

8th Annual Rocky Mountain Humanistic Counseling & Psychological Association Conference

Experience, Story, and Trauma



**Hybrid Conference
November 8 - 9, 2024**

The Rocky Mountain Humanistic Counseling and Psychological Association (RMHCPA) was founded in 2016 to promote and develop humanistic psychology in the Rocky Mountain Area.

Our Mission

The Rocky Mountain Humanistic Counseling and Psychological Association's mission is to support and promote existential, humanistic, and transpersonal psychology and counseling, especially in contributing to psychotherapy, education, theory, philosophy of psychology, research methodology, organization and management, and social responsibility and change in the Rocky Mountain Area.

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8th Annual Rocky Mountain Humanistic Counseling and Psychological Association Conference

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Continuing Education

Continuing Education Credits need to be purchased separately from the conference. In order to receive CE credits, you must be present for the entire live version of the presentation and complete an evaluation form. We cannot offer CEs for viewing the archived asynchronous versions of these presentations. *You cannot miss more than 5-minutes of a live presentation and receive credit.* We have CE volunteer who will monitor attendance. The volunteer will check to see if individuals who registered for CEs are present in the zoom room for the duration of each presentation. If you have any questions or concerns about the CE process, please direct them to Dr. Louis Hoffman. After each day of the conference, you will receive information on how to complete an evaluation for the CE programs offered that day. After you have completed the evaluation, notify us at ce@rmhcpa.org. Within 5-7 days of completing the evaluation and notifying us, you will receive your CE certificates by email. CEs are only available for the live portion of the workshop.

The Rocky Mountain Humanistic Counseling and Psychological Association (RMHCPA) has a collaborative agreement with the Society for Humanistic Psychology to provide Continuing Education Certificates for approved training events. Division 32 (Society for Humanistic Psychology) of the American Psychological Association is approved by the American Psychological Association to sponsor continuing education for psychologists. Division 32 (Society for Humanistic Psychology) of the American Psychological Association maintains responsibility for this program and its content.

About the Live and Asynchronous Programs

The 8th Annual RMHCPA Conference will have a recorded, asynchronous portion of the program that will be available through Thinkific (rmhcpa.thinkific.com) beginning the day of the conference. The asynchronous portion of the workshop includes pre-recorded presentations and poster presentations.

Conference Schedule

Friday, November 8, 2023

Morning/Afternoon: RMHCPA Building

1767 S. 8th Street, 2nd Floor, Colorado Springs, CO 80905

9:00-10:00 AM	An Existential-Humanistic Approach to Play Therapy <i>Shawn Rubin</i> (CE)
10:00-11:00 AM	Using Poetry to Facilitate Dialogues and Healing from Trauma <i>Nathaniel Granger, Jr.</i> (CE)
11:00 AM-12:00 PM	I Am an Antiracist Superhero: Empowering Children Through Social Justice and Mindfulness <i>Jennifer Bacon</i> (CE)
12:00-12:30 PM	Reading Emotions: Navigating Child Behaviors and Promoting Inclusive Representation <i>Joy Hoffman and Danielle Kleist</i>
12:30-2:00 PM	Lunch
2:00-4:00 PM	Empowering Children and Their Families: Moving Through Clinical Paralysis in Cultural Trauma Dialogue <i>Theopia Jackson</i> (CE)

Friday, November 8, 2023

Evening: Mount Carmel Veterans Center

530 Communication Circle, Colorado Springs, CO 80905

4:00-6:00 PM	Supper/Move to Mt. Carmel Veterans Center Main Room
6:00-7:00 PM	Indigenous Wisdom Perspectives on Healing Trauma <i>Ian Wickramasekera, II</i> (CE)
7:00-8:00 PM	Awards Ceremony <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undergraduate Student Poster Award: Kaitlin Leahy • Graduate Student Poster Awards (Tie): Joseph Alexander Vanderhoff, Jeff Singer, & Olivia Michael Siba Alzohaili & Isam Maaz • COSPP Alumnus Award: Cathy Calvert, PsyD • Lifetime Achievement Award: Ron Valle, PhD • Student Humanistic Exemplar Award: Brittany Varisco • Emory G. Cowan & Susan Cooper Lifetime Service Award: Dick Gee, EdD
8:00-9:00 PM	Poster Session & Social

Saturday, November 9, 2024
Mount Carmel Veterans Center
530 Communication Circle, Colorado Springs, CO 80905

9:00-10:00 AM	Cultural Perspectives on Cognitive Processing Therapy and Humanistic Therapy for Trauma <i>Nathaniel Granger, Jr.</i> (CE) Main Room	
10:00-11:00 AM	Keynote Address in Main Room: Humanistic Psychology's Actualization as an Influencer in the Trauma Discourse <i>Theopia Jackson</i>	
	Main Room	Breakout Room
11:00 AM-12:00 PM	Restorative and Gentle Meditation and Yoga <i>Ian Wickramasekera, II</i>	Processing Election Debrief ¹ <i>Facilitated by Nathaniel Granger, Jr. and Louis Hoffman</i>
12:00-1:30 PM	Lunch	
1:30-2:30 PM	Navigating Suicide with Presence <i>Megan Campbell, Justin Rock, & Nathaniel Granger, Jr.</i> (CE)	Love in Lyrics Podcast: Supporting a Growth Mindset Through Lyrical Exploration <i>Lauren Skuba & Paige Sutula</i>
2:30-3:30 PM	Working with Existential Shattering and Trauma in Psychotherapy <i>Louis Hoffman & Jeff Singer</i> (CE)	Storytelling, Trauma, Exceptional Experiences, and Transformation <i>Sue Mirkin</i> (CE)
3:30-4:30 PM	Literary Analysis as an Intervention: The Integration of the Humanities and the Clinical Practice of Psychotherapy <i>Melanie Grundvig & H. Luis Vargas</i> (CE)	Intersectional Narratives of Meaning <i>Francis J. Kaklauskas</i>
4:30-5:30 PM	Sitting in Candlelight: Reflections on a Decade of Existential Supervision <i>Jason Dias</i> (CE)	Ketamine Assisted Psychotherapy Using a Humanistic Approach: A Journey Toward Self-Actualization and Beyond Symptom Relief <i>Pamela Peters</i>
5:30-6:00 PM	Conference Closing	

¹This is not promoting any political belief or party. We are aware that many people from diverse political positions and affiliations are experiencing increased anxiety. This is an opportunity to find common ground and process anxiety related to the election.

Asynchronous Presentation

Following the Psyche's Threads: A Dream Journey Through Complex Trauma Recovery
Sil Machado

Poster Presentations

Messages and Warnings: How Dreams Evolve Over Time
Ian Almond & Thurston Whitlow

Complex Posttraumatic Stress Disorder from the Perspectives of Neurobiology, Attachment, and Antipsychiatry: A Comprehensive Approach
Siba Alzohaili & Isam Maaz

Body Mapping of Aesthetic Chills: Manuscript Analysis
Anompreet Bal

What I See is What I Say: Subjective Reality In The Wake of Global Conflict
Allison Connors

How to Make Rain: A Psycho-Anthropological Content Analysis of Rain Ceremonies
Kaitlin Leahy

Connections Between Existential Issues and Disease Severity in People Living with Diabetes Mellitus
Jonathan Sundby

Awe as an Antidote to an Epidemic of Isolation
Joseph Alexander Vanderhoff, Jeff Singer, & Olivia Michael

Award Recipients

Undergraduate Student Poster Award Winner: Kaitlin Leahy

Graduate Student Poster Award Winner (Tie):
Joseph Alexander Vanderhoff, Jeff Singer, & Olivia Michael
Siba Alzohaili & Isam Maaz

COSPP Alumnus Award: Cathy Calvert, PsyD

Lifetime Achievement Award: Ron Valle, PhD

Student Humanistic Exemplar Award: Brittany Varisco

Emory G. Cowan and Susan Cooper Lifetime Service Award: Dick Gee, EdD

Keynote Speaker



Theopia Jackson, PhD is a licensed clinical psychologist who received her master's degree in clinical psychology from Howard University, Washington DC, and her doctorate from the Wright Institute in Berkeley, California. Dr. Jackson has held several leadership roles in higher education and is currently the Chair of the Department of Humanistic Clinical Psychology degree program at Saybrook University in Pasadena, California. She is a member of the American Psychological Association (APA) Council of Representatives (CoR) on behalf of Division 32 Society for Humanistic Psychology. She is a past president of The Association of Black Psychologists (ABPsi), Inc., where she served as the primary investigator for the COVID-19 Needs Assessment among Black communities. Additionally, Dr. Jackson contributed to the Adaptive Mind Project under the leadership of Susan Moser and The International Transformational

Resilience Coalition (ITRC) Climate Change Mental Wellness and Resiliency Policy coordinated by Bob Doppelt. Dr. Jackson relocated to Maryland after 30+ years of practice in the Bay Area. There, she held medical privileges at UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland; she practiced in the Healthy Hearts program, Department of Psychiatry as the Associate Training Director, and Comprehensive Sickle Cell Center. Dr. Jackson was the Clinical Training Director at the Women's Therapy Center, El Cerrito, and an external supervisor for several community mental health programs. She managed a vibrant private practice and consultation in the Bay Area and was appointed to several local and national task groups. Dr. Jackson is a co-developer of the Therapist-in-Residency Program (TnRP; a clinical training program grounded in Black psychology) and of the Emotional Emancipation CirclesSM (a community-defined practice that is a collaboration between the Community Healing Network, Inc., and ABPsi). She serves on the medical advisory council for the Sickle Cell Community Advisory Council (SCCAC) and several boards. Dr. Jackson has a long history of providing child, adolescent, and family therapy services, specializing in serving populations coping with chronic illness and complex trauma. Honoring culturally grounding psychospiritual healing, liberation, and activism, Dr. Jackson espouses: *"What you help a child to love can be more important than what you help [them] to learn."* ~African proverb.

