Clinical psychology and the climate crisis
Held on Monday 4th November 2019
Feedback to GTiCP

Sam Fender
Hypersonic Missiles:
It’s a dense, compelling picture
of the modern world - from
politics to social change to the
world grinding to a halt thanks
to climate change and war.

Annie Mitchell, Nick Sarra and Tony Wainwright
Presenters

Annie Mitchell
New grandma, part time clinical health psychologist enthusiast for community psychology, DCP SW committee member. Previously DClinPsy Clinical Director in SW.

Tony Wainwright
Works on Dclin at Exeter
Ex chair BPS Ethics Committee
Works on human rights and psychology, and prevention with the EFPA SW DCP Committee
DCP PSU member

Nick Sarra
Consultant psychotherapist working in the NHS, working on the DClinPsy, DClinPrac and Msc at Exeter University and Visiting Professor in organisational dynamics at Business School, University of Hertfordshire
Outline of the day

10.00  Introductions
10.15  Creative Connections exercise – Annie Mitchell
10.45  Scientific and policy background – Tony Wainwright
11.15  Break
11.30  Psychologies and change – Annie Mitchell
12.15  Trainee led exercise on communication
12.45  Intro to Schwartz rounds and their significance – Annie Mitchell
13.00  Lunch
14.00  Schwartz -like Round
15.00  Discussion
15.15  Break
15.30  The Psychological Climate: a plague of primates ? – Nick Sarra
16.30  Closing discussion and consideration of goals
17.00  Close
Creative connections

Pictures of the exercise from Resurgence magazine
Pick an image that connects with how you relate to climate change.
Find someone else to talk with for 3 minutes
Call out words that express how you felt.
Tony Wainwright
Policy and science
Where does Climate Change fit in...

- Prevention
- The NHS Plan
- Ten years ago, the NHS published its first carbon reduction strategy. In doing so it became the first major health system anywhere in the world to develop a strategic vision outlining how health care needs to evolve as part of the transition to a low carbon economy and to commit to progressively reducing its own carbon emissions. King’s Fund 2019
Where does Climate Change fit in...

- Despite this, it is hard to argue that climate change has become the strategic priority for the NHS that it needs to be. It received a mention in the appendix of the NHS long-term plan (on page 120) but has not been integrated within core strategic thinking. King’s Fund 2019
Health protection threats

In recent years, PHE has responded to a rising number of major emergencies classed as ‘enhanced incidents’. Among the risks identified in the Government’s latest assessment of significant threats to public safety are terrorist attacks, extreme weather events and new and emerging diseases, which have shown the ability to spread rapidly between communities and countries with devastating effects. The scale and nature of many of these threats is likely to shift as a result of climate change.
Where does Climate Change fit in...

• Climate associated crisis, trauma and disaster
  • Crisis, Disaster and Trauma Psychology section
  • Online statement
  • International psychology and trauma organisations
• EFPA Board HR, Prevention, Disaster and Trauma
Lancet Climate Health Countdown

• Present day changes in heat waves, labour capacity, vector-borne disease, and food security provide early warning of the compounded and overwhelming impact on public health that are expected if temperatures continue to rise. Trends in climate change impacts and vulnerabilities show an unacceptably high level of risk for the current and future health of populations across the world.

• A lack of progress in reducing emissions and building adaptive capacity threatens both human lives and the viability of the national health systems they depend on, with potential to disrupt core public health infrastructure and overwhelm health services.

http://www.lancetcountdown.org/
The way human beings live is causing very serious trouble to the environment.

Psychology has the potential to make an enormous contribution to address this challenge.

Ethics, Human Rights and Prevention

Psychological science now engaged with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

In the UK with the Climate Committee

Rapid pace of change

My history..
Ten years ago ...

- British Psychological Society Ethics committee discussed climate change as an ethical issue, both for practice and also for other reasons:
  - Climate justice – the poor greatly affected.
  - Generational justice
Experimental Psychology
50 years ago!
Ten years ago ...

