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APPARENT DISPLACEMENT EFFECT IN A REMOTE VIEWING EXPERIMENT:

A METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

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We wish to report an apparent displacement of ESP effect in a remote viewing study from the physical characteristics of the remote site to the psychological processes of the agent (traveler). Such displacement is of methodological significance in studying this phenomenon.

Puthoff and Targ (1976) created the basic remote viewing paradigm, in which an agent travels to a randomly selected target site while a percipient, the viewer, attempts to describe what the target site looks like in the absence of sensory cues or previous knowledge about the site. These authors have reported excellent results in a large number of experiments. Hastings and Hurt (1976) adapted this basic procedure to a group viewing situation with excellent results. Twenty of the thirty-six group members correctly chose the remote site from six possible alternatives, a results that would occur by chance less than one in ten million times.

We further modified the rather sophisticated psychological procedure developed by Hastings (AH) for eliciting ESP in group settings for one of us (CT) to use in a two-day workshop on perception and consciousness at the Nebraska Psychiatric Institute, May 17 and 18, 1976. The elicitation procedure will be described in detail elsewhere (Hastings and Tart, in preparation), but, briefly, it consisted of the following steps: (1) immediately asking participants to give themselves personal permission

to do remote viewing, primarily as a way of activating resistances to carrying out this rather unusual act; (2) asking if anyone experienced any "reluctances or hesitations" as a result of giving themselves this permission, and letting people express these reluctances and hesitations, with CT acknowledging such expressions without arguing about them; (3) dividing participants into teams of a coach and viewer, with the viewer actually attempting to do the ESP task and the coach's job being to help him sort out his imagery and to record impressions; (4) instructing the viewers in how to relax and quiet their minds; (5) having them practice this procedure by trying to get impressions about a target slide in a sealed envelope; (6) collecting viewers' notes on their impressions of the target slide and then providing feedback by showing the target slide and allowing some discussion as to how well the viewers thought they had done; (7) introducing the remote team, the agents, who would travel to the remote site; (8) randomly selecting a remote site, as explained in detail below, and sending off the agents; (9) taking a brief break while the agents were traveling to the remote site; (10) reconvening, giving instructions to the teams to relax and turn their attention inward; (11) a silent five-minute period for viewing the remote site, beginning at the time the agents were due to be at the remote site; (12) a five-minute period in which the viewer described his salient impressions (from the previous five-minute period and ongoing) to the coach, the coach noting these down; (13) a brief period for the coach to ask questions that might clarify the viewer's impressions, specifically whether the target site appeared to be indoors or outdoors, whether there were lots of people around or it was relatively deserted, the dominant emotional tone, and any outstanding colors or forms; (14) collection of viewers' notes, including any sketches they had made (they retained a carbon copy); (15) viewing six slides of possible target sites, including reading aloud suggestions that had been included in the

traveling instructions as to appropriate things the agents might do there; (16) each viewer, coach, and team ranking their impressions for degree of similarity to each of the six possible remote sites; (17) collecting these ratings; (18) a hand count vote on the number of first plus second choices assigned to each location to see if there was some group consensus as to the target; and (19) finally bringing the agents back to the auditorium to have them reveal which site they actually went to.

We shall consider the results of the attempts to get impressions of the sealed slide first. This was introduced in a relaxed way as primarily being for the purpose of "warming up" the participants to the later remote viewing task. The teams were asked specifically to not have any impressions/^{related} to the later remote target, and given a moment to instruct their minds to so do. The procedure was basically the same as in the later remote viewing part of the experiment, including the coaches asking questions about indoors or outdoors, etc., questions which were somewhat irrelevant to viewing the slide.

The target slide had been selected by CT before leaving for Omaha by randomly picking it from a set of four slides of art works (Chagall's "The Yellow Rabbi," Dali's "The Sacrament of the Last Supper," Tamayo's "Animals," and Dali's "Persistence of Memory") that had been used very successfully as targets in a telepathic dream study at Maimonides Medical Center (Ullman, Krippner, & Feldstein, 1966). The particular slide selected was Dali's "The Sacrament of the Last Supper," a beautiful and unearthly painting showing Christ and his twelve disciples at a long, low table, celebrating the last supper. A geometric framework surrounds the scene and a vista of the sea, boats, and mountains shows in the background. Since CT knew what the slide in the sealed envelope was, this was a GESP test, although he did not unseal the envelope to concentrate on it at the time of testing. In order to prevent CT from saying anything that might give a hint as to the slide's

content, he adhered to the formal protocol for testing that had been prepared before the particular target slide had been chosen.

Immediately after the participants had handed in their response sheets, CT unsealed and projected the target slide, and many participants reported that they felt their imagery had corresponded quite well to (aspects of) the target. To objectively test this, all four slides, without any indication of which had been the target, were given to AH, who had not been involved in the target selection. He was to match each team's response to the slide it most resembled. For the results of 28 teams, he correctly matched the "Sacrament of the Last Supper" to 24 of these, yielding a CR of 7.42,* with a probability of less than 10^{-13} . Even allowing for some possible stacking effect, these results are so striking that there seems little reason to doubt that the participants, as a group, showed a very high level of ESP functioning.

