variables (14).

First, we consider two validation variables that measure cooperation and helpfulness independent of self-reports (Table 4A). The first is interviewer's ratings of how helpful and cooperative respondents were. We would expect the cooperative to be more empathic and altruistic. The analysis shows that for all five variables empathy and altruism rose with rated level of cooperation and that in each case the association was linear.<sup>6</sup> The second validation variable is whether respondents reported their household income to interviewers. As one would expect, those who report their income are more altruistic, but empathy does not vary with reporting. Perhaps empathy is not an important factor behind this particular helpful/compliant behavior. Overall, the validation variables indicate that these variables are operating as one would expect.

Second, we look at the demographic profile of empathy and altruism (Table 4B):

The literature is very inconsistent on gender's relationship to empathy (Chou, 1998; Giesbrecht, 1998; Gilligan and Attanucci, 1998; Piliavin and Charg, 1990; Davis, 1994; Post, et al., 2002) and altruism (Amato, 1990; Batson, 1998; Dovidio, 2000; Howard and Piliavin, 2000; Johnson, et al., 1989; Khanna, et al., 1992). Batson's (1998, p. 289) summary of research is that "sometimes men help more than women, sometimes women help more than men, and sometimes the sex of the helper makes no difference." Similarly, Howard and Piliavin (2000, p. 117) observe that in regards to men and women "who helps depends heavily on the nature of the help required." The NAS found that gender is strongly associated with empathy and altruistic values with women besting men on both. But altruistic behaviors do not vary by gender.

Few studies have examined age since most research involves students with little variation in age. Some research suggests that altruism may be greater among the middle-aged and less

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<sup>6</sup>The statistical analysis first tested for whether there is statistically significant variation in empathy and altruism across the categories of the other variables. If not, no model is listed. If significant and the other variable is nominal, then the model is not constant (NC). If significant and the other variable is ordinal or interval, then the possible models are: linear (L) - no significant variable from the best linear fit; significant linear component (SLC) - linear fit is significant, but also significant variation from the best linear fit; and not constant, not linear (NCNL) - linear fit is not significant and deviation from best linear fit is significant.

for the young and old (Dovidio, 2000; Rushton, et al., 1989). In the NAS age is somewhat associated with both empathy and altruism. Empathy appears to rise with age, but perhaps falls among those 65+ (but on only one scale is the relationship statistically significant). A similar pattern exists for altruistic values. ABS is unrelated to age, but ABHS is highest for young adults and somewhat declines with age.

Stratification variables in general and education in particular have not been extensively examined in the main empathy and altruism literature, but other research indicates that the better educated are more supportive of social welfare policies and to be volunteers (Berkowitz and Lutterman, 1968; Dovidio, 2000; Webb, 2000). In the NAS empathy and altruism differ little on the stratification variables of education and household income. Altruistic values are higher among the better educated and ABHS is more frequent among those with lower income.

Marital status has rarely been considered as a predictor variable. In the NAS empathy and altruistic values are greater among the married and widowed (in the later case because there are more widows than widowers) and lowest among the separated and never married. Altruistic behaviors are not consistently related, but ABHS scores are highest among the never married and lowest among the married and widowed.

Research on helping, neighborliness, and inter-personal relations finds these to be stronger in less dense area (Howard and Piliavin, 2000), but on the NAS rural/urban residence is unrelated to either empathy or altruism and there was no support for the hypothesis that they would be lowest in the "impersonal" large, central cities and highest in "friendly" small towns and rural areas. Regional differences appear, but they are not consistent across measures (appearing on only one empathy and one behavior scale) and do not show a clear pattern across those measures that are significantly related.

Ethnicity and race have been little examined in the empathy and altruism literature although some cross-cultural differences have been found (Johnson, et al., 1989).<sup>7</sup> In the NAS Hispanic ethnicity is unrelated to empathy or altruism and race is only related to altruistic behaviors being higher for Blacks on both scales.

Labor force status has not be examined by most empathy and altruism research. In the NAS empathy is highest among

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<sup>7</sup>Race of helper and helped interactions have been examined (Batson, 1998).

homemakers (because they are overwhelmingly female), lowest among the unemployed, and next lowest among the full-time employed (probably because they include more males). The lower empathy among the unemployed may reflect the negative impact of hardships on people's world views, but there are too few unemployed respondents to seriously examine this hypothesis. Altruistic values are unrelated to labor force status and altruistic behaviors do not show either a clear or consistent pattern of differences.

Family of origin may be related to empathy (Piliavin and Charg, 1990). As Table 5 shows, DES scores are highest for those raised in two-parent families, intermediate for those raised by females only, and lowest for those raised by males. This pattern holds overall and for being raised by one's parents, parents and step-parents, and other relatives, but is statistically significant for only one formulation with ESS. These results are consistent with the gender differences on empathy reported above.

Third, we consider the hypothesis that social and civic engagement will be associated with empathy and altruism (Table 4C). Regarding social engagement empathy and altruism is highest among those having the most friends with all scales showing statistically significant relationships. Socializing with friends, relatives, and neighbors is related to more altruistic behavior, but not to empathy and altruistic values. Socializing in bars shows the curvilinear relationship of having both empathy and altruism highest among the most and least frequent attenders. On civic engagement, empathy and altruism do not vary meaningfully by whether people voted, but empathy and altruism are higher among those active in voluntary associations on all five scales.

Fourth, we thought that empathy and altruism would be higher among those seeing obligations between various socially related groups (Table 4D). Empathy proved to have a more complex relationship. The two items on the duty of children to their parents showed inconsistent patterns, no association for one and a curvilinear association for the other. Empathy was unrelated to a general measure putting self and family first. It was higher among those reporting that friends and family often made demands on them and those feeling that the better-off should help their friends. Altruistic values are somewhat stronger among those believing children have a duty to elderly parents, but the association is not strong. It is also higher among those who disagree that one should help their family and selves first. Altruistic values are also greater among those believing that the better-off should help their friends. Altruistic behaviors are somewhat more frequent among those saying elderly parents should live with their children, but is unrelated to the other parental variable. They are also unrelated to the self/family first variable. The ABS measure is unrelated to demands on people from family and friends and on friends helping friends, but the AHBS measure, which includes items

referring to family and friends, is higher among those getting demands from other and among those favoring friends helping friends.

Fifth, we tested the idea that empathy and altruism would be greater among the religious (Amato, 1990; Dovidio, 2000; Morgan, Goddard, and Givens, 1997; Post, et al., 2002; Smith, Fabricatore, and Peyrot, 1999) (Table 4E). First, we looked at whether these constructs vary by the religious tradition in which one was raised or which one currently practices. While a number of associations initially appeared, most of the variation was due to those with no religion, not to differences amongst the different religious groups. However, on both empathy measures, fundamentalist showed higher scores than moderates and liberals did both with the non-religious included and excluded from the analysis.

The comparison of those raised in no religion vs. being raised in some religion also showed no statistically significant differences. But those currently with no religion did have less empathy and lower altruistic values than those with some religion and while not statistically significant, altruistic behaviors tend in the same direction. Next, we looked at religiosity. In terms of all three indicators (self-rated strength of religious attachment, frequency of attending church, frequency of praying), more religious involvement was associated with greater empathy and more altruism on all five scales. The relationships were strong and linear or nearly linear.

Sixth, we examined whether better health and psychological-well being were associated with more empathy and altruism (Table 4F). Few of these measures were related to any of the scales. The AHBS scale was associated with general happiness and life activity. In both cases, the association was curvilinear with altruistic and helping behaviors done by the very happy and not too happy and by those whose lives were either exciting or dull. A similar relationship appeared for ABS. It was statistically significant for life activity, but not happiness. The ABS scale had higher scores among those happily married, but there was no difference on AHBS.

