SPSP 2023
Annual Convention
FEBRUARY 22 —— ATLANTA GA
EXISTENTIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Wednesday, Feb. 22 | 9:00 AM – 8:00 PM (EST)

PROGRAM OF EVENTS (at-a-glance*)

All times are in USA Eastern Standard Time (PST)

9:00-9:30am	Opening remarks	Welcome; Orientation.
9:30-10:30am	**Special Address: Derk Pereboom**	Free will, agency, and the science of existential psychology
10:30-11:30am	**Poster session**	Live poster presentations
11:30-11:45am	Coffee break	
11:45-12:45pm	**Keynote Address: Josh Hicks**	Let's talk about the experience of authenticity
12:45-1:15pm	**Grace Rivera**	The "true self" concept as guide: A lay-theory approach to authenticity
1:15-1:45pm	**Tamar Kushnir**	Developmental understanding of freedom and responsibility
1:45-2:00pm	Coffee break	
2:00-2:30pm	Recognition	Award ceremony
2:30-3:30pm	**Special Address: Alfred Mele**	Free will: Philosophical perspectives
3:30-4:00 pm	**Data blitz session**	5 data blitz presentations
4:00-4:15pm	Coffee break	
4:15-4:45pm	**Elena Reutskaja**	Rethinking choice overload
4:45-5:15pm	**Serena Chen**	Authenticity and the working self-concept: How shifts in the relational context influence state authenticity
5:15-5:45pm	**Anna Sutton**	Awesome work: The role of authenticity in promoting well-being and engagement at work
5:45-6:00pm	Closing remarks	
6:00-8:00pm	Virtual happy hour	Existential Psychology happy hour *Sponsored by Ernest Becker Foundation.*

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

EXISTENTIAL PSYCHOLOGY

RESEARCH TALKS

9:30-10:30am	**Derk Pereboom: Special Address**

Free will, agency, and the science of existential psychology

Abstract: With advances in our scientific understanding of human beings and our place in the world, we are seeing a shift in the way people think about free will, taking the prospect that we lack free will more seriously. This raises important existential concerns. In this talk, I explore the idea that finding meaning in life and sustaining good interpersonal relationships would not be threatened by this shift, but instead enhanced.

11:45-12:45pm	**Josh Hicks: Keynote Address**

Let's talk about the experience of authenticity

Abstract: The past decade has seen an explosion of research on authenticity, aimed at understanding the components of authenticity, what facilitates this experience, and whether it contributes to well-being and behavioral outcomes. Some findings have supported long-held beliefs about the construct and others have raised more questions than answers. I will review some of these findings and lead a discussion in hopes of using our collective knowledge to gain insight on this elusive construct.

12:45-1:15pm	**Grace Rivera**

The "true self" concept as guide: A lay-theory approach to authenticity

Abstract: I will present research informed by a "True Self as Guide" lay theory of decision-making, which suggests that people internalize the belief that true selves should guide behavior. People subsequently use perceptions of authenticity as a cue that they're living up to a shared cultural value of what it means to live a good life and make good decisions. I will also present work on how beliefs about true selves shape our perceptions of authenticity.

1:15-1:45pm	**Tamar Kushnir**

Developmental understanding of freedom and responsibility

Abstract: Despite an explosion of moral psychology research on early childhood, we still rarely consider children as *moral agents*. I'll discuss research finding that children understand their own and others' capacity to resist temptation and to break rules, and how children make social evaluations about trade-offs between acting out of self-interest and acting for the benefit of others—suggesting a sophisticated understanding of freedom and responsibility as early as age 6.

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2:30-3:30pm	**Alfred Mele: Special Address**
	Free will: Philosophical perspectives
	Abstract: My primary aim in this Special Address is to describe the currently prominent philosophical positions on free will and their pros and cons. I will also comment on connections between free will and moral responsibility and on some questions about free will that scientists can help philosophers answer

4:15-4:45pm	**Elena Reutskaja**
	Rethinking choice overload
	Abstract: I'll discuss the impact of the environment and type of decision-maker on the perception of the number of choices. I'll present data showing that in most choice domains and countries, choice deprivation (lack of choice) is the norm. Choice deprivation also has a greater negative effect on satisfaction with choice than overload. Additionally, though choosing with another person reduces the negative consequences of too much choice, people still prefer to choose alone.

4:45-5:15pm	**Serena Chen**
	Authenticity and the working self-concept: How shifts in the relational context influence state authenticity
	Abstract: The self-concept is multi-faceted and its nature shifts according to the situation at hand. State authenticity is also likely to fluctuate across contexts. In this talk, I will discuss how shifts in relational contexts (e.g., close relationship, asymmetric power relationship) influence state authenticity, with illustrative studies from my laboratory and beyond. I will also discuss issues, questions, and possible directions associated with considering authenticity in relational context.

