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An extended non-drug MDMA-like experience evoked through hypnotic suggestion

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Description: This research explored whether hypnotic suggestion could produce a mind-body experience similar to that caused by the psychoactive drug 3,4-methylenedioxy-n-methylamphetamine (also known as Ecstasy and Adam), in individuals who had taken the drug at some prior time. This drug is now illegal, but was used in psychotherapy in the past decade with some positive reports. Initial human studies are currently being conducted on its physiological effects.

Eight volunteer participants, who had taken MDMA at some previous time, were hypnotized and given post-hypnotic suggestions that they would re-experience the mental and physical qualities of an MDMA state for one hour. This was without taking the drug.

The participants' reports showed that the post-hypnotic suggestions effectively reproduced an MDMA-like state, lasting an hour at a stable level. Participant ratings in real time and in retrospect ranged from 60% to 100% equivalence to a

drug-induced experience. The subjective characteristics of the hypnotic experience corresponded with the phenomenology of a drug experience. The participants successfully carried out various intentional activities during this time (e.g., self reflection, talking with partners about relationships, walking in natural settings).

High correlations were found for the Similarity rating of the experience compared with scores on the Tellegen Absorption Scale (Spearman, .90, $p = .002$). The Harvard Group Scale of Hypnotic Susceptibility was not significantly correlated.

Conclusions: Post-hypnotic suggestion can successfully evoke an experience that has the qualities of the MDMA drug-induced experience for at least some persons who have had the drug experience one or more times.

This level of the state is stable, and can probably be used for the same purposes as an MDMA drug produced experience, such as therapy, pain control, problem solving,

personal exploration, transcendence, and interpersonal communication.

Implications. Hypnotic suggestions appear to verbally produce the same effects on the mind-body state as the drug does through chemical influence. Does the hypnotic suggestion actually manipulate the physical substrates (as does MDMA) to reproduce an MDMA experience, or are the phenomena being simulated in consciousness ("hallucinated") at a higher cortical level? Several participants reported the two states to be identical. If so, is it meaningful to say the drug state is different from the hypnotic state, just because one is caused "physically" and the other "mentally"? Would a blood test show traces of MDMA in the hypnotic condition (I would think not) or an increase of serotonin (possibly), which is triggered by MDMA?

Could the MDMA experience (or other discrete non-volitional and identifiable ASCs) be constructed by putting together the subjective qualia of

the state via hypnotic suggestion? Some pilot trials suggest this is possible even without prior experience with the drug.

Practically, the post-hypnotic technique could be explored for use after initial MDMA sessions, to enable therapy, pain control, personal exploration, transcendent experiences, and problem solving. It may also be that pharmaceutical drugs could be enhanced and their pharmacokinetic effects influenced using this hypnotic technique, consistent with conditioning effects reported by Ader and Olness.

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