

## Psychodynamic Hypnotherapy – A Study of Client Perspective



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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore how clients experience psychodynamic hypnotherapy and was implemented with a qualitative input by means of eight in-depth interviews. The results point to two central areas: Active factors and Change, each with six categories. Those factors all interviewees perceived as active were *confidence in the therapist and the method* and also *contact with powerful emotions and memories*. Those changes most interview subjects described were *a greater insight into one's life history, presenting a clear image to oneself and others* and also *greater self-confidence and greater freedom of action*. All interview subjects in the study experienced that they had been helped by hypnotherapy, which indicates that this therapy form can be powerful and effective.

### ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Mit dieser Studie soll erforscht werden, wie Klienten die psychodynamische Hypnotherapie erleben. Sie wurde mit qualitativen Daten aus acht Tiefeninterviews durchgeführt. Die Ergebnisse weisen auf zwei zentrale Gebiete hin: Aktive Faktoren und Veränderung, jedes mit sechs Kategorien. Die Faktoren, die alle Interviewten als aktiv wahrnahmen, waren Vertrauen in den Therapeuten und die Methode und auch

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Kontakt mit mächtigen Emotionen und Erinnerungen. Die Veränderungen, die die meisten Interviewteilnehmer beschrieben, waren größere Einsicht in die eigene Lebensgeschichte, die Darbietung eines klaren Bildes an sich selbst und andere und ebenso größeres Selbstvertrauen und größere Handlungsfreiheit. Alle Interviewteilnehmer der Studie machten die Erfahrung, dass ihnen mit Hypnotherapie geholfen wurde, was darauf hinweist, dass diese Therapieform machtvoll und effektiv sein kann.

## SAMMANFATTNING

Syftet med denna studie var att kartlägga hur klienter upplever psykodynamisk hypnotherapie. Studien genomfördes med en kvalitativ ansats genom åtta djupintervjuer. Resultatet visade på två centrala områden: Verksamma faktorer och Förändring, med vardera sex kategorier. De faktorer alla intervjuade uppfattade som verksamma var *förtroende för terapeuten och metoden* samt *kontakt med starka känslor och minnen*. De förändringar flest intervjuade personer beskrev var *ökad insikt om sin livshistoria, att bli tydlig inför sig själv och andra* samt *ökad självförtroende och ökad rörelsefrihet i sin omvärld*. Samtliga intervjuade personer i studien upplevde att de blivit hjälpta av hypnotherapie vilket tyder på att denna terapiform kan vara verksamt och kraftfull.

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## INTRODUCTION

In evaluating a therapy, some interested party is always represented, whether society, the professional care workers or the users and these various parties differ in their emphasis in their evaluation of the effects of therapy. Society looks to the individual behaviour, for example, work function, while the professionals apply theoretical concepts such as ego-strength and impulse control. Individuals themselves place the emphasis on how they feel (Armeliu & Armeliu, 1994) and their experiences of the therapeutic process are rarely utilised in a systematic manner. We are not aware of any study that systematically describes clients' experience of psychodynamic hypnotherapy, but we were inspired by a study of how young people experience psychodynamic therapy (Gustavsson, Westesson, Hansson Scherman, 1999). The intention of the present study is to increase understanding for psychodynamic hypnotherapy by exploring how clients experience this treatment.

## BACKGROUND

Psychodynamic hypnotherapy is a concept chosen by the authors, since the therapies included in the study were all based on psychodynamic theory and practice. A general assumption in the psychodynamic theories is that individual personality development is associated with the mental incorporation of the earliest relationships with important persons in one's social world and also that symptoms often reflect residual unconscious conflicts or deficiency states in relation to important figures in childhood (Cullberg, 1995). Psychodynamic therapy operates with dialogue as a tool for exposing and exploring unconscious conflicts for the purpose of allowing their processing and integration. The fundamental rules for intervention in psychodynamic hypnotherapy are the same as in other psychodynamic therapy (Wormnes, et al., 2000).

