

The rise and fall of forensic hypnosis.

Posted At : January 22, 2013 2:40 PM | Posted By : [Tim Brunson, PhD](#)

Related Categories: Forensics

This paper examines the fortunes of the controversial use of hypnosis to 'enhance' autobiographical memories in postwar America. From the 1950s through the early 1980s, hypnosis became increasingly popular as a means to exhume information thought to be buried within the mind. This practice was encouraged by lay understandings of memory drawn from a material culture full of new recording devices (motion pictures, tape and then video recorders); and during the years when the practice was becoming most popular and accepted, academic psychologists developed a contrary, reconstructive, account of memory that was put to use in a series of battles meant to put an end to hypnotic recall. But popular commitment to the idea of permanent memory 'recordings' sustained the practice and the assumptions about memory and self that were associated with it, and in the face of a culture of academic psychology fully committed to the idea of 'reconstructive', malleable memory, a tidal wave of 'enhanced' memories swept America in the late 1980s and 1990s, in the so-called 'memory wars'. These, in turn, provoked academic psychologists to research the claims and counter claims central to the memory wars. The paper will also make an argument about the importance of lay knowledge in the psychological sciences explored in this paper: that popular psychological beliefs played a significant, even formative role in defining the nature of forensic psychological expertise, and also the framing of elite academic psychological research.

Stud Hist Philos Biol Biomed Sci. 2012 Nov 8. pii: S1369-8486(12)00105-7. doi: 10.1016/j.shpsc.2012.09.011. Winter A. Department of History, The University of Chicago, 1126 E. 59th Street, Chicago, IL 60637, USA. Electronic address: awinter@midway.uchicago.edu.

Object N

This document m:=====