

Mood and Mentorship: The Affective Impact of Volunteering as a Therapeutic Poetry Volunteer Mentor

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PROJECT QUESTIONS

What is the impact of volunteering with Poetry Power on affect? What may underlie observed effects of volunteering on affect?

BACKGROUND

- Poetry Power is a volunteer-facilitated, community therapeutic poetry program aimed at helping participants process through trauma
- Mentoring provides therapeutic facilitation experience and introduction to artistic therapies

METHOD

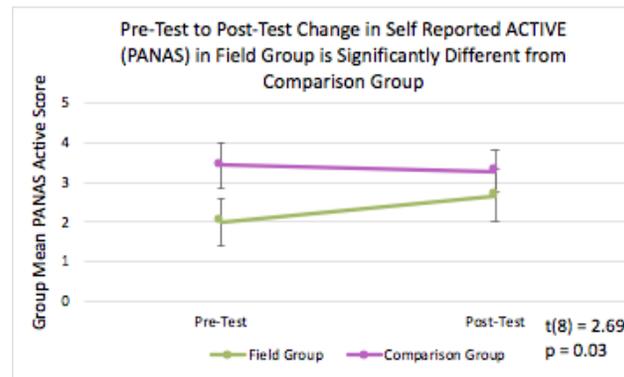
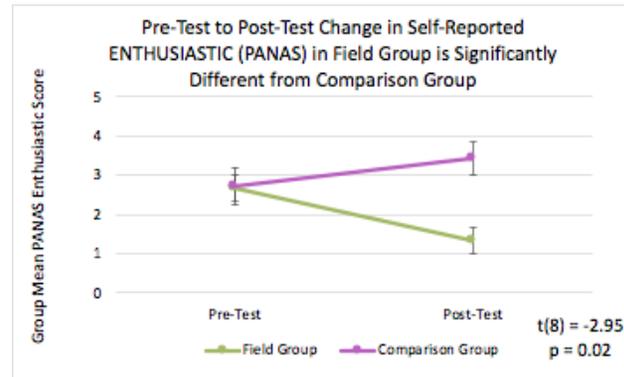
- Participants: 10 female Poetry Power volunteers and individuals who expressed interest in the program. Nine participants were UP students between 18-25 years old and one was not associated with UP and between 36-45 years old. Three participating volunteers in field group. Seven non-participating volunteers in comparison group.
- Measured affect using The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) and abbreviated Profile of Mood States (POMS) scales
- Abbreviated POMS consists of 40 items measuring 7 categories of mood states (including tension and vigor) and has been used to measure affect in settings such as athletic competitions
- PANAS consists of 20 items measuring emotions (including "enthusiastic" and "active") and has been found to be reliable in general adult samples as well as in undergraduate college student samples
- Qualitative questions inquiring about experience
- Pre-test and post-test surveys administered through Qualtrics

Additional information

The Poetry Power program was adapted from Richard Gold's Pongo Teen Writing Project by Dr. Kevin Jones

RESULTS

Quantitative Findings



Additional trending findings from POMS that vigor ($t(2) = 3.46$, $p = 0.07$) and tension ($t(2) = 3.46$, $p = 0.07$) decline after volunteering.

Qualitative Findings

Example direct quotations on positive/enjoyable aspects:

- "I loved being able to relate to the youth and connect with them."
- "Reading poetry before we all began and getting to know the people there."

Example direct quotations on negative/challenging aspects:

- "There was a language barrier."
- "Remembering it is not about me."

DISCUSSION

- Social connection and aesthetic enjoyment may partially explain positive effects.
- Logistical, linguistic, and emotional challenges may partially explain negative effects.
- Difference between field and comparison groups on ACTIVE (PANAS) measure could be due to comparison group starting out with higher scores and having less room to increase
- Limitations: minimal data due to COVID-19 interruptions, small sample size, temporal discrepancies in survey completion, differences in cultural relevance/interpretation of items.

Implications

Poetry Power could maximize positive effects by providing opportunities for mentors to build on relationships with mentees by sending follow up emails to mentees with additional writing resources. Additionally, an opportunity for volunteers to write their own poems as a means of debriefing at the end of sessions may enhance aesthetic participation. Poetry Power may be able to minimize negative effects by matching mentor and mentee based on preferred language and enhancing education on maintaining emotional boundaries.

References

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