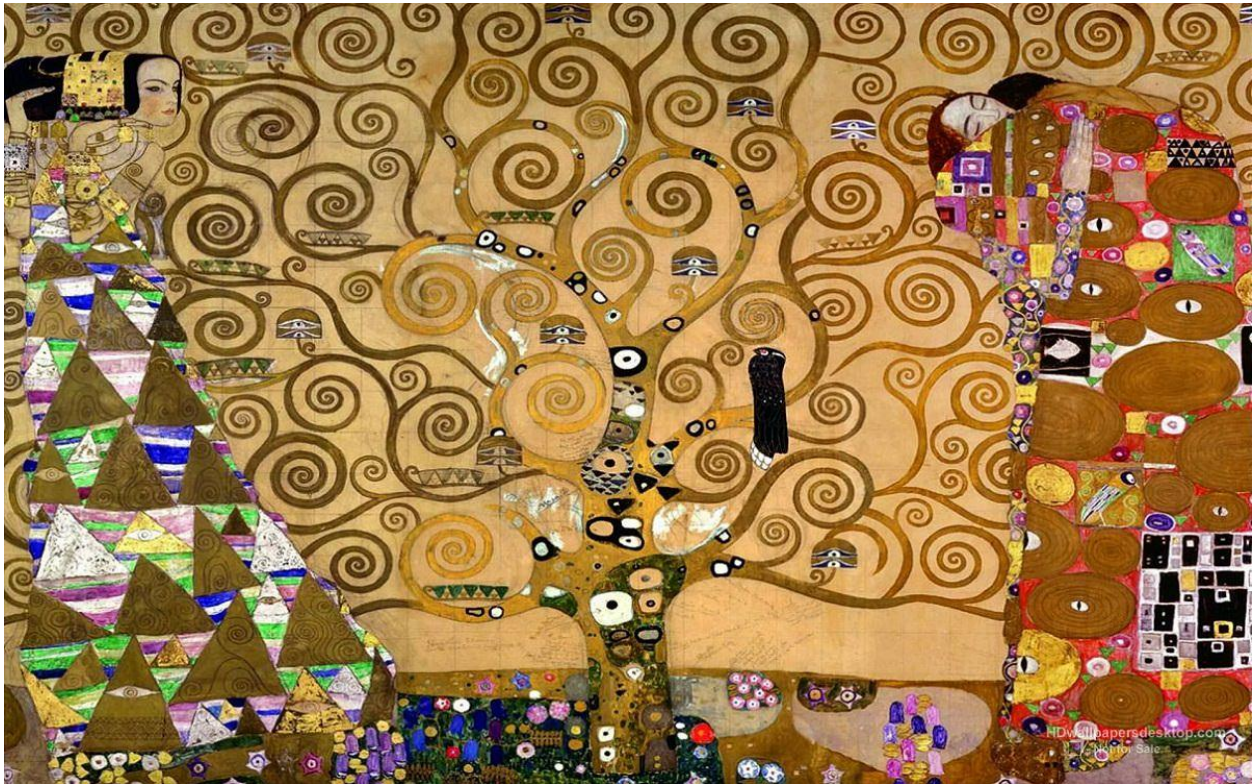


India Group for Existential Psychological Science Research

With research direction and coordination by
Dr. Kenneth Vail and his Social Research Laboratory
at Cleveland State University, USA



Gustav Klimt, 1905, Tree of Life

Last updated: July 08, 2018

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Welcome

The India Group for Existential Psychological Science Research (IXP) was co-founded in June 2018 by Madhwa S. Galgali (IND) and Kenneth E Vail III (USA).

The IXP has the mission of training researchers and advancing existential psychological science in India. IXP includes officers, members, and volunteers, and is open to

- Undergraduate and graduate students
- Full-time and part-time faculty
- Researchers and other professionals

who are interested in gaining research training, building experience, and engaging in international collaboration on research projects in existential psychology.

Participation in IXP is beneficial for developing research skills and building academic resumes (curriculum vitae), seeking graduate school and other research opportunities, and—of course—addressing the fascinating research questions at the center of existential psychological science.

Interested individuals are invited to contact any existing officer or member to inquire about participating/joining; further information may be found below.

Mission & Purpose

MISSION

To train researchers and advance existential psychological science in India.