Presenter Bios



Jennifer Nicole Bacon, PhD brings with her over two decades of experience in the field of education. Dr. Bacon earned her Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Maryland, College Park, and her MEd in Special Education from the University of Virginia. Dr. Bacon is Core Doctoral Faculty in Human and Organizational Development at Fielding Graduate University. She formerly served as Core Associate Professor and Department Chair in Education at Naropa University and Associate Dean for Naropa College. In addition to her in-depth experience in education, she is an interfaith minister trained in the use of poetry therapy, spiritual guidance, and yoga, and provides private mentoring and spiritual guidance sessions virtually and in person. Deeply committed to addressing racial and gender equity, and writing for social justice, healing, and transformation, she participates in a number of professional associations, mentoring organizations, writing projects, and research work. She has authored numerous articles and book chapters including, "Writing in Solidarity: The Lived Experience of African American Adolescent Girls Writing Poetry," "Using Culturally and Inclusive Poetry Groups with Diverse Teens," "Academic Mothering: Black Women Mentors in Higher Education," and co-authored article, "Examining Teachers' Beliefs About African American Male Students in a Low-Performing High School in an African American School District." Dr. Bacon is the author of *Sisters in the Dissertation House: A Dissertation Narrative*, which addresses doctoral completion by women of color in underrepresented fields. Her children's book titled *I Am an Antiracist Superhero: With Activities to Help You Be One Too!* was released by Bala Kids in September of 2023. This empowering story inspires kids from all backgrounds to Look, Listen, Feel, and Act like antiracist superheroes, even in times of adversity. *I Am an Antiracist Superhero* is a winner of Bookstagang's Best of 2023 Picture Book Awards. Dr. Bacon's newest book, *These Black Kids: Culturally Responsive Poetry and The Lived Experience of African American Adolescent Girls*, debuted with University Professors Press in October 2023. *These Black Kids* offers the writings and lived experiences of three adolescent girls, "Keisha," "Mishaps," and "Blue," as they uncover their muted voices to speak with truth, courage, and conviction. This is the space where the "girlchild" learns what it means to be free.



Megan Campbell. I am a Marriage and Family Therapist Associate at Live True Counseling, an existential-humanistic psychotherapy group practice based in Portland, Oregon. I hold a Master's degree in Marriage, Couple, and Family Therapy from Lewis and Clark College in Portland, OR, and a Bachelor's degree in Family and Human Services from the University of Oregon. During my undergraduate studies, I worked as a hospice companion for a hospice organization, where I supported individuals and families navigating the end of life. This role allowed me to confront uncertainty and the unknowns of existence, as I witnessed and was present with what I believe are the rawest moments of life. It was a profoundly formative experience that ignited my passion for end-

of-life care, grief work, and supporting those experiencing deep pain and suicidality. I am honored to be a part of the Rocky Mountain Humanistic Counseling and Psychological Association conference and look forward to sharing my insights, as well as learning from the experiences and expertise of my fellow humans and practitioners.



Jason Dias is a neurodivergent existential psychologist. With twenty years experience between developmental disabilities and psychiatric hospitals and years after of therapy and supervision, Jason these days mostly teaches undergraduate psychology. He is also a retired novelist. In his fiction, he tried to present themes of existential psychology and philosophy in accessible formats.



Nathaniel Granger, Jr., PsyD is a past president of the Society for Humanistic Psychology (APA Division 32) and the recipient of the Division's Hari Camari Early Career Award as well as the Sandy Sela-Smith Exemplar Award presented by the Rocky Mountain Humanistic Counseling and Psychological Association where he serves as the Treasurer. He is an adjunct professor at Saybrook University and is the founder and director of Be REAL Ministries, Inc., where he serves the community by working closely with marginalized groups as a pastor and psychotherapist. Dr. Granger is a sought-after speaker with several publications, presentations, workshops, and keynotes to his credit.

Among his published works and collaborations are *Stay Awhile: Poetic Narratives on Multiculturalism and Diversity*; *Silent Screams: Poetic Journeys Through Addiction and Recovery*, *Rising Voices: Poems Towards a Social Justice Revolution*, and *Humanistic Approaches to Multiculturalism and Diversity* in addition to his doctoral dissertation *Perceptions of Racial Microaggressions Among African American Males: A Heuristic Inquiry*. Additionally, Dr. Granger is a co-chair of the Fourth World Congress of Existential Therapy to convene in June 2026. (<https://www.Drn8g.org>) (<https://www.wcet.com>)



Melanie Grundvig is an MFTC, MA in Marriage and Family Therapy, and currently does clinical therapy work with couples and individuals in the Denver/Boulder region. Melanie also has a B.A. in the humanities which directly influences how she approaches clinical work with clients, pulling in themes from philosophy and literature in her practice. She believes that what makes great art also makes great therapy; which is the ability to

connect someone to their experience. For the past two years, Melanie has served as a board member for the Rocky Mountain Family Therapy Network, creating events for professionals to network and a place for clinicians across the mountain west to develop professionally. In her free time, Melanie loves to spend time outdoors with her husband or read a great book. You can find her on linked in or can contact her via email at grundvigtherapy@gmail.com



Joy Hoffman & Danielle Kleist. Joy Hoffman is a Korean American transracial adoptee and mother of two biracial children, one of whom is autistic. Joy worked in higher education for twenty-four years before transitioning to independent consulting. Danielle Kleist is a Korean American transracial adoptee and mother of two biracial children. Danielle worked in higher education for over ten years before transitioning to consulting with Proof Leadership and being a

stay-at-home mom. Danielle and Joy met in 2009 and found a deep connection through their adoptee experiences. They have had a sisterhood ever since and often joke about being twins separated at birth (despite a twenty-year age difference). This book series is a labor of sisterly love. Follow us on Facebook: Seoul Sisters Books.



Louis Hoffman, PhD, is the executive director of the Rocky Mountain Humanistic Counseling and Psychological Association and a licensed psychologist in private practice. An avid writer, Dr. Hoffman has published over 25 books and over 100 journal articles and book chapters. He has been recognized as a Fellow of the American Psychological Association and is the 2020/2021 recipient of the Rollo May Award of the Society for Humanistic Psychology. He serves on the Editorial Board of the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* (Senior International Editor), *The Humanistic Psychologist*, and the *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*. Dr. Hoffman's books included the *APA Handbook of Humanistic and Existential Psychology* (APA Books, summer 2025), *The Evidence*

Based Foundations of Existential-Humanistic Psychotherapy (APA Books, May, 2025), *Existential-Humanistic Case Formulation* (APA Books, Spring, 2025), *Becoming an Existential-Humanistic Therapist*, and *Existential Psychology East-West* (Volumes 1 & 2). He is also featured in the video *Existential-Humanistic Case Formulation* by APA Videos.



Dr. Francis Kaklauskas has always considered himself a clinician first, working presently with clients individually and in group psychotherapy and supervising clinicians. Dr. Kaklauskas has over thirty years of clinical experience in various settings and roles. He worked in community mental health, forensic settings, and private practice. He has published nine books, including the 2020 Anne Alonso Award-winning *Core Principles of Group Psychotherapy*. Both *Existential Psychology East-West* and *Brilliant Sanity: Buddhist Approaches to Psychotherapy and Counseling* have been noted as important texts in humanistic and cross-cultural psychology. Additionally, Dr. Kaklauskas has published many book chapters and articles with multiple co-authors on the practical application of research findings into clinical practice, inclusion and belonging, and spirituality. He directed the University of Colorado's

group psychotherapy training and led the specialization in Existential-Humanistic Psychology at Saybrook University. He is a core faculty member in Naropa University—Buddhism-inspired Contemplative Counseling program and he leads the process and

consultation groups in his private practice in person and virtually. Dr. Kaklauskas has tirelessly supported other colleagues and students through a personable style that combines warmth, humor, humility, and scholarship.



Dr. Sil Machado (he/his/him) earned a Ph.D. in clinical psychology from Saybrook University, where he specialized in LGBTQ+ mental health, depth and psychodynamic psychotherapies, and qualitative research methods. He holds three separate M.A. degrees in counseling, clinical psychology, and Jungian Analytical psychology. He is a licensed psychologist in the state of California with experience providing individual, couples, and group psychotherapy, trainee supervision, and neurofeedback in primary care, non-profit, public health, juvenile justice, and private practice settings. As a depth psychologist, Dr. Machado is committed to a holistic understanding of the psyche, including its conscious, unconscious, developmental, somatic, cultural, symbolic, and spiritual dimensions. His current clinical work integrates neurofeedback, biofeedback, and integrative depth psychotherapy to address complex trauma. He has advanced training in psychodynamic, Jungian, Existential-Humanistic, experiential-dynamic, expressive arts, and sandplay approaches, as well as evidence-based approaches including CBT, DBT, and EMDR. Dr. Machado's is an associate professor of Clinical Mental Health Counseling at Sonoma State University, where he teaches courses in psychotherapy theory, psychopathology, lifespan development, and supervises trainee fieldwork work. His primary areas of scholarship interest include Jungian psychotherapy, trauma therapy, queer experience (e.g., homonegativity, HIV, queer spirituality, identity development), dreams and dreamwork, and the transformation of shame in psychotherapy. In his research Dr. Machado utilizes qualitative approaches rooted in an emancipatory framework, such as poetic inquiry, autoethnography, autobiography, and narrative research, all with the intention to illuminate lived experience.



