

THE EFFECT OF MONOTONOUS DRUMMING ON SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCES

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Background

Rhythm is a very important characteristic of music. Listening to rock music, youths sometimes experience a trance-like state. In shamanism, the voice of drums was used for inducing trance. Rhythm is very effective, but it is not clear how it effects our experiences.

Aims

The aims of the present research were to measure the effects of drumming on subjective experiences, and to identify the way the rhythm effects experiences.

Method

Subjects were sitting in a comfortable chair while a monotonous drumming from a tape was presented to them. While listening to drumming, they were involved in an imagery task. The control group was given the imagery task but without drumming. After the experiment, the Phenomenology of Consciousness Inventory was administered for measuring subjective experiences further; subjects were interviewed about their experiences. The content analysis of the interviews was made by the Atlas ti. program. Subjective experiences measured by the questionnaire were compared to experiences of an alert and a hypnosis group.

Results

Results show that listening to drumming while being involved in the imagery task, subjects experience an altered state of consciousness. This state differs significantly from the alert state and very similar to the experiences in hypnosis. If subjects are involved in the same imagery task but without drumming, their experiences do not differ significantly from the alert state. Content analysis of the interviews show that subjects' experiences were influenced through associations, similar to the way it happens in indirect hypnosis induction techniques.