hypnosis

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# THE EFFECTS OF HYPNOSIS ON REMOTE VIEWING QUALITY

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## ABSTRACT

Two remote viewers participated in an experiment to determine whether the overall quality of remote viewing (RV) would be enhanced by a hypnotic trance. Each viewer participated in 16 RV sessions while in trance. No significant evidence of psychoenergetic functioning was obtained, and comparisons with previous work by the same viewers were therefore rendered moot. Implications of these results for further research are discussed.




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# I INTRODUCTION

## A. Overview

Since the time of Mesmer, hypnosis has been associated with purported manifestations of psychic ability. In his four-volume classic, Dingwall[1]* compiled anecdotal evidence of this association. Recent experimental work comparing extrasensory perception (ESP) performance after hypnotic induction with performance under control conditions has been reviewed by Honorton and Krippner[2] and Schechter.[3] With a total of 25 such comparisons, in 20 papers from 10 different laboratories, both investigations found a persistent effect in favor of the hypnotic condition. Given that the bulk of psychoenergetic research at SRI International (SRI) has focused on the remote viewing (RV) phenomenon and its enhancement, the possibility that hypnosis might be used to facilitate higher-quality RV held some attraction.

An in depth study of the experimental literature raised several problems with doing hypnosis research. One is the difficulty in determining exactly what variables associated with hypnosis are responsible for enhancing an effect. Due to individual differences in hypnotic susceptibility, most hypnosis studies use a same-subjects design. That is, subjects engaged in hypnotic research are used as their own waking controls. But in the above-referenced studies it was unclear whether the scoring advantage for hypnosis, was due to the induction itself or to the percipients' and experimenters' positive expectations for hypnosis since subjects' and experimenters' were never blind to condition..

A second problem was encountered in that, of the studies cited in the review articles, only three used free response tasks as the test of psychic functioning, and of these, one used remote viewing (RV) as the psychic test. Although a significant effect for the hypnosis condition was reported, the study was described in such a way that the difference could not be evaluated.[4] Palmer and van der Velden[5] reported a study using RV of magazine pictures with a hypnosis condition but found no significant psychic functioning in the hypnosis condition. Their study used 150 subjects in groups of 8 to 16 for one session with no waking controls, an extremely poor design at best. The obvious conclusion is that new territory is being broken with regard to experimental work using hypnosis and RV.

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* References may be found at the end of this report.

With the above difficulties in mind, the SRI Cognitive Sciences Program initiated a multiyear effort to determine whether hypnosis could be used to improve RV scores. During FY 1987, we conducted a pilot experiment with one viewer to discover whether hypnosis could be used as a memory aid to recall unreported RV material following a standard RV session. In that study, a standard RV session was conducted followed by the induction of a hypnotic trance. When the trance was established, the hypnotist gave specific suggestions for directing the viewer's mind toward target-related information from the preceding viewing. A post-hypnotic suggestion was given to associate all the remembered material to the word "target." The trance was terminated and a second RV of the same target was produced.

The assumption for the pilot study was that hypnosis would enhance RV data in the second viewing of the same target because it would provide access to unconscious, target-related material that was acquired, but not reported, during the first RV. No evidence of RV was found in the pre-hypnosis RVs, but significant evidence of RV ability was found in post-hypnotic sessions. However, this pilot study suffered from the same design flaw as previous psychic experiments with hypnosis, in that the subject was not blind to experimental condition, although a counterbalanced random protocol was used. One method of correcting this problem would be to use as a baseline for comparison previous responses from viewers who had participated in similar earlier studies. Putting the same viewers through RV trials with hypnosis could yield data uncontaminated by subject expectations.

## B. Objective

In the pilot work noted, the RV monitor observed that in all RV sessions following hypnosis the viewer was in a more internally focused and relaxed state than in the control condition (a proofreading task between RV sessions). The question arose as to whether the hypnotic trance could be used to specifically prepare and guide a viewer through an RV session. In order to test this question as well as improve on previous design shortcomings where viewers were not blind to condition, we designed an experiment where hypnosis was utilized as a method for clearing away mental distractions and giving specific suggestions for focusing on the RV task prior to doing a remote viewing. Remote viewings subsequently done while still in trance could then be compared to a baseline of viewings from previous studies by the same viewers but without hypnosis, to judge the efficacy of the hypnotic procedure.*

* This report constitutes the deliverable for Objective E, Task 3.