Sue Mirkin received her PhD in depth psychology with an emphasis on somatics from Pacifica Graduate Institute. Her doctoral research explored transformational experiences of professional storytellers. She continues to research and write about the transformative power of storytelling. She is a mother of college age twins.



Pamela Peters, MFTC, is a private practice clinician who sees clients in-person in Denver and online in Colorado. She is passionate about working with clients who are in consensually non-monogamous/open/alternative relationships, struggling with affair recovery, or trying to learn new ways of being in their existing relationships. She also uses ketamine assisted psychotherapy (KAP) with individuals and couples, which is the topic of her 2024 RMHCPA presentation. Pamela has been working with psilocybin mushrooms and other psychedelics for

transformational healing as well as connecting with loved ones since 1991. She understands on an experiential level the power of tapping into alternative realities. She joined a local advocacy group in 2019 to help the passage of the original psilocybin decriminalization efforts in Denver. This experience is one of the motivations for earning her Master's in Marriage and Family Therapy from the Regis University, Rueckert-Hartman College for Health Professions. Pamela came to relational therapy as a vocation after several other careers including freelance marketing writer for high tech companies, art school owner and instructor, and backcountry guide, among others. Most recently she is the author of the manuscript "Psilocybin Mushroom Stewardship: A Qualitative Inquiry into Practices and Priorities of 'Underground' Psilocybin Mushroom Practitioners" to be published in the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*. Her formal education and training includes: Certification from the Psychedelic Facilitator Immersive: Ketamine Assisted Psychotherapy (KAP) Space Holding & Integration with Elemental Psychedelics, MAMFT from Regis University, MA in Cultural Anthropology from Prescott College, and a BA in Comparative Literature/German from Brown University. Born and raised in Colorado, Pamela likes to balance her professional life by regularly attending Burning Man, enjoying time with friends and family, hiking, camping, reading and travelling. (www.pamelapeterstherapy.com)



Justin Rock (he/him) is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, Licensed Professional Counselor, and supervisor who has devoted his career to exploring the depth of human experience through existential-phenomenological therapy. With roots in the Pacific Northwest, Justin's journey began in a small farm town, where he first experienced the beauty of community alongside the complexities of rural life. As the first in his family to attend college, he earned his BA in Philosophy and MA in Marriage and Family Therapy from Lewis & Clark College in Portland, OR, cultivating a foundation for his commitment to relationships and meaning in therapeutic work. Now an educator at Lewis & Clark Graduate

School, the president of the Existential-Humanistic Northwest Professional Organization, and a group practice owner, Justin centers his work on care ethics and relational depth, challenging the manualized transactional approaches in therapy. His focus is not only on the relationship as the ground for therapy between therapist and client but also on how relationship is essential in reshaping the systems and structures surrounding therapy. He advocates for knowledge generation through relationship that honors the richness of diverse perspectives and the transformative potential of presence. In his classes and clinical supervision, Justin encourages his students and colleagues to explore ambiguity and co-created knowledge, striving to create a community that values process over rigid outcomes. Guided by a deep respect for human complexity, Justin's work continues to evolve, grounded in the belief that authentic connection and shared inquiry are at the heart of meaningful change.



Shawn Rubin, PsyD is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist whose practice is informed by extensive training in the depth psychologies of humanistic-existentialism, liberation psychology, and contemporary psychoanalysis. Dr. Rubin attended the Center for Humanistic Studies Graduate School (CHS) in Detroit from 1997-2002, where he was mentored by Humanistic Psychology Founder and Play Therapy Pioneer, Clark Moustakas, PhD. From 2011 to 2015, Dr. Rubin was Executive Faculty at Saybrook University where he served as Chair of the School of Clinical Psychology, and Program Director of both the PhD & PsyD Degrees in Clinical Psychology as well as founder of the Masters in Marriage & Family Therapy & Professional Clinical Counselor Degree. After serving consecutive terms as Member at Large (2009-12 & 2012-15), Shawn served as

President of the Executive Board of the Society for Humanistic Psychology (2016-17), Division 32 of the American Psychological Association. He continues to serve on various 32 Committees, Taskforces, and as a consultant for Society Presidents and Board Members. In addition to his published articles and book chapters, Shawn is also Co-Editor of “Humanistic Psychotherapies: Handbook of Research and Practice, 2nd Edition” published by the American Psychological Association. He serves as Co-Editor of University Professors Press, and is a Lead Mentor in the Psychedelic-Assisted Psychotherapy Program at the California Institute for Integral Studies. For the past decade, Shawn has specialized in providing affirming therapy with transgender and gender expansive children, adolescents, adults, their spouses and families; and consulted and advocated for trans rights and inclusion with companies, local politics, and school systems. In 2023 he was recognized by Fairfax County Public School PRIDE for his contributions to transgender children and teens as an affirming therapist and advocate. He serves as a Board member of the Transgender Education Association of Greater Washington, DC and the Rocky Mountain Humanistic Counseling & Psychological Association.



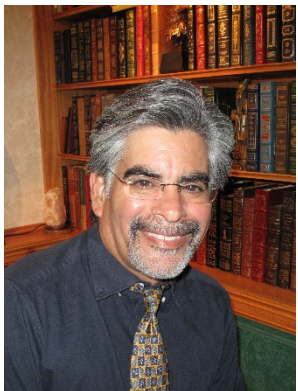
Jeff Singer is a fourth-year PsyD student in clinical psychology at the University of Denver’s Graduate School of Professional Psychology. He is involved in Division 32, RMHCP, Fourth World Congress of Existential Therapy and served as a panelist at University Professors Press’s 10th annual conference on “Advancing Humanistic, Existential, and Transpersonal Psychology.” Jeff’s passion for existential-humanistic psychology infuses his clinical work in areas of substance use, neurodiversity, group therapy, college counseling, and long-term depth therapy. Jeff currently works at the Center for Humanistic and Interpersonal Psychology and is writing his doctoral paper on the phenomenology of awe within a therapeutic dyad.



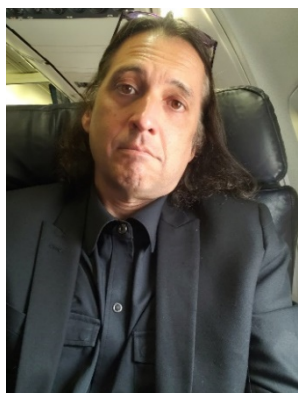
Lauren Skuba, MA, MFTC is a graduate from Regis University with a Master's degree in Marriage and Family Therapy. In 2017 Lauren began her private practice Positive Space Relationship Therapy in Lafayette, CO where she works with couples, families and individuals focused on relationship dynamics and emotional disconnection from an experiential approach. She co-authored the article "Forged in the Fires of COVID-19: The Evolution of Systemic Therapy for Online Practice and Beyond" that was published in the Regis Counseling and Family Therapy Scholarship Review in 2022. She has advanced training in Emotionally Focused Therapy and draws on attachment science and interpersonal neurobiology in her approach to her work and in life. She co-hosts the podcast *Love in Lyrics: Exploring Relationships Through Taylor Swift's Discography* with Paige Sutula. Lauren has served on the board of the Delta Kappa, Kappa Chapter Marriage and Family Therapy honor society board for 10 years and has filled several roles including President and now Alumni Advisor. In 2024 she was nominated for the Rocky Mountain Family Therapy Network's Local Advocacy Award and will begin her term on the Rocky Mountain Family Therapy Network's leadership team as part of the Advocacy Committee in January 2025.



Paige Sutula, MA, MFTC holds a master's degree in Marriage and Family Therapy from Regis University and is the co-founder of Rocky Mountain Relational Therapy, a holistic private practice in Arvada. With a focus on emotional disconnection and attachment trauma, Paige works with individuals, couples, and families to foster deeper connections. Before entering the field as a Marriage and Family Therapist, she gained valuable experience in inpatient eating disorder facilities, where she developed a strong passion for supporting clients through a Health at Every Size (HAES) framework. Paige integrates Emotionally Focused Therapy and parts-work in her practice to enhance emotional experiences and authentic connections. Additionally, she co-hosts the "Love in Lyrics" podcast with colleague Lauren Skuba, where they explore relational themes through the lens of Taylor Swift's discography, blending insights from attachment theory with their experience as relationship therapists.



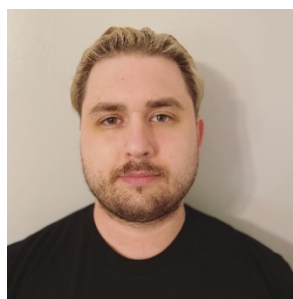
Dr. H. Luis Vargas maintains a Colorado-based private practice supervising post-graduate pre-licensed MFT and Counseling professionals. Additionally, Dr. Vargas offers supervision of supervision toward the AAMFT Approved Supervisor designation. His practice offers professional development courses for licensed psychotherapy practitioners. He is the Director of Clinical Training for the Center of Humanistic and Interpersonal Psychotherapy and a Rocky Mountain Humanistic Counseling and Psychological Association Board Member.



