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*Final Report--Objective B, Task 1
Covering the Period 1 October 1987 to 30 September 1988*

December 1988

MASS SCREENING FOR PSYCHOENERGETIC TALENT USING A REMOTE VIEWING TASK

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ABSTRACT

A screening effort was mounted during FY 1988 to discover individuals who showed natural remote viewing (RV) ability as measured by a laboratory RV task. Out of 196 individuals who participated in the selection process, three persons showed evidence for some skill at the task during further testing.

I INTRODUCTION

A. Overview

Traditionally, psychoenergetic experimenters at SRI International have relied on the remote viewing (RV) of a relatively small number of talented persons in laboratory experiments. But, as the number and nature of experiments and/or applications increases, the necessity for discovering additional talented individuals becomes acute. In FY 1984, in anticipation of more process-oriented experiments, the psychoenergetics project at SRI International began efforts to increase the size of the psychoenergetic talent group for future experimental work. Three directions were pursued; (1) attempts to train selected individuals, (2) mass screening using psychological correlates of psychic functioning, and (3) mass screening using a carefully developed remote viewing task. This report details the third effort conducted during FY 1988.*

B. Objective

Although it has not been documented to what extent psychoenergetic abilities exist in the general population, certain individuals do have a capacity for picking up information not available by known sensory processes. Some of these persons may have had spontaneous experiences that led them to be more or less aware of an extrasensory potential while others with ESP potential have not had such experiences. The goal of the FY 1988 mass screening effort was to find individuals with talent for RV, the ability to give vivid verbal and pictorial descriptions of designated sites and scenes in the absence of sensory contact.

To accomplish this, we developed a two-stage process for screening large numbers of people. The goal was to screen several hundred individuals at the first stage and to invite 10 to 20 of the most promising individuals to participate in four to eight additional laboratory trials in anticipation of finding five to ten individuals who would show robust RV performance.

* This report constitutes the deliverable for Objective B, Task 1

II METHOD OF APPROACH

A. General Description

A two-stage screening process was deployed to find good remote viewers. The first stage included a lecture presentation summarizing RV research conducted at SRI International over the past 15 years. This presentation was designed to attract interested audiences of 50 or more persons. Following the lecture, the audience was asked to volunteer its participation in four RV trials with targets randomly selected from a previously constructed target pool. Based on a qualitative assessment of the RV data collected at the first stage, the second stage consisted of a formal test with selected individuals using independent trials in our RV laboratory.

B. Mass Screening Protocol

1. Targets

A special set of sixteen targets was constructed for the screening procedure. The target pool contained both dynamic (targets with motion) and static (still photographs) targets. Dynamic targets consisted of action film clips edited from popular movies while the static targets were a series of thematically related still photographs shown in succession for five seconds each. The targets ranged in length from approximately 60 to 100 seconds and were stored for ease of retrieval on two video disks.

The sixteen targets were divided into four categories with four targets in each one. Categories included: Military, scientific/industrial, natural/non-technical, and projects. Targets in the first three categories were film clips of the dynamic variety, while each target in the fourth category showed a project title (e.g., Project Blue Book) interspersed with images related to the purpose of the project (e.g., UFOs). Four categories were chosen to allow for the possibility that some types of targets might be easier to view than others. No attempt was made to maintain target orthogonality across categories, but considerable effort was expended to maintain within-category orthogonality.

Two factors were considered in choosing the targets. Within each category the targets were chosen because they were thematic, interesting, and possessed geometric elements that

could be drawn easily. Second, they were selected to be as distinct as possible, so that the other targets within that category could be used as decoys for judging.

Tables 1a-d show the target categories, the specific targets within a category, and a brief description of each target.

Table 1a

MILITARY TARGET AND CATEGORY

Name	Source / Description
Aircraft carrier	<u>Final Countdown</u> --Multiple takeoffs of mostly F-16s. Characterized by triangular shapes and high drama.
Control room	<u>Wargames</u> --Control room sequence. Characterized by rectangular shapes and rotating lights.
Russians in space	<u>Superman IV</u> --EVAs and the collision of two satellites. Characterized by tubular shapes and Russian singing.
Atomic bomb blasts	<u>Atomic Cafe</u> --Continuous series of atmospheric atomic blasts. Characterized by fireballs, bright light, buildings being destroyed, and trees in violent motion.