The four psychodynamic techniques, free associations, dream interpretation, interpretation of defences and transference, are used in psychodynamic hypnotherapy, but are expressed a little differently

than in pure conversational therapy. During hypnosis, the free associations often present themselves in the form of images that are closer to primary process thinking and the unconscious than is language, and hence conflicts and defences are less masked than in verbal association (Fromm, 1998). As regards dream interpretation, the therapist can re-narrate the reported dream sequence to the client during hypnosis so that the client can continue to work on it. The therapist can also give suggestions that the meaning of the dream will become increasingly clearer to the client. Defences and unconscious wishes also appear as images in that the client views his/her inner world during hypnosis (Brown & Fromm, 1986). Hypnosis does not impede transference; on the contrary, it strengthens and increases the client's transference (Wolberg, 1996).

Besides the traditional techniques of psychodynamic therapy, the hypnotherapist employs specific hypnotic techniques, e.g. projective and dissociative techniques, guided visualisation, age regression, posthypnotic amnesia and posthypnotic suggestion. These techniques are used to both contact the unconscious material and help the client find the strength and potential to overcome difficulties (Brown & Fromm, 1986).

## **METHOD**

The study includes eight women with an age spread of twenty-one to fifty-one years, with an average age of forty. They are undergoing or had undergone psychodynamic therapy, where the use of hypnosis was a permanent feature. The average period of treatment was around two years (eight months to three years) and most of them had been receiving therapy once a week. Six of the participants had previously received psychodynamic conversational therapy. Three of the interview subjects had concluded their hypnotherapy at the time of the interviews, which was between six months and four years after conclusion had taken place. Of those persons who are included in the study, seven are gainfully employed and one is a student. Fifteen therapists were asked to invite clients to participate in the study and the therapists excluded only those clients for whom participation could have a negative effect on continued treatment. Participation was voluntary and the therapists were not informed which clients had chosen to participate.

The clients were interviewed separately in depth at the Department of Psychology of the University of Gothenburg in Sweden. The interviews were conducted in an informal conversational manner, which allowed the clients to talk freely about their experiences of psychodynamic hypnotherapy. The interviewer introduced three areas: the hypnotic state, the working method in hypnotherapy and any changes in therapy, in order to facilitate the client's account of the experience. The interviews lasted on average one hour and were tape-recorded, transcribed verbatim and analysed according to the phenomenographic approach.

Phenomenography is an empirical, qualitative research approach, developed at the Department of Education and Educational Research of the University of Gothenburg, Sweden in the early 1970s and mentioned by Marton (1981). Since then, it has been diversified (Marton & Booth, 1997; Bowden & Marton, 1998), but its fundamental characteristic is still based on the observation that every phenomenon can be experienced in a number of qualitatively different ways. The object of research is to *reveal* and *describe* these *qualitatively different ways of experiencing* various phenomena, i.e. to describe the world as others see it.

Analysis of the interview data started with an open-minded reading of the protocols in a search for variations in the experience of psychodynamic hypnotherapy. Each of the different experiences was described very carefully, in order to bring out its special characteristics in relation to the others, thus forming a set of what is called *categories of description*.

## **RESULTS**

The interviews showed that the clients focused on both *factors*, which they experienced as *active* in hypnotherapy and *changes* that they experienced in conjunction with it. Within these two areas, twelve categories were present. The interview subjects' experiences of the active factors of hypnotherapy could be compiled in the following six categories:

*Having confidence in the therapist and the method, Achieving relaxation, Coming into contact with powerful emotions and memories, Encountering charged inner images, Changing things for the*

*better in one's imagination*, and also *Naming and being named*. All interview subjects stated positive changes as a result of the hypnotherapy and described the following changes: *Greater insight into one's life history*, *Belief in continued change*, *Greater physical well-being*, *Feeling more alive and creative*, *Presenting a clear image to oneself and others* and *Greater self-confidence and greater freedom of action*. The categories are presented in greater detail below, with each one illustrated by quotations from the interviews. The results of the experience of hypnotherapy on the part of the interview subjects have been quantified in table 1.

