Metacontrast Masking Reflection

This was a complex, but seemingly well-done experiment. I liked the fact that they chose to address several different issues associated with masking by doing three experiments, and having multiple groups within each one. I found it interesting however that they chose to use only two different types of masks. I wonder why they chose to use the four-dot mask, and not another type. I would like to see a larger variety of masks, such as masks using different shapes to replace the dots, or creating a different shape surrounding the target image. This would be beneficial in determining what exactly makes a mask more or less effective. It would be interesting to determine if different types of shapes or masks were more or less distracting than others, by looking at the various temporal distances needed before each type of mask loses its effect.

When using multiple images, the masking effect was much stronger. I did not find this surprising. However, I did find it interesting that compared to the four-dot mask, the metacontrast mask was more effective in the central view, but they were equally effective when used in the periphery. Perhaps this is because as we search outwards to find the target image, the dots interfere with our search due to the short duration of the images. Perhaps it is because we can only attend to so much information in such a brief period, not allowing us time to process the information from the periphery once we determine that is the pertinent image. This would also indicate why the masking was less effective in the center; because our attention was already focused in that spot, it would give us just slightly longer to interpret the information.

In the trials where there were only one mask and one target, they used the trials in which the mask and target were in the same location as the control. I found this interesting, and wonder why they did not simply use trials with the absence of a mask as their trials. I understand the implication of their procedure is that they were able to determine the importance of spatial relations in processing an image, however, I believe that processing without the presence of a mask would be just as beneficial, if not more. By using simply the image, you are eliminating any possible confounds to perception associated with the mask. I believe they chose to keep the mask to make the only difference between the control and experiment would be the spatial difference, and the decisions associated with the processing.

There are many possible implications of this study, partly due to the wide range of the comparisons being made within the three experiments. It is possible to learn how long it takes us to process visual information and fully comprehend it without interference. It could also be used to help determine what types of information can confound our processing. Perhaps this information could be extrapolated to other areas, such as furthering our understanding of how certain optical illusions work. I would be interested to know what other types of interesting and beneficial implications will arise from experimentation with masking.