Table 1b

SCIENTIFIC/INDUSTRIAL TARGET CATEGORY

Name	Source / Description
Bottling factory	<u>Take This Job and Shove It</u> --Bottles on a conveyer belt. Characterized by multiple cylindrical shapes.
Building construction	<u>Steel</u> --Girder construction by helicopter. Characterized by rectangular shapes "floating" in air.
Tacoma Narrows bridge	<u>Documentary on the Bridge Disaster</u> --Wild oscillation of the bridge. Characterized by linear shapes in torsional motion.
Launch of John Glen	<u>The Right Stuff</u> --Single rocket launch. Characterized by singular tubular shape and bright light.

Table 1c

NATURAL/NON-TECHNICAL TARGET CATEGORY

Name	Source / Description
Skiing	<u>The Spy Who Loved Me</u> --James Bond skiing fast. Characterized by snowy mountain scenes and dramatic skiing off a cliff.
Ostriches	<u>Animals are Beautiful People</u> --Ostriches in synchronized dance. Characterized by black and white fluffy birds.
Waterfall	<u>Emerald Forest</u> --Aerial view of a waterfall. Characterized by dramatic vertical falls.
Greek temple	<u>Jacques Cousteau</u> --Helicopter view of the Posiedon temple ruins.

Table 1d

PROJECT TARGET CATEGORY

Name	Source / Description
Manhattan Project	<u>Various Still Photographs</u> --Oppenheimer, Fat Boy, Los Alamos, Oak Ridge, and an air blast.
Project Blue Book	<u>Various Still Photographs</u> --Hynek, UFOs, and "landing" imprints.
Project Deep Quest	<u>In Search Of</u> --Schwartz and others, underwater submersible, and large rectangular block.
Project Ultra	<u>Various Still Photographs</u> --Turing, code machine, and bombed-out cathedral at Coventry.

A preliminary test of the target pool and experimental protocol was carried out using two experienced viewers. In this test, the viewers were not informed as to the nature of the target pool or the target categories. Using a standard double blind RV protocol, Viewer 009 produced verbal and pictorial responses for 20 randomly selected targets from the target pool. Viewer 372 produced eight such responses. Of the 28 combined trials, 14 were ranked as first place matches in a visual correspondence method of judging where a 0.25 probability of a first place match existed by chance. A total sum of ranks of 55 produced a p-value of 0.007 for the mean rank suggesting that the targets were viewable, at least by experienced viewers.

2. Viewers

Viewers were recruited by advertising a seminar on remote viewing and the promise of audience participation in four RV trials. Screening was conducted with two government groups, two separate groups at SRI International, and a group from the Society for Scientific Exploration (SSE). One government group of volunteers was small and we therefore had the ability to use independent trials in this setting. However, the other settings involved larger groups, typically 25 to over 100, with all members participating in the same trial simultaneously.

3. Session Protocol

Viewers and experimenters were kept blind to both target category and the specific target used for each trial. To do this, several hundred target packets were assembled prior to the first screening. Each contained four target names and was locked in a department safe. To prepare a single packet, a research assistant randomly chose one target from each of the four categories and randomly permuted the order of the choices. A slip of paper printed with a target name was placed into a sealed, opaque envelope and numbered to indicate the order of presentation. A packet was formed by sealing the four smaller envelopes into a larger unmarked envelope. The packets were shuffled and, just prior to a screening session, an assistant selected one of the packets for use during that session.

A mass screening session began with an introduction to RV presented by the project director. In addition to a historical review of RV research at SRI International, the presentation included examples of good and not so good RV attempts. Instructions on how to proceed with an RV trial were then given. One RV trial consisted of a period of several minutes for viewers to record their impressions of target material and a minute or so for the presentation of the target film as feedback. Four trials were conducted during each mass screening session.

Prior to each trial, the participants were asked to relax, take a few deep breaths, and try to focus on the task at hand. While the viewers were relaxing, an assistant, stationed in another room some distance from the screening auditorium, opened the packet envelope and selected the small envelope labeled No. 1. The assistant had video copies of the sixteen targets and video equipment with which to view the targets. The assistant's task was to attempt to "send" the target material (mentally) to the viewers. The first trial began when the experimenter sent a signal to the sender (via one telephone ring or similar means) indicating that the audience was ready to begin. The assistant then opened the small envelope selected for that session, found the first target, and began to view it on a television monitor.

