

SEATING PREFERENCE, HYPNOTIZABILITY,
AND IMAGERY ABILITY

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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 Betts' 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 Betts' imagery questionnaire. Findings provide some support for the notion that hypnotizability is associated with the right hemisphere for right-handed persons.

Gur, Gur, and Marshalek (1975) 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, Paulhaus, and Weiman (1979) who found that, for right-handed subjects, male, but not female, 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 (1969), for instance, reported an appreciable correlation between hypnotizability and right-hemisphere functioning as indexed by lateral eye movements; although sex, handedness, and eyedness have also been reported to be moderator variables of this relationship (Gur & Gur, 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 (1980) and Sheehan and Mc-

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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 McConkey, Sheehan, and White (1979) and Sheehan, McConkey, and Law (1978). Also given was the shortened form of the Betts' 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 tested 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 most 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 60 (49 female and 11 male) subjects, Creative Imagination scores of all subjects, and Betts' 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
MEAN SCORES ON THREE MEASURES FOR EACH SEX AND SEATING PREFERENCE GROUP

Sex/Seating Preference	Harvard		Creative Imagination		Betts'	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Male						
Right-side	6.71	1.80	18.55	5.22	70.00	22.33
Left-side	4.25	1.71	17.22	7.53	85.67	34.53
Female						
Right-side	4.86	2.69	20.34	7.18	76.89	20.43
Left-side	5.71	2.53	18.85	5.63	84.48	17.14

Harvard scale ($t_0 = 2.01$, $p < .05$, one-tailed) but not on the Creative Imagination scale or Betts' 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 left-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 Sackheim, *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 Betts' measures is that these two measures are more similar to each other than they are to traditional measures of hypnotizability.

The present study presents a brief empirical statement concerning the relationship of the various measures, and further data need to be gathered, for instance, on the reliability and validity of the seating-preference measure as an index of laterality. Also, given the relatively small difference found with respect to performance on the Harvard scale, future research also needs to consider carefully laterality as it is indexed by other measures—see Birkett (1977) and Richardson (1976) for a discussion of the measurement of laterality—before the exact role of the right hemisphere in hypnotizability can be delineated. Finally, laying aside the issue of laterality effects, present data suggest that further work is needed on the relationship between different measures of hypnotizability such as the Harvard and Creative Imagination scales.

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