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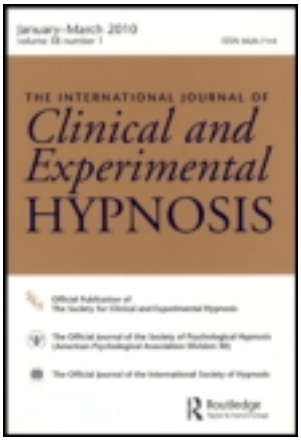

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Belgian Norms for the Waterloo-Stanford Group C (WSGC) Scale of Hypnotic Susceptibility

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BELGIAN NORMS FOR THE WATERLOO-STANFORD GROUP C (WSGC) SCALE OF HYPNOTIC SUSCEPTIBILITY[1]

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Abstract: Belgian norms of the Waterloo-Stanford Group C Scale of Hypnotic Susceptibility (WSGC) are presented. A French translation of the WSGC was administered to 150 Belgium college students between October and December 2009. Belgium has 2 main linguistic groups, Dutch and French speakers. The present translation was conceived for all French-speaking populations. Score distribution, item analysis, and reliability of the WSGC are presented and compared to the normative sample of the WSGC. The results were also compared with 2 North American norms (University of Connecticut and Seton Hall University) and a Portuguese (translated) norm. The findings show that normative data from the French (Belgium) sample are in line with the reference samples. The only significant difference was the lower proportion of participants scoring within the high range of hypnotic suggestibility on the WSGC.

Hypnosis has been used for several centuries, and probably for several thousand years as a way of controlling one's internal and

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external states. Hypnotism was practiced during numerous medicinal practices and rituals (Cardeña & Krippner, 2010).

More recently, hypnosis has also been the focus of intense research and debate. Its use in the field of cognitive sciences and in experimental and clinical psychology has showed how important it may be as a tool to understand human behavior and its neural underpinnings. An important aspect of research on hypnosis is the screening of participants' hypnotic suggestibility to determine the extent to which a person is prone, or not, to be hypnotized. This has resulted in the development of scales for the reliable measurement of hypnotic susceptibility. Although the obvious limitations of such instruments as an estimate of the full range of hypnotic susceptibility have been criticized (Kirsch, 1997; Kirsch & Braffman, 2001; Woody, 1997), they nevertheless constitute good and helpful tools for the preliminary screening of participants for research purposes. The "gold standard" of this type of instrument is the Stanford Hypnotic Susceptibility Scale, Form C (SHSS:C) conceived by Weitzenhoffer and Hilgard in 1962. The SHSS:C has been translated into several languages, and normative data have been reported for various countries, including Germany (Bongartz, 1985), Spain (Lamas, de Valle-Inclán, & Díaz, 1996), Portugal (Carvalho, Kirsch, Mazzoni, & Leal, 2008), Italy (De Pascalis, Bellusci, & Russo, 2000), the Netherlands (Näring, Roelofs, & Hoogduin, 2001), and Mexico (Sánchez-Armáss & Barabasz, 2005). However, the SHSS:C has some limitations, such as the fact that it involves an hour-long individual administration, which can be challenging in experimental research. To overcome these limitations, the Waterloo-Stanford Group Scale of Hypnotic Susceptibility, Form C (WSGC), was developed by Bowers (1993, 1998) as a group adaptation of the SHSS:C. The essential difference between the individual and the group scales is that in the group scale, participants are asked to complete a response booklet at the end of the testing session. The purpose of the group scale is to make it possible to test a greater number of participants. Through factorial analysis of the WSGC, Sadler and Woody (2004b) showed that the scale seems to approach the psychometric ideal of unidimensionality. The reliability of the WSGC is indicated by an internal consistency coefficient of .80 in one sample and of .81 in another, as reported by Bowers (1993). Bowers (1993) also demonstrated the validity of the WSGC through high correlations with the SHSS:C ($r = .85$) and with the Harvard Group Scale of Hypnotic Susceptibility, Form A (HGSHS:A; Shor & Orne, 1962) ($r = .77$).

