A STUDY OF THE TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION PROGRAM IN THE SERVICE OF COUNSELING

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Counselees practicing the Transcendental Meditation technique became more inner-directed and more oriented towards living in the present.—EDITORS

The combined effects of counseling and the Transcendental Meditation program were compared with the effect of the Transcendental Meditation program alone and counseling alone on three groups of young adults over an eight-week period. Changes in locus of control, present-orientation, and self-support were measured using the Adult Nowicki-Strickland Internal/External Locus of Control Scale and the Time Competence and Inner-Directedness Scales of the Personal Orientation Inventory, respectively. Mean improvements in nine meditating counselees, eight noncounseled meditators, and nine nonmeditating counselees who combined counseling with 20-minute rest periods twice daily fell into the expected relation (meditating counselees > noncounseled meditators > resting counselees) on Time Competence and Inner-Directedness scales but not on the Locus of Control scale. Changes in means and variances within each group were also examined. The general conclusion was that the Transcendental Meditation program seemed to foster self-directedness.

INTRODUCTION

Various theorists tend to agree that the goals of an existential, phenomenological approach to counseling and psychotherapy are to help an individual to see himself as he is, to give up living in the past and/or future, and to take responsibility for himself as he exists in the present (5, 6, 7, 9, 13, 17, 18, 19). What is known about the Transcendental Meditation technique suggests that its practice would facilitate the attainment of these goals.

The work of Deikman (3) has supported the hypothesis that some forms of meditation produce deautomatization of perceptual-interpreting structures, resulting in a "receptive mode of consciousness." Since ancient times meditation has been described as a means of being fully present in each moment and is generally thought to involve the use of techniques such as unbroken attendance to breathing, to a visual stimulus, to silent repetition of certain words, or to nothing at all (4, 11, 12, 14). During the Transcendental Meditation (TM) technique, as taught by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, a mantra or sound is thought silently and effortlessly.

Investigators (16, 23) have found that the Transcendental Meditation technique is accompanied by deep neurophysiological relaxation, permitting energy-restoring activity in the autonomic nervous system. Furthermore, psychological findings have indicated that Transcendental Meditation fosters self-actualizing attitudes and behavior (20), decreases test anxiety and field dependence (10), and increases feelings of stability and self-confidence in young drug abusers, in whom drug usage simultaneously decreases (2).

The psychophysiological state found to accompany the practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique is one of restful alertness, a state generally free of feelings of fear and anxiety. The accumulated experiences of a calm, pleasant state of oneself, of being present now, of being alone, and of accepting what is here to experience would be expected to generate feelings of well-being and thus facilitate the capacity to take responsibility for one's present existence.

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the effect of Transcendental Meditation on the student counsellee's experience of well-being as revealed by changes in perceived locus of control of reinforcement, orientation towards living in the present, and orientation towards self-support. The experimental design made use of three sample groups: counseling plus Transcendental Meditation (MC); Transcendental Meditation only (M); and counseling plus rest (RC). The hypothesis was that improvements in perceived internal control of reinforcement, living in the present, and self-support would fall into the relationship MC > M > RC. The advantages of using the TM technique in this study included the availa-
bility of a qualified TM teacher and the uniformity of instruction.

**METHOD**

**SUBJECTS**—Two of the sample groups were made up of subjects randomly selected from the regular client population (those participating in individual counseling for six or more consecutive weeks) of a southwestern state university counseling center. The subjects, drawn equally from each counselor’s clients, were randomly assigned to the experimental group (meditating counselees, MC, N = 9) or to a control group (resting counselees, RC, N = 9). Each group consisted of six undergraduates and three graduate students. There were five females and four males in group MC and four females and five males in group RC. The subjects of a second control group, beginning meditators who were not in counseling (M, N = 8), were contacted through the local Students International Meditation Society (SIMS). These were three high school students, four undergraduates, and one graduate student—three males and five females. Originally groups MC, RC, and M had contained ten subjects each.

**MEASURES**—The following six subscales of the Study of Values (1) were administered at pretest to determine if the three sample groups differed in relative prominence of interests underlying evaluative attitudes: Theoretical, Economic, Aesthetic, Social, Political, and Religious. Locus of Control was measured with the Adult Nowicki-Strickland Internal/External Locus of Control Scale (ANS-IE) (15), composed of 40 items to be answered “yes” or “no”; the statements were scored. Orientation towards living in the present and self-support were assessed respectively by the Time Competence (23 items) and Inner-Directedness (127 items) scales of the Personal Orientation Inventory (POI) (21); the items consist of paired statements of which one is chosen. The 150 items of the POI were scored a second time for ten subscales that assess more specifically stated attributes of the self-actualizing person: Self-actualizing Value, Existentiality, Feeling Reactivity, Spontaneity, Self-regard, Self-acceptance, Nature of Man Constructive, Synergy, Acceptance of Aggression, and Capacity for Intimate Contact. The ANS-IE and POI scales were administered before and after the eight-week experimental period.