Seventh, we tested the hypothesis that the misanthropic would be less empathic and altruistic (Table 4G). The misanthropy measures showed rather weak and scattered relationships, but where statistically significant associations emerged, they were in the hypothesized direction. Empathy is not meaningfully related to misanthropy, but altruistic values are higher among those with low misanthropy. The measures of altruistic behaviors are not consistently related to the misanthropy items.

Eighth, we considered whether concern about crime or punitive attitudes towards crime and criminals would be related to lower empathy and altruism (Table 4H). We found that counter to expectations that empathy was higher among those fearful of crime and with more punitive attitudes. This may be related to the fact that women are both more fearful and less punitive than men and more empathic. Altruistic values are higher among those fearful of crime (counter to expectations), unrelated to whether courts should be tougher or the police should hit people, and higher among those

opposed to the death penalty (as expected). Altruistic behaviors are unrelated to fear of or attitudes toward crime.

Finally, we examined the hypothesis that those who were empathic and altruistic would also be liberal on social-welfare policies (Table 4I). In general these expectations were supported. Empathy was higher among those backing more government spending for health care, Blacks, children, social security, and welfare/the poor. It was also higher among those for more government efforts to help the elderly, the poor, and the sick, and for reducing inequality in wealth. It was not related to expanding government aid to child, affirmative action for Blacks, or support for more vs. less government in general. Altruistic values were higher among those for more social-wealth spending, more government assistance to the old, the poor, the sick, and Blacks, equalizing wealth, and more government action in general. It was not related to more assistance for children. ABS was unrelated to support for any of these social-welfare programs. AHBS was higher among those wanting the government to assist children and the poor more, but had no clear relationship to the other social-welfare measures.

Looking at the results that are statistically significant, consistent across the two empathy and altruistic scales, and consistent across measures within each of the domains, we find the follow patterns. Empathy is greater among women than men and for the widowed and homemakers because of the gender of these groups. It is higher among the connected - those with more friends and those belonging to more voluntary associations. It is higher those who see more obligations between groups of people and among those who get more demands from others. It is greater among the religious than the non-religious and greater among those actively engaged in their religion (by self-assessment and frequency of prayer and church attendance). Counter to expectations empathy is higher among those who think courts are too easy and who are afraid of crime, but as expected it is greater among those opposed to the death penalty. Empathy is higher among those for increased social-welfare spending and for expanded governmental programs for the disadvantaged.

Altruistic values are related to many of the same factors as empathy is. Values are higher among women, the widowed, the better educated, and those living outside central cities. The more connected (those with friends and members of groups) have more altruistic values as do those seeing obligations across social groups (but more weakly than for empathy). The religious and the religiously involved have more altruistic values. Those scoring low on misanthropy also are more altruistic. As with empathy, altruistic values are higher among those fearful of crime (counter to expectations) and among those against the death penalty (as expected). Those with liberal position on social-welfare spending and programs also have more altruistic values.

Altruistic behaviors show relatively few notable relationships. Altruistic acts occur more frequently among the never married than among the married or widowed (counter to the pattern on empathy and altruistic values) and among Blacks (race is

unrelated on empathy and altruistic values). As with the other constructs, altruistic behaviors are related to having more friends and belonging to more groups (and also with socializing more often). Helping is also more frequent among the religious and the religious involved.

#### Multivariate Models of Empathy and Altruism

Table 6 presents a series of multi-variate models corresponding to the group of variables discussed above. First, Table 6A shows the basic demographic model. Second, Tables 6b-6h add variables to the basic model for the groups of variables in Table 4.<sup>8</sup>

For the empathy scales only one demographic variable consistently mattered, women have more empathy than men do. Also, in the models with religious and social-welfare spending variables, non-Blacks showed higher empathy. In the various demography + models, empathy was also greater among those rated as more cooperative by interviewers, those belonging to voluntary associations, those thinking that one should help friends, those attending church and praying more frequently, those opposed to the death penalty, those for courts being tougher towards criminals, and those for more social-welfare spending. Misanthropy and fear of crime were unrelated to empathy. With the exception of the positive association between supporting tougher courts and being more empathic, these all follow expected directions.

For the values scale, altruism is greater among women for all models. The basic demographic model also shows more altruism among older adults and the college educated. The age and education relationships show up among most, but not all, of the expanded models. Almost all of the non-demographic correlates of empathy are also related to altruistic values: being rated as cooperative by interviewers (plus reporting one's income), belonging to groups, agreeing that one should help friends, attending church and praying, opposing the death penalty, and favoring social-welfare spending.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>One group, psychological well-being, was omitted because the bivariate analysis indicated that this dimension was unpromising. Not all individual variables used in Table 4 are employed in Table 6. Because some GSS items appear on different, random sub-samples, it is not possible to simultaneously use all variables. Analysis of the bivariate results and preliminary multi-variate analyses were conducted to identify the best variable to use in the multi-variate models.

<sup>9</sup>All of these are treated as independent predictors of empathy and altruism, but in some cases the causal order is unclear. For example, it may well make more sense to say that empathy predicts social spending than the other way around. However, to facilitate comparisons across models, we have consistently made empathy and

Models differ for the two altruistic behavior scales. For the shorter scale nothing was a statistically significant predictor in the basic demographic model. Living in a large city was associated with more helping in three of the seven extended models and men were more helpful than women in the religion model. Helping was also greater among the cooperative, those belonging to groups, church attenders, and those disagreeing that one has a duty to assist ones parents (counter to expectations). For the fuller 15-item helping scale that added items referring to assisting relatives, friends, and others close to you, help is consistently greater across models among those in large central cities, usually greater among those never married (in 6 of 8 models), and occasionally greater among younger adults (in two models) and the less educated (only in the engagement/group-membership model). Helping is also more frequent among the cooperative, those with more friends, those belonging to more groups, those who believe one should help friends, those who receive heavy demands from others, and those who pray more and rated themselves as more religious.

Looking across the three dependent variable groups (empathy, altruistic values, and altruistic behaviors), shows the following patterns.

Women are more empathic than men are and have higher altruistic values. Gender is not notably related to altruistic behaviors.

Age is largely unrelated to empathy, but older adults tend to have more altruistic values. On the longer altruistic-behavior scale the young show more acts of helping, at least in some models, but age is unrelated to the shorter scale.

Income is unrelated to empathy and altruism.

The never married are more likely to engage in altruistic acts on the longer scale, but marital status does not differentiate on the shorter scale.

Living in a large city is associated with more altruistic behavior (consistently on the longer scale and in some cases on the shorter scale).

Race is unrelated to altruism, but in a few models non-Blacks show more empathy than Blacks do.

Labor force status is unrelated to empathy or altruism.

Empathy and altruism are greater among people rated as cooperative respondents, among those belonging to groups, those agreeing that one should help friends, those actively involved in religion, and those for government, social spending.

Other non-demographic variables are related to some, but not all, scales. Empathy and altruistic values are higher among those opposed to the death penalty, but those for tougher punishments of criminals are more empathic (but it is unrelated to altruistic values). Attitudes about obligations towards parents is related to the shorter behavior scale in one model only.

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altruism the dependent variables in the models in Table 6.

## Conclusion

The NTS provides basic data on the prevalence and structure of empathy and altruism in contemporary American society. It indicates that empathic feelings, altruistic values, and helping behaviors are all common. Empathy is closely related to altruistic values, but both empathy and altruistic values are only moderately associated with altruistic behaviors. Moreover, they are better predictors of helping behaviors involving those close to the helper rather than more "random acts of assistance" directed mostly towards those without ties to the helper.

