

Psychology's international responses to global issues: Collaboration on climate change and COVID-19

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Brian had been on Otago's clinical psychology training programme staff and operates a private practice in Dunedin. His research and professional interests include: professional ethics, treatment applications of virtual/mixed reality systems and climate psychology. He was on the NZPsS Ethical Issues Committee for 14 years and its

convenor for nine, during which time he actively campaigned for radical changes to the Code of Ethics, which resulted in the current Code.

A timely event

Some interesting commonalities arise when we stop to consider how climate change and the global pandemic are related. There will be much documented elsewhere on the social, cultural, environmental, economic and scientific bases for the connection of these global issues and on the diverse regional and national political responses. However, without venturing further into that territory, there is a serendipitous connection for psychology in the form of agreements made just last November to form an international collaborative network of professional psychology organisations to share our collective efforts and improve our communication on global issues. While the start we made last year and early in 2020 was focused on psychology's roles in addressing climate change, the substantial work done in that area has already proven immeasurably valuable to the new efforts to apply best practice in psychology to the myriad of issues that have arisen in the first three months of 2020. The model for sharing

knowledge and resources will continue to evolve over the months and years ahead, in the wake of the COVID-19 "coronavirus" pandemic that has swept around the globe, its transmission assisted by the inter-connection of the world's peoples.

Lisbon 2019

But, let's take a step back to the start in early 2019, when the New Zealand Psychological Society was invited to send a representative to attend the International Summit on Psychology and Global Health being convened by the American Psychological Association in conjunction with the Ordem dos Psicólogos - the Portuguese Order of Psychologists (OPP). That meeting of psychological associations took place in mid-November in Lisbon, Portugal, with the brief to commit to and develop collaborative and cooperative approaches that will establish the role of psychology as "a leader in climate action". At that time climate change was seen as the major priority we needed to begin to address.

In the words of the Summit

session facilitators, Terri Morrissey and Richard Plenty: "As fellow psychologists, we knew of the possibilities this gathering would present. This was a unique opportunity to bring the key decision makers of international psychological associations up to speed on the issues associated with climate change, to start to build an international professional community on an urgent global challenge where we all potentially have a role to play, and to motivate, energise and inspire collaborative action. Most importantly, there was the challenge of helping to bring together and unite the diverse group of participants from all over the world around an agreed set of outcomes and way forward."

In my role as Director of Scientific Issues and co-convenor of the Climate Psychology Task Force, I represented the NZPsS at the Lisbon Summit and can best describe the Summit as a momentous and historic event that brought together representatives of 44 psychological associations (38 national societies and 6 cross-national organisations)

plus a number of ‘observers’, 4 invited speakers, the President of Portugal and the Minister of Health (both for a session on the second day) and session facilitators. Agreement was reached on a declaration of the organisations’ collective commitment to combine efforts in the interests of promoting effective climate change action measures, informed by psychological science.

Pathway to the Summit

Considerable preliminary work on a Proclamation and a draft Resolution from the Summit provided definition of how we might proceed in translating the commitment to effective action. That preparation in advance of the Summit (led by Amanda Clinton, senior director for the APA’s Office of International Affairs and other APA staff) involved thorough consultation with organisations about the wording and intent of the Proclamation and Draft Resolution. For the NZPsS, that consultation extended to the Society’s executive and members of the Climate Psychology Task Force and NSCBI. Aotearoa/New Zealand psychologists helped shape the documents that were signed at the Summit by asserting the need to acknowledge the importance of the values and experiences of different cultures in determining best practice and desired outcomes of climate action and to ensure that indigenous voices are welcomed and empowered by psychology.

At the Summit

The Facilitators’ report (Morrissey & Plenty, 2019) summarises the Summit programme as follows:

“The agenda was structured in such a way as to allow for four substantial guided working sessions over the course of the Summit. The first focused on setting the ground rules and expectations, while the remaining three progressed thinking around key “products/ outputs” and agreeing a way forward individually, collectively and by interest group area.

These working sessions were informed by 15 structured presentations on the work already being done by psychological associations, interspersed with inputs from the 4 expert guest speakers from Portugal and the United States (the associations organising the summit). There

was also an inspirational keynote speech on the role of psychology from the President of Portugal, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa.