Although the HGSHS:A group scale is probably the most widely used measure of hypnotizability, we have chosen the WSGC group scale because of the better quality of the item set that includes a wider range of items that tap cognitive as well as positive and negative hallucinations, thus avoiding the exclusive emphasis on motor items found in HGSHS:A (Moran, Kurtz, & Strube, 2002).

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Being so, we are aware that group susceptibility scales represent evident problems (Bowers, 1993; Cardeña & Terhune, 2009; Kurtz & Strube, 1996; McConkey & Sheehan, 1982; Register & Kihlstrom, 1986), but we also estimate that a standardized, group-administered, and self-scored measure yields substantial savings on expenditure of time and effort in testing large numbers of research participants.

This article presents normative data for a French translation of the WGSHS and its psychometric properties. The results are compared with the data of the standardization normative study and with one translation and two others samples. Dr. Erik Z. Woody made the referenced original data available and it was the same data used in the standardization study. This sample consisted of 272 subjects (instead of the 259 in Bower's study) and it was gathered in the standardization study. The author used the same data in his publication "Four Decades of Group Hypnosis Scales: What Does Item-Response Theory Tell Us About What We've Been Measuring?" published in *The International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis* in 2004 (see Sadler & Woody, 2004a). Some of this data were presented in the symposium, "Hypnosis: Investigation and Explanation in Contemporary Psychology" at the 27th International Congress of Psychology in Stockholm, July 2000. The other studies were used as reference comparisons.

Method

Participants

A French translation of the WGSHS was administered to 154 subjects. Of these, 4 submitted incomplete protocols (they failed to fill out or only partially filled out the response booklet). Thus, the sample was composed of 150 subjects among which 129 were female (86%) and 21 were male (14%). The ranging age was from 17 to 31 for almost all subjects and from 38 to 63 for 4 subjects. One hundred and thirty subjects (87%) were first-year psychology students who volunteered in exchange for experimental credits (ULB psychology students have to accumulate a certain number of hours of participation in psychology experiments) and 20 subjects (13%) were nonpsychology students. Participants were recruited through an ad inviting them to participate in a "group hypnosis session." Three information sessions were given to the interested students: These consisted of a brief explanation of what hypnosis is (and what it is not). We then answered some questions about hypnosis. Only a small percentage of participants had any previous experience with hypnosis (4 subjects or 2.6%). Participants had to register to take part in a session. The testing sessions were

scheduled either during a weekday or on a Saturday. Sixteen sessions were organized, each involving a maximum of 13 students.

Materials

The WSGC was translated into French by the second author, who is a professional hypnotherapist and who has accrued experience conducting experimental research on hypnosis. The French (Belgium) translation stays as close as possible from the original version. It is fully understandable to French speakers. The following validation test was carried out to assess the distance between the translation and the original version: A random part of the translation was given to a French-English bilingual expert who had not read the original text, and who translated it back to English. We then compared the original and translated English and found them to be very close, thus comforting us about the validity of the translation.

Procedure

The sessions were all administered in lecture rooms. Participants were seated on simple chairs, placed in a half circle in front of the authors. When entering the room each participant could sit on the chair of his or her choice. On the ground and in front of each chair, the response booklet was placed on a clipboard with a pen. The booklet was turned over, showing a blank page. In the testing room, a portable music player was already installed, arranged so that it was easily noticeable, and with the electrical cable plugged in. All participants were administered the French version of the WSGC. All sessions were conducted by one of the two authors. A very brief explanation was first given, merely pointing out that the participants were here for an experiment on hypnosis, and that the author will be reading aloud the text of the test so as to be as accurate as possible. The French version was then read aloud, exactly in the same order as in the original version. After the administration of the scale, participants were asked to fill out the response booklet, as instructed in the original procedure. Finally, participants could ask questions and make comments in front of the group or individually with one of the authors.

