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COMMENTS BY CHARLES T. TART:

In a paper in this issue of ZS, Karnes, Susman, Klusman and Turcotte (1980) report an experiment in which they were unable to obtain evidence for ESP of the sort described as "remote viewing." If they had obtained such positive evidence, however, their study would have had to be considered only suggestive, at best, because of a serious methodological flaw.

Karnes et al. state that "The order of target sites to be used for the trials was determined by a table of random numbers. The principal author was the only person aware of the identity of the target sites and the order of use. Subjects were contacted by phone and were scheduled for the experimental sessions at their convenience. Assignment of target sites for each sender-receiver pair was determined by order of appearance. Sender-receiver pairs met the principal author at this office. They were read a set of instructions"A fundamental rule of sound parapsychological research was violated. The principal author (Karnes), knowing which target site a particular sender was going to, nevertheless engaged in sensory interaction with the receiver. This created the possibility of subtle cueing of the receiver by the principal investigator as to qualities of the target site.

It has been a rule for decades in scientific parapsychological investigation that no person with knowledge of the targets should be permitted sensory contact with the subject, especially fairly prolonged and complex interaction such as seems to have occurred in the Karnes et al. study. From my reading, this apparent flaw also appears to have occurred in two earlier studies by Karnes and Susman (1979) and by Karnes, Ballou, Susman, and Swaroff (1979).

I would certainly be personally (but not professionally) sympathetic to Karnes if he felt that his interactions with his subjects were controlled by him so that he was subjectively certain that he did not give out any such cues, but the importance of eliminating any possibility of sensory cueing has been emphasized many times by both critics and parapsychologists. If Karnes and his colleagues do any further research in this area, I hope they will eliminate this methodological flaw.

There are also a number of important procedural differences between the present and earlier Karnes et al. studies and the prototype remote viewing procedure developed at Stanford Research Institute, but I shall delay commenting on these, pending a systematic study of differences in a number of variables across all remote viewing studies to date.

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