Are High Hypnotizables Especially Vulnerable to False Memory Effects? A Sociocognitive Perspective

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ARE HIGH HYPNOTIZABLES ESPECIALLY VULNERABLE TO FALSE MEMORY EFFECTS?
A Sociocognitive Perspective

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Abstract: This article examines issues raised by a recent UK legal case in which the defense argued that the accusations made by the highly hypnotizable plaintiff were likely based on false memories. The authors argue that the evidence related to hypnotizability and false memory production is inconsistent but may be illuminated by a sociocognitive perspective. They present 2 preliminary studies that indicate that when the instructions imply that accurate reporting is a feature of hypnosis, higher hypnotizables may actually be more resistant than low or medium hypnotizables to false memories arising from misleading information given during hypnosis. They conclude that, when memory accuracy is emphasized rather than productivity, there is little evidence to link high hypnotizability with a propensity to produce false memories.

The impetus for this article arose from three recent legal cases in the United Kingdom in which the first author was involved as an expert witness (R. v. Dyer, 2008; R. v. Knight, 2008; and R. v. Barker, 2009). Each involved allegations that a hypnotist had sexually assaulted clients while they were undergoing hypnotherapy. In each case, the defendant was subsequently found guilty of multiple offenses but, notably, in none of these cases did the complainants claim hypnotic automatism had taken place; all reported that they had been fully aware of what had happened to them and were subsequently able to give detailed accounts to the police. However, one case, in particular, stood out by virtue of the argument put forward by the defense. In the case of R. v. Steven Dyer, the defense argued that the main allegations made by one of the complainants were based on false memories. Although no formal

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attempt was made to assess the complainant’s hypnotizability, the rationale for this argument was that, given how she had responded to hypnosis, the complainant could be judged to be “more than averagely susceptible to hypnosis,” and people who are susceptible to hypnosis are more likely to produce false memories. Naturally, no attempt was made to argue that, during hypnosis, the defendant had given the complainant suggestions to imagine that he had sexually assaulted her; rather the argument was based on the premise that, because of her high hypnotizability, the complainant would have been more willing to accept false memories or fantasies of sexual assault that came into her imagination, either during hypnosis or after she had been hypnotized.

The arguments made by the defense in this case raise a number of important issues about the relationship between hypnosis, hypnotizability, and false memories, which will be examined in this article.

**Hypnosis, Hypnotizability, and False Memory Production**

Certainly, a variety of evidence appears to support the view that hypnotic procedures may encourage the production of false memories (for reviews, see Erdelyi, 1994; Krauss, Kinoshita, & McConkey, 1989; Mazzoni, Heap, & Scoboria, 2010; Wagstaff, 1999a, 1999b; Webert, 2003). For example, in a seminal review of the area, Erdelyi concludes that memory improvements associated with hypnosis, when they occur, tend to be accompanied by an increase in incorrect false positive information (false memories); as a result, overall accuracy, as determined by the proportion of correct to incorrect responses is not improved and may even deteriorate (Dywan & Bowers, 1983; Orne, Whitehouse, Dinges, & Orne, 1988). Research also indicates that hypnosis may often encourage witnesses to incorporate more misleading information into their reports (Krauss et al., 1989; Scoboria, Mazzoni, Kirsch, & Milling, 2002; Zelig & Beidleman, 1981) and/or be more confident in their incorrect reports (Erdelyi, 1994; Krauss et al., 1989; Nogrdy, McConkey, & Perry, 1985; Wagstaff et al., 2004).

