

**THE EFFECTS OF ORGANIZATION AND
MOTIVATION ON RECALL DURING
POSTHYPNOTIC AMNESIA**

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University of Pennsylvania, 1975**

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Statement of Problem. Suggestions for posthypnotic amnesia effectively disrupt the deeply hypnotized subject's memory for the events and experiences that transpired during hypnosis. The reversible nature of amnesia marks it as a disruption of memory retrieval, rather than a disorder in the acquisition or storage of the memory material.

Two quite different theories concerning the nature of posthypnotic amnesia are investigated in this study. The social-psychological "neglect" hypothesis, proposed by Barber and by Coe, stresses the hypnotized subject's unwillingness to verbalize the material, or the active suppression of recall. The cognitive "disorganized retrieval" hypothesis made by Kihlstrom and Evans holds that the amnesia results from the disorganization of temporal-sequence relationships and other cues which usually allow the process of recall to be easy, efficient, and productive.

Procedure and Methods. A total of 372 male and female paid college student volunteers received a tape recorded version of the Harvard Group Scale of Hypnotic Susceptibility, Form A (HGSHS:A) up to and including the suggestion and initial standardized test for posthypnotic amnesia (Test 1). A second test (Test 2) was also administered during the amnesia period to three subgroups: Retest ($N = 115$, no special instructions concerning the manner of recall); Cue ($N = 139$, instructed to list the events in the precise order in which they occurred during hypnosis); or Challenge ($N = 118$, instructed to exert extra effort to recall all the events of hypnosis). Finally, the prearranged reversibility cue was administered to all 372 subjects (Test 3). All written amnesia protocols were later scored by two blind experimenters.

Results. Examination of the initial amnesia data (number of items recalled) led to replications of four previously documented aspects of posthypnotic amnesia. On Test 1, compared to insusceptible subjects, hypnotizable subjects (a) recalled fewer hypnosis events, (b) showed a lack of detail in the remembered material, (c) showed diminished temporal sequence organization in recall, and (d) on Test 3, after administration of the reversibility cue, showed a recovery of previously unrecalled memories.

Test 2 yielded a significant, but incomplete, increment in the amount of material recalled by hypnotizable subjects regardless of whether their initial amnesia was complete or partial, or whether they received retest, cue, or challenge instructions. These results are contrary to the predictions of the social-psychological "neglect" hypothesis.

In contrast, the cognitive hypothesis concerning the disorganization of recall processes received support. Temporal organization in recall improved on Test 2 to the same relative extent in all three treatment groups; furthermore, hypnotizable subjects continued to show an amnesic deficit in temporal sequencing compared to unsusceptible subjects. Highs with random recall order during amnesia recalled less material than did those with ordered sequencing. With some important exceptions, improvements in temporal sequencing across the tests were generally accompanied by improvements in the extent of recall.

Conclusions. Posthypnotic amnesia remains robust despite the passage of time (Retest condition) and even in the face of strong exhortations and reminders (Cue and Challenge conditions) intended to improve memory. Amnesia does not appear to derive merely from the hypnotized subject's neglect of memory, suppression of recall, or unwillingness to verbalize the material. On the other hand, posthypnotic amnesia does appear to involve the disorganization of cues and strategies necessary for effective recall. These findings would seem to encourage further study of the nature of posthypnotic amnesia both in terms of the disorganization of cues and strategies in recall, and also in relation to other organizational principles that may be important in the retrieval of the events and experiences of hypnosis.

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