

Letter to the Editor

Experimenter Psi Considerations

The editorial, *Synthesizing Thoughts on Experimenter Psi*, by John G. Kruth in the *Journal of Parapsychology*, 86(2), has suggestions for how to minimize potential unwanted psi intrusions from experimenters and others involved in the psi experiments. Several recommendations for shielding and safeguards are provided along with a bracketing approach that considers environmental, psychological and cultural aspects. John cites two incidents from his Ganzfeld research where participants reported specific images not related to the target pictures that correlated exactly with his distractions during the Ganzfeld sessions. One was passive (thinking about an action), the other was active (performing a specific action). Unwanted intrusions from experimenter psi probably occur frequently but are not recognized or acknowledged.

Experimenter psi effects were observed during the Maimonides Dream Telepathy experiments in the 1960's – 1970's. This should be expected since the experimental protocol had a target picture observer (sender).

I have also observed similar effects during my informal replications of the Maimonides pioneering work and during my exploratory psi projects. In my experiments, the observers' distractions included imagery recall from a book, thinking about interesting features in the area, and personal issues. These psi intrusions can affect statistical results if similar elements are in the alternative targets. However, these unwanted psi intrusions can also assist in determining if the experiment was primarily telepathic, clairvoyant, or possibly precognitive. Experimenter psi influences observed during experiments with target observers provide evidence for potential experimenter psi effects in double blind protocols.

Individuals that may inadvertently influence the psi participants' data in double blind experiments include the experimenter, and possibly others who help administer the experiment. For operational or applied psi projects, a task monitor, a task provider, and interested observers may be present and can be a potential source for unwanted psi. I have observed instances where the strong bias or expectation of the monitor or task provider entered into the participants impressions and subconscious interpretations of the data.

These influences can be minimized by having a limited number of individuals directly involved with the experiment or task management. The tasking method may also have implicit biases that can be minimized by developing neutral targeting or objective designating procedures.

If the psi tasks are precognitive, other potential unwanted psi data effects may occur that may depend on the time between the psi sessions and when ground truth (feedback) is provided to the participants. Since the participants are in a "future seeing" mode during the psi sessions, interesting incidents encountered between the psi sessions and feedback may be perceived and incorporated into the pre-

cognitive data. Examples of unwanted precognitive intrusions: a tree climbing activity entered into the session data that was not in the target picture although it had a thematic association with the target's theme; a unique recollection by the person preparing the feedback email was presented clearly in the psi session data.

The precognitive targets may have an influence on the participants' spontaneous actions between the psi sessions and feedback time, with that action directly related to imagery in the target pictures. Recent examples are photographing a scene prior to feedback that matches the feedback picture; and creating an art form that correlates with a key image in the later seen feedback picture. These psi influenced actions are suggestive of synchronicity and that precognition and synchronicity are connected phenomenon.

Experimenters in formal psi experiments who focus exclusively on statistical evaluation would not recognize such psi intrusions since the data is not thoroughly reviewed with the participants. Data elements not related to the intended target are considered to be errors possibly from displacement to alternative targets, inaccurate perceptions or a psi process effect.

Sometimes these errors in psi session data have unique meaning not related to the target that can only be identified through dialogue when reviewing the data. Examples include a participant's sketch that had no correlation with the target but invoked concern since it suggested a serious emerging medical issue (it did); a sketch that seemed symbolic but not relevant to the target lead to resolution of a participant's personal concern. These errors are not the result of unwanted psi but arise from subconscious needs that have an opportunity to manifest during a psi session.

A focus method that I use to minimize or eliminate unwanted psi effects is to envision a tube (or tunnel) that connects directly with the target wherever it is, along with the intent that all noise or distractions cannot enter the tube and that only the target material can be perceived. A variety of noise reduction strategies are used by psi participants in experimental environments and by psi practitioners in applied projects that can also be adapted for minimizing experimenter psi influences. One possibility is for experimenters to visualize themselves being inside a "psi shield" that blocks unwanted psi access to their thoughts during the experimental period.

As John suggests, there are various methods used by the experimenters and others in the experimental environment to minimize the potential of an experimenter psi effect. Some error sources for psi session data may result from the psi participants being attracted to alternative targets and other interesting aspects of the experimental situation, including the experimenter's actions or distractions. The psi participants and the experimenters may have equal responsibility for psi data errors attributed to experimenter psi.

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