PURPOSE

The purposes of the IXP group are (1) to train and support Indian students in the best practices and methods existential psychological science, (2) to create a collaborative and mutually beneficial international research team, and (3) to accomplish and increase the visibility of high quality academic research in India.

About Existential Psychological Science Research

The India Group for Existential Psychological Science Research (IXP) conducts research addressing existential psychological concerns involving motivation, the self, and challenges of “being” in the world. Broadly, that means investigating the cultural and personal consequences of humans’ awareness of life and death; identity formation and maintenance; freedom and autonomy; feelings of isolation; and strivings for a sense of guiding meaning and significance.

Although not exclusively, much of our research utilizes terror management theory (TMT). This theory initially addressed two relatively simple questions: Why do people have such a great need to feel good about themselves, and Why do people have so much trouble getting along with people who are culturally different from themselves? According to TMT, humans manage their awareness of death by developing and participating in sociocultural worldviews that offer a sense of permanence either literally through religious ideas (afterlife, reincarnation) or symbolically via legacy (e.g., contributions to government, art, science, sports, etc). From this view, people are motivated to live up to and defend those cultural standards and values, and they feel good about themselves (self-esteem) when they do so.

Since its inception in 1986, the theory has generated much empirical research into the nature of self-esteem motivation and prejudice as well as a host of other human social behaviors. To date, over 450 studies conducted in over 20 countries, and on every continent, have explored topics ranging from creativity, to sports fandom, political leadership preferences, and health, and have examined self-esteem, aggression, stereotyping, needs for structure and meaning, depression and psychopathology (e.g., phobias, prone-ness to PTSD), political preferences, sexuality and attraction, romantic and interpersonal attachment, self-awareness, unconscious cognition, martyrdom, religious belief, group identification, disgust, human-nature relations, risk taking, and legal judgments, among many others.

Of late, the IXP has been focused on studying the impacts of death awareness on the social-cognitive processes contributing to religious beliefs and unbeliefs.

A related, albeit more minor, focus of our lab is directed at understanding the motivational consequences of the experience of freedom. Psychological science has learned much about how people perceiving restrictions on their freedom push back and assert themselves to regain their freedom (e.g., reactance). But on the other side of that coin, despite having been explored in great depth by existentialist philosophers, psychological science still knows relatively little about the possible motivational consequences of being faced with one’s own personal freedom.

We build on classic existential philosophy and psychological theory, and take the perspective that although people may sometimes ineffectively manage their freedom, under certain circumstances they may be motivated to manage their freedom by, for example, following social consensus or cultural norms, pre-empting opportunity for choice (e.g., via self-handicapping), or supporting certain forms of leadership. We are currently focused on further understanding the underlying motivational mechanisms and the overt social consequences associated with the freedom experience in consumer behavior, health decision-making, and political and workplace leadership preferences.

Offices & Membership

The India Group for Existential Psychological Science Research (IXP) is organized and supervised by an international group of administrative officers, and is composed of numerous members and volunteers. The following is a description of these various IXP roles.

OFFICES

Research Director: Dr. Kenneth E Vail III

- Dr. Vail is a psychological scientist at Cleveland State University and director of the Social Research Lab. He completed his BA in psychology at University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, and his MA and Ph.D. at the University of Missouri. His research focuses on existential psychology, with outcomes related to cultural activity (e.g., politics, religion), personal growth, and physical health (e.g., nutrition, carcinogenic behavior) and mental health (e.g., PTSD). Some of his research findings have been featured in national and international outlets including *The Atlantic*, *Pacific Standard*, *Live Science*, *TEDx*, *Telegraph UK*, and the *Times of India*, he has contributed to numerous academic book volumes, and is currently co-editing a forthcoming book, to be titled *The science of religion, spirituality, and existentialism*.
- Dr. Vail serves as research director of the IXP, and is responsible for guiding the creative and scientific direction of the group.
- The research director delegates administrative authority to the president, yet reserves the right to directly govern IXP activities.

