



What Brings Us Together:

Landmark Study Shows that Americans Have More in Common than they Think

POINT REYES STATION, CALIFORNIA

You hold in your hands the first executive briefing of a groundbreaking research study of American values, attitudes, and beliefs. Its analysis of eight American types offers startling insight into our society. The information gathered in this large-scale study is the result of two years of intensive work carried out by an accomplished, professional research team. The *In Our Own Words 2000 Research Program (IOOW)* is designed to contribute to national and global unity and healing. The current research demonstrates a profound sense of connection that is shared by the diverse population of Americans.

The landmark research undertaken by *IOOW 2000* suggests many ways in which our society may be approaching a turning point in its development. An ever-increasing proportion of the population is embracing a more encompassing understanding of themselves, a deeper spiritual awareness, a universal connectedness, and a belief in working toward a greater common good.

The *IOOW* study examines key values, attitudes, and beliefs concerning forgiveness and tolerance, ethics and leadership, compassion and service, expectations for the next decade, technology,

media, healthcare, and other vital contemporary concerns. The study identifies many key issues of strategic importance to all of American society and to individuals in positions of leadership in all sectors. Questions and statements to which the study's 1,600 interviewees were asked to respond include:

- "Which of the following is the greatest threat to the future of the world?" (Natural disaster; World war; Terrorism; Disease epidemic; Economic collapse; Something else—describe).
- "I believe that helping those in need is one of the most important things nations can do within the global community."
- "If we could forgive and reconcile all our past hurts and conflicts, we could all accomplish so much more."
- "We should be tolerant of all lifestyles and groups even if we don't like what they do."
- "It is important to teach our children to feel a connection to the earth, people, and all life."
- "I am concerned that humanity is headed for serious problems and disasters in the next 10 years."
- "Over the next 10 years, I believe that life will go on much the same way as it always has, but with small or minor improvements."
- "Over the next 10 years, social and spiritual awakening will make the world a better place to live."
- "I prefer watching television programs or films that have positive or 'uplifting' themes."

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- “Thinking about your overall emotional life, are you currently experiencing any serious problems with your emotional relations?”
- “At any time in your life, have you ever lived in a place that was a war zone or [involved in] armed conflict, or have you been at some point a combatant?”
- “Do you attend church services or other meetings of a religious organization?”
- “I follow the teachings of a specific spiritual or religious leader.”
- “Whether we recognize it or not, we all just want to connect to God or a higher spiritual consciousness.”
- “Whether I am aware of it or not, I believe that God or a higher spiritual consciousness is present everywhere.”
- “Do you feel the need in your life to experience spiritual growth?”
- “Our earth is a unique kind of living organism and as a whole system is fundamentally alive.”
- “Underneath it all, we're all connected as one.”
- “I prefer that the politicians I vote for hold higher and more evolved moral and ethical values than my own.”

In times of great uncertainty, individuals and nations can momentarily forget that, as sentient beings, we are all part of something much greater than our own selves. America is a society whose strength is based in part on the hopes and aspirations of humanity that arise from a deep longing for enlightenment and compassion. We have the potential to show the world new ways of being that transcend conflict and retribution. Much has been accomplished in little more than two centuries of nationhood. What choices will Americans make to tap our enormous potential? One choice is to work consciously and resolutely to create a positive, compassionate, and enlightened future, and to demonstrate new ways in which human society can evolve.

As a greater whole, can humanity forgive and reconcile the differences that lead to tragic conflict? *IOOW 2000* research demonstrates ways humanity can find within its collective heart the courage to recognize and embrace not only a greater truth but a greater good and in so doing end old patterns of separation and conflict. Recognizing the universal context of the interconnection of all life and consciousness can allow humankind to become wise stewards of ourselves as a species and of this planet as a whole.

IOOW 2000 research also shows that the sense of sacred interconnectedness is surprisingly unrelated in this country to whether a person identifies with organized religion or religious practice.

The *In Our Own Words 2000 Research Program* brings to light values, attitudes, and beliefs that have long been implicit in our way of life. Now, more than ever, these core values need to be supported and brought to the forefront of daily life. The sponsors of this study, a nondenominational non-profit organization, hope that many U.S. organizations and policy-making bodies will be guided by the inspiring insights of the American public that are given voice to in this study.

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