### Active factors

The material shows a mutual relationship among the active factors, some of which seemed more fundamental and provided pre-conditions for the others. *Having confidence in the therapist and the method* was seen as a pre-requisite for achieving relaxation. *Achieving relaxation* was seen in turn as having a central significance in being aware of several of the other factors perceived as active: *Coming into contact with powerful emotions and feelings*, *Encountering charged inner images* and also *Changing things for the better in one's imagination*. The category *Naming and being named* was not described as being dependent on achieving relaxation to the same degree as for the other categories.

#### *Having confidence in the therapist and the method*

The interview subjects were of the opinion that confidence in the therapist formed the basis of their daring to work with hypnosis and attain a relaxed state. The therapist provided peace of mind through being empathetic, accepting, skilled, present and amenable. This confidence meant that the interview subjects relied on the fact that nothing would happen with which they would not be able to cope and that the therapist would be able to assist in critical situations. They stated that their faith in the therapist meant that they relied on the method being a good one and all of them defined the active element as being one of feeling confidence in the therapist and the method.

We first established a good contact so that she knew who I was and vice versa. I felt confidence in her and then we started to work bit by bit. It

wasn't anything like 'now you're entering deep hypnosis' and then me saying 'Oh, where have I been?' It wasn't like that, but built up gradually, session by session, and I gradually dared go deeper and deeper as time went by. When I saw that the first time went fine and I didn't black out and nothing strange happened, then I felt that this was a viable option. And I know that I could rely on her, which was very important. After all, this was what everything was based on, that mentally she wouldn't abduct me. I knew *exactly* where I had her.

#### *Achieving relaxation*

The clients stated that relaxation helped them to get beyond their intellect and reach the unconscious, allowing them to a greater extent to let go of performance and the need for control. The words relaxation and unwinding were closer to the experience of the interview subjects than the 'hypnotic state' concept. Seven subjects described the active element as one of relaxation.

For me it was more as if it was a state of deep relaxation rather than hypnosis, as I was always conscious of everything else in that reality. But it was deep enough to still allow very free fantasies and I thought it was really great to get in touch with the fantasy that in some way I hadn't been in contact with since I was little.

#### *Coming into contact with powerful emotions and memories*

The interview subjects described how hypnotherapy paved the way for emotions and memories. They achieved a deeper emotional contact with themselves and difficult emotions and memories emerged more clearly during hypnosis than at other times. All interview subjects experienced the active element as one of coming into contact with emotions and memories.

If you've suppressed a mass of emotions since childhood that lie there and you work there and they sort of just pop up, then this is very hard. You get right into this deep feeling that you perhaps have been trying nearly all your life to avoid.

Toys and things like that, which you liked then and were important, turn up. I remember very clearly my childhood room and even afterwards I recall that I saw it from a child's perspective and not that of the grown-up.

The interview subjects also stated that in hypnosis it was not as easy to avoid difficult issues as when they just talked. They could not get away from what they sensed to be the basis for their problems but on which they perhaps would rather not elaborate.

It is such a powerful emotional experience that you cannot repress it or say something else. You cannot lie about it or distract yourself. And then this feeling is so pure; there is nothing else that has this effect except this specific feeling that you are experiencing, so in some way you cannot get past it.

The clients experienced the active element of getting in touch with parts of themselves and as adults being able to handle feelings that had been unbearable for them as children.

I believe that much of this has to do with getting in touch with those parts of oneself that have been frozen, parts that are too tough to handle without help. I don't believe that you may need to do so much about it, but I can get in touch with them and feel that I can handle them now that I'm an adult. So I believe it's mainly about daring, in fact daring to be in touch with all your parts and all the memories.

