

My dear fellow ISPP members:

With great sadness, we acknowledge the October, 2020 death of our colleague, Dr. Emile Bruneau, of a brain tumor. Emile embodied virtues as a person and a scholar-activist that many of us strive for: international and interdisciplinary research, persistent curiosity, scientific imagination and systematic research, wonderful mentoring and collaboration, positivity, humor, and compassion for his intimates, students, friends, and even for people engaged in intergroup conflict that wounded others.

GC member Nour Kteily, and one of Emile's several collaborators, contributed this remembrance:

Emile Bruneau's guiding mission—and he was certainly a man on a mission—was to “put science to work for peace”. Emile's doctoral training was in cellular and molecular neuroscience, but his life's passion was to use the tools of social and political psychology to improve intergroup relations. A trademark of his research program was identifying a barrier to peace, and then working—often with partners ‘on the ground’ around the world—to develop evidence-based interventions to help increase tolerance. His postdoctoral research explored intergroup empathy, examining when and why we express empathy parochially to members of ingroups versus outgroups, and uncovering mechanisms (such as the use of individuating narratives) to attenuate this bias. Shining a spotlight on the role of power, he showed that whereas high-power groups benefit from perspective-taking interventions, low-power groups benefit more from having the opportunity to give their perspective. In subsequent work, he examined the causes and consequences of blatant forms of dehumanization, including research that showed that dehumanization is in part facilitated by the meta-perception that one's own group is dehumanized by others. Indeed, Emile was fascinated by the tendency for meta-perceptions to be unduly negative, identifying false polarization—our proclivity to believe that we are more divided and despised than we actually are—as an opportunity for corrective interventions. Emile was particularly excited by the power of what he called ‘intervention tournaments’, sourcing ideas for and then testing a large number of interventions to see what was most effective and then investigating why. This approach yielded an intervention he was especially proud of, a ‘collective blame hypocrisy’ intervention that reliably reduced anti-Muslim bias by gently highlighting individuals' tendency to collectively blame outgroups but not their own group for the condemnable actions of individual group members. Fittingly, one of Emile's final projects (soon to be published) was an intervention tournament based on video stimuli generated from interviews he conducted with former FARC members at demobilization camp in rural Colombia to overcome barriers to re-integration and lasting peace. Emile's work will leave an indelible mark on political psychology—and the world.

Another ISPP member friend, Anca Minescu, shared that there are many interviews with and

talks by Emile on the internet that you may appreciate. Here are just a few:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=McrXGQg5svY>

<https://penntoday.upenn.edu/features/penn-researcher-reports-on-the-evils-that-come-with-dehumanization?fbclid=IwAR1HQPm56CPejzwxH2cpFNpcSzDxFUt43E-m6fgLqFAeZC2FgKf8pHNpis>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJvfqft5v9U&feature=share&fbclid=IwAR2Th3R6QF4deZl0xTFBfKI-Os7qJmqlQk8OFT6fNdyrJYsndYJQu7XPkqc>

Emile's obituary in the New York Times: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/02/opinion/emile-bruneau-dead.html>

We share the pain of Emile's family, friends, and collaborators, and hold them with compassion in our hearts.

Felicia Pratto  
ISPP President