Except for the strong association between gender and empathy and its somewhat smaller relationship with altruistic values, demographics show mostly slight-to-moderate and variable associations with empathy and altruism. A number of the non-demographic variables do show notable, statistically significant, and consistent relationships with empathy and altruism. In particular, religious involvement (e.g. attending church and praying) are associated with greater empathy and altruism as are various variables measuring connectedness such as group memberships and feeling obligations to others, and personal empathy and altruism are linked to support for public policies designed to assist people (e.g. spending for health care and children). Other expected relationships such as greater psychological well-being and greater altruism and more misanthropic views and less altruism did not appear. And a few surprising associations also appeared including that those for tougher courts had more empathy and those living in large, central cities engaged in more helping behavior.

Table 1  
Empathy and Related Values<sup>a</sup>

A. Davis Empathy Scale	Doesn't Describe Well		Describes Well		
	1	2	3	4	5
a. I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me.	4.8	4.7	19.3	25.9	45.3
b. Sometimes I don't feel very sorry for other people when they are having problems.	36.8	22.0	23.8	11.1	6.4
c. When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective toward them.	4.1	4.1	12.0	33.0	46.9
d. Other people's misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal.	35.7	25.6	22.7	10.3	5.8
e. When I see someone treated unfairly, I sometimes don't feel very much pity for them.	45.7	27.6	14.6	6.7	5.4
f. I am often quite touched by things that I see happen.	3.6	3.6	17.8	26.7	48.3
g. I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person.	3.7	5.0	18.0	24.8	48.5

N=1337-1352

Table 1 (continued)

B. Selflessness and Acceptance Items

	Many Times a Day	Every Day	Most Days	Some Days	Once in a While	Almost Never/ Never
a. I feel a self -less caring for others.	9.8	13.2	20.3	24.0	22.3	10.4
b. I accept others even when they do things I think are wrong.	9.4	15.5	32.4	23.0	14.8	4.9

N=1314-1339

<sup>a</sup>Full wordings in Appendix A.

Table 2

Altruistic Values<sup>a</sup>

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. People should be willing to help others who are less fortunate.	42.8	46.3	9.2	1.1	0.7
b. Those in need have to learn to take care of themselves and not depend on others.	12.0	41.4	23.5	19.2	3.9
c. Personally assisting people in trouble is very important to me.	25.1	49.5	19.9	4.8	0.7
d. These days people need to look after themselves and not overly worry about others.	6.6	25.6	21.8	37.2	8.8

N=1347-1349

<sup>a</sup>Full wordings in Appendix A.

Table 3

## Altruistic Behaviors per Annum

Behaviors <sup>a</sup>	Mean Number of Times <sup>b</sup>	% Doing 1 + Times
Talked to Depressed Person	23.9	92.6
Helped Others with Housework	16.6	78.2
Allowed Someone to Cut Ahead	10.9	86.2
Gave Directions	10.6	88.0
Gave Money to Charity	9.5	78.7
Volunteered for Charity	6.4	44.6
Give to Homeless	6.1	63.0
Helped Someone Find Job	4.6	58.2
Helped Someone Who Was Away	4.2	56.5
Gave Up Seat	3.5	42.1
Lent Money	3.2	47.2
Carried Belongings	3.1	43.5
Loaned Item	2.6	39.6
Returned Extra Change	1.7	46.7
Gave Blood	0.6	15.7

N=1329-1357 for 11-item battery and 1138-1140 for 4 items, See Appendix A

<sup>a</sup>See Appendix A for full wordings

<sup>b</sup>Original categories converted to get estimated mean number of times per year as follow: Not at all=0; Once=1; At least 2 or 3 times=3; Once a month=12; Once a week=52; More than once a week=75

Table 4

Altruism and Empathy Scales  
by Other Variables

Variables <sup>a</sup>	Davis Empathy	Empathy+	Altruistic Values	Altruistic 11-items	Behaviors 15-items
a. Validation					
Interviewer rated Cooperation (COOP)					
Friendly and eager	28.2	35.1	14.1	61.2	112.6
Cooperative not eager	26.7	33.3	13.6	49.8	93.1
Indifferent/ Hostile	25.1	31.1	12.7	37.6	90.1
Prob.	.000	.000	.000	.009	.043
Model <sup>b</sup>	L	L	L	L	L
	(1326)	(1298)	(1336)	(1312)	(1112)
Reported Income (INCOME98)					
Gave	27.8	34.6	14.1	60.2	111.2
Refused	28.2	35.2	13.4	42.5	74.5
Prob.	.536	.437	.016	.030	.014
Model	---	---	L	L	L
	(1262)	(1235)	(1272)	(1251)	(1064)
b. Demographics					
Gender (SEX)					
Men	26.5	33.0	13.5	61.6	104.8
Women	29.2	36.4	14.5	56.0	113.8
Prob.	.000	.000	.000	.126	.124
Model	L	L	L	---	---
	(1329)	(1301)	(1313)	(1315)	(1113)
Age (AGE)					
18-29	27.3	34.1	13.6	67.9	135.9
30-39	27.2	34.1	13.8	51.7	100.7
40-49	28.2	35.1	14.1	58.7	103.6
50-59	28.5	35.3	14.7	58.4	105.6
60-69	28.8	35.2	14.1	58.3	94.6
70+	28.0	34.7	14.0	54.5	95.4
Prob.	.006	.088	.000	.116	.000
Model	L	---	SLC	---	SLC
	(1323)	(1294)	(1333)	(1308)	(1108)

Table 4 (continued)

Degree (DEGREE)	Davis Empathy	Empathy+	Altruistic Values	Altruistic 11-items	Behaviors 15-items
LT High Sch.	27.8	34.5	13.6	55.7	118.4
High School	28.0	34.8	14.0	60.0	110.8
Jr. College	27.1	33.7	14.0	58.1	111.0
4-yr. Col.	28.1	35.0	14.2	58.4	103.5
Grad. Sch.	27.8	34.6	14.6	57.9	95.3
Prob.	.512	.481	.007	.960	.409
Model	---	---	L	---	---
	(1329)	(1301)	(1339)	(1315)	(1113)
Income (INCOME98)					
LT 20K	27.7	34.4	13.9	59.0	121.6
20-40K	28.0	34.8	14.1	60.4	118.7
40-75K	28.1	34.9	14.1	58.3	102.6
75K+	27.6	34.4	14.2	62.8	105.4
Refused	28.2	35.2	13.4	42.5	74.5
Prob.	.715	.724	.073	.236	.011
Model	---	---	---	---	L
	(1262)	(1235)	(1272)	(1251)	(1064)
Marital Status (MARITAL)					
Married	28.0	34.7	14.1	56.8	98.3
Widowed	29.0	36.3	14.5	49.3	97.0
Divorced	28.4	35.2	14.3	58.0	109.1
Separated	27.4	34.0	14.0	57.9	111.7
Nev. Married	27.3	34.0	13.6	66.0	133.6
Prob.	.015	.017	.005	.165	.000
Model	NC	NC	NC	---	NC
	(1329)	(1301)	(1339)	(1315)	(1113)
Residence (SRCBELT)					
Big Cities	27.7	34.7	13.7	74.5	137.0
Med. Cities	27.4	34.2	13.6	65.8	127.9
Subs. Big	27.6	34.3	14.0	54.9	101.5
Subs. Medium	27.6	34.3	14.2	59.8	105.3
Other Urban	28.3	35.3	14.2	56.9	104.6
Other Rural	27.7	34.0	13.9	50.4	99.7
Prob.	.207	.091	.047	.068	.011
Model	---	---	L	---	---
	(1329)	(1301)	(1339)	(1315)	(1113)

Table 4 (continued)