**PROCEDURE**—The subjects in the meditating counselee and resting counselee groups (MC and RC) were notified by letter of their selection for participation in the study; the subjects in the noncounseled mediator group (M) were contacted by the TM instructor. All subjects completed the pretest inventories at their convenience at the counseling center within the first week of the eight-week experimental period. Subjects in group MC were instructed in Transcendental Meditation by the local TM teacher and were asked to practice the technique daily for 15 to 20 minutes morning and evening. Subjects in group M had already begun Transcendental Meditation when they were first contacted. The resting counselees (RC) were asked to rest quietly morning and evening for 15 to 20 minutes.

**ANALYSIS OF DATA**—Mean differences, obtained by subtracting pre- from posttest scores, were compared by means of the $t$-test (8) for use with orthogonal, planned comparisons. An $F$-test was made to determine whether or not the set of group means fit a straight regression line, where $MC > M > RC$. In addition, one-tailed $t$-tests of the pre- to posttest differences were made for each group separately, and $F$-tests were made on the pre- to posttest changes in variance for each group.

**RESULTS**

At pretest the groups differed only on the Aesthetic scale of the Study of Values ($F = 7.58, p < .01$); the two counseled groups scored higher than the noncounseled meditators. The results of comparisons between groups from pre- to posttest are presented in table 1. The pre- to posttest differences over the eight-week experimental period for each group are summarized separately in table 2. Comparisons of variances revealed no significant differences. The results presented in table 1 support the hypothesis that meditating counselees (MC) would improve more than resting counselees (RC) in their orientation towards living in the present (fig. 1) and self-support (fig. 2), as assessed by the POI. Table 2 shows that the meditating counselees (MC) improved significantly in orientation towards living in the present and self-support over an eight-week period, whereas the resting counselees (RC) did not. The noncounseled mediator group (M) also became significantly more inner-directed. Furthermore, the findings also offer support for the general hypothesis that improvements in the direction of living in the present and self-support would fall into the relationship $MC > M > RC$, since the differences found were in the predicted order, and the mean differences for the three groups on the Time Competence and Inner-Directedness scales did not deviate significantly from a straight regression line (table 3). The significant differences in improvements in time competence and inner-directedness were further substantiated by examining differences in change scores on the ten subscales of the POI. These indicate that the meditating counselees improved more than the resting counselees on Existentiality ($p < .025$), Self-regard ($p < .025$), Self-acceptance ($p < .01$), and Acceptance of Aggression ($p < .005$).

No significant changes occurred in perception of the locus of control of reinforcement as measured by the ANS-IE.
TABLE 1
ORTHOGONAL COMPARISONS AMONG GROUP MEAN DIFFERENCES FROM PRE- TO POSTTEST ON THE TIME-COMPETENCE AND INNER-DIRECTEDNESS SCALES OF THE POI AND THE INTERNAL/EXTERNAL LOCUS OF CONTROL SCALE (ANS-IE)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCALE</th>
<th>COMPARISON</th>
<th>MEAN SQUARE WITHIN GROUPS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t*</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time Competence (POI)</td>
<td>Meditating counselees vs. resting counselees</td>
<td>7.22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Noncounseled meditators vs. meditating counselees and resting counselees</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>0.574</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner-Directedness (POI)</td>
<td>Meditating counselees vs. resting counselees</td>
<td>80.82</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>&lt;0.05</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Noncounseled meditators vs. meditating counselees and resting counselees</td>
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<td>...</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>...</td>
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<td>Internal/External Locus of Control (ANS-IE)</td>
<td>Meditating counselees vs. resting counselees</td>
<td>20.71</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>-0.103</td>
<td>...</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Noncounseled meditators vs. meditating counselees and resting counselees</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>-0.544</td>
<td>...</td>
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</table>

*One-tailed.

TABLE 2
MEAN DIFFERENCES FROM PRE- TO POSTTEST ON THE ANS-IE AND THE TIME-COMPETENCE AND INNER-DIRECTEDNESS SCALES OF THE POI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCALE</th>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>MEAN DIFFERENCE</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t*</th>
<th>p</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time Competence (POI)</td>
<td>Meditating counselees</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>&lt;0.005</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Noncounseled meditators</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>2.10</td>
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<td>1.52</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Resting counselees</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.11</td>
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<td>Inner-Directedness (POI)</td>
<td>Meditating counselees</td>
<td>11.67</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>&lt;0.005</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Noncounseled meditators</td>
<td>7.62</td>
<td>7.63</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.82</td>
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<td>Resting counselees</td>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>10.71</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.87</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal/External Locus of Control (ANS-IE)</td>
<td>Meditating counselees</td>
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<td>3.94</td>
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<td>-1.27</td>
<td>...</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Noncounseled meditators</td>
<td>-0.50</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Resting counselees</td>
<td>-1.44</td>
<td>5.17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-0.84</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
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</table>

*One-tailed.

FIG. 1. CHANGES IN TIME COMPETENCE. The figure shows the mean change in scores on the Time Competence scale of the POI for each group over the eight-week experimental period.

