

## SOME POSSIBILITIES AND PITFALLS OF QUANTITATIVE METHODS IN PSI RESEARCH

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Broadly, we have two objectives in using quantitative methods: to prove the occurrence of a phenomenon, and to extend our understanding of its nature. It has been pointed out that these two objectives are not entirely compatible.

In pursuing the second we sometimes encounter pitfalls such as the premature acceptance of experimental findings. For example, the influence of alcohol upon ESP scoring may be found in one experiment but may disappear when a repetition is attempted. Evidently, there were other variables not adequately controlled. Such disappointments sometimes lead the experimenter to engage in overanalysis, i.e., to attempt to deal with everything from the barometric pressure to the subject's breakfast menu.

The author offers two constructive suggestions. More rapid progress may result by paying primary attention to experimental structure rather than to specific hypotheses. Moreover, the use of research teams composed of specialists from several fields will prevent the pursuit of variables that are highly improbable in view of available overall scientific knowledge.