

Reviewer 2:

It has been claimed that the art of conjuring and magic tricks can assist the development of theories and knowledge in visual cognition. In a series of seven experiments the paper tested various factors. For example, observers saw a video of a magician performing the French Drop sleight whilst some key elements were hidden: the gaze, motion, or muscular tension. Surprisingly it turns out that these factors are not important. The authors conclude that in the literature there have been a wrong assumption that magicians have unique insights about human attention and perception.

I enjoyed reading the paper, and I have to say that I was already in agreement with the main thesis. There is an unfortunate tendency by scholars to make exaggerated claims about what professionals "know", and this applies to magicians as much as to artists or to athletes.

I have only some suggestions for improvement:

page 1. "the claim that the field of magic possesses particular knowledge of visual cognition". Here and in other places I was confused by the choice of words. It is a bit odd to claim that a "field" knows something. Are we talking specifically about people who practice magic, or is the point slightly different?

Authors' Reply:

We did indeed mean people who practice magic. Thus, by "field", we meant the community of magicians who have collectively accrued information about conjuring. This information is then relayed in technical books about magic. This is where, for example, the importance of gaze in the French Drop illusion has gained axiom status, in for instance Bobo (1952) as referenced in the ms. We have now replaced "field" with "community of conjurers" or just "conjurers".

page 3. the section on participants needs more information. I understand it was a study done online, but maybe we can know a bit more. Is it likely that no exclusion criteria were used? When was the data collected? Were participants different in every experiment?

Authors' Reply:

With the exception of Experiment 7, the participants were recruited via MTurk (as the original submission stated). So anyone who signed up as an MTurk 'worker' would be a potential participant. The pool however mainly comprises US citizens. MTurk does not provide demographics as standard unless a researcher request that information, which we didn't (and it costs extra). We only requested age and gender, which we report in each experiment. There was also no exclusion criteria. With respect to Experiment 7, all were first year undergraduate Psychology students. The Method section of Experiment 1 in the revised ms now states that "with the exception of Experiment 8, a different sample of participants were recruited for each experiment". The data were collected during 2019, which we now state.

page 4. the statistical analysis is also very minimal, more information is needed.

Authors' Reply:

We report the ratios for both conditions in each experiment together with the Chi Square value and p value. Does the reviewer mean that we did not include degrees of freedom? These are now presented.

page 8. the results section of exp 6 only mentions tension and not the opening of the hand, which is the new manipulation, as if this was the same as exp 5. This was confusing.

Authors' Reply:

We now make this clear in Experiment 6. Here, we also state how the non-opening of the hand did indeed increase the success of the illusion.

page 8. please provide pag numbers for the quotes.

Authors' Reply:

Now included.