

ISSEP Existential Psychology | Tuesday, Feb. 09 | 10:00 AM - 7:00 PM (EST)

**PROGRAM OF EVENTS (at-a-glance\*)**

**All times are in USA Eastern Standard Time (EST)**

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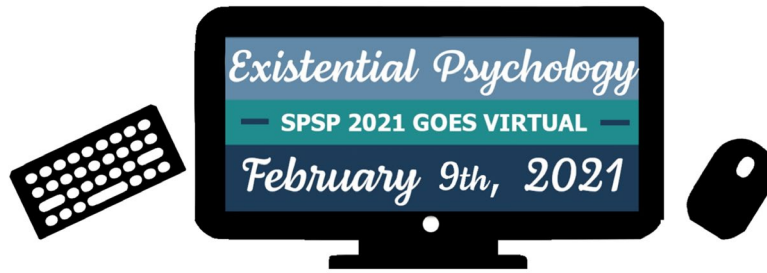
10:00-10:15am	Opening remarks	Welcome; <a href="#">Sponsored Awards</a> ; Orientation.
10:15-11:15am	<b>Keynote Address:</b> <a href="#">John Jost</a>	<a href="#">A theory of system justification</a>
11:15-12:15am	<a href="#">Poster session</a>	<a href="#">Live poster presentations</a>
12:15-12:30pm	Coffee break	
12:30-1:00am	<a href="#">Gerald Echterhoff</a>	<a href="#">The transfer of shared reality: How the experience of commonality spreads</a>
1:00-1:30pm	<a href="#">Louis Hoffman</a>	<a href="#">The role of empathy in prejudice, microaggression, and racial gaslighting</a>
1:30-1:45pm	Coffee break	
1:45-2:45pm	<b>Special Address:</b> <a href="#">Tomi-Ann Roberts</a>	<a href="#">Feminist existential psychology goes to court</a>
2:45-3:15pm	<a href="#">Data blitz session</a>	<a href="#">5 data blitz presentations</a>
3:15-3:25pm	Coffee break	
3:25-3:55pm	<a href="#">Daniel Sullivan</a>	<a href="#">A cultural-existential analysis of responses to disaster and environmental hazard</a>
3:55-4:25pm	<a href="#">Crystal Park</a>	<a href="#">Meaning disruption and meaning making in the midst of the covid-19 pandemic</a>
4:25-4:55pm	<a href="#">Kirk Warren Brown</a>	<a href="#">How presence supports the basic human need for social connection</a>
4:55-5:00pm	Closing remarks	
5:00-7:00pm	Virtual happy hour	Virtual happy hour <i>Sponsored by Ernest Becker Foundation.</i>

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\*Detailed programming (w/abstracts) for each presentation on the following pages.

**EXISTENTIAL PSYCHOLOGY**





**ISSEP Existential Psychology | Tuesday, Feb. 09 | 10:00 AM - 7:00 PM (EST)**

**SPONSORED AWARDS**

**Innovation in Existential Psychology Research Award – \$150**

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Harrison Schmitt      University of Arizona

**Worth Publishers/Macmillan Learning Graduate Student Registration Awards – \$50**

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Arthur Braaten      University of Ottawa  
Lindsay Branham      University of Cambridge  
Gulnaz Kiper      University of Southern California  
Jonah Li      Indiana University  
Joseph Maffly-Kipp      Texas A&M University  
Alex Sielaff      University of Arizona

**Cleveland State University Undergraduate Student Registration Award – \$50**

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Madison Sarlo      James Madison University

**Cleveland State University Diversity in Existential Psychology Registration Award – \$50**

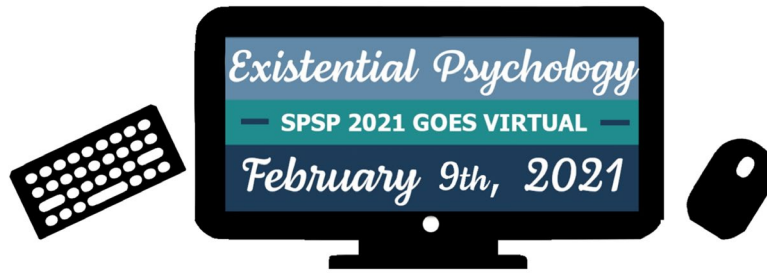
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Miranda Bahng      University of British Columbia  
Anaïs Ortiz      George Mason University

**EXISTENTIAL PSYCHOLOGY**





ISSEP Existential Psychology | Tuesday, Feb. 09 | 10:00 AM - 7:00 PM (EST)

## RESEARCH TALKS

10:15-11:15am **Keynote Address: John Jost**

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### **A theory of system justification.**

**Abstract:** According to system justification theory, people are motivated to defend, bolster, and justify aspects of existing social, economic, and political systems. I will summarize major tenets of system justification theory, review some of the empirical evidence supporting it, answer several questions and criticisms, and highlight areas of societal relevance and directions for future research.

