

AMERICAN VALUES IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Editor's Note: In 1990 and 1991, the Times Mirror Center for The People and The Press conducted a massive study of political attitudes and social values all across Europe. The study culminated with 13,000 hour-long personal interviews done in May of this year in nine European countries, two Soviet Republics and one former Soviet Republic. An additional poll of 1,035 residents of Moscow and St. Petersburg was conducted September 1-3, to measure changes following the failed coup attempt. Many of the surveys' questions were asked in each of the European countries as well as in the United States, the latter as part of the Times Mirror Center's continuing work here.

The result of this immense undertaking is a database containing cross-national information on attitudes and values of great scope and richness. Donald S. Kellermann is director of the Times Mirror Center. Andrew Kohut is the director of surveys. Public Perspective hopes to publish in the future articles and analysis that explore the surveys' many findings in greater depth.

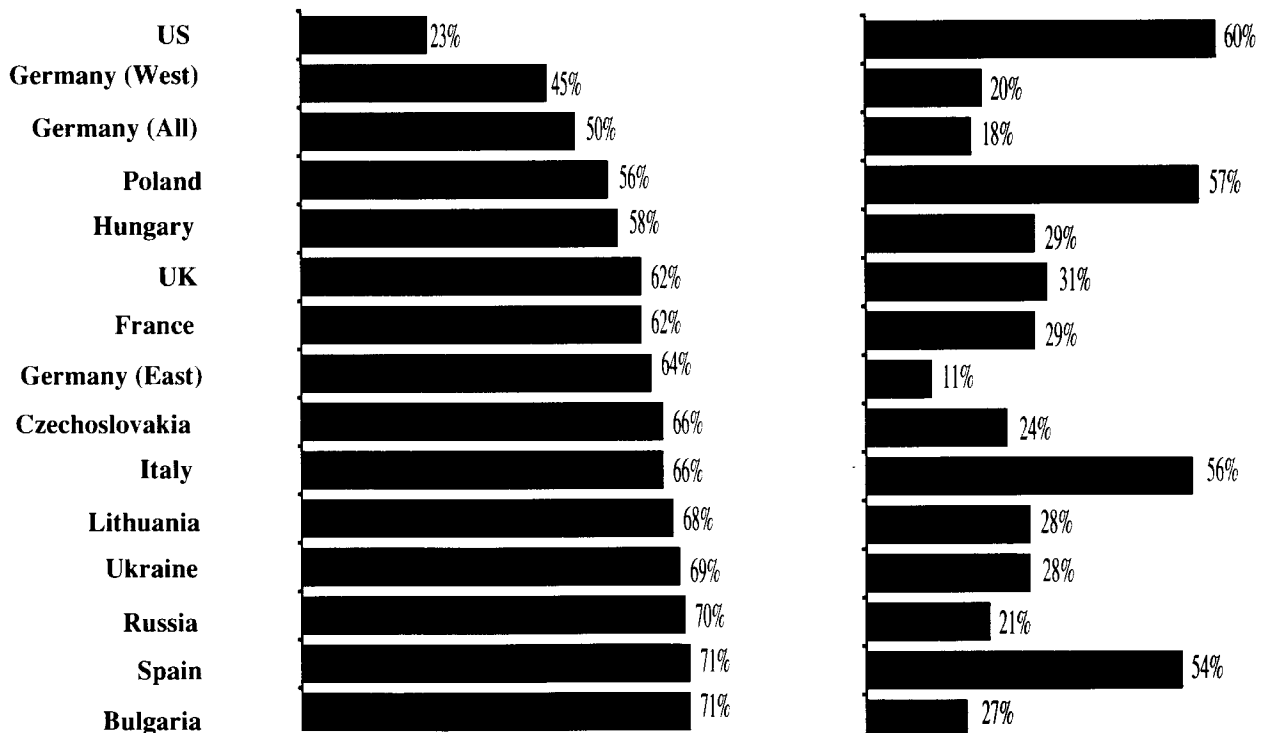
We were struck at once, though, by the evidence the surveys presented not only of continuing differences among the diverse nations of Europe, but also of the extent to which American attitudes and values remain in many important ways entirely distinct from those of any European tradition. The American ideology of liberal individualism continues to shape public responses here which place special emphasis on the needs and possibilities of individual action or initiative. As a corollary, while Americans favor more government than they did in the past, they look to the state less than the citizens of any of the European countries surveyed. These Times Mirror Center findings parallel and reiterate those of work done for the International Social Survey Program, under the general direction of the National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago.

