

Remote Viewing in a Group Setting

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Abstract—Remote viewing (RV) is a perceptual ability whereby individuals are able to describe and experience objects, pictures, and locations that are blocked from ordinary perception, either by distance, shielding, or time. RV is usually carried out as a team effort, consisting of a viewer who is attempting to describe a target, and an interviewer who assists the viewer in exacting images and sensations from his or her subconscious process. We report a RV experiment carried out at a conference in Arco, Northern Italy, with a class of 24 participants, many of whom were healers and “energy workers.” Based on previous work of the authors, great attention was given to creating a feeling of community and coherence of intention within the group during the three-day class. In the fourth of the five sessions of the class, a formal, RV experiment was conducted with class members working in pairs, wherein each person served alternately as viewer and interviewer. Viewers were asked to describe a picture of an outdoor scene, encased in an opaque, sealed envelope, which they would be shown immediately after the session. The interviewer then was directed to take the viewer’s sketches and written impressions to the front of the room and rank order the material (from 1 to 4) against the four possible pictures from a preset target package. In this blind-ranking protocol, 6 first-place matches would be expected by chance from the 24 viewers. Instead, 14 first-place matches were achieved. The binomial probability of this outcome is 5×10^{-4} , with an effect size $Z/(N)^{1/2} = 0.64$

Keywords: remote viewing—psi—ESP

Introduction

The remote viewing (RV) protocol that was developed in 1972 by scientists at Stanford Research Institute has now been in the public domain for more than 25 years. This perceptual processing technique pertains to the acquisition and description by mental means of verifiable information about the physical universe that is blocked from ordinary sensory perception by distance or shielding (Puthoff and Targ, 1976). The authors have many years of experience conducting RV studies, in which effect sizes $Z / (N)^{1/2} = 0.6$ and greater

are not unusual. We often have attributed this degree of success to the energy and positive expectation that the experimenters bring to each session. This experimental ambiance and communicated expectation was described in detail in a 1990 Parapsychological Association Conference panel, "Increasing Psychic Reliability" (Targ *et al.*, 1991). ESP experiments in group and classroom settings have traditionally had low effect sizes, 0.2 or less. This is attributable principally to a lack of attention, coherence of feelings, seriousness of purpose, and motivation in the group, combined with the use of unselected and untrained subjects and a lack of trial-by-trial or otherwise timely feedback to the subjects (Honorton and Ferrari, 1989). The purpose of the experiment described here was to determine if we could overcome these obstacles and carry out a successful experiment in a group setting with people who were previously unknown to each other.

The Arco Experiment

For a phenomenon thought in many circles not to occur (Hyman, 1996), we have learned a great deal about how to increase and decrease the accuracy and reliability of RV. Remote viewers often can contact, experience, and describe a hidden object or a remote natural or architectural site based on the presence of a cooperative person at the location, geographical coordinates, or some other target demarcation, which we call an address. Shape, form, and color are described much more reliably than the target's function or other analytical information. In addition to this vivid visual imagery, viewers sometimes describe associated feelings, sounds, smells, and even electrical or magnetic fields. Blueprint accuracy sometimes can be achieved, and reliability in a series can be as high as 70%. With practice, people become increasingly able to separate out the psychic signal from the mental noise of memory, analysis, and imagination. Targets and target details as small as 1 mm can be perceived. Again and again, we have seen that accuracy and resolution of RV targets are insensitive to variations in distance (Targ and Katra, 1998).

With this goal in mind, the authors accepted an invitation to conduct a 15-hour RV workshop at the 20th International Astra Meeting, called "Rights of Passage," in Arco, Italy (October 12–15, 1999). Astra publishes a widely read metaphysical magazine in Italy and conducts an annual conference on a variety of esoteric subjects in cooperation with residents and city officials of the town of Arco in the foothills of the Italian Alps. We accepted the invitation to introduce a class of 24 Italian students to spiritual healing and to teach them how to perform RV.