12:30-1:00pm **Gerald Echterhoff**

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### **The transfer of shared reality: How the experience of commonality spreads from one issue to other issues.**

**Abstract:** The presented research (N = 958) suggests that verification of judgments about initial targets by an unfamiliar partner promotes the construction of shared reality about novel targets with that partner. Such transfer allows an initial shared reality to extend to new issues. The underlying motivational mechanisms and implications are discussed.

1:00-1:30pm **Louis Hoffman**

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### **The Role of Empathy in Prejudice, Microaggression, and Racial Gaslighting**

**Abstract:** Lacking or limited empathy contributes to the development of racism, setting the stage for microaggressions and the dynamics of racial gaslighting. Facilitating the development of empathy and deeper understanding in privileged individuals can play an important role in anti-racism work designed to combat various forms of racism.

1:45-2:45pm **Special Address: Tomi-Ann Roberts**

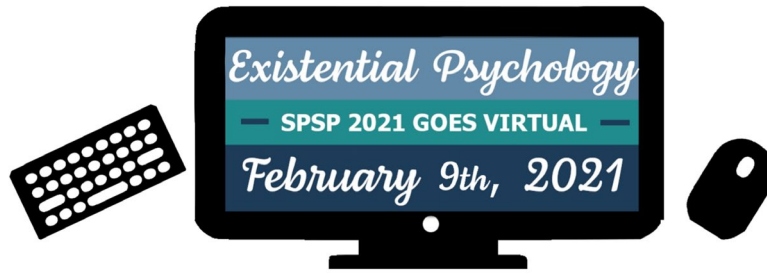
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### **Feminist existential psychology goes to court**

**Abstract:** In a sexually objectifying culture, women's creaturely bodies are existentially threatening. I review court cases in which feminist existential psychology advances the cause of gender justice by revealing the benevolent sexist underpinnings of discriminatory toplessness ordinances, and the hostile sexism that fuels the degradation of the bodies of incarcerated women.

# EXISTENTIAL PSYCHOLOGY





3:25-3:55pm **Daniel Sullivan**

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**A cultural-existential analysis of responses to disaster and environmental hazard**

**Abstract:** Environmental hazards are major existential threats. Cultural factors shape not only the vulnerability of individuals to such threats, but their psychological responses. I present a model and associated research documenting how culture shapes the experience of environmental hazard, from minority religious communities experiencing tornados to diverse responses to environmental contamination.

3:55-4:25pm **Crystal Park**

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**Meaning Disruption and Meaning Making in the Covid-19 Pandemic**

**Abstract:** Using a meaning making framework, this study documents the extent to which the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted central domains of life, the extent to which people engaged in meaning making early in the pandemic, and the relations between making meaning and psychological wellbeing in a national sample of 850 Americans.

4:25-4:55pm **Kirk Warren Brown**

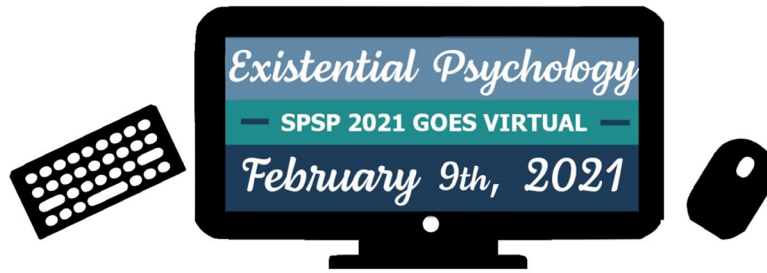
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**How Presence Supports the Basic Human Need for Social Connection**

**Abstract:** Social connection has been jeopardized by the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet this presentation will show that how we “show up” psychologically – operationalized in our work as “presence,” key to mindfulness, can support human connection even among those with lower social inclinations and when quantity and diversity of daily interactions are fewer.