5:15-5:45pm	**Anna Sutton**
	Awesome work: The role of authenticity in promoting well-being and engagement at work
	Abstract: Being authentic at work promotes engagement and well-being. Authenticity can also buffer against some common challenges in the workplace, like difficult bosses or maintaining a professional image. In this talk, I will examine both these advantages and some potential pitfalls of trying to be authentic at work. Finally, I will review emerging research on how short interventions, such as guided recall of autobiographical memories, may enhance authenticity.

DATA BLITZ PRESENTATIONS (3:30-4:00pm)

1. Black Lives Matter: Exploring Meaning-Making Through Social Justice Imagery

Authors: Henderson, P., Machado, M. F., Harris, C., Tran, B. H., & Fetterman, A.

Abstract: Meaning in life is important for well-being. As racial injustice may pose an existential threat, it could be that racial justice movements, especially those that emphasize the worth of oppressed groups, serve a meaning function for people who experience racial injustice. We investigated the impact of the Black Lives Matter movement on meaning in life in those who experience racial injustice.

Notes:

2. How maximizers search for existential meaning: Associating maximization with depth and breadth search for meaning

Authors: Kim, H., Kim, J., Gause, C., & Hicks, J.

Abstract: In two studies (N = 496), we examined how trait maximization is related to search for meaning. Study 1 showed that two components of maximization—best search and alternative search—uniquely predicted search for meaning. Study 2 further revealed that best and alternative search were linked with meaning search particularly through depth and breadth search for meaning, respectively.

Notes:

3. Is my true self worried? Worrying positively predicts authenticity for people high in depression

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

Abstract: Three studies (N = 1362) yielded evidence that worry positively predicts authenticity when depressive symptoms are high. These findings suggest that depression may involve a subjective feeling that worry is an aspect of one's authentic self. This holds implications for understanding the ways that authenticity is experienced and how it might relate to the maintenance of depression.

Notes:

4. Fake it till you feel it: Exploring the effects of moral and non-moral emotion regulation on authenticity

Authors: Lee, D., Kim, J., & Hicks, J.

Abstract: Two studies (N = 363) were conducted to examine how moral emotion regulation affects authenticity. Participants were given negative IAPS images either morally or non-morally relevant and asked to feel or regulate emotions. In both studies, we found the attenuating effects of emotion regulation on authenticity but no evidence for the stronger effect of moral emotion regulation.

Notes:

5. Autonomy Support for Gender Expression and Managing Existential Concerns

Authors: Horner, D., Sielaff, A, & Greenberg, J.

Abstract: Results found that transgender (vs. cisgender) people reported higher death-related cognition, greater post-traumatic stress, lower meaning in life, and greater existential isolation. Yet, feeling supported by others to be autonomous and volitional in one's gender expression predicted greater meaning in life and lower existential isolation, and also predicted perceptions of symbolic immortality.

Notes:

POSTER PRESENTATIONS (10:30-11:30am)

1. Predicting Authenticity: The Implications of Childhood Adversity on Perceived Authenticity

Authors: Jeffers, A., & Schlegel, R.

Abstract: Childhood adversity has been deemed one of the greatest public health challenges due to the detrimental impacts it can have during a person's lifespan. Yet, little is known about how experiencing childhood adversity predicts authenticity. This project examines the extent to which childhood adversity relates to current and projected feelings of authenticity among young adults.

Notes:

2. Does place attachment foster meaning in life in everyday life?

Authors: Krause, A., Baldwin, M., & Westgate, E

Abstract: Do places we care about give us a sense of coherence and meaning in life? In an experience sampling study, college students reported their current location, attachment to that place, and meaning four times a day for one week. We predicted that participants should report higher meaning in life while in locations to which they are more attached.
Notes:

3. Indistinct and Interconnected: Self-essentialism and Awe in Monastic Tibetan Buddhists

Authors: Dulaney, E., Kim, Y., & Quinn, K.

Abstract: Tibetan Buddhist monks reject individual selves separate from the environment. At a southern Indian monastery, more advanced monks showed higher confidence in true self items and reported awe experiences with greater vastness and less negativity. This suggests careful recognition of the true self in order to surpass it and appreciation of the world's interconnections without being overwhelmed.
Notes:

4. Sleep Troubles: Death Thought Accessibility and its Impact on Sleep Quantity and Quality

Authors: Harvell-Bowman, L. H. B., Dyche, J., Montwill, P., & Sanchez, S..

