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# Methods for Collecting Data Based Upon an Eastern Paradigm of Evaluation

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**Background:** This is one in a series of articles in which the authors attempt to relate Eastern philosophy to contemporary program planning and evaluation.

**Purpose:** The authors examine data collection methods through the lens of Eastern Philosophy.

**Setting:** N/A

**Intervention:** N/A

**Research Design:** Pre-experimental design: one-shot case study.

**Data Collection and Analysis:** The author attempts to "see" a photograph sealed in an opaque envelope.

**Findings:** The author was able to draw a picture that somewhat resembled the photograph. This was one of the author's better attempts at CRV. To be able for him to refine this technique to the point that it might have application for evaluation will no doubt take a long time—if ever. However, it is an intriguing notion.

**Keywords:** *evaluation; remote viewing; Eastern metaphysics; alternative methods.*

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\* The responsibility for opinions expressed in this study rests solely with the author, and the publication does not constitute an endorsement of the opinions expressed here by the International Labour Office nor the Evaluation Capacity Development Group.

## Introduction

Over the past seven years, we have published a trilogy of articles exploring the metaphysics of evaluation from an Eastern perspective. Metaphysics is the branch of philosophy concerned with the basic causes and nature of things. Ontology, epistemology and methodology are all branches of metaphysics.

In the first article (Craig Russon, 2008), I explored a number of ontological questions. Ontological questions deal with the form and nature of reality (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This led me to expound an Eastern paradigm of evaluation.

In the second (C. Russon & Russon, 2009), we explored a number of epistemological questions. Epistemological questions deal with the nature of the relationship between the knower and the object of inquiry (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This led us to propose a new approach to evaluation that integrates Insight Meditation techniques.

The subject of this, the third article of the trilogy, will explore methodological questions. These questions deal with how the knower should go about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

## Ontological and Epistemological Constraints

According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), the answers to methodological questions are constrained by answers already given to the questions of ontology and epistemology. Therefore, we shall briefly summarize some of what we published in the first two articles to provide background and context.

The answer to the ontological question we offered in the Eastern paradigm article was that the nature of reality is interconnected. All things are unified and connected in the Tao (Urban Dictionary, n.d.). This perspective parallels the modern scientific concept of the basic unity of energy-matter.

The answer to the epistemological question that we offered in the Insight Evaluation article was that the knower and the object of inquiry can mutually resonate (i.e., enter into a sympathetic matching of frequencies) with each other.

According to Huai Nan Tzu (LeBlanc, 1985), the reason that mutual resonance operates throughout the universe is that all things, even those that are remote and essentially different, share a common ch'i (energy).

The above constraints have some interesting implications for methodology. We think that if everything is connected and if it is possible to resonate with the object of inquiry, it might be possible to develop uniquely Eastern methods for collecting evaluation data.

Such methods might include remote viewing (千里眼: qian li yan), supernatural perception of the spirit world (阴阳眼: yin yang yan) and energy viewing (風水眼: feng shui yan) (Neutrinoz, 2014). The remainder of this article will focus on the first potential, Eastern method: remote viewing.

## Remote Viewing

In principle, remote viewing should be much like direct observation. Direct observation, of course, involves an evaluator traveling to the site of a project or program to watch behavior, events, interactions, and processes in their natural setting.

The difference between the two is that in remote viewing the evaluator does not travel to the site. She uses mental means to observe a project or program from a different time and/or in a distant place.

The authors concede that the idea of using remote viewing to gather evaluation data may sound a bit far-fetched. However, it was apparently not so far-fetched that it prevented the US government from investing over US\$25 million in its development for intelligence gathering purposes during the Cold War.

Starting in 1972 and continuing for more than two decades, the Central Intelligence Agency, Defense Intelligence Agency, and various military organizations funded several remote viewing programs with mysterious-sounding names such as Grill Flame, Center Lane, Sun Streak and Stargate.