FIG. 2. CHANGES IN INNER-DIRECTEDNESS. The figure shows the mean change in scores on the Inner-Directedness scale of the POI for each group over the eight-week experimental period.
DISCUSSION

The significant differences found in time competence and inner-directedness were all in the predicted direction and in accord with the hypothesis. A systematic effect occurred. Transcendental Meditation, in which the attention is turned inwards, away from external stimuli, appears to foster or to be accompanied by a climate in which the individual can become more present-oriented and self-directed.

Transcendental Meditation alone and meditation plus counseling produced psychological development, whereas counseling alone had no measured effect. The superiority of the combination of counseling and meditation suggests that counseling augments the psychological integration produced by the Transcendental Meditation technique.

It is interesting to note that the specific areas of change, as assessed by the ten subscales of the POI, all have to do with self-awareness and self-value. Existentiality refers to one's flexibility in responding appropriately in a given situation rather than reacting in a stereotyped fashion, dictated either by rigid internal principles or by the need to conform to others' beliefs. Self-regard has to do with liking oneself because of one's strength; self-acceptance is concerned with liking oneself in spite of one's weakness; acceptance of aggression relates to one's ability to accept feelings of anger and aggression as natural. It appears that the meditators had improved in personal awareness and self-valuing, but over the eight-week experimental period they had not yet incorporated these feelings into the more global concepts, viz., self-actualizing values, constructive nature of man, and synergy, which are attributed to self-actualizing persons.

The lack of significant change on the Internal/External Locus of Control Scale may be because the perceived locus was initially comparable to the adult norm and therefore remained fairly stable over time and experience. On the other hand, it is possible that changes toward greater internality could occur as a result of meditation experience over a longer period of time than was allowed for this study. The way in which the Internal/External Locus of Control variable is influenced by TM bears further investigation.

Is it possible that something other than meditation affected change scores, e.g., experimenter demand, self-fulfilling prophecy, having been selected, faking, simply having done something, or having had an added experience? The study was designed to give the subjects as little contact with the experimenter as possible. Instructions and information were communicated in written form, and the inventories were administered by someone other than the experimenter. Also, the subjects were clients of seven different counselors, which was expected to minimize counselor effect. Had self-fulfilling prophecy been operating, it would have been expected to affect both meditating groups to the same degree rather than one group more than the other.

It is unlikely that having an added experience was the major influence on changes, since all subjects were given an added task to perform. It could be argued that having been selected to meditate might have inspired subjects more than having been selected to rest; however, the noncounselled meditators were not “selected”—they had made a choice to meditate before being informed about the study. Since it is not known whether or not the resting counselees (RC) would have been willing to meditate, it is possible that the two counseling groups differed in willingness to meditate, although they did not differ at baseline on any of the 19 scales administered. The nonmeditators were willing to rest twice a day; however, they may not have considered ordinary resting to be as “risky” as meditating. The resolution of cognitive dissonance that may be a result of risk-taking would be expected to influence any experiment.

Is it possible that the extra attention given meditators via TM instruction influenced the results? This possible alternative explanation would bear testing in another study.
The scales employed to assess change have been demonstrated to be resistant to social desirability and faking. According to Warehime and Foulds (24) an individual must understand the theory underlying the test instrument well in order to fake responses in the desired direction. Both groups of counseling subjects would presumably have been familiar with the self-actualizing and internal/external control theories to a similar degree. In addition, if meditators had faked their responses, it is unlikely that they would have faked only the second time or that the nonmeditators would not have faked their responses also. Therefore, it seems unlikely that faking had a significant and systematic influence on the results of this study.

Even though all of the changes predicted were not found, those that did occur were systematic. Whatever variable was operating influenced change in the manner that had been predicted to be a result of Transcendental Meditation. The results tend to support the hypothesis that the Transcendental Meditation program facilitates the attainment of both greater self-support and more present-oriented living in college-level adults involved in counseling.

Replication of the present study with counselees from other universities as well as with nonuniversity counselees is needed. Moreover, investigations that utilize more treatment groups and long-term follow-up and that include obtaining behavioral data would be of value.

A subsidiary finding in the pretest data was of interest. The two counseling groups (meditating counselees and resting counselees) scored significantly higher on the Aesthetic scale of the Study of Values than did the noncounseled meditator group. All three groups scored higher than the norm. Spranger (22) has stated that the aesthetic type has an "empathic intuition"; he sees or knows the form that another has created, whether in science or art, only as his own inner tendency towards form responds. If Spranger is correct that inner form is "the law of the purposive organic development of the inner being," it may be that people who seek counseling are those of the aesthetic type who have obstructed their inner development. An investigation of interest would be the relationship between "aesthetic type" and involvement in counseling and between "aesthetic type" and involvement in any kind of experience that is expected to enhance change or growth. One explanation for the apparently positive effect of the Transcendental Meditation program on counseling may be that the practice of the TM technique facilitates development of the "inner being."

REFERENCES


2. BRAUTIGAM, E. 1972. Effects of the Transcendental Meditation program on drug abusers: A prospective study. (Published in this volume.)


