

Megan Parisi

Graduation Year: Senior

College: Arts & Letters

Major(s): Psychology

Minors(s): Computing & Digital Technologies

Scholar Group Membership: No

Did you received other funding for this project?: No

Could you have completed this project without CUSE funding? No

More details on CUSE funding assistance? My research project involved individual participants, and in Psychology, it is customary to compensate participants for their involvement in the study. Standard rates are about ten dollars per hour, and each session in my study lasted about two and half hours, totaling twenty-five dollars per participant. To gain anything near a sizable sample, I needed significant funding, and without the funds allocated by CUSE, I would never have been able to reach the sample size I did.

Project Title: The Relation Among Trait Anxiety, Cortisol Stress Reactivity, and Aggressive Behavior

Project Location: University of Notre Dame - Cognition, Emotion, and Emotional Disorders Lab

ND Faculty Mentor: Lira Yoon

Project Type: Research

Why did you undertake this project/experience? Deepen your knowledge of a topic or issue, Research/experience necessary for senior thesis or capstone project, Prepare for graduate school (MA or PhD), Career discernment and/or preparation

Did your funded experience help you:

[Deepen your understanding of your coursework or field of study]: Yes

[Discern your interests and post-bac goals]: Very Much

[Become confident in your ability to set and achieve your goals]: Very Much

[Gain a more nuanced view of local, national, or global communities]: Not Applicable

[Improve your written and verbal communications skills]:Yes

Tell us about your experience.

My study investigated the potential relation between trait anxiety, cortisol stress reactivity, and aggressive behavior. More specifically, I wanted to determine, first, whether aggressive behavior and trait anxiety are positively correlated, as described in previous research, and, second, whether this correlation may be also related to differing levels of cortisol in response to stress provocation, as gaps in the literature may suggest. To help answer this question, I ran a subset of a larger experiment being conducted by Dr. Lira Yoon. Participants were brought into the lab and completed a stress-provoking deception task. Their aggressive behavior was then assessed using a voodoo doll paradigm, in which participants were told they could stick as many pins into the computer voodoo doll as they wished. Participants then filled out various

surveys in which their trait anxiety was assessed. This summer, I recruited participants throughout campus, scheduled participants, and ran the individual sessions. I also did preliminary analyses of the data, but the actual results will be more thoroughly analyzed and reported as part of my senior thesis this upcoming school year. While the concrete, psychological takeaways of this study are yet to be known, I gained a vast amount of knowledge in the daily practices of research and the challenges and rewards of running an independent study.

Describe the impact this project had, both on you as a student-scholar and on the people you worked with.

This project had a large impact on my views of scholarly work. The daily processes of running a research project are not always glamorous or exciting, but I felt enormous fulfillment at being able to complete a project that I was passionate about. By allowing me to live as a full-time researcher this summer, this project cemented my desire to pursue research as an eventual career. This project may not have had much of an impact on the individual people who participated, but hopefully, the results will add to a growing literature on the causes and correlates of aggressive behavior and violence and lead to eventual interventions.

Describe how this experience is connected to your plans as a student or future professional.

My experience is immediately connected to my senior thesis, as the data I was able to collect this summer will be analyzed and assessed more thoroughly in my senior thesis. However, I also hope to publish my findings and present at various student conferences throughout the year. I also will be applying to PhD Psychology programs in the near future, and my experience this summer has cemented my desire to pursue a post-graduate degree and continue my research.

What advice would you give other students who are planning to pursue similar projects?

It may seem obvious, but I would advise students to pick projects or topics that inspire true passion or interest. Research, especially when it is not in the field, can be tedious work, but if students choose to explore areas that create excitement for them, the work will be fulfilling. More concretely, I would advise students to discern early on what their topic will be and to take advantage of the resources that CUSE has to offer in terms of preparation, grant proposal drafting, and budget formation.

I acknowledge that this form has been filled out truthfully and to the best of my ability. I understand that this information will be shared with many different CUSE constituencies. As such, I have provided as much useful information as I was able. I understand that CUSE will not complete my award disbursement until this form is successfully completed. If I have any questions or concerns, I will contact CUSE before submitting this form. To illustrate that you understand all of these points, please enter your Notre Dame email in the box below.

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