

# Free Will Scales Old and New: Surveying the Field

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### Free-Will-Determinism Scale (FWD) (Viney et al. 1982):

#### 7 Item Scale with Two Parts

#### General Instructions:

*For centuries, human beings have debated the old philosophical problem of free will and determinism. Free will is the doctrine that assumes that we make real choices which are partially or completely independent of antecedent conditions. Determinism denies this and maintains that causation is operative in all human affairs. Thus, so-called choices are influenced or determined by antecedent conditions. The following materials include statements which represent opinions by those who believe free will and those who believe in determinism. Please read each of the following statements carefully and then place an x under the statement which most closely corresponds to your opinion on the topic. If your opinion seems to fall somewhere between the statements provided, then mark an X in one of the intermediate spaces.*

#### Instructions for Part 1:

*The following five questions pertain to possible influences on free will. Some people believe that there are few restrictions on free will; others believe in free will, but view it as very delicate, still others deny altogether that free will exists. Please read each item under a given question and then mark the item which most closely corresponds to your opinion.*

#### Questions/Items for Part 1:

- 1) When does free will first manifest itself?
  - Free will manifests itself at a very early age in most children.
  - Free will may not exist in infants, but gradually develops during an “age of accountability.”
  - Free will, if it exists at all, is very limited and manifests itself only in mature adults.
- 2) Are there social conditions which interfere with free will?
  - Free will, at best is delicate and probably manifests itself only when we are not the victims of oppressive social conditions.
  - The exercise of free will is somewhat limited by such social conditions as poverty, unemployment, and class.
  - Free will is a basic human quality and there are few social conditions which interfere with it.
- 3) To what extent do physical health problems interfere with free will?
  - Health is not a factor in free will. We have free will as long as we are alive.
  - There are a few physical problems which interfere with free will. For example, some crippling illnesses may interfere.

- Free will may be very limited by a great many health problems.
- 4) Does level of intelligence place restrictions on free will?
- Those who are severely retarded may have no free will.
  - In general, free will and intelligence are unrelated, but low intelligence may place some restrictions on free will.
  - All people, regardless of their level of intelligence, have free will.
- 5) Do mental problems place restrictions on free will?
- Those who are mentally disturbed still have free will.
  - Very severe mental disturbances may interfere with free will.
  - Even mild mental disturbances may interfere with free will.

Instructions for Part 2:

*The following two statements pertain to philosophical problems related to the free will determinism issue. Please read each item under a given question and then mark the item that most closely corresponds to your opinion. Remember, if you do not agree with either of the statements, mark one of the intermediate areas.*

Items/Questions for Part 2:

- 6) What is the source of human morality?
- Behavior must be based on choice or free will in order to be considered moral.
  - So-called moral behavior is not dependent on free will. Morality is simply a label used to describe behaviors which are in accord with society's norms.
- 7) Indicate where you stand with respect to the free will determinism issue.
- I believe strongly in free will.
  - I believe strongly in determinism.

Primary Results:

### **Attitude-Towards-Punishment Scale (ATP) (Viney et al. 1982)**

15 Item Scale

Items measured on the following scale:

- |                       |                          |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| +1 Slight agreement   | -1 Slight disagreement   |
| +2 Moderate agreement | -2 Moderate disagreement |
| +3 Strong agreement   | -3 Strong disagreement   |

Instructions:

*The following statements reflect attitudes on relationships between crime and punishment. Please mark each item in the left hand margin according to the strength of your agreement or disagreement.*

Items:

1. In general, I believe in the law of the talon "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth."
2. When crimes are premeditated, we should think more in terms of punishment than rehabilitation.
3. Our courts and judges have been too lenient, that is one reason we have so much crime in our country.
4. The death penalty should be mandatory in cases of premeditated murder.
5. A drunk person who causes an accident with injury should spend time in jail.
6. In general, our courts have been more concerned with the rights of criminals than victims.
7. The SEC discovered an employee was embezzling funds. That offender should be required to do more than repay the stolen amount.
8. We could avert further offenses, if first offenders were not given such light sentences.
9. We could reduce teenage crime if parents would return to an old fashioned "spare the rod spoil the child" attitude.
10. Prison is punishment and we lose sight of the fact when we overemphasize rehabilitation and therapy.
11. Universities and military academies should have a policy of automatically dismissing students who are caught cheating on examinations.
12. The death penalty is a strong deterrent to crime.
13. One who causes an accident with injury while driving in a reckless and irresponsible manner should spend no less than a year in jail.
14. A bricklayer was caught stealing materials which were later used on a personal project. That person should be required to do more than just repay the price of the bricks.
15. A stiff fine or brief jail sentence should be imposed on anyone who intentionally breaks a bottle on a public street or sidewalk.

Primary Results:

### **Free Will-Determinism Scale (Stroessner and Green 1990)**

Factor 1: Religious-philosophical determinism:

1. My choices are limited by God's plan for my life.
2. When things are going well for me I consider it due to a run of good luck.
3. My choices are constrained by God.
4. My decisions fit into and thus are limited by a larger plan.
5. God's will determines the choices I make.
6. God has planned out my life.

Factor 2: Libertarianism:

1. I have free will all of my life.
2. I am free to make choices regardless of social conditions.
3. I have free will in life, regardless of group expectations or pressures.