AH was familiar with the earlier Maimonides study (Ullman, Krippner, & Feldstein, 1966) using this target material, and noted that the remote viewing set given by the instructions in the present study may have been responsible for a noticeable difference in the kinds of responses seen. In the Maimonides study the participant usually had associations to the target (e.g., a Christmas catalog) rather than fairly direct perceptions of its formal characteristics, whereas with the remote viewing set the indicators leading to successful judging dealt primarily with the form of the target, e.g., the geometrical structure, the windows, the ocean, and mountains. We plan to deal with this in detail in a future publication on judging tactics (Hastings and Tart, in preparation).

The results of the following remote viewing experiment were more complex. Table 1 shows the distribution of combined first and second choice responses to the six slides of remote sites used. These six sites were a mortuary, a room with a fountain inside the Joclyn Art Museum, a church with rather

* The exact binomial probability (1-tailed) of $\frac{24}{28}$ hits in 28 trials, when the probability of a hit is $\frac{1}{4}$, is 2×10^{-11} .

striking architecture, a Woolworths Store at a shopping center, a book store, and a print shop. These six slides had been selected by CT the evening before the experiment from a larger set of about 60 slides of possible remote sites. These 60 slides had been collected a few days before at CT's request by the coordinator of the workshop, who also acted as the principal agent. Since she and her husband acted as the agents to travel to the remote site, it is important to note that the agents had a knowledge of the total target pool, although they did not know which half-dozen slides CT had picked (on the basis of strong discriminability) from that pool.

When the agents returned to the auditorium, CT had turned over the black-board tabulating the votes so the agents could not see how the participants had responded. Before revealing the site the principal agent immediately apologized for "messing up the experiment." She explained that they had, as per the decision from an electronic random number generator (a Hewlett-Packard Model 25 scientific calculator with a random number program), picked the fifth envelope from the previously shuffled stack of six after leaving the building, and on opening it found the intended target site had been the room with the fountain in the Jocllyn Art Museum. The other agent immediately commented that the Jocllyn Museum was closed on Mondays and so they couldn't go there. A check of a telephone book revealed that the Museum was indeed closed on Mondays. The principal agent felt very upset about this, but the other agent suggested that if the fifth target was impossible, then counting down five in the stack of target envelopes meant that they would have to take the sixth envelope, so they opened it and found the target site was the church, which they got to on time.

The principal agent (who was personally known to many of the workshop participants) also indicated that she had been hoping all through the experiment,

up to the time she actually opened the envelope, that the mortuary would be picked as the remote site, for two reasons. First, an old friend of hers had died a few days before and his funeral had taken place (at a different mortuary in town) earlier that afternoon; she had wanted to go to the funeral but couldn't because of her obligation to act as agent. Second, the agents did not start out until late in the afternoon and she was worried that they might not be able to get a parking place at many of the possible remote sites, but she was sure they would be able to get a parking place at the mortuary.

In terms of the remote target site actually chosen, the church, the ranking was clearly inaccurate, as can be seen in Table 1. Looking at the viewers' choices, there was a clear preponderance of first and second choices for the mortuary, the target site the principal agent had strongly wanted to be chosen, a second vote for the Joclyn Art Museum, where the agents had been supposed to go, and a third vote for the site they'd actually gone to. The coaches' votes (they were asked to separately vote on the basis of their viewers' impressions), as well as the consensus vote of viewer and coach of each team, also showed a preference for the mortuary, with the Joclyn Art Museum and the church also getting very high votes.

Given that the slide viewing experiment showed a very high level of ESP talent within this particular group using this psychological procedure, it is plausible to interpret the remote viewing results not as a failure of ESP to work at all, but as a displacement of the ESP from the target site itself to the psychological processes of the principal agent. Indeed, one viewer insisted that her impressions were that the agents could not get to the target site they were intended to go to. We plan to carry out more detailed analyses of this possible displacement.

One of the advantages of the remote viewing procedure for eliciting ESP seems to be the "realness" and distinctness of the target site, as opposed to

the more abstract quality of symbolic material of the type usually used in ESP experiments (cards, e.g.). There is considerable evidence for many kinds of displacement effects in more conventional ESP research paradigms (see, e.g., Rao, 1966), and our results suggest that displacement can also occur in the remote viewing procedure.

While the viewers can be instructed to try to focus on the site rather than the agents' reactions or impressions, it is certainly natural for them to be concerned with the agents' reactions, and, indeed, the agents' actions and experiences are a part of the target. Information about these reactions cannot ordinarily be incorporated in a formal judging procedure: since what the agents do at the site might be affected by temporally localized experiences that they have in common with the viewers as well as the characteristics of the site, this might inadvertently give clues to a target. We attempted to overcome this by specifying appropriate things to do at each target with the traveling instructions, and think this procedure should be followed in remote viewing experiments.

Judging from our results it would probably be wise to have the agents ignorant of the various sites in the target pool, instruct them to try to not anticipate possible sites, and have them chauffeured to the site by someone not otherwise connected with the experiment or known to the viewers. This might eliminate or reduce displacement effects in future studies of the remote viewing type.

This apparent displacement to the psychological processes of the principal agent is, of course, a post hoc finding, and there may be alternative explanations for our results. The viewers might have been astonished enough with their success on the previous slide experiment to be frightened and so have their ESP turned off, there might be inherent differences in doing remote viewing versus a slide GESP test, or fatigue might have set in. We are inclined to the

displacement explanation, given its ubiquity in other types of ESP experiments, and the primary purpose of this report is to alert others working with the remote viewing procedure to it.

References

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