

## Psychic Experiences in the Multinational Human Values Study: Who Reports Them?

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ABSTRACT: Three items on personal psychic experiences (telepathy, clairvoyance, and contact with the dead) were included in a survey on human values that was conducted on large representative samples in 13 countries in Europe and in the U.S. ( $N = 18,607$ ). The three items were originally formulated by Andrew Greeley and were translated into different European languages. In Europe, the percentage of persons reporting telepathy was 34%; clairvoyance was reported by 21%; and 25% reported contact with the dead. Percentages for the U.S. were considerably higher: 54%, 25% and 30%, respectively. There were great national differences; for example, 60% of Americans and Italians reported some psychic experience, but only 24% of the Norwegians made such claims. Looking into the question of how people who report psychic experiences differ from those who do not revealed little or no effect of education and age but rather striking effects of sex, marital status, reporting positive and negative affects on the Bradburn Affect Scale, and several other variables. The question of whether some of these associations could be due to a response bias effect was considered, and as far as could be ascertained, there was no response bias effect, meaning that the associations were quite specific. After national differences, the variables best predicting that one has had some psychic experience were sum of affect according to the Bradburn Affect Scale and belief in reincarnation.

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In the past 10–15 years, surveys have been conducted in a few countries that used large representative national samples and included items on psychic experiences and beliefs (Audience Selection, 1980; Greeley, 1975; Haraldsson, 1978, 1985; IMU 1978, 1980). It is interesting to note that most of these surveys were initiated by sociologists and journalists outside the field of parapsychology. These surveys have provided an opportunity to make cross-national comparisons of the frequency of reports of various psychic experiences and beliefs. However, differences in the content and wording of items have made direct comparisons across countries both difficult and highly tentative. Haraldsson (1985) has reported on such surveys in Iceland, Great Britain, Sweden, and the United States, and he has made a tentative comparison of findings across countries. Striking national differences were found in both the frequency of reported experiences and belief in various kinds of allegedly paranormal phenomena.

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## BACKGROUND OF THE EUROPEAN HUMAN VALUES SURVEY

In 1981–1984 a multi-national survey—sometimes called the European Human Values Study—was conducted in most countries of Western Europe and in the United States. The survey should be of particular interest to readers of this *Journal* and all psi researchers because it contained three items on psychic experiences, and these same items were used in all the participating countries.

The European Value Systems Study Group (EVSSG), which organized the survey, was initiated by J. Kerkhofs of the University of Louvain in Belgium. The group now has its center at the University of Tilburg in the Netherlands (directed by R. A. de Moor). The EVSSG consists mainly of European sociologists with long experience in research on values and norms. They constructed the original questionnaire, but the paranormal items were originally devised by the well-known sociologist-priest-novelist Andrew Greeley.

The central concern of the EVSSG was whether or not Western Europeans have one common value system. They were interested in the extent to which their norms and values might differ or be similar. Gallup or Gallup-affiliated companies carried out the survey on behalf of the EVSSG. In 1981, the survey was conducted in nine Western European countries. Later, several more countries in Europe, Asia, and the Americas joined the project. The survey has now been conducted in 16 European countries and 11 countries in the Americas and Asia, but the data from some of the non-European countries have not been made available. Gallup International in London coordinated the fieldwork.

This is the largest survey conducted to date that allows so many cross-cultural or cross-national comparisons on human beliefs and values. The principal findings from a comparison of 10 selected Western European countries are discussed in the book *Contrasting Values in Western Europe* (Harding, Phillips, & Fogarty, 1986). Several books have been published on the findings in individual countries (e.g., Abrams, Gerard, & Timms, 1985; Halman, Heunks, Moor, & Zanders, 1987; Noelle-Neumann & Köcher, 1987). Numerous papers have been written on various aspects of this survey (see the European Value Systems Study Group's *Information Bulletin* 1987).

E. Haraldsson was a member of a group of researchers who prepared the survey in Iceland, and he later obtained access to all the data files from Western Europe and the U.S.

## METHOD

*The Samples*

The samples were representative of the adult population in all the participating countries, and standard sampling methods were used to obtain

them (Harding, Phillips, & Fogarty, 1986). The mean sample size for the 14 countries that are included in most of our analyses is 1,329 persons. These samples are from Iceland (927), Denmark (1,182), Finland (1,003), Norway (1,246), Sweden (954), Great Britain (1,231), Ireland (1,217), West Germany (1,305), the Netherlands (1,221), Belgium (1,145), France (1,200), Italy (1,348), Spain (2,303) and the U.S. (2,325). A few results are given for South Korea (942). The total number of persons interviewed in the European and U.S. samples is 18,607. All of the interviews were conducted face-to-face.

