

# WHAT DO WE REALLY THINK?: A SURVEY OF PARAPSYCHOLOGISTS AND SCEPTICS\*

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## ABSTRACT

A survey of 38 leading parapsychologists and sceptics was conducted. Respondents were chosen on the basis of recent publications and categorized as 18 parapsychologists and 17 sceptics. 3 remained unclassified. This categorization was generally confirmed by how people would choose to be categorized, though many considered themselves both parapsychologists and sceptics.

The groups were similar in first becoming interested in the subject around age 21, by either reading or personal experience (including conjuring). They agreed that we know little about psi, that parapsychology has made a contribution to psychology, statistics, sociology and other fields, and that its major problems include replicability. Almost all in both groups said their belief in psi had decreased.

The major difference was in belief in psi, organizations belonged to and the kind of literature read (though not the quantity). Parapsychologists found experiments, spontaneous cases and the whole body of research convincing while sceptics tended only to cite experiments or say that nothing convinced them. Sceptics said that better research and theory would change their minds about the existence of psi while several parapsychologists said that nothing would.

Many answers revealed the devastating effect of Soal's claims and subsequent exposure as a fraud.

A cluster analysis revealed one large group of mainly sceptics. Parapsychologists were less homogeneous in their answers.

## INTRODUCTION

Parapsychology is a unique subject. Since the very existence of its phenomena is in question, belief plays a larger role than in most sciences. As a consequence there tends to be a split between those who believe in the phenomena and those who do not. There are now a growing number of professional sceptics who make their doubt about psi, or even their disbelief, very clear in their writings.

Societies for the study of psi have a long history. This Society was founded in 1882 with its American counterpart being founded only three years later. The SPR's main objective has always been the scientific study of the claimed phenomena. Nevertheless it has long had a reputation amongst spiritualists and occultists, for its scepticism, while many scientists assume it consists only of true believers. The professional organization, the Parapsychological Association was founded in 1957. These societies promote research, organize conferences and publish journals. There are now four major international journals dealing with parapsychology and psychical research.

Until recently there was no official organization for sceptics. Then in 1976 CSICOP (The Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal) was formed. Its name might almost describe the aims of the SPR but no one could confuse the two organizations. The committee itself consists of

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some 50 people, mainly scientists and stage magicians, who are sceptical about claims of the paranormal. Its official journal is *The Skeptical Inquirer* (SI) with 26,000 subscribers in the U.S.A. and around the world. Like the SPR and the PA it runs annual conferences and other events promulgating various sceptical views.

As CSICOP has grown so local groups have sprung up. SI lists over 20 in the United States from Arizona to Wisconsin and there are sceptical groups in a dozen other countries. Some of these produce their own journals, newsletters or magazines. In Britain there is the *British and Irish Skeptic* now in its second year. There are also more overtly sceptical books, such as the *Skeptic's Handbook of Parapsychology* (Kurtz 1986); a counter-balance to the previous *Handbook of Parapsychology* (Wolman 1977). It is a striking fact that of all these societies and periodicals there is none which cannot be neatly identified as either parapsychological or sceptical.

It is easy to get the impression from all of this that there are two sides committed to different views and with little in common. Popular stereotypes are not flattering to either side. Parapsychologists are often dismissed as gullible religious-minded believers who perform shoddy experiments to prove their unshakable beliefs while skeptics are often derided as close-minded unimaginative bigots, ignorant of all the positive evidence and prepared to deny any they come across.

These may only be myths but harsh words are often printed. For example 'parapsychologists are, by motivation, not problem solvers but mystery-mongers' (Scott 1985, p. 498). This might be hard to confirm or deny but other views are more easily tested such as the claim that 'Most researchers of the paranormal begin their careers as skeptics and then reluctantly cross over into the realm of belief' (Rogo 1986, p. 76).

Although the two groups may appear to be distinct and opposed, it is my impression that, even if, organizationally, there are two groups, there is much common ground in their opinions, beliefs and attitudes. If the extent of this common ground and the nature of any real differences could be made clearer it might make for better understanding and communication between the two 'sides'.