Outline of the Workshop

We had five 3-hour sessions with our 24 students. Everything that we wished to communicate to our students had to be translated into Italian, sentence by sentence. In the first morning session, we described our proposed program

and introduced the students to the idea of remote viewing and spiritual healing. An overview of the material was presented, together with numerous slides from previous experiments, showing what can and cannot be expected from RV. We discussed the necessity of separating the so-called psychic signal from mental noise. We shared our belief that RV is a natural and widely distributed ability for which everyone, to a greater or lesser degree, has the potential. The emphasis of this session was on how to do the mental processing for real-time RV with immediate feedback. The session ended with each participant doing RV of a "small, interesting object" that the authors had brought for them to psychically observe and describe. This was, of course, not a double-blind trial because the person guiding the students in their efforts knew the object. The purpose of the exercise was to show the students the variety of questions that an interviewer can ask regarding the shape, texture, size, weight, type of material, color, possible use, and so forth, as he or she leads the viewer to look for surprising mental images. After the trial, the students were each given a small opaque paper bag, asked to put a small object into it, and bring it to the next morning's class.

The afternoon session was experiential and dealt with meditation, group coherence, and spiritual healing. There was great attention given to building rapport and trust, both between the experimenters and the students and among the students themselves. To achieve this, we conducted a lengthy, guided meditation with music and a guided experience of "energy sharing" among pairs of students.

In the third session, the second morning, the students divided themselves into pairs. They took turns being interviewers and viewers for the objects each had brought to the session. This activity also was not a double-blind trial, but it gave the students another opportunity to look for mental pictures that correspond to something outside their experience. We did not want to use pictures for this training, because we hoped to keep their mental slates "clean" for the pictures we would use in the formal experiment in the next session.

The fourth session (held on October 14, 1999, from 3 to 5 p.m.) was a formal experiment, described below. The fifth and final session was carried out the next morning. It included a discussion of the experiment and the spiritual implications of psychic abilities. We asked, what do the spiritual healer, the mystic, and the psychic have in common? We proposed that they are all in touch with their nonlocal, interconnected mind and their community of spirit. In the spirit of the conference, we suggested that as we approach the millenium, in every area of human activity, we are experiencing a climax in which science and religion are finally becoming coherent in the exclamation of a single, unified truth. Recent research in areas as different as distant healing and quantum physics are in agreement with the oldest of spiritual teachings of the sages of India, who taught that "separation is an illusion," suggesting that we have an inner knowledge of time and space.

In this final session, we observed that the in-flow of information, which is

the hallmark of RV, and the out-flow of intention, which plays a part in facilitating distant healing, are on either side of the quiet mind and the stillness that can arise between them. Perhaps narrowly focusing on the omniscience of ESP is simply a trap that prevents us from discovering who we really are and how we might direct our life's attention. Whenever any one person demonstrates an ability beyond the ordinary, it can be seen as an inspiration to the rest of us, indicating an immense and still largely undeveloped human potential.

Experimental Protocol

The formal experiment in the fourth session was a demonstration-of-ability test to determine if the students could actually show some RV capability. Before leaving for Italy, we had prepared 24 file folders, each with four target pictures. The 8×10 color pictures were carefully selected from the 20,000 Corel Professional Photos available on a set of 200 CD ROMs, which were made available to us by Dr. Edwin May of the Laboratories for Fundamental Research. The pictures each contained a central focus, such as a mountain, waterfall, lighthouse, windmill, bridge, tall building, ruins of various descriptions, pyramid, trees, coastline, and so forth. Each group of four pictures was carefully assembled so as to have as few overlapping pictorial elements as possible. One picture from each group then was put into an opaque, tamper-resistant envelope, and then the envelope was sealed. These pictures were selected randomly, and then filtered to provide a representative mixture of possible targets to avoid any accidental stacking that could occur if, for example, we had an overrepresentation of waterfalls, or bridges. We keyed each envelope by number to the target folder to which it belonged.

To carry out the experiment, the group again divided themselves into pairs. From each pair, the person who was to be the first interviewer came to the front of the large, dimly lit meeting room and was given a sealed envelope containing a picture. Each interviewer then proceeded to elicit from their partner his or her impressions of the picture that was in the envelope. They also could describe their impression of the same picture because it would be shown to them for feedback right after their session. The interviewers then asked their partners to draw sketches and to write down any key words, both of which were to reflect their mental image of the target picture.

