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**DOES DISTRACTION AFFECT VARIOUS  
PARAMETERS OF PAIN DIFFERENTLY?**

**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE EFFECTS  
OF TWO DISTRACTERS ON THREE  
MEASURES OF PAIN**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of  
the requirements for the degree of  
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**Wanda Douglas**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Generally, research indicates that the distraction of attention away from painful sensations reduces both experimental and clinical pain. In addition, the literature suggests that different distracters may influence different parts of the pain experience. The present study used thirty subjects and compared the effects of visual distraction, imaginal distraction, and no-distraction on pain threshold, pain tolerance, and pain ratings. Pain was induced through potassium iontophoresis. The present study tested the assumptions that (1) Both distracter tasks will be effective in raising pain threshold and pain tolerance in comparison with the control condition (2) The visual distracter will be more effective in raising pain threshold than the imaginal distracter (3) The imaginal distracter will be more effective in raising pain tolerance than the visual distracter (4) Pain ratings will be reduced in both distraction conditions in comparison with the control condition (5) Males will have higher pain threshold and pain tolerance levels than females. Findings revealed that none of the distracters heightened pain threshold in comparison with the control condition. However, the visual detection task proved to be the most effective in increasing pain tolerance. This is contrary to predictions that the imaginal distracter would have the most influence on pain tolerance. The data showed that there was no significant difference found between males and females regarding both pain threshold and pain tolerance. The implications of findings for the management of clinical pain are discussed.

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