President: Madhwa S. Galgali

- Mr. Galgali completed his BA and MA in Psychology at the University of Mumbai in 2013, then worked in higher education through 2018. Broadly speaking, he is interested in investigating answers to the “big questions” like understanding existential motivations that drive various ideologies and belief systems and how moral systems arise and take shape in human beings. He also runs ongoing research projects focused on investigating unconscious existential motivation underlying Hindu religious belief systems in India
- The presiding officer, with full authority, appointed by the research director.
- Must be...
 - Responsible and able to effectively lead the IXP organization.
 - Dynamic, enthusiastic, and hard working.
 - Supportive of all officers, members, and volunteers.
- Responsible for consulting with the research director to develop and implement research projects.
- May invite members to assume particular offices.
- Supervises the functioning of all officers.
- Responsible for the smooth functioning of IXP group meetings and research activities.
- Responsible for collecting internal information and reports on IXP functioning.
- Serves as official representative of the IXP to other groups.
- May delegate administrative authority to the vice-president, when necessary.

Vice-President

- Assumes the duties of the president, when necessary.
- Must be...
 - Responsible and able to effectively lead the IXP organization.
 - Dynamic, enthusiastic, and hard working.
 - Supportive of all officers, members, and volunteers.
- Assists the president in supervising the functioning of all other officers.
- Works with the secretary to organize IXP meetings, at least once per quarter or more frequently as needed.
- Works with the treasurer in budget management and reporting.
- Assumes other responsibilities assigned by the president.

Secretary/Clerk

- Prepares and distributes the agenda for meetings.
- Notifies officers and members of upcoming meetings through announcements and other communications.
- Tracks officer attendance and absences at meetings.
- Keeps records of minutes at meetings, and distributes those minutes to all officers and members in a timely fashion.
- Maintains a file of past agendas, minutes, and notes.
- Maintains contact names, mailing addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses of officers, members, and volunteers.
- Provides a quarterly report of all active IXP officers, members, and volunteers.
- Track IXP activities on a calendar, and provide that calendar to all officers quarterly.

Treasurer

- Maintains the IXP funds in a safe bank account, and deposits money quickly to avoid accidental loss.
- Keeps accurate and detailed records of IXP funds and budget.
- Works with vice-president to provide a detailed quarterly report of IXP finances.
- Oversees expenses and, with president or vice-president authorization, dispenses research-relevant participant payment funds and travel expenses with receipts.
- Tracks expenses, predicts how funds will continue to be expended based on prior activity, and makes concrete suggestions for lowering expenses wherever possible.

International Liaison

- Responsible for working with the research advisor, president, vice-president, secretary, and regional research supervisors to facilitate the effective coordination of research projects, and the close communications of all officers, members, and volunteers, wherever they might be located.
- Must be...
 - Fluent in English and Hindi; other regional languages desirable but not required.
 - Dynamic, enthusiastic, and hardworking, with developed people skills.
 - Skilled at communicating regionally, internationally, and across continents.

Grants and Awards Officer

- Identify and seek funding through Indian and international (USA) grant opportunities relevant to psychological science, the development of science organizations (such as IXP), and research development.
- Immediately notify the president and vice-president (and research director) of any such available opportunities, and work with them to develop a funding application.
- Provide a quarterly report on submitted applications and upcoming deadlines.

Regional Research Supervisors

- Supervises data collection on-the-ground, including closely monitoring research conduct, data collection, data entry, and data security/privacy.
- Provide research training, supervision, and support to local/regional IXP member and volunteer researchers.
- Keep detailed records of all ongoing projects and data collection.
- Provides a detailed quarterly report of each local/regional IXP researcher's data collection activity (hours of data collection, number of completed participants, etc)
- Provide a detailed quarterly report on all data collected.

Membership & Volunteer Recruitment Coordinator

- Recruit new members and volunteers to assist in ongoing IXP research projects.
- Track volunteer activity and handle membership status.
- Provide a quarterly report on membership.

MEETINGS AND PROCEDURE

IXP meetings should take place at least once per quarter (more frequently as needed), and should be conducted in an orderly fashion. Meetings should be guided by an agenda, prepared in advance and with input from various officers and the research advisor as appropriate. Meetings may ordinarily be conducted in a casual and open manner, but more formal procedures may also be adopted in cases of complex or difficult discussion where structure would help resolve issues; in such cases, follow Robert's Rules of Order (<http://www.rulesonline.com>).

Get involved

One of the most enjoyable aspects of social psychological research is the collaborative process of studying mental processes and behaviors. Following an existential philosophical tradition, we are particularly passionate about learning how the fundamental human condition can affect social behaviors, as well as applying what we learn to better understand the nature of various cultural beliefs and behaviors.