However, the exact processes responsible for producing these effects have been the subject of some conjecture. For example, Dywan (1995) has argued that, in hypnosis, false memories are more likely to be experienced with the same intensity and vividness as true memories and hence more source-monitoring errors are found during hypnosis. On first consideration, therefore, from a state perspective on hypnosis, if hypnosis induces an altered state of consciousness in which participants are more vulnerable to false memories, and highly hypnotizable individuals are most likely to be susceptible to this state, it should
presumably follow that, under hypnosis at least, highly hypnotizable individuals will be more likely to display false memories. However, the evidence for a relationship between the induction of hypnosis, hypnotizability, and vulnerability to false memory effects is somewhat inconsistent. For example, Register and Kihlstrom (1988) found no relationship between hypnotizability and susceptibility to misleading information administered during hypnosis. Scoboria et al. (2002) examined both the effects of hypnotic induction and hypnotizability on misleading information errors and found an effect of hypnotic induction, but, again, hypnotizability was not related to the tendency to produce false memory reports. In contrast, other studies have shown that, in response to misleading information, high hypnotizables are more likely to make false memory errors than low hypnotizables under both hypnotic and nonhypnotic conditions equally (Barnier & McConkey, 1995; Sheehan, Garnett, & Robertson, 1993; Spanos, Gwynn, Comer, Baltruweit, & de Groh, 1989). Yet, further studies have shown that high hypnotizables report more false memories than low hypnotizables under both hypnotic and nonhypnotic conditions but more under the former (Whitehouse et al., 2005) or only when misleading information is presented under hypnotic conditions (Krauss et al., 1989).

The finding of a relationship between hypnotizability and susceptibility to false memory errors outside of the context of hypnosis is particularly problematic. Not only does it suggest that other factors besides the induction of hypnosis may be operating to explain the relationship but it also runs counter to how highly hypnotizable individuals, and individuals who are generally vulnerable to false memory effects, have been characterized in the literature. For example, in the forensic literature, one of the main tools for assessing susceptibility to suggested false memories is the Gudjonsson Suggestibility Scale (GSS). The GSS consists of a story followed by a memory test that consists mainly of questions containing misleading information. If participants yield to the misleading information and further pressure to change their responses, they are judged to be high on interrogative suggestibility (Gudjonsson, 1984, 1987, 1997).

A number of researchers have argued that individuals who score high on the GSS typically do so because they have a negative mindset toward the memory-testing situation. That is, they find the situation distressing and have low expectations of success and high uncertainty as to the correct answer; hence, to alleviate the distress they accept what is suggested to them (see, for example, Drake, 2010; Gudjonsson & Clarke, 1986). In contrast, most highly hypnotizable individuals are not typically characterized by a negative mindset toward the hypnotic testing context; indeed, some researchers have argued that positive attitudes and expectancies towards the hypnotic situation are among the
most important predictors of high hypnotizability and are fundamental to the clinical efficacy of hypnotherapy (see, for example, Kirsch, 1991; Silva, Bridges, & Metzger, 2005; Spanos, 1986a). Moreover, there is no evidence that, as general characteristics, high hypnotizables have poor or problematic memories; on the contrary, a number of reports indicate that, in nonhypnotic contexts, they may show better performance on tests of frontal memory functioning than low hypnotizables (Wagstaff et al., 2004; Wagstaff, Cole, & Brunas-Wagstaff, 2007). Similarly, there is no evidence to suggest that high hypnotizables lack confidence in their memories; if anything, they are more likely to be overconfident (Krauss et al., 1989; Nogrady et al., 1985). Given these considerations, rather than attempting to account for the various findings regarding hypnotizability and susceptibility to false memories by speculating about the characteristics of the hypnotic state, and the vulnerability of hypnotizable individuals to its influence, it might be more useful to examine the issues from a sociocognitive perspective.

**Hypnosis, Hypnotizability, and False Memory Production: A Sociocognitive Perspective**

From a sociocognitive perspective, false memory reports that occur as a consequence of hypnotic or related procedures, and any propensity high hypnotizables may have to be vulnerable to such reports, arise not because of some intrinsic feature of the hypnotic state, or susceptibility to this state, but because of the contextual demand characteristics of the particular situation and participants’ related expectancies and beliefs (Wagstaff, 1999a, 1999b; Wagstaff, Cole, Wheatcroft, Anderton, & Madden, 2008). For example, in line with this view, a variety of researchers of different theoretical persuasions have argued for a “criterion shift” interpretation of false memory reports with hypnosis. That is, because the expectancies associated with the hypnosis context, and instructions that reinforce those expectancies (i.e., such as the expectation that hypnosis has special properties that enable individuals to generate additional detailed and vivid material), hypnotized witnesses may sometimes adopt a more lax criterion for report when reporting memories, providing details that they might otherwise have rejected on grounds of uncertainty. In addition, they may report vague details or imaginings, including those suggested to them, as confident memories on the assumption that, because they are created or provided in the hypnotic context, they will be accurate (see, e.g., Lynn & Nash, 1994; Orne et al., 1988; Wagstaff, 1999a, 1999b; Webert, 2003; Whitehouse, Dingess, Orne, & Orne, 1988; Whitehouse et al., 2005). They may also incorporate more misleading information into their testimony.
simply because the demand characteristics of the situation indicate that this is the appropriate response (Wagstaff, Cole, Wheatcroft, et al., 2008; Wagstaff & Frost, 1996).