### ***Encountering charged inner images***

The inner images were experienced as fascinating and possessed a power that captivated the interview subjects. There was astonishment and joy at having discovered a world of symbols inside themselves. The clients described the images as touching the core of their troubles and in that way difficulties and problems could be tackled. These images were part of their everyday life and helped them reflect on what they had been through. They experienced that the images' symbolic content answered their questions. Seven people stated that they experienced the active therapeutic element as an encounter with these inner images.

It feels like I can leave out a load of steps in my thinking. I don't need to think 'now what did that represent and which side of me is it?' but 'yes, it's my thing about the teeth'. And this makes it much simpler and more accessible. They are just there and in some way are so obvious./.../And I just like them so much too, so I in so way I make them mine.

That image of the flower became very powerful for me as a symbol of myself that I was not prepared for. It was so simple and clear and yet in some way so strong.

### ***Changing things for the better in one's imagination***

The interview subjects have experienced positive developments in hypnosis, when they have been in touch with dark and difficult things. This was expressed as both seeing their vulnerability when small and now as adults taking care of the inner child and as experiencing new possibilities in their imagination in areas where everything had previously felt completely blocked. The interviewees experienced that in their imagination they could surmount the obstacles that restricted them in their everyday life. In visualisation they dared meet what seemed intimidating on the surface and experienced that it could be turned into something positive and empowering. Five interview subjects described their experience of an imaginary positive development as an active factor in hypnotherapy.

She got me to defend this child, which then felt very good. The child that had become vulnerable, she got me to do so as an adult; it may sound strange and remarkable but then it seemed very logical. It still is to me although I can't really explain it. But she got me to support and comfort the child that was vulnerable then and as an adult, say that 'it's all right, things will be fine'. And it felt very good to be able to give such comfort to the child.

And in this world I could change things. If I saw something happening that was going to end badly, I could change it so it went well instead. Or what I thought was bad, perhaps was not bad any longer and could become something good. It wasn't necessarily so that what appeared at first sight to be horrifying, really was so and it

could be something fine instead. Somewhere around the beginning, I had one of those fairy tale fantasies, which in many ways are far too obvious. I remember that despite my thinking that it was clichéd, it made a very strong emotional impact on me and I felt very uplifted by it. I saw a dragon, a warty and ugly little dragon that was angry at the whole world and was very stupid. But later, now that I've forgotten the details, somebody or something in the dream dared to approach it so that it shed its skin to reveal a little fairy princess inside.

### ***Naming and being named***

Three of the interview subjects stated that they experienced the active element as being the ability to put their feelings and experiences into words both during and after hypnosis. They experienced an insight when they recognised themselves in the therapist's interpretations. Conversing and putting into words what they experienced during hypnosis was described as a way of coping with the experience. The clients thought that these words could help them to structure experiences or problems and render them less vague.

I believe that one actually knows oneself what this is and what has happened. Even if you can't really put it into words. But it feels very good when somebody does. It can be me or her /.../ You have to know what you are feeling, as you don't always grasp this; I don't always grasp what I feel. I don't even really know what I feel, what I should call this feeling. If I'm angry, whether this is anger or sorrow or whatever. So this is very important.

The actual naming of the experiences during hypnosis was described as a first step to be spoken about also during the waking state.

*Interviewee:* It's a bit of a shock to put it into words. Before it was perhaps like a silent movie where things happened, but speaking about it was like adding sub-titles. This wasn't good or, yes, it was but it felt difficult.

*Interviewer:* Yes. Whose words were these?

*Interviewee:* Yes, they were mine. Mine when I was forced to describe what I saw. This was difficult./.../ You couldn't avoid it. Because I

knew what I'd seen and said and then my conscious self had to accept this and live with it. It was better to have it revealed than just feeling bad, having nightmares and so on.

### ***Change***

All interviewees stated positive changes as a result of hypnotherapy and saw the therapy as being of central importance in the changes that they had experienced.

