

BOOK REVIEW

MARTY SAPP: *HYPNOSIS, DISSOCIATION AND ABSORPTION: THEORIES, ASSESSMENT AND TREATMENT*

(2ND EDITION, 2014) PUBLISHER: CHARLES C THOMAS, SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS, USA
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This is a curious little book that seems to defy categorisation; the title does little to help. It *is* about hypnosis, but after that there seems to be no clear theme or structure. With regard to the latter, it may be that the update for the second edition did not help; I have not read the first edition, but the current book has later chapters that do not seem to fit into a natural sequence. For example, the penultimate chapter is entitled 'Pulling it Together', but comprises only a couple of pages, that failed to pull anything together for me and entirely neglected to answer the question posed by the rest of the chapter's long title: 'What is hypnosis and why is it related to dissociation and absorption?' This meagre (and one might have assumed, concluding) chapter is then followed by a substantial offering on statistics: 'Reliability, Validity, Effect Sizes and Confidence Intervals in Hypnosis'.

That earlier question, concerning dissociation and absorption, is exactly what I had hoped the whole book would be about; the title does rather suggest that it might be, although the subtitle (*Theories, Assessment and Treatment*) implies some clinical content too. We know that, at a theoretical level, there is a fascinating link between the psychoses and hypnosis, the one being characterised by episodes of dissociation, and the other being a means of facilitating dissociation. The many parallels between hypnosis and schizophrenia, for example, invite attempts at finding joint explanations for the two phenomena. An epigenetic explanation is hinted at by the observation that adults who suffered abusive childhoods tend to be both more hypnotically susceptible and more at risk of experiencing psychotic episodes. Sadly, in this book none of these intriguing issues is addressed, and neither is the well-known warning to take care when using hypnosis with patients who have schizophrenia, on the grounds that they are already better at dissociating than is good for them. The omission is surprising, not only because of the book's title but also because there is now a significant body of relevant literature on these issues.

Of more interest to North American readers than the rest of the world perhaps, the book starts with a list of past presidents of Division 30 of the American Psychological Association (the division covering clinical and experimental hypnosis). Curiously, although this section of the book is entitled *History of Division 30 of the American Psychological Association*, the material covered is a potpourri that includes training in hypnosis, the use of hypnosis in an apparently random selection of conditions, some theories/explanations of hypnosis and hypnotisability in different ethnic groups. I fear this rather haphazard approach tends to be repeated throughout the book, for example the second chapter is principally concerned with theory, focusing on more historical approaches, but theory is then revisited in Chapter 6, this time addressing

more contemporary material. Between the two there are descriptions of treatments, with example scripts, which allegedly reflect different theory-based approaches.

To complete the picture of poor planning and lack of attention to detail, there are numerous errors of a typographical nature, with missing or inappropriate words, and sentences that simply don't make sense. These shortcomings are there, in spite of a statement by the publishers that, 'Careful attention is given to all details of manufacture and design'. Perhaps they just refer to the stereotypical cover, which shows the usual contemplative head within the obligatory eye motif.

Although my assessment clearly lacks enthusiasm, the book still has something of quirky appeal. It could be viewed as something between a miniature coffee-table book and a thin encyclopaedia. I don't believe anything is dealt with in sufficient depth to satisfy a scholar in any of the fields touched on, but the book perhaps bears flicking through, when needing to occupy some spare moments. It might also be helpful to someone who wants a quick memory jog: 'Now, what was that theory ... ?' One would probably find the answer in this book; there would be little analysis, but if one were checking for the bare bones of one of the old accounts of hypnosis, then the outline would probably be found here.