Manipulation with Pink

By Meagan Broussard

The first use of the color pink in prison cells was in 1976, following a study by Alexander Schauss. The study showed significant results that the color pink was effectively reducing the muscle strength in participants who looked at the color for any set amount of time.

These results came in when, after the participants had looked at the color for a set, unknown amount of time, and then attempted to resist the experimenters pushing down on their raised arm, they could not.

Nearly following this study, two wardens at the U.S. Naval Correctional Center painted the cells where new inmates stayed for processing. They reported a significant, in fact 100% drop in inmate violence and resistance. The color was seeping the strength from the inmates, both mentally and physically.

This began the race for manipulation of the human psyche to reduce the not so likeable traits of the population.

Schauss concocted a shade of pink that he called “Baker-Miller Pink”, after the two naval officers who helped him with his study, and he claimed that it was this specific shade that had the restricting effect on the psyche of humans and animals alike.

The color, in fact, was seemingly too strong. Dr. Paul Boccumini, the Director of Clinical Services for the San Bernardino County Probation Department, said that similar, concerning results were being reported at their Kuiper Youth Center, and that the staff there had to restrict the delinquents exposure to the color, “because the youngsters became too weak.”

However, upon repeat studies, both of these experiments were proven by the same experimenters to have incorrect results. They no longer saw the loss in strength or aggression that they had before. They actually began to fear the color would have to opposite effect: more aggression.

30 years later, psychologist Oliver Genschow and his colleagues repeated Schauss’s experiments. They found that the color had no effect on aggressiveness. The discussion had seemingly come to an end, with no results.

However, in 2011, Swiss psychologist Daniela Spath began writing about her own experiments with a different shade of pink calling it “Cool Down Pink”. The shade covered the walls of ten prisons in Switzerland, and again, prison guards reported results of decreased aggression and violence among inmates.

Some say the results are due to the feminine connotations of the color.

Before World War II, the color pink was not classified as a feminine color, nor was it perceived as weakening. Mothers would dress their little girls in blue, and their boys in pink, and the colors were interchangeably worn by both genders. Now, beautiful baby girls are assigned pink clothes and blankets, while bouncing baby boys wear baby blue. This is because, similarly to the color yellow being assigned to the Jews by the German Nazis, the tell-tale color pink was assigned to gay men, forever leaving the color with the connotation that it is less masculine. Therefore the females were “given” the color to represent their gender.

Some psychologists believe this is the reason behind the manipulation of the human psyche that achieves the reduction in violence. The color radiates femininity, and makes the prisoners believe deep down that they are more feminine, and therefore have less strength.

Others believe this manipulation lives on with the continuing tradition that women and baby girls are given, told, and shown that pink is their color and they are to stick to it.