4. I have total free will.

#### Factor 3: Psychological determinism

1. My behaviors are limited by my background.
2. My present behavior is totally a result of my childhood experiences.
3. My exercise of free will is limited by my upbringing.
4. Because of my background influences, I have no real free will.
5. My free will is limited by such social conditions as wealth, career, and class.
6. My wealth, class, race, and gender determine my decisions and behavior.
7. My behaviors are determined by conditioning and life expectations.

#### **Free Will and Determinism Scale (FAD) (Paulhus 1994 unpublished):**

##### 28 Item Scale with Four Subscales

Items measured on 5 point Likert scale ranging from 1 (totally agree) to 5 (totally disagree) with 3 (unsure)

##### Subscales /Items:

##### Fatalistic Determinism

1. I believe that my future has already been determined by someone somewhere.
2. No matter how hard you try, you can't change your destiny.
3. Fate has something in store for all of us.
4. What will be, will be.
5. Mysterious forces seem to move our lives in a certain direction.
6. I don't like it when psychologists try to take the mystery out of life.
7. I don't believe in destiny. R

##### Scientific Determinism

1. A person's biological makeup is the ultimate cause of their successes and failures.
2. A person's environment is a major cause of their current behavior.
3. Psychologists and psychiatrists have no chance of understanding certain behaviors. R
4. Your genes determine your future.
5. People's past experiences totally mold their abilities and personalities.
6. Scientists will never be able to predict the future. R
7. Human lives follow exactly the laws of nature precisely.

##### Unpredictability

1. Chance events seem to be the major cause of human events.
2. No one can predict what will happen in this world.
3. Life seems unpredictable like throwing dice or flipping a coin.
4. I like the idea that people can't be predicted.
5. There are random events even at the level of atoms and molecules.

6. Life is hard to predict because it is almost totally random.
7. It is not wise to believe in chance. R

#### Free Will

1. People have complete control over life's decisions.
2. People should be blamed when they make bad choices.
3. People can overcome any barriers if they truly want to.
4. There are limits on people's free will. R
5. I certainly did not choose to be what I am now. R
6. We shouldn't blame others because life is not a matter of free choice. R
7. People do what they want to do when they want to do it.

#### **Free Will and Determinism Scale (Rakos et al. 2008)**

First, some salient remarks from the paper:

- “However, the Viney et al. (1982) scale used to measure free will in these studies is limited not only by brevity (seven items) but also by demand characteristics that likely established response biases...The instrument was introduced to participants as a measure of free will/determinism, presents definitions of the concepts, and informs participants that people take a variety of positions on the issue. Consistent with this approach, its questions are concrete, referring to free will in those words in six of the seven items” (23).
- “Therefore, the purpose of the present research was to evaluate the **strength of the baseline belief [in free will]**, which required development of a sounder measure of belief in free will. We were particularly concerned that the new instrument has (a) a sufficient number of items to measure and analyze the construct, and (b) protection against demand characteristics” (25).
- “Our approach conceptualized libertarianism and determinism as the opposing poles of an “amount of agency” continuum” (25). But surely, this is not quite right. After all, a compatibilist could be both determinist and pro-free will. **The proper poles ought to be libertarian**—who believes in the maximal amount of free will—and the skeptic—who believes in no free will. Is this right?
- “The questions on the FW & D scale were interspersed within the first 34 items of the 58 item “Social and Personal Attributes Questionnaire,” that contained all of the instruments used in the study. Thus, the questionnaire was neither explicitly nor implicitly identified to participants as a measure of free will/determinism” (25). Does this make sense? It seems like it might influence/confound things in a different direction. Any thoughts?
- “The stable and replicable factor structure that emerged from the initial examination of the FW & D Scale suggests the instrument may be a useful research tool, particularly if additional data establishes the reliability and convergent/divergent validity with populations other than students. A thorough examination of the agentic belief in Western society is needed to understand better is geographic, social, racial, and cultural pervasiveness; its developmental course before the age of 14; its relationship to other relevant variables, especially in light of the modest correlations obtained with the variables investigated in this study; and its functional properties (e.g., do people who

verbalize strong agentic belief in fact act differently than those who emit weaker belief statements?)” (35).

Subscales/Items:

**Moral Responsibility:**

**1**

1. A person who makes a poor decision should experience the consequences of that decision.
2. A person is accountable for the decisions he or she makes.
3. A person should receive appropriate punishment for choosing to engage in bad or harmful behaviors.
4. A person always has choices and therefore should be punished for making choices to harm others.
5. Human beings actively choose their actions and are responsible for the consequences of their actions.
6. A person is responsible for his or her actions even if his or her childhood has been difficult.

**Free Will:**

**2**

1. Free will is a part of the human spirit.
2. Free will is a basic part of human nature.
3. I have free will even when my choices are limited by external circumstances.
4. People have free will regardless of wealth or life circumstances.
5. Life's experiences cannot eliminate a person's free will.

**Personal Agency:**

**3**

1. I am in charge of the decisions I make
2. I decide what action to take in a particular situation.
3. I am in charge of my actions even when my life's circumstances are difficult.
4. I have free will.

**Higher Power Control:**

**4**

1. A person's choices are limited by a higher power's plan for him or her.
2. Each person's decisions are guided by a larger plan.
3. I actively chose what to do from among the options I have.

**Personal Responsibility:**

**5**

1. A person is to blame for making bad choices.
2. A person must accept responsibility for his or her choice of action.

**Personal Limitations:**

**6**

1. My decisions are influenced by a higher power.
2. My choices are limited because they fit into a larger plan.