In support of these kinds of explanations, a variety of evidence suggests that hypnotically created false memories can be reduced significantly under conditions that encourage more cautious and truthful reporting; such as when told that a “hidden-part” of them can describe their “real” memories, or when cross-examined under oath (Spanos et al., 1989), or when given a financial incentive for accurate reporting (Murray, Cross, & Whipple, 1992), or when given an opportunity to deny being in a “trance” (Wagstaff & Frost, 1996). False memory reports with hypnosis are also reduced when it is implied that the experiment is terminated (Barnier & McConkey, 1995), when subjects are contacted by telephone at their home after the experiment (McConkey, Labelle, Bibb, & Bryant, 1990), and when rapport with the hypnotist is downgraded (Sheehan, Green, & Truesdale, 1992). It should be emphasized that false memory effects are rarely eliminated entirely using such procedures; however, the issue here is not whether all false memory reports result from response bias, but why they tend to be exaggerated when hypnosis is involved.

These findings suggest that whether or not hypnotic induction and hypnotizability are found to relate to false memory production may be highly dependent on the contextual demands of the particular situation and how both low and hypnotizable individuals interpret them. For example, a variety of evidence suggests that, in general, high hypnotizables seem especially attuned to respond to the contextual demands of hypnosis situations in ways that low hypnotizables are not; that is, high hypnotizables appear to be highly committed to playing the role of the good hypnotic subject as defined by previous expectations and cues conveyed in the situational context (see, e.g., Spanos, 1992, 1986a, 1986b; Perlini, Spanos, & Jones, 1996; Wagstaff, 2004; Wagstaff et al., 2004). High hypnotizables may, therefore, respond to the contextual demands of ostensibly “nonhypnotic” situations so long as they perceive that an association with the behavior of a good hypnotic subject is expected or desired (see, e.g., Kirsch, 1991; Milling, Kirsch, & Burgess, 2000). In support of this interpretation with regard to false memory production, Barnier and McConkey (1995) found that high hypnotizables reported more false memories than lows in both hypnotic and nonhypnotic conditions, but the number of false memory reports dropped significantly when participants were tested after the experiment appeared to end the session such that differences between highs and lows were no longer apparent. Similarly, Spanos et al. (1989) found that false memory errors were more often reported by high hypnotizables in both hypnotic and nonhypnotic conditions, but they fell significantly after they were cross-examined and instructed to be
accurate and truthful, such that, again, differences between high and low hypnotizables were no longer apparent.

Another implication of this line of reasoning is that correlations between hypnotizability and memory performance in nonhypnotic conditions are likely to be influenced by the resemblance of the latter to hypnotic procedures, and the similarity between the kinds of suggestions given in hypnotic and nonhypnotic situations. It is notable, for example, that studies that have found that hypnotizability to be associated with susceptibility to misleading information and false memory production in both hypnotic and nonhypnotic conditions have tended to use instructions or suggestions designed to produce more, or changes in, memory details in both conditions (see, e.g., Spanos et al., 1989; Whitehouse et al., 2005).

Also, relationships between hypnotizability and measures of false memory production may vary depending on whether instructions or suggestions delineating the role of a “good” subject are present or absent. For example, in a large study, involving 227 participants, Malinowski and Lynn (1999) looked at factors influencing potentially spurious reports of early memories from childhood. Although hypnotizability and memory reports were measured in different contexts and on different occasions, Malinowski and Lynn still found that two measures of hypnotizability showed low but significant correlations (.22 and .27) with reports of early memories in childhood, following instructions designed to evoke such memories. However, although not specifically labeled as “hypnosis,” these procedures were similar to those found in some hypnotic memory enhancement procedures; that is, they included eye-closure with fairly emphatic, repetitive suggestions to visualize more memories, together with a clear indication to participants that this would be successful. In contrast, Malinowski and Lynn found no significant relationships between hypnotizability and any of the GSS measures of susceptibility to misleading information, which, again, were administered without hypnosis, but also without equivalent repetitive suggestions or instructions for memory enhancement (the correlations ranged from .05 to .08). Interestingly, they also reported no relationship between fantasy/imaginative involvement and either early childhood memories or the GSS, indicating that involvement with fantasy and imagination was not a moderating factor.

