Description

There were several activities supported by the summer funding received. The most exhaustive and primary of these activities was data collection by undergraduates in an empirical study that examined expressive and exposure based writing, and how various writing tasks affected PTSD symptoms, depression, health, and psychological growth. Four undergraduate research assistants were continuously trained on delivering the protocol, and each RA ran over 50 sessions of data collection, in addition to soliciting participants by screening large classes. We met as a research team weekly, in order to cover relevant details about our data collection process and how to begin data entry and analysis. Also, each student was required to give a mock professional presentation on a topic of their interest (children & PTSD, how writing can help cancer survivors, posttraumatic growth, and how writing can help suicide survivors). Some activities related to the recently awarded Swarm endowment for mental illness, such as training all RAs in the time system, were also completed in the summer to further our research mission.

Progress

The empirical study requires that participants have suffered a severe trauma, and with the fewer classes offered in the summer, we were unable to run the total number of participants needed. However, we did collect a significant number of essays and questionnaires that later culminated in presentations at regional conferences in the fall, and that will culminate in a national presentation in the spring of 2010. One of the largest obstacles for the study has been a misunderstanding of what participants should write about and some anomalies on the dependent measures. We have minimized these issues by submitting an IRB amendment that was approved.

Products

A manuscript will be generated in the near future after data collection for our large scale study is completed. However, we have been pleased to have the opportunity to present our research at several conferences, most notably the APS conference which is fairly competitive and provides national exposure.


The poster above won an honorable mention, although all other posters were composed by graduate students. For a summary see page 11 of:

http://www.indianapsychology.org/pdf/newsletters/newsletter_dec_09.pdf