Many observers have noted that, religiously, the US does not behave as it "should," given its stage of "postindustrial" development. We contradict the common experience that countries of high scientific, technological, and industrial development manifest declining belief in traditional religious values and declining participation in church life, prayer, and other religious activities. The new Times Mirror Center surveys add powerful confirmation of Seymour Martin Lipset's observation [THE FIRST NEW NATION, Doubleday Anchor Books, 1967, pp. 170-1] that "the one empirical generalization which does seem justified about American religion is that from the early nineteenth century down to the present, the United States has been among the most religious countries in the world."

Percentages saying they "COMPLETELY AGREE"*

**"It is the responsibility of the state [in the US, asked
"the government"] to take care of very poor people
who can't take care of themselves."**

"I never doubt the existence of God."

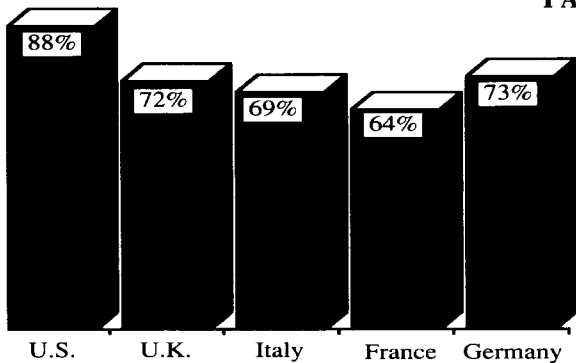


*In the pages which follow, the "completely agree" and the "mostly agree" responses, and the "completely disagree" and "mostly disagree" responses, have been combined. Note that here, in contrast, only the "completely agree" proportions are shown.

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NATIONAL IDEAS: AMERICANS ARE PATRIOTIC, INDIVIDUALISTIC

"I AM VERY PATRIOTIC"



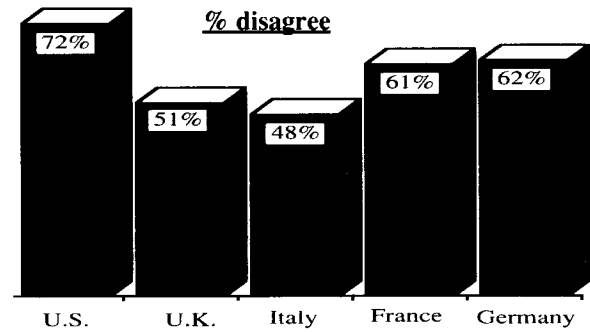
% agree

Responses of the Young and those with High Incomes

	U.S.	U.K.	Italy	France	Germany
18-24 years of age	82%	57%	60%	44%	54%
High income	90	75	57	61	72

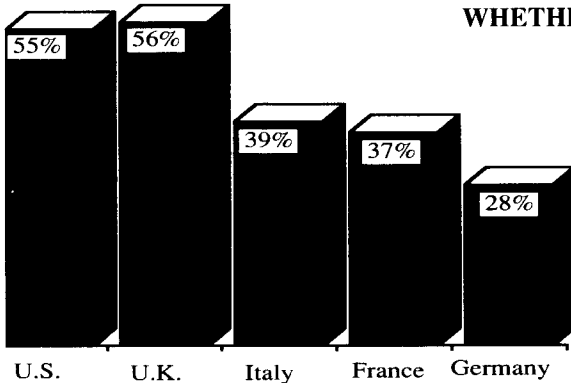
***High income includes the top income quartile in each country.**

"I DON'T HAVE MUCH IN COMMON WITH PEOPLE OF OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS AND RACES"



Note: For the U.S., question reads: ...I don't have much in common with people of other races.

"WE SHOULD ALL BE WILLING TO FIGHT FOR OUR COUNTRY, WHETHER IT IS RIGHT OR WRONG"

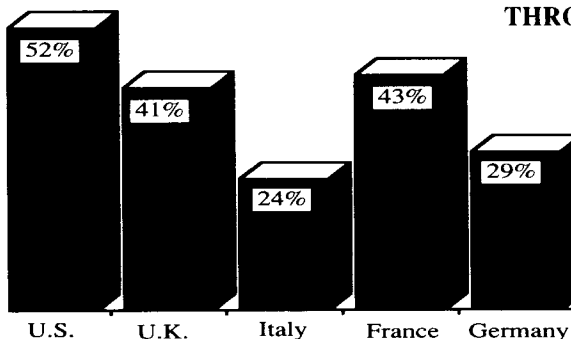


% agree

Responses by Gender

	U.S.	U.K.	Italy	France	Germany
Men	60%	55%	37%	33%	28%
Women	51	57	41	40	28

"THE BEST WAY TO ENSURE PEACE IS THROUGH MILITARY STRENGTH"