However, if it is the case that associations between high hypnotizability and false memory production, when they occur, occur not because of some intrinsic characteristic of high hypnotizables that renders them generally vulnerable to false memory effects, but rather because they have a proclivity to conform with the contextual demands of situations perceived as hypnosis, or resembling hypnosis, then by changing the contextual demands specifically towards accurate reporting, it might actually be possible to reverse the usual direction of
the relationship between hypnotizability and susceptibility to false memory errors, such that high hypnotizables show more resistance to them.

For example, in a related study, Wagstaff, Cole, Wheatcroft, et al. (2008) reasoned that if expectancy and demand characteristics play a role in increasing false memory responses with hypnosis, it might be possible to use the same factors to reduce them. So, if subjects are given misleading information followed by an instruction suggesting that hypnosis will reduce the influence of misinformation, hypnosis may act to reduce rather than increase false memory responses, including spurious confidence in errors. They report two studies in support of this hypothesis, showing that effects of misleading information can be eliminated or significantly reduced to below nonhypnotic levels when participants are given hypnotic induction together with a suggestion that it will help them discriminate between correct and incorrect information (this finding also accords with the view that nonhypnotic baseline levels of susceptibility to misleading information may often be inflated by demand characteristics effects; see Wagstaff, Cole, Wheatcroft, et al., 2008). There was no evidence of inflated confidence with hypnosis in either study, but, also, in neither study was any relationship found between hypnotizability (measured by hypnotic depth reports) and misleading information errors. However, Wagstaff, Cole, Wheatcroft, et al. argued that this might have been a consequence of the limited range of hypnotizability scores in the samples. Moreover, in these studies the misleading information was presented before the introduction of hypnosis, rather than during hypnosis; and arguably the latter would provide a more sensitive indicator of the effects of hypnosis and instructions on vulnerability to misleading information. Indeed, Krauss et al. (1989) have argued that studies in which the misleading information is presented before hypnotic induction typically show no effects of hypnotizability. To investigate the possibility, therefore, that, by introducing the misleading information during, rather than before, hypnosis, and emphasizing accuracy, it may be possible to reverse the typical relationship between hypnotizability and susceptibility to misleading information errors, the following two preliminary studies were conducted.

EXPERIMENT I: METHOD

Participants

The participants were 30 students (6 males and 24 females) from the University of Liverpool (age: $M = 18.90$, range = 18–24, $SD = 1.48$). None had previously had any experience of hypnosis.
Materials and Procedure

All participants received a 2-minute audio recording of a conversation between two men planning a robbery. They were then given the following instruction stressing the importance of accurate reporting:

People have been shown to be capable of filling in gaps in memory, of distorting information, and being influenced in what is remembered by leading questions or suggestions. However, hypnosis techniques can improve memory by focusing your concentration and enabling you to distinguish better between correct information and any misleading information you may have heard.

All participants were then given an audiotape of a standard hypnotic relaxation induction procedure modified from Barber (1969); hypnotic depth was then measured using the Long Stanford Scale of Hypnotic Depth (LSS; Tart, 1970), which requires subjects to rate their degree of experienced depth on a scale from 0 through 10 (with 0 = awake and alert, as you normally are, 1 = borderline state, between sleeping and waking, 2 = lightly hypnotized, 5 = quite strongly and deeply hypnotized, 8–9 = very hypnotized, and 10 = very deeply hypnotized). It can be noted here that the LSS has been shown to be as reliable and valid a measure of hypnotizability as standard suggestion-based measures (see Wagstaff, Cole, & Brunas-Wagstaff, 2008).