One of the 15 presentations was on the New Zealand Psychological Society’s climate psychology work, outlining the current and expected effects of climate change from Antarctica through to the Pacific islands near the equator and observing that Māori and the people of the Pacific will be disproportionately affected by the effects of rising sea levels, more frequent and severe storm events, changes in marine life and reduced capacity to grow crops and draw groundwater for sustenance and irrigation. I urged special attention by psychologists to the needs of communities that are vulnerable because of their limited economic and political power. Our presentation also described the importance of the relationship with Māori psychologists and the essential role of the NSCBI in the functioning of the Society.

Many of the presenters (us included) highlighted the recent ‘strike for climate’ rallies in their own countries and I expressed our hope that action by professionals, by our young people, politicians and the public as a whole can make a difference to the future.

Throughout the Summit, speakers referred to the need for collective action, networking and sharing of resources to help psychologists better inform politicians and educate the public about effective personal and collective action and help them make changes either required or compelled by the changing environmental conditions.

What we achieved (from Morrissey & Plenty)

- Agreements on the Proclamation and the Resolution were in themselves significant accomplishments. Even in the absence of any other outcome or call to action, they were major achievements uniting psychologists on a global scale
- Thirty national associations produced plans for the next six months to be shared with all summit participants - and identified areas where they were interested in contributing internationally. These plans not only provide a summary of and/or focus for local action but also provide insights into the global

PROCLAMATION

“We, representatives of national and international psychological organizations in attendance at the Lisbon Inaugural International Summit on Psychology’s Contributions to Global Health, are committed to ongoing collaboration in the application of psychological science to jointly advance progress on critical global issues, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Our commitment of professional, scientific, educational, cultural, and applied resources will be directed to advancing those issues and Goals for which psychology offers the greatest contribution.

Our initial efforts will be focused on Sustainable Development Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

Our mutual work on applications of psychological science to climate change will also provide a framework and model for future collaboration focused on proposals to address critical global issues”.

situation and possible areas for collaboration

- Briefs were produced on topics for urgent international co-operation. Substantial progress was made during the event and further work will take place post Summit to consolidate this. The interest areas were:
 - Research/science
 - Communication/media campaigns
 - Influencing public policy
 - Educating psychologists on climate change
 - Developing a toolkit for national associations
 - Building a social network
 - The 'one world' approach

In agreement with other commentators, I note the remarkable goodwill of the Summit participants, both in support of each other and in their commitment to cooperate and collaborate on major advances in the role of the profession in helping people around the world to mitigate, adapt to and cope with the effects of climate change. This resulted in the establishment of strong connections between people from different continents and from distinctly different cultural perspectives. I returned to New Zealand feeling confident that the work of our Society is better understood and will be supported by those elsewhere in the world who look to what we are doing for inspiration and can also inspire our efforts, as well as offering collaboration on projects, research and actions. There was impetus, too, to establish stronger regional networks which for us is the Asia-Pacific and Australasia associations.

We encourage Members and colleagues to read the Proclamation from the Summit and the Resolution (see panels) and to inform the Climate



Psychology Task Force through the Executive Director of their interest in aspects of the CPTF's work or their willingness to offer skills and time to help advance the objectives of the group. The CPTF is eager to involve psychologists of all training backgrounds, research areas and fields of practice; all have potential contributions to make in this area of such significance to the future wellbeing of New Zealanders and others. The Society is particularly interested at this stage in developing its capacity to respond to the needs of Māori and Pacific people with regard to climate change impacts and would welcome any offers from members to help with this.

The Summit Credits

The success of the Lisbon event is, in large part, attributable to the dedicated work over the months before the Summit by the APA's Office of International Affairs staff (Amanda Clinton and Juliana Mayhew), and the OPP team (Sofia Ramalho and Tiago Pereira) who hosted the event. The organisation was superb and all those attending were made to feel very welcome by the major sponsors, the APA and OPP. The facilitation team and guest

speakers all performed impressively. And, naturally, the NZPsS is to be commended for investing in my travel and accommodation and ensuring representation at this significant event.

And then came COVID-19...

It's a case of "but wait, there's more ..". And it's a lot more, most of which we undoubtedly will report on in the next issue; but here's the summary: As I said at the outset, the agreements made at Lisbon to work together and share resources resulted in establishing networks and resource sharing that have provided a model for the international response of the profession to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the two months following the Summit, we had set up online meetings of association representatives (three calls across different time zones) to develop and discuss plans for implementing the actions and commitments made at the Summit. We agreed to establish a post-Lisbon Summit LISTSRV and a resource sharing repository and were discussing collaboration on research and presentations. Then came the coronavirus, already a major problem in China and clearly

a global threat. Modelled on the systems established after Lisbon, the APA rapidly created similar resources and communication channels for the profession's international response to a second global issue: COVID-19. Many of those on the previous group were automatically alerted and invited into the COVID response group and were joined by dozens of others across the world.