- I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that climate change poses a major challenge to human civilisation.
- The impending transformation of the physical environment is unprecedented in human history. Alongside these changes are the equally unprecedented losses of animal and plant species though habitat destruction.
- What implications are there for clinical psychology practice?
“ECOLOGICAL DISASTER and climate chaos, associated with social inequality and political and economic extremism, comprise the greatest crisis humankind has ever faced, threatening our physical and mental health, our security, and indeed our continued existence on the planet.”
Hi, my name's Jessica and I want to talk to you about (what's her name again?) ... Greta
Привет, меня зовут Джессика, и я хочу поговорить с вами о (как ее зовут снова?) ... Грете
Charles David Keeling began the CO2 observations at Mauna Loa in 1958.
“It is worse, much worse than you think”

A few numbers:
• We are adding carbon to the atmosphere 100 times faster than any time in the last 800,000 years.
• Over half of all CO2 by burning fossil fuels has been emitted in the past 30 years.
• Climate change will force at least 150 million people to move from where they live within the next 30 years and the greatest risk of unsettlement and harm is in non-Western countries, which have contributed least to the damage.
We need to (continue) to develop a new climate (social) science

“What is needed is not (just) more and better science, but a different science.”

- Deep interdisciplinarity
- Meaningful engagement of all people
- Based on an analysis of vulnerability - inequality
- Creative thinking that envisions multiple pathways and solutions
- Analysis at regional, local and ‘hyperlocal’ levels.
- Change won’t be easy – winners and losers


10.1038/s41558-018-0352-1
Psychologists on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

- Linda Steg University of Groningen – adaptation
- Susan Clayton (on adaptation) – see APA report 2011
- Elke Weber (Princeton, decision science),
- Petra Schweizer-Ries (Univ of Applied Science Bochum)
- Lorraine Whitmarsh (Cardiff)
- All contribute to Working Group III WGIII, focusing on mitigation. These reports assess the psychological literature relevant to climate change mitigation and adaptation
- “It is a massive success story for the discipline to have several representatives on this key body that up to now has mainly drawn on technological and economic perspectives.” (Patrick Devine-Wright (Univ of Exeter) Environmental Psychologist)
“Although multiple communities around the world are demonstrating the possibility of implementation consistent with 1.5°C pathways very few countries ... can currently make such a claim. To strengthen the global response, almost all countries would need to significantly raise their level of ambition.”
The Climate Change Act 2008 and the UK

- UK emissions reduced by 43% since 1990 and had two carbon budgets
- Net zero report in May 2019
- Government committed to this target
- Professor Nick Chater, member of the Climate Committee and advisory board of the UK ‘nudge unit’
- Dr Richard Carmichael – Independent report
Sarb Bajwa, chief executive of the BPS, said:

“Climate change is one of the defining issues of our time, and psychologists can offer a great deal when it comes to understanding what interventions are likely to be effective…

The BPS will be working with our partners both nationally and across borders to address the urgent issues which this crisis raises, and do all we can to make psychology part of the solution.” May 2019
What to do...

- Paris Agreement December 2015
  - Over 200 countries signatories
  - Phase 2 = implementation pledges
  - Phase 3 = review targets
- Some psychologists are connected but we all need to get involved.
- Do you know our own countries plans?
- We have much to offer
- Data available https://climateactiontracker.org
Possible goals..

- Study the science – and the ’new’ social science
- Find out what the international agreements say about our country and what policies are being developed
- Work out where psychological science might contribute to the effort to face the challenges
- Consider your own skills and how they might apply
- Consider becoming an activist e.g. XR – and there are many ways to do this..
- Who is doing what? https://iaapsy.org, APA, BPS, ACP
- Link up with and support IPCC / Climate Change Committee psychologists
- Understand links between the climate and environmental emergency, public health and wellbeing
Psychologies and change
Annie Mitchell
Demanding disruption: Extinction Rebellion and changing psychology
Annie Mitchell, Shira Rub & Tony Wainwright

Ecological disaster and climate change, associated with social inequalities and injustice, are compounding the greatest crisis humankind has ever faced, threatening our physical and mental health, our security, and indeed our continued existence on the planet. In October 2018, nearly one hundred academics and politicians, including a good number of psychologists, wrote to The Guardian newspaper to support a new international group Extinction Rebellion (XR) that was formally established in London on 31 October 2018 and committed to nonviolent social activism disrupting or demanding political change (Coxen et al., 2019)

The letter stated: ‘While our academic perspectives and expertise may differ, we are united on one point: We will not tolerate the unfolding ecological disaster and the resulting social and economic injustices that are killing us all’.