All participants then received a procedure designed to elicit the standard misinformation effect; this consisted of a further 2-minute audio recording of a woman recounting the first conversation to her female friend; however, a number of critical details were changed. Following this, they received a repeat warning: “I am now going to test your memory for the information contained in the first tape. Remember, that while hypnotized you may find that you may be able to distinguish better between correct information and any misleading information you may have heard.” They were then asked to open their eyes, while remaining hypnotized, and to complete a questionnaire that contained 17 questions concerning details of the planned robbery; 11 of these asked for details that were discrepant between the two conversations, such as “What is the name of the shop?” Participants were specifically instructed to base their answers on the first conversation, to be as accurate as possible, and to provide an answer to every question. After each question, they were required to rate their confidence in their answer on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 indicates not at all confident, and 5 indicates extremely confident. Upon completion of the questionnaire, participants were told to close their eyes again and the hypnosis termination instructions were given.
Preliminary analyses showed no significant effects for age or sex. LSS depth scores ranged from 1 to 7 ($M = 3.67, SD = 1.47$). Only 2 participants scored 1, and none scored 0, so participants were retrospectively categorized as either low/medium hypnotizability (3 or below, $n = 16$) or high hypnotizability (4 and above, $n = 14$). The 17 items of the questionnaire were scored as misled errors (errors containing misleading information from the second conversation), nonmisled errors (errors not containing misleading information), and correct responses. The means and standard deviations are shown in Table 1.

A series of $F$ tests on the three dependent variables showed only one significant result; as predicted, high hypnotizables showed a small but consistent trend to produce fewer errors involving misleading information, $F(1, 28) = 3.67, p < .035$ (one tailed), $d = 0.70$. Neither of the other comparisons was significant ($F \leq 1$).

The data for mean confidence in correct scores and mean confidence in errors (misled and not misled combined) were then analyzed using a $2 \times 2$ mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA; High/Low Hypnotizability $\times$ Mean Confidence in Correct/Errors) with repeated measures on the second factor. Together, both groups showed greater confidence in correct responses than errors, $F(1, 28) = 8.57, p < .008$; the means were 3.90 ($SD = 0.47$) and 3.41 ($SD = 0.62$) for correct responses and errors, respectively. However, the interaction was not significant ($F < 1$).

The finding that high hypnotizables integrated less misleading information into their answers than low/medium hypnotizables produced a medium-to-large effect size ($d = 0.70$), but the difference was only significant on a one-tailed test and could be considered, therefore, to provide only very tentative support for the hypothesis that if the misleading material is introduced during hypnosis, and accuracy is emphasized, high hypnotizables may show less vulnerability to misleading information effects than low hypnotizables. Of course, a more significant effect might have been achieved with a larger sample size,
but if the effect is only evident when large samples are employed it is unlikely to have much forensic relevance. There was no evidence of hypnotizables showing more errors or greater confidence in errors.

**EXPERIMENT 2**

As the first study looked at the relationship between hypnotizability and resistance to misleading information only within the context of hypnosis, a second study was conducted that compared performance before and during hypnosis procedures. The materials for this study were taken from the parallel form of the Gudjonsson Suggestibility Scale (GSS2; Gudjonsson, 1987, 1997), which contains a larger proportion of misleading information. It also includes an instruction that gives negative feedback and encourages accurate recall. It was hypothesized, therefore, that if this instruction is given in a context defined as hypnosis, high hypnotizables would be more likely to show resistance to misleading information.

**EXPERIMENT 2: METHOD**

*Participants*

The participants were 21 members of the general public (11 males and 10 females) from the Liverpool area (age: \( M = 26.76 \), range = 16–45, \( SD = 8.57 \)). None had any previous experience of hypnosis.

*Materials and Procedure*

All participants were played an audio recording of a short descriptive story about a bicycle accident from the GSS2. All participants were then asked the standard 20 questions from the GSS2. Fifteen of these are leading questions that include reference to material not included in the story, such as “Did the boy commonly ride the bicycle to school?” when “school” was not mentioned in the story. The remaining five questions were nonleading, requiring a simple “yes” or “no” response, such as “Were the couple called Anna and John?” (which they were). All participants were then told that they were to receive a hypnotic induction procedure to allow them to clear their thoughts and to enhance concentration. An audiotape of a standard hypnotic relaxation induction procedure modified from Barber (1969) was then administered, following which hypnotic depth was measured using the LSS. All participants were given the standard GSS instruction that emphasizes the importance of accurate recall: “You have made a number of errors. It is therefore necessary to go through the questions once more, and this time try
to be more accurate.” The 20 questions were then asked a second time (Questionnaire 2). Following this, hypnosis was terminated.