As an IXP researcher, you can directly contribute to some cutting edge research in existential social psychology. You can expect to work closely with a knowledgeable team of researchers who will provide you with training, guidance, and resources to conduct empirical experimental research studies. The research skills you will learn in this lab can be generalized across a broad range of disciplines that employ the psychology research methods, and may serve you well in a variety of fields of research. Additionally, working in a productive research lab looks great on your resume and potential graduate school applications, can prepare you for a future research position, and... it can be fun!

Below, you will find more information about joining the IXP either on a volunteer basis, or as a formal member or officer. We look forward to working together with you!

VOLUNTEER

Volunteers are welcome to join us at any time, and at any level of involvement for any duration of time as their schedule permits. Simply get in touch with any current members or officers for more information about getting involved, and we will be happy to assist you in getting started.

Benefits: In general, working with IXP as a volunteer researcher will provide valuable experience, build research skills, and help network with colleagues. Additionally, IXP volunteer researchers are eligible to receive the following:

- **Certificate of IXP involvement.** Upon completion of certain milestones of contributions to the IXP (data collected from 25, 50, 75, 100 participants; data preparation; study development; etc), you will be eligible to receive a formal display-quality certificate of completion to officially recognize your valued involvement with the group.
- **Possible membership.** Volunteering will also serve as the initial step toward IXP membership, which offers numerous additional professional benefits (see below).

MEMBERSHIP

Membership is free of charge, and is open to any person interested in joining the IXP who meets the recommended qualifications.

Qualifications: Recommended qualifications for membership are:

- Hold a Bachelor's degree or be currently enrolled in post-secondary education.
- Completed or currently enrolled in coursework in psychology and research methods.
- Accomplish at least one milestone contribution as an IXP volunteer researcher.

Admittance: Any individual may petition for admittance to IXP membership by contacting an IXP officer and requesting consideration for membership. The applicant should include, with their request, a very brief description of how they meet the recommended qualifications for membership, described above. The IXP officers will review the request and vote to either (1) grant membership, (2) welcome another request at a future date after additional contributions, or (3) decline the request. Membership is free of charge.

Duties and responsibilities: Members will be expected to actively participate in IXP research projects by helping to collect data, as described in the “Basic expectations” and “Training and data collection” sections of the Research Conduct section below. Additionally, though optional, IXP members are strongly encouraged to take on other duties and pursue additional opportunities in the course of their involvement in IXP (see relevant sections under Research Conduct below).

Benefits: Membership in IXP offers tangible and practical professional benefits, as follows:

- **Formal letters of recommendation.** All IXP members will be eligible to request formal letters of recommendation from IXP. Such formal letters will be co-written and co-signed by the IXP Research Director (Dr. Kenneth Vail, USA) and the IXP President (Madhwa Galgali, IND), and will cover the following: confirm your official membership in the group; describe your valuable tangible contributions to IXP research projects; describe your valuable intangible characteristics (teamwork, leadership qualities, reliability, initiative, intelligence and creativity, etc); and describe your aptitude for success in future professional and research settings. Customized letters may be requested as needed.
- **Co-authorship on journal article research reports** that result from an IXP study that you substantively helped complete. Substantive contributions are those that go beyond the minimum levels of involvement in completing a study, with qualifying contributions such as helping to propose or develop the study hypotheses/design, collecting data from 50+ participants, and helping to prepare the study’s data for statistical analysis.

OFFICER

Members are also encouraged to become involved as officers in the IXP organization.

Qualifications: Recommended qualifications for holding an IXP office are:

- Membership
- Relevant qualifications, aptitudes, or willingness to perform the functions of the available offices described in more detail above.

Installation: Any member may petition to hold an office by contacting an existing IXP officer and requesting consideration for the office. The IXP President may also invite members to petition to assume a vacant office. In either case, the applicant should provide a very brief description of how they meet the recommended qualifications for membership, described above. The existing IXP officers will review the request (and any other competing requests) and vote to either (1) install the member to that office, (2) welcome another request at a future date after additional contributions, or (3) decline the request.