The following survey was carried out to ascertain the views of a sample of influential parapsychologists and sceptics.

## METHOD

In December 1986 a pilot questionnaire was sent to eight people who were knowledgeable about the field but not eligible for the main sample. On the basis of their (most helpful) answers, some questions were omitted and many changed.

In May 1987 a questionnaire was sent to 47 people in two groups, 'parapsychologists' and 'sceptics'. The groups were defined according to their publications and throughout this paper are so defined (with the qualification noted below). The distinction is not meant to imply anything about respondents' beliefs or opinions. Indeed it is those opinions which are the subject matter of this paper.

The people were chosen on the basis of their publication in the parapsychological or sceptical literature. The following parapsychology journals were

consulted: *The Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* (JSPR), the *Journal of Parapsychology* (JP), the *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research* (JASPR) and the *European Journal of Parapsychology* (EJP), and the sceptical journal the *Skeptical Inquirer* for a period of two years up until the end of 1986 (the last issue of EJP available was May 1986).

Parapsychologists were chosen who had contributed a chapter to the *Handbook of Parapsychology* and published at least one other article in a parapsychology journal in the past two years, or those who had published at least three such articles.

'Sceptics' were chosen who had contributed a chapter to the *Skeptic's Handbook of Parapsychology* or published at least two articles in SI.

There were 23 'parapsychologists' and 22 'sceptics'. There were just two people who met the criteria for both categories: John Beloff and Gerd Hövelmann. In addition five others had published in both types of literature.

The questionnaire consisted of six forced choice questions and twelve open-ended questions. It is reprinted in the Appendix. Those who did not reply within eight weeks of the original mailing were sent a further request.

## RESULTS

A total of 38 completed questionnaires was received. That is a very high (81 per cent) response rate. In addition two people replied but said they were too busy to complete the questionnaire and one letter was returned undelivered. One question asked respondents whether they would call themselves a parapsychologist, a sceptic or both. On this basis some reclassification was made. John Beloff called himself only a parapsychologist (his chapter in the 'Skeptics Handbook' was in a section entitled 'Parapsychologists reply'). He was therefore put into that group. Of the other six who had published in both types of literature, three only called themselves sceptics (and not parapsychologists) and were put into this group. Just three out of 37 remained as unclassified, having published in both types of literature and calling themselves both a parapsychologist and a sceptic. This provided a total of 18 parapsychologists (P), 17 sceptics (S) and 3 unclassified (U).

It must be emphasized that there is no unequivocal distinction between Ps and Ss. For a start the term parapsychologist refers to the occupation of the person while 'sceptic' refers to a disposition or belief. I would therefore emphasize that in this study respondents were classified according to where they have published with the few people who had published in both categories being classified according to their own preference.

That the grouping was reasonable is clear from respondents' own classification. In the P group three did not wish to classify themselves at all. All the rest claimed to be parapsychologists (in one case to have been, though not any more) and five also to be sceptics. In the S group all called themselves sceptics and only two also parapsychologists.

Respondents were also asked whether they wished to classify themselves as believers or disbelievers. As expected many did not wish to use these categories and several explained why. Roughly half of both groups (P 47 per cent, S 53 per cent) declined to say either yes or no to at least one of the categories, implying that people in both groups are equally cautious about applying belief labels. Of

the Ps 11 claimed to be believers and none disbelievers. Of the Ss none claimed to be believers and 10 disbelievers. These differences are highly significant (belief  $X^2 = 19.3$  1df  $p < 0.001$ , disbelief  $X^2 = 14.3$  1df  $p < 0.001$ ).

#### QUESTIONS 1-6

The average age of respondents was 51 years and they first became interested in the subject at average age 21 (with no significant differences between the groups). The average percentage of working time devoted to the subject was 49 per cent but not surprisingly Ps devoted more time (69 per cent) than Ss (25 per cent) ( $t = 3.82$ ,  $p = 0.0007$ , 29 df). The average number of published papers and articles on the subject was 49 with Ps averaging 54 and Ss 30 ( $t = 2.10$ ,  $p = 0.045$ , 31 df).