% agree

Responses by Age

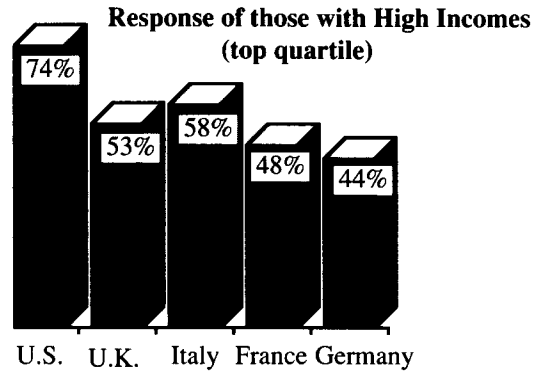
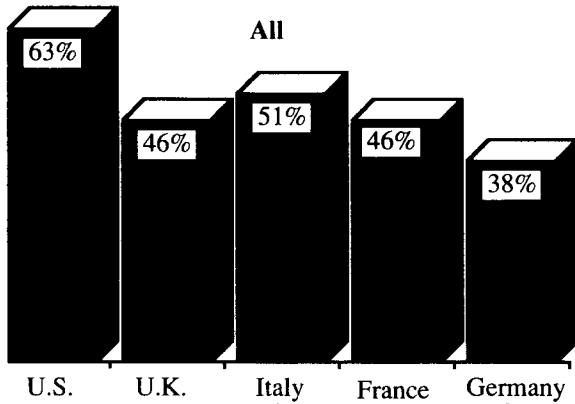
	U.S.	U.K.	Italy	France	Germany
18-24 years of age	44%	31%	15%	30%	23%
25-39	44	33	15	39	21
40-59	56	48	23	43	37
60+	62	51	39	55	32

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THE [CLASSICAL] LIBERAL TRADITION

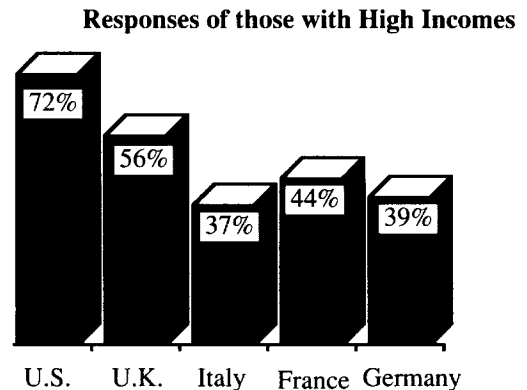
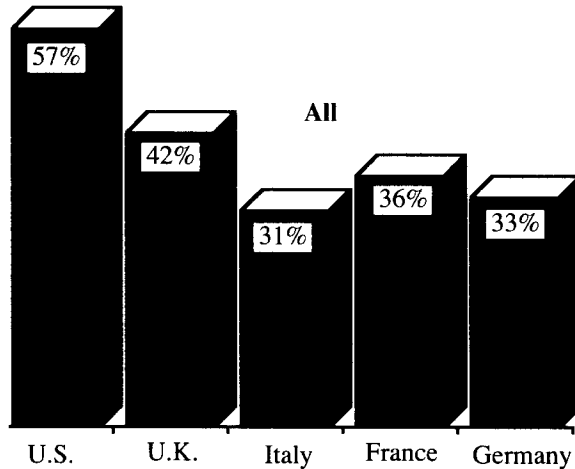
"HARD WORK OFFERS LITTLE GUARANTEE OF SUCCESS"

% disagree



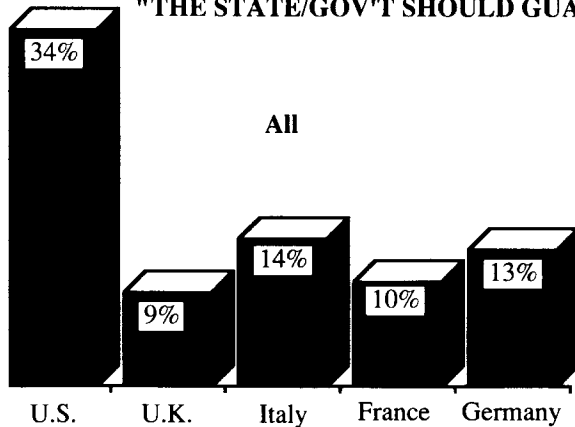
"SUCCESS IN LIFE IS PRETTY MUCH DETERMINED BY FORCES OUTSIDE OUR CONTROL"