**EXISTENTIAL PSYCHOLOGY**





ISSEP Existential Psychology | Tuesday, Feb. 09 | 10:00 AM - 7:00 PM (EST)

**POSTER PRESENTATIONS (11:15-12:15pm)**

**1. Facing a Cosmic Perspective: Existential Reactions to the Vastness of the Universe**

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**Authors:** Braaten, A., & Huta, V.

**Abstract:** The vastness of the universe can evoke polarizing existential experiences. Some people can have elevating experiences and others can have existential distress. This research uses qualitative and quantitative methods to understand how people react differently to cosmic vastness. It contributes to research on awe, existential psychology, and stresses the value of measuring existential experiences.

**Notes:**

**2. Exploring the Experiential Mode of Death Transcendence: A Terror Management Analysis**

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**Authors:** Sielaff, A., & Greenberg, J.

**Abstract:** Inspired by psychedelic research, this presentation discusses a hypothesis, and initial data, for a novel mode of managing death anxiety. Terror Management Theory is employed to investigate how a fleeting, yet curiously profound, experience is able to elicit a persisting reduction in death anxiety.

**Notes:**

**3. Mental Fantasies May Promote Meaning in Life Among Depressed Individuals**

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**Authors:** Maffly-Kipp, J., & Vess, M.

**Abstract:** People with depression often struggle to construct and maintain meaning in their lives. Though frequently engaging in mental fantasies typically bodes poorly for mental health, fantasies may provide an alternate source of meaning for some individuals. In 2 studies, we found support for the hypothesis that fantasy proneness positively predicts meaning specifically for people high in depression.

**Notes:**

**4. Mindfulness as a Promoter of an Authentic, Compassionate Self**

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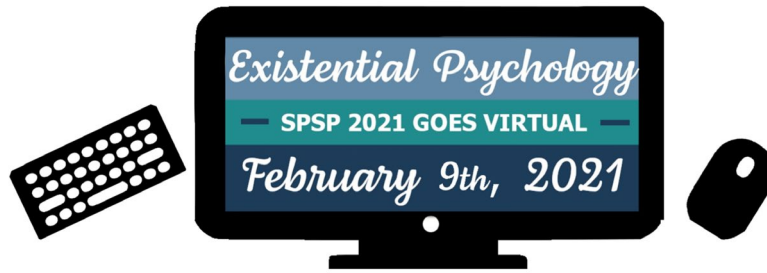
**Authors:** Ortiz, A., Turner, E., Regalario, I., Zhang, J. W., & Murdoch, E.

**Abstract:** People with high self-compassion (SC) experience more authenticity: a connection to self that promotes optimal functioning. Mindfulness, a component of SC linked to inner awareness, also promotes authenticity. While previous studies showed the independent effects of SC and mindfulness on authenticity, this study unpacks how mindfulness may act as a mechanism in SC to affect authenticity.

**Notes:**

**EXISTENTIAL PSYCHOLOGY**





### **5. Does Money Make Life Meaningful? Socioeconomic Status, Financial Self-Efficacy, and Meaning in Life**

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**Authors:** Kim, J., & Ward, S.

**Abstract:** Despite the negative relation between money and well-being, money can serve as a source of meaning in life (MIL). In the present study, we conducted three experiments that supported a moderated mediation model in which primes of money (vs. control) enhances a link of SES to financial self-efficacy, which then predict MIL. This study has implications regarding reminders of money and well-being.

**Notes:**

### **6. Self-compassion: A buffer for political extremism**

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**Authors:** Branham, L.

**Abstract:** This investigation proposes that self-compassion, mainly studied for individual mental and physiological health benefits, has also been found to satisfy root existential psychological motivations for conservatism while nurturing flexibility around divergent political opinions, which can be associated with lower out-group prejudice and extremist political beliefs.

**Notes:**

### **7. Thwarted Reproductive Goals as a Meaning Threat**

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**Authors:** Brown, F., & Keefer, L.

**Abstract:** This study examines the effect of prospective thwarted reproduction on meaning and symbolic immortality. Participants imagined 1) successfully having happy and healthy children, 2) being unable to have children, or 3) having children who then die to assess the effects of these imagined futures on meaning, symbolic immortality, and meaning-seeking in ways besides reproduction.