Although Ss are often accused of not knowing the literature there was no significant difference in the amount the two groups claimed to have read. There was, however, a big difference in what they read. Not surprisingly Ps had read far more of the *Journal of Parapsychology* ( $X^2 = 16.2$ , 2 df,  $p < 0.001$ ) and *JSPR* and *JASPR* ( $X^2 = 12.8$ , 2 df,  $p < 0.01$ ) and Ss far more of *Skeptical Inquirer* ( $X^2 = 16.2$ , 2 df,  $p < 0.001$ ) and the *Skeptic's Handbook* ( $X^2 = 10.1$ , 2 df,  $p < 0.01$ ). There was no overall difference in the number of societies belonged to although of course the two groups predictably belonged to different ones: Ps to the PA, SPR and ASPR and Ss subscribing to SI. Only 2 Ss belonged to the PA, 5 and 4 Ss belonged to the SPR and ASPR respectively while only 1P subscribed to SI.

#### QUESTIONS 7 TO 18

Respondents were asked how they first became interested in parapsychology. Reading was the single largest reason, being given by 9 Ps, 10 Ss and all three of the unclassified group. Books cited included those by Dingwall, Ducasse, Jastrow, Price, Rhine, Soal and Bateman, and Sudre, as well as books on spiritualism and survival. Other reasons included a general intellectual interest (Ps 6, Ss 4). Ps were more likely to have become interested through personal experience (other than conjuring) (Ps 7, Ss 1,  $X^2 = 5.4$ , 1 df,  $p < 0.05$ ) and Ss by performing as a magician or conjuror (Ss 4). For example one sceptic, Ivan Kelly, wrote

In high school I was an amateur conjurer. Several times on TV I saw individuals claiming to be able to 'read minds', but these people were using tricks I already knew! After reading some of Houdini's books I became more interested in the subject and rather hostile to 'psychics'.

Asked whether any of their personal experiences were relevant to their work roughly half of both groups (9P, 9S) said they were. Three people mentioned OBEs (1P, 1S and 1U), 2 Ps mentioned psychic dreams but the single most often cited experience was performing as a magician or watching other magicians (given by 1P and 4S).

Others said their experiences were not relevant. Antony Flew replied

'Only negatively. Like Freud I have had premonitions and suffered disasters. But the former were not usually succeeded by the latter or the latter preceded by the former.'

Respondents were asked what they consider the most impressive evidence for psi to date. Here a clear difference between the groups is seen. Of the Ps half (9) mentioned specific experiments while 7 noted spontaneous case material and a further 3 commented that it was the whole body of research, the recurrent features or the convergence on the same findings which impressed them most. By contrast no sceptics cited any spontaneous case material nor thought the whole picture was convincing. Most (13 or 76 per cent) cited experimental work while 4 said that nothing convinced them.

The following types of experiment were specifically mentioned: RNG work such as by Schmidt and Jahn (4Ps, 9Ss, 1N), ganzfeld (3 Ps, 2Ss, 1N), DMT (2Ps, 1N), dream-ESP (1S), Serios (1P), Weiner-Zingrone (1P) Sheep-goat effect (1P), Pearce-Pratt (1P), Soal (1S), and experiments with van Dam and Olga Kahl (1P). The following spontaneous case material was mentioned by the Ps, *Phantasms of the Living*, the work of mediums such as Mrs. Piper (2), Mrs. Leonard, Ossowiecki (2), Home, Palladino and Schneider and children recalling past lives.

Not surprisingly there were lots of provisos given by the Ss group. For example Kendrick Frazier answers

'Whatever are the latest sets of studies that have not yet been examined in great enough detail to determine the key flaws, etc. (Keeping in mind Ray Hyman's observation that this process takes 10 to 15 years or so.) Some recent studies are in these categories, such as Helmut Schmidt's work on quantum generators of random events. Hyman's critiques of Ganzfeld experiments show how much effort must be expended to get at some of these impressive claims. So I feel it best not to take any too seriously until some years have elapsed and much time and effort has been devoted to critically examining them.'