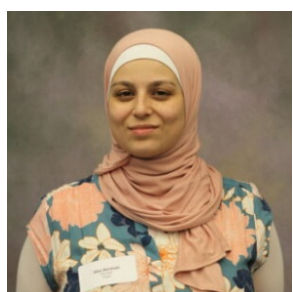
Dr. Ian Wickramasekera has a lifelong fascination with topics such as Affective Neuroscience, Biofeedback, Bon-Buddhism, Empathy, Hypnosis, Lucid Dreaming, Mind/Body Medicine, and Transpersonal Psychology. He enjoys helping people connect with their mind and body using meditation and hypnosis to heal from all kinds of psychological and medical challenges. His research into these areas has won him a number of awards such as the Clark L. Hull Award for Scientific Excellence in Hypnosis and the Milton H. Erickson Award for Scientific Excellence in Clinical Hypnosis from the American Society of Clinical Hypnosis. Dr. Ian also won the Distinguished Early Career Contributions to Hypnosis award from the American

Psychological Association as well as from the American Society of Clinical Hypnosis. He was confirmed to be a Fellow of the American Psychological Association in 2018 by the Fellows Committee of APA. Dr. Ian enjoys hiking, making music, meditating, and running when he isn't at work and/or reading an obscure tome of ancient lore.

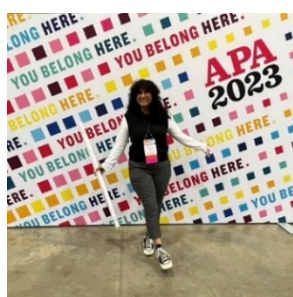
Poster Presentation Bios



Ian Almond. As an undergraduate psychology major at Virginia Commonwealth University, I became involved with the Dream Lab headed by Dr. Richard Bargdill. Currently, I am a sociology graduate student at VCU while continuing to work within the lab as the lead research assistant. My current research interests across both fields include urban policing, housing insecurity, deviance, dreams, and prosocial aggression. After earning my master's degree, I intend to pursue my Ph.D. with the goal of becoming a professor.



Siba Alzohaili is a doctoral student at the Michigan School of Psychology (MSP) in Farmington Hills. She received her master's degree in counseling psychology at Wayne State University. Siba is an avid proponent of honoring people's autonomy and freedom both in the therapy room and outside it. She especially enjoys working with children and families to help them heal and grow together.



Anompreet Bal. I am an award-winning researcher who graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University with a double major in Psychology and Sociology. As a research intern under Dr. Richard Bargdill, I focused on aesthetic chills, maintaining a database, thematizing chill events, and preparing findings for various conferences. This work led to the creation of color-coded body charts reflecting the intensity and frequency of chills across different body regions. In addition, I have experience in social psychology research

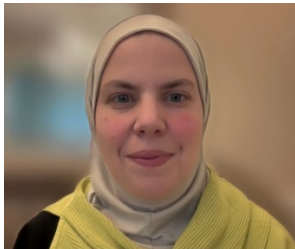
and am interested in exploring the psychological mechanisms behind decision-making, morality, and interpersonal dynamics in my future research.



Allison Connors is a student at UCCS in their Clinical Mental Health Counseling MA program. She graduated with a BA in History with an emphasis on Holocaust, Genocide and Peace Studies. She plans on pursuing a Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology after her time at UCCS. She is currently working under Dr. Rachel Ratliff researching Undergraduate Counseling Students' comfortability with sex and sexual awareness, as well as what "sexy" means and looks like for Black Americans. Allison's clinical and research interests are widespread, and she hopes to continue expanding on them through a humanistic lens.



Kaitlin Leahy is an undergraduate senior studying Psychology with a minor in Painting and Printmaking at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia. She is the lead research assistant of Dr. Richard Bargdill's Rain Ceremony Lab, a senior research assistant in Dr. David Chester's Social Psychology and Neuroscience Lab, and a clinical intern for a community mental health and developmental services agency. After graduating in December she hopes to continue her education in a Clinical or Counseling Psychology program to help develop new and alternative psychotherapies for the treatment of PTSD.



Isam Maaz is a doctoral student at the Michigan School of Psychology (MSP) in Farmington Hills. She received his master's degree in clinical psychology from the Michigan School of Psychology (MSP). Isam is a passionate advocate for mind-body integration and holistic healing, with a client-centered approach that emphasizes autonomy, growth, and emotional well-being. Drawing from her experience working with adolescents and adults, Isam enjoys supporting individuals navigating anxiety, depression, and stress.



Olivia Michael is a clinical psychology Psy.D. student at the University of Denver. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in psychology from the University of North Texas, and a Master of Arts in clinical psychology from the University of Denver. Olivia provides integrative psychotherapy influenced by Existential-Humanistic and Acceptance and Commitment Therapies. She has worked in early education, crisis intervention/suicide prevention, cognitive assessment, and individual psychotherapy. She served as a panelist at Bridging the Divide Suicide Prevention and Awareness Summit in 2023 and is actively involved in professional organizations that include RMHCPA and the Fourth World Congress of Existential Therapy.



Jeff Singer is a fourth-year PsyD student in clinical psychology at the University of Denver's Graduate School of Professional Psychology. He is involved in Division 32, RMHCP, Fourth World Congress of Existential Therapy and served as a panelist at University Professors Press's 10th annual conference on "Advancing Humanistic, Existential, and Transpersonal Psychology." Jeff's passion for existential-humanistic psychology infuses his clinical work in areas of substance use, neurodiversity, group therapy, college counseling, and long-term depth therapy. Jeff currently works at the Center for Humanistic and Interpersonal Psychology and is writing his doctoral paper on the phenomenology of awe within a therapeutic dyad.



Jonathan Sundby is a doctoral student in clinical psychology at the University of Colorado-Colorado Springs (UCCS). His research explores how existential issues intersect with aging and adult development. In particular, he is interested in how existential and philosophical orientations are related to a person's physical and social health. In his clinical work, Jonathan works as a psychotherapist with older adults and caregivers in the Colorado Springs community.



Joseph Alexander Vanderhoff is a dedicated clinical psychotherapist with a passion for existential-humanism, psychoanalysis, neuropsychology, ecopsychology, and group psychotherapy. He is a member of the planning committee for the Fourth World Congress of Existential Therapy, sits on the grant writing committee for the Rocky Mountain Humanistic and Psychological Association, and sees clients at the Center for Humanistic & Interpersonal Psychotherapy, as well as his private practice, Colorado Men's Therapy. Vanderhoff holds a Master of Arts from the University of Denver in Counseling Psychology and a Bachelor of Arts from Virginia Commonwealth University in Philosophy and Religious Studies. He recently coauthored *The Evidence-Based Foundations of Existential-Humanistic Psychotherapy* (APA Books, 2025) and is currently working on several other publications.



Thurston Whitlow is an undergraduate at Virginia Commonwealth University currently working on a bachelor's degree in Psychology. His particular research interests include the subconscious and dreaming, human-animal companionship, and sociopathy. After graduation he plans to pursue higher education and collect his master's degree.

Award Recipient Bios

COSPP Alumnus Award



Cathy Calvert is a licensed psychologist. She currently is the Director of Mental Health Services for the University Colorado Colorado Springs (UCCS). Prior to this position she was the Director of Clinical Training at UCCS and was instrumental in the university obtaining APA accreditation. Additionally, she has had a private practice, been a faculty member at the University of the Rockies, guest lecturer at UCCS and supervised numerous trainees and interns over the past 14 years in different spaces. Cathy has been married for almost 40 years, has three grown children and two grandchildren.

Lifetime Achievement Award



Ron Valle, Ph.D. has been a professor of psychology, psychotherapist, and author for over 45 years having served as a dean and faculty member in a number of university and graduate institute psychology programs. He has published extensively including 6 books, over 60 journal articles and book chapters, and given numerous lectures and professional convention paper presentations in the areas of clinical, social, humanistic, existential-phenomenological, transpersonal, and philosophical psychology. Ron continues to serve as a practicing psychologist via telehealth in Discovery Bay, California specializing in clients with chronic pain and stress-related disorders and those experiencing grieving and their time of dying. A long-time practitioner and teacher of

meditation, Ron developed the Integrated Therapy Program for Transforming Stress and Pain while director of an outpatient university hospital pain clinic. He is editor of *The Changing Faces of Therapy: Evolving Perspectives in Clinical Practice and Assessment*, *Phenomenological Inquiry: Existential and Transpersonal Dimensions*, *Metaphors of Consciousness*, and author of *Opening to Dying and Grieving: A Sacred Journey*.

