

000436 - Modulation of the level of attention to irrelevant external stimuli in hypnosis using suggestions

K. Varga (1)

(1) Affective Psychology, Budapest, Hungary

Résumé

One of the most profound characteristics of hypnosis is that it involves intense narrowing of attention. Changes in attentional focus during hypnosis are supported by subjective reports and electrophysiological and brain imaging evidence alike, however we know little of what brings these alterations about. In our study, 72 participants were exposed to blocks of sound stimuli before, during and after hypnosis while their skin conductance orientation responses (SCORs) and skin conductance level (SCL) was monitored. To find out how suggestions mediate attentional changes, participants in hypnosis were subjected to one of two suggestions either implying that 1) even though they are hypnotized, they perceive environmental stimuli clearly (*perceiving* group), or 2) that they are so deeply hypnotized, that they will not be bothered by any environmental stimuli (*neglecting* group). Orientation responses given to the sound stimuli were marginally decreased in hypnosis compared to pre and post in medium and high, but not low hypnotizables ($t(1434) = 1.77$; $p = 0.077$).

The two suggestions regarding the same stimuli yielded different results. SCORs were lower in the *perceiving* group during hypnosis ($t(1505.9) = 1.96$; $p = 0.050$), and their SCL decreased more while listening to the sound stimuli compared to the *neglecting* group ($t(4959) = 4.72$; $p < 0.001$). Particularly, the trend of SCL decrease in the two groups suggest that in the *neglecting* group, SCL decrease stopped during the sound stimuli, while in the *perceiving* group, arousal decrease continued.

These findings suggest that the neglecting group was actually more reactive to outside stimuli, and that the neglecting suggestions impaired the participant's ability to relax in hypnosis while exposed to external noises. Practical implication is that *acknowledging* the existence of external stimuli seems to be a better way to help subjects disregard irrelevant or unimportant stimuli during hypnosis than denying their existence.

This study was supported by the Hungarian Scientific Research Funds (OTKA 109187 and K100845) and we thank also the support of the Active Psychology Foundation

Objectifs

explain the design of the study

understand the interventions and the measures

discuss how we can prove the effectiveness of suggestions

Liste des mots clés :

- biologie
- conscience
- perception