

THE *e-psyche* ONLINE DATABASE: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FIELD OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

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This study evaluates the effectiveness of the *e-psyche* database with particular focus for researchers in social psychology. Descriptive terms from the field were selected and comparative online searches between *e-psyche* and *PsycINFO* were conducted. An analysis of the productivity (citation output) of these databases points to the potential usefulness of *e-psyche* for social psychology researchers due to its larger "source base" either as a single database or in conjunction with a multidatabase search strategy. These findings provide evidence in support of the utility of *e-psyche* as a behavioral/social science literature source.

The literature base for the field of psychology has become not only extensive but also multidisciplinary and overlapping with those of other behavioral sciences (e.g., sociology, social work, criminology, and neurology). Despite this vast research base, most investigators continue to rely solely on one bibliographic source, namely, *PsycINFO*. Indeed, since 1967, *PsycINFO* has been considered the authoritative scholarly database for psychologically-related literature (Brand & Kinzie 1984; Perdue & Piotrowski, 1991). In the fall of 2000, Dennis Auld and John Kuranz introduced a new behavioral and social sciences database known as *e-psyche*. Auld brings much practical experience to this endeavor as he is the former director of *PsycINFO* services at the American Psychological Association. Specifically, *e-psyche* ultimately aims to have 3,400 source journals and newsletters, along with select dissertations and websites added on a continuing basis. Presently, *e-psyche* includes journal coverage since 1993, with approximately 85,000 records. A key feature of this new database is the inclusion of complete, cited-text references for each record (which are similar to

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“cited references” in the *Social Sciences Citation Index*). In addition, researchers have the option to search “cited references” by all original source authors, and are not limited to “first authors” only.

While several basic information reports on *e-psyche* have appeared in online and library outlets, there is a dearth of studies that critically analyze the database. However, Johnstone (2000) suggests that *PsycINFO DIRECT*, which is part of *APA's PsycPORT* web site, may have some rival features with *e-psyche*, such as full-text options, and low search fees. In an objective evaluation, Jasco (2000) highlights several of the key features of the *PsycINFO* database that have propelled it to become the premier research source in the behavioral sciences, but concludes that *e-psyche* may become a serious challenger.

Recently, Perdue and Piotrowski (in press) discussed the advantages and limitations of *e-psyche*; however, to date, no published research has appeared on the productivity of actual search results between *e-psyche* and *PsycINFO*. Thus, the purpose of the current investigation is to illustrate with examples from the field of social psychology a comparison of search output between *e-psyche* and *PsycINFO*.

METHOD

First, a descriptive comparison between the *e-psyche* and *PsycINFO* databases is presented in Table 1. Although *e-psyche* provides coverage from 1993 forward, some of its source journals are not yet fully indexed before 1996. For comparison purposes, several search strategies were conducted in *e-psyche* and *PsycINFO* with date limitations imposed from 1998+ in some cases, and 1999+ in others. The purpose of this search strategy was to determine whether or not the *e-psyche* search produced relevant citations that do not appear in *PsycINFO* since the former provides indexing to a larger source list. Our goal was to attempt to identify the number of “unique hits” produced by *e-psyche* that are not available in *PsycINFO*. Table 2 exhibits the results of several search strategies in which 2 single-search terms were entered in both databases, and 3 strategies in which combinations of 2 or more terms were entered. The next step was to search the “titles” resulting from the *e-psyche* output in *PsycINFO* and determine the number of “titles” that do not appear in *PsycINFO*, thus identifying the number of “unique hits” produced by *e-psyche*.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

An examination of Table 2 clearly indicates that the database *PsycINFO* produced many more hits than did *e-psyche* for both individual descriptor terms and for the combination of terms. Indeed, this result was expected due to the large

number of overall records in *PsycINFO* in comparison to *e-psyche* for the time frame 1998-2001. However, as noted in the unique hits column of Table 2, there was a fair number of pertinent reference citations which were identified in the *e-psyche* search and which were not part of the citation output in the *PsycINFO* searches. For example, the search for the key term *betrayal* produced 7 reference citations that were unique to *e-psyche*. While in absolute terms, this appears to be a low number, these 7 citations were more than 50% of the references ($T=12$) identified in the *e-psyche* search. For the search using the combination terms *discrimination* and *stereotypes*, *e-psyche* produced 3 unique references. Varying results are evident from the other searches listed in Table 2.

These data indicate that *e-psyche*, due to its indexing format and inclusion of

TABLE 1
COMPARISON BETWEEN THE *e-psyche* AND *PsycINFO* DATABASES

	<i>e-psyche</i>	<i>PsycINFO</i>
Dates of Coverage	1993-	1872-
Number of Source Journals	2,000	1,846
Update Frequency	weekly	weekly
Number of Records in Monthly Updates	6,000	6,500
Database Size	85,000+	1,854,530+
Producer	e-psyche, LLC	APA

Note: *e-psyche*, LLC, 131 Adams Street, NE., Albuquerque, NM 87108-1201 USA., Voice: (505)-348-4965, Fax: (505)-998-3372, Email: <contact@e-psyche.net>, Web: <www.e-psyche.net> American Psychological Association, 750 1st St., NE, Washington, DC 20002-4242, Voice: (202) 336-5650, (800) 374-2722, Email: <psycinfo@apa.org>, Web: <www.psycinfo.com>

TABLE 2
FREQUENCY OF HITS ON SELECTED TERMS IN *e-psyche* AND *PsycINFO*

<i>Terms</i>	<i>e-psyche</i>	<i>PsycINFO</i>	<i>Unique Hits</i>
Betrayal (1998+)	12	75	7
Implicit Leadership (1998+)	3	13	0
Intergroup & Interpersonal (1999+)	12	72	1
Discrimination & Stereotypes (1998+)	16	92	3
Discrimination & Prejudice & Social (1998+)	12	138	2

source journals which are not indexed in *PsycINFO*, may be a productive database when used alone or in combination with *PsycINFO*. While *PsycINFO* is usually an adequate and premier bibliographic source in psychology (Perry & Dana, 1985), our results provide sound evidence that when a comprehensive literature review is desired, researchers would be advised to use *PsycINFO* and *e-psyche* in tandem, to effect superior identification of the scholarly literature.

Several research studies that utilized comparisons of select scholarly databases in the social and behavioral sciences have suggested the use of a multidatabase strategy for obtaining a broad-based bibliographic review (see Brand, 1979; Moore & Finn, 1986; Perdue & Piotrowski, 1990; Piotrowski & Perdue, 1986, 1988). Such strategies in conducting literature reviews are effective since individual databases vary in critical features such as indexing, scope of journal coverage, selected dissertations, journal inclusion of articles, and nonjournal bibliographic coverage. In fact, one study reported that the databases *ERIC*, *Medline*, *Social Scisearch*, and *Sociological Abstracts* are frequently included as part of a multidatabase search strategy (Perdue & Piotrowski, 1991). Moreover, several database vendors offer multifile options as part of their search recommendations (e.g., Dialog's *Dialindex* and Datastar's *Cross Database Search*).

While the searches reported in the current article focus on topics in the field of social psychology, it seems that similar findings would be evident for search descriptors across all topical areas of psychology. However, it would be prudent to confirm such suppositions with additional search strategies based on empirical data. The implications of the current findings for researchers in the field of social psychology are clear. Since the field is interdisciplinary, investigators need to be mindful of the advantages of multifile searching. Secondly, accessing multiple databases *within* a select discipline (e.g., psychology) should provide a more comprehensive and more inclusive bibliography – a worthy goal for any scholarly researcher.

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