The scoring of the response booklets followed the procedure described by Kenneth S. Bowers (1998). Participants received a score of 1 if they had marked Option A (indicating an experienced behavioral change for a given suggestion) and a 0 if Option B was marked (indicating that the behavioral change was not experienced). Amnesia was scored as 1 if the subject recalled fewer than 4 out of 12 items before the amnesia was lifted and more than three other items after amnesia removal.

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Results and Discussion

Score Distribution

The mean and the standard deviation for the French (Belgium) and original Waterloo samples are presented in Table 1, together with the data from three reference samples from the University of Connecticut, Portugal, and Seton Hall University. The mean score of the French (Belgium) sample is the lowest compared to the reference samples, $t(422) = 3.68$, $p = .001$, but the magnitude of the difference was small (standardized mean difference = 0.32).

The French (Belgium) sample presents a slightly more nonsymmetrical distribution towards the left compared with the original sample (sk = 0.13; $z = 0.68$ in the French sample, sk = .039; $z = 0.26$ in the Waterloo sample) and both sample distributions presented a negative Kurtosis (ku = −.762; $z = -1.93$, in the French sample and ku= −.833; $z = -2.83$, in the Waterloo sample), meaning that both samples shows a platykurtic distribution (relatively wide peak and thin tails, compared with the normal distribution).

The Shapiro-Wilks test indicated that hypnotic suggestibility scores were not distributed normally in either sample (French: $W = .96$; $p < .001$; Waterloo: $W = .97$; $p < .0001$).

Figure 1 shows the distribution of scores in the French (Belgium) sample, the Waterloo sample, and the three reference samples. Frequencies and percentages of participants at each score of the WSGC for each sample are presented in Table 2. The five samples present similar distributions. However, significantly fewer participants in the French (Belgium) sample score in the high range (9–12) of hypnotic suggestibility than in the Waterloo sample ($z = 3.67$; $p < .001$). This means that there is a significant difference in subjects with a high score in the French (Belgium) sample compared to the reference sample.

The difference between male and female participants on the total score, $t(150) = 0.68$, $p = .50$, shows no significant difference. This

Table 1
Sample Size, Mean, and Standard Deviation From the French (ULB), Waterloo, and Three Reference Samples

	Population (*N*)	Mean	Standard Deviation (*SD*)
French (ULB)	150	4.84	2.15
University of Waterloo	272	5.88	3.06
Seton Hall University	226	5.95	2.62
University of Connecticut	926	5.75	2.95
Portugal	625	5.47	2.34

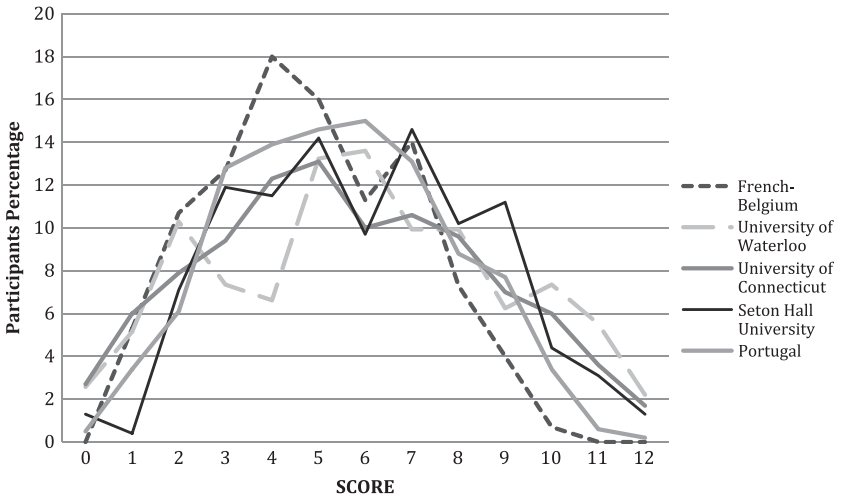

Figure 1. **Score distribution in the WSGC in the French (ULB) sample, North American, and reference samples.**

indicates that there is no significant difference between men and women (standardized mean difference = 0.34). The mean scores were 4.89 ($SD = 2.13$) for females and 4.52 ($SD = 2.31$) for males. Pearson's chi-square test was used as well as Fisher's exact test when appropriate. An analysis was performed, item per item, and the results revealed no difference between men and women.