**Experiment 2: Results and Discussion**

Preliminary analyses showed no significant effects for age or sex. LSS depth scores ranged from 0 to 8 ($M = 2.67; SD = 2.05$), and participants were divided into three groups on the basis of these scores, low hypnotizability ($0–1, n = 7$), medium hypnotizability ($2–3, n = 8$), and high hypnotizability ($4–8, n = 6$). For the purposes of the present experiment, the most critical variables are the number of times the participants responded affirmatively to the leading information conveyed in Questionnaires 1 and 2. In terms of the GSS, these measures are termed Yield 1 and Yield 2 (Gudjonsson, 1984, 1987, 1997). The results are summarized in Table 2.

A $3 \times 2$ mixed ANOVA (Low/Medium/High Hypnotizability × Questionnaire 1/2) on the yield scores showed a significant main effect for yield; Yield 1 scores ($M = 7.19, SD = 2.73$) were significantly higher than Yield 2 scores ($M = 6.38, SD = 2.26$), $F(1, 18) = 5.97, p < .026$. More important, however, the Hypnotizability × Questionnaire interaction was also significant, $F(2, 18) = 5.31, p < .016$. (post hoc $F$ tests showed that only the high hypnotizables produced significantly lower

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Hypnotizability</th>
<th>Yield (Misled Errors)</th>
<th>Correct Responses (Noncritical Questions)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Questionnaire 1</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>(Yield 1 and Correct Responses before Hypnosis)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>7.86 (2.67)</td>
<td>3.71 (1.11)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>7.25 (2.31)</td>
<td>4.00 (1.07)</td>
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<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>6.33 (3.50)</td>
<td>4.50 (0.54)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Questionnaire 2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>(Yield 2 and Correct Responses during Hypnosis)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>6.86 (1.57)</td>
<td>4.14 (1.21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>7.87 (1.23)</td>
<td>4.25 (1.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>3.83 (2.04)</td>
<td>4.17 (1.16)</td>
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<td><strong>Questionnaires 1 and 2</strong></td>
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<td>Mean Total</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>7.36 (1.97)</td>
<td>7.86 (1.86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>7.56 (1.56)</td>
<td>8.25 (1.98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>5.08 (2.76)</td>
<td>8.24 (1.67)</td>
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Yield 2 scores, \( p < .011 \). As a consequence, the Yield 2 scores for high hypnotizables were lower than those for either of the other groups (\( p < .031 \), the effect sizes \( d \) were 0.99 and 2.40, for the lows and mediums, respectively). There were no differences between groups in the Yield 1 scores. There was also no significant overall main effect for levels of hypnotizability on the combined yield, \( F(2, 18) = 2.69, p < .09 \).

In addition to the yield scores, the GSS also provides two other measures of the extent to which participants yield to suggestive pressure; these are Shift, which is the number of times the participant changes a response to an item having received the negative feedback (regardless of the direction of the change), and total suggestibility, which is calculated by summing the Yield 1 and shift scores. Scores on two measures were also calculated and analyzed using one-way ANOVAs. Neither of the effects approached significance (\( F \leq 1 \)); the mean shift scores were 5.86 (2.61), 4.00 (2.13), and 5.33 (3.20), and the mean total suggestibility scores were 13.71 (4.68), 11.25 (2.31), and 11.67 (6.21) for the low, medium, and high hypnotizability groups, respectively.

It can be noted that, unlike in the first study, because in the GSS the misleading information is conveyed in the way the question is asked, participants who correctly fail to accept the premise in the leading questions do not tend to offer alternative answers that are “in error.” Nonmisled errors were, therefore, negligible and no significant differences between conditions were found (\( F < 1 \)). Moreover, in accordance with standard GSS scoring, a wide variety of answers is acceptable as indicating nonyielding, including “no” and “can’t remember” (Gudjonsson, 1997). Although not in error, technically such answers do necessarily indicate a “correct” answer, in the sense of an accurate recollection of events. It was, however, possible to perform a further \( 3 \times 2 \) ANOVA on the data for correct responses to the five noncritical questions for Questionnaires 1 and 2. Again, the data are summarized in Table 2. None of the effects approached significance (\( F < 0.1 \)).

