Marketing by Mistake:
The Unintended Consequences of Consumer Research

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Imagine for a moment you are a market research professional interested in understanding women’s attitudes towards home pregnancy tests. You want to understand current usage patterns and determine which features are most important. As a first step, you decide to conduct focus groups. You recruit six women through telephone interviews and invite them to attend a discussion on pregnancy-related matters. As an ethical researcher, you inform the women accurately in advance what the discussion will be about and they freely sign consent forms. You explain that anything they say will be confidential and assure them of their anonymity. You also make clear that nothing will be sold to them during the course of the research and make clear that they are free to leave at any time. During the discussion, you ask them to imagine what they would do if they believed they might be pregnant. If they mention a home pregnancy test, you ask them to explain the reasoning behind that choice. You then introduce your brand and ask them to rate their feelings for it. At the end of the session, you feel pleased. You feel you have effectively met your research objectives while protecting the rights and interests of the respondent in the process. This chapter argues that while you were well intentioned, it is quite likely that you inadvertently failed to follow the basic research dictum “do no harm.”

The fundamental goal of consumer researchers, both in academic and applied settings, is to enrich our understanding of consumer behavior. We attempt to gain this understanding by using a variety of research techniques. These approaches range from large-scale, quantitative studies, such as habits-and-attitudes surveys, to traditional laboratory experiments, to qualitative research, such as focus groups or one-on-one interviews. In general, consumer researchers assume it is possible to practice these techniques in isolation – that is, without contaminating either the data or the subject. However, much recent research in social cognition has demonstrated that it is possible to influence beliefs, attitudes, goals and behavior through
unconscious processes. This has important consequences for consumer researchers. It suggests
that the research process itself has the potential to inadvertently influence the consumer’s
responses and behavior. In the opening vignette, there are several occasions when the research
process could have unintentionally influenced the respondents. For example, anticipating the
discussion might have led them to unconsciously alter the attitudes they planned to express in the
group. Or, imagining they suspected pregnancy for the sake of the study, might lead the subjects
to later believe they actually experienced this event. Alternatively, asking the respondents to list
reasons for their attitude might have unintentionally disrupted the link between their stated
attitude toward a pregnancy test brand and their intention to purchase it. Exposure to the subject
matter may have also inadvertently initiated pursuit of a goal to become pregnant that the
participant is not aware of. Note that not only could these nonconscious processes affect
participant responses during the focus group, but, perhaps more importantly, their participation
in the study could affect their subsequent “real-life” behavior.

The fact that research can influence participants unintentionally is acknowledged with
varying degrees within the field of consumer research. At times, it is effectively ignored. In
industry, for example, marketing decisions such as sales forecasts, new product launches and
advertising designs are based upon research results with little consideration for the potential
influence of the research process on that data. At other times, the ability to influence research
participants outside their awareness is purposely employed. For example, political campaigners
may ask leading survey questions to introduce damaging knowledge about the opposition (push
polls – see Fitzsimons and Shiv, 2001) while unscrupulous marketers may attempt to sell
products under the guise of market research (sugging), an activity that not only violates
marketing research ethical codes, but is illegal (Bowers 1995). In academia, supra liminal and
subliminal priming techniques are used as a means of more elegantly testing research hypotheses. Many other research approaches may overlook or underestimate the potentially contaminating effect of the research process on the participant. Given the difficulty associated with undoing or reversing many types of biases in decision making (e.g., Arkes 1991) the inadvertent introduction of such biases on behavior raises numerous cautionary flags.

In this chapter we will interpret a growing body of work on nonconscious processes and apply it to the field of consumer research. Our goal is to encourage a broader recognition of the implications of research on nonconscious processes for all consumer researchers. We will begin by providing a brief overview of the central role played by automatic attitudes and behavior in everyday life. The substance of the chapter will highlight numerous research streams, emphasizing the relevance to consumer researchers. We have grouped the research streams into three broad categories, depending on the type of inadvertent influence on consumer responses: (1) Exposure, (2) Measurement and (3) Introspection. Some overlap no doubt exists between the three categories and some theories will no doubt have been omitted. The goal of this chapter is not to provide a comprehensive literature review, but to stimulate thought about how routine consumer research might have consequences that are not typically considered. Finally, we will conclude with a brief discussion of the ethical and public policy issues raised by inadvertently influencing respondents through the consumer research process.