A comparison of the score distribution within participants showed no difference between psychology undergraduate students and external participants (nonpsychology undergraduate students), $t(150) = -0.534$, $p = .50$.

Item Analysis

Table 3 shows the percentage of participants passing each of the WSGC items in the French and the four reference samples. The pattern of item difficulty is similar in all samples (see Figure 2). Rank-order correlations were calculated between the passage rate of the French (Belgium) sample and the reference samples. Highly significant correlations were found (using the Kendal, Spearman, and Pearson correlations) between the Belgium ULB (French translation) and the Waterloo samples, $r_k = .86$, $p = <.001$; $r_s = .94$, $p = <.001$; $r_p = .95$, $p = <.001$, between the Belgium and the Portuguese samples, $r_k = .80$, $p = <.001$; $r_s = .92$, $p = <.001$; $r_p = .93$, $p = <.001$, between the Belgium and the Seton Hall University samples (the North American sample used

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Table 2
Frequencies (and Percentages) of Participants at Each Score of WSGC in the French (ULB–Belgium), Waterloo, and Reference Samples

	French (ULB)		University of Waterloo		University of Connecticut		Seton Hall University		Portugal	
Scale Score	*N*°	%	*N*°	%	*N*°	%	*N*°	%	*N*°	%
0	0	0.0	7	2.57	25	2.7	3	1.3	3	.5
1	8	5.3	14	5.15	56	6.0	1	.4	21	3.4
2	16	10.7	28	10.29	74	7.9	16	7.1	38	6.1
3	19	12.7	20	7.35	88	9.4	27	11.9	80	12.8
4	27	18.0	18	6.62	115	12.3	26	11.5	87	13.9
5	24	16.0	36	13.24	122	13.1	32	14.2	91	14.6
6	17	11.3	37	13.60	93	10.0	22	9.7	94	15.0
7	21	14.0	27	9.93	99	10.6	33	14.6	82	13.1
8	11	7.3	27	9.93	90	9.6	23	10.2	55	8.8
9	6	4.0	17	6.25	65	7.0	23	11.2	48	7.7
10	1	.7	20	7.35	56	6.0	10	4.4	20	3.4
11	0	0.0	15	5.51	34	3.6	7	3.1	4	.6
12	0	0.0	6	2.21	16	1.7	3	1.3	1	.2
High (9–12)	7	4.7	58	21.32	171	18.3	43	19	74	11.8
Medium (4–8)	100	66.7	145	53.31	519	55.6	136	60.2	409	65.4
Low (0–3)	43	28.7	69	25.37	243	26	47	20.8	142	22.7

Note. *N*° = Number of cases; % = Percentages of cases.

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Table 3
Item Difficulty for the French, North American, and Reference Samples (Percentage Passing)

Items[a]	French sample (ULB–Belgium)	University of Waterloo	University of Connecticut	Seton Hall University	Portugal
Hand Lowering	88	88	76	74	74
Moving Hands together	70	69	78	78	71
Mosquito Hallucination	26	38	38	43	32
Taste Hallucination	29	55	45	53	52
Arm Rigidity	67	60	70	71	80
Hypnotic Dream	29	44	37	50	34
Harm Immobilization	54	55	57	60	64
Age Regression	50	61	50	44	55
Music Hallucination	4	15	14	21	12
Negative Visual Hallucination	13	24	33	30	25
Posthypnotic Suggestion	30	41	46	39	30
Amnesia	23	37	30	32	19

[a]Items are listed by order of administration.