Student Humanistic Exemplar Award



Brittany Varisco is a doctoral student in the PsyD program at the Graduate School of Professional Psychology, University of Denver. After earning her bachelor's degree in behavioral sciences at the United States Air Force Academy, Brittany served on active duty as a C-17 instructor pilot in the Air Force, flying combat airlift, medical evacuation, and humanitarian missions around the world. After returning to Colorado as an evaluator pilot at the United States Air Force Academy, she took a leap of faith and left active duty to pursue her PsyD in 2018. She found her path to psychology, and more specifically existential, humanistic, and transpersonal psychology, had been paved by her lived

experiences both in the military and in her personal life. Her clinical interests include trauma, health psychology, psycho-oncology, attachment theory, spirituality, substance use/addiction, and advocacy. Currently, Brittany is the graduate student member on the board of directors at the Rocky Mountain Humanistic Counseling and Psychological Association (RMHCPA) and is the secretary for the organizing committee of the Fourth World Congress of Existential Therapy (WCET) that will be held in Denver in June 2026. She recently co-authored a chapter about working with emotions in the upcoming book, *Evidence-Based Foundations of Existential-Humanistic Psychotherapy* (APA Books). Brittany is passionate about student outreach and mentorship as well as expanding exposure to the world of existential, humanistic, and transpersonal psychology in undergraduate and graduate programs. (<https://www.wcet4.com/>) (<https://www.pledge.to/student-scholarship>)

Emory G. Cowen and Susan Cooper Lifetime Service Award



Dr Dick Gee earned his BA in Psychology at the University of Wisconsin in 1972 and his MS in Guidance and Counseling in 1974, along with a MEd in School Psychology. He then earned an EdS degree in Guidance and Counseling in 1975 and another MS in Marriage and Family Counseling in 1977. In 1980 he graduated with an EdD in Counseling Psychology from the University of Northern Colorado. Dick was licensed as a psychologist in 1988 and a MFT in 1989, a Clinical member of AAMFT in 1977, and a AAMFT supervisor in 1982. He is a past president of the Colorado MFT Association (1989 to 1992) and helped establishing licensure for MFTs in Colorado. Professionally, Dr. Gee was one of the founders of COSPP, an

Executive Faculty since 1999 to his retirement in 2012. At that time he was awarded the title Professor Emeritus. Along with a full-time private practice (1984 to 2016), teaching, consulting and administering the EAP for Memorial Hospital, he presented at national conferences for AAMFT and ACA. He provided learning institutes on a state and regional level. His development of mental health courses from Elementary school to graduate school have been well noted. Dr. Gee self-published a couples workbook titled *Keep the Homefires Burning* in 1997. Presently he is enjoying his retirement with his wife, Jody, traveling, still learning, and living.

Pre-Conference Workshops

An Existential-Humanistic Approach to Play Therapy

Shawn Rubin

This presentation will present the theoretical foundations of an existential-humanistic play approach to children, integrating psychodynamic theories of child development, and discussing the vital role of parent support and guidance. Case examples and discussion will allow the material to come alive and be meaningfully applied to the child and parent clients of participants.

Objectives:

1. Participants will be able to describe 2 key elements of an EH approach to play therapy.
2. Participants will be able to identify two aspects of limit setting.
3. Participants will be able to identify 2 tenants of child developmental theories.

Using Poetry to Facilitate Dialogues and Healing from Trauma

Nathaniel Granger, Jr.

Experiencing trauma is a common human experience that can affect individuals from all walks of life, regardless of age, gender, race, or socio-economic status. Trauma can result from a wide range of events, such as natural disasters, accidents, violence, or abuse, and can have lasting psychological and emotional effects on individuals. The universality of trauma highlights the fact that anyone can be impacted by traumatic events and underscores the importance of providing appropriate therapy to those who have experienced trauma. Gradilla (2015) noted that, "...in all ancient societies poetry was seen as the purest and most dangerous form of truth and knowledge" (p. 7). The danger, to which Gradilla's speaks, is the revealing way that poetry opens one to the truth—even the oftentimes painful revisitation of the traumatic event. Poetry, like many art forms, is highly adaptable. It can be used as protest to confront injustice. It can also be used to explore one's own pain and suffering. Poetry can be used to find healing and meaning in the face of trauma. This workshop explores the various ways that poetry can be used to facilitate dialogues and healing from trauma within therapeutic contexts. We conclude with an experiential exercise followed by time for questions and discussion.

Objectives:

1. Participants will be able to identify two ways that poetry can facilitate dialogue around traumatic events.
2. Participants will be able to discuss how poetry can facilitate dialogue and healing from trauma.
3. Participants will be able to identify two ways that poetry can be integrated into therapy when working with trauma.

I Am an Antiracist Superhero: Empowering Children Through Social Justice and Mindfulness

Jennifer Bacon

This workshop is based upon my children's picture book, *I Am an Antiracist Superhero!* that tells the story of 6-year-old Malik, who after learning about racism after the murder of George Floyd, decides to transform his world by becoming an antiracist superhero along with the help of his parents, and inspiration from historical figures such as Rosa Parks and James Baldwin. The project offers an accessible mindfulness section for children which includes hands-on guided activities and practices that children can create in order to change the world around them. This project highlights children from all backgrounds learning tools of empowerment through the process of "Look, Listen, Feel, and Act" even in times of adversity. The presentation discusses ways to use mindfulness with children in the context of racial trauma and social justice issues.

Objectives:

1. Participants will be able to identify two strategies to foster social and emotional learning and exploration through reading and guided mindfulness activities.
2. Participants will be able to define racism, antiracism, and equity and provide examples of age-appropriate tools for empowerment and creating equity.

Reading Emotions: Navigating Child Behaviors and Promoting Inclusive Representation

Joy Hoffman and Danielle Kleist

Joy Hoffman and Danielle Kleist, co-authors of the *Seoul Sisters Books* Toddler Series, discuss the importance of recognizing challenging toddler behaviors and why it is important to normalize diverse families in children's stories.

Empowering Children and Their Families: Moving Through Clinical Paralysis in Cultural Trauma Dialogue

Theopia Jackson

Exposure to trauma is a universal human experience; from a psychological perspective, trauma is the emotional response to a single event (acute), ongoing or persistent event (chronic), or combination of multiple events or variations (complex) that can occur across the lifespan. It is an Ancient Greek term that refers to wound or damage. What may be differentiating factors when considering one's response to trauma are one's a) situation (quality of life) before the trauma, b) knowing or awareness of the trauma, c) availability of resources (including community), d) internal and physical capacity to access the resources, and e) experience of cumulative and interactive effect among trauma events (Gold, 2017). These are essential data points that can inform treatment. A significant contribution of the field of traumatology has been shifting away from the medical model question of what is wrong with you to what happened to you. This inquiry demonstrates the influence of humanistic principles of resisting the reductionistic stance of pathologizing the client to considering a more holistic conceptualization and centering treatment in facilitating client self-actualization and meaning-making. The fusion of humanistic and multicultural psychologies has moved the pendulum further in appreciating the complexities of culture and socio-political contexts in the field of traumatology and the value of epistemological

justice to promote individualistic and collectivistic psychological well-being. The universal nature of exposure to trauma denotes the necessity of familiarity for all practitioners, particularly those working with children and families, and it dictates that practitioners may be contending with some level of exposure. The therapeutic relationship is meant to be a safe and trusting space to explore one's lived experience and how one makes meaning out of suffering (trauma) as it is to be expected in life. Attention to the risks for practitioners, such as vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, secondary trauma, etc., as well as the opportunities, such as various resilience and posttraumatic growth, are prominent in the literature. What is less attended to is the prevalence of what can happen for the practitioners in the clinical hour in the context of direct services, attention to difficult clinical moments that can emerge as clinical paralysis, becoming clinically frozen or non-responsive in the face of client material, particularly those of children. This interactive workshop is designed to engage attendees in strategically considering how to recognize and counter the prevalence of clinical paralysis when working with culturally diverse children and their families from a humanistic-multicultural traumatology framework.

Objectives:

1. Describe the humanistic-multicultural traumatology framework and its contributions in centering the experiences of diverse children and their families in trauma recovery.
2. Critically discuss the reciprocity of therapy when considering the potential risks (clinical paralysis) and opportunities (vicarious resilience) for the person of the therapist.
3. Name at least three strategies in traumatology that promote the empowerment of children and families from diverse backgrounds and contexts.

Keynote Address

Humanistic Psychology's Actualization as an Influencer in the Trauma Discourse

Theopia Jackson

The field of traumatology has been slow to navigate away from the medical and individual perspectives toward a communal, social justice approach. This is unsurprising, as the history of psychology within the U.S. has followed the same path. In fact, it has taken hundreds of years for the discipline of psychology to publicly open the discussion about its history of perpetuating and turning a blind eye to systemic collective complex trauma and systemic oppression, may it be genderism, racism, ableism, etc. Traumatology, concurrently as old as humanity's first existence and as recent as its understanding in the 21st century, does not have to idle for another hundred years. As humanistic psychology is positioned to take the lead in furthering the objectives of diversity and equity initiatives, we look to address the missing pieces of restoration and reparations. Humanistic principles and values are essential in attending to the intersectionality of cultural/multicultural dynamics and social justice ideologies in treating trauma. Such an intersectional framework denotes that it is not an either/or as much as it is a both/and approach when recognizing that trauma symptomatology is a natural response to an unnatural situation; thus, it must be examined. This talk is intended to engage and encourage Humanistic thought-leaders and future generations of humanistic practitioners to boldly assume their role as influencers in the field

of traumatology and move the entire field of psychology beyond the ideology of do no harm or symptom reduction to being accountable for improving the quality of life for all humanity. Understandably, this will require Humanistic psychology to continue to become, be, and being an accomplice in transforming systems to promote individual and collective healing, particularly for members of invisible groups who are suffering in silence or rioting in pain or further weighted by systemic blinders in social science and mental health.