**Notes:**

### **8. Self-Transcendence as a Source of Existential Meaning**

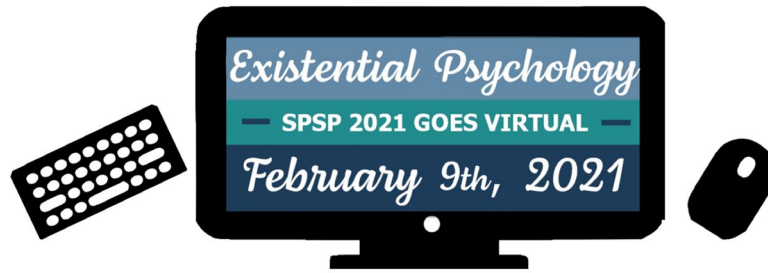
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**Authors:** Fan, Y., & Cimpian, A.

**Abstract:** What is the meaning of life? This is a fundamental question about the nature of our existence. We found that people's intuitive theories about existential meaning focus on entities beyond the self. Those who endorse self-transcendent life orientations also experience more meaning, happiness, and life satisfaction. The results support the view that self-transcendence provides existential meaning.

**Notes:**





### **9. Political Polarization and Terror Management Theory: How Death Anxiety Deepens the Divide Between Liberals and Conservatives during the 2020 Election**

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**Authors:** Sarlo, M.

**Abstract:** This project aims to uncover the role of death anxiety in political polarization using Terror Management Theory (TMT) as a framework during the 2020 Election. This research investigates whether mortality salience (MS) increases partisan hostility between liberals and conservatives, causes them to express more polarized attitudes on various political issues, or both.

**Notes:**

### **10. Existential & Social Isolation Is Not The Enemy: How isolation and media use affected Americans during the COVID19 pandemic**

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**Authors:** Manson, L., Gilmore, G., Baillargeon, A., Dunn, S., Demassi, J., & Harvell-Bowman, L.

**Abstract:** During the height of the COVID19 pandemic, we collected data beginning the day after America shut down until the reopening. This nationwide survey assesses the relationship between existential isolation, social isolation, depression, and self-esteem with their impacts on health risk. Results show that increased levels of existential isolation and social isolation may be helpful during a pandemic..

**Notes:**

### **11. ‘Spirituality’ in the Literature and in Discussions with the Very Elderly: Does the Terminology Need Adjustment?**

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**Authors:** Moore, A., Poulin, C., & Goulique, L.

**Abstract:** This poster uses a model of meaning-making from La Cour and Hvidt (2010) to guide thematic analysis of ambivalent, and non-traditional views on religion and meaning expressed by older adults. Data are from a study on aging and resilience in 90+ year-olds living independently in eastern Canada. We argue for framing secular components of existential wellbeing as distinct from spirituality.

**Notes:**

### **12. Existential Meaninglessness Scales: Scale Development and Psychometric Properties**

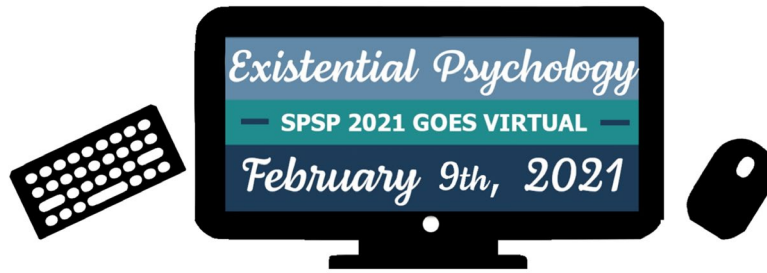
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**Authors:** Li, J., Wong, J., Wang, C., Jin, L., & McCullough, K.

**Abstract:** This project reports the development of new measures of people’s concern and anxiety regarding existential meaninglessness. The authors found that experience of existential meaninglessness among college students and patients with chronic illness was uniquely and positively related to depressive symptoms and suicide ideation.

**Notes:**





### 13. Pandemic-related Ontological Insecurity Measure Predicting Health Outcome

**Authors:** Umemoto, S., Mohr, C., & Boulch, P.

**Abstract:** A Pandemic-related Ontological Insecurity (OI) Measure was developed and tested as part of a COVID-19 impact survey of 240 participants. EFA resulted in two factors, confirmed via CFA [ $\chi^2(74)=108.64$ , MLRsf=1.07, RMSEA=.046, CFI=.95, SRMR=.051; Reliability  $\alpha$ 's> .75]. OI negatively predicted frequency and hazardous alcohol use; indirect effects via coping positively predicted both outcomes.