Region (REGION)	Davis Empathy	Empathy+	Altruistic Values	Altruistic 11-items	Behaviors 15-items
New England	28.7	35.4	14.7	64.7	110.8
Mid-Atlantic	27.7	34.1	13.8	51.2	102.0
E. No. Cen.	27.9	34.6	14.2	51.6	100.9
W. No. Cen.	27.1	34.1	13.4	64.2	110.3
So. Atlantic	28.2	35.1	14.1	57.2	105.6
E. So. Cen.	29.0	36.0	14.3	42.1	97.0
W. So. Cen.	28.5	35.6	13.8	61.0	116.9
Mountain	27.7	34.5	14.1	58.6	107.1
Pacific	27.2	33.8	13.9	77.0	129.3
Prob.	.055	.041	.015	.001	.174
Model	---	NC	NC	NC	---
	(1329)	(1301)	(1339)	(1315)	(1113)
Race (RACECEN1)					
White	27.9	34.7	14.0	57.3	104.7
Black	27.8	34.5	13.9	63.9	132.2
Prob.	.314	.078	.473	.002	.001
Model	---	---	---	L	L
	(1329)	(1300)	(1339)	(1315)	(1113)
Hispanic (HISPANIC)					
Is Not	27.9	34.7	14.0	58.7	108.2
Is Hisp.	28.1	35.0	13.8	59.9	121.5
Prob.	.651	.586	.410	.867	.225
Model	---	---	---	---	---
	(1329)	(1301)	(1339)	(1315)	(1113)
Labor Force Status (WRKSTAT)					
Full-Time	27.5	34.1	14.0	57.1	106.1
Part-Time	28.8	35.9	14.1	72.8	127.9
Temp. Off	29.1	36.0	14.1	44.5	116.8
Unemployed	26.4	33.3	13.8	62.4	122.9
Retired	27.9	34.7	14.0	54.6	90.4
Student	28.2	35.3	13.9	79.7	152.7
Homemaker	29.2	36.4	14.2	52.8	100.1
Other	29.2	35.7	14.8	57.0	118.7
Prob.	.000	.001	.458	.051	.004
Model	NC	NC	---	---	NC
	(1329)	(1301)	(1339)	(1315)	(1113)

Table 4 (continued)

	Davis Empathy	Empathy+	Altruistic Values	Altruistic 11-items	Behaviors 15-items
c. Social/Civic Engagement					
Socializing with Friends (SOCFRIEND)					
Daily	28.2	35.9	14.5	102.7	176.7
Weekly	28.3	35.2	14.1	61.1	119.3
Monthly+	28.1	34.8	13.9	64.3	116.6
Monthly	28.0	34.8	13.9	55.8	101.4
Sev. Times	27.6	34.4	14.0	52.2	102.5
Yearly	27.6	34.1	13.3	42.1	67.9
Never	28.9	35.7	14.1	48.7	106.0
Prob.	.675	.509	.232	.000	.000
Model	---	---	---	SLC	SLC
	( 881)	( 858)	( 884)	( 867)	( 730)
Socializing with Neighbors (SOCOMMUN)					
Daily	27.0	33.9	13.7	70.8	149.1
Weekly	28.6	34.9	14.0	64.5	123.8
Monthly+	28.3	35.4	13.9	70.6	126.2
Monthly	27.9	34.9	14.0	54.5	91.7
Sev. Times	28.4	34.9	14.0	56.6	93.1
Yearly	27.1	34.0	14.1	52.9	100.9
Never	28.3	35.2	13.9	54.2	106.8
Prob.	.130	.403	.927	.167	.002
Model	---	---	---	---	SLC
	( 879)	( 857)	( 883)	( 866)	( 729)
Socializing with Relatives (SOCREL)					
Daily	29.2	36.2	14.3	59.6	126.6
Weekly	28.2	35.1	13.9	67.9	131.9
Monthly+	27.9	34.6	13.8	54.4	102.1
Monthly	27.9	34.6	14.0	56.1	97.9
Sev. Times	27.6	34.7	14.0	55.2	97.7
Yearly	26.9	33.3	13.5	61.2	97.5
Never	28.2	34.3	14.1	58.1	118.4
Prob.	.124	.105	.660	.492	.009
Model	---	---	---	---	L
	( 881)	( 858)	( 884)	( 867)	( 730)

Table 4 (continued)

	Davis Empathy	Empathy+	Altruistic Values	Altruistic 11-items	Behaviors 15-items
Socializing at Bar (SOCBAR)					
Daily	28.1	35.4	13.9	139.3	181.6
Weekly	27.7	34.5	14.0	60.4	114.5
Monthly+	27.3	34.4	13.5	60.2	113.7
Monthly	27.3	33.7	13.3	60.4	113.0
Sev. Times	27.5	34.1	13.8	60.5	108.3
Yearly	27.1	33.9	14.3	47.4	88.2
Never	28.9	35.8	14.2	60.2	116.5
Prob.	.001	.001	.019	.007	.062
Model	SLC	SLC	L	NCNL	---
	( 881)	( 858)	( 884)	( 867)	( 730)
Friends (COWRKFRD, NEIFRD, OTHFRD)					
None	25.9	32.6	12.9	56.1	86.5
1	26.5	32.7	13.3	48.4	99.3
2	27.5	34.3	13.6	54.6	97.2
5-9	28.2	35.0	14.2	55.6	99.1
10-19	27.7	34.5	14.3	63.7	115.0
20-34	29.1	35.9	14.5	65.4	124.0
35+	28.5	35.6	14.6	83.5	144.9
Prob.	.001	.006	.000	.015	.000
Model	SLC	L	SLC	L	L
	(1118)	(1105)	(1121)	(1105)	(1102)
Vote in 2000 (VOTE00)					
Did	27.9	34.8	14.1	60.9	108.6
Didn't	28.0	34.7	13.7	54.5	107.1
Not Eligible	26.0	32.3	14.0	59.7	140.9
Refused	24.0	28.6	13.9	33.2	57.3
Prob.	.035	.022	.058	.396	.195
Model	NC	NC	---	---	---
	(1326)	(1298)	(1335)	(1311)	(1109)

Table 4 (continued)

	Davis Empathy	Empathy+	Altruistic Values	Altruistic 11-items	Behaviors 15-items
Group Activity (GRPPOL, GRPUNION, GRPCHURH, GRPSPORT, GRPCHRTY, GRPNEI, GRPOTH)					
Low (7-9)	26.7	33.2	13.4	43.1	86.6
Med. (10-13)	28.4	35.1	14.0	55.4	100.7
High (14+)	28.4	35.5	14.7	81.9	137.5
Prob.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Model	SLC (1127)	SLC (1114)	L (1131)	L (1114)	L (1110)
d. Obligations					
Adult children duty to care for parents (KIDPARS)					
Agree Str.	28.4	35.2	14.3	59.5	117.4
Agree	27.6	34.3	14.0	60.8	102.5
Neither	27.0	33.7	13.7	59.3	100.5
Disagree	27.8	34.8	14.3	71.2	119.3
Dis. Str.	30.2	38.1	13.9	73.8	122.2
Prob.	.003	.002	.022	.572	.117
Model	NCNL (1108)	NCNL (1094)	L (1112)	--- (1097)	--- (1094)
Parents live with Children (AGED)					
Good idea	27.9	34.7	14.2	63.3	117.3
Depends	28.0	34.8	13.9	45.5	92.3
Bad idea	27.7	34.6	13.9	54.7	102.0
Prob.	.813	.949	.075	.014	.028
Model	--- ( 868)	--- ( 850)	--- ( 876)	NCNL ( 857)	L ( 731)

Table 4 (continued)