Presentations

Indigenous Wisdom Perspectives on Healing Trauma

Ian Wickramasekera, II

Indigenous peoples have been developing and using traditional methods of helping people to cope with trauma for hundreds and possibly thousands of years (Wickramasekera II, 2014). In this presentation, we will explore some of these traditional methods that the author has practiced and researched within the Indigenous Tibetan traditions of “Soul retrieval” and “Chod” meditation for helping people with trauma (Chaoul, 2024; Wickramasekera II, 2020). The practices and will first be described from the Indigenous perspectives of the Tibetan Bonpo community and then discussed in relationship to humanistic psychology (Wickramasekera II, 2024, 2016, 2013, 2004) and neuroscientific research about trauma, consciousness, the self, and the nature of mind (Wickramasekera II, 2020, 2016, 2015). There is a remarkable congruence between Indigenous and Humanistic ideas about the nature of trauma and the mind which can deepen our understanding of trauma as well as the critical importance of including a multicultural and insights into critical psychology that uplifts the beliefs and practices of Indigenous peoples when working with them. The case for the critical importance of uplifting indigenous views and practices of helping Indigenous peoples will be discussed using examples from the authors previous experiences of teaching, researching, and working in Bhutan (Doma & Wickramasekera, 2019) and Sri Lanka with Buddhist peoples. Similarly, the benefits of cross validating some of the ideas of humanistic psychology and neuroscience regarding the nature of trauma and the mind can deepen our psychological and spiritual appreciation of Western ideas as well (Wickramasekera 2024, 2020, 2018, 2014, 2013, 2004). The presentation will combine lecture of the main ideas presented via PowerPoint as well as discussion of the ideas and best practices in concert with the audiences insights and questions.

Objectives:

1. Participants will be able to describe 2 Indigenous Tibetan practices of healing trauma such as Soul Retrieval and Chod meditation.
2. Participants will be able to describe the relationship of Indigenous Tibetan beliefs and practices about trauma and the nature of mind to Humanistic Psychology and Neuroscience.
3. Participants will be able to describe the importance of including indigenous views of trauma and the nature of mind when developing multicultural treatment for Indigenous trauma survivors.

Cultural Perspectives on Cognitive Processing Therapy and Humanistic Therapy for Trauma

Nathaniel Granger, Jr.

Cognitive processing therapy (CPT) is a specific type of cognitive behavioral therapy that has been effective in reducing symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) that has developed after experiencing a variety of traumatic events including child abuse, combat, rape and natural disasters, and racism. CPT is generally delivered over 12 sessions and helps clients learn how to challenge and modify unhelpful beliefs related to the trauma. Therefore, the client creates a new understanding and conceptualization of the traumatic event so that it reduces its ongoing negative effects on current life. Additionally, the humanistic approach works on the concept that human nature is inherently good, and everyone has the potential to find their own answers to their problems. The relationship between the client and therapist is vital so that the client feels able to be fully transparent, explore their feelings and speak openly. The goal of humanistic therapy is to help people develop a healthy sense of self, explore their feelings, and live more fulfilling lives. Both treatments are strongly recommended for the treatment of trauma related symptomology such as PTSD. In *The Pain We Carry: Healing from Complex PTSD for People of Color* (Gutiérrez, 2022), we find that there are cultural influences on trauma making post-traumatic stress more complex. This groundbreaking work illuminates the phenomena of complex post-traumatic stress disorder (C-PTSD) that is uniquely experienced by people of color and provides an essential path to health and wholeness. If a person of color has experienced repeated trauma—such as discrimination, race-related verbal assault, racial stigmatization, poverty, sexual trauma, or interpersonal violence—they may struggle with intense feelings of anger, mistrust, or shame. They may feel unsafe or uncomfortable in their own body, or struggle with building and keeping close relationships. Sometimes the client may even feel very alone in their pain. Hence, the aim of this symposium is to examine the cultural perspectives at the intersection of cognitive processing therapy and humanistic therapy on working with Complex PTSD and contend that it is at the intersection of the two modalities is where we find more favorable outcomes in the amelioration of trauma symptomology inclusive of cultural ascendancy.

Objectives:

1. Participants will be able to identify two advantages of incorporating cognitive processing therapy and humanistic therapy in the treatment of trauma in people of color.
2. Participants will be able to discuss two ways in which cultural influences on trauma make post-traumatic stress more complex and challenging to work with.
3. Participants will be able to comprise treatment strategies relevant to treating complex post-traumatic stress disorder in people of color.

Restorative and Gentle Meditation and Yoga

Ian Wickramasekera, II

An experiential exercise to facilitate the restoration and connection of mind, body, and spirit.

Navigating Suicide with Presence

Megan Campbell, Justin Rock, & Nathaniel Granger, Jr.

Presence is a concept thrown around in therapy, but what does it mean when faced with a client who hints at having nothing left to live for? This presentation moves beyond basic concepts to examine the vital role of presence in effective clinical work—one that transcends technique, centering the therapist's humanity in the here and now with themselves and the client, essential for authentically holding stories of despair, suicide, pain, hopelessness, and trauma.

Co-facilitated by supervisor Justin and supervisee Megan, this session invites therapists to explore presence not as a secondary or passive quality but as a dynamic, co-constructed experience that unfolds between therapist and client, supervisor and supervisee, and within the broader professional and ethical landscape. Utilizing a duoethnographic approach, we draw from Megan's and Justin's shared reflections on her first encounter with a suicidal client to examine how presence is shaped not only within the therapy room but also in the reflective spaces we create together and with our peers, highlighting its depth as both a personal and relational stance in navigating the complexities of trauma. We will delve into both inter- and intrapersonal dimensions of presence, exploring how it informs our ability to deeply listen, respond, and connect with clients who carry deep narratives of suffering. Participants will gain practical strategies for applying this awareness when working with clients at risk for suicide, learning how presence can serve as a grounding tool that honors and holds space for their complex stories. Through case discussions and reflective dialogue, participants will develop a nuanced understanding of how presence enhances therapeutic effectiveness.

For those looking to deepen their practice and engage with presence as a powerful integrative element in psychotherapy, this presentation offers a compelling perspective rooted in real-world experience. Join us for an honest, engaging session that will hopefully inspire new ways of thinking—and being with—your clients and yourself.

Objectives:

1. Participants will be able to define the concept of "presence" in therapeutic practice and distinguish between intrapersonal and interpersonal presence.
2. Participants will be able to implement 2 presence-based strategies in clinical practice, particularly when working with clients presenting with suicidality, to build stronger therapeutic alliances and support client stabilization.
3. Participants will be able to identify 1 intervention to improve clinical decision-making and outcomes with suicidal clients.

Love in Lyrics Podcast: Supporting a Growth Mindset Through Lyrical Exploration

Lauren Skuba & Paige Sutula

Exploring the meaning of lyrics and the use of music as a therapeutic intervention has been shown to facilitate new avenues of emotional exploration and deepening emotional experiencing in therapy. Additionally, the connection people make with music can normalize the human experience and support thinking about barriers to growth and connection through new framing and reduce resistance to change. When we began our podcast Love in

Lyrics: Exploring Relationships Through Taylor Swift's Discography, we wanted to bring a discussion into to the public that aims to normalize the human experiences of heartbreak, fear, emotional risk, vulnerability, disconnection, and connection seeking in relationship and support our listeners' innate draw toward personal and relational growth and authentic expression. This focus not only enhances our understanding of the complexities of human connection but also provides a framework for discussing common relational struggles, ultimately encouraging listeners to reflect on their own experiences and growth. In particular, we were drawn to explore Taylor Swift's discography due to her immense storytelling skill and ability to describe somatic experiences that connect deeply for her listeners. In this presentation we will discuss what inspired us to begin a podcast together, how we decided on a structure for our episodes, and explore the theoretical underpinnings we draw on. We will also explore the ways we believe this podcast can be a part of a broader discussion about how the dominant culture in the United States views individual and relational problems and how this problem framing can inhibit personal growth and block connection with authentic human experience.

Objectives:

1. Attendees will explore how lyrics and music can facilitate emotional exploration and expand the therapeutic experience with clients, unlocking new strategies to use with clients in their own practices.
2. Attendees will gain a deeper understanding of how music can normalize feelings of vulnerability, disconnection, and emotional risk, to be better able to support their clients in navigating relational challenges.
3. Attendees will critically assess how the dominant narratives surrounding relational issues can hinder growth and connection.

Working with Existential Shattering and Trauma in Psychotherapy

Louis Hoffman & Jeff Singer

The concept of existential shattering was introduced Tom Greening and further developed by Hoxie (2013), Vallejos (2015), Ren et al. (2018), and Hoffman and Vallejos (2018). "Existential shattering is the sudden and unexpected dismantling, or shattering, of one's self-conception and worldview as a consequence of an event or process that the individual has experienced" (Hoffman & Vallejos, p. 847). While the shattering is sudden, Hoffman and Vallejos note that it can be the result of a gradual process or cumulation of events over time. Existential shattering has similarities but remains distinct from moral injury. Furthermore, it has implications for differentiating types of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) that are relevant for problem identification and case formulation. When PTSD is accompanied by existential shattering, it may be necessary to adapt traditional treatments, including considering meaning and self-perceptions.