Throughout our own Level 4 Emergency "lockdown", it has been helpful to join one of the twice-weekly zoom calls and receive updates on developments in other countries, to participate in the international sharing of resources and to report on our endeavours in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Much of the material uploaded to our website has been obtained rapidly from the COVID resource drive or Listsrv (sometimes adapted for New Zealand use) and others have been making use of material we have developed. Already, the larger associations have invited us to participate in relevant webinars and training free of charge and we have benefited from hearing from those who have advanced knowledge of the psychological effects of the pandemic such as Prof. Buxin Han, President of the Chinese Psychological Society. Our own (President-elect) Dr Waikaremoana Waitoki and colleagues have been invited to address the international network on cultural considerations in the response to COVID.

In many ways, psychology has risen to the challenge of an unexpected global pandemic and was prepared for and able to mobilise and respond more efficiently and effectively than most other professions. People around the world have been able to make use of the resources that have been widely shared and made available to practitioners, decision-makers, media and the public.

RESOLUTION

“WHEREAS there is overwhelming agreement among climate scientists that climate crisis poses a serious global threat, is occurring faster than previously anticipated, and is caused in part by human behavior;

WHEREAS the resistance of some individuals worldwide to accept evidence of climate crisis reflects a variety of psychological, social, economic, and political factors, including misunderstanding the relevant science; psychological threats of departing from the consensus view of one's peer-group; deliberate exposure to misinformation; and concerns about financial losses stemming from addressing climate crisis;

WHEREAS current research and public communication on the impact of climate crisis have often emphasized the major physical damage caused by extreme weather, such as floods, droughts, hurricanes, and wildfires, and insufficiently addressed the increased displacement, migration, and conflict affecting those populations involved;

WHEREAS climate crisis has a disproportionate impact on already vulnerable groups with fewer resources, including low-income individuals or those who live in rural areas, people of color, women, children, older adults, and individuals with disabilities;

WHEREAS research shows that climate change-related events can result in major acute and chronic adverse mental health outcomes, including stress, trauma, and shock; post-traumatic stress disorder and other forms of anxiety; depression; and substance use disorder, which have been a secondary consideration in climate change communication and action;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that our psychology organizations will advocate for and support international and cross-disciplinary collaboration to mitigate and facilitate adaptation to climate crisis.

We will inform our respective members and the public about climate crisis, emphasizing scientific research and consensus on its causes and short- and long-term harms, and the need for immediate personal and societal action;

We will encourage our members and other mental health leaders to be vocal advocates concerning the necessary preparatory and responsive adaptations to climate crisis and to invest more in research and practice in this area;

We will advocate for Universities and other entities could include formation on societal challenges and, particularly, climate crisis for psychologists and other mental health professionals;

We will increase the availability of services and supportive interventions to help minimize harm to mental health and well-being, especially among vulnerable populations, and increase community resilience;

We will advocate for the rights of those most susceptible to the negative health, and mainly, mental health impacts of climate crisis, for example, by encouraging policymakers to fully fund programs to aid those who suffer harm from severe climate crisis-related events;

We will support the development of a public awareness campaign to encourage individuals and communities to adopt behaviors to help prepare for and recover from gradual climate change and acute climate crisis events;

We will encourage governmental, educational, health, and corporate leaders to use more psychological science in policy designs as well as to adopt norms, values, and policy to promote sustainable preventive and corrective behaviors in individuals, groups and communities”.

APPENDIX

A summary extracted from the report of the APA's Office of International Affairs on the Summit:

International Summit on Psychology and Global Health: A Leader in Climate Action

Thursday, November 14th-Saturday, November 16th, 2019

CONVENERS: American Psychological Association (APA)
Amanda Clinton

Portuguese Order of Psychologists (OPP)
Tiago Pereira, Sofia Ramalho

Session FACILITATORS: Terri Morrissey and Richard Plenty.

Approximately 37 invited participants representing Psychological associations from across the world plus a number of invited observers, presenters and guests.