Duties and responsibilities: Officers are expected to faithfully carry out the duties and responsibilities of the office(s) they hold. Members may hold an office until they resign the post or defer it to another member. However, continued high quality performance of the office is expected; indeed, officers may be unseated by competing members requesting the same office or, in the case of dissatisfactory execution of the office, they may be removed and replaced by parliamentary vote (of present officers/members) during an official IXP meeting. Officers should view themselves as leaders in the IXP and conduct themselves accordingly, providing guidance in their duties to the organization and providing training and support to our up-and-coming members and volunteer researchers.

Benefits: IXP officers will gain both tangible and practical professional benefits, as follows:

- **Formal letters of recommendation.** All IXP officers will be eligible to request formal letters of recommendation from IXP. Such formal letters will be co-written and co-signed by the IXP Research Director (Dr. Kenneth Vail, USA) and the IXP President (Madhwa Galgali, IND), and will cover the following: confirm your official office(s) and duties in the group; describe your valuable tangible contributions to IXP leadership (office responsibilities and contributions to their completion and improvement); describe your valuable intangible characteristics (teamwork, leadership qualities, reliability, initiative, intelligence and creativity, etc); and describe your aptitude for success in future professional and research settings. Customized letters may be requested as needed.
- **Practical experience.** As an IXP officer, you will have the opportunity to build practical experience in a key role of a research group organizational team. These are experiences that one does not find in the classroom, and may not often have access to in other professional settings. Thus, holding an IXP office offers the chance to build a record of organizational leadership experience, hone those leadership skills, and may help serve as a launch pad to other professional leadership roles elsewhere.
- **Networking.** As an IXP officer, you will be working closely with other research professionals in various parts of India and the USA. These networking opportunities can be both productive and enjoyable experiences, broadening your connection to colleagues in other academic domains and parts of the world.
- **Continued IXP functioning.** The IXP benefits all involved, and continued functioning of the group is essential for developing, conducting, and publishing rigorous scientific studies. Through the IXP, volunteers and members (including officers) are able to gain training, build research skills and experience, and obtain tangible materials to advance their research careers (certificates, letters of recommendation, co-authorship on scholarly publications, etc). Your faithful leadership as an IXP officer helps make all of this possible, and we are all grateful for your service.

GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH IN USA

IXP researchers interested in working with Dr. Vail in his Social Research Laboratory, at Cleveland State University (USA), are encouraged to contact Dr. Vail to discuss possible shared research interests and to apply to the American graduate program.

The Cleveland State University psychology department offers existential psychology graduate training with Dr. Vail in two areas: a PhD in Adult Development and Aging (ADA) and a Masters in the Experimental Research Program (ERP).

The ADA area is a 4-year PhD program and the ERP area is a 2-year Master's degree program; each involve academic training based on the apprenticeship-model: only a few students are admitted each year, and each student is matched to a faculty advisor whom will serve as the student's mentor, research advisor, and provide general support.

With acceptance to the program, you would be matched with Dr. Vail as your advisor, and it would be expected that you would work closely together to a) train in both content and methodology, b) actively build your academic record (i.e., research), and c) position you for admission into a strong PhD program or academic career by the time you graduate.

More information about submitting an application to ADA PhD or ERP Master's degree can be found here:

<https://www.csuohio.edu/sciences/psychology/graduate-programs-in-psychology>

Dr. Vail is always looking for talented graduate students, and welcomes inquiries and applications from interested students.

Research Conduct

When conducting research with IXP, you will be given unique opportunities that are not offered in the typical classroom experience. Broadly, you will gain hands-on involvement in the research process, gain experience working as a member of a productive research team, and gain valuable insight into some emerging concepts and methods in existential psychology. We take seriously the fact that you are here because you are a motivated, intelligent, and responsible scholar. As such, we will entrust you with real responsibilities and offer training experiences designed to better equip you to carry out your own research efforts into the future. That is, we view you as a professional member of our team and a future academic colleague.

We offer training to cover many of the basic skills and experiences involved in conducting existential psychology research. These basic activities will be what constitute your basic expectations in research conduct. In addition, we also offer a number of additional *optional* opportunities for your professional and academic development, should you be interested in a future academic or research career.