As the sender continually and repeatedly viewed the target, the screening participants wrote and/or drew their perceptions on specially prepared forms that provided an original and a carbon copy. At the end of several minutes, the original responses were collected and sealed in an envelope while the viewers retained the copies for comparison with the feedback. After all responses were sealed for safekeeping, a phone call to the sender revealed the target and, with a second copy of the target pool on video disks, the audience was allowed to view the target film clip as feedback. Trials 2, 3, and 4 proceeded in the same manner.

4. Analysis

Quantitative scoring presents several problems when testing groups of viewers. Because all viewers have seen the same four targets, a single judge cannot produce an independent rank ordering for each viewer. Therefore, since the goal was to find natural talent for additional testing, a more qualitative assessment was done by the analysis staff to find any viewers who had produced striking matches to discrete target elements.

Another difficulty with having multiple viewers for the same target material is what is called *stacking* in the parapsychological literature. This refers to the fact that human viewers have common response biases, and if the targets selected happen to correspond to these biases, then the perceived strength of the match can be inflated. For example, if it happens that most people have a tendency to mention water in their first remote viewing trial, and the first target happens to contain a significant amount of water while the remaining targets do not, then a fortuitous match can occur just because of this response bias. If a different set of targets is selected for each viewer, this problem does not occur. Since there was no way address this problem and still screen large groups of people together, a qualitative assessment for the first stage of screening was necessary.

Two independent analysts made the qualitative assessments of the responses from the first level of screening. These assessments formed the basis for deciding which persons to invite for the second-stage screening. The qualitative judging was based on a seven-point rating scale shown in Table 2. Analysts were instructed to start at the top of the scale and find the largest rating that describes the match between a response and its intended target.

Table 2

QUALITATIVE RATING SCALE.

7 = Excellent correspondence, including good analytical detail (e.g., naming the site), and with essentially no incorrect information.
6 = Good correspondence with good analytical information (e.g., naming the function), and relatively little incorrect information.
5 = Good correspondence with unambiguous unique matchable elements but with some incorrect information.
4 = Good correspondence with several matchable elements intermixed with incorrect information.
3 = Mixture of correct and incorrect elements, but enough of the former to indicate viewer has made contact with the site.
2 = Some correct elements, but not sufficient to suggest results beyond chance expectation.
1 = Little correspondence.
0 = No correspondence.

C. Second-Stage Screening Protocol

1. Viewers

The goal of second-stage screening was to select exceptional individuals who could eventually participate in applications-oriented research. Individuals who showed qualitative evidence of RV ability in the mass screening described above, either by producing an average qualitative rating above three or producing a qualitative rating of six or seven on one trial were invited to participate in the second round of screening in an RV laboratory.

2. Targets

Targets for second-stage screening were the same as for first-stage screening.

3. Session Protocol

Since most applications do not provide a sending individual, the sender was eliminated in the second-stage screening. As before, targets were randomly preselected and

their associated target numbers were sealed in opaque envelopes and stored in the department safe. Before each trial, the RV monitor for that trial selected an envelope. A laboratory RV session began with the monitor and viewer seated at opposite ends of a table in an RV laboratory. When the viewer indicated a readiness to begin, the monitor gave a previously agreed-upon stimulus word (i.e., "target"), and the viewer put down target impressions in the form of pictures and/or written words. The session ended when a viewer had exhausted his/her impressions. After copying the response, the monitor and viewer moved to the locked feedback room where target material was stored. The monitor then opened the envelope to ascertain the target number, activated a TV screen and displayed the target filmclip as feedback for the RV session (the viewer, of course, was not allowed to add anything to the response).

4. Analysis

Quantitative analysis presents no problem if each viewer is tested individually as was the case in the second-stage of screening. Each RV response was ranked using the visual correspondence method by an independent analyst who was otherwise uninvolved with the experiment. In this procedure the target and its three companions from the designated category were presented in random order. The analyst 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 4 means the worst match). The output from each trial was the rank number the judge assigned to the correct target. The sum of ranks over the total number of trials was used to calculate p-values and effect sizes (r) for each of the second-stage participants.

