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Effects of Group Practice of the Transcendental Meditation Program on Preventing Violent Crime in Washington, DC: Results of the National Demonstration Project, June-July 1993

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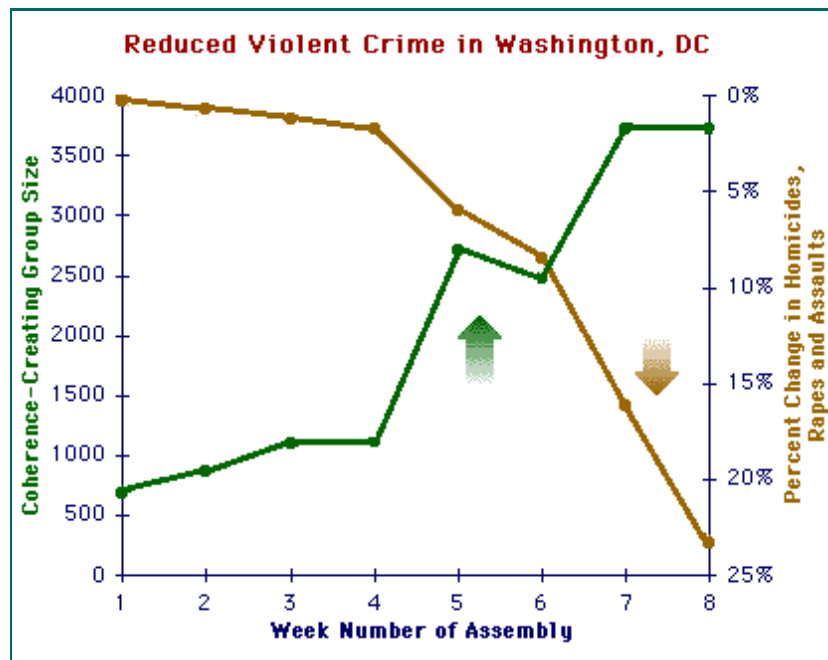
This study presents the final results of a two-month prospective experiment to reduce violent crime in Washington, DC. On the basis of previous research it was hypothesized that the level of violent crime in the District of Columbia would drop significantly with the creation of a large group of participants in the Transcendental Meditation® and TM-Sidhi® programs to increase coherence and reduce stress in the District.

This National Demonstration Project to Reduce Violent Crime and Improve Governmental Effectiveness brought approximately 4,000 participants in the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi programs to the United States national capital from June 7 to July 30, 1993. A 27-member independent Project Review Board consisting of sociologists and criminologists from leading universities, representatives from the police department and government of the District of Columbia, and civic leaders approved in advance the research protocol for the project and monitored its progress.

The dependent variable in the research was weekly violent crime, as measured by the Uniform Crime Report program of the Federal Bureau of Investigation; violent crimes include homicide, rape, aggravated assault, and robbery. This data was obtained from the District of Columbia Metropolitan Police Department for 1993 as well as for the preceding five years (1988-1992). Additional data used for control purposes included weather variables (temperature, precipitation, humidity), daylight hours, changes in police and community anti-crime activities, prior crime trends in the District of Columbia, and concurrent crime trends in neighboring cities. Average weekly temperature was significantly correlated with homicides, rapes and assaults (HRA crimes), as has also been found in previous research; therefore temperature was used as a control variable in the main analysis of HRA crimes. Using time series analysis, violent crimes were analyzed separately in terms of HRA crimes (crimes against the person) and robbery (monetary crimes), as well as together.

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Analysis of 1993 data, controlling for temperature, revealed that there was a highly significant decrease in HRA crimes associated with increases in the size of the group during the Demonstration Project. The maximum decrease was 23.3% when the size of the group was largest during the final week of the project. The statistical probability that this result could reflect chance variation in crime levels was less than 2 in 1 billion ($p < .000000002$). When a longer baseline is used (1988-1993 data), the maximum decrease was 24.6% during this period ($p < .00003$). When analyzed as a separate variable, robberies did not decrease significantly, but a joint analysis of both HRA crimes and robberies indicated that violent crimes as a whole decreased significantly to a maximum amount of 15.6% during the final week of the project ($p = .0008$). Analysis of 1993 data, controlling for temperature, revealed that there was a highly significant decrease in HRA crimes associated with increases in the size of the group during the Demonstration Project.

Several additional analyses were performed on HRA crimes to further assess the strength of the main findings. These indicated that the reduction of HRA crimes associated with the group of participants in the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi programs could not be attributed to changes in police staffing. These secondary analyses also found that the reduction of HRA crimes was highly robust to alternative specifications of the statistical model—that is, the effect is independent of the isolated details of the models used to assess seasonal cycles and trends. No significant decrease was found in any of the prior five years during this period of time, indicating that this effect was not due to the specific time of year. Furthermore, the intervention parameters for the group size revealed that the effect of the group was not only cumulative with the increase in group size, but also continued for some time after the end of the project.

Based on the results of the study, the steady state gain (long-term effect) associated with a permanent group of 4,000 participants in the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi programs was calculated as a 48% reduction in HRA crimes in the District of Columbia.

Given the strength of these results, their consistency with the positive results of previous research, the grave human and financial costs of violent crime, and the lack of other effective and scientific methods to reduce crime, policy makers are urged to apply this approach on a large scale for the benefit of society.

Reference: Hagelin, J.S., Rainforth, M.V., Orme-Johnson, D.W., Cavanaugh, K. L., Alexander, C.N., Shatkin, S.F., Davies, J.L, Hughes, A.O, and Ross, E. 1999. Effects of group practice of the Transcendental Meditation program on preventing violent crime in Washington

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