**Automatic or Non-Conscious Attitudes and Behavior**

Historically, consumer research has had a purely cognitive focus and Bargh (2002) notes that this approach remains popular, particularly in areas such as decision making. A cognitive focus also dominates popular behavior prediction theories, such as Social Cognitive Theory
(Bandura, 1997), the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) and the Integrated Model of Behavior Change (Fishbein & Yzer, 2001). However, the increasing popularity of dual process models (see Petty, Wegener & Fabrigar, 1997; Wood, 2000 for reviews) such as the elaboration likelihood model (ELM; Petty, Cacioppo, & Schumann, 1983) and the heuristic-systematic model (HSM; Chaiken, 1980) suggest that many researchers accept the possibility that non-systematic processing may guide behavior, at least under certain conditions. These dual-mode processing theories propose that when the respondent lacks the motivation, opportunity or ability, a peripheral, automatic processing mode will kick in, using heuristic cues such as spokesperson attractiveness. The past decade has seen an increase in research examining automatic processes in social domains covering perception (Carlston & Skowronski, 1994), emotion (Berridge & Winkielman, 2003), goal pursuit (Chartrand & Bargh, 1996, 2002), attitude formation (Fazio, Sanbonmatsu, Powell & Kardes, 1986) and numerous other domains (see Bargh & Chartrand, 1999 for review). This research stream suggests that a person’s conscious attentional capacity is limited and so, to function effectively, most psychological life must occur automatically, without conscious awareness. Baumeister et al (1998) conclude that the conscious self only plays a role about 5% of the time. This allows for the possibility of influencing attitudes, beliefs and behavior outside of conscious awareness. The fact that this can happen raises important ethical questions. The remainder of the chapter will focus on the literature that finds these nonconscious effects on attitudes, beliefs, goals and behavior. As noted earlier, these effects are grouped into three broad categories, based on their type. Within each section, we will highlight the implications of the work for consumer researchers, illustrating potential concerns with real world examples.
Exposure Inadvertently Influences Responses

A growing body of work suggests that the initial information subjects are exposed to can direct their subsequent responses, without their awareness. It is not hard to imagine how this is relevant to consumer research. Exposure to a stimulus presented in the early stages of a survey, experiment or focus group can unintentionally and unconsciously influence the attitudes, beliefs or behavior examined in later sections of the research. This effect has been shown to hold for a variety of different types of stimuli. Reviewed in this chapter is exposure to questions and numbers as well as pictorial and textual primes. Exposure to stimuli can inadvertently influence responses in two ways: it can bias responses to objects encountered after the stimuli, or it can affect responses to the stimuli itself. The former will be discussed first.

In their discussion of self-generated validity, Feldman and Lynch (1988) suggest that a subject’s responses to early questions can automatically influence his or her answers to subsequent questions, if the earlier response is accessible and perceived to be more diagnostic than other available information. This influence of early judgments on later judgments is suggested to be most evident when the early judgment is diagnostic of the later judgment. To update the example that Feldman and Lynch used, a subject’s answer to the question “Is Enron trustworthy?” might be more diagnostic for the question “Is big business trustworthy?” than the answer to big business would be for Enron. The relevance to consumer research is obvious, because the initial information is something that almost all research uses – a question. Much has been written about the implications of this process for research validity and Feldman and Lynch themselves suggest that these effects have important consequences for the respondent as well. The process of asking questions biases beliefs, attitudes, intentions and even behavior. Even if the measured constructs do not originally exist in a subject’s long-term memory, the belief,
attitude or intention can be created by the measurement itself, and these responses can direct answers to other questions that follow in the survey, or influence their beliefs and behavior after the research is completed. Through the very questions we ask, we unintentionally affect attitudes, beliefs and intentions. Interestingly, the question can be purely hypothetical and still unintentionally bias behavior. For example, in a simulated election Fitzsimons and Shiv (2001) showed that when asked the suppositional question, “If you learned that Bob Clark had been convicted of fraud in 1988 on a charge stemming from several illegal donations accepted and subsequently misrepresented during his successful campaign for state treasurer, would your opinion of him increase or decrease?” the percentage of respondents choosing Bob Clark decreased from 79% to 25%. If they cognitively elaborated on the question (because they expected to justify their decision), the number of people choosing Candidate A decreased even further. In a second study Fitzsimons and Shiv also showed that asking hypothetical questions can influence actual behavior. The percentage of respondents who chose cake over fruit salad increased substantially if the respondents had been asked a hypothetical question one hour earlier about the benefits of eating baked goods. When respondents were confronted with the possibility that the hypothetical question may have guided their later behavior, they steadfastly denied any connection. Once again, this has important ethical implications. An unscrupulous market researcher could, for example, disparage a competitor’s product by asking suppositional questions with negative information, much as political campaigners do in so-called push polls (Traugott & Kang, 2000). The longevity of the effect depends on how exactly the effect takes place. As Fitzsimons and Shiv (2001) note, this is an area that requires more research, but if hypothetical questions actually alter preferences, they could also alter behavior later in time. This
could have negative consequences for the consumer – for example, if he or she were asked a hypothetical question about positive consequences of using drugs or smoking.