Abstract: This experiment conducted through two phases examines how the amount and quality of sleep can impact the level of death thought accessibility in college-aged individuals under the guidance of Terror Management Theory (TMT). Statistical analyses uncovered a link between worse sleep quality and increased death anxiety, demonstrating the role of maintaining a regulated sleep schedule.
Notes:

5. Moral Injury: The Intersection Between Morality and Health

Authors: Hall, N.

Abstract: Using findings from a published systematic review, this poster aims to introduce the idea of moral injury, demonstrate trends in the associations between morality, transgressions, and mental health (e.g., depression, anxiety, substance use, burnout), and highlight various mediators or moderators.

Notes:

6. Understanding Existence and the Self through Art: Phenomenological Analysis of Life Stories about Art Creation and Interaction

Authors: Wilt, J., Exline, J., Sherman, A., & Schlegel, R.

Abstract: We interviewed artists about their experiences with (a) creating an artwork and (b) interacting with an artwork by another person. We asked questions about how engagement with art may have led to understandings about the self, life meaning, and spirituality. Phenomenological analyses identified a diverse set of themes pertinent to authenticity and ultimate (i.e., existential or spiritual) meaning.

Notes:

7. Make a Non-Believer Understand: I-sharing and Systemic Racism

Authors: Fuchs, N., Benjamin, S., & Pinel, E.

Abstract: Can I-sharing make non-believers in systemic racism nonetheless understand someone elses reasons for believing in it? We examined whether I-sharing facilitates understanding of belief in systemic racism. White participants with low initial belief in systemic racism who I-shared with a Black partner understood their partner's reasons for belief in systemic racism more than those who did not I-share.

Notes:

8. From Other and From World: Expanding the Current Model of Existential Isolation

Authors: Young, R., & Bosson, J.

Abstract: Philosophers allege that the internal world of conscious experience and the external world of physical objects are separated by an unbridgeable ontological gap. The current research is the first to study this gap as a psychological experience. Our findings suggest that such experiences negatively affect self-construal and threaten self-needs. Theoretical and clinical applications are discussed..

Notes:

9. Finding Meaning in Education Bolsters Academic Self-Efficacy

Authors: Trieu, E., & Abeyta, A.

Abstract: We tested the impact of college meaning on academic efficacy. In Study 1, college meaning was positively associated with academic efficacy. In Study 2, students who completed a college meaning task reported stronger academic efficacy. Getting students to consider the existential importance of college appears to inspire positive beliefs about their ability to succeed in college.

Notes:

10. Self-Compassion Moderates the Relationship Between Fixed Versus Growth Mindsets and Mental Health Outcomes

Authors: Tello, A., & Bounds, E.

Abstract: Self-compassion refers to how we relate to ourselves in instances of perceived failure, inadequacy, or personal suffering. Moderation analyses revealed that subscales of self-compassion moderated the relationship between fixed mindsets and mental health outcomes. Self-compassion attenuated the negative impact of fixed moral and ability mindsets on depression, anxiety, and stress.

Notes:

11. "A Deeper Longing": Lived Experiences of Existential Loneliness from Youth to Older Adulthood

Authors: McKenna-Plumley, P., Turner, R., Yang, K., & Groarke, J.

Abstract: Existential loneliness may be an important part of loneliness experiences but a comprehensive understanding of its lived experience is lacking. We present qualitative findings from 175 adults (16–72 years old) who described their experiences of existential loneliness. The findings indicate that it is a deeper form of loneliness with emotional and social aspects which warrants further attention.

Notes:

12. Breast Health Esteem to Motivate Breast Health Behavioral Intentions: An Application of the Terror Management Health Model Among Women with Breast Cancer Family History

Authors: Courtney, E. P., & Goldenberg, J.

Abstract: A family history of breast cancer can lead women to feel more susceptible and view the disease as deadlier. In two preregistered studies informed by the Terror Management Health Model, women at risk through family history saw breast cancer as deadlier and intertwined breast health with feelings of esteem, which predicted breast health behavioral intentions.

Notes:

13. Being Bored to death? A Test of How state boredom Influence Death Thought Accessibility

Authors: Chen, K., An, D., Schlegel, & Vess, M.

Abstract: Research suggests that boredom undermines the perception that life is meaningful. Drawing from Terror Management Theory, we proposed that insofar as perceptions of meaning buffer against the awareness of mortality, boredom should enhance death thoughts accessibility. We conducted one experiment (N = 154) where we manipulated state boredom. However, the results failed to support the hypothesis.
Notes:

14. The Representational Structure of Social, Temporal and Spatial Selves

Authors: Kim, H., & Florack, A

Abstract: We introduce a new paradigm to gauge the representational overlaps among social (me myself), temporal (me now) and spatial (me here) selves based on the redundancy gain effects. Results revealed that spatial self resides at the core of self-representation which conceptually extends to the temporal and ultimately, to the social domain, echoing the human developmental stages of self-representation.
Notes:

15. A life examined: Effects of mortality salience on authenticity

Authors: Chur, M., Diarra, M., Wagoner, J., & Pyszczynski, T.