	Davis Empathy	Empathy+	Altruistic Values	Altruistic 11-items	Behaviors 15-items
Help Self, Family First (FIRSTYOU)					
Agree Str.	27.6	34.2	13.8	59.5	111.0
Agree	28.1	34.9	14.0	58.4	100.9
Neither	28.2	35.3	15.0	71.8	124.8
Disagree	28.8	35.9	14.9	70.7	129.9
Dis. Str.	29.5	38.8	18.3	101.2	171.0
Prob.	.352	.114	.000	.210	.053
Model	---	---	L	---	---
	(1124)	(1113)	(1128)	(1112)	(1110)
Family, Friends Make Demands (DEMANDS)					
No	27.7	34.4	14.0	58.1	101.2
Yes, seldom	27.4	34.1	13.9	62.2	106.6
Yes, sometimes	28.4	35.3	14.1	64.9	117.5
Yes, often	28.5	35.3	14.2	58.6	129.2
Yes, v. often	30.3	37.9	15.3	64.9	157.5
Prob.	.006	.005	.059	.729	.006
Model	L	L	---	---	L
	(1125)	(1112)	(1127)	(1112)	(1111)
Better should help friends (HELPPFRDS)					
Agree Str.	29.7	37.2	15.1	70.9	147.9
Agree	27.7	34.6	14.2	58.0	104.0
Neither	27.3	33.8	13.5	59.9	99.0
Disagree	27.0	33.4	13.3	63.9	107.6
Dis. Str.	23.9	27.8	12.3	40.3	54.6
Prob.	.000	.000	.000	.191	.000
Model	SLC	SLC	L	---	SLC
	(1104)	(1093)	(1105)	(1092)	(1089)
e. Religion					
Religion (RELIG)					
Protestant	28.3	35.2	14.2	57.5	107.0
Catholic	27.8	34.3	13.9	62.1	116.7
Jewish	27.6	33.5	14.8	67.0	108.0
None	26.6	33.4	13.4	50.4	97.5
Other	28.0	34.7	13.7	71.9	123.7
Prob.	.002	.005	.000	.095	.203
Model	NC	NC	NC	---	---
	(1325)	(1296)	(1334)	(1310)	(1110)

Table 4 (continued)

Religion Raised In (RELIG16)	Davis Empathy	Empathy+	Altruistic Values	Altruistic 11-items	Behaviors 15-items
Protestant	28.0	35.0	14.2	56.8	105.1
Catholic	27.8	34.4	13.9	62.8	115.7
Jewish	27.3	33.5	14.4	57.5	93.1
None	27.4	34.2	13.5	52.1	106.6
Other	27.8	34.3	13.7	71.3	132.9
Prob.	.681	.302	.043	.275	.190
Model	---	---	NC	---	---
	(1325)	(1296)	(1333)	(1310)	(1110)
Theology (FUND)					
Fund.	28.6	35.6	14.1	57.0	107.8
Moderate	28.0	34.7	14.1	63.0	119.1
Liberal	27.0	33.8	13.9	52.4	95.5
Prob.	.000	.000	.587	.065	.006
Model	L	L	---	---	NCNL
	(1208)	(1184)	(1215)	(1193)	(1008)
Religion (RELIG)					
Has	28.1	34.9	14.1	60.2	111.3
None	26.6	33.4	13.4	50.4	97.5
Prob.	.000	.003	.000	.069	.111
Model	L	L	L	---	---
	(1325)	(1296)	(1334)	(1310)	(1110)
Religion Raised In (RELIG16)					
Had	27.9	34.7	14.1	59.5	109.6
None	27.4	34.2	13.5	52.1	106.6
Prob.	.283	.387	.019	.300	.791
Model	---	---	---	---	---
	(1325)	(1296)	(1333)	(1310)	(1110)
Religiousness (RELITEN)					
Strong	28.9	35.8	14.5	70.3	128.6
Somewhat	27.4	34.1	13.8	62.6	111.2
Not Strong	27.6	34.3	13.8	50.6	96.5
No Religion	26.6	33.4	13.4	50.4	97.5
Prob.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Model	L	L	L	L	L
	(1322)	(1294)	(1331)	(1307)	(1107)

Table 4 (continued)

	Davis Empathy	Empathy+	Altruistic Values	Altruistic 11-items	Behaviors 15-items
Attend Church (ATTEND)					
Never	27.2	34.0	13.5	47.3	96.5
LT Yearly	26.9	32.7	13.5	44.9	93.0
Once Year	26.9	33.5	13.7	54.8	99.6
Sev. Times	28.1	35.0	13.9	54.3	111.4
Monthly	27.8	34.4	14.4	58.4	105.5
2-3 Month	27.8	34.8	14.6	61.0	125.0
Al. Weekly	28.3	35.1	14.0	71.7	130.1
Weekly	28.8	35.6	14.3	72.8	117.6
Weekly+	30.4	38.2	15.2	74.9	127.6
Prob.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.028
Model	L	SLC	L	L	L
	(1325)	(1297)	(1334)	(1311)	(1109)
Praying (PRAY)					
Daily+	29.4	36.8	14.6	61.3	122.8
Daily	28.6	35.5	14.4	67.5	119.8
Weekly+	27.9	34.7	13.8	61.7	110.5
Weekly	26.6	32.9	13.4	51.4	83.9
LT Weekly	25.9	32.0	13.3	45.3	89.3
Never	26.9	33.1	13.7	30.6	46.0
Prob.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Model	L	L	L	L	L
	(1316)	(1290)	(1325)	(1303)	(1103)
f. Psychological Well-Being					
Marital Happiness (HAPMAR)					
Very happy	28.1	34.8	14.2	61.2	103.3
Pretty happy	27.7	34.5	13.9	51.2	91.6
Not too hap.	27.6	34.3	14.2	35.6	85.1
Prob.	.526	.768	.374	.032	.250
Model	---	---	---	L	---
	( 697)	( 686)	( 701)	( 690)	( 579)
Life is (LIFE)					
Exciting	27.8	34.7	14.2	65.8	119.0
Routine	27.6	34.3	13.9	53.6	96.5
Dull	28.7	35.2	13.9	59.7	119.3
Prob.	.461	.600	.242	.028	.006
Model	---	---	---	L	SLC
	( 888)	( 872)	( 896)	( 885)	( 751)

Table 4 (continued)

	Davis Empathy	Empathy+	Altruistic Values	Altruistic 11-items	Behaviors 15-items
Health (HEALTH)					
Excel.	27.5	34.4	14.3	59.1	108.9
Good	27.6	34.4	13.9	59.0	105.5
Fair	28.2	34.7	14.0	61.4	110.5
Poor	28.8	35.7	13.9	58.3	122.4
Prob.	.257	.514	.299	.982	.748
Model	---	---	---	---	---
	( 908)	( 892)	( 917)	( 904)	( 765)
Happiness (HAPPY)					
Very happy	27.9	34.7	14.0	63.7	116.5
Pretty happy	27.8	34.6	13.9	55.0	102.3
Not too hap.	28.1	34.9	14.3	63.3	122.8
Prob.	.783	.889	.198	.064	.022
Model	---	---	---	---	NCNL
	(1329)	(1301)	(1339)	(1314)	(1113)
Financial satis- faction (SATFIN)					
Pretty well	27.6	34.3	14.0	57.6	105.8
More or less	27.9	34.6	14.0	59.8	108.4
Not at all	28.3	35.3	14.1	58.8	115.1
Prob.	.101	.100	.811	.885	.464
Model	---	---	---	---	---
	(1327)	(1299)	(1337)	(1313)	(1112)
Job satisfaction (SATJOB)					
Very sat.	28.0	34.8	14.1	58.7	110.4
Mod. sat.	27.4	34.2	13.9	56.0	103.7
Little dis.	28.5	35.1	14.0	67.8	123.7
Very dis.	29.1	36.5	13.9	57.8	122.2
Prob.	.057	.095	.880	.493	.343
Model	---	---	---	---	---
	(1031)	(1012)	(1041)	(1027)	( 885)

Table 4 (continued)