BASIC EXPECTATIONS

The following are the basic expectations for IXP research activity:

1. *Time.* Be prepared to devote several hours per week, during normal business hours, but perhaps also in evenings if useful, to IXP activities and data collection efforts. We of course understand that schedules can fluctuate, so please set your schedule to allow for sufficient involvement in the group.
2. *IXP research responsibilities.* As mentioned above, you are an intelligent and responsible member of our team, and will be put in charge of research projects and data collection efforts, meaning that you will be responsible for learning the theory and methodology being used, recruiting participants and collecting data, and preparing that data for analysis. So, there are three primary categories of expected IXP research activities: training, recruitment and data collection, and data preparation.
3. *Reliability.* You are expected to keep appointments with fellow IXP colleagues and participants, and to be responsive via your contact info. However, we of course understand that things happen, so if you cannot keep a scheduled meeting or data collection session just let us know as soon as possible and we will adjust accordingly.
4. *Professional conduct.* When interacting with research participants, we expect you to act with a casual, yet professional, demeanor (specific training on this will be provided). Inappropriate or abusive language or behavior will, of course, not be tolerated. Attire should be appropriate and professional, but may be influenced by the setting (use your best judgment).

TRAINING & DATA COLLECTION

As an IXP researcher, you will be put in charge of helping to complete research projects. In fact, you may work on several studies simultaneously, as you complete and begin new projects during the course your involvement with IXP. With each new study, you will receive detailed training about the relevant theory and methodology, as well as practical training for data collection sessions. Below, we provide a general outline of that training.

1. *Theory and methodology*: With each study you get to conduct, you will first learn the basic theoretical ideas being tested, as well as how those ideas are being tested (the methods). You are encouraged to play an active role here by asking questions and getting a clear understanding of the information and methodological technique; your comprehension of the materials is a priority, and in academic research any questions or suggestions you might have can potentially lead to an informative breakthrough. Additionally, we want to support you in gaining a mastery of existential psychology concepts and familiarity with contemporary methodological techniques. So, please feel encouraged to question ideas and methods, suggest improvements, and, in general, participate in the free and open exchange of ideas.

2. *Practical training – Stage 1*. Most studies will require that you become proficient at four roles: actor, support/monitor, detective, and teacher.

Actor – Because good experimental method requires consistent environments, and because our research often involves some degree of deception (e.g. initial omission of the true purposes of the study), you will need to learn a script, detailing what you should do and say to participants when you first meet them and before they begin the study. The script lets the participants know what they are going to do and sometimes sets up a cover story. As consistency is important, especially before and during data collection, it is important that this script be memorized nearly verbatim, though delivered in a casual manner.

Support and monitor – Once the participant has begun the study, you should remain nearby and available to help answer questions if they have questions about the materials or procedures. While they complete the study, please remain nearby to monitor the setting, and take mental notes about any irregularities (major distractions or interruptions, including using phone, having conversations, eating, getting sick, etc); after the study is completed, make a formal note of any irregularities. However, try to do these two activities (be nearby to help, and monitor the session) while also giving participants some privacy to complete the materials without feeling like they are being watched. That is, try to not invade their space or give the impression that you're closely watching their responses as they complete the study; we want participants to feel free and open in their responses.

Detective – After you have delivered the script and participants have completed the study, it is important that you discern whether their responses were natural. Sometimes participants will alter their responses if they feel social pressure to provide “desirable responses”, such as if they think they know the hypothesis or if they feel the researcher (or anybody else) might be watching them complete items with socially stigmatized response options (e.g., indicate being atheist, or homosexual). Suspicion about our methods (if we used a deceptive cover story) or other inauthentic responses can threaten the validity of our data. Therefore, you will learn how to briefly interview participants to determine whether they provided natural, naive responses.

Teacher – After data has been collected and you've interviewed them about whether they provided their natural responses, you'll need to inform participants about the actual nature of the

research in which they just took part. This is called debriefing. Participants sometimes participate for compensation, and our studies often involve some mild forms of deception (omission). So, this task not only serves an educational function to inform them about psychological research but is also, in general, part of the ethical treatment of research subjects. As was the case with the introductory script, you will need to learn a scripted debriefing, explaining the cover story (if there was one), the theoretical ideas being tested, the design of the study, and our hypotheses.

In general, you must learn/memorize these component parts before progressing to the next stage.