*The Questionnaire*

The EVSSG questionnaire consists of over 120 items, many with several subitems. (For the full text of the basic English version of the questionnaire, see Harding, Phillips, & Fogarty, 1986.) The same basic questionnaire was used in all the participating countries with a few questions of local interest added to it in several of the countries. The questionnaire surveyed a variety of values, attitudes, and behaviors and was divided into the following six domains:

1. *Leisure*. There were 19 items on leisure, psychological well-being, etc. For example: "Thinking of the way you spend your leisure time, what is more important to you, to relax as much as possible or doing things that are being active?"
2. *Work*. There were 12 items on attitudes toward work and work ethics; for example, which of 16 listed aspects in a job are important to the respondent, such as good pay, pleasant people to work with, etc.
3. *Meaning and purpose of life*. There were 23 items dealing with religious beliefs and practices but also with such questions as, "In the long run do you think that scientific advances we are making will help or harm mankind?" (The three paranormal items of Greeley were included in this section.)
4. *Family life*. There were 20 items dealing with various aspects of relations to other people, such as how close your father and mother were to you during the time when you were growing up.
5. *Contemporary social issues*. There were 21 items on politics and various social issues, such as describing one's political interests.
6. *Demographic information*. There were 17 items in this category, including sex, age, education, socioeconomic status, and other background variables.

Of particular interest to us are the three items that deal with paranormal experiences. They were taken from a survey entitled *The Ultimate Values of the American Population* by two University of Chicago sociologists, William McCready and Andrew Greeley (1976). These items are sometimes referred to as the *Greeley items* because Andrew Greeley composed them. One of the Greeley items concerned spiritual/religious experiences and will not be dealt with in this paper.

The items are as follows:

*Did you ever have any of the following experiences:*

- (1) *Felt as though you were in touch with someone when they were far away from you;*
- (2) *Seen events that happened at a great distance as they were happening;*
- (3) *Felt as though you were really in touch with someone who had died;*
- (4) *Felt as though you were close to a powerful spiritual life force that seemed to lift you out of yourself.* [The responses to this query were not included in our analyses.]

Response alternatives for the items were: no never, yes, don't know. For convenience, the three Greeley items will hereafter be referred to as *telepathy, clairvoyance, and contact with the dead.*

#### Limitations of the Data

There are some obvious limitations to the data elicited by the three questions concerning telepathy, clairvoyance, and contact with the dead: a) We are only dealing with reported experiences. No attempt was made to investigate or verify/falsify any reported experiences. b) From the parapsychologist's point of view, these items are far from being worded in the ideal fashion. The wording "felt as though" (used in the first and third items) is particularly critical because respondents may have reported instances in which they were not sure that the experience was genuine, although they may have "felt as though" they were having the experience. c) Exact translations of items from one language to another can be difficult, and nuances of translations may in some cases provide a source of error.

In spite of these limitations, there are relatively comparable representative survey data from most countries of Western Europe and the U.S. Bearing the above limitations in mind, we still have a better opportunity than ever before to get answers to such questions as: How commonly in various countries do people report experiences of telepathy, clairvoyance, and contact with the dead? Are there significant national differences in reporting these experiences? What, if anything, characterizes those who report psychic experiences? Do they differ in any meaningful way from those who report none? Does this huge amount of data give any support to the notion that there is a "psychic personality"?

#### RESULTS

First, let us look at the overall results for each of the three types of experiences. For the combined 13 participating countries in Europe, telepathy was reported more frequently than the other experiences. Weighing the figures by national population sizes, it can be estimated that 32% of Europeans from these 13 countries have experienced telepathy, 20% have

had a personal experience of clairvoyance, and that contact with the dead was experienced by 23%. The percentages for the U.S. are higher in all instances: telepathy, 54%; clairvoyance, 25%; and contact with the dead, 30%. The results for each country and Europe combined are given in Table 1.

#### Telepathy

The answers varied greatly from one country to another in regard to the number of persons who reported having "felt as though you were in touch with someone when they were far away from you." In the U.S., this experience was reported by 54% of the respondents—which far exceeded any European nation surveyed. Italy, which was highest in Europe, came next with the considerably lower figure of 41%. Finland followed with 40%, then West Germany with 39%, Great Britain (36%), and France and Iceland, who both reported 34%. Denmark had the lowest percentage of persons reporting telepathy (15%). Second and third among the lowest are Norway and Ireland, with 17% and 19%, respectively. The Danish results are reminiscent of the earlier finding that only 11% of respondents reported a paranormal experience in a 2-item survey initiated by the Danish Society for Psychical Research in 1957 (Gallup Markedsanalyse, 1957). We have this figure for one Asian country, South Korea, where 48% of the respondents reported telepathy (Gallup International, 1984).

Nationality is evidently an important and significant factor in the reporting of telepathic experiences.

