

## CORRESPONDENCE

To the Editor:

I recently read—and enjoyed—Cooper and Thalbourne's article (*JP*, 69, 139-150), which detailed a study that sought to test various predictions of McClenon's Ritual Healing Theory (e.g., McClenon, 2002). While I am pleased to see that researchers are examining this theory and investigating the relationships between anomalous experiences and hypnosis-related variables, the paper suffers from a number of conceptual shortcomings regarding hypnosis that I believe were not sufficiently addressed.

The primary item in the paper with which I would like to take issue is Cooper and Thalbourne's use of the Experience Inventory (Ås, O'Hara, & Munger, 1962) as a measure of hypnotic suggestibility. In its definition of hypnosis, the Society of Psychological Hypnosis (Division 30 of the American Psychological Association) states that hypnosis occurs when "one person (the subject) is guided by another person (the hypnotist) [or by themselves as in individual hypnosis] to respond to suggestions for changes in subjective experience, alterations in perception, sensation, emotion, thought or behavior" (Green, Barabasz, Barrett, & Montgomery, 2005, p. 262). Hypnotic suggestibility, or hypnotizability, is measured with group or individual scales including successive suggestions of increasing difficulty following a hypnotic induction (e.g., Bowers, 1993; Shor & Orne, 1962; Weitzenhoffer & E.R. Hilgard, 1962). The Experience Inventory, however, is a psychometric measure that queries respondents about a number of experiences and cognitive perceptual personality characteristics that are believed to be related to hypnosis—it is, in fact, not a measure of hypnotizability and the two correlate only weakly ( $r < .37$  in two samples; Ås, 1963). Cooper and Thalbourne even note that the items in the Experience Inventory "cover 9 hypnosis-related categories" (p. 143, my italics), yet they incorrectly operationalize hypnotizability as one's score on the Experience Inventory. Although the study is identified as exploratory and the authors recommend that future investigators "consider using more conventional measures of hypnotizability such as the Harvard Scale" (p. 145), they remain incorrect in interpreting the Experience Inventory as a measure of hypnotizability. Given their misinterpretation, it remains premature to state that there is a relationship between transliminality and hypnotizability, as the authors report (p. 146).

I wish to make two other brief remarks. First, the relationship between anomalous experiences and hypnotizability is already well recognized (e.g., Nadon & Kihlstrom, 1987; Richards, 1990; see Kumar & Pekala, 2001 for a review). The authors should have mentioned this in their

introductory discussion of this relationship and their examination of the association between anomalous experiences and scores on the Experience Inventory should have been identified as conceptually replicative rather than exploratory. Second, the authors curiously failed to discuss the extant literature on the relationship between childhood trauma and hypnotizability despite testing a hypothesis predicting that the two variables are positively correlated. They should have noted that this relationship has previously been examined, that empirical findings in this area have been inconsistent (e.g., J. R. Hilgard, 1972; Rhue, Lynn, Henry, & Buhk, 1990-1991), and that this relationship is not without controversy (Lynn, Meyer, & Shindler, 2004).

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