Abstract: We present an exploratory study investigating how awareness of one's death (mortality salience; MS) influences people's perceived authenticity of the self, of others, and the motivation to behave more authentically. We also investigate how some traits, like self-esteem and existential isolation, factor into these relationships.
Notes:

16. Being inauthentic makes me angry: The mediatory role of existential anger in the relationship between authenticity and psychological well-being

Authors: Dincer, D.

Abstract: This study examined the mediatory role of existential anger in the relationship between authenticity and psychological well-being amongst psychological counselors. Data were obtained via four instruments consisting of the Authenticity Scale, the Existential Anger Scale, the Flourishing Scale, and a personal information form.
Notes:

17. How does the (mis)alignment of personal and cultural narratives motivate personal and cultural exploration vs. protection.

Authors: Matthews, M., Wegener, D., Petty, R., & Fletcher, A.

Abstract: Participants collected across the United States as part of a 50-State American life story field study report on the main themes and tones of their stories as compared to what they perceive to be the expected themes and tones of someone in their home state, most important group, and as an American. This (mis)alignment is used to predict cultural exploration via behavioral measure

Notes:

18. Death & Awe: A Terror Management Investigation into the Relationship between Awe and Mortality Salience

Authors: Sundby, J., Pyszczynski, T., & Wagoner, J.

Abstract: Terror Management Theory has demonstrated that knowledge of one's death can produce defensive reactions, such as self-esteem striving and clinging to worldviews. In this experimental study, we investigate whether experiencing awe can help mitigate one's worldview defenses, as well as if a death reminder increases one's subjective experience of awe.

Notes:

19. Reasoning about death in Tana Toraja, Indonesia

Author: Lunkenheimer, H., Nyhof, M., Lattu, I., & White, C.

Abstract: How do cultural conceptions of death as a gradual process, rather than a sudden event, impact how people reason about death in Tana Toraja, Indonesia? Indonesian beliefs and practices surrounding death and the afterlife contrast Western biological and dominant folk concepts of death, providing a unique opportunity to explore and compare cultural influences on explanatory reasoning about death.

Notes:

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CONFERENCE AWARDS

ISSEP Innovation in Existential Psychology Research Award – $250

Joe Maffly-Kipp	Texas A&M University

ISSEP Student Registration Awards

Perla Henderson	University of Houston
DaYe Lee	Sogang University
Ethan Trieu	Rutgers University
Ana Tello	Baylor University

Worth Publishers/Macmillan Learning Registration Awards

Ashley Krause	University of Florida
Nicole Hall	University of Houston
Natalie Fuchs	University of Vermont
Phoebe McKenna-Plumley	Queen's University Belfast
Kaiyuan Chen	Claremont Graduate Univ.
Marcus Chur	Univ. CO at CO Springs

Cleveland State University Registration Awards

Hyunjin Kim	Sogang University
Dylan Horner	University of Arizona
Alexiss Jeffers	Texas A&M University

ANNUAL AWARDS

Distinguished Career Contributions Award – $1000 each

Ed Deci	University of Rochester
Richard M. Ryan	Australian Catholic University

Early Career Contributions Award – $1000

Eranda Jayawickreme	Wake Forest University

Best Paper Award – $500

Ed O'Brien	University of Chicago

O'Brien, E. (2021). A mind stretched: The psychology of repeat consumption. *Consumer Psychology Review*, *4*, 42-58. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1002/arcp.1062

Outstanding Student Award – $500

Dylan Horner	University of Arizona

RESEARCH GRANTS

Research projects funded – up to $3000 each

- Examining LGB individuals' experience of state authenticity through the SAFE Model. *PI: Lydia Needy. Texas A&M University*.
- Repressive authenticity and the construction of the Native American. *PI: Alexis Goad. University of Arizona.*
- The effect of existential threat on the appeal of, and belief in, religious concepts among Christians and atheists. *PI: Madhwa Galgali. University of Missouri*.
- Leaving to find my true self: Examining the role of authenticity in schism/disaffiliation. *PI: Joseph Wagoner. University of Colorado at Colorado Springs*.
- Gerotranscendence and the secularization of society: Exploring the role of existential concerns on life priorities across early-, middle-, and late-adulthood. *PI: Renate Ysseldyk. Carleton University*.