	Davis Empathy	Empathy+	Altruistic Values	Altruistic 11-items	Behaviors 15-items
g. Misanthropy					
Rosenberg Scale (TRUST, FAIR, HELPFUL)					
3 (Low)	28.2	35.2	14.6	61.1	108.0
4	28.8	35.5	14.3	51.1	87.4
5	27.7	34.3	14.1	50.4	90.3
6	27.1	34.2	13.4	68.3	125.0
7	27.8	34.2	14.0	55.2	110.0
8	29.2	36.5	14.1	56.1	110.2
9 (High)	27.5	34.4	13.7	62.9	125.4
Prob.	.241	.238	.009	.472	.047
Model	---	---	L	---	L
	( 867)	( 850)	( 874)	( 857)	( 730)
Trust Few People (TRUSTPEO)					
Agree Str.	27.9	34.7	14.0	64.6	116.3
Agree	27.7	34.4	14.0	55.3	100.1
Neither	27.7	34.0	13.9	62.1	111.8
Disagree	28.6	35.8	15.1	70.8	117.5
Dis. Str.	29.3	36.8	14.2	67.0	117.8
Prob.	.378	.101	.000	.152	.136
Model	---	---	SLC	---	---
	(1118)	(1104)	(1122)	(1105)	(1104)
People take Ad- vantage (ADVANTAGE)					
Agree Str.	27.9	34.7	14.0	62.8	128.1
Agree	27.9	34.7	13.8	58.3	101.6
Neither	27.3	34.0	13.9	62.1	100.6
Disagree	28.5	35.4	15.1	64.0	107.6
Dis. Str.	27.9	35.9	15.4	101.2	161.2
Prob.	.336	.368	.000	.229	.001
Model	---	---	SLC	---	NCNL
	(1116)	(1103)	(1119)	(1103)	(1102)

Table 4 (continued)

	Davis Empathy	Empathy+	Altruistic Values	Altruistic 11-items	Behaviors 15-items
People Want Best for You (WANTBEST)					
Agree Str.	28.6	36.0	15.0	65.0	132.4
Agree	28.0	34.7	14.0	60.6	105.9
Neither	27.3	34.1	13.9	61.6	105.1
Disagree	27.6	34.2	13.7	62.1	107.9
Dis. Str.	29.2	36.1	14.7	46.8	102.7
Prob.	.050	.015	.000	.811	.046
Model	NCNL (1113)	SLC (1101)	SLC (1116)	--- (1100)	NCNL (1099)
h. Crime					
Courts are... (COURTS)					
Too Harsh	26.7	33.6	14.2	62.6	118.3
About Right	27.1	33.9	14.1	59.9	105.6
Too Easy	28.2	35.1	14.0	57.2	108.0
Prob.	.000	.004	.605	.621	.510
Model	L (1257)	L (1231)	--- (1262)	--- (1242)	--- (1062)
Fear Walk at Night (FEAR)					
Yes	28.4	35.2	14.3	59.1	114.0
No	27.4	34.2	13.9	59.4	105.5
Prob.	.016	.036	.045	.952	.265
Model	L ( 906)	L ( 890)	L ( 915)	--- ( 901)	--- ( 764)
Capital Punishment (CAPPUN)					
Yes	27.5	34.2	13.8	59.1	105.9
Don't Know	27.7	34.4	13.8	43.1	93.4
No	28.8	35.9	14.6	60.4	119.3
Prob.	.000	.000	.000	.271	.082
Model	L (1321)	L (1293)	L (1331)	--- (1307)	--- (1110)

Table 4 (continued)

	Davis Empathy	Empathy+	Altruistic Values	Altruistic 11-items	Behaviors 15-items
Police Hitting (POLHITOK)					
Approve	27.8	34.5	14.1	59.7	105.8
Disapprove	28.2	35.2	14.2	56.2	118.2
Prob.	.220	.133	.503	.504	.154
Model	---	---	---	---	---
	( 823)	( 807)	( 825)	( 813)	( 695)
i. Social Welfare					
Govt. Social Spending <sup>c</sup>					
Low	26.9	33.6	13.3	56.2	102.8
Middle	27.9	34.7	14.2	58.4	107.7
High	28.8	35.8	14.4	62.4	120.4
Prob.	.000	.000	.000	.498	.098
Model	L	L	SLC	---	---
	(1311)	(1282)	(1321)	(1298)	(1098)
Govt. Aid to Old (AIDOLD)					
Def. should	28.8	35.7	14.4	62.7	117.6
Prob. should	27.3	34.0	13.8	57.7	105.9
Prob. not	26.8	33.4	13.9	68.2	105.1
Def. not	27.7	34.1	13.7	55.5	80.7
Prob.	.000	.000	.001	.386	.056
Model	SLC	SLC	L	---	---
	(1081)	(1070)	(1084)	(1069)	(1066)
Govt. Aid to Children (AIDKIDS)					
Def. should	28.3	35.2	14.3	66.5	133.1
Prob. should	28.0	34.9	14.1	57.5	107.7
Prob. not	27.7	34.6	14.1	61.3	105.0
Def. not	28.0	34.8	14.0	61.0	100.7
Prob.	.686	.809	.678	.647	.007
Model	---	---	---	---	L
	(1032)	(1021)	(1033)	(1021)	(1019)

Table 4 (continued)

	Davis Empathy	Empathy+	Altruistic Values	Altruistic 11-items	Behaviors 15-items
Equalize Wealth (EQWLTH)					
Govt should	28.8	35.6	14.5	60.7	120.6
2	29.0	36.2	14.9	50.0	99.8
3	27.6	34.4	14.2	58.8	110.3
4	27.5	34.2	13.8	52.2	97.4
5	27.6	34.5	14.3	58.3	106.8
6	28.0	34.8	13.4	60.4	113.9
Govt shldn't	27.0	33.5	13.2	63.2	112.5
Prob.	.017	.035	.000	.759	.591
Model	L	L	L	---	---
	( 863)	( 847)	( 869)	( 852)	( 727)
Govt. Help Poor (HELPPPOOR)					
Govt help	28.4	35.3	14.9	69.8	137.8
2	28.8	35.5	14.8	48.5	91.9
3	28.0	34.8	14.0	54.4	102.9
4	26.7	33.5	13.5	62.1	104.1
Help self	27.2	33.7	13.0	57.7	107.8
Prob.	.010	.035	.000	.097	.008
Model	L	L	L	---	SLC
	( 849)	( 834)	( 855)	( 839)	( 717)
Govt. do more (HELPNOT)					
Govt do more	28.5	35.3	14.6	67.5	140.5
2	28.0	34.7	14.4	54.5	93.9
3	27.8	34.6	14.0	53.1	100.8
4	28.2	35.0	14.2	62.0	112.7
Govt do less	26.9	33.5	13.3	63.0	119.3
Prob.	.169	.248	.001	.213	.006
Model	---	---	L	---	NCNL
	( 850)	( 834)	( 854)	( 840)	( 715)
Govt. help sick (HELPSICK)					
Help sick	28.8	35.8	14.7	58.8	116.3
2	27.9	34.7	14.0	55.5	97.8
3	27.4	34.1	13.8	60.2	113.2
4	27.0	33.9	13.8	53.2	88.5
Not help	27.0	33.2	13.0	51.2	105.1
Prob.	.003	.003	.000	.822	.217
Model	L	L	L	---	---
	( 861)	( 845)	( 868)	( 851)	( 726)

Table 4 (continued)

	Davis Empathy	Empathy+	Altruistic Values	Altruistic 11-items	Behaviors 15-items
Govt help Blacks (HELPBLK)					
Help Blks	28.8	35.5	14.6	61.0	132.6
2	27.9	34.6	14.9	45.5	84.9
3	28.2	35.1	14.1	59.9	113.8
4	28.1	35.0	14.2	58.9	105.3
Not help	27.3	33.8	13.6	57.2	107.4
Prob.	.123	.072	.000	.567	.106
Model	---	---	L	---	---
	( 855)	( 838)	( 863)	( 846)	( 720)

<sup>a</sup>The GSS variables names are in parentheses and their wordings can be found in Davis, Smith, and Marsden, 2003.

