SEATING PREFERENCE, HYPNOTIZABILITY,
AND IMAGERY ABILITY

JACQUELYN CRANNIBY AND KEVIN M. MCCONKEY

University of Queensland, Australia

Summary—The effects of a specific hemispheric mode of functioning as indexed by lateralized seating preference was tested separately for male and female subjects in terms of their performance on the Harvard Group Scale of Hypnotic Susceptibility, Form A, the Creative Imagination Scale, and Ben's Questionnaire Upon Mental Imagery. Males, but not females, who preferred right-side seating scored higher on the Harvard scale but not on the Creative Imagination Scale or Ben's imagery questionnaire. Findings provide some support for the notion that hypnotizability is associated with the right hemisphere for right-handed persons.

Gur, Gut, and MacCullough (1973) reported that those persons who consistently moved their eyes to the left in response to face-to-face questioning—indexing activation of the right hemisphere (Kinsbourne, 1972)—preferred seating on the right side of a classroom whereas those who moved their eyes to the right preferred left-side seating. Lateralized classroom seating preference has also been reported to be associated with hypnotic susceptibility by Sackheim, Paulhus, and Weinman (1979) who found that, for right-handed subjects, males, but not females, subjects who preferred right-side seating (suggesting activation of the right cerebral hemisphere) were appreciably more hypnotically susceptible than those who preferred left-side seating. This suggestion of the influence of the right hemisphere on hypnotizability is supported by other work as well. Bakan (1950), for instance, reported an appreciable correlation between hypnotizability and right-hemisphere functioning as indexed by lateral eye movements; although sex, handedness, and eyewash have also been reported to be moderating variables of this relationship (Gur & Gut, 1974). Generally, data are consistent with the notion that hypnotizability is a right-hemisphere function for right-handed persons.

The present study was designed to examine empirically the relationship between lateralized seating preference (as one possible index of cerebral laterality) and performance on measures of hypnotizability and imagery ability. These measures included the Harvard Group Scale of Hypnotic Susceptibility, Form A (Shor & Orne, 1962) which is a traditional measure of hypnotic susceptibility—see McConkey, Sheehan, and Law (1960) and Sheehan and Mc-

*Now at Institute of Pennsylvania Hospital and University of Pennsylvania. Requests for reprints should be sent to Kevin M. McConkey, Unit for Experimental Psychiatry, 111 North 49th Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19141. This study was conducted at the University of Queensland, Australia; the final revision of the manuscript was completed at the Unit for Experimental Psychiatry and was supported in part by Grant MH 19156-10 from the National Institute of Mental Health.
Conkey (1979) for recent analyses of this scale. The Creative Imagination Scale (Wilson & Barber, 1978) was given; this is a relatively new instrument of the cognitive-behavioral model of hypnosis and has also been examined by McCrory, Sheehan, and White (1979) and Sheehan, McCrory, and Law (1978). Also given was the shortened form of the Bents' Questionnaire Upon Mental Imagery (Sheehan, 1967), a traditional measure of imagery ability recently reviewed by White, Sheehan, and Ashton (1977).

The present study employed right-handed subjects and was for the effects of laterality, as indexed by seating preference, on these measures of hypnotizability and imagery ability. Following the finding of Sackheim, et al. (1979), it was predicted that males, but not females, who preferred right-side seating would display greater hypnotizability on the Harvard scale. Although no real prediction could be made with respect to the other two scales, similar comparisons were conducted.

**METHOD**

Right-handed undergraduate psychology students, 84 females and 20 males, completed a seating preference questionnaire similar to that used by previous investigators (Gur, et al., 1975; Sackheim, et al., 1979), which contained a diagram of a classroom of seats (12 columns and 5 rows) and asked subjects to indicate "the seat (they) would feel more comfortable in occupying." Forty-three (34 female and 9 male) subjects marked left and 61 (50 female and 11 male) subjects marked right of center (between columns 6 and 7); these subjects were classified as having left or right seating preferences, respectively. Harvard scale scores of 69 (49 female and 11 male) subjects, Creative Imagination scores of all subjects, and Bents' scores of 66 (58 female and 8 male) subjects were available for analysis.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Table 1 presents the mean scores and standard deviations on each measure for each of the sex and seating-preference groups. Analyses indicated that male subjects who preferred right-side seating scored appreciably higher on the

**TABLE 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex/Seating Preference</th>
<th>Harvard M (SD)</th>
<th>Creative Imagination M (SD)</th>
<th>Bents' M (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Left-side</td>
<td>Right-side</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right-side</td>
<td>6.71 (1.80)</td>
<td>18.55 (5.32)</td>
<td>70 (22.33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left-side</td>
<td>4.25 (1.71)</td>
<td>17.22 (7.35)</td>
<td>83.67 (34.33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right-side</td>
<td>4.86 (2.69)</td>
<td>20.54 (7.18)</td>
<td>76.89 (20.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left-side</td>
<td>5.71 (2.53)</td>
<td>18.85 (5.63)</td>
<td>84.48 (17.14)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Harvard scale ($t = 2.01, p < .05$, one-tailed) but not on the Creative Imagi-
nation scale or Bens' questionnaire, than did male subjects who preferred left-
side seating. Further analyses yielded no appreciable differences among scores 
on these measures for female subjects who preferred right- or leftright-side seating. 

Findings indicated that males who preferred right-side seating scored 
higher on the traditional measure of hypnotizability than other males, which 
supported the finding of Shackleton, et al. (1979). No such finding, however, 
was observed for performance on the other two measures or for female subjects. 
One inference that can be drawn from the observed relationship between seating 
preference and traditional hypnotizability and the absence of a relationship for 
the Creative Imagination and Bens' measures is that these two measures are 
more similar to each other than they are to traditional measures of hypnotiz-
bility.

The present study presents a brief empirical statement concerning the 
relationship of the various measures, and further data need to be gathered, for 
inference, on the reliability and validity of the seating-preference measure as an 
index of hypnotizability. Also, given the relatively small difference found with 
respect to performance on the Harvard scale, future research also needs to consider 
causality between sitting position and hypnotizability.

REFERENCES

Bakan, F. Hypnotizability, latency of eye movement and functional brain asymmetry. 
Perceptual and Motor Skills, 1960, 20, 927-932.

Bethe, E. Measures of latency and theories of hemispheric dominance. Neurphe-
ology, 1971, 10, 629-694.

Gur, R. C., & Gur, R. E. Maecrodors, sex, and rotation as moderating variables in the 
relationship between hemispheric asymmetry and functional brain asymmetry. Journal 


Kinsbourne, M. Eye and head turning indices cerebral lateralization. Science, 1972, 
176, 539-541.

Group Scale of Hypnotic Susceptibility, Form A. International Journal of Clinical 
and Experimental Hypnosis, in press.

McConkey, K. M., Sherihan, P. W., & White, E. D. Comparison of the Creative 
Imagination Scale and the Harvard Group Scale of Hypnotic Susceptibility, Form 
A. International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis, 1979, 27, 207-
277.


Saghir, H. A., Patihis, D., & Wadman, A. L. Companion scales and hypnotic 


Accepted May 1, 1980.