Exposure to a question is not the only stimuli that can bias subsequent responses. Exposure to a number can also be used unconsciously by the consumer to answer subsequent questions, a process known as anchoring. In a classic study, Tversky and Kahneman (1974) showed that when people guessed whether the percentage of African countries in the United Nations was more or less than a number from a ‘wheel of fortune spin’, estimates were significantly higher if they began with a high ‘spin’ than if they began with a low ‘spin’. This effect has been shown in a variety of contexts and occurs even when the prior information is completely uninformative. For example, in a series of studies Wilson et al (1996) show that completely arbitrary numbers can anchor people’s judgments, even when there is no logical reason to consider the numbers as answers to subsequent questions, an effect that is moderated by attention and knowledge. Of importance to this review, is that Wilson et al found the process occurred unintentionally and unconsciously; warning people about the effects did not eliminate them. To relate this to the consumer research context, imagine the marketer trying to understand purchase interest for a new product. A study is conducted, where consumers are asked what price they would pay for the new product. As part of the same survey, however, they initially were required to write their home address. It is possible for that initial task to provide an arbitrary anchor value which unintentionally influences their answer to the pricing question. Not only is the research validity now questionable, but we have accidentally affected the attitude of the respondent. Much as a careless park visitor, we have left our trace on the environment, i.e. the consumer.
Exposure to a prime can also inadvertently influence responses to subsequently encountered material. Priming occurs when attention to some stimulus increases the saliency of a category, attitude, identity or goal, which in turn increases the likelihood it will be used when judging a subsequently encountered stimulus. Primes can be delivered subliminally, where the affected person is unaware of the prime, or supraliminally, where he or she is aware of the prime but not of the potential influence. Primes have been shown to have unintentional effects in a variety of areas, including racial attitudes (Fazio, 1995), conformity to social pressure (Epley & Gilovich, 1999), goals (Chartrand, 1996), memory (Dijksterhuis et al., 2000), mood (Beridge & Winkielman, 2003) and behavior (Dovidio, 2002; Wilson, 2000). A common priming technique is to expose the respondent to images or words on a computer screen below the threshold of awareness (typically less than thirty milliseconds). Strahan, Spencer and Zanna (2002), for example, use this technique to subliminally prime thirst. They found this automatically activated a desire to quench thirst and, if respondents were indeed thirsty, increased the amount that people drank. An alternative priming technique is to give respondents a series of scrambled words, such as “he what gain did summer” from which they have to form a four word sentence. The words used in the sentence have been shown to prime a particular mood or a goal (Srull & Wyer, 1979). In the example above the word ‘gain’ is the prime. Research has shown that such primes can nonconsciously activate a goal to succeed, leading the person to take steps to fulfill that goal. Individuals can succeed or fail at nonconsciously pursued goals and this has downstream consequences for moods and beyond. Chartrand (2004) shows that failure at a nonconscious goal can depress mood, while success can improve it. The consequences of altering someone’s mood are far reaching. A rich literature shows that mood can affect both attitude and behavior (see Luomala & Laaksonen, 2000 for review). For example, mood can influence estimates of risk
(Johnson & Tversky, 1983; Gasper & Clore, 1998; Lerner & Keltner, 2001), product ratings (Srull, 1983), preferences (Winkielman, Zajonc & Schwarz, 1997) purchase intention (Deshpande, Hoyer & Donthu, 1986) and task performance (Chartrand, 2004). Mood can also be primed unconsciously. Winkielman, Berridge and Wilbarger (in press) primed mood with happy, neutral or angry faces, and though subjects’ ratings of mood did not change, the amount of a drink poured and consumed, as well as ratings of the drink, did. Overall, this literature suggests that the environment, specifically the research context, can guide attitudes, beliefs and behavior without conscious awareness. For example, during advertising research it wouldn’t be unusual for participants to encounter images of happy people. This could unintentionally prime their mood, or set a goal in motion, impacting their behavior when they leave the research environment.