Table 1  
PERCENTAGE OF PERSONS IN THE HUMAN VALUES SURVEY REPORTING EXPERIENCES

	Telepathy	Clairvoyance	Contact with the dead
France	34	24	24
Italy	41	39	34
Spain	21	14	16
Belgium	21	14	18
Great Britain	36	14	26
West Germany	39	17	28
Holland	29	12	12
Ireland	19	11	16
Denmark	15	12	16
Finland	40	15	14
Iceland	34	7	4
Norway	17	7	14
Sweden	24	7	14
EUROPE	34	21	26
U.S.	54	25	30
South Korea	48	25	23

### Clairvoyance

For clairvoyance, national differences range from 7–39%. The Italians lead in a prominent way with 39% of respondents—more than every third person—reporting having “seen events that happened at a great distance as they were happening.” Americans came second with 25% and were closely followed by the French (24%). Then came West Germany (17%) and Finland (15%). Great Britain, Spain, and Belgium each reported 14%. The lowest percentages are found in Sweden, Norway, and Iceland, with 7% each. It is worth noting that in every country people are considerably less likely to report clairvoyant than telepathic experiences.

### Contact with the Dead

Having “felt as though you were really in touch with someone who had died” was the second most often reported experience in Europe as well as in the U.S. Again, large national differences are found, with the percentages ranging from 9%–41%. Iceland leads with 41% of the respondents reporting a personal experience of contact with the dead. Italy is second with 34%, and the U.S. had 30%. West Germany and Great Britain follow closely with 28% and 26%, respectively. Denmark and Norway have the lowest percentages, with 10% and 9%, respectively. In Europe as a whole, every fourth person polled reports having felt themselves to have been in actual touch with someone who had died.

### Any Paranormal Experience

For Europe as a whole, nearly half of the population (46%) reported one or more of the three types of paranormal experiences. It is also quite evident that the percentage differs widely within the group of countries, as can be seen in Table 2. The U.S. and Italy lead with 60% of respondents reporting some psychic experience. Iceland is third with 52%; Germany, France, Finland, and Britain follow with 49%, 48%, 45%, and 44%, respectively. Norway and Denmark, the two countries culturally closest to Iceland, have the lowest percentages, with about a quarter of the respondents reporting any experience.

### Number of Paranormal Experiences

Of those who report any paranormal experience at all, 49% in Europe and 47% in the U.S. profess to have had only one kind of experience, whereas 8% and 11%, respectively, reported having had all three kinds of experiences.

The three items correlate significantly with one another. In the combined countries in Europe, the highest correlation (Kendall tau) is between telepathic experience and clairvoyance at .46. The correlation between

Table 2  
PERCENTAGE OF PERSONS IN THE HUMAN VALUES SURVEY REPORTING  
PSYCHIC EXPERIENCES

	Any psychic experience	Number of experiences			
		0	1	2	3
U.S.	60	40	28	21	11
Italy	60	40	24	22	14
Iceland	52	48	27	22	3
West Germany	49	51	27	17	5
France	48	52	25	15	3
Finland	45	55	28	12	3
Great Britain	44	56	21	16	3
Holland	34	66	21	11	3
Spain	32	68	19	9	3
Sweden	31	69	20	9	3
Ireland	30	70	18	9	3
Belgium	29	71	16	8	3
Denmark	25	75	18	6	3
Norway	24	76	15	7	3
EUROPE	46	54	23	16	3

telepathy and contact with the dead is .40 and between clairvoyance and contact with the dead it is .34.<sup>2</sup> In the U.S., these numbers were .29, .33 and .28, respectively. Thus, for the U.S., the relationship between telepathy and contact with the dead is the most prominent.

### Who Reports Psychic Experiences?

The great number and variety of variables in this survey provide a unique opportunity to search for the characteristics of those who report psychic experiences. For brevity's sake, let us call them the *psychics*, keeping in mind the inherent limitations of the data, particularly the question of validity, and the extent to which the reported instances are indeed dealing with genuine psychic experiences. Can the psychics be distinguished from the nonpsychics? Because there are large samples from many countries, the generality of the findings of one country sample can easily be tested across countries, but here again, it must be kept in mind that the survey reveals national differences.

*Sex.* In Europe, many more women (38%) reported telepathic experiences than men (30%), and a comparable difference was found in the U.S.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this paper, the Kendall tau is used as a measure of association. It is also used in the case of dichotomous variables in which we present the strengths of the associations in a uniform manner, rather than test their significances. Nevertheless,  $\tau$  can be used provided, as we do, that the correction for ties is applied. In general, the correlations were calculated across individuals.

(59% vs. 47%). Only in Holland and Norway do equal proportions of the sexes report telepathy, and in no country did men report it more frequently than women. It can be firmly stated that in most countries women have a greater tendency than men to report telepathy.

This sex difference is not equal for the three kinds of experiences. For clairvoyance this difference is generally very slight, and it was even reversed in five countries where more men than women report clairvoyance, although this difference is not significant in any country. In five countries there is no difference, as in the U.S.

The sex difference becomes strongest when reporting contact with the dead. In Europe, 30% of the women and 20% of the men report such an experience; the difference is comparable in the U.S. (34% vs. 25%).

When we look at the results in regard to reporting some psychic experience (see Table 3), we find that in all countries but one—Holland—there are more psychics among women than men, and there the difference is small (35% vs. 34%).

