

# VECUDÉJÀ VÉCU AND DÉJÀ VISITÉ: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES FURTHER RESULTS FROM AN ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

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## ABSTRACT

Over an 8-year period, an online questionnaire, devised as a pilot project, collected exploratory data in order to compare the particularities of déjà vécu (i.e., event related) experiences with those of déjà visité (i.e., location related). In a previous article it was shown that there are sufficient differences in the results for these two experiences to warrant considering them as being separate entities. Here, additional analyses have established a number of relationships that differ across the two phenomena. Their elucidation will require further

investigations with improved research instruments and the studied population will have to be broader based in order to establish if the relationships determined here will be found to be true in the general population.

**Keywords:** Déjà vu, Déjà vécu, Déjà visité, Precognition, Differences

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## INTRODUCTION

There has been thought and speculation about what is commonly called “déjà vu” for at least 200 years.<sup>1,2</sup> Moreover, in his exhaustive and comprehensive book, *the déjà vu experience*,<sup>3</sup> Brown lists 53 definitions of déjà vu and has several chapters that lay out the various theories devoted to explaining and elucidating its causes and origins. He also includes 32 terms that have been used in English publications and includes terms from a number of other languages.

Neppé<sup>4</sup> provided a definition of déjà vu that is now widely accepted and quoted in the research literature: *any subjectively inappropriate impression of familiarity of a present moment with an undefined past*. For many, it is the bewilderment, sometimes even a startle reaction, due to the inappropriateness that is the defining feature of the experience. This then distinguishes a déjà vu experience from what might be termed “anomalous familiarity” where this degree of puzzlement is not present.

Various factors have hampered scientific research into these intriguing and baffling experiences. Surely the most important is the fact that, like dreams, such experiences are subjective: one has to believe the reports of those having them. Another hampering factor is that they are sporadic and cannot

be predicted or reliably evoked (the attempts using hypnosis<sup>5,6</sup>, and electrical stimuli during open brain surgery<sup>7,8</sup> have resulted in incidents of anomalous familiarity rather than déjà vu). A third factor, the one addressed in the research being reported here, is that there are several experiences all called “déjà vu”<sup>4</sup> (p. 10) but may well have different origins and etiologies (for an overview of déjà experiences, see <https://deja-experience-research.org/types>).

The present investigation was designed to study and compare the characteristics of two forms (or sub-types) of déjà vu experience: “déjà vécu” (already experienced or lived through) and “déjà visité” (already visited). The former have also been termed “event-related” while the latter have been referred to as “place-related.”<sup>9</sup> In order to compare the characteristics of the two experiences, a questionnaire was created in which the same questions were asked of those who said they had had déjà vécu experiences as were asked of those who claimed to have had déjà visité ones. The questionnaire (available at: <http://funkhouser.dreamunit.net/dejavu/>) was put online in December 2004, and as of July 31, 2012, 3042 individuals from many countries had filled out the questions.

Based on an initial analysis of this survey data, several prominent similarities and differences between these two forms of déjà experience were compared and presented.<sup>10</sup> There it was seen that most have had these experiences only a few times. The majority claimed that they were in their normal state of mind when their experiences occurred. They said that most or even all the situation was included in the experiences they had had. Their “memory” of what they were “reliving” tended to be quite precise in terms of detail.

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Moreover, in comparing déjà vécu experiences with those of déjà visité, the former occurred more frequently and tended to be significantly longer than the latter ones. In addition, the mean age of the first experience was lower for déjà vécu experiences compared to what was true for déjà visité ones. In addition, positive emotions outweighed negative ones for both experiences while both tended to have sudden onsets. More déjà vécu experiences were said to occur in a state of hyper-alertness, tended to be more comprehensive, were remembered in greater detail, and involved pre-cognition more often than occurred in instances of déjà visité. The differences that were found seem to warrant viewing these two experiences as being separate entities.

Here, the results of additional analyses of the data are reported. When considering them, though, a few caveats should be kept in mind:

- (1) Those who filled out the survey questions are persons with access to the Internet and thus tend to be more advantaged and educated than members of the general population.
- (2) Moreover they have had these experiences and have sufficient interest in them to fill out a rather lengthy questionnaire (a maximum of 71 questions).
- (3) This survey is seen as a pilot project at an early, exploratory stage of research. Subsequent investigations will no doubt employ more sophisticated measurement tools and will be able to formulate hypotheses that can be substantiated or not depending on what results are obtained.

## METHOD

### Participants

As stated above, by July 31, 2012, 3042 persons had completed the questionnaire. Table 1 provides a demographic overview. There it is seen that more women filled out the questionnaire (61%) than men and the majority of the respondents for both experiences said they had had them more than once (96.6% for déjà vécu and 79.3% for déjà visité). The age distributions shown in the table may say more about how old Internet users tend to be than something about those having déjà experiences. The same can be said about the race and education distributions. Those answering the questionnaire came mostly from English-speaking countries (the questionnaire is only available in English) but there was a fair distribution of other countries as well. Most were Caucasian but other races are also represented. Since the results of previous surveys have shown that déjà experiences tend to be most prevalent during adolescence there were 6 possible answers to all of the age-related questions: less than 10, 10–15, 16–20, 21–25, 26–30, and more than 30 years of age (Table 2).

### Online Questionnaire

The questions were derived from those used in a variety of previous surveys<sup>11</sup> or claims that have been made based on anecdotal evidence. The questions, which are the same for

**Table 1.** Sample Characteristics 1

<i>N</i> (Total)	Participants With More Than One Déjà Vécu Experience 2425	Participants With More Than One Déjà Visité Experience 1418
<b>Gender (<i>n</i>, %)</b>		
Female	1480 (61.0)	862 (60.8)
Male	927 (38.2)	547 (38.6)
Missing	18 (.7)	9 (.6)
<b>Age category, <i>y</i> (<i>n</i>, %)</b>		
< 10	5 (.2)	3 (.2)
11–15	98 (4.0)	62 (4.4)
16–20	681 (28.1)	428 (30.2)
21–25	520 (21.4)	288 (20.3)
26–30	362 (14.9)	202 (14.2)
> 30	751 (31.0)	432 (30.4)
Missing	8 (.3)	3 (.2)
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Caucasian	1657 (68.3)	951 (67.1)
African-American	71 (2.9)	45 (3.2)
Black African	16 (.7)	13 (.9)
Asian	145 (6.0)	99 (7.0)
Native American	46 (1.9)	33 (2.3)
Australian	5 (.2)	3 (.2)
indigenous		
Pacific	12 (.5)	6 (.4)
indigenous		
Indian sub-continent	40 (1.6)	21 (1.5)
Arabic	23 (.9)	10 (.7)
Mixed	156 (6.4)	93 (6.6)
No answer	235 (9.7)	135 (9.5)
Missing	19 (.8)	42 (3.0)
<b>Highest education</b>		
No school	8 (.3)	3 (.3)
Primary school	187 (7.7)	114 (8.0)
High school	947 (39.1)	563 (39.7)
College	1024 (42.2)	594 (41.9)
Graduate school	199 (8.2)	115 (8.1)
Missing	60 (2.5)	29 (2.0)

both types of déjà experience, include queries having to do with age at the time of the first experience, duration, ending and frequency of occurrences, feelings evoked by the experiences, and clarity of memory and mind. For both déjà vécu and déjà visité there were eight questions for those who had had these experiences only once. For those who had had them more often, there were 25 questions. Other questions (i.e., in addition to the comparison questions) included ones

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