

## THE EXPERIMENT

1995

When the clinician's formulative method relies exclusively on objective observations processed by his(her) conscious, cognitive-emotional mind functions, there are many types of scientific research design that he can devise and apply. Here is one example that could inspire the researcher-reader's imagination for what can be done beyond the clinic.

It is a method that can be applied to any members of any groups of analysts and psychotherapists of any theoretical persuasions who are willing to participate. Volunteers are provided with a segment of material from a first phone call to request consultation on the back of a two-sided sheet of paper. The first side includes a description of the task and instructions. When they have read it and "heard" that they are to take a call from a new consultee, they are to; (a) simulate answering the phone; (b) turn the page to "hear" what he(she) says, and; (c) respond spontaneously as they would in such an actual situation (on the phone).

The M.F. researcher can use this method for a variety of purposes including the discovery of lacunae in the curricula of training programs.

For example:

Are initial transferences identified and addressed or not?

Is each individual's input directed by a theory? If so, can he(she) explain his response?

Is a standardized theory in evidence across the group?

Is a particular theory (e.g. "working surfaces") in evidence?

It can also be used to generate new *clinical* research questions by simply finding out what various therapists actually think and do in the sudden heat of the unanticipated clinical moments that occur in practice. The unavoidable spontaneity of one or another kind of reaction is rarely if ever captured for experimental purposes in paper presentations and case discussions

## In Handout Form

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#### **The Task:**

A psychologist colleague in a nearby city left a message for you saying that she had seen and referred a man who would shortly be calling for an appointment. She gave his name, Victor C., but nothing else, and he left a message on your answering machine this morning. On the reverse side of this page, there is a verbatim account of what he says when you speak to him. Please simulate a return call to him and turn the page to "hear" what takes place when he answers. Try to capture your responses as you "listen". By "responses", I mean any and all internal and behavioral events and/or expressions that you observe in self. For example:

**Internal:** affects, thoughts, formulations, hunches, plans, symptoms (anxiety)

**External:** "mmm hmms", questions, remarks, comments, withheld remarks

Jot the responses down as they are occurring during the "phone call", then elaborate them upon reflection afterwards. Include your reasons for responding as you did, if possible. And make certain to distinguish what took place on the phone from what came after.

**Note:** Please keep in mind that this is an experiment, not a test. Your spontaneous, natural responses are requested.

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**The material**

**"Hello, Victor C. here."**

*"Hello, Mr. C., Dr. B., returning your call."*

**"Thanks, Dr. B."**

**"I've run into quite a problem. I'm over here (in Canada) on loan from ----- to assist with some research. I'm with my partner. We've been living together for seven years and talked about marriage and kids, but we've never taken the step.**

**About five months ago, I met a visiting consultant from ----- . We had a relationship before she went back to ----- and things haven't been good since. She phones me often, and I keep in touch. There's a possibility that I might move to be with her, but I can't decide anything at this point.**

**Meanwhile, I've been getting increasingly anxious and depressed and I haven't kept my deadlines at work .. (pause) ..... I don't think I've ever felt so bad in my life.**

**(pause) ..... "I guess you would recommend meeting separately with me and then with (the partner) (brief pause) ..... not that I want to keep secrets." (pause) ..... "I sound awful, don't I."**

## **Sample Tests and Results at the Time**

#1 The experimental task was provided to members of an international Psychology Society in **Vancouver**, and the response was very positive. Several members were attracted to the process and they provided written summaries of their response. Then a later assessment of them made it very clear that there was no real scientific method in process, and none of the participants had been aware of such.

#2 The Experiment was then offered to the members of a large, Canadian, conventional, anti-scientific Analytic Society, and only two members responded. However, both were intrigued with the task, and they wrote at length. And the results were similar to those above.

## **A Brief Summary Comment of the Experience: Temporarily Renewed in 2015**

Although this part of my research was described and discussed in **the book, Diary of a Rejected Scientist**, I did not include the results in terms of the places and people where and with whom it was conducted. They are, however, very telling with respect to the lack of interest in real scientific research in Psychoanalysis and related Psychotherapies, and they highlight what such disciplines could accomplish if they turned their attention to that phenomenon and opened a door to the development of tested and proven theories.

For one thing, that only two analysts from a large membership responded to my request for assistance with the project is telling. The first would neither be identified to me nor in the research write-up, and his/her use of the response with no identification of any kind was refused. Another gave an extensive account of the response and, thankfully, allowed its publication as part of the study. And none of the others gave me the slightest indication of why they did not participate.

The experience also said something about analytic Societies when no candidates (trainees) or guests responded either.

It is also noteworthy that twelve years earlier (1982), I had presented a paper to my Society that described a research into symptoms (transference type) in immediate operation in 38 consultations, and described the Glover Effect and its dangers, and neither of the two members who responded even identified the transference signs in the example.

It is similarly notable that, among the psychotherapists later presented with the opportunity to contribute, only one identified the indicator of an Operative Transference Resistance.

**[NOTE: April 4, 2014:** I had been too busy with several researches and a full practice to renew and pursue this project at the time. I am sure that the lack of interest in real science in the significant professions was the determinant. I had not done all the work for myself alone at the time. And as my experience with science in Psychoanalysis had been a particularly-strange, unexpected, interminable, wasteful bust, I left the International, National and Local Association and Societies in 1992 – after developing an extensive collection of researches and papers from the 70's on.]