**Education.** Is the reporting of paranormal experiences a deficiency syndrome of some kind that shows a lack of education? For Europe as a whole, 37% of the college-educated report telepathic experiences, as do 32% of those who finished their education immediately after primary school. Again, there are national differences. In 11 countries, relatively more college-educated than only primary-school-educated respondents reported telepathy. This tendency was reversed only in Great Britain and there only marginally so. In the U.S., the telepaths were found in equal numbers among the primary- and college-educated. Clairvoyance was generally not affected by education in Europe or the U.S., whereas the less educated reported more contact with the dead.

In Europe as well as in the U.S., the length of formal education has no effect on the reporting of some paranormal experience. The correlation with the reporting of some paranormal experience is .00 for Europe and .02 for the U.S.

**Marital status.** Probably most people would not expect marital status to be related in any way to how likely people are to report paranormal experiences, but that is incorrect (see Table 4). In Europe, about a third of the married and the single respondents, 31% and 36%, respectively, report an experience of telepathy. For other groups the situation is different. Almost half of those living together as married (i.e., not legally married) (44%), the separated (53%), and the divorced (47%) report telepathic experiences. The same trend is evident in the U.S. Of the married and single respondents, about half (51% and 53%, respectively) profess to have had telepathic experiences, against almost two-thirds of those who are living as married, separated, or divorced and widowed (65%, 66%, 64%). It should be pointed out that the number of respondents in what we might call the broken-relationship groups is relatively small in all countries.

In all 15 countries, relatively fewer single and married persons report telepathy than the combined broken-relationship group of those living as

Table 3  
PERCENTAGE OF PERSONS REPORTING ANY PSYCHIC EXPERIENCE BY SIGNIFICANT VARIABLES

	Total	Sex		Education			Belief in reincarnation		Belief in spirit or life force		Prayer		Think about the meaning and purpose in life		
		Men	Women	Pri	Sec	Col	Y	N	Y	Others	Y	N	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
France	48	41	55	47	49	48	61	45	56	45	57	42	48	40	34
Italy	60	54	65	58	56	66	68	59	63	56	66	45	57	33	51
Spain	32	28	36	31	31	35	39	30	35	31	35	25	30	28	25
Belgium	29	25	33	25	28	35	50	29	43	25	37	22	33	17	19
Great Britain	44	40	49	50	41	46	59	36	52	39	54	35	45	32	38
West Germany	49	42	54	44	47	51	66	43	54	46	59	29	46	41	23
Holland	34	35	34	31	31	41	50	34	48	29	41	27	34	24	22
Ireland	30	27	33	32	28	34	39	29	38	28	33	17	41	21	23
Denmark	25	22	29	25	26	25	48	22	35	22	32	19	23	19	9
Finland <sup>a</sup>	45	—	—	47	43	48	—	—	—	—	—	—	44	35	17
Iceland	52	47	57	60	54	48	68	46	57	45	65	42	47	43	28
Norway	24	18	30	28	22	24	30	21	29	21	29	16	26	15	7
Sweden	31	25	38	31	29	38	57	25	40	25	42	25	33	20	20
EUROPE	46	41	51	47	43	46	59	42	54	42	54	35	45	33	34
U.S.	60	55	65	64	58	62	72	56	66	59	64	42	56	47	51

<sup>a</sup> Some figures missing because of technical difficulties with the Finnish data file.

Table 4  
PERCENTAGE OF PERSONS REPORTING ANY PSYCHIC EXPERIENCE BY MARITAL STATUS

	Single	Married	Living as Married	Separated	Divorced	Widowed
France	46	47	51	56	63	56
Italy	65	54	60	74	85	75
Spain	33	30	46	46	50	41
Belgium	33	24	27	42	55	44
Great Britain	41	42	58	66	51	65
West Germany	41	48	55	63	49	60
Holland	39	32	41	41	47	32
Ireland	25	33	32	29	—	32
Denmark	26	23	31	27	39	27
Finland	43	43	47	—	64	67
Iceland	41	54	50	71	59	63
Norway	21	23	24	20	46	28
Sweden	37	28	25	29	48	43
EUROPE	46	43	52	60	53	58
U.S.	60	57	71	81	70	68

married, separated, divorced or widowed. The same effect is evident in regard to contact with the dead, and also—but to a lesser extent—for clairvoyance.

#### Psychological Well-Being

The Bradburn Affect Scale was devised as a measure of psychological well-being and has been widely used by sociologists for that purpose (Bradburn, 1969). It consists of 10 items, all of which were included in the EVSSG questionnaire. For the wording of the scale, see Appendix A. Three indicators are calculated: one positive, one negative, and one that is the balance of the two. The positive indicator is found by adding the number of positive feelings reported: being particularly excited or interested in something, being proud because someone complimented you, being pleased about having accomplished something, feeling that life is wonderful, and feeling that life is going your way. The negative indicator is found by adding the items of feeling restless, lonely, bored, depressed, or upset.

