

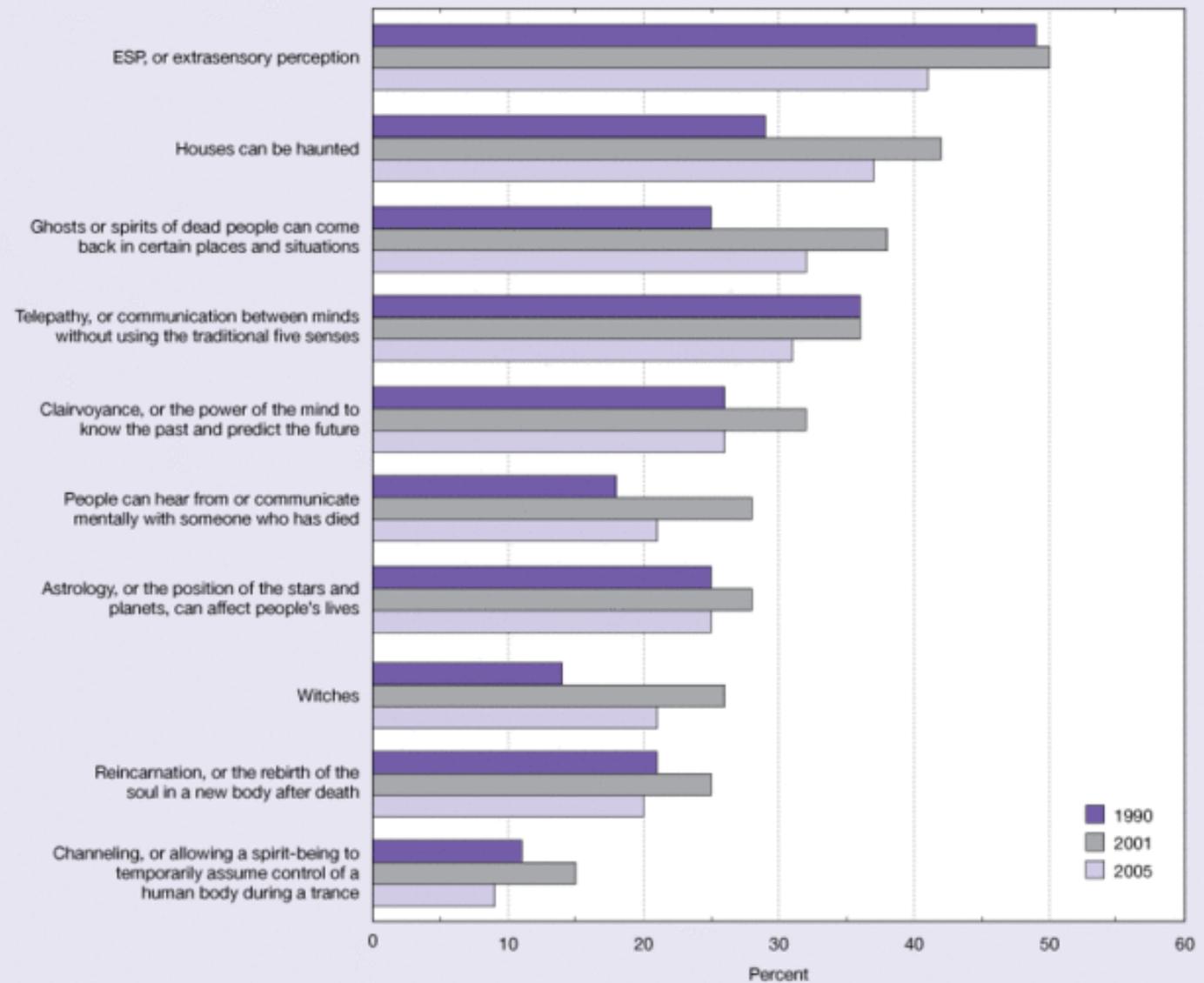


# SUPERNATURALISM (part I)

Halloween has come and gone again. It is perhaps the most superstition-ridden of our holidays. But most of our traditional holidays have roots in superstition and, especially, in astrology. And, as silly as it is, astrology continues to have a following. Gallup polls have shown that roughly 25% of

Americans agree that "the position of the stars and planets can affect people's lives." The same surveys show that about 75% of Americans believe in one or another paranormal claims from "psychic powers" to reincarnation to ghosts and witches. (see below) And a 2013 survey by YouGov (not shown) found

Figure 7-8  
**Belief in paranormal phenomena: 1990, 2001, and 2005**



SOURCE: D.W. Moore, Three in four Americans believe in paranormal, *Gallup Poll News Service* (16 June 2005), <http://www.gallup.com/poll/content/default.aspx?ci=16915>.

