SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS AS A COMPONENT AND CORRELATE
OF FOCUSING ABILITY

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The hypothesis guiding this presentation is that nonevaluative self-directed attention, especially toward bodily kinesthetic events, may serve as a source of imagery that is perceived to representationally fit, intensify, and sometimes change those bodily feelings. The phenomenology of this process, called focusing, has been articulated by Gendlin (1978), who has emphasized its apparent role in psychotherapy (Gendlin, 1977; Gendlin, Beebe, Cassens, Klein, & Oberlander, 1968). Regardless of context, however, focusing is a process of imagery-guided or enhanced (Gendlin & Olson, 1970) change in self-feeling, of the conditions for which we have little concrete understanding. The role of self-directed attention in this process is the object of the present study.

Researchers studying imagery processes have often been inclined to emphasize the visual modality (e.g., Cooper & Shepard, 1973; Kosslyn, 1975; Segal & Fusella, 1969). However, Lang (1979) has articulated a model of imagery that conceives the image in its perceptual and somatic patterns and as constituting a prototype for overt behavioral expression, a position compatible with that offered by Gendlin (Note 1). Lang has reviewed evidence that during imaginal recall of a just completed task, sense organ changes and muscular adjustments occur that mimic those involved in the task (cf. Brady & Leavitt, 1966; Shaw, 1940). Similarly, instructions to form an image of an event that occurred remotely in time or to form an original image also produce patterns of sense organ and postural adjustment similar to those that might be expected were the event actually occurring (cf. Jacobson, 1930; Schwartz, Fair, Salt, Mandel & Klerman, 1976).

Although causal relations are difficult to discern in this research, one possibility is that imagery construction involves elabor-
ation of an image with its visual, auditory, and semantic relations, and then the body responds to this imaginal product as if it were in reality present. Despite the simple appeal of this hypothesis and its consistency with the research on physiological responses to remembered and imagined events cited above, there is an alternative, although less well substantiated, possibility. Specifically, it is possible that, on some occasions at least, imagery construction involves the activation of a patterned body movement sequence that then elicits the semantic, visual, and acoustic components that complete the image. For example, one contemporary theory of dreaming (McCarley & Hobson, 1979) proposes that endogenous activation of motor sequences during sleep may produce a kinesthetic image that is then elaborated by visual, auditory, and memorial events to create the dream.

There is some indication that a similar sequence may occur during waking. In his theory of focusing, Gendlin (1978) has suggested that the bodily felt sense of an event may often precede the elaboration of its meaning in words or images. In fact, it is suggested that words or images must be allowed to "emerge" from the bodily feelings to find those that fittingly represent the bodily feeling and this may "carry forward" the affective and motor sequence that is implicit in the original bodily felt sense. This process may be analogous to the tip-of-the-tongue phenomenon (Hart, 1967) in which the feeling of knowing but being unable to say, is followed by the emergence and confident recognition of the right answer.

Hypothetically, focusing can proceed when a particular mode of attention is directed toward the felt complexity of bodily events. This mode of attention must be selective in that it should provide undistracted access to bodily feelings, perhaps especially those of the feeling-related skeletal musculature. At the same time this mode of attention must be global in that it must provide simultaneous access to the complexity of the patterns of bodily felt events as they may be manifest in facial and postural musculature especially.

There is evidence of individual differences in attentiveness to bodily events (Shields & Stern, 1979), although most of this research has largely dealt with attention to autonomic or visceral events rather than kinesthetic events. Some recent research on modes of self-directed attention has isolated a variable called private self-consciousness (Buss, 1980). Private self-consciousness appears predictive of reliance upon internal events, rather than external suggestions or expectations, when people are asked to describe themselves (Froming & Carver, in press; Gibbons, Scheier, Carver & Hormuth, 1979). This sensitivity to internal events is also suggested by research indicating the increases in private self-consciousness produce increases in reported intensity of affect in emotion-inducing situations (Scheier & Carver, 1977). Such evidence led to the hypothesis that private self-consciousness may predict focusing ability. A measure of individual differences in private self-consciousness has been developed.