The balance indicator, namely, the value that is obtained when the number of reported negative feelings is subtracted from the number of positive feelings, is considered a fair indicator of psychological well-being, rather than the values of positive and negative indicators taken separately. We calculated the Kendall tau ( $\tau$ ) correlation between the Bradburn Affect Scale and the three types of psychic experiences. In Europe it was  $-.01$  for telepathy and  $-.03$  for both clairvoyance and contact with the dead, and  $-.02$  for all psi experiences combined. In the U.S. the correlation was  $.05$  for telepathy,  $-.02$  for clairvoyance,  $-.03$  for con-

tact with the dead, and  $.02$  for reporting any experience. The psychics evidently enjoy neither more nor less psychological well-being than the nonpsychics.

An examination of the subscales on negative feelings among Europeans showed that 12% of those who express no negative feeling report telepathy, 24% of those expressing one negative feeling report telepathy, and there follows a gradual but steady increase up to 44% of those reporting telepathy who experience all five negative feelings in the Bradburn Scale. The same trend is found in the U.S. sample. The percentage of persons reporting telepathy rises steadily from 33% reporting no negative feeling to 64% reporting all the negative feelings. The trend is about similar for contact with the dead, but it is less noticeable for clairvoyance.

For all the psychic experiences combined, this trend is steady for both Europe and the U.S. In Europe, the rise is from 37% for no negative feeling to 61% for them all. In the U.S., reporting of any psychic experiences increases steadily from 52% among those experiencing no negative feeling to 89% among those who experience all the negative feelings.

Among the Europeans who report no *positive* feeling, only 24% claim a telepathic experience. There is gradual and steady increase up to 44% among those who report all five positive feelings. This finding is replicated in the U.S. data. The more that people report positive feelings, the more likely they are to report telepathic experiences. The increase rises steadily from 33% to 64%. The same trend—to a lesser extent—is found for clairvoyance and contact with the dead. With the three items combined, there is a steady increase with increased affect from 42% to 69% of the persons reporting at least one or more psychic experiences.

We combined the positive and negative subscales by adding their scores, thus creating a new variable that we called the sum of affect which we correlated with the Greeley items. (See our discussion of response bias in Appendix B.) The sum of affect correlated significantly with telepathy in all countries as can be seen in Table 6. For Europe as a whole, the Kendall correlation coefficient is  $.19$ , and for the U.S. it is  $.28$ . For clairvoyance and contact with the dead, the coefficients were lower but significant. For any psychic experience, the correlation was  $.20$  for Europe and  $.29$  for the U.S.

To find out to what extent the reporting of psychic experiences can be predicted from other variables in this study (biographical data, attitudes and values), regression analysis was carried out for each of the countries with the number of psychic experiences as the dependent variable and representative subset of other variables as independent variables. The same analysis was run for Europe as a whole.

The result (see Table 7) is that the number of psychic experiences can be predicted only to a limited extent. The percentage of the variance that can be explained ranges from 6% in Spain to 23% in Italy. Although there is substantial variation between nations regarding which variables play the most important role, several are often found among the five best pre-

Table 5  
PERCENTAGE OF PERSONS REPORTING ANY PSYCHIC EXPERIENCE BY NUMBER OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE FEELINGS ON THE BRADBURN SCALE

	Negative Affect					Positive Affect						
	0	1	2	3	4	5	0	1	2	3	4	5
France	40	53	52	69	54	60	38	47	49	51	56	53
Italy	47	62	68	67	75	90	40	56	58	64	76	68
Spain	26	36	41	33	44	20	24	29	35	40	36	30
Belgium	23	33	32	38	54	41	15	27	29	32	39	31
Great Britain	35	47	50	55	58	66	39	39	43	38	52	54
West Germany	43	41	55	54	58	45	52	48	48	46	47	55
Holland	27	37	42	47	45	62	18	30	36	40	36	40
Ireland	24	35	36	34	45	37	23	27	36	40	32	41
Denmark	22	26	34	41	35	47	8	21	25	28	25	38
Finland	31	41	40	50	57	71	40	50	51	57	67	42
Iceland	51	56	51	57	58	40	32	46	45	52	60	58
Norway	19	27	33	26	29	33	21	20	17	20	28	32
Sweden	29	32	42	48	55	—	35	29	27	27	33	40
EUROPE	37	47	53	56	59	61	34	43	46	47	52	53
U.S.	52	58	64	69	77	89	42	45	54	54	67	69

Table 6  
KENDALL TAU CORRELATION BETWEEN SUM OF AFFECT AND TELEPATHY, CLAIRVOYANCE, CONTACT WITH THE DEAD AND ANY EXPERIENCE

	Telepathy	Clairvoyance	Contact with the dead	Any Experience
France	.16**	.10**	.12**	.20**
Italy	.27**	.28**	.28**	.32**
Spain	.11**	.10**	.04**	.15**
Belgium	.17**	.13**	.11**	.21**
Great Britain	.20**	.05**	.11**	.21**
West Germany	.17**	.01	.03*	.11**
Holland	.19**	.07**	.04**	.18**
Ireland	.17**	.07**	.09**	.19**
Denmark	.14**	.11**	.01	.17**
Finland	.15**	.12**	.10**	.19**
Iceland	.15**	.02	.15**	.14**
Norway	.10**	.09**	.08**	.14**
Sweden	.13**	.01	.07**	.13**
EUROPE	.19**	.10**	.09**	.20**
U.S.	.28**	.13**	.15**	.29**