The perceived changes are different in nature. Some apply only to the individuals themselves (*Greater insight into one's life story, Believing in continued change, Greater physical well-being and Feeling more alive and creative*). Others also apply to relationships with others. (*Presenting a clear image to oneself and others*). Yet others comprise both a change in the individual and a widening of the world around. (*Greater self-confidence and greater freedom of action*.) The individuals have gained access to a larger part of their social world and interact in a new way, which makes relations seem altered. The order in which the categories are presented marks a movement from change applying solely to the individual to change that also embraces relationships with others and the social world.

### ***Greater insight into one's life history***

Hypnotherapy is seen as providing a greater insight into one's life history. It was described as having gained a greater insight into childhood difficulties, a clarity as to the feelings one had for important figures in one's proximity and an understanding why one feels as one does and how that is related to one's own life history. The interviewees considered that they had been given answers to questions, which previously they had not even asked. Seven people stated that they had obtained a greater insight into their life histories through hypnotherapy.

I think I have been able to see very much that had to do with me, things that didn't prove to be what I thought /.../ you might even say as a cliché that the myth of my happy childhood has been shattered through this hypnosis.

This was also described as having had an intellectual insight emotionally anchored. The clients experienced that they could recognise emotions from the past in the present and that they found it easier to discover patterns in their own behaviour.

You've repressed and repressed and not been aware what this was about. And it's this, which makes you as an adult react so violently in certain situations. You regress and in some way become this child, sort of tie things together. You can't keep it separate. You're that five-year-old then but now I started to be able to separate out and look at it 'Well, now how old am I here? Here, I'm now five again. It's about *then*, the feeling *then*. Although this is something different.' All this baggage follows you if you don't pick it up and look at it.

### ***Belief in continued change***

The changes that the interview subjects experienced during and through hypnosis caused them to gain a belief in continued change. They had a belief that they could feel better in the future and a confidence in their own ability to influence their life and make use of experiences from the therapy to be able to explore by themselves and continue to grow. This was how four of the interview subjects put it.

Another change is that I have confidence; I believe in a change where I am concerned and a development. And, yes, I'm going on until I consider myself finished and ready./../, I have more and more confidence in the therapist and the method since I feel "God, how great!" Things will be OK. I will be able to feel much better and learn to handle things this way, and I know that if I should need help in the future, there's somewhere to go. And that feels very good.

### ***Greater physical well-being***

Hypnotherapy was experienced by four interview subjects as also having brought about changes in their physical well-being. They described the experience of having less pain and of the emphasis on pain and illness as having been toned down. One subject stated that she had become free of physical anxiety symptoms and two that they had stopped smoking.

But on a general level I have become much better after hypnosis. And now I've done some other things too; so it's hard to know what was what, but I believe that it has been very important and the back pains were basically due to very, very deep tension, muscle tension that went a long way back.

And I've also stopped smoking although I hadn't intended to. I just stopped because I got tired of it and I smoked since my teens.

### ***Feeling more alive and creative***

One change that the interview subjects experienced through hypnosis was that they felt more alive and creative. This was expressed by three subjects. Among other things, this was described as feeling more intact and in touch with all one's parts. The interview subjects perceived themselves as being more creative than before and having gained greater access to their imagination.

I believe that the less you've bottled things up, the less you've blocked yourself, the better you feel. You become free to be the person you are, /../ and I think this has been so for me. After all, it's about being good and feeling alive. Something I can't claim I was before.

For me I believe that this was a change from having had very gloomy images of my life. It's as if I don't remember what it was before, but I remember the difference. The difference is that suddenly I had a very lush and lavish fairy-tale world in my head. It could be both very terrifying but also very fine; a lot of it was horrible but it was so anyway. What was thrilling was its rich detail and the lushness of the colours and the actual figures that inhabited this world, such really good older fairy-tale drawings, a mixture of Bauer and Tolkien but more so.