When interviewers felt that they had a coherent description from their partner viewer, they brought the remarks and sketches to the front of the room and gave their material to one of the two assistants. The sealed envelope was then carefully opened under the front table, out of sight, and the picture inside was randomized into the folder with the other three pictures of its set. Because these pictures had all been used previously, many of them had little wrinkles around the edges; any wrinkles caused by handling in this experiment was not thought to be a factor. The folder then was given to an assistant, who spread the four pictures out on a table. The interviewer was then asked to rank the

four pictures from 1 to 4 in accordance with their estimation of best to worst match to their viewer's description. Neither of the assistants working with the interviewer had any knowledge of which of the four pictures was the target picture. After the assignment was made, the correct picture was identified by the independent scientist tracking the target pictures that were selected from the target folders. The interviewer then took the correct target picture (regardless of its rank) back to the viewer for feedback.

Results

The first group of 12 viewers received eight first-place matches ($p = .0028$, $h = .863$). The second group of 12 obtained six first-place matches ($p = .0544$, $h = .52$). The overall result of the experiment found 14 first-place matches for the 24 students ($p = .0005$, $h = .69$), with a 58.3% hitting rate. There were two second-place matches, four third-place matches, and four fourth place matches.

In Figure 1, we show the sketch produced by Viewer 1 to finish the RV task. Viewer 1 was a highly regarded Italian energy healer; his wife was his interviewer, and she was known as a psychic practitioner in her own right. Within 1 minute of the interviewer receiving the target picture in its envelope, she returned with Viewer 1's sketch. After seeing the four possible pictures, it took the interviewer no time at all to identify the correct one, an image with pillars. In the illustration, the word *cielo* is Italian for sky. It is interesting to note that Viewer 1 was in no way limited in his drawing by the edges of the paper he was given. Figure 2 shows a drawing made by Viewer 2, a psychotherapist, who was interviewed by a good friend. This interviewer also had no difficulty choosing the correct picture from the four offered, which was a picture with the domed buildings and cross-hatched windows.

Discussion

Teaching RV is one thing, but teaching it entirely through a translator seemed like a daunting task because of our belief in the importance of intimacy and coherence in the process. We present this experiment here to function as a possible aid to other researchers who are called upon to demonstrate or teach psychic abilities in a group setting. We did not carry out a double-blind comparison of this approach with other possible methodologies. Nonetheless, what we describe here reflects many years of success in eliciting psi from inexperienced students. It was the success of this experiment that made us feel it was worthwhile to describe our approach.

We believe that the success of this experiment can be attributed to several factors. Perhaps most important, all of the participants were self-selected to take part in a RV training program for which they had to pay in advance. Also, the 20 women and 4 men in the class all considered intuition at least a moderately important part of their professional work as healers, therapists, and

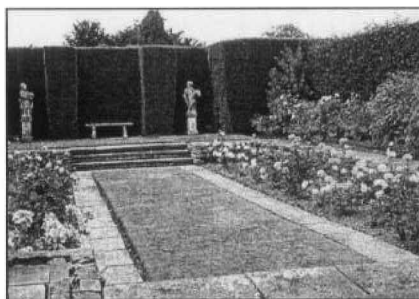
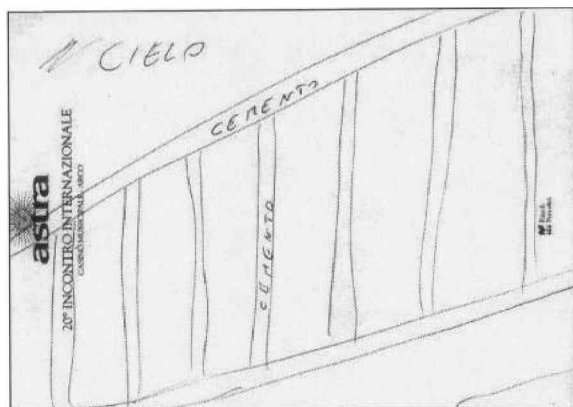


Fig. 1. Sketch by Viewer 1 at top, together with actual target picture (lower left) and three decoys.