\*  $p < .05$  (two-tailed)  
\*\*  $p < .01$  (two-tailed)

dicting variables. Sum of affect occurs in 12 of the 13 analyses for individual countries. The second most prevalent variable is belief in reincarnation (V315), which occurs in 10 of 13 analyses. The response-bias variable occurs in 7 analyses and is the second best predictor in the combined European data. More details about this variable, which consists of the sum of 50 variables associated with reporter bias, can be found in Appendix B. The fourth best variable is sex, with four occurrences. There follow three variables each with three occurrences. These are broken versus unbroken marital relationships, belief in some sort of spirit or life force (as opposed to belief in a personal god, no belief in any sort of spirit, god, or life force, and not knowing what to think about such matters), and spending some moments in prayer (V319).

DISCUSSION

Sixty percent of the American sample reported one or more of the psychic experiences assessed by the items originally designed by Greeley. For Europeans, the figure was 46% when the samples had been weighted according to the size of the national populations. These are relatively high percentages. Based as they are on large representative national samples, they allow us to infer that perhaps as many as 145 million Americans and over 100 million Western Europeans report at least one of the three kinds of psychic experiences as defined in the survey. When interpreting these data, we must keep in mind their limitations. We are dealing with reported



Table 7  
RESULTS OF REGRESSION ANALYSIS FOR EACH COUNTRY

Country	% of variance explained	Var 1	Var 2	Var 3	Var 4	Var 5
France	13	NEGAFF	V315	RBV	BALAFF	SEX
Italy	23	SUMAFF	RBV	BROKEN	WORKRLZ	V319
Spain	6	V315	V253	SELFJUS	SUMAFF	V317
Belgium	20	V317	SUMAFF	V315	SPIRLIF	RBV
Great Britain	16	V315	V211	AGE	SPIRLIF	SUMAFF
West Germany	20	AGE	V315	TRADFAM	V319	SEX
Holland	15	RBV	SUMAFF	SPIRLIF	V253	V315
Ireland	13	SUMAFF	V311	RBV	CONFINS	TRADRLG
Denmark	13	V315	RBV	SUMAFF	V253	SOCACT
Iceland	18	V253	POS AFF	V315	V319	V449
Norway	8	V253	SUMAFF	SEX	V156	V233
Sweden	21	V315	SHAPRTN	V314	SUMAFF	SEX
EUROPE	13	SUMAFF	RBV	V315	SPIRLIF	V319
U.S.	16	SUMAFF	V315	BROKEN	SOCACT	RBV

NOTE: Regression analysis was run with number of psychic experiences as the dependent variable and a representative subset of other variables as independent, which were stepwise included. Var 1 indicates the variable that best predicts the number of psychic experiences reported, Var 2 is second best, etc.

- BALAFF balance of affect on the Bradburn Scale
- BROKEN marital status
- CONFINS confidence in institutions
- NEGAFF negative affect
- POS AFF positive affect
- RBV response bias
- SELFJUS justifying minor immoral acts (tax evasion, lying, etc.)
- SHAPRTN sharing attitudes with partner
- SOCACT take part in social activities
- SPIRLIF belief in some sort of spirit or life force
- SUMAFF sum of affect on the Bradburn Scale
- TRADFAM traditional attitude to family
- TRADRLG traditional religious views
- V156 state of health
- V211 having choice and control over one's life
- V233 taking pride in one's work
- V253 thinking about the meaning and purpose of life
- V311 belief in the devil
- V315 belief in reincarnation
- V314 belief in sin
- V317 God important in one's life
- V319 take some moments for prayer, mediation etc.
- V449 take interest in politics
- WORKRLZ finding realization in one's work

experiences only, and the phrasing of the questions is not ideal for assessing potentially paranormal experiences. It should, however, not be unreasonable to estimate that the figures roughly indicate the frequency with which people in the samples have interpreted some personal experiences as paranormal in nature.

The most outstanding finding is the national differences in reporting every kind of psychic experience. Taking the extremes, we find that Americans report telepathic experiences 3.6 times more often than the Danes (54% vs. 15%), Italians report clairvoyance 5.6 times more often

than Icelanders, Norwegians, and Swedes (39% vs. 7%), and Icelanders report contact with the dead 4.5 times more often than the Norwegians (41% vs. 9%). Americans and Italians, whom we find to be the most "psychic" nations in this survey, are 2.5 times more likely to report any psychic experiences than are the least "psychic" Danes (60% vs. 24%).