Asked 'Do you think that psi exists?' the two groups give almost a mirror image response. Of the Ps, 13 (or 72 per cent) said 'yes', none said 'No' and 5 gave qualified answers. Of the Ss 6 (or 35 per cent) said a straight 'No', none said 'yes' and the other 11 (65 per cent) qualified their answers. The difference is highly significant ( $X^2 = 21.2$ , 2 df,  $p < 0.001$ ). Of the unclassified group one said 'Yes' and the others gave qualified responses such as this one from Gerd Hövelmann

'(It) depend(s) on what you mean by "psi". If "psi" is supposed to denote a more or less mysterious "force", then I am a disbeliever. If "psi" is merely to point to a certain class of experimental or other anomalies, then I am a moderate believer in the sense that I think that the parapsychologists may be on the track of something that is interesting and of potential importance and should therefore be investigated further.'

Others preferred to divide psi up, such as Harvey Irwin (P) who says

'Clairvoyance I'd give a 50:50 chance, other forms of ESP rather less chance, PK even lower likelihood.'

The difference between the two groups appears to be one of willingness to attribute some new (or paranormal) principle to the anomalies. For example John Palmer (P) says

‘I believe that some psi anomalies will eventually be shown to require paranormal explanation.’

while Charles Akers (S) explains

‘I doubt that the laboratory experiments (when significant) are reflecting some new principle of nature but it is possible that, while most results are artifactual, some represent a genuine anomaly.’

Question 11 asked ‘What kind(s) of evidence would persuade you to change your mind about the existence of psi?’. Here a most interesting difference was seen. The Ss gave very uniform answers. Without exception they outlined research outcomes which would convince them. Fourteen (82 per cent) talked about repeatable or demonstrable effects, 3 (18 per cent) mentioned better theory, 2 would be convinced by one specific kind of experiment and another 2 by someone gaining James Randi’s \$10,000. This is a reward he has long been offering to anyone who can demonstrate any psychic effect to his own satisfaction. Only one S mentioned a possible change in the opposite direction; that is towards less belief, explaining that no amount of debunking can alter one’s personal experiences.

The responses from the Ps were much more varied. Two (11 per cent) noted that the change could be in either direction. One explained ‘I don’t think my opinion would ever become completely stabilized’. Four (22 per cent) responded just like the Ss did, giving examples of evidence which would increase the likelihood of psi (4 cited replicability and 2 theory). The greatest difference between the groups is that 5 of the Ps (but no Ss) said that nothing could make any difference! For example one stated ‘Nothing now could change my mind’. Others were less dogmatic such as Charles Tart who explained ‘(It is) hard to imagine how 50+ years of evidence could be disproven’. On the other hand some could imagine just this. A further 4 (22 per cent) mentioned better evidence that some of the convincing results were in fact artifactual or fraudulent.

Gertrude Schmeidler (P) gives the most picturesque explanation . . .

This is a hard one! All I can think of is the equivalent of the last one of the classical Murphy’s laws—that they weren’t by Murphy, but by another man of the same name.

And John Beloff sets the clearest criterion (surely a challenge to someone!)

‘If a conjuror could perform to my satisfaction the sort of feats attributed to D. D. Home!’

The next question was ‘What do you think we now know about psi?’ Several in each group answered that it is elusive or ‘exists in some furtive form’ (5P 4S 1U), that it only has negative attributes or is an artifact (3P 4S) or that we know little or nothing about it (4P 6S 1U).

An example is Charles Akers (S) who says

We know how easy it is to get psi artifact! We also know that the appearance of psi is somehow dependent on the identity of the testing experimenter. That's about it!