In this presentation, we begin by introducing existential shattering, including considering the development and evolution of this concept over time. Defining existential shattering includes distinguishing it from similar concepts, such as moral injury. Next, we consider implications for case formulation, including diagnosis and problematic identification. From this foundation, we consider psychotherapy implications, including challenges to working with clients experiencing existential shattering. We maintain that an existential-integrative

approach, which utilizes a critical assimilative integrative approach to existential-humanistic therapy, is an ideal approach for working with most individuals who have experienced an existential shattering. This approach combines the development of resources to manage overwhelming emotions with an existential-humanistic approach that focuses on issues of meaning, freedom/responsibility, relationships, and community while emphasizing the importance of the therapeutic relationships and presence.

Objectives:

1. Participants will be able to define existential shattering and discuss its relevance to psychotherapy.
2. Participants will be able to discuss one implication of existential shattering for case formulation.
3. Participants will be able to identify two implications of existential shattering for psychotherapy.

Storytelling, Trauma, Exceptional Experiences, and Transformation

Sue A. Mirkin

Psychologists listen to narratives or stories, personal and nonpersonal, told by their clients. As they listen, plot lines and characters from fictional tales such as movies, may arise in the minds of therapists and clients. Working with these stories is a nonthreatening way that allows clients to distance her or him -self from the repercussions of trauma and discuss painful experiences and unconscious material, not feel alone in his or her suffering, and may give the client courage to reveal secrets such as extraordinary or exceptional experiences that she or he withholds for fear of rejection or being considered crazy. An example of one storyteller's transformational experiences, which included an exceptional or anomalous experience will be used to explain the positive impact of an anomalous experience and how the hero's journey in conjunction with the death motif and the influence of an audience member became a catalyst for a series of transformations. Integrating the fullness of this storyteller's experience is evident in one revelation: "We're in this together, people. We are interconnected. It's the reaching out and being human. Being real."

Objectives:

1. Participants will learn how to detect client's unresolved elements mirrored in a story, and how the story lends itself to resolving the issue
2. Participants will learn how to evaluate when the themes of the story have been integrated
3. Participants will understand how to work with a client who had or has anomalous experience(s).
4. Participants will have an opportunity to experience and understand how the body communicates the meaning of a story when they embody an element within the story (e.g., character, landscape) after which they will discuss with their partner.

Literary Analysis as an Intervention: The Integration of the Humanities and the Clinical Practice of Psychotherapy

Melanie Grundvig & H. Luis Vargas

Psychotherapy and literary analysis can be deeply interconnected. In fact, different therapeutic models have long been used as tools to analyze and discuss literature from Freud to Lacan to Jung (Tyson, 2014), and more recently Family Systems models (Novianti, 2015). Less clearly established is the reverse: the utility of including literary analysis as a tool for psychotherapy. However, there are ways in which we see this occur as well. The intervention of deconstructive questioning within Narrative Therapy is derived from deconstructionism: a well-established form of literary critique (Tyson, 2014). Before I was ever introduced to Satir's sculpting, I practiced similar techniques to analyze famous plays in a western dramatic literature course in undergrad and have now brought some of my undergrad activities into my own clinical practice. Better understanding the relationship between these fields matters insofar as it deepens clinician's understanding of where their theoretical orientation is rooted and because it potentially contains a well of creativity and utility that clinicians could draw from if they were aware.

This presentation will discuss the intersection between literary analysis and psychotherapy and advocate for the utility of literary analysis as a possible tool and intervention for clinical practice including an opportunity to practice some of these techniques and suggest future directions for research. The content will be taught as a didactic presentation primarily, but will also incorporate a brief experiential activity, as well as some time for discussion at the end. The object of the didactic presentation is to increase attendees' awareness of the ways in which psychotherapy and literary analysis are interconnected. The experiential learning will be used to allow clinicians to practice and gauge for themselves the utility of literary analysis as a form of intervention, and finally, the discussion section will be essential for provoking increased consideration and thought on the subject as well as solidify directions for future research.

Objectives:

1. Participants will be able to identify two ways the fields of literary criticism and psychotherapy can be interconnected.
2. Participants will be able to assess and describe the utility of literary analysis as a possible tool for intervention in clinical work.

Intersectional Narratives of Meaning

Francis J. Kaklauskas

This workshop introduces the concept of intersectionality and its application to humanistic and existential psychology. To quote Walt Whitman, each of us contains multitudes; however, depending on the context, we bring forward aspects of our identity while leaving others behind. In this experiential workshop, after a brief didactic portion, attendees are invited to share their journeys with their identity, the meanings they have discovered, and the ongoing questions that continue. The workshop closes with reviewing themes, paradoxes, and potential areas of further exploration, both professionally and personally.

Sitting in the Candlelight: Reflections on a Decade of Existential Supervision

Jason Dias

Ten years as a clinical supervisor for psychotherapists in China have revealed certain themes relevant to supervision of existential therapy. Explicating these themes highlight important skills, strategies, and processes that are important to the practice of supervision. The themes discussed here include: Failure, never-ending emotions, the joy in sorrow, new standards for relationships, mutuality, and the work of change. Each of these themes will be discussed with an illustrative story. Along with the story, the presentation will illuminate how these themes can inform the practice of existential supervision and guiding supervisees to effective existential therapy practice.

Objectives:

1. Participants will be able to identify 2 applications to existential supervision.
2. Participants will be able to identify 1 important consideration for assessing measurable outcomes in therapy.
3. Participants will be able to identify 2 goals of their therapy practices that can be enhanced through supervision.

Ketamine Assisted Psychotherapy Using a Humanistic Approach: A Journey Toward Self-Actualization and Beyond Symptom Relief

Pamela Peters

Participants will gain an understanding into the process of sublingual ketamine assisted psychotherapy (KAP) including information about preparation, informed consent, dosing sessions, integration, prescriber relationship, risks, barriers to access, and best practice therapeutic uses for KAP. Beyond the potential for healing from treatment resistance depression and trauma, KAP offers the opportunity for transformational self-actualization when used in conjunction with humanistic psychotherapy. KAP focuses on and highlights the beautiful, strange, and sometimes absurd qualities of the medicine journey to learn more from the client's subconscious messages. This is a contrast to the focus on the singular chemical changes touted with infusion ketamine treatments. With the resurgence of interest in psychedelic substances for healing, both natural and pharmaceutical, this presentation helps clinicians understand the reasons for choosing ketamine over other psychedelic substances for therapeutic and transformational use. Listeners will be able to identify potential clients to refer for KAP as well as understand if this is a modality to get further training themselves.

Asynchronous Presentation

Following the Psyche's Threads: A Dream Journey Through Complex Trauma Recovery

Sil Machado

In this 60-minute session, the author presents a dream series from a client with whom the author worked in a six-year depth psychotherapy. The dream series illuminates the individuation journey of "David," a cisgender gay man in his 50's who presented to therapy with complex trauma, manifesting in symptoms of anxiety, depression, and obsessive-

compulsive disorder. The presentation details the psychodynamics of trauma recovery from a depth psychological perspective by weaving together four threads – the dream thread, the clinical thread, the theoretical thread, and the alchemical thread. With the first – the dream thread – the author shares a series of dreams that attendees are encouraged to feel into via symbolic, somatic, and felt knowing. With the second thread – the clinical – the author shares alongside the dream series pertinent information about the client, the psychotherapy, and transference-countertransference dynamics, illustrating the way in which the psyche both reflects the client's progress and offers guidance for the therapy via potent dream imagery. With the third thread – the theoretical – the author draws on key concepts from analytical psychology, such as shadow, persona, anima/us, and archetype, to enrich attendees' understanding of the case with a depth psychological framework. Lastly, with the fourth thread – the alchemical thread – the author amplifies the archetypal dimensions of the client's trauma recovery by integrating ideas, images, and motifs from alchemy. Woven together, these threads reveal a symbolic process of trauma healing grounded in the actualities of clinical practice.

Objectives:

1. Demonstrate ways of accessing a symbolic, somatic, felt, and intuitive sense of a dream within the context of trauma recovery.
2. Describe how dreams symbolically reflect the psyche's current state and provide clues to the waking self and the therapist about what is needed in trauma-focused depth psychotherapy.
3. Describe various concepts from Jungian analytical psychology, including persona, shadow, anima/us, complex, individuation, and archetype.

Poster Presentations

Messages and Warnings: How Dreams Evolve Over Time

Ian Almond & Thurston Whitlow

This study delves into a detailed examination of the dreams of one individual using content analysis- a systematic approach that counts various objects and actions that occur within the dream narratives (Van de Castle, R.1994). This particular project utilizes the principles of autoethnography, positioning the principle investigator (PI) as both the participant and the researcher. Autoethnography promotes scientific rigor by using a qualitative methodology (i.e., Content Analysis) and integrating the researcher's reflective observations. The dissemination of findings enhances the academic discourse on dream analysis and provides an advancement in theory for dream interpretation.