Before Haraldsson started this project (Houtkooper joined it at a later stage) and calculated the results, he did not state any explicit hypotheses, but based on the results from earlier surveys, he expected the percentages of reported experiences to be highest for the U.S. and Iceland, with Great Britain, Italy, and Germany nearby. He also expected Denmark, Norway, and Sweden to be among the least "psychic." As far as these countries are concerned, the findings come as no surprise. What remains puzzling, however, is the finding that so many French people report psychic experiences and that they report them slightly more frequently than the British. Our surprise probably reflects our ignorance of the French people. Slight differences in the translation of the items may also affect the results.

Nationality emerges as a very powerful factor indeed, and this evokes many questions. What is the active ingredient that causes the national differences? Is it in the genes? Is it due to differences in dominant philosophy or life styles? Or is it due to the degree of favorable coverage by press and TV? McClenon's (1982) survey of elite scientists in the U.S. showed that they get most of their knowledge of psychic phenomena and research from popular sources, not from scientific publications. This clearly reveals the powerful effect of the popular media. An important question is: What, if any, impact does the quantity and quality of research conducted and published have on the various nations surveyed? Our findings open up many questions.

There is a notable difference between France and Great Britain in the reporting of clairvoyance. A total of 24% report it in France, but only 14% report it in Britain, whereas the figure for telepathy is about equal for both countries. As early as around the turn of the century, French researchers tended to give more support to the clairvoyance hypothesis, whereas the British overwhelmingly favored telepathy as a leading explanation of psychic phenomena. Perhaps these differing conceptions of early French and British researchers still exist among the general populations of the countries involved. Or, were the conceptions of those researchers simply reflections of the dominating views of the populations of which they were a part?

In a representative survey of psychic experiences conducted in Iceland in the mid-1970s, 31% reported experience of the dead (Haraldsson, 1975, 1985). Why do we now find an increase up to 41%? It is possible that the higher figure is due to very slight differences in the wording of the questions. The results of Haraldsson's survey were widely publicized in Iceland when they were released to the media (Haraldsson, 1975), and this may well have made people more ready to report contact with the dead when they knew that almost every third person had done so. A British

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survey among widows and widowers revealed that many of those who report experiences of encounters with the dead are reluctant to do so for fear of ridicule (Rees, 1971).

The fact that Icelanders top the list in regard to contact with the dead calls for some discussion. It brings to mind some other findings of Haraldsson's 1975 survey in that country. It was noteworthy that about every third respondent (32%) had attended mediumistic séances. For the age bracket 50–59, the figure rose to 47% and was even a surprising 29% for the college-educated group. Furthermore, it was found that respondents expressed a relatively strong belief in communication with the dead at séances, with 21% being certain of such communication and a further 21% thinking it likely, as opposed to 11% who thought it impossible or unlikely. Concerning the high figure of 30% of Americans reporting contact with the dead in the present survey, we should recall the relevant fact that the United States was the soil from which spiritualism grew and spread to other countries.

In the U.S., Greeley (1987) has found a steady increase of reports of contact with the dead: 27% in 1973, 30% in 1981, and exceeding even Iceland in 1987 with 42%. (See Table I.) Greeley interprets this increase as an indication of increased readiness to admit experiences of contact with the dead. He also suggests that the writings of actress Shirley MacLaine and the wide publicity she has received may have affected that change.

Many more "psychics" are found among women than among men. The results concerning reporting some psychic experience indicate that in all countries but Holland many more psychics are found among women than among men. Further, this sex difference is more prominent for contact with the dead and telepathy than for clairvoyance. Why? Experiences of telepathy and contact with the dead involve *contact with persons*, whereas clairvoyance concerns *perceptions of events*. Rightly or wrongly, women are often believed to be more person-oriented than men. If this old stereotype is true, it would seem reasonable to expect more women to report telepathic experiences (with living and dead) and for men to report relatively more clairvoyant experiences, which is what the results indicated. However, this effect of sex is very slight: Reporting some psychic experience correlated only .08 with sex in Europe and .11 in the U.S., both coefficients being significant because of huge sample sizes.

A notable absence in the data is a relationship with age, except for a slight increase in experiences of contact with the dead.

In the U.S. as well as in Europe, education has no effect on whether people report psychic experiences. It should be mentioned, however, that the data have the limitation that we cannot distinguish between those who hold the European "student" examination or a U.S. college degree and those who hold higher university degrees. Findings by McClenon (1982) indicate that this distinction may be more important than the traditional classification of formal education as primary, secondary, and college. Be

that as it may, there is no evidence in the results for the "deficiency syndrome," that is, that psychic experiences tend to be reported because of lack of education.

Rather striking are the differences in reporting psychic experiences as regards marital status (see Table 4). The single and married are less likely to report psychic experiences than those living in what we termed "broken relationships" (those living as married, separated, divorced, or widowed). Are psychics more likely than nonpsychics to have marital difficulties? Is an unstable or broken relationship psi-conductive? Are people who are under emotional strain that may accompany broken relationships more likely to have psychic experiences? Or do people in such relationships have a greater need for psychic experiences? Or—taking a more skeptical approach—do those living as married, separated, divorced, or widowed more often "feel as though" or imagine that they have psychic experiences? The data give no answers to these questions.