The only difference between the groups was that the Ps were more likely to list specific (positive) things we know about psi (10P 1S,  $X^2 = 10.1$  df,  $p < 0.01$ ). For example one suggested that it works differently in life as opposed to the lab; others that it is affected by experimental variables and psychological variables like belief. In the unclassified group Scott Rogo suggested that we know that it exists, that it is normal to humans and needs the right conditions for people to be able to tap into the ability.

Some Ps implied doubt about the interpretation which should be put on such 'knowledge'. A good example is Martin Johnson who lists some things we know

1. There is an 'experimenter effect' which can be viewed in radically different ways.
2. There is a decline effect.
3. There are anomalies (deviations from chance expectations, not fully understood, which most parapsychologists accept as evidence of psi.)

It seems that everyone is agreed that we have learned rather little but the difference lies in interpretation or in how willing people are to build on the basis of that little knowledge.

Will the controversy over the existence of psi ever be resolved? Most parapsychologists thought it would be (11P 2S) while more sceptics thought it would not (1P 7S 1U). Several in each group (6P 8S 2U) gave more general answers. Many said it would take a very long time or involve only a gradual change in consensus ( $X^2 = 11$ , 2 df,  $p < 0.01$ ).

Gertrude Schmeidler (P) says

If the flat earth society disbands and stays disbanded, then yes, I think the psi controversy will end too.

and James Alcock (S)

I rather doubt it. I expect it to wax and wane with the time. However, I do suspect that (as you, Susan have pointed out), parapsychology may itself become irrelevant as an expanding psychological approach to anomalies robs it of its subject matter. Yet, I believe there will always exist in some quarter the search for 'something more' to life than materialistic science offers.

Some sceptics such as James Randi and Charles Akers pointed out the asymmetry involved in resolving it.

Akers says: Since psi is negatively defined—and represents a very broad class of anomalies (as opposed, for example, to N-rays) there is no possibility for a resolution except by *confirmation* of one or more anomalies. In other words, psi could never be shown *not* to exist.

One might expect that parapsychologists would think their subject had made a greater contribution to scientific knowledge than sceptics. This was not so. Most people thought it had made some contribution, though usually an indirect one. They cited contributions to methodology and statistics (3P 4S 2U) to understanding anomalies (3P) to the sociology and philosophy of science (6P 3S 1u) and to the psychology of belief, deception or self-deception, and experimenter effects (3P 6S 1U).

The contributions were said to be of a rather negative kind such as showing how unreliable statistics can be, in supporting a field with no signal, or pointing up pitfalls in research.

More positive contributions were cited by some parapsychologists (and one U) such as in demonstrating that some measurable phenomena are not mechanistic, undermining materialism, opening up theoretical possibilities or keeping people from too final a view of reality. But the disappointment in some people was obvious.

One explained that the study of paranormal phenomena might have brought about a scientific revolution but that now seems farther away than he once thought it was.

Asked what are the most serious problems facing parapsychology today respondents mentioned the problem of replication (3P 8S 2U), specific research problems (5P 3S 1U) and dealing with cranks, the media and occultism (1p 2s 1u). One sceptic commented on the low competence of current investigators and one P on the difficulty of attracting good minds to work in the field. Ps were more likely than Ss to quote money and funding as a problem (7P,  $X^2 = 8.3$ , 1 df,  $p < 0.01$ ). No sceptics mention funding. One parapsychologist quoted 'universal resistance' and another 'non-acceptance by the scientific community'. One thought that the field was too narrow and another that the methodology does not reflect the subject matter. Harvey Irwin (P) argued (rather like some Ss) that there was 'too much emphasis on proving the paranormality of parapsychological experiences; even if they are not paranormal they warrant research'.

A similar, though perhaps still more sceptical, view is given by parapsychologist Hendrik Boerckamp

'... too much energy of the very restricted number of researchers in parapsychology is invested in lengthy discussions about the existence of psi. ... not in research! ... In my view parapsychology has to invest more energy in explanation (A) as well.'

He explains (A)

The experiences are meaningless coincidences between some internal sensations and external events. (Psi does not exist. Parapsychology needs some kind of a psychological attribution theory, which explains which people attribute paranormal meaning to which experiences under which circumstances.)

