An Attempt to Replicate the “Checker Effect”


(This abstract was originally published in

Four series of experiments were carried out in an attempt to inde-
dependently 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 (E₁) and which two runs would be checked by another
experimenter (E₂). 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
E₁ and J. E. K. acted as E₂. In the other two, D. O. acted as E₁ and H. H. K. as
E₂. 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 E₁
with those that were predicted to be checked by E₂ but were actually scored by
E₁, 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