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THE RELATIVE EFFECTS OF HYPNOSIS, TRANSCENDENTAL
MEDITATION, AND A WESTERN MEDITATION ON ANXIETY
AND SELF ACTUALIZATION IN HIGH AND LOW SUSCEPTIBILITY
SUBJECTS

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationship between hypnosis and varying forms of meditation in order to determine their effects upon psychological measures of anxiety and self-actualization. Furthermore, an attempt was made to determine whether the subject variable of hypnotic susceptibility interacted with hypnosis and meditation in a similar manner to elicit significant decreases in anxiety and increases in self-actualization. The postulated antecedent variables to hypnotic susceptibility

- 1 positive attitudes, expectancies and motivation together with
- 2 a shift in cognitive orientation from an objective perspective to one of involvement in suggestion-related imagining

were also investigated to assess their predictability of hypnotic susceptibility and their independent effects on anxiety and self-actualization. Finally, a placebo control condition was included for the purpose of assessing any placebo effects evident in the outcome achieved using hypnosis and meditation as well as to compare the efficacy of this technique with that of hypnosis and meditation.

In recent years, a number of studies have focused upon the psychological and psychotherapeutic effects of the regular practice of self regulation strategies including hypnosis and meditation. While many of these studies have drawbacks in terms of poor methodology, there are a significant number of tightly controlled investigations into the effects of hypnosis and meditation which have indicated similar subjective and behavioural outcomes. These studies have shown similar effects upon psychological and psychotherapeutic measures using hypnosis and meditation treatment modalities. In addition, some recent investigations have suggested that common subject variables, including hypnotic susceptibility, may interact with these conditions to produce beneficial psychological effects. Furthermore, in studies where a placebo technique was utilized, the results showed similar beneficial effects by those practicing this "technique" compared with those practicing meditation. Therefore, further clarification of the relationship between the practice of hypnosis, meditation and a placebo technique was indicated.

The 57 subjects who volunteered for the study were randomly assigned to one of the five treatment or control conditions following their assessment of hypnotic susceptibility using the Harvard Group Scale of Hypnotic Susceptibility: Form A, and pre tests on the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) and the Personal Orientation Inventory (POI) along with an attitudes questionnaire. These conditions were:

- 1 hypnosis
- 2 Transcendental Meditation
- 3 A Western Meditation
- 4 placebo control
- 5 non-meditating control.

Subjects were given a tape-cassette recording of the technique and instructions to practice over the six-week treatment period. At the conclusion of the treatment period, subjects were post tested on the STAI, the POI, and those in groups one to four were given an Imagining Questionnaire.

The data was collected and analyzed using a 2-way and 3-way analysis of variance (groups by pre and post test/groups by susceptibility by pre and post test/groups by attitudes by pre and post test/groups by imagining by pre and post test). A priori comparisons were drawn to assess significant within group and between group changes using 2-tailed F tests of significance. In addition, correlational data was obtained through a multiple regression correlation to assess the relationships of the antecedent variables (Attitudes and Imagining) to the mediating variable (Hypnotic Susceptibility).

The results suggest that the regular practice of hypnosis and meditation elicit beneficial psychotherapeutic effects in terms of anxiety reduction and increased self-actualization. This tendency was shown to be very similar for the hypnosis and the TM groups with some differences noted in the major scales on which the Western Meditation and placebo control groups recorded significant improvements. There was some indication of a placebo effect operating in both the hypnosis and meditation treatment conditions. However,

this effect alone was insufficient to explain the significance of results obtained by the hypnosis and TM groups and indicates the importance of a hypnotic or meditative state and/or cognitive-behavioural factors in addition to expectancies.

For the subject variable of hypnotic susceptibility, the results are complex and somewhat contradictory. They indicate that hypnotic susceptibility interacts with the practice of hypnosis and meditation to reduce anxiety; perhaps due to the common effects of relaxation. Whereas, for the dependent variable of self-actualization, hypnotic susceptibility was unrelated to significant change in the hypnosis and TM groups on the major scales, while showing some relationship to the degree of improvement on the subscales. However, in the Western Meditation group, high susceptibility subjects showed a greater number of significant increases in self-actualization than low susceptibility subjects across all scales. This confounding of overall results when assessing the relevance of hypnotic susceptibility as a subject variable suggests important differences between current methods of assessing hypnotizability (task hypnosis) and the clinical use of hypnosis to facilitate anxiety reduction and self-actualizing values and behaviour (relaxation hypnosis).

The findings suggest a relationship between hypnosis and meditation in terms of common subject variables and consequent effects. The nature of this relationship bears further investigation. A clarification of the role of hypnotic susceptibility in the practice of hypnosis and meditation may be fruitfully explored by examining the relationship between task hypnosis as measured by standardized scales and relaxation hypnosis with suggestions for self improvement as used in a variety of clinical settings. In addition, the various modes of accessing information presented in hypnosis and meditation (e.g. visual, auditory, kinesthetic) bears further exploration. Finally, the results of this study underscore the importance of using a placebo condition in further research into hypnosis and meditation and suggest the need to investigate the similarities and differences between hypnosis and meditation compared with varying placebo techniques.

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The factors investigated in this thesis have developed from a growing interest by the author in the therapeutic application of meditation and hypnosis in clinical practice. This interest began 10 years ago, and the present study is the culmination of an attempt to clarify some of the issues related to the wide-ranging field of meditation and hypnosis as adjuncts to psychotherapy.

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