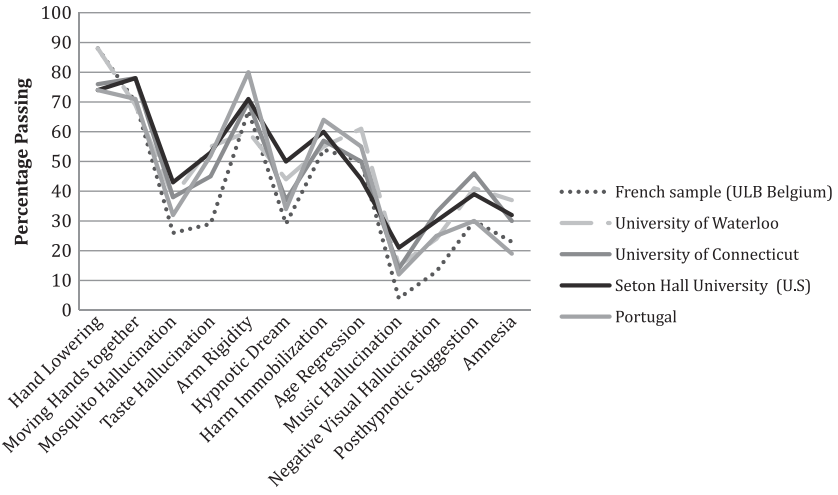

Figure 2. **Pattern of item difficulty for the French (ULB) and the reference samples.**

by Claudia Carvalho et al. [2008] as their reference sample), $r_k = .80$, $p = <.001$; $r_s = .91$, $p = <.001$; $r_p = .92$, $p = <.001$, and between the Belgium and the University of Connecticut samples, $r_k = .90$, $p = <.001$; $r_s = .97$, $p = <.001$; $r_p = .96$, $p = <.001$. This high correlation indicates that the relative difficulty of suggestions is comparable across the French (Belgium), Waterloo, and reference samples.

Reliability

Corrected item-total correlations (i.e., the correlation of each item of the scale and the total score minus the contribution of that item) for all five samples are presented in Table 4. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was .82 in the Belgium sample and .79 in the Waterloo sample.

Discussion

Overall, Belgian (French native speakers) participants scored significantly lower than North American and Canadian participants, but the magnitude of the difference was small ($SD = 0.32$). However, our Belgian (French-speaking) sample presents a weak proportion of participants scoring in the high range of hypnotic suggestibility (WSGC scores 9–12). Several hypotheses can be spelled out about the determinants of this difference. First, it may be the case that there are cultural differences between North America and Latin Europe that can explain response differences to certain ways of presenting a participant, for

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Table 4
Item-Total Correlation for the French (ULB–Belgium), Waterloo, and Reference Samples

	Corrected Item-Total Correlation[b]				
Items[a]	French sample (ULB)	University of Waterloo	University of Connecticut	Seton Hall University	Portugal
Hand Lowering	.26	.24	.29	.19	.17
Moving Hands together	.41	.39	.32	.10	.17
Mosquito Hallucination	.55	.49	.47	.36	.38
Taste Hallucination	.54	.46	.46	.47	.36
Arm Rigidity	.58	.55	.46	.31	.25
Hypnotic Dream	.32	.35	.44	.42	.35
Harm Immobilization	.54	.45	.38	.21	.25
Age Regression	.60	.57	.48	.40	.43
Music Hallucination	.42	.31	.35	.32	.23
Negative Visual Hallucination	.44	.46	.50	.41	.24
Posthypnotic Suggestion	.47	.35	.34	.19	.12
Amnesia[c]	.51	.49	.41	.36	.25

[a]Items are listed by order of administration.
[b]Calculated correlating each item with the entire scale minus the item.
[c]Amnesia criteria used is the one proposed by Bowers (1998) of remembering three or less items before cancellation of suggestion and three or more items after cancellation of suggestion.

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example, the possible links between feeling comfortable and feeling either heavy or light. Second, Sadler and Woody (2004b) also point out that differences in hypnotic suggestibility scores across studies can be an artifact produced by lab differences (the chairs that are used, the amount of environmental noise during the testing, etc.). Responding to hypnotic suggestions is determined by a number of factors, including involvement in suggestion-related imaginings, but also subjects' attitudes, beliefs, situational expectancies (Kirsch & Council, 1992), and expectations concerning hypnosis. The relative salience and potency of these multiple determinants of hypnotic responding may well vary across cultures (Jacquith, Rhue, Lynn, & Seevaratnam, 1996). Thus, although participants' responsivity to hypnosis may be comparable across disparate cultures, the cultural context appears to play a role in shaping individual experience of hypnosis.