# II METHOD OF APPROACH

## A. Hypothesis

The rationale for conducting this experiment rested on the assumption that improved RV could be achieved using the highly focused, relaxed state produced by hypnosis to guide the RV process. This state would be characterized not only by the relative reduction of external distraction but also by the reduction of distracting internal thoughts, associations, memories, and feelings. It was hypothesized that the hypnotic procedure would maximize the reduction of internal noise prior to an RV session, facilitating a lock on the RV signal line and thus improving RV quality when compared to non-hypnotic RV. In addition, it was hypothesized that providing feedback to the viewer while still in trance could serve to cement the associative process between the internal experience of the target details and the target itself.

## B. Viewer Selection

Two experienced remote viewers who had participated in previous studies provided the data for this experiment. One viewer had shown significant RV ability in studies using an outbound RV protocol but had failed to produce a significant series using *National Geographic* magazine photographs as targets. The other viewer was a relative novice who showed some qualitative RV ability in a novice training study conducted in FY 1986 and had participated in a feedback experiment in FY 1987 without showing independently significant results. It was hoped that the hypnosis procedure would improve RV scores for both viewers when compared with the previous studies.

Prior to their participation in the study each viewer was administered the *Stanford Hypnotizability Scales*, both to aid in developing individually specific RV protocols and because previous work has shown a relationship between high hypnotizability and high scoring on psychic tasks.[6]

## C. Target selection

One hundred *National Geographic* photographs of natural scenes previously chosen as a pool of potential targets for RV experiments were arranged in 20 packets of 5 targets each.

The 5 targets within a packet were selected on the basis of their dissimilarity (i.e., to be as different from one another as possible). A specific target appeared in one and only one packet. Targets were stored individually in a manila folder for ease of handling during the experiment. When a target was selected for a trial, the folder containing the target was removed from the stack of targets and placed in a designated spot for the trial.

Target selection for a specific trial was conducted just before each experimental RV session by a research assistant after the viewer, hypnotist, and monitor were sequestered in the remote viewing room. While they were aware of the general nature of the pool, the viewer, experimenter, hypnotist, and assistant remained blind to the specific target photograph until after each trial was completed. Using a pseudorandom algorithm seeded by a computer system clock, a target packet was selected from the target pool and, by the same technique, a target was selected from within the designated packet. Targets were chosen with replacement, so that the same target could be selected more than once. A total of 16 targets was randomly selected for 16 experimental trials for each subject.

### D. Hypnosis Procedure

Since our interest was in the highest-quality hypnosis procedure, we decided to hire an experienced professional. The services of a licensed clinical psychologist with a wide range of both clinical and research experience and training were contracted to administer the hypnotizability scales, assist in the development of individually specific trance inductions, and conduct the hypnosis RV sessions.

After the hypnotizability scales were administered, an interview was conducted with each viewer to determine personal beliefs about RV, methods of preparing for RV, experiences during RV, confidence and characteristics associated with accuracy of RV, and suggestions for helping the viewer perform at the highest level.

On the basis of strengths shown on the hypnotizability scales and specific answers to interview questions, an induction and RV protocol was tailored to the needs of each individual viewer. This included specific instructions for initiating and deepening the trance, suggestions leading to predefined levels of readiness and confidence, assistance in producing an RV response, help in evaluating the response, and presentation of the target stimulus as feedback with evaluation and support while still in trance.

E. Protocol

An experimental trial was conducted as follows. The viewer, monitor and hypnotist were sequestered in an RV laboratory where the hypnotist assisted the viewer into a trance. In another part of the building, an assistant selected a specific target from the pool using a computer random number generator and placed the target in the designated spot. After the trance was established the hypnotist gave specific suggestions to focus on target material, to have a full sensory experience of the target, and to write and/or draw that material on paper provided. Following the RV session the viewer was shown the target photograph as feedback (see Figure 1).

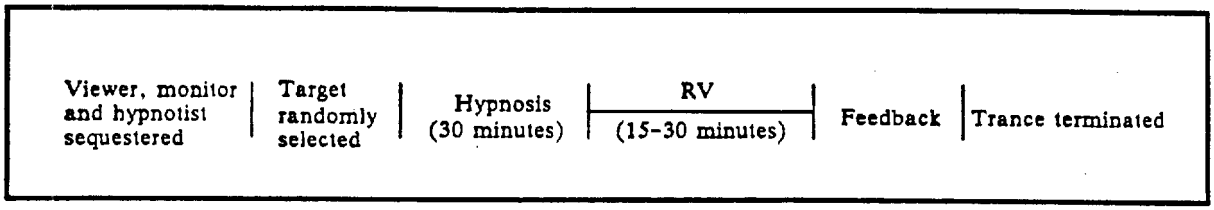


FIGURE 1 (U) SEQUENCE OF EVENTS IN EACH HYPNOSIS TRIAL

F. Analysis

RV responses were ranked using the visual correspondence method by an independent analyst who was blind to the target. In this procedure the target and its four companions from the designated packet were presented in random order along with the viewer's response to an analyst who rank-ordered the targets in order of decreasing similarity to the response (i.e., a rank of 1 means that the target best matches the response, and a rank of 5 means the worst match). The output from each trial was the rank number the analyst assigned to the correct target. The sum of ranks over the 16 trials was used to calculate the p-value for each viewer in the experiment.