According to persons who were involved, these programs were never independently evaluated by an outside agency. Some contend that sufficient evidence has been declassified to support the claim that remote viewing can yield valid propositions—the kind that might be useful for evaluation.

## Remote Viewing Theory

Remote viewing theory is predicated on the existence of a matrix not dissimilar to the ancient Chinese concept of the Tao or to William James' (1902) concept of cosmic consciousness. (And, apparently, this is where the movie *The Matrix* got its name (Dourif, 2000)).

This matrix has been described as a huge, non-material, highly structured, mentally accessible “framework” of information containing all data pertaining to everything in both the physical and non-physical universe (McNear, 1985; Putoff & Swann, 1983).

The goal of remote viewing is to facilitate the transfer of information along a hypothetical signal line from the matrix to a viewer's subconscious, across the threshold of awareness, and into waking consciousness where it can be “decoded” into a form that can be intelligibly expressed (McNear, 1985; Putoff & Swann, 1983).

The process of transferring information has been divided into discrete achievable levels called stages. Each stage is a natural progression, building on the information received from the previous stage. The six stages are described below (McNear, 1985; Putoff & Swann, 1983):

*Stage I: Major Gestalt.* In this stage, the viewer provides a quick-reaction response to cueing or prompting information (e.g., geographic coordinates such as degrees, minutes, and seconds). The response, known as an ideogram, is a spontaneous graphic representation of all elements of the site taken for their composite interactive meaning.

*Stage II: Sensory Contact.* In Stage II, the viewer begins to receive sensory data associated with the site such as sounds, smells, tastes, textures, temperatures, and energies at the site. In this stage, the data are still non-visual. These are the sensations that the remote viewer would experience were he or she to be physically present at the site.

*Stage III: Dimension, Motion and Mobility.* In Stages I and II, data are received in fragmented data bits. In Stage III, a broader concept of the site begins to emerge. Detailed data and dimensional aspects such as length, height and distances begin to appear. This increased flow of data is known as a “widening of the aperture”.

Once contact with the site is sufficiently strengthened, the viewer begins to have an appreciation of the overall gestalt and physical configuration of the site. This is known as an “aesthetic impact”. At this point, it is possible to begin to represent the site in the form of sketches and drawings.

*Stage IV: General Qualitative Analytical Aspects.* In Stage IV, data of an analytical nature, going beyond normal observational concepts, begin to emerge. Through refinement and expansion of the

previous structure a more complete and detailed decoding of the signal line emerges. Thus, the ambiance of the site (e.g., technical, educational, religious, etc.) can be determined. Cultural factors and functional indicators can also be perceived.

*Stage V: Specific Analytical Aspects by Interrogating the Signal Line.* In Stage V, specific techniques are used to probe or to question the significance of the data in order to produce the more detailed information.

*Stage VI: Three-Dimensional Contact and Modeling.* In Stage VI, the viewer uses various materials such as clay, cardboard, and poster paper to produce three dimensional representations of the site or specific elements at the site location. As such, it is a continuation of the process begun in Stage III.

### *Validity and Reliability*

Using methods that will ultimately lead to valid and reliable propositions is of concern to evaluators. Admittedly, this method could present special challenges. Threats to the validity of the propositions ultimately derived from remote viewing come from our linear, analytic thought processes—those same processes that many of us evaluators have spent our entire careers trying to refine.

As the signal line crosses the threshold of awareness, the mind's conscious analytic processes attempt to interpret what appears to be incomprehensible data coming from an unaccustomed source. This premature interpretation relies heavily upon a combination of imagination and past memories—mental noise. In remote viewing parlance this is known as an “analytic overlay” (AOL) (McNear, 1985; Putoff & Swann, 1983).

The defense against AOL is through the use of proper structure. The term “structure” implies systematically accessing the signal line, going from general to specific, and objectifying the contents by writing them down, using pen and paper, in a formal, sequentially-ordered format. Proper structure suppresses mental noise and helps to ensure that the propositions derived from remote viewing are valid and reliable (McNear, 1985; Putoff & Swann, 1983).

