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Extended Abstract

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Hypnosis – Stoking the fire of creativity within an Individual

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Hypnosis and creativity are related constructs and the relationship would manifest itself in one off the following ways:

1. Hypnotisable subjects and creative people share certain personality traits.
2. Similarities in the subjective experience.
3. Hypnotised subjects generate more creative product than a non-hypnotized subject.
4. Specific situational variables that characterise hypnotic settings facilitate creativity.

In the clinical setting, hypnotic phenomenon that have creative qualities have been observed. The hypnotherapist is engaged in a 4-stage creative process. Initiation is the first stage which optimise a client's inner work where the therapist helps one to access state dependent memory and emotional arousal. In the second phase, emotional conflicts are made to come up to the mind body language about unresolved problems at an unconscious level that require review and reconstruction. In the illumination stage, the therapist helps one to recognise and appreciate the value of new spontaneous and unheralded learning. The final stage is the stage of evaluation and reality testing.

With respect to relation between hypnosis and creativity, there are wide range of theories. While, some proponents of neo dissociation theorists claim that there is no facilitation of creative insight during hypnosis there are psychoanalysis theorists who strongly believe to the contrary. For them, adaptive regression used during hypnosis provides a theoretical link between creativity and hypnosis, although it also draws important distinction between the two processes. The most general belief is that hypnosis facilitates the retrieval of images and ideas into phenomenal awareness.

The notion that creativity is related to hypnosis has both an observed and a theoretical foundation and the clinical hypnosis literature is filled with pertinent examples of creative responses by hypnotised patients. Reported cases involving the creation of pseudo-memories in the context of hypnosis sessions, hypermnnesia and past-life regression are some examples as these are known to involve some degree of confabulation. While most critics differ whether confabulation can be an erroneous rather than a creative response, some view it as appropriate if it is adaptive to the needs of the subject.

Creativity and hypnotisability are both considered a stable personality trait and investigators have found three interrelated constructs that do correlate significantly with hypnotisability – Absorption, Imaginative involvement and Fantasy proneness.

In both hypnotic and creative processes, they appear to be linked by a

cognitive restructuring that produces modifications in awareness in the form of an internal absorption and a realisation of a modified awareness. Both have a greater than normal capacity for transition from an active to a passive mode of thinking. A highly hypnotizable individual is typically someone who becomes absorbed in non-hypnotic imaginative activities and experiences and can allow the experience simply to take place effortlessly.

There are two broad hypotheses concerning the relationship of hypnosis and creativity. One is that highly hypnotizable subjects are also more creative than their low hypnotizable counterparts (personality trait), the other is that the subjects are more creative when they are hypnotised than when they are not (process feature). Some critics indicate the two hypotheses converge in that the characteristic personal qualities of creative or hypnotizable people tend to be aptitudes and/or motivations to engage in the postulated processes.

Researchers have been debating on the question whether creative performance increase during hypnosis. None of the creative instruments in existence is particularly appropriate for hypnosis research as they fail to meet the most critical criteria: Non-reactivity and Ecological validity. Non-reactivity measures are those that can be obtained without affecting the subject's hypnotic experience and most creative instruments have a standard test format requiring written response where it is difficult to assess the level of distraction at the time of noting the response. Ecological validity is a notion that is particularly relevant to state measures of creativity, which focus on creativity in a specific context as opposed to personality traits. Creative expression in adults most commonly takes the form of storytelling. In hypnotic setting, it would be advantageous to find a creativity task that allows the subject to describe some imagined set of events, because such a task has a high probability of accessing a set of skills that the subject already has at his or her disposal.

The mechanism by which creativity takes place is not well understood, but it is evident that the process involves much more than simple motivation. Hypnotic responses are regarded as goal directed actions, and reports of involuntariness reflect context generated interpretations of these goal directed actions.

Methodological problems have hindered understanding of the relationship between hypnosis and creativity and can be attributed to conceptual deficiencies. The selection of appropriate creativity measures has proven to be particularly challenging task for hypnosis researchers. There has been a tendency on the part of the investigators in this field to confound state measures (of the creativity of products) with trait measures (of the creativity of people) and to overlook issues of ecological validity and reactivity in assessing the creativity of hypnotised subjects. In general, enough attention has been paid to the literature on creativity itself, particularly with respect to measurement issues.

By introducing a simple organisational framework based on the principles governing creativity research in other domains, we have been able to identify specific limitations in the existing literature, as well as look into new directions that can be taken in this field. Empirical findings concerning

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the relationship between hypnosis and creativity could have enormous repercussions for existing theoretical viewpoints in hypnosis literature. Of significance is the interactions of hypnosis and hypnotic susceptibility with the component processes of creativity.

The experience of having a creative insight involves the following two events:

1. The generalisation of a new idea or image and

2. The retrieval of this information into phenomenal awareness.

Any condition including hypnosis, that may favour the formation of such an insight must facilitate at least one of these events.

As a final word, hypnotherapists engaged in the treatment of psychological and medical disorders should engage in enhancing skills in utilising the creative genius in individuals. Training and recognising of hypnosis and hypnotherapy would ensure that maximum people reap the benefit of such learning.