In summary, the WSGC administered in a French translation is a reliable and credible measure of hypnotic suggestibility, as it gives results that are consistent with the native reference data (Bowers, 1993) as well as with other translated versions. It can, therefore, serve as a valuable tool for initial screening of susceptibility to be hypnotized in French-speaking countries, such as Belgium.

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Belgische Normen der Waterloo-Stanford Gruppe C Skala für Hypnotisierbarkeit

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Abstrakt: Belgische Normen der Waterloo-Stanford Gruppe C Skala für Hypnotisierbarkeit (WSGC) werden präsentiert. Eine französische Übersetzung des WSGC wurde bei 150 belgischen Hochschülern zwischen Oktober und Dezember 2009 angewendet. Belgien hat zwei Hauptsprachgruppen, die Holländisch- und die Französisch-sprechende. Die derzeitige Übersetzung war für alle Französisch-sprechenden Gruppen gedacht. Streuverhalten, Merkmalanalysen und Reliabilität des WSGC werden aufgezeigt und mit der Normalgruppe des WSGC verglichen. Die Ergebnisse wurden auch noch mit zwei nordamerikanischen Normen

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(University of Cennecticut und Seton Hall University) und einer protugiesischen (übersetzten) Norm verglichen. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, das normative Daten aus der französischen (Belgien) Menge der der Referenzmengen gleichgerichtet sind. Der einzige signifikante Unterschied war ein geringerer Anteil an Teilnehmern, die dem WSGC zufolge im höheren Bereich der Hypnotisierbarkeit lagen.

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Normes belges de l'échelle de susceptibilité hypnotique de Waterloo-Stanford, groupe C (WSG : C)

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Résumé: Les auteurs y présentent les normes belges de l'échelle de susceptibilité hypnotique de Waterloo-Stanford, groupe C (WSG : C). Une version française du WSG : C a été administrée à 150 étudiants universitaires entre octobre et décembre 2009. La Belgique compte deux principaux groupes linguistiques : le néerlandais et le français. Cette traduction avait été conçue à l'intention de l'ensemble des populations de langue française. La distribution des résultats, l'analyse des items et la fiabilité du WSG : C y sont présentées et comparées avec l'échantillonnage de référence du WSG : C. Ces résultats ont également été comparés avec ceux de deux normes nord-américaines (celle de l'Université du Connecticut et celle de l'Université Seton Hall) et ceux d'une norme portugaise (traduite de l'anglais). Les résultats montrent que les données normatives de l'échantillon français (belge) correspondent aux échantillons de référence. La seule différence significative était la proportion plus faible de participants ayant obtenu des résultats élevés de suggestibilité hypnotique à l'échelle WSG : C.

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Normas belgas de la Escala Grupal C Waterloo-Stanford de Susceptibilidad Hipnótica (WSGC)

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Resumen: Se presentan datos normativos belgas de la Escala Grupal C Waterloo-Stanford de Susceptibilidad Hipnótica (WSGC). Se administró una traducción francesa de la WSGC a 150 estudiantes universitarios belgas entre Octubre y Diciembre del 2009. Bélgica tiene dos grupos lingüísticos principales, holando- y francoparlantes. La presente traducción se concibió para todas las poblaciones francoparlantes. La distribución de puntuaciones, el análisis de reactivos, y la fiabilidad de la WSGC se presentan y comparan con la muestra normativa del WSGC. Los resultados también se comparan con dos muestras Norte Americanas (Universidad de Connecticut y la Universidad Seton Hall) y una (traducción) Portuguesa. Los resultados muestran que los datos normativos de la muestra Belga francoparlante son

parecidos a los de las muestras de referencia. La única diferencia significativa fue la menor proporción de sujetos puntuando en el rango alto de la susceptibilidad hipnótica en la WSGC.

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