In summary, these results indicate that during hypnosis, the highs showed significantly less susceptibility to influence from misleading information than the other groups; the differences showing large effect sizes. Moreover, the highs were the only group to show a significant decline in susceptibility to misleading information following hypnotic induction.

**General Conclusion**

Notwithstanding the reasonably large effect sizes, given the small sample sizes involved these two studies, further replication is obviously needed to establish their reliability. Nevertheless, taken together, the results of these studies and the literature reviewed in this article...
could be considered to lend some support to the view that highly hypnotizable individuals are not inherently more vulnerable to false memory errors either within or outside the context of hypnosis. Rather, in accordance with previous sociocognitive conceptions, high hypnotizables may be especially sensitive to the contextual demands of how a “good” subject should behave in situations defined as, or perceived by them to be similar to, “hypnosis” in terms of their procedures (Perlini et al., 1996; Spanos, 1986a, 1992; Wagstaff et al., 2004). Consequently, when the instructions convey the message that the role of the hypnotized individual is to report accurately, rather than increase productivity, there are indications that both hypnotic induction (Wagstaff, Cole, Wheatcroft, et al. 2008) and high hypnotizability may be associated with greater resistance to false memory errors.

The arguments presented in the present article are not intended, in any way, as an endorsement of the use of hypnosis as a memory facilitation device by either police or clinicians, as there remain substantial problems with its use in this role (Wagstaff, 1999a, 1999b; Webert, 2003). Nevertheless, if valid, they may be relevant to court cases such as the Dyer case, where hypnosis has already been used, and the vulnerability of the previously hypnotized witness to false memory effects is an issue. Given the available evidence, it seems reasonable to conclude that if, no suggestions for false memory are given at any stage, and the emphasis is placed on accuracy rather than productivity, there is little reason to assume that high hypnotizability will be associated with any special propensity to produce false memories.

References


R. v. Knight (Birmingham Crown Court 2008).


HYPNOTIZABILITY AND FALSE MEMORIES


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Les sujets hautement hypnotisables sont-ils particulièrement vulnérables à l'effet des faux souvenirs? Une perspective sociocognitive

Graham F. Wagstaff, Jacqueline M. Wheatcroft et Anna Christina Jones
Résumé: Cet article porte sur des questions soulevées dans le cadre d'une poursuite en justice menée au Royaume-Uni, au cours de laquelle la défense soutenait que les accusations faites par un plaignant hautement hypnotisable étaient probablement fondées sur de faux souvenirs. Les auteurs affirment que la preuve liée à la susceptibilité hypnotique et à la production de faux souvenirs est contradictoire, mais qu’elle peut être expliquée par la perspective sociocognitive. Ils présentent deux études préliminaires indiquant que lorsque les instructions hypnotiques demandent un témoignage exact, les personnes hautement hypnotisables peuvent en fait mieux résister aux faux souvenirs découlant d’une information erronée fournie durant l’hypnose, que les personnes faiblement ou moyennement hypnotisables. Les auteurs en concluent que lorsque l’accent est mis sur l’exactitude des souvenirs et non sur la capacité de production de ceux-ci, il existe peu de preuves permettant de lier une haute susceptibilité hypnotique à la propension à produire de faux souvenirs.

Johanne Reynault
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Serán las personas altamente hipnotizables vulnerables a memorias falsas? Una perspectiva sociocognitiva

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Resumen: Este artículo examina cuestiones que surgieron de un caso legal en el Reino Unido en donde la defensa argumentaba que las acusaciones del demandante altamente hipnotizable probablemente estaban basadas en memorias falsas. Los autores argumentan que la evidencia relacionada con habilidad hipnótica y la producción de memorias falsas es inconsistente, pero que puede evaluarse bajo la perspectiva sociocognitiva. Presentan 2 estudios preliminares que indican que cuando las instrucciones implican que el reportaje certero es una de las características de la hipnosis, los
participantes altamente hipnotizables pueden ser más resistentes, que aquellos poco o medianamente hipnotizables, a que surjan memorias falsas de información desorientadora durante hipnosis. Concluyen que, cuando se enfatiza la certeza de la memoria en vez de productividad, hay poca evidencia que asocie la alta habilidad hipnótica con la propensión a producir memorias falsas.

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