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Changes in Vision as a Result of Hypnotic Age Regression

By WILLIAM H. ROBERTS AND DUANE BLACK

Hypnotic suggestion that the subject was celebrating her seventh birthday resulted in certain changes in vision to be shown in the table below.

The subject is the wife of the junior author of this article, Mrs. Duane Black. She is a healthy, intelligent young woman, seventeen years of age, married about two years and the mother of one child. She completed two years of high school. As a child she was considered precocious. Her eyesight was defective from early childhood, but she began wearing glasses only in her twelfth year. She was then in the eighth grade. Her unaided vision for distance is now extremely poor, as the table shows. The table also shows that strong glasses have more than compensated for the defect.

Mr. and Mrs. Black have carried on informal experiments in hypnosis for some time. Mr. Black has been particularly successful in inducing age regression. In a recent experiment he noted that when the subject had regressed to childhood, she found that her glasses not only diminished what vision she had but were annoying and even painful. This led to an investigation of changes in vision. Crude experiments at home indicated an improvement in vision that became more marked as the subject regressed to earlier and earlier age levels. Mr. Black was unable to produce any such improvement by direct suggestion which did not involve the regression.

The senior author's contribution to this note was to persuade a local optometrist to measure the subject's vision before and during hypnosis. The results are shown in the table below.

NEAR VISION

Uncorrected	Normal	Under Hypnosis
R	14/28	14/21
L	14/21	14/14
Both	14/14	14/14
Corrected		
R	14/14	14/35
L	14/14	14/55
Both	14/14	14/24

FAR VISION

Uncorrected	
R	Finger vision at 10 feet 20/200, 20/200— Less than 20/400

L	Finger vision at 13 feet.	20/200, 20/200 plus.
	Less than 20/400	
Both	20/400	20/200 plus.
Corrected		
R	20/15	20/50
L	20/15	20/70
Both	20/15	Patient complained of discomfort and headache.

RETINOSCOPY

R	—3.50, —0.50 cyl.	The same.
L	—2.00, —1.00 cyl.	The same.

Two conclusions seem justified.

- (1) Hypnotic regression to the age of seven years did result in a small but measurable improvement both of near and far vision.
- (2) The strong glasses worn by the patient provided excellent vision in the normal or waking state. When the subject was under hypnosis, however,
 - (a) They markedly impaired near vision,
 - (b) improved far vision, but to a much smaller degree than in the waking or normal state.
 - (c) In both cases the subject complained of discomfort and even of headache.

The pitfalls connected with any experiment of this type are familiar to all students of the subject. Intense effort to see, it is well known, will produce in un hypnotized subjects slight improvement in reading the charts commonly used. The subject manages to see through a haze or blur. It is possible, too, that as the tests progress, some learning or memorizing of the stimulus letters may take place. In this particular subject, finally, unaided vision was so extremely poor that precise measurement was difficult.

We can only say that we were aware of these pitfalls and attempted to avoid them. We instructed the subject not to squint or to make any intense effort to see. We noticed no evidence that she was doing so at any stage of the investigation. Neither did we note indications of memorizing. The childish side remarks made from time to time, appropriate to the suggested age, encouraged us to believe that we were dealing with a genuine regression in visual ability to something resembling that which the subject possessed at the age suggested.

The most plausible explanation seems to be that the subject reverted to methods of adjustment to her defective vision which she

had employed as a child but had discarded since she had begun to wear glasses.

If time permitted, we would repeat the experiment. That cannot be done. The results obtained, we hope, justify this brief report. We hope, further, that others will carry out investigations along the lines suggested.

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