Complex Posttraumatic Stress Disorder from the Perspectives of Neurobiology, Attachment, and Antipsychiatry: A Comprehensive Approach

Siba Alzohaili & Isam Maaz

Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (CPTSD) is a new diagnosis in the ICD 11 that addresses the impact of developmental trauma. The diagnostic criteria include posttraumatic symptoms such as experiencing, avoidance, and hypervigilance, as well as disturbances in self-organization such as interpersonal detachment, affect dysregulation,

and diminished self-worth (World Health Organization [WHO], 2022). This poster is a critical review of the etiology and treatment of CPTSD from three theoretical perspectives: neurobiology, attachment, and antipsychiatry. From the neurobiological perspective, some people with CPTSD have decreased connectivity in brain regions associated with cognitive reappraisal and distress regulation (Schlumpf et al., 2019). The hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis is also affected by developmental stress; it is initially hyperactivated and then releases less corticosteroids in response to stress later in life (Oh et al., 2022). The Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics is one treatment that targets neurodevelopment to treat complex trauma (Lucero, 2018). From an attachment perspective, insecure attachment can lead to maladaptive coping and a disturbed internal working model (Karatzias et al., 2022). Emotional dysregulation and attachment insecurity create problems in relationships and functioning across the lifespan. Courtois and Ford's (2013) sequenced relationship-based approach is one treatment developed specifically to address complex trauma from an attachment perspective. From the Szaszian and Fanonian antipsychiatry perspective, trauma is not located in the individual but in their social context. CPTSD symptomology from this perspective is not pathological but rather a rational response to social realities. Treatment must thus be decoupled from mental health care institutions that may retraumatize the individual; nonclinical community-based interventions may be more appropriate. A critical comparison of these three perspectives offers a more holistic understanding of CPTSD and its pervasive and wide-ranging impact on functioning in multiple domains. This comprehensive approach can aid clinicians in more effectively treating individuals with CPTSD. treating individuals with CPTSD.

Body Mapping of Aesthetic Chills: Manuscript Analysis

Anompreet Bal

This research is an autoethnographic exploration of aesthetic chills (piloerection) as a psychophysiological response to beauty, distinct from temperature-related chills. Over five years, the researcher as both the observer and the participant, recorded aesthetic chills, including body location, date, triggering stimuli, and intensity. Intensity levels were categorized into four stages: mild, medium, intense, and "pulsar" (a prolonged, full-body chill). Stimuli were classified into thematic categories such as music, reading, physical touch, and synchronicity. The research visualizes these experiences through 13 body charts, showing the distribution and intensity of chills across different body areas based on specific stimuli. Previous studies suggest that aesthetic chills are linked to personality traits like openness and agreeableness, as well as reward pathways in the brain associated with dopamine release. This study contributes by presenting aesthetic chills as unique reflections of personal emotional experiences. Through a combination of qualitative reflections and quantitative analysis, the research offers insights into the frequency and distribution of aesthetic chills and their relationship to various stimuli, providing a deeper understanding of how individuals experience these profound sensations.

What I See is What I Say: Subjective Reality in the Wake of Global Conflict

Allison Connors

The United States is currently involved in many overseas conflicts: the war between Russia and Ukraine, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and several civil wars across Africa and the Middle East. In addition, it is an election year for Americans, and the political divide has never

been more unyielding. The pressure to conform to one political identity enforces strong judgement from opposing sides and worsens the cognitive dissonance between what one believes to be logical and what one may align with morally. From the existentialist perspective, this conformity challenges the core tenet of human nature: to freely develop identity and purpose for oneself. There is a severe lack of fluidity in American political development. Through the availability of social media, most Americans have the ability to further entrench themselves in the experiences of others—and more prevalent since Covid-19—the graphic and traumatic experiences of others. All of these outside factors weigh on us in varying severity, so how do we proceed? Can we, as individuals, transcend the weight of global conflicts? As Counselors, we must educate and inform ourselves on these conflicts and on the current American political situation to bring awareness to the effects this influx of information has on clients' subjective realities. We must be able to advocate for clients' self-determinism whilst acknowledging the limits we all experience as members of a nation. Considering the sheer amount of media available in our current state, people are tasked with constant evaluation of truth, and their perceived and created narratives shape their worlds. As Counselors, we have a responsibility to broach these big topics as a way of opening the door to a much larger, more impactful global conversation and collective identity.

How to Make Rain: A Psycho-Anthropological Content Analysis of Rain Ceremonies

Kaitlin Leahy

This poster reports on a cross-cultural content analysis investigating the psychological mechanisms involved in motivating rain ceremonies across the world. Rain ceremonies are human attempts to influence weather patterns, most commonly in request of rainfall, that have coincided with much of human history. The researchers are interested in cultural understandings of nature and the formation of their particular procedures to influence the weather. This research also examines how scientific researchers have accounted for these various beliefs. For example, some researchers view these practices as mere superstition while others have considered that humans may be more in tune with the weather than is acknowledged (i.e., seasonal depression). Data collection is still underway, with research thus far drawn from a variety of historical accounts, as well as archaeological, anthropological, and psychological sources. Ten main themes have emerged from the qualitative analysis of rain ceremonies performed in over 100 cultures. Cultures investigated are located on all 6 historically inhabited continents and span ancient civilizations to contemporary cultures. Once data collection concludes, a frequency analysis will be conducted to determine which themes and subthemes occur most often within the data or with respect to geographical locations. The global frequency of these methods suggest that attempts to influence the weather, particularly in periods of environmental uncertainty, may be the result of a shared impulse within the human psyche. As exposure to climate change and extreme weather patterns become unavoidable, a more robust understanding of the influences motivating human behavior in relation to its environment is imperative. Gaining perspective on how the Indigenous and other cultures have responded to their own desire for environmental control may shed light on how contemporary Westerners will respond to the growing unpredictability of climate change in coming years.

Connections Between Existential Issues and Disease Severity in People Living with Diabetes Mellitus

Jonathan Sundby

In this poster, I will propose a correlational study in which I will measure existential variables such as death anxiety (Templer, 1970), existential isolation (Pinel et al., 2017), and ego integrity (Janis et al., 2011), and look for connections between these variables and physical health indicators in people living with diabetes. In particular, health indicators that measure disease severity, such as A1C levels, will be investigated. Mental health indicators (e.g., depressive and anxiety symptoms), as well as reported health activity (e.g., daily exercise, diet), will also be measured and treated as correlates. A Structural Equation Model (SEM) will be used for the analysis, in order for the connections between these variables to be mapped, latent variables established, and mediational relationships explored. It is hypothesized that participants with greater disease severity will experience greater levels of existential distress and that these variables will partially explain previous correlations between diabetes disease severity and greater depression risk (Kao et al., 2020).

Awe as an Antidote to an Epidemic of Isolation

Joseph Alexander Vanderhoff, Jeff Singer, & Olivia Michael

The phenomenological experience of loneliness is one that is currently running rampant in modern culture. People are electronically more connected than ever via social media, yet much research and anecdotal evidence points to a lack of connection in people's lives, and a longing for more depth and authenticity in their interpersonal relationships. While social media has been a tool to bridge communication gaps across great distances, we believe the proliferation of these platforms has resulted in consequences that lead to disconnection and experiences of interpersonal and intrapersonal isolation. Furthermore, these technologies are designed to incentivize self-centeredness and inauthentic means of expression and connection. We propose awe as an antidote to our modern epidemic of loneliness and the social ills induced in part by social media. We will look at clinical case examples to highlight this epidemic and investigate how social media can rob clients of their capacity to feel deeply connected to others, as well as themselves. We explore questions about the ways in which people experience awe and how these experiences may assuage loneliness and isolation? Does facing life directly and embracing anxiety lead to a more meaningful, resilient, and connected life? How does social media contribute to a culture of disconnect? We believe that the phenomenological experience of awe in multifarious forms, is a powerful antidote our culture needs to ameliorate loneliness and promote authenticity and connection.

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At the **Rocky Mountain Family Therapy Network**, we provide vital resources and support for Marriage and Family Therapists across Colorado and Wyoming. Our initiatives include providing clinical and professional development through monthly workshops, creating networking opportunities to strengthen connections among practitioners, and offering legal and ethics updates specific to the region. We are dedicated to advancing the field by guiding new professionals, advocating locally as well as for the MFT profession, and ensuring that our members have access to the latest information regarding best practices. Through our efforts, we strive to enhance the quality of care provided to individuals, couples, and families in our area. More info at <https://rmftn.squarespace.com/>

Why Join the Rocky Mountain Humanistic Counseling and Psychological Association?

RMHCPA is creating a vibrant humanistic community in the heart of the Rocky Mountains. By joining you gain access to our membership benefits listed below and help support the development of humanistic psychology in the Rockies and beyond.

<https://rmhcpa.org/join/>

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- Mentoring Network for students and early career counselors and therapists
- Coming Soon: The Rocky Mountain Humanistic Archives & Library

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The Rocky Mountain Humanistic Counseling and Psychological Association is a growing organization and we are looking for individuals looking to get involved and help us grow. We have openings for people to serve on the board and many of our committees. We have opportunities for students to serve on the board and many committees as well. If you are interested in becoming involved with RMHCPA, please email the RMHCPA Executive Director, Dr. Louis Hoffman, at lhoffman@rmhcpa.org.

Why Support RMHCPA

RMHCPA is in the process of developing the Rocky Mountain Humanistic and Existential Institute (RMHEI), which will include an archive, library, training center, and clinic with practicum sites. RMHEI will provide many additional membership benefits while serving the local community and the field of humanistic and existential psychology.

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