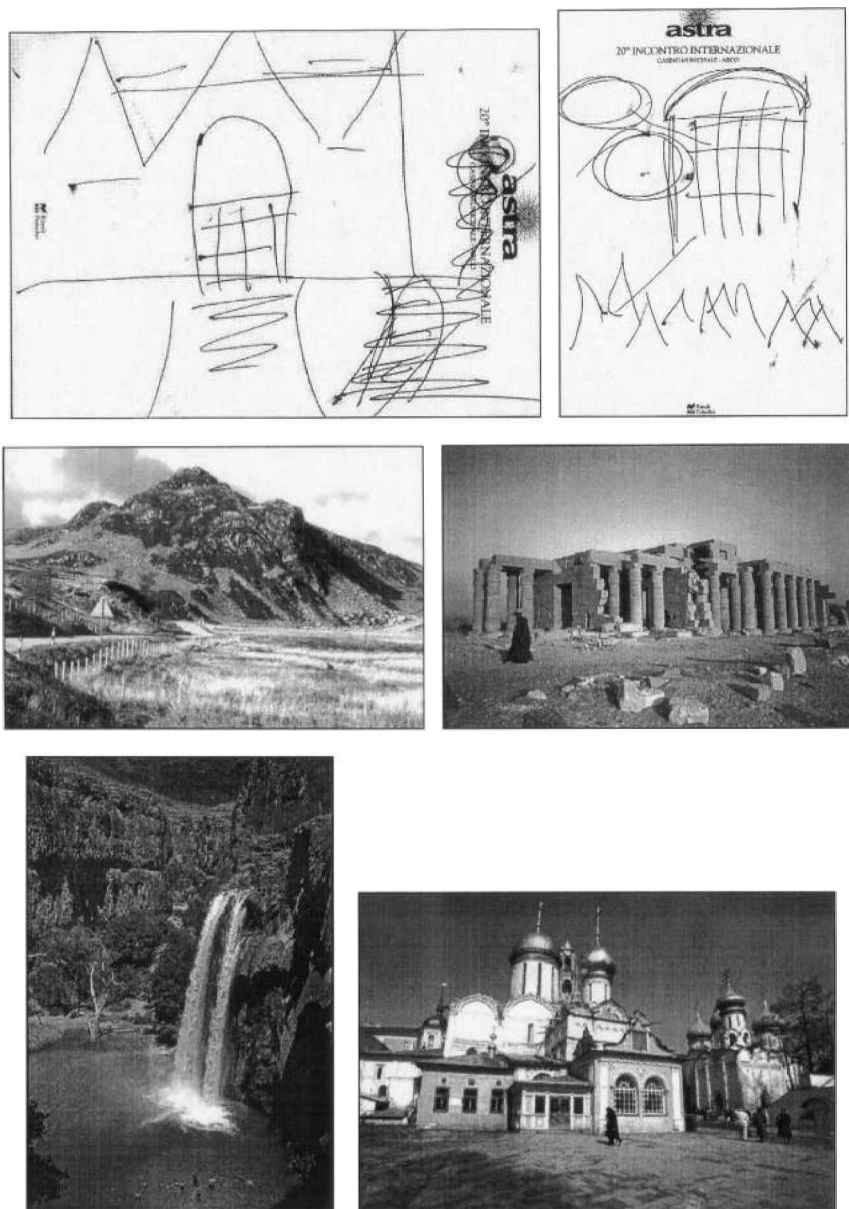


Fig. 2. Sketches by Viewer 2 at top, together with actual target picture (lower right) and three decoys.

physicians. We further believe it was helpful to have found a way to give the students practice in RV with an interviewer through the use of small objects, which did not contaminate their mental imagery with pictures resembling their target pictures. Thus, we were able to work with "first timers" who actually had some practice in RV. It is likely that the use of large, clear, colorful, easy-to-describe targets was an additional helpful element. Finally, we wish to point out that the effect sizes seen in this experiment are analogous with effect sizes seen in the recently published future forecasting experiment by the authors (Targ and Katra, 1998), and the 36 trial experiment carried out many years ago with six army volunteers at Stanford Research Institute (Targ, 1994). These intelligence officers achieved an overall effect size of 0.63, comparable to the 0.69 seen in this experiment. We consider these results typical for a well-conducted RV experiment. These experiments differed from many of the usual RV cases in that no one knew the correct answer at the time of the experiment. Therefore, this study would be considered one of the clairvoyance type, with only the final feedback providing a possible precognitive channel.

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