Science and Engineering Indicators 2006

that about half of Americans believe in “the devil” and demon possession.

We may speculate on these facts. After all, there are no institutions that systematically promote belief in the paranormal in the way traditional religions promote god-belief and its trappings. On the other hand, the entertainment industry steadily produces movies and TV shows that feature the paranormal. Even in “science fiction” we see “Vulcan mind melds” and adepts who are in tune with “the force.” There is much speculation on the psychological factors that lead people to “explain” a wide variety of things with “magical thinking.”

Princeton social psychologist Sander van der Linden, for example, writing for Scientific American\*, discusses investigations into how cognitive thinking styles, especially “intuitive” as compared to “reflective,” influence people’s beliefs in the supernatural. For example, consider the question: “if a baseball and a bat cost \$1.10 and the bat costs \$1 more than the ball, how much does the ball cost?” The intuitive answer is 10 cents. But on more careful reflection it is realized that the correct answer is 5 cents, as 5 cents plus \$1.05 = \$1.10. People who rely more on intuitive styles have been found to be more apt to accept paranormal explanations for “weird” experiences. Such people also more readily accept conspiracy theories and fall victim to the “conjunction fallacy,” an error in reasoning where it is assumed that specific conditions are more probable than a general one.

There are more troubling consequences of uncritical thinking styles. Van der Linden’s work found that having people watch a two minute conspiracy video clip significantly reduced their acceptance of science as well as civic engagement and even their likelihood to volunteer for or donate to charities in the following six months. Encouragingly, other studies showed that priming people to think more analytically reduced their susceptibility to belief in conspiracy theories.

\* <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-come-some-people-believe-in-the-paranormal/>

**YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS  
TO THE NTCOF ARE NEEDED,  
APPRECIATED,  
AND TAX-DEDUCTIBLE!!**

**All NTCOF events can be found through our website calendar , or our meetup page, from which you can RSVP, at:**

**- [www.meetup.com/church-of-freethought](http://www.meetup.com/church-of-freethought) - JOIN THE NTCOF MEETUP GROUP !!!**

**Social Luncheon:** Today, immediately after our Service, join us for lunch and discussion at the Jason’s Deli on MacArthur Blvd just south of 635, at 7707 N MacArthur Blvd, phone (972) 432-0555.

**Freethought Salon:** Discuss today’s service topic or other conundrums of interest. It happens most non-first Sundays of the month, over breakfast, at the Hilton DFW Lakes Hotel restaurant “The Vineyard” - inside the hotel - in Grapevine beginning 10:30 AM.

**Game Night:** Nearly every Friday night at the IHOP on 2310 Stemmons Trail (I-35), near Northwest Highway (Loop 12). Plan to arrive at about 7:30 PM, and stay late playing Le Havre, Carcassonne, and other fun games!

**Freethought Book Club January 14, 2017 5:30 pm,** THE BOOK: Good without God by Greg Epstein, Humanist Chaplain at Harvard University Location: Farina’s Winery on Main Street in Grapevine

**Communitas Dinner Group: (To be Announced)**  
**Have Another Idea?** Email or call! Read bulletins & presentations and post on the FORUM at [www.churchoffreethought.org](http://www.churchoffreethought.org) LIKE US at [www.facebook.com/northtexaschurchoffreethought/](http://www.facebook.com/northtexaschurchoffreethought/) and sign up for our Twitter feed at [twitter.com/ntcof](http://twitter.com/ntcof) !

**PLANNED FOR NEXT MONTH:  
“MERRY MYTHMAS!”  
Seasonal Thinking/Feeling  
> Sunday, December 4, 2016 <  
COMFORT INN DFW AIRPORT NORTH  
(Take the Freeport Parkway exit, then the frontage road east just past Best Western;  
starts at 10:30 but come early for coffee,  
snacks - you can bring! - and conversation)**

The North Texas Church of Freethought  
The Fellowship of Unbelievers

Pastor (It’s a Job Description, NOT a title!)	Tim Gorski
Presenters	Tim Gorski
Social Media Czar	Aaron Kelton
Book Club Lord	Nirav Assar
Welcome Coordinator	Mark Barnick
Videographer:	John Gauthier
WebPage/Management	Saturn Consulting

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