### ***Presenting a clear image to oneself and others***

Hypnotherapy was perceived by six interview subjects as having helped them to present a clearer image of themselves and others. They described this as having learned more about who they were and what they felt about various things. They had a better idea of what they wanted to do and what they were good at. Presenting a clear image of themselves also meant that they listened to and understood both mind and body better and dared trust their feelings.

It isn't that you have hypnosis and then find out things there and then it's completely different. But it's given me an understanding of myself on a very deep level, a kind of foundation to

stand on, so I know more about who I am and I didn't know that before.

The interviewees also stated that they understood others better. In that they themselves became more distinct, others also appeared more clearly.

But I think anyway that I have a greater ability to understand people, I certainly do, /.../, I believe I understand more what people are up to than I did before.

This change was also described in terms of having changed one's daily behaviour towards others. The interview subjects perceived that they presented a clearer image to others, that they dared make more demands on others and that they had become better at setting boundaries.

That this make you react is, I think, relevant in some situations. If somebody is unpleasant, then it happens spontaneously that you draw the line. Indeed, relevant reactions to things happen, where perhaps I wouldn't have dared make clear what I felt a few years ago.

**Greater self-confidence and greater freedom of action**

Six of the interview subjects stated that they have obtained greater confidence in themselves and greater access to their social world. They experienced that they accepted themselves as they were to a greater degree than before and had become kinder towards themselves. This change was also described in terms of them having gained the strength to grab hold of their lives; that they felt greater self-confidence, took more initiative and could experience a new-found pride in their accomplishments.

And to some extent it's this outspokenness, that I've got rid of fears and such like that were holding me back so much. More faith that it'll be fine nonetheless. And this was a result of getting rid of the dullness that had plagued me all my life. /.../ I've wanted to get rid of it, but learning to live *with* it, seeing it and not... that's part of life.

At the same time as it's been such a struggle, it's given me a different strength, a self-confidence, a different way of looking at myself.

This increased self-confidence led the interview subjects to a greater liberty of action in their social world. They pointed to concrete changes such as a change of career, trying out entirely new fields of activity and daring to enter into new environments and situations.

I didn't like the job I had at all so I handed in my notice, started to study and then made up my mind. I must have done so after perhaps two years, that I had to have a job again. I behaved in a way and with an outspokenness that I had had in me before but which was very small. I contacted just one employer and then got a job there.

**Quantification of the results**

The table illustrates the profile of the individual interview subject with regard to her experience of hypnotherapy. Quantification of the material also enables the detection of patterns in the areas of Active factors and Change. *Having confidence in the therapist and the method* and also *Coming into contact with powerful emotions and memories* emerge as central factors, while by contrast the category *Naming and being named* is not so prominent. With regard to the area "Change", all interview subjects are represented within those categories that touch on change in the individuals themselves (*Greater insight into one's life history, Belief in continued change, Greater physical well-being and Feeling more alive and creative*). On the other hand, only six of eight interview subjects spoke about the consequences of this change for their relations to other people and their social world. (*Presenting a clear image to yourself and others and Greater self-confidence and greater freedom of action*).

**DISCUSSION**

The sample of interview subjects is a weakness of the study and their representativeness can therefore be questioned. The availability of interview subjects was dependent on the therapists' evaluation of the person's suitability for participation in the study. All the interview subjects were satisfied and experienced therapy as a major help. It may be that the therapists selected only persons who were positive