Exposing someone to a particular social identity can also unconsciously change attitudes and behavior. The identity can be one the respondent holds about others or about themselves. As an example of the former, Bargh, Chen and Burrows (1996) found that young participants unconsciously primed with elderly related material subsequently behaved more in line with the stereotype than participants who were not primed – that is, they walked more slowly down the hallway after leaving the experiment. Regarding the self identity, Shih, Pittinsky and Ambady (1999) examined Asian-American women’s performance on a math test. When their female identity was implicitly primed, the women performed significantly worse than when their Asian identity was primed, in line with popular cultural stereotypes. Social identity theory helps to explain the latter result. Social identity refers to the degree to which an individual identifies with a particular social group or role (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Reed, 2002). Everybody has multiple social identities that together make up a global self. Some identities are more salient than others.
and particular identities become more salient at different times. Identity salience – when an individual spontaneously and often unconsciously categorizes him or herself by some identity-orientated criteria – can happen for a variety of reasons. Distinctiveness theory (McGuire, 1984) predicts that a person’s distinctive traits will become more salient when compared to the traits of everyone else in a given social context. Being in a numeric minority is one situation when the unique trait will become more salient. For example, a woman will become most aware of her gender identity in a room of men. Grier and Deshpande (2001) argue that other socio-economic factors, such as the group’s social status and economic power, will also influence whether a consumer feels distinctive in a particular situation. Importantly, the process is again unconscious – people are not aware that they are responding in a manner influenced by a particular identity. This research suggests that if an earlier question or stimulus raises respondents’ awareness of a particular, socially distinctive identity, their subsequent responses will reflect this identity. For example, Forehand, Deshpande and Reed (2002) show that attitudes towards in-group advertising improved when the participants’ in-group, socially distinctive identity was made salient through a nonconscious prime. This result is particularly worrying if the salient identity is perceived negatively by the respondent, as it could cause emotional discomfort. For example, Levy (1996) primed elderly people with either a negative or positive stereotype of the elderly, respectively impairing or improving performance on a memory task. It is not a big leap to see how numerically and socially distinctive identities could be made salient in the course of marketing research – a single African American focus group participant is likely to be very aware of his ethnic identity, for example. The effect could not only bias the responses expressed in the research, but could endure afterwards, affecting post-study emotions and behavior.
As noted earlier, exposure to a stimulus not only influences subsequently encountered material, it can also influence attitudes towards the stimulus itself. Two related streams of research – the mere-exposure effect and the truth effect – suggest that simply exposing respondents to stimuli can alter their assessment of the attitude object itself. Mere exposure describes the process by which simple repetition leads to improved assessments of an object. The truth effect refers to the fact that simply exposing respondents to information can increase the perceived truth value of that information. Zajonc (1968) first reported the fact that repeated exposure to a stimulus can improve affective evaluations of it. In a meta analysis of the mere-exposure effect, Bornstein (1989) finds over 200 published experiments that replicate this effect with a variety of attitude objects. Replicating earlier work (Hasher et al, 1977; Schwartz, 1982) on the truth effect, Hawkins and Hoch (1992) show that people will rate an ambiguous trivia statement, such as “Buffered aspirin tends to work more slowly than unbuffered aspirin,” (Hawkins & Hoch, 1992 p.217) as more true if they have been exposed to it before. They found this basic effect increased when involvement was low and suggest that familiarity (“it rings a bell”) is the key mediator of the effect. Hawkins and Hoch (1992), and later Hawkins, Hoch and Meyers-Levy (2001), suggest that the truth effect differs from the mere-exposure effect in that recognition appears to be necessary for the former, but inhibitive for the latter. Indeed, Bornstein and D’Agostino (1992) show that subliminal priming produces significantly larger mere-exposure effects, but when the respondent is aware that they have been exposed to stimuli they are about to rate they can correct their initial evaluation. Nonetheless these two research streams have important implications for consumer researchers: whether a respondent is aware of being exposed to a stimulus or not, the process of being exposed can alter their rating of the statement, or the degree to which they believe the statement. These results were found in experimental
conditions, without the clutter, perhaps, of applied market research. Nonetheless, they do suggest that seemingly innocuous statements used in focus groups or other experiments will be liked more and will be more likely to be accepted as true by respondents who subsequently encounter them. Once again, the researcher has altered the environment they entered.