# III RESULTS

## A. Hypnotizability scales

Our experienced viewer (No. 372) produced a score of 10 on the 12-point hypnotizability scales, a 92 centile equivalent. Though he was unable to inhibit hand movement on suggestion, failed to respond to a hallucinated voice item, and experienced conflict during value and meaning alterations, he produced a deep state of relaxation, became absorbed in imagery processes, was able to regress, performed posthypnotic suggestions, and showed amnesia and hypermnesia, trance logic, cognitive and role distortion. Imaginal ability was highly rated with the ability to create, manipulate, and experience imagery in all sensory fields especially when the image was positive and productive.

The novice viewer (No. 137) scored a 7 on the hypnotizability scales, a 71 centile equivalent. She produced a deep state of relaxation, showed ability to regress and to be absorbed in imagery, performed posthypnotic suggestions, and showed amnesia. She showed difficulty altering sensory phenomena, did not demonstrate hypermnesia, trance logic, or the ability for cognitive and role distortion. Again, for this viewer imaginal ability was highly rated with the ability to create, manipulate, and experience imagery in all sensory fields.

## B. RV results

The results of the independent judge's rank order for each RV are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

(U) RANK BY SESSION NUMBER FOR 16 TRIALS

| Session No. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Viewer 372 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 5 |
| Viewer 137 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 5 |

The sum of ranks for Viewer No. 372 is 50, with an associated p-value of 0.67. For Viewer No. 137, the sum is 56, with a p-value of 0.93. Since neither of these p-values is significant, it appears that there has been no information transfer in this experiment. Comparisons with previous work by these viewer's would be superfluous, since there is no significant evidence of RV.

# IV DISCUSSION

RV has been demonstrated to be a weak phenomenon such that success on any given study cannot be expected 100 percent of the time. The following discussion focuses on three other possibilities for failure to achieve positive results in this study.

The first possibility is that the hypnotic trance was disruptive to the usual RV processes. Since each of the viewers had participated in well over 100 previous RV trials, their particular methods of producing an RV response were relatively habituated. The viewers received no particular training on how to perform under trance, how the RV experience would differ while in trance, or extensive practice with hypnosis RV sessions. It seems reasonable to conclude that the addition of a training period prior to the taking of experimental data may have produced more positive results.

Conversely it may be that the demands of the RV production process are such that the trance state is not at all conducive to producing high-quality RV. If this is so, then a decrease in performance over time might be expected as the viewers become accomplished at trance induction and deepening. Both viewers showed a tendency in the direction of decreasing performance as the study progressed ($r = 0.510$ with 15 df for viewer # 372, $r = 0.348$ with 15 df for viewer # 137). In the pilot work mentioned above the viewer produced his responses while in the waking state using a stimulus word that served as a post-hypnotic suggestion. Further experimentation may show this to be the more efficient protocol, since it dovetails nicely with our standard stimulus-response method of conducting an RV session.

A second possibility is that the viewers chosen for this study were not the optimal individuals for this work. While ranking relatively high on the scale of hypnotizibility, these particular viewers were not hypnotic virtuosos. Demonstration of an effect using hypnosis may require the most highly susceptible subjects, corresponding to a score of 12 on the *Stanford Hypnotizability Scales*.

A third potential source of interference in the hypnosis task could have been what is known in the parapsychology literature[7] as "displacement." In this instance the term refers to the inability of the viewer to distinguish accurately between elements of the target and elements of its decoys in the target packet. The division of the target pool into 20 packets of five was done arbitrarily for simplicity of judging in another experiment. In prior years a given target

was randomized with decoys from orthogonal target clusters for judging purposes *after* the RV session was concluded instead of before the session. Displacement into the other targets in the packet may have occurred, such that the viewer was confused about exactly what constituted the target. To check this possibility, a new set of decoys for each target was randomly chosen from orthogonal target clusters and a second judging was performed by a different judge. The second judging produced marked variability in the ranks assigned and a decline in the sum-of-ranks, with a p-value for the difference in means between the two judgings of 0.08. While this result does not achieve significance at the usual 0.05 level and may be due to judging differences, it could also suggest displacement effects.

In order to address these issues, future experiments should be designed to eliminate these potential difficulties. Specifically, an attempt seems warranted to replicate the results of the successful pilot work mentioned above, where hypnosis was used as a memory aid and targets were randomized with decoys after the viewing.

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