

An Attempt to Replicate the “Checker Effect”

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Four series of experiments were carried out in an attempt to independently replicate and extend the “effect of the checker” study reported by Feather and Brier (1968).¹ The procedure was as nearly identical to that used in their original study as was possible. Subjects made precognitive responses to four runs of ESP cards. They also

[page 378]

guessed which two of the runs would be checked by the experimenter administering the test (E_1) and which two runs would be checked by another experimenter (E_2). Later the dice entry-point method was used to enter a random number table in order to generate the targets and to determine which runs would be scored by each experimenter.

There were four series in the present study. In two of them J. T. O. acted as E_1 and J. E. K. acted as E_2 . In the other two, D. O. acted as E_1 and H. H. K. as E_2 . Each series consisted of one class of high-school students tested as a group. All four classes were from the same school and each class was tested only once.

There was no evidence for psi in the results. The Feather-Brier analyses, which compared scoring on the runs correctly predicted to be checked by E_1 with those that were predicted to be checked by E_2 but were actually scored by E_1 , were carried out on the present data. Post hoc analyses looking at overall differences between experimenters (number of hits and variance effects), correct versus incorrect checker predictions by the subjects, and correlations of individual subjects’ scoring with different experimenters were also carried out. Neither the planned nor the post hoc analyses yielded any significant results.

One major difference between the original study and the present one that might account for this failure to replicate is that the subjects in the Feather-Brier experiment were participants in evening courses on parapsychology and thus were not only older than the high-school students of the present study but probably had more interest in the experiment. Also, it is possible that studies finding checker or other experimenter effects may be totally dependent upon the particular experimenters involved. Experimenter effect studies may be even more difficult to independently replicate than other parapsychological experiments.—*Authors’ abstract*

¹Feather, S. R., and Brier, R. The possible effect of the checker in precognition tests. *Journal of Parapsychology*, 1968, 32, 167-175.