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Purpose: Assess the structural, personal, and experiential risk factors for trauma in TVTP research.

Project Phases

- **Phase 1 – Job Analysis and Ground-Level Research**
  - July '22 – June '23

- **Phase 2 – Experience Sampling Research**
  - June '23 - Present

Method Details

- Qualitative, interview-based research with 35 TVTP researchers in the US and UK.

- More than 50 hours of job analytic interviews.

- Interview transcripts were coded and analyzed for both specific (i.e., job analysis) and thematic information regarding typical work experiences.

- Quantitative, longitudinal research conducted with 11 active TVTP researchers.

- Daily observations over one working month for each participant (N = 191), reporting on distressing and traumatic exposures.

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Phase 1 BLUF: There is a meaningful delta between how people **think** this work effects them and how much it **actually** impacts their lives.

Key Takeaways

Theme 1 – Scholars underestimate the personal toll of their work. This varies with rank & seniority.

Theme 2 – There are pervasive, discipline-related cultural issues preventing trauma mitigation.

Theme 3 – Social identity may increase risk of psychological trauma, dependent on research topic

High Level Results

- PIs were **far less likely** to claim distress than postdocs, GRAs and undergraduates. Also differed in general sentiment / view of seriousness in the topic in general.

- Many interviewees state that the potential for trauma is known but not ever addressed or discussed seriously. There is perceived **prestige** in doing "difficult" work.

- Women, POC, and LGBTQ+ researchers appear to be at higher risk of trauma, likely because these groups are often targeted by the extremists they study.

Representative Quotations from Phase 1

Psychological Impact

"I got a lot more like paranoid, like an anxiety of my own safety. And I eventually actually ended up moving because of that…I don't feel safe in my home." (*F4, Undergraduate*)

"Everyday. And it doesn't matter, at least from my experience, how long you've been embedded in the community. It can still get you, like, literally out of nowhere…. It can be really unpredictable, which makes it harder." (*F20, Research Professional*)

Behavior Change

"I do not take public transportation. That's one thing. I avoid it at absolutely every cost that I can." (*F18, Graduate Student*)

"I don't go to big group events. [I'm] scared of things like that, for sure. Of like being in the wrong place at the wrong time, even though it's statistically like, very unlikely." (*F10, Primary Investigator*)

View of the Field

"It's hard to be optimistic. It's hard to be hopeful." (*M4, Research Professional*)

"Absolutely not…we talked earlier about policies like the IRB, like, they don't care about me, they care about like what happens when the participants relive trauma." (*F10, Primary Investigator*)

"No one's really telling you how to handle stuff… I was viewing violent imagery. I didn't know how to handle that. I was like having breakdowns and…there was nothing. I don't even think the P.I. even thought about the fact that we were viewing violent propaganda." (*F11, Graduate Student*)

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Phase 2 BLUF: Rates of traumatic exposure vary, but **desensitization** is likely a pervasive issue.

Key Takeaways

Participants reported at least one distressing or traumatic exposure in nearly 30% of daily observations (N = 56).

Women reported significantly more exposures than men, as well as **significantly more re-living** of the experience and **lower daily job satisfaction**. Women also had **higher baseline turnover intention**

Rates of exposure and experience of re-living exposures also varied by seniority. **Junior scholars** recounted **significantly more exposures and significantly more re-living** of those exposures than PIs.

Underscores an unexpected broader theme of **desensitization** revealed in ESM data. Also present in Phase 1 interviews.

Data / Results

Simple effects of Time: Parameter estimates

Moderator levels			95% Confidence Interval				
Exposure Count	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	df	t	p
Mean-1-SD	-0.0344	0.0306	-0.0959	0.02712	46.0	-1.13	0.266
Mean	-0.0647	0.0297	-0.1245	-0.00488	46.0	-2.18	0.035
Mean+1-SD	-0.0950	0.0428	-0.1813	-0.00879	45.1	-2.22	0.032

Note. Simple effects are estimated keeping constant other independent variable(s) in the model

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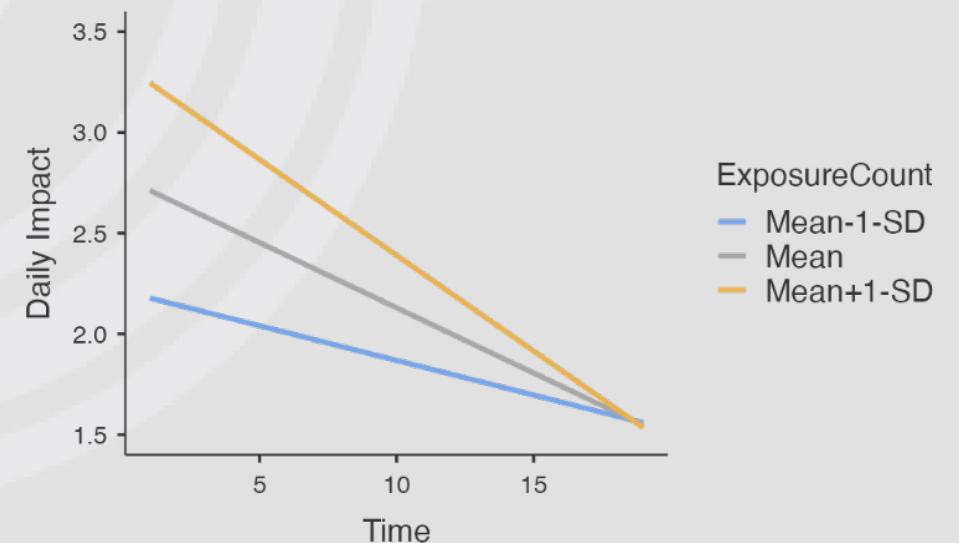
Project Summary and Future Directions

Key Takeaways

It is important to recognize that the lived experience of many TVTP researchers is embedded with psychosocial harm. **This is a risk for both researchers and the field**.

Who is most likely to experience trauma is a potentially **more important** question than when or how those exposures occur.

Desensitization is not a positive or a panacea. It **reflects structural flaws** in the how distress and trauma are addressed in TVTP work.

Future Research Directions

- Work specifically targeted on junior researchers / research teams.

- Work exploring the intersections of identity / demographics and specific topics of research.

- Model and test support strategies that can be developed at scale. Can help revise culture issues.

- Explore to what extent these experiences are a) understood at job onboarding and b) related to issues of long-term talent acquisition and retention.