How does working on the paranormal affect peoples beliefs? To the question 'How have your beliefs changed during the period of your interest in psi?' only one person (P) claimed it had increased while many (6P 9S) said it had decreased



(tending to disprove Rogo's generalization quoted in the introduction). For example sceptic Michael Dennett explained 'In the beginning I felt that some form of psi had been demonstrated, and that other aspects need to be explained. Then I examined the evidence . . .'. Several respondents (7P 3S 2U) said their beliefs had become more complex as time went on. James Rotton (s) pointed out that any answer he gave would suffer from hindsight distortion. Gertrude Schmeidler (P) says 'From a smug materialism before to a feeling of ignorance—no belief—now'.

The unclassified group are all extremely cautious over this question. One says he will not talk about beliefs, another that 'They have stabilised to a position of well-defined confusion', and the third prefers to 'accept everything—believe nothing'. Scott Rogo says

'Over the years I have been taking a more liberal attitude towards what *might* exist in the world. I wouldn't reject any story concerning the paranormal—no matter how outlandish—as *a priori* impossible. But at the same time, I have grown more and more sceptical of each individual story I hear. I think these two non-contradictory attitudes balance each other nicely, and they certainly keep me from becoming bored!'

Although no sceptics claimed their belief in psi had increased over the years, many cited positive changes in attitude. Three claimed that their respect for parapsychologists had increased. For example Ray Hyman says 'I've become more tolerant of the parapsychological quest'.

James Randi says

'At first, I considered parapsychologists I knew to be either dishonest or incompetent, or both. I have since encountered a number who are dedicated, serious and honest researchers.' He then adds 'Unfortunately, I also find them to be painfully naive, by and large.'

Perhaps the most impressive finding of the whole survey was the devastating effect that Soal's fraud and exposure had upon people in the field—whether initially sceptical or not.

John Beloff (P) explains

'I have come to attach more weight to the historical evidence as against the current laboratory evidence. The demolition of S. G. Soal was a very chastening experience. I have come to regard genuine psi events as probably very rare.'

Sceptic Antony Flew writes

'When I wrote NAPR (*A new approach to physical research*) I was, along with so many of the wise and good, persuaded by Soal's work that there must be something in it. But the discrediting of that work leaves me taking every story of positive results as a miracle story—to be dismissed on the basis of a knowledge that such things are impossible.'

Clearly the uncoverer of Soal's fraud (Markwick, 1978) did not react in the same way although she was obviously affected deeply by it. Betty Markwick (S) explains

'Using sheep-goat terminology, one might say I started off as a black sheep. Then, with the unexpected realization of psi-effects in my own experience, I became increasingly conflicted: simultaneously white sheep and grey goat. Of late, the sheep aspect has become rather off-white!'

Most deeply affected of all was Christopher Scott. He says

'At the start I was a 90 per cent believer (mainly because I could see no way around Soal's evidence). Now I am a 99 per cent disbeliever.'

With respect to his own experiences he writes

'The fact that I wasted so much of my time at University and for about 10 years thereafter on the subject has probably contributed to the element of bitterness in my disillusionment. I really believe that I did my best scientific work (paper "Models for Psi") in this essentially empty field, and I find it hard not to blame Soal for this.'

All the parapsychologists and the unclassified group said they would continue working in the field (even if only peripherally) with the exception of Julie Eisenbud who said 'not unless an interesting new superstar—say a materialization psychic—comes my way. I am not much interested in lab experiments'. Three sceptics said they would not (at least not by choice).

The final question was 'What do you consider is the most fruitful way for research to proceed from here?'. Suggestions included pursuing minor anomalies (1P 1S), abandoning the psi hypothesis (2S) concentrating on spontaneous cases or superstars (2P 1S 1U). One sceptic advocated courses to warn young parapsychologists about the pitfalls of the subject, another suggested getting rid of the 'dead wood' in the field and a third that we should investigate the dramatically successful experimenters.

