

**56/08 - "The Sheep-Goat effect as a matter of compliance vs. noncompliance: The effect of reactance in a forced-choice ball selection test" - only abstract available**

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**Abstract:** Parapsychological research findings suggest that the motivations of believers in psi (sheep) and skeptics (goats) tend to be antithetical. According to Reactance Theory (Brehm & Brehm, 1981), when an individual's freedom is threatened through some form of coercion, *reactance* usually sets in, which is "a motivational state aimed at restoring the threatened freedom" (Silvia, 2005, p. 277). Reactance even leads to 'boomerang effects' (i.e., noncompliance). It is proposed that sheep comply with experimenter's instructions, whereas goats do not, which may explain the so-called sheep-goat effect (i.e., sheep tend to psi-hit; goats tend to psi-miss). In this study, the effects of reactance on psi performance is sought in Ertel's (2005a,b) Ball Selection Test. Specifically, it is proposed that a reactance treatment (an opinionated communication meant to evoke a reactance response) affects goats more than sheep, so that goats psi performance will be more adversely affected than sheep. This proposition is based on the hypothesis that sheep are less reactant than goats in psi tests because goats are predisposed to *disproving* the psi hypothesis which requires noncompliance. The sheep-goat measure to be used in the study is the Australian Sheep-Goat Scale (Thalbourne, 1995). The opinionated communication is an adapted text used successfully by Silvia (2005). In a laboratory setting, in a single session, participants each complete up to four runs (60 trials/run) of paranormal target-seeking (i.e., calling numbers prior to selecting unseen numbered ping pong balls from a black bag). Psi effects will be statistically determined as a percentage of successful calls (where  $P_{MCE} = 20\%$ ). Total number of participants to be tested is 150. Interim results only ( $N = 53$ ) are as follows: (i) Hit rate was significant for the whole sample at 21.41% ( $p = .0002$ ;  $ES = .04$ ); (ii) Mean hit rate for sheep (21.76%) was higher than goats (21.23%), but not significantly,  $F(1, 49) = 0.43$ ,  $p = .257$  (one-tailed); (iii) Reactance affected scoring in the hypothesised direction, but not significantly,  $F(1, 49) = 1.19$ ,  $p = .140$  (one-tailed); and (iv) against our hypothesis, goats were less reactant than sheep, but not significantly,  $F(1, 49) = 0.70$ ,  $p = .204$  (one-tailed). The groups are too small, and therefore they lack power, so no firm conclusions can be made at this stage.

**Keywords:** ESP, PK, reactance, psi, sheep-goat effect