3. *Practical training – Stage 2.* Next, you will meet with your regional research supervisor (or other available IXP officer/member) to run through the study as if they were a participant. At this stage, you will run a full rehearsal in the anticipated research setting, getting familiar with the relevant equipment (e.g., paper/pencil materials, computer stations, physiological measurement equipment). Your colleagues will provide feedback, guidance, and instruction during these sessions; these practice sessions will continue to be scheduled until you are able to conduct the research data collection session properly and in its entirety. This is essentially an exam, testing how well you've learned to conduct your study and whether you are adequately prepared to conduct actual data collection from real participants. This is also an opportunity for your IXP colleagues to provide feedback on your performance and take a final look over materials before approving your study for official data collection. Thus, the more and better preparation you do on your own, the sooner you can pass this stage and move on.

4. *Data collection: Scheduling and recruitment:* Your IXP regional research supervisor (or other IXP colleagues) can help you begin your study. They will also help provide support and materials to you as you take charge and conduct the research project on your own.

OTHER DUTIES

There are also a number of secondary activities in a fully functioning research group. Sometimes these tasks will be relevant to your own study (e.g., making calls or field excursions to recruit participants for your study), and other times they may be relevant to studies in which you were not directly involved (e.g., helping with data preparation for your own or other IXP studies). You should be prepared to handle these tasks, or work with others on them, to enable our IXP research programs to run smoothly.

Making recruitment calls or field visits – Sometimes we may ask you to make telephone calls. This might be for a variety of reasons e.g. to recruit participants, to screen participants, or to schedule their sessions. Usually you will be given a script and flow diagram to guide you through the communication and the various answers the person may provide. At other times, you may instead find it more effective to make field visits (go out into certain communities) to collect data from people in the area.

Data preparation – An important step in the research process is to prepare data for statistical analysis. Accurate and reliable data entry is vital to successful and valid research. Raw data is usually prepared using Microsoft Excel or a statistical software package called SPSS. Training in data preparation will typically be specific to your particular study.

Transcription – Some of our research entails open-ended written responses, and needs to be transcribed into a digital response for computerized quantitative textual analysis. This may be done using a specific computer program or data file, and training on these tasks are usually specific to the project.

Content coding – Occasionally, we will have textual or graphical data that require thematic content coding. This procedure involves training and a scoring manual to guide your judgment of content themes. These sources might entail a photograph, video footage, or an essay response, and content coding is often done in teams.

Field research – We often conduct studies outside of the laboratory. When we do, we may ask you to conduct field visits to recruit participants from the public, collect data from them, serve as a confederate (trained acting), or conducting an interview. Special training will be given in these instances.

ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

As mentioned above, one of the purposes of IXP is to support you as a motivated, intelligent, and responsible scholar and we strive to offer you helpful training experiences. Although there is a basic set of expectations for the IXP, the goal is to be mutually beneficial and supportive to our team. As a result, we are very interested in building a program that produces successful researchers who are capable of going on to become successful graduate students, professors, and other professional researchers. Toward that effort, we offer optional training experiences that can help you excel, by attending IXP meetings, taking on more responsibility (e.g., assuming officer duties, training and supporting other members and volunteers, managing more studies), and developing your own research questions and your own study designs.

1. *IXP meetings* – The IXP holds meetings at least once per quarter (often more frequently), and you are most welcome to join. The topics discussed at these meetings can vary, but, in general, these meetings are where you can learn what it takes to operate a research group and what you might encounter in your future as a professional researcher.

Topics discussed at lab meetings generally include all steps of the process of research, from start to finish. We sometimes discuss clerical issues; we most often discuss the process of getting research reports completed and published, including data analysis and analytic strategies, scientific writing skills, and how to interact with journal editors and peer-reviewers; but one of the most important activities of these meetings involves theoretical and methodological discussions. We often discuss conceptual ideas about existential motivation and grapple with different ways of turning them into concrete, testable, ideas. This can be a difficult skill, and the sooner you gain exposure to it, and begin developing it, the better. Finally, we also sometimes discuss the academic life and graduate school (e.g., applications, courses, comprehensive exams, research tasks, teaching assistantships, etc.), which may be of interest if you are interested in learning what you might expect as a future graduate student yourself.

You are welcome to just come and observe, or to take any degree of active participation with which you are comfortable. On the more passive side, you're welcome to simply observe and learn about what is involved for a professor who supervises his own lab (Dr. Vail), and for graduate students researching and studying in a graduate program, and for other researchers involved in the IXP. On the more active side, you're also most welcome to join in the conversations, ask questions, and propose ideas, and even take on officer roles.