**Measurement Inadvertently Influences Consumer Response**

A second broad category of unintentional influences on participants’ attitudes, beliefs and behavior stems from measuring their intentions. An increasing number of studies find that simply measuring someone’s intention to perform a behavior influences the likelihood that they will then perform that behavior. This “mere-measurement” effect holds true across a variety of behaviors, including volunteering (Sherman, 1980), voting (Greenwald et al., 1987), name generation (Spangenberg & Greenwald, 1999) and automobile shopping (Morwitz, Johnson & Schmittlein, 1993). For example, Morwitz et al. (1993) found that respondents asked about their intent to purchase an automobile in the next six months increased their purchase rates of actual automobiles by almost 40% versus a control group not asked the intent question. There is also evidence that the effect is fairly durable. In a field experiment, Dholakia and Morwitz (2002) show that measuring satisfaction not only affects the one-time purchase of financial services, but also leads to improved relational behaviors, such as customer profitability and defection, over an extended period of time. An important aspect of the hypothesized process is that the intention measure increases the accessibility of attitudes about the behavior which leads to increased or decreased choice depending on the valence of the attitude (Fitzsimons & Morwitz, 1996; Morwitz & Fitzsimons, 2004). Williams, Fitzsimons, and Block (2004) suggest that this occurs because intention questions slip beneath the respondents natural defense mechanisms, preventing
normal coping tactics from kicking in (Friestad & Wright, 1994). The unintended hazards of measuring intentions are fairly wide ranging. Of perhaps greatest concern are respondents asked about likelihood to engage in risky or unhealthy behaviors (e.g., drug use, unsafe sex) by researchers doing marketing or public policy research. While the respondents may have an explicit negative attitude toward engaging in the risky behavior they may also hold an implicit positive attitude toward engaging. If the implicit positive attitude dominates in situations of temptation, having been asked an earlier intention question could well have the effect of liberating the respondent to engage in the risky behavior.

**Introspection Inadvertently Influences Consumer Response**

A common task in much consumer research is to ask the respondent to think about or list their reasons for a particular preference. This seemingly simple task has been shown to accidentally affect behavior. Wilson et al (1984, 1995) show that analyzing the reasons behind an expressed object attitude can decrease attitude-behavior consistency, an effect known as disruption. In their studies, people who expressed a positive attitude towards an object were less likely to choose that object at a later time if they had analyzed their reasons for liking it, compared to a control group who had not analyzed their reasons. Sengupta and Fitzsimons (2000) suggest that the extent to which disruption will occur depends on moderating factors such as whether there is a delay between the attitude and behavior measurement and the timing of the reasons analysis. Specifically they find that analyzing reasons before taking an attitude measurement will decrease the attitude – behavior link, when behavior is measured after a delay, the situation most likely in commercial marketing research contexts. Not only does this mean
that analyzing reasons can have counter-productive effects from the marketer’s perspective, it means, once again, researchers are altering the environment they enter.

Another kind of introspection has also been shown to influence attitudes. Schlosser and Shavitt (2002) demonstrate that when people anticipate participating in a group discussion they mentally rehearse – introspect – about what they will say, focusing on less important, but more easily explainable or available information, and this can alter the attitude they express in the discussion in accordance with the valence of the information. When outside the group context, however, they will base their attitude on all information, including that which is not readily explainable, which may differ to the attitude they have expressed. This has obvious implications not only for focus groups, but perhaps for all research situations where the respondent is expected to justify their attitude and hence rehearses what to say. Once again, the process of conducting research has resulted in an unintended consequence for the subject.