III RESULTS

A. Summary

Four groups ranging in size from 12 to 139 were screened at the first stage for a total of 190 individuals. Of that number, 18 showed qualitative evidence of ability to report target-related material, and 9 of the 18 participated in second-stage screening. Two showed strong evidence of RV ability. Six persons in a fifth group were tested with independent trials at the first stage and one showed evidence of RV ability.

B. First-Stage Results

Table 3 shows the results of first-stage screening. A total of 154 individuals participated in two separate screening sessions at SRI International. The first session was conducted in the Geoscience and Engineering Center and was open to Center employees. Fifteen individuals participated in that session and three were selected to participate in second-stage screening. The second session was open to all SRI employees at the Menlo Park facility and 139 persons attended. Twelve of these were selected for additional testing. Twenty-four persons were screened at one government agency. Qualitative judging produced two persons who were selected for second-stage screening. The final group screened was twelve people from the SSE, one of whom was selected to participate in additional trials.

Table 3
RESULTS OF FIRST-STAGE SCREENING

Organization	No. of Participants	No. Selected for Second Stage
SRI International ₁	15	3
SRI International ₂	139	12
Government Agency ₁	24	2
Society for Scientific Exploration	12	1
Government Agency ₂	6	1

One government agency group of viewers was handled a bit differently from other groups screened because of its smaller size and the relatively greater time available for testing (two days). Four SRI researchers conducted the screening series at the government agency site. Six government employees agreed to participate in four viewings each. These individuals were selected randomly (by government personnel) but participation was on a time-available basis. None of the volunteers had previously participated in a remote viewing experiment. A rank order analysis was used to estimate the quality of the remote viewing, but, because each person participated in only four sessions, the power of the statistical test for an individual was extremely low. Thus an individual would have to do exceedingly well in all four trials to provide statistically significant evidence of RV ability. For example, a viewer would need to score four first place matches, or three first place and one second place match, in order to obtain significance in four trials. In contrast, if twice as many trials are considered (8 trials) and the total score is 12 (i.e., the same average performance), the p-value is significant ($p \leq 0.007$). Nonetheless, one participant produced encouraging results with three first place matches and a sum-of-ranks of 6.5 ($p \leq .098$, $r = 0.46$).

C. Second-Stage Results

Excluding the smaller government group, a total of 18 persons from first-stage screening were invited to participate in second-stage screening trials. Of the 18, 9 were able to schedule time to participate in second-stage trials (if there was no possibility of obtaining a significant result at any time after four trials, the person was dropped from the screening). One person discontinued testing after two trials. Table 4 shows the number of trials, sum-of-ranks, p-value, and effect size for the participants in second-stage screening.

Table 4
RESULTS OF SECOND-STAGE SCREENING

Viewer No.	No. of Trials	Sum-of-Ranks	p-Value	Effect Size (r)
689	3	9	0.844	0.50
486	4	11	0.742	
633	5	12	0.500	
890	8	15	0.078	
117	4	12	0.863	
748	4	11	0.742	0.39
330	8	16	0.136	
393	8	21	0.680	
015	2	6	0.812	

IV DISCUSSION

By design, the second-stage screening specified a maximum of eight trials. While it is recognized that the statistical power is thus quite low, nonetheless we were searching for viewers who displayed exceptional natural talent. This eight trial maximum was based on the ability of our calibrated viewers.

Three viewers from the total screened population demonstrated robust RV. While none of the three reached statistical significance, the effect sizes (0.39, 0.46, and 0.50, respectively) indicate that an RV hypothesis accounts for a sizable fraction of the variance (15% to 25%) between good and bad viewers. To put this result in perspective, Rosenthal reports the effect size for two studies, one on the effects of psychotherapy and the other of interpersonal expectancy effects, as being on the order of $r = 0.32$.*

These results are encouraging since several individuals were able to show strong evidence of anomalous information transfer with a relatively low number of trials (time and scheduling prevented testing of all promising persons from the first-stage of screening). Given that these individuals were not preselected and received very little training in how to produce a response, this method of finding additional participants for future experiments shows some merit. Coupling this method with pre-selection criteria that have shown correlations with psychoenergetic function such as results from the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, spontaneous experiences, and an open mind toward the possibility of psychoenergetic phenomena, we could develop an even more efficient procedure.

* Rosenthal, R., *Meta-Analytic Procedures for Social Research*, p. 130, Sage Publications, Beverly Hills, 1984.