Still more striking is the finding that the "psychics" report significantly more positive as well as negative feelings and emotions than the nonpsychics, yet the "psychics" enjoy neither higher nor lower psychological well-being (as measured by the Bradburn Scale) than the rest of the population. This is in line with what Greeley (1975) found in his first U.S. survey. What conclusions can be drawn from the much more frequent simultaneous presence of both positive and negative feelings ("sum of affect") among the psychics? Could this effect be due to a general response bias of the yes/no-sayer type because all the items of the Bradburn Scale are so worded that the respondent is asked if he or she has had the particular feeling/experience and then is requested to respond with a yes or no? Analyses reveal that the findings are not due to response bias. A detailed statistical analysis of this problem is given in Appendix B.

Are the psychics more emotionally unstable? Apparently people are more likely to report psi experiences when experiencing either very difficult or very pleasant times. Are the psychics more sensitive to their environment and hence experience more negative as well as positive feelings? We can surmise that they are more sensitive, and they probably have richer emotional lives and react emotionally more strongly to events around them than do the nonpsychics.

The Human Values Study contains a great number of variables from a variety of highly different domains. Nationality is evidently the strongest factor determining the frequency of the reporting of psychic experiences, followed by the "sum of affect." In addition to the factors already mentioned in this discussion, it is of interest that regression analyses revealed three other variables from the religious domain that affect the frequency of reporting psi experiences: namely, belief in reincarnation, belief in some sort of spirit or life force, and taking moments for prayer or meditation. This result is in line with earlier findings (Haraldsson, 1981; Tobacyk & Milford, 1983) that show some religious variables to be mildly but significantly related to belief in psychic phenomena in general.

The Human Values Survey was repeated in 1990 in all the countries of Western Europe and a number of countries in Eastern Europe, Asia, and the Americas. To our disappointment, the EVSSG committee decided to drop the Greeley items from the new questionnaire.

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## APPENDIX A

## The Bradburn Affect Balance Scale

We are interested in the way people are feeling these days. During the past few weeks, did you ever feel:

	Yes	No
Particularly excited or interested in something		
So restless you couldn't sit long in a chair		
Proud because someone had complimented you on something you had done		
Very lonely or remote from other people		
Pleased about having accomplished something		
Bored		
On top of the world/feeling that life is wonderful		
Depressed or very unhappy		
That things are going your way		
Upset because somebody criticized you		

## APPENDIX B

## Response Bias

The finding of a correlation between the sum-of-affect variable from the Bradburn Scale items and reported psychic experiences has caused some

concern about its being explainable by response bias. In this case, response bias would be defined as the tendency to respond affirmatively on questions asking whether something applies to the subject or not. Subjects who possess this tendency to a large degree are called "reporters," whereas those who respond generally negatively to such questions are called "nonreporters." Of course, it is important for the interpretation of a correlation to know whether it can be regarded as due to a general effect or to the specific content of the questions whose responses show this correlation.

To decide this issue, we are fortunate in having a sizeable collection of questions available. We were able to find a set of 50 questions that asked for responses that could be regarded as distinguishing "reporters" from "nonreporters," if such a distinction has any grounds. The questions are found in various parts of the questionnaire so that specific meaning gets diffused when the set is treated as a whole. To obtain a variable to represent response bias, in the set of 50 questions we counted all responses of "yes," "very," "often," or where a specific item was marked as applicable to the subject. This provided the rather diffuse variable representing response bias needed to distinguish between our finding being due to a specific, rather than a diffuse, effect.

The response-bias variable (RBV) has been correlated with both sum of affect (SUMAFF) and the reporting of one or more psychic experiences (Any Exp). This allows the calculation of a partial correlation coefficient in which the correlation is controlled for the effect of a third variable, RBV, in this case. The results are shown in Table 8 for Europe combined and for the U.S.

The conclusion is that response bias plays a negligible role in the correlation and does not explain the high positive and negative affect scores and sum of affect of those who respond affirmatively to the three Greeley items. The regression analyses (see Table 7) corroborate this conclusion.

Table 8  
INFLUENCE OF RESPONSE BIAS ON THE CORRELATIONS BETWEEN ANY PSYCHIC EXPERIENCES AND BRADBURN'S SUM OF AFFECTS

Country	SUMAFF × RBV	Any Exp × RBV	Any Exp × SUMAFF	Any Exp × SUMAFF controlled for RBV
Europe	.04	.15	.19	.19
U.S.	.03	.12	.22	.22

Note: Kendall rank correlation coefficients and Kendall rank partial coefficient (last column) are given.

Though part of the variance in "Number of Psychic Experiences" is explained by the RBV, another larger part of it is explained by SUMAFF.

A better way to detect response bias is by including items that are asked twice, but in an opposite sense, so that an affirmative response in one instance should correspond with a negation in the other. Lack of consistency then reveals response bias. Because no items of this sort were included in the questionnaire used in the Human Values Survey, we could not perform this analysis.