Introspection can also reverse some of the earlier-mentioned identity prime effects. Reflecting on others’ expectations about a particular salient identity can unconsciously change their behavior. For example, looking at the performance of Chinese women on math tests, Cheryan and Bodenhausen (2000) show that priming the positive stereotype (Chinese) can actually lead to poorer math results if awareness of other people’s expectations is simultaneously raised. Imagination can also be considered a form of introspection, and this too can alter beliefs. Thomas and Loftus (2002) show that after repeated imagination of both bizarre acts (such as “kiss the magnifying glass”) and familiar acts (such as “flip the coin”), people later believe they have actually performed the act. Once again, this has important ethical considerations for consumer researchers. Moderators in focus groups often ask respondents to imagine themselves in a particular situation. Thomas and Loftus’ results suggest that this could lead people to believe
those situations actually took place. Finally, literature in the de-biasing field has relevance in this section, in particular the hindsight bias. This occurs when people “tend to view what has happened as having been inevitable” (Fischhoff, 1982, p.428). To counteract this bias, respondents are usually encouraged to think of reasons why the event may have turned out otherwise. Sanna, Schwarz and Stocker (2001) show however that this strategy can backfire. They find that when participants attempt to list many thoughts the hindsight bias actually increases. The authors hypothesize that because respondents find the introspection task difficult, they believe that the actual outcome was indeed the most likely. Importantly, for this chapter, while participants were aware that the thoughts-listing task was difficult, they were not conscious of the influence of the task on their attitude formation.

A related line of research by Schwartz and colleagues (Schwartz et al, 1991; Schwartz & Vaughn, 2000) finds that when participants are asked to generate either a small number or a large number of reasons either for or against an issue they use the ease with which they can generate the reasons as an input to their subsequent attitude. For example, a participant asked to generate a large number of behaviors consistent with a particular personality trait judges themselves as being lower on that trait than does a participant asked to generate a small number (ease of retrieval is low for the large number, but high for the small number, leading participants to change their self-perceptions (Schwartz et al, 1991)). In a consumer domain Menon and Raghubir (2003) demonstrate similar effects with brands as targets, and conclude that the application of the ease-of-retrieval cue to brand attitudes occurs outside of conscious awareness. In applied market research, it is common to ask respondents to make lists – of behaviors or brand names for example. The aforementioned literature suggests that the ease with which they can
generate such lists will influence their attitude, bringing into question the validity of the research results.

Conclusions

Altering the attitudes, beliefs and behaviors of consumers without their awareness raises significant ethical issues that have not been satisfactorily discussed to date. Kimmel and Craig (2001) point out that marketing, when compared to the fields of psychology and sociology, has a limited history of addressing ethically sensitive practices, especially from the perspective of the consumer. Early literature on marketing-research ethics focused on the rights of the client to accurate information or the responsibilities of the researcher to undertake research without fraud, fabrication, falsification, prevarication, plagiarism, or profiteering (Holbrook, 1994, p568). Literature from the perspective of the respondent has tended to focus on issues such as his or her rights to privacy, informed consent or freedom to withdraw (see Giacoobe and Segal, [2000] for review). There has been some research on the ethical issues associated with deliberate trading off of ethical beliefs and other attributes (Irwin, 1999) or with deliberate transgressions, such as selling under the guise of marketing research (Bowers, 1995) or intentionally deceptive practices (Kimmel and Craig, 2001). To date, however, little attention has been paid to the impact of the numerous unintentional effects of marketing research from the perspective of the subject.

The research conducted in the opening vignette of this chapter follows the guidelines suggested by the American Marketing Association and the Marketing Research Association. It does not expose the participant to serious mental or physical risk and does not knowingly deceive or inflict harm. We believe this is insufficient. Changing someone’s behavioral responses without their knowledge violates certain rights, including those listed by Holbrook.
(1994) as autonomy, dignity, candor and informed consent. We propose a code of marketing research conduct that mimics the National Park Service’s “Leave no Trace” principles, one of which invites the visitor to enjoy the environment, but to leave it as it was found. Applying this code to marketing research implies that we should seek to understand the respondent’s mental and emotional state, but try to leave it unchanged. To be sure, this is no easy matter. We have laid out examples in this chapter that demonstrate that almost all consumer research – applied and academic – risks these unintentional hazards for the respondent and, as many of the effects occur outside of conscious awareness, it may be impossible to avoid them. In some cases, a rigorous debriefing after the research may suffice to ‘undo’ any accidental effects, though the robustness of some of the effects would seem to preclude this. In other cases, it may be possible to use alternative research techniques in order to avoid the effects in the first place. Clearly, this is an area where further research is necessary. By raising awareness of the risks, however, we aim to encourage the researcher to at least be aware of the consequences of their work.


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