Christopher Scott argued we ought

'To pin-point the defects in the most "successful" experiments. Better still: to call it a day—close down parapsychology, admitting that there's nothing there.'

There were two obvious differences between the groups. Sceptics were more likely to say that we should work more closely with sceptics and magicians! (2P 7S) while parapsychologists were more likely to suggest new research. Among these were general suggestions for more programmatic research, long term projects, or process oriented and interdisciplinary research. One suggested more focussed and systematic work on PK and another exploration of the relationship of psi to biology and phenomenology. One said 'I think we need a more complete picture of just what range of phenomena we are obligated to explain.'

Scott Rogo (U) lamented

'... that the parapsychologists of today lack the visionary powers of some of the field's historical leaders, who were more capable of asking probing, deep questions about psi and its role in the world.'

## CLUSTER ANALYSIS

There is obviously an artificiality to the grouping made here. Question 10 'Do you think psi exists?' clearly discriminates the two groups very well but other questions are not so clear. To try to discover whether there is any natural grouping on the basis of the answers given to the questions a cluster analysis was performed (using GENSTAT, hierarchical clusters). For each question the many possible types of answers were coded and all respondents put into a yes/no category for each. When question 10 was excluded no clear groupings emerged. In other words, apart from the question of belief in psi, the respondents do not fall naturally into separate groups.

When question 10 is included, one large group emerges consisting (with one exception) entirely of sceptics. The rest of the respondents fall into many small groups, with most Ps remaining ungrouped. Thus it appears that most sceptics form a homogeneous group while the parapsychologists do not.

The groupings show, in a general way, which people have similar responses. These are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Cluster Analysis. Hierarchical Clusters. Level 80.0

GROUP 1	8 Ss, 1 P, 1 U
GROUP 2	ROGO, ROLL, SCHMEIDLER, TART.
GROUP 3	SCOTT, ALCOCK, HYMAN
GROUP 4	EISENBUD + 1 P
UNGROUPED	12 Ps, 1 S, 1 U

## DISCUSSION

From the answers given it seems that there is a great deal of agreement between the sceptics and the parapsychologists. Organizationally there are two groups with only a very few people managing to span them. One consists of people who publish mainly in the sceptical literature. They are not convinced by the evidence for psi, join sceptical organizations and read sceptical writings. The other publish in the parapsychological literature, mostly do find the evidence (at least for some kind of anomaly) convincing, join parapsychological groups and read parapsychological writings.

Other differences are far less obvious. The respondents cannot (by cluster analysis) be divided into clear groups unless their belief in psi is taken into account. Views on some issues are remarkably similar, such as what we now know about psi, what contribution to scientific knowledge has been made by parapsychology and what the problems of the field are. The only real differences involve interpretation and prospects. Parapsychologists are more likely to think the findings indicate something about psi and so be prepared to speculate about its implications. They are more hopeful about resolving the problems especially if more funding were forthcoming. However, many express sceptical views about the notion of psi and are unconvinced by much of the laboratory experimental work.

It seems as though most people agree that the evidence is weak, individual cases often unconvincing and the notion of psi problematic. Some respond to this

by relying more on their own experience or on the breadth of spontaneous cases while not losing their belief that there is something 'paranormal'. Others respond by doubting all the evidence and becoming 'sceptics'.

The stereotypes sometimes held about the 'other' group are not well supported by the evidence. A few parapsychologists appear to hold unshakeable beliefs, that is they claim that nothing in the way of evidence could change their mind about psi. However, most express an open-mindedness and doubt which is common to sceptics too. The sceptics are knowledgeable about research in parapsychology and by no means totally dismissive of all claims. Contrary to the claim of Rogo, parapsychologists (like sceptics) tend to become less inclined to believe in psi after working in the field.

Given the extent of agreement and the very small number of people in the world who have expertise in this field, it is a pity that the two groups remain so well isolated from each other. Obviously each group has much to contribute to the other. I hope that this survey of the opinions and beliefs of those involved may encourage better communication between parapsychologists and sceptics.

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