<sup>b</sup>NC= not constant; L= linear; SLC= significant linear component; NCNL= not constant, not linear

<sup>c</sup>This is a five-item scale based on support for government spending for health (NATHEAL, NATHEALY), blacks (NATRACE, NATRACEY), children (NATCHLD), social security (NATSOC), and welfare/the poor (NATFARE, NATFAREY). Scores range from 5 for someone who thought the was spending too much on all areas to 15 for someone who thought the government was spending too little in each case. Low is 5 to 10, middle is 11 to 13, and high is 14 to 15.

Table 5

Davis Empathy Scale (DES) by Family of Origin

	Both Genders	Female	Male
Parents	28.0	27.4	25.8
Parent/Step Parent	----	28.7	26.7
Relatives	28.1	27.9	25.9
All	28.0	27.5	25.8

Parents=raised by both parents or one parent alone

Parent/Step Parent=raised by parent of specific gender plus step parent

Relatives=raised by one or more relatives of both or one gender

All=raised by parents, parent+step parent, or relatives of both or one gender

Table 6  
 Multivariate Models of Altruism and Empathy Scales  
 (beta/prob.)

Variables/ High Value	Davis Empathy	Empathy+	Altruistic Values	Altruistic 11-items	Behaviors 15-items
<b>A. Demographics</b>					
Gender/Female	.263/.000	.266/.000	.160/.000	-.040/.189	.044/.183
Age	.074/.076	.034/.419	.094/.026	-.034/.435	-.086/.061
Education	.014/.656	.021/.503	.083/.009	.042/.193	-.001/.975
Income	.009/.805	.008/.828	.019/.597	.016/.659	-.028/.474
Marital/Wid.	-.018/.584	.006/.851	.005/.889	.003/.923	.008/.829
Marital/DivSep	-.002/.956	-.001/.964	.017/.581	-.000/.994	.012/.730
Marital/Never	-.017/.644	-.027/.467	-.033/.367	.050/.189	.087/.033
Reside/Rural	.024/.412	.010/.740	.045/.134	-.056/.069	-.083/.011
Race/Black	-.034/.241	-.045/.131	-.005/.860	.021/.495	.033/.319
Work/Ret.	-.043/.335	-.027/.536	-.087/.051	.014/.766	-.026/.587
Work/At Home	-.012/.724	-.001/.987	-.050/.164	-.015/.673	-.058/.133
Work/Worker	-.021/.610	-.023/.593	-.056/.187	-.014/.746	-.052/.244
	(1188)	(1167)	(1195)	(1176)	(1015)
<b>B. Demographics + Validation</b>					
Gender/Female	.260/.000	.261/.000	.154/.000	-.046/.124	.043/.177
Age	.083/.039	.045/.266	.088/.031	-.028/.504	-.086/.056
Education	.009/.747	.019/.505	.090/.002	.047/.112	-.005/.870
Income	---/---	---/---	---/---	---/---	---/---
Marital/Wid.	-.023/.452	.002/.948	.010/.755	.001/.987	.014/.677
Marital/DivSep	.001/.960	.001/.980	.018/.537	-.003/.916	.021/.517
Marital/Never	-.006/.854	-.013/.682	-.036/.292	.047/.177	.101/.007
Reside/Rural	.023/.417	.012/.678	.051/.081	-.053/.075	-.072/.024
Race/Black	-.010/.735	-.017/.564	.016/.570	.035/.240	.045/.152
Work/Ret.	-.037/.397	-.027/.540	-.079/.073	.007/.871	-.032/.501
Work/At Home	-.011/.737	-.003/.934	-.052/.131	-.025/.489	-.064/.090
Work/Worker	-.014/.734	-.016/.689	-.042/.300	-.010/.817	-.058/.185
Coop./Not	-.138/.000	-.136/.000	-.108/.000	-.091/.002	-.074/.016
Inc. Info/Ref.	.019/.484	.024/.389	-.064/.021	-.051/.074	-.053/.083
	(1252)	(1225)	(1261)	(1241)	(1057)

Table 6 (continued)

Variables/ High Value	Davis Empathy	Empathy+	Altruistic Values	Altruistic 11-items	Behaviors 15-items
<b>C. Demographics + Engagement</b>					
Gender/Female	.276/.000	.275/.000	.170/.000	-.031/.338	.041/.192
Age	.033/.461	.021/.639	.082/.069	-.051/.262	-.107/.017
Education	-.033/.328	-.030/.377	.039/.263	-.032/.368	-.075/.029
Income	.022/.568	.004/.906	.009/.810	-.014/.713	-.065/.086
Marital/Wid.	-.002/.964	.008/.816	.014/.687	.007/.838	.005/.891
Marital/DivSep	.008/.811	.004/.908	.026/.440	.001/.981	.028/.400
Marital/Never	-.014/.728	-.011/.782	-.017/.665	.056/.162	.100/.011
Reside/Rural	.009/.788	.010/.759	.029/.369	-.072/.026	-.089/.005
Race/Black	-.021/.505	-.032/.314	.012/.708	.014/.660	.028/.377
Work/Ret.	-.026/.585	-.031/.502	-.092/.051	.023/.623	-.008/.856
Work/At Home	-.008/.826	.009/.821	-.063/.095	.011/.782	-.025/.510
Work/Worker	-.042/.334	-.033/.453	-.062/.156	-.005/.910	-.031/.476
Friends	.049/.123	.040/.206	.033/.300	.059/.070	.111/.001
Group Members	.118/.001	.147/.000	.177/.000	.227/.000	.231/.000
	(1018)	(1008)	(1020)	(1009)	(1006)
<b>D. Demographics + Obligations</b>					
Gender/Female	.266/.000	.263/.000	.171/.000	-.041/.229	.034/.303
Age	.048/.285	.029/.524	.090/.045	-.053/.263	-.085/.070
Education	.013/.692	.023/.500	.101/.003	.043/.224	.009/.803
Income	.058/.122	.043/.248	.066/.082	.027/.502	-.015/.697
Marital/Wid.	.008/.811	.016/.634	.021/.534	.013/.726	.002/.951
Marital/DivSep	.029/.384	.025/.457	.047/.168	-.012/.726	.012/.738
Marital/Never	-.008/.851	-.010/.809	-.012/.772	.047/.263	.095/.022
Reside/Rural	.028/.389	.032/.311	.059/.066	-.054/.114	-.069/.039
Race/Black	-.031/.332	-.034/.286	.026/.413	.031/.357	.040/.226
Work/Ret.	-.025/.595	-.032/.491	-.065/.164	.002/.961	-.018/.716
Work/At Home	-.025/.500	-.018/.620	-.086/.022	-.023/.558	-.052/.184
Work/Worker	-.054/.214	-.049/.262	-.064/.141	-.034/.456	-.042/.350
Care Pars/Dis.	-.013/.679	.019/.554	.001/.974	.095/.005	.058/.083
Demands/Lots	.054/.082	.054/.085	.036/.255	.037/.261	.081/.012
Help Frds/Dis.	-.207/.000	-.242/.000	-.252/.000	-.052/.115	-.126/.000
	( 992)	( 982)	( 993)	( 985)	( 984)

Table 6 (continued)