**Table 1. Eight individuals experience of hypnotherapy allocated among the two areas of Active factors and Change with their respective categories.**

| Category  | Interview subject |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Total number of interview subjects |   |
|---|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|------------------------------------|---|
|   | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |                                    |   |
| <b>Active factors</b>                                   |                   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |                                    |   |
| Having confidence in the therapist and the method       | x                 | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |                                    | 8 |
| Achieving relaxation                                    | x                 | x |   | x | x | x | x | x |                                    | 7 |
| Coming into contact with powerful emotions and memories | x                 | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |                                    | 8 |
| Encountering charged inner image                        | x                 | x |   | x | x | x | x | x |                                    | 7 |
| Changing things for the better in one's imagination     | x                 |   | x | x |   | x | x |   |                                    | 5 |
| Naming and being named                                  |                   | x | x |   | x |   |   |   |                                    | 3 |
| <b>Change</b>   |                   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |                                    |   |
| Greater insight into one's life history                 | x                 | x | x | x | x |   | x | x |                                    | 7 |
| Belief in continued change                              |                   |   |   | x |   | x | x | x |                                    | 4 |
| Greater physical well-being                             | x                 | x |   |   | x | x |   |   |                                    | 4 |
| Feeling more alive and creative                         |                   |   |   |   | x | x | x |   |                                    | 3 |
| Presenting a clear image to oneself and others          | x                 | x | x |   | x |   | x | x |                                    | 6 |
| Greater self-confidence and greater liberty of action   | x                 | x | x |   | x | x |   | x |                                    | 6 |

to the therapy and the same may apply when the interview subjects themselves adopted a position on their possible participation in the study.

The interview subjects perceived the therapy they received as having central importance for the changes that they experienced, but at the same time found it difficult to distinguish the importance of the therapy from other things in their lives that had affected them. It was also hard for the interviewees to express the specific significance of the various aspects of the therapy for this perceived change. The difficulty in deducing changes is a dilemma in all psychotherapy research.

The results showed that the interview subjects' experience of active factors in psychodynamic hypnotherapy accords well with the picture of the potential of hypnosis that is conveyed in the literature (Brown & Fromm, 1986). *Confidence in the therapist* is perceived as central. The quality of the patient-therapist relationship is also the factor that most clearly demonstrated the link to treat-

ment results in other psychotherapeutic research (Sandell, 1993).

Hatcher and Barends (1996) studied how the client perceived the relationship with the therapist and its relationship to effects of psychodynamic therapy. They described the results in the following way "*As it turns out, the patients' appraisal of the alliance has the strongest association with outcome, whether outcome is assessed by patients, therapists or observers.*" (p. 1326).

Given that confidence in the therapist was perceived as essential for daring to enter a hypnotic state, we believe that the requirement for confidence in the therapist is taken to the extreme in hypnotherapy, where the clients are generally lying down with their eyes closed in order to focus on images and feelings. This contributes to the feeling of vulnerability and brings to the fore the confidence in the therapist. Many of those who seek therapy lack confidence in others, which further accentuates the requirement for a relationship of trust with the therapist.

*Achieving relaxation* is a category whose content could be equated with reaching a hypnotic state. The interview subjects described the hypnotic state as a relaxed one. These descriptions agree with the descriptions of hypnosis in the literature (Hawkins & Heap, 1998).

For all interview subjects it was important to *come into contact with powerful emotions and memories*. One can speculate as to whether earlier strategies were based on avoiding situations that recalled such emotions and memories. Watzlawick et al. (1974) describe that persons often strive for change by doing more of the same thing, which aggravates the situation. In our opinion, what is needed is to seek a solution at another level.

The active element in *Encountering charged inner images* and *Changing things for the better in one's imagination* was noted by several interview subjects. We envisage that here hypnosis functions as a play area. Winnicott (1971) held that psychotherapy takes place in the field where the client's and therapist's play areas coincide. A play area is the place where the inner world and the objective external reality meet and create each other. In the play area the person can be a creative being who experiments with his or her inner world and the relationship to the external reality.

The category *Changing things for the better in one's imagination* described among others the experience of having changed a condensed traumatic childhood memory by intervening and taking care of oneself as a child. The interview subject had seen her vulnerability as a child in a visualisation and encountered the pain, but with the difference that as an adult she could now take care of the child within. Such an experience is based on the ability to dissociate, which is aroused by hypnosis. Hypnosis facilitates the client's ability to dissociate and intervene as the adult who comforts and protects the vulnerable child. In this manner the client repairs him/herself through empathy and obtains an intrinsic value. This process is illustrated by S. Carolusson (1998).

