

Utah State Prison Study

Taylor, E, McCusker, C. & Liston, L. (1990)

Abstract of Findings

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Thirty-eight male residents (average age, 23) from the unit at the Utah State Prison completed the Thurstone Temperament Schedule in a voluntary participatory study. Following administration, subjects were randomly placed in one of three groups (experimental, 14; placebo, 13; and control, 11). The experimental group received and played a subliminal tape for 20 days. The placebo group received and played a similar sounding tape without an embedded subliminal message, while the control group had no tape exposure. At the end of 20 days a second Thurstone Temperament Schedule was administered. In the experimental group, 5 subjects remained who had completed the procedure, 3 in the placebo group and 8 in the control group. Others were lost due to discharges or unwillingness to participate.

In a comparison of the experimental and control groups, the following results were obtained. The Dominance scale scores decreased while the Reflective and Stability scale scores increased in the Experimental group (desired effects). The Dominance scale scores increased while the Reflective scale scores decreased in the Control group. These are interesting results across groups. In the experimental group, these results would be predicted by focus of the embedded subliminal messages. In the placebo group, the opposite effect obtained may be explained by the fact that they (the subjects) listened to a tape without a message and felt no change. They obtained no reinforcement to continue and possibly experienced some frustration.

It is emphasized that this pilot study had limitations, especially in terms of implementation and sample size.

It is not the intention of the experimenters to generalize beyond the obtained results. It must be emphasized, however, that to evaluate an incarcerated population was a unique opportunity; to our knowledge this was the first time subliminal technology has been evaluated with this population. The results indicated change and strongly suggest the need for further research with benefit to these individuals and society in general, as this technology is better understood and applied in a wide variety of applications and settings.

Comparisons Between the Experimental and Control Groups

Experimental			Control		
Predifferences to postdifferences			Predifferences to postdifferences		
Scale Movement	Variable	Rate of Change	Scale Movement	Variable	Rate of Change
↑	Stability	+3.4	↑	Stability	+8
↑	Reflectivity	+2.6	↓	Reflectivity	-1.0
↓	Dominance	-2.7	↑	Dominance	+1.4