% disagree



"THE STATE/GOV'T SHOULD GUARANTEE EVERY CITIZEN FOOD AND BASIC SHELTER"

% disagree



Responses by Age

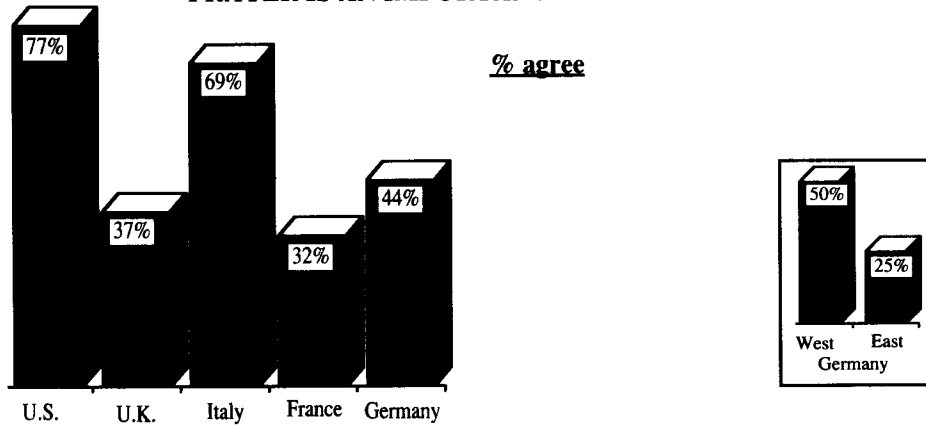
	U.S.	U.K.	Italy	France	Germany
18-24 years of age	25%	3%	13%	4%	10%
25-39	32	8	14	9	12
40-59	39	11	15	12	17
60+	36	12	13	10	13

Note: In the U.S., respondents were asked about "the government" rather than "the state."

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RELIGIOUS AMERICA: STILL A BIG EXCEPTION

"PRAYER IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF MY DAILY LIFE"

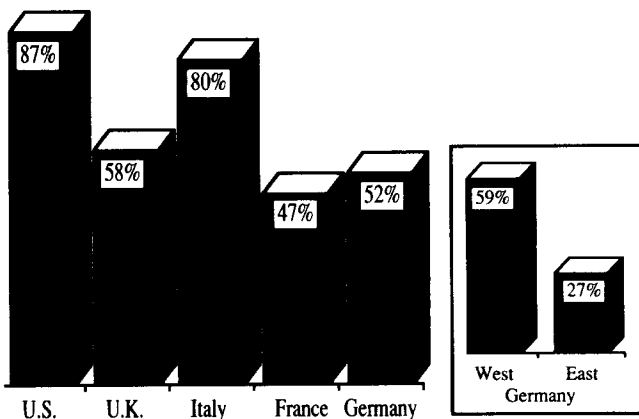


Responses of the Young, Men and Women,
and High Income People

	U.S.	U.K.	Italy	France	Germany
18-24 years of age	65%	24%	59%	21%	31%
Men	70	27	61	24	36
Women	84	46	78	38	52
High Income	69	34	55	26	40

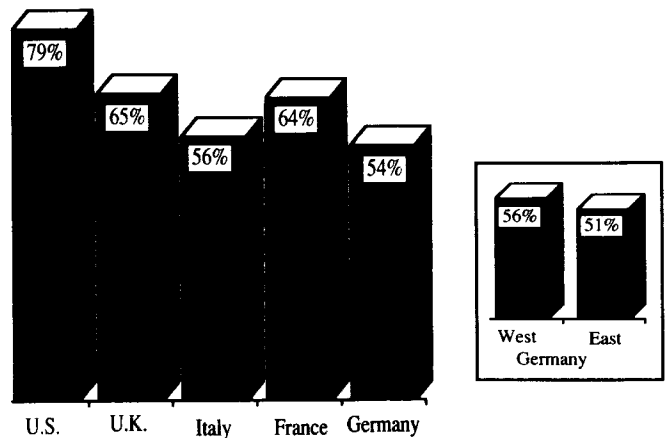
"I NEVER DOUBT THE
EXISTENCE OF GOD"

% agree



"THERE ARE CLEAR GUIDELINES
ABOUT WHAT IS GOOD OR EVIL"

% agree



Note: For the U.S., question reads: ...There are clear guidelines about what's good or evil that apply to everyone regardless of their situation.