2. *Additional responsibilities* – After you've gotten familiar with the lab and have a study or two under your belt, you are more than welcome to become more actively involved in the group. This might mean taking on additional projects (to help give you a broader exposure to different ideas and methodologies, and additional experiences to describe in a graduate school application), or the responsibility of training and supporting other IXP colleagues (to get experience in a leadership role), or participate in the conceptual and methodological development of a new research study.

3. *Research development* – Once familiar with the lab and after handling a study or two, you are also welcome to take a more active role in the conceptual and methodological development of a new research study. This is excellent experience for future graduate school applications and research performance, and we will do our best to help support your efforts in developing and conducting your own research project.

ETHICS AND SAFETY

This section contains very basic information regarding the ethical demands of the IXP, as well as the safety of yourself and participants.

1. Ethical research conduct. All IXP researchers are required to follow the best practices of ethical research conduct. See, in particular, Section 8 of the APA code of ethics, regarding Research and Publication: <http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/index.aspx>. Breach of these ethical guidelines would lead to removal from the group. IXP researchers should familiarize themselves with these ethical standards and aspire to follow best ethical practices.

2. Health. Obviously, your health is important and we're very supportive when it comes to taking care of yourself. If, for whatever reason, you are unwell and cannot attend to your IXP duties, please contact another IXP colleague and we will arrange for someone to cover your duties. Please note that the more notice you can give the better.

3. Emergency. During data collection or field excursions, if you become injured or fall ill, if you encounter dangerous or criminal activity, if you feel threatened by a participant, or if for any other reason you need assistance, disengage from the study immediately and prioritize your health and safety. Also, you can find help from your IXP colleagues. Please take emergency contact information with you before visiting the field for research purposes, or consider taking a colleague with you in a "buddy system" for safety sake.

3. Subject Matter. Additionally, much of our research can involve existential concerns (life and death) and can ask about tough or uncomfortable subject matter (politics, religion). This means you will be actively dealing with a broad range of tough, emotionally charged, or controversial issues. If, at any time and for whatever reason, you find the research topic or methodology makes you uncomfortable, just let us know and we will happily do our best to reposition you with a different study. Similarly, participants may also find the subject matter makes them feel uncomfortable, painful, or disturbing. Please be aware of any verbal and non-verbal signs of participant distress. If you observe such signs, please provide participants with the opportunity to discontinue from the study (without penalty) and give them our contact information.

Resources & Suggested Readings

Below are a few resources that provide insight into our primary theoretical tradition, as well as important experimental methodological information. These resources should be readily available online or in university libraries.

Social Research Laboratory. Cleveland State University, USA

- Our American collaborators.
- www.csuohio.edu/sciences/social-research-lab

Ernest Becker Foundation

- A great website containing a forum & media related to the works of Ernest Becker & TMT. Check out the audio lectures by Sheldon Solomon.
- <http://www.ernestbecker.org>

Flight from Death

- Documentary film exploring the fear of death as a possible root cause of many human behaviors on a psychological, spiritual, and cultural level. Influenced by Ernest Becker's work, with interviews of contemporary philosophers, psychiatrists, and social psychological scientists researching terror management theory.
- <http://www.transcendentalmedia.com/new/films/now-playing/flight-from-death-the-quest-for-immortality/>

Readings in Existential Psychology:

- Becker, E. (1962). *The Birth and Death of Meaning: A Perspective in Psychiatry and Anthropology*. New York: Free Press of Glencoe.
- Becker, E. (1973). *The Denial of Death*. New York: Free Press.
- Fromm, E. (1941). *Escape from freedom*. New York: Owl books.
- Greenberg, J., Koole, S. L., & Pyszczynski, T. A. (Eds.). (2004). *Handbook of experimental existential psychology*. Guilford Press.
- Vail, K. E., Juhl, J., Arndt, J., Vess, M. K., Routledge, C., & Rutjens, B. T. (2012). When death is good for life: Considering the positive trajectories of terror management. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 16, 303-329.
- Vail, K. E., Rothschild, Z. K., Weise, D., Solomon, S., Pyszczynski, T., & Greenberg, J. (2010). A terror management analysis of the psychological functions of religion. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 14, 84-94.
- Yalom, I. D. (1980). *Existential psychotherapy*. New York: Basic Books.