Variables/ High Value	Davis Empathy	Empathy+	Altruistic Values	Altruistic 11-items	Behaviors 15-items
E. Religion					
Gender/Female	.213/.000	.205/.000	.121/.000	-.078/.013	-.057/.865
Age	.046/.271	.010/.816	.070/.097	-.061/.157	-.121/.008
Education	-.003/.923	.005/.867	.026/.045	.032/.325	-.005/.884
Income	.021/.554	.018/.602	.022/.528	.003/.941	-.035/.363
Marital/Wid.	-.022/.486	-.003/.927	-.003/.921	-.004/.916	.001/.999
Marital/DivSep	.014/.646	.014/.647	.030/.343	.017/.587	.027/.439
Marital/Never	.021/.568	.018/.631	-.007/.846	.074/.054	.113/.006
Reside/Rural	.004/.895	-.008/.799	.025/.409	-.068/.028	-.098/.003
Race/Black	-.083/.006	-.098/.001	-.044/.148	-.016/.612	-.002/.944
Work/Ret.	-.032/.465	-.016/.711	-.079/.075	.021/.636	-.023/.625
Work/At Home	-.010/.771	.005/.891	-.047/.181	-.012/.746	-.050/.187
Work/Worker	-.019/.638	-.018/.658	-.053/.204	-.013/.766	-.052/.240
Religiousness/ None	.013/.756	.035/.397	-.061/.146	-.079/.065	-.126/.005
Religion/None	-.010/.773	.009/.786	.029/.418	.048/.186	.055/.148
Attend/Weekly+	.079/.034	.089/.016	.078/.039	.119/.002	.041/.313
Pray/Never	-.170/.000	-.214/.000	-.104/.004	-.070/.556	-.124/.001
	(1175)	(1154)	(1181)	(1164)	(1004)
F. Misanthropy					
Gender/Female	.270/.000	.266/.000	.155/.000	-.028/.405	.042/.199
Age	.047/.309	.035/.452	.065/.159	-.055/.249	-.090/.054
Education	.008/.808	.016/.651	.063/.072	.022/.537	.001/.966
Income	.037/.051	.040/.298	.047/.221	.022/.585	-.020/.608
Marital/Wid.	.006/.855	.017/.626	.023/.516	.017/.645	.007/.844
Marital/DivSep	.013/.711	.011/.739	.040/.245	-.007/.833	.015/.675
Marital/Never	-.010/.804	-.004/.921	-.016/.690	.047/.255	.082/.045
Reside/Rural	.011/.744	.013/.695	.031/.349	-.068/.042	-.083/.012
Race/Black	-.018/.583	-.031/.344	.031/.344	.030/.375	.033/.322
Work/Ret.	-.039/.405	-.045/.336	-.091/.056	.017/.734	-.026/.585
Work/At Home	-.013/.740	-.000/.996	-.070/.066	-.016/.688	-.054/.161
Work/Worker	-.057/.198	-.049/.268	-.074/.095	-.021/.640	-.056/.212
Take Advantage	-.032/.366	-.030/.398	.067/.065	.051/.171	-.006/.863
Trust People	.028/.411	.037/.287	.053/.125	.004/.912	.007/.847
Want Best	-.029/.349	-.038/.226	-.060/.058	.010/.759	-.049/.126
	(1009)	( 999)	(1011)	(1011)	(1009)

Table 6 (continued)

Variables/ High Value	Davis Empathy	Empathy+	Altruistic Values	Altruistic 11-items	Behaviors 15-items
G. Crime					
Gender/Female	.233/.000	.247/.000	.141/.000	-.026/.427	.046/.181
Age	.069/.112	.035/.423	.079/.071	-.004/.933	-.069/.148
Education	.018/.581	.021/.516	.064/.050	.029/.397	-.012/.728
Income	.011/.768	.010/.773	.017/.930	.010/.783	-.037/.358
Marital/Wid.	-.017/.611	.006/.852	-.003/.937	-.010/.777	-.007/.852
Marital/DivSep	.009/.786	.003/.927	.005/.876	.002/.950	.008/.820
Marital/Never	-.030/.439	-.034/.372	-.066/.089	.052/.196	.077/.067
Reside/Rural	.024/.432	.014/.655	.062/.046	-.046/.149	-.071/.036
Race/Black	-.034/.271	-.056/.070	-.039/.211	.037/.259	.042/.220
Work/Ret.	-.056/.223	-.040/.380	-.084/.069	-.001/.981	-.047/.349
Work/At Home	-.003/.935	.006/.865	-.039/.288	-.016/.680	-.060/.129
Work/Worker	-.033/.438	-.030/.484	-.039/.371	-.025/.589	-.073/.118
Courts	.098/.001	.080/.007	-.024/.419	-.003/.924	.023/.495
Death Penalty	.098/.001	.115/.000	.151/.000	-.007/.816	.030/.372
	(1121)	(1103)	(1124)	(1110)	( 967)
H. Social Welfare					
Gender/Female	.255/.000	.259/.000	.150/.000	-.041/.185	.042/.198
Age	.073/.079	.035/.410	.104/.013	-.031/.473	-.084/.068
Education	.017/.585	.025/.425	.089/.005	.045/.167	.002/.944
Income	.010/.785	.007/.837	.021/.543	.015/.690	-.029/.456
Marital/Wid.	-.024/.453	-.001/.968	-.002/.950	.002/.963	.005/.878
Marital/DivSep	-.013/.685	-.012/.690	.008/.789	-.004/.899	.008/.821
Marital/Never	-.011/.766	-.024/.521	-.025/.500	.054/.164	.093/.023
Reside/Rural	.035/.238	.019/.538	.056/.063	-.057/.070	-.081/.014
Race/Black	-.063/.041	-.071/.021	-.039/.201	.016/.619	.024/.483
Work/Ret.	-.021/.630	-.007/.879	-.072/.106	.018/.691	-.022/.655
Work/At Home	-.011/.756	.002/.952	-.049/.171	-.013/.729	-.058/.136
Work/Worker	-.016/.710	-.016/.699	-.049/.252	-.009/.836	-.051/.264
Social Spend	.128/.000	.118/.000	.149/.000	.027/.379	.035/.286
	(1172)	(1151)	(1179)	(1162)	(1002)

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## Appendix A: Question Wordings

### 1. Empathy

The following statements ask about your thoughts and feelings in various situations. For each item indicate how well it describes you by choosing the number on the showcard where 1 indicates that it does not describe you very well and 5 means that it does describe you very well. Of course numbers 2-4 indicate that how well it describes you are in between these points.

- a. I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me.
- b. Sometimes I don't feel very sorry for other people when they are having problems.
- c. When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective toward them.
- d. Other people's misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal.
- e. When I see someone treated unfairly, I sometimes don't feel very much pity for them.
- f. I am often quite touched by things that I see happen.
- g. I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person.

### 2. Acceptance and Selflessness

The following are things that you may experience in your daily life. Please tell me how often these occur.

CARD: Many times a day/Every day/Most days/Some days/Once in a while/Never or almost never

- a. I feel a selfless caring for others.
- b. I accept others even when they do things I think are wrong.

### 3. Altruistic Values

Please tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statements:

- a. People should be willing to help others who are less fortunate.
- b. Those in need have to learn to take care of themselves and not depend on others.
- c. Personally assisting people in trouble is very important to me.
- d. These days people need to look after themselves and not overly worry about others.

Appendix A (continued)

4. Altruistic Behaviors

During the past 12 months, how often have you done each of the following things:

CARD: More than once a week/Once a week/Once a month/At least 2 or 3 times in the past year/Once in the past year/Not at all in the past year

- a. Donated blood
- b. Given food or money to a homeless person
- c. Returned money to a cashier after getting too much change
- d. Allowed a stranger to go ahead of you in line
- e. Done volunteer work for a charity
- f. Given money to a charity
- g. Offered your seat on a bus or in a public place to a stranger who was standing
- h. Looked after a person's plants, mail, or pets while they were away
- i. Carried a stranger's belongings, like groceries, a suitcase, or shopping bag
- j. Given directions to a stranger
- k. Let someone you didn't know well borrow a item of some value like dishes or tools

During the past 12 months, how often have you done any of the following things for people you know personally, such as relatives, friends, neighbors, or other acquaintances?

SAQ: More than once a week/Once a week/Once a month/At least 2 or 3 times in the past year/Once in the past year/Not at all in the past year

- a. Helped someone outside your household with housework or shopping
- b. Lent quite a bit of money to another person
- c. Spent time talking with someone who was a bit down or depressed
- d. Helped somebody to find a job