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EDITORIAL COMMENTARY

It seems appropriate at the start of a new century to be announcing changes, if only small ones. The first change is to the appearance of the cover of this issue of the journal. Also, by popular request, we have returned to a referencing style in which the publication date appears in parentheses after the authors' names and not at the end of the reference as it has since issue 15.1 (1998).

This year is also a time for looking into the future. If I have one prediction to offer for the new millennium it is that, as the development of cognitive psychology increasingly legitimizes the study of subjective states and provides a model for the distribution of processing between conscious and unconscious domains, we shall see a burgeoning of studies that use hypnosis as a tool in mainstream psychological and neuropsychological research. That is, I believe, as well as hypnosis and hypnotic phenomena increasingly being the object of study in their own right. A second powerful influence in this change will be increasing access to functional imaging facilities such as PET (positron emission tomography) and fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging). Once these two influences are fully in place hypnosis seems set for a renaissance.

It is particularly appropriate, therefore, that this issue of *Contemporary Hypnosis* should begin with an article and commentaries that are based on a study which combines hypnosis with functional brain imaging (PET). The target paper, by Erik Woody and Henry Szechtman (Woody and Szechtman, 2000a), explores the wider theoretical significance of their innovative work which compares the patterns of brain activity associated with a normally heard voice, an imagined voice and a hypnotically hallucinated voice (Szechtman, Woody, Bowers and Nahmias, 1998). The two commentaries, by Sukhi Shergill and Anthony David (Shergill and David, 2000) and Richard Bentall (Bentall, 2000), are notable not only for their high quality but also because the authors are from outside the hypnosis community and have not previously, as far as I am aware, contributed to a hypnosis journal. This in itself is testimony to the impact that studies which combine modern brain imaging techniques with the somewhat more established procedures of hypnosis can have in the wider academic community. It also marks another change for the journal in that we intend to encourage this trend by including more contributions than has been the case in the past, particularly in the form of peer commentaries, from eminent academics, researchers and clinicians from outside the hypnosis field. Woody and Szechtman's reply to the commentaries is also included in this issue (Woody and Szechtman, 2000b).

There are other signs that a renaissance is already under way. Papers by Pierre Rainville and his colleagues, for example, have been influential in the area of pain research, with hypnosis being used to alter the affective qualities of the pain experience separately from pain intensity and location, both with concurrent brain imaging (Rainville, Duncan, Price, Carrier and Bushnell, 1997) and without (Rainville, Carrier, Hofbauer, Bushnell and Duncan, 1999). The same group have also used PET to look at brain activation patterns in hypnosis itself (Rainville, Hofbauer, Paus, Duncan, Bushnell and Price, 1999). In the Hypnosis Unit at University College London there are a number of collaborative brain imaging studies under way where hypnosis is being used to produce paralysis, involuntary movement and reversible

amnesia. One of these has already provided some evidence that the brain mechanisms involved in limb paralysis produced by hypnotic suggestion are similar to those seen in hysterical conversion disorder patients with a corresponding functional paralysis (Halligan, Athwal, Oakley and Frackowiak, 2000). In purely practical terms hypnosis has also been suggested as a means of increasing tolerance for the often protracted procedures and claustrophobic environment encountered in both medical and research settings where functional imaging is used (Simon, 1999).

The other main papers in this issue are an investigation of the effect of context on the relationship between absorption and suggestibility from Irving Kirsch's lab (Milling, Kirsch and Burgess, 2000) and an account of the current status of hypnosis in Spain (Cangas and Wagstaff, 2000).

Later this year we are planning a special issue on Hypnosis and Madness around the High Court case in 1998 involving the stage hypnotist and entertainer Paul McKenna, where it was alleged that the plaintiff, Mr Gates, developed schizophrenia as a result of his participation in Mr McKenna's stage show. The main paper will be by one of the expert witnesses, Graham Wagstaff, and is based on the Keynote Address he gave at the 1999 British Society of Experimental and Clinical Hypnosis (BSECH) Annual Conference. There will be a series of commentaries by other expert witnesses in the McKenna trial and by others who have a special interest in the case and in the wider question of the dangers of hypnosis generally.

A final piece of good news is that the *American Journal of Clinical Hypnosis (AJCH)* has caught up with its backlog and has resumed regular publication. Until very recently the last issue we had received was for January 1998 (40.3). Ed Frischholz, the current editor of *AJCH*, has done an impressive job in putting the journal back on track and now that we have received the missing issues our Abstracts Editor, Richard Brown, will bring our coverage of *AJCH* up to date in our next Abstracts of Current Literature section in issue 17.2.

As ever, the future of *Contemporary Hypnosis* relies on academics, researchers, clinicians and anyone else who uses or thinks deeply about hypnosis and related topics to submit main papers, brief reports and clinical reports for consideration for publication. Notes and guidelines for prospective contributors are published at the back of most issues of the journal. I and the other editors look forward to hearing from you.

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