**Notes:**

### 14. Racial differences in associations between police mistreatment, existential isolation and suicidal ideation

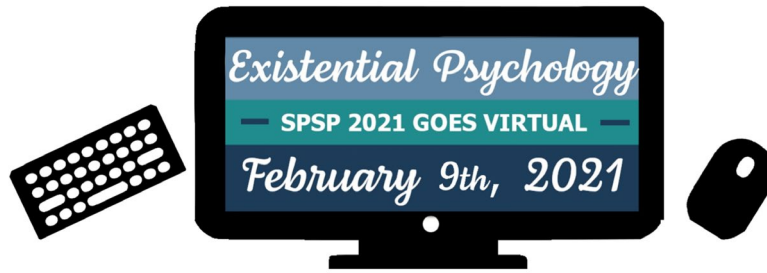
**Authors:** Oleskiewicz, T., Comstock, W., Fuchs, N., Glinsky, B., Pinel, E., & Pyszczynski, T.

**Abstract:** Does police mistreatment predict racial differences in existential isolation (EI)? White and Black participants completed the Existential Isolation Scale and a suicide screener. Analyses revealed higher EI and police mistreatment among Black participants and an indirect effect of police mistreatment on suicidal ideation via effects on existential isolation.

**Notes:**







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**DATA BLITZ PRESENTATIONS (2:45-3:15pm)**

**1. The Psychological Experience of Water Contamination: Implications for Mental Health, Coping, and Resilience**

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**Authors:** Schmitt, H., & Sullivan, D.

**Abstract:** Living through chronic environmental contamination can be psychologically stressful. I present results from 1 qualitative and 1 experimental study on the psychological stress impact of living through CEC and on the potential for increasing resilience via collective efficacy. Results suggest that increasing collective efficacy is an important goal for work on coping with environmental catastrophes.

**Notes:**

**2. Framing Uncanniness: Human-Like Descriptions of Robots Produce Uncanny Feelings**

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**Authors:** Bahng, J., Benjamin, R., & Heine, S.

**Abstract:** Do human-like descriptions of robots cause uncanny feelings? Studies show that robots with a human-like appearance are perceived as uncanny, but it is unclear whether mere descriptions also produce uncanniness. Our findings show that framing robots as possessing human-like minds do elicit uncanny feelings, beyond appearance.

**Notes:**

**3. Difficulty mindsets shape meaning making and behaviors in pandemic times**

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**Authors:** Kiper, G., Yan, V., Oyserman, D., & Atari, M.

**Abstract:** During the COVID-19 pandemic, people who endorse difficulty-as-self-improvement and difficulty-as-importance mindsets are more likely to see a silver lining in the pandemic (e.g. “this pandemic has made me a better person”). Seeing a silver lining matters. People who find such silver linings are more likely to perform the hygienic behaviors needed to reduce the spread of the virus.

**Notes:**

**4. Existential Isolation, Interpersonal Isolation, and Suicidal Ideation Among Formerly Incarcerated Individuals**

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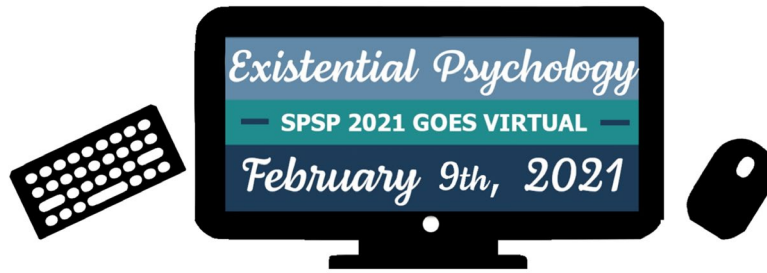
**Authors:** Gehman, R., Pinel, E., & Pyszczynski, T.

**Abstract:** We ask whether existential isolation (EI), or the feeling of being alone in one’s subjective experiences, and interpersonal isolation predict suicidal ideation (SI) among formerly incarcerated individuals. Examining survey data (n = 946), we found that EI mediates the relationship between incarceration and SI. We also found group differences in EI and the magnitude of the EI/SI relationship.

**Notes:**

**EXISTENTIAL PSYCHOLOGY**





## 5. Beliefs in Free Will Versus Determinism: Search for Meaning Mediates the Life Scheme–Depressive Symptom Link

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**Authors:** Li, J., & Wong, J.

**Abstract:** What may prompt people to search for meaning in life (MIL), knowing that search for MIL may be costly to their mental health? We posited people initiate a search when they find their life schemes incoherent. Grounded in past findings that lay beliefs are often incoherent, lay beliefs in determinism as a life scheme were strongly, positively related to search for MIL, relative to free will belief.

**Notes:**