Summary of 11/14/19 Meeting:

1. History and purpose of the Summit detailed
2. Dr. Vargas presented a talk titled, "Transformational Leadership."
3. Proclamation signed by all invited organizations (including those unable to be physically represented) indicating a willingness and commitment to working together as organized psychology in an effort to address critical world issues.
4. Established ground rules and expectations for working together effectively. Engaged in the initial guided working session addressed defining progress and future needs regarding climate change initiatives within respective organizations.
5. Associations provided Pecha Kucha presentations on a volunteer basis offering updates on their climate-oriented engagement.
6. Dr. Ava Thompson presented a talk titled, "Rethinking Psychology's Role in Climate-Related Disasters."

Summary of 11/15/19 Meeting:

1. Completed guided working session focused on identifying specific areas for continued work to address climate change and psychology's potential role and impact.
2. Dr. Gould presented a talk titled, "Psychology and Climate Change: The Times Have Found Us."
3. Dr. Jose Manuel Palma Oliveira presented a talk titled,

Psychology, Risk and Decision-Making."

4. An open session was held for the general public
 - o Francisco Miranda Rodrigues, Order of Portuguese Psychologists: Psychology's Contributions to SDGs
 - o Arthur Evans, American Psychological Association: Why Psychology? Why Now? The Case for Global Action
 - o Jose Manuel Palma Oliveira, Lisbon University, Janet Swim, The Pennsylvania State University: Climate Change and Psychology: Past, Present and a Better Future
 - o Francisco Ramos, State Secretary for Health, on behalf of the Portuguese Minister of Health...
 - o Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, President of Portugal: Comments on the Importance of Psychology

Summary of 11/16/19 Meeting:

1. Areas for urgent international co-operation were identified
 - a. Research/science
 - b. Communication/media campaigns
 - c. Influencing public policy
 - d. Educating psychologists on climate change
 - e. Developing a toolkit for national associations
 - f. Building a social network
 - g. The "one world" approach
2. Final products developed
 - a. ables identifying next steps, action plans and commitments from participating associations.
3. Next steps confirmed
 - a. A steering committee consisting of Amanda Clinton (USA), Bernardo Useche (Colombia), Frances Mirabelli (Australia), Sarb Bajwa (UK), Arthur Evans (USA), Francisco Rodrigues (Portugal), Michael Ezenwa (Nigeria) and Brian Dixon (New Zealand) will be convened to discuss overall strategy and follow-up. Terri Morrissey and Richard Plenty are also included.
 - i. The first Summit Steering Committee call is scheduled for Friday, January 30th, 2020
 - b. A series of conference calls will be scheduled in 2020 at distinct times of day to allow for time zone differences. These are for all Summit

participants and those who signed on to the Proclamation and Resolution subsequent to the meeting. The aim of the regular calls is to move climate-related initiatives forward across the globe.

- i. The first general Summit follow-up calls are scheduled for the 4th, 5th and 6th of February, 2020

DECISIONS MADE

1. Summit participants signed a Proclamation and Resolution, formally agreeing to collaboration on major global issues and, more specifically, on climate change.
2. Summit participants decided to convene regular meetings for follow-up on progress and shared initiatives.
3. Summit participants committed to follow-through on efforts to advance climate-oriented work in psychology within their organizations.
4. Summit participants agreed to a steering committee.
5. Summit participants indicated interest in the Lisbon Summit model for future engagement for psychology to take leadership on global issues.

PROCLAMATION ON COLLABORATION SIGNED BY

American Psychological Association, Order of Portuguese Psychologists, Australian Psychological Society, Bahamas Psychological Association, Brazilian Society of Psychology, British Psychological Society, Canadian Psychological Association, Caribbean Alliance of National Psychological Associations, Chinese Psychological Society, Asian Psychological Association, College of Psychologists of Peru, Colombian College of Psychologists, Cuban Society of Health Psychology, Cuban Society of Psychology, European Federation of Psychologists' Associations, Flemish Association for Clinical Psychologists, German Psychological Society, Guatemala College of Psychologists, International Association of Applied Psychology, International Council of Psychologists, International Union of Psychological Science, Jamaican Psychological Society, Japanese Psychological Association, Jordanian Clinical Psychologists Association, Lebanese Psychological Association, Mexican Psychological Society, National Psychological Association of Ukraine, New Zealand Psychological Society, Nicaraguan Association for the Development of Psychology, Nigerian Psychological Association, Norwegian Psychological Association, Order of Psychologists of Albania, Pan-African Psychology Union, Psychological Association of Namibia, Psychological Society of Kenya, Seoul National University, Spanish Psychological Association, Sri Lanka Psychological Association, Swedish Psychological Association, Uganda Council of Psychologists, Uruguayan Psychological Association and Zanzibar Professional Counselors Association.