## Learning Structure

It appears that about 90 people were trained to do remote viewing in the covert programs previously mentioned. Once the CIA declassified its archives, many of these people started offering training. There are also websites, such as [www.remoteviewed.com](http://www.remoteviewed.com) that have manuals and other training materials.

Training to perform remote viewing is based on the idea that one does not train someone to be "psychic," but rather teaches a person to follow specifically developed and extensively tested protocols (i.e. structure) that help the viewer to "expand the parameters" of his or her perceptions (McNear, 1985; Putoff & Swann, 1983). It is said that anyone can do it and so I have been playing around with it. Below is an account of one of my sessions.

## Personal Experiences

One type of experiment that I have tried involves trying to "see" what is in a picture sealed in an opaque envelope. Karen selected several photos from old National Geographic magazines, pasted each on a plain white piece of paper and sealed each in a separate Manila envelope. On the outside of the envelope she put a sticky note with the longitude and latitude of the location of the photo.

On 13 June, 2015, I used a die to randomly select one of the envelopes and sat in our bedroom alone with protocol template described in the CRV manual. I took about half-an-hour to enter a meditative state. This involved going from a conscious, awakened state (beta brain waves) to a relaxed, focused state (alpha brainwaves).

When I felt ready, I looked at the geographic coordinates, picked up a pen with my left hand and drew the ideogram found in Figure 1 (below). This ideogram gave me the impression of a large solid structure. I put my pen back on the paper and drew the ideogram found in Figure 2. This ideogram gave me the impression of something that was alive.



Figure 1. First Ideogram

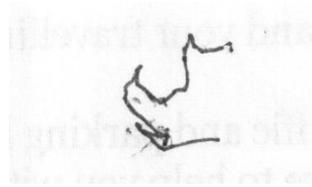


Figure 2. Second Ideogram

The description of Stage II sensory data that I received was: "noisy, animals, dirt floor, grass, enclosure." With this information, I made the sketch found in Figure 3 (Stage III). I did not continue on to Stages IV through VI.

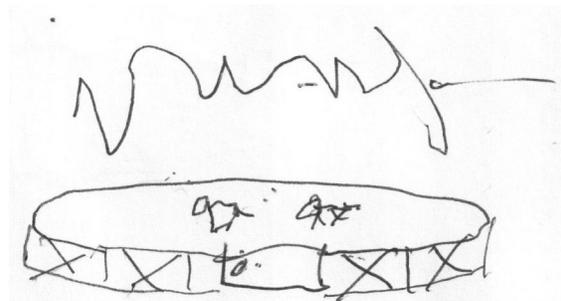


Figure 3. Final Image

After the session was over, I opened the sealed envelope and found part of a photograph (Payne, 1989) featuring the first two elephants of a procession with Mount Kilimanjaro in the background (Figure 4).

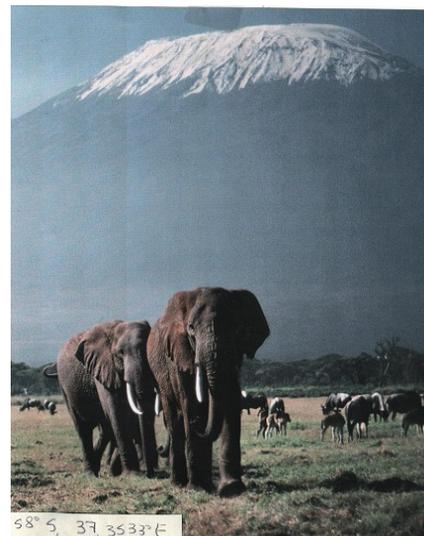


Figure 4. Elephants

This was one of my better attempts at CRV. To refine this technique to the point that it might have application for evaluation will no doubt take a long time—if ever. However, I have a hunch that there

might be people in the evaluation community who are more gifted than I. If you are one of those people and would like to have a conversation, my email is [craigwrusson@gmail.com](mailto:craigwrusson@gmail.com).

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