Mergenthaler (1996) points out that the active element in psychodynamic therapy and psychoanalysis is those occasions when the clients find themselves in a state of emotional experience and reflection simultaneously. One can speculate as to whether the potential of the hypnotic state for dissociation into an experiencing and observing part improves the

pre-conditions for a linking together of emotional experience and reflection.

We ask ourselves whether *Naming and being named*, which was experienced as an active factor, would have had more space devoted to it if it had been a matter of conversational therapy. In our study only three of the eight interview subjects took up this dimension. In comparison with psychodynamic hypnotherapy and conversational therapy, hypnotherapy should be able to be described as a movement from primary to secondary process thinking while the opposite movement occurs in conversational therapy. In hypnotherapy the client comes into contact with powerful emotions and memories during a hypnotic trance, which is later addressed in the verbal dialogue. In conversational therapy the act of talking is the point of departure and the tool for getting the client to come into contact with powerful emotions and memories, i.e., attaining a state that is guided more by primary process. Since for many people it is hard to let go of control and allow oneself to come into contact with one's emotions, there is the risk that the therapeutic treatment will stop at the secondary process level in conversational therapy. The interview subjects described that in hypnotherapy it was harder to avoid delicate topics, which had been done earlier by being verbal and keeping the conversation on an intellectual plane. We believe that therapies, which utilise the primary processes (hypnotherapy, dance therapy, visual therapy etc.), offer a potential for the client to better integrate thought and emotion.

All interview subjects stated that they had been changed by psychodynamic hypnotherapy. Six had previously undergone conversational therapy without achieving the desired change. Depending on the client's experience of previous efforts to achieve change, there are positive or negative expectations of the therapist. Situations where a change to the person is part of the picture, result in questions as to the consequences of the change for the individual's feeling of autonomy and identity. Mende (1998) shows how the therapist can describe hypnosis as a contact with the unconscious and gives the client metaphors for the unconscious as an inner, positive force that works independently of the conscious mind, for a change that is constructive for the individual.

*Greater physical well-being* is an interesting category that confirms the intimate connection between body and soul. Setterlind (1994) describes how the hypnotic state has the ability to decrease

physiological over-activity and restore the body's equilibrium. We envisage that hypnotherapy can give a clearer physical effect than conversational forms of therapy only.

It is possible that the category *Feeling more alive and creative* is especially related to hypnosis. The hypnotic state is believed to make the patient come into contact with his or her own creativity through what is termed the primary process (Fromm, 1998), and we envisage that hypnotherapy may have a particular effect on the client's creativity even outside the therapy.

In our material the category *Greater self-confidence and greater liberty of action* has a component that is about the fact that the interview subjects accepted themselves as they were to a greater extent. The same phenomenon can be described by Freud's structural model of the id, ego and superego. The superego comprises both a judgmental instance and an ideal ego (Sigrell, 1994). When the distance between the person's perceived ego and ideal ego

decreases, this leads to reduced feelings of guilt and shame and greater well-being. This in turn increases the person's freedom of action in his or her social world. According to psychodynamic theory the therapist's accepting way of relating to the client is central to such a degree that it forms an experience of being accepted despite one's shortcomings. The client can then integrate this acceptance into the own superego and self.

All interview subjects experienced being helped by hypnotherapy and there may be several reasons for this. Hypnotherapy endows the verbal conversational therapy with several therapeutic means. The contact with emotions and the inner images can release strength and facilitate changes. The trust in the therapists is focused, which provides pre-conditions for dealing with difficulties in close relations. The study indicates that psychodynamic hypnotherapy is an active and powerful therapeutic model, according to the clients themselves.

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