The climate is changing
So should we!
#ActNow

Psychologies of Change

Debunk conspiracy theories with a convincing story

Reframe the issue

Appeal to values, not affiliations

Ask how rather than why

Stay calm, friendly and put your point across
4 converging socio-political-economic strands trouble our quarrelsome species:

- poverty
- global economic, health and social inequalities, associated with greed, hedonic treadmill, excessive consumption, war, abuse, trauma
- rising subjective distress (or at least our rising awareness of distress)
- global heating and ecological damage

These critical problems are inter-linked, with the environmental crisis fundamental to all.

The poorest and most marginalised, who have contributed least to the damage but have suffered most from western imperialism, are at most immediate risk of harm.
We first have to question our own discipline.

• Psychologists are (alleged to have been) complicit with economic and social powerful vested interests: advertising, torture, conversion therapy

• We must check our vested interests & blind spots: being aware of systemic & cultural pressures that bear down upon us: asking whose interests are we serving & being wary of professional arrogance.

• BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct (2018) acknowledges our shared collective duty for the welfare of human and non-human beings, both within the societies in which Psychologists live and work, and beyond them.

• We can be a force for good – but in trying, we must work with others
Risk of over-emphasis on individual change

- The “life-style” drift -may be a dangerous distraction – part of an individualising tendency to blame the victim for problems which are social and structural.

- Rich, powerful “winners” are complicit with wilful blindness to carbon harm, as with tobacco, and collude with individualising approaches that distracts from corporate responsibility.
Mental health impacts of climate change fall into three categories – all associated with trauma or threat of trauma:

• impacts of acute climate-related events eg flooding, tsunami, hurricanes

• impacts of sub-acute climate-related events eg drought, increasing ambient temperatures

• existential threat associated with climate change and threat of future deteriorations
Preventing trauma: a psycho-social-political process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychological processes: SASSI</th>
<th>Extinction Rebellion core demands</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Safety: protect</td>
<td>• Government must tell the truth by declaring a climate and ecological emergency, working with other institutions to communicate the urgency for change.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Acceptance: towards agency</td>
<td>• Government must act now to halt biodiversity loss and reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2025</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Sympathetic support: kindness</td>
<td>• Government must create and be led by the decisions of a Citizens’ Assembly on climate and ecological justice</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Information: tell the truth</td>
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Can the dual process model of grief apply to our engagement with environmental harm? (Thomas Doherty, 2018)

Table 1. The Tasks of Grief

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE TASK</th>
<th>POSSIBLE NEGATIVE RESPONSES</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Denial of the:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• facts of the loss;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• meaning of the loss;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• irreversibility of the loss.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Shutting off all emotion, idealizing what is lost, bargaining, numbing the pain through alcohol, drugs, or manic activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Not adapting, becoming helpless, bitter, angry, depressed, withdrawing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Refusing to love, turning away from life</td>
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Source: Adapted from Worden (1983).
There are many psychologies, all at different levels of analysis.

All stress different aspects of the human condition.

Explored together, they expand the currently dominant Western individualistic/rationalist approach: “I think, therefore I am” (Descartes)...

...towards a more inclusive global approach (Ubuntu): “we feel and act together, therefore we continue to be”.

Desmond Tutu: “We think of ourselves far too frequently as just individuals, separated from one another, whereas you are connected and what you do affects the whole World. When you do well, it spreads out; it is for the whole of humanity.”
Human beings are social creatures of habit

We don’t have much (if any) so-called “will-power”: and especially not in response to new information.

We are not readily rational: cognitive errors include avoiding or denying (be wilfully blind to) evidence associated with uncomfortable feelings (including awareness of our own death), or that puts us in an awkward light, requires us to do things differently, or is costly to our own advantage

Change is painful and constrained by our environment
So, what *does* enable change to happen?

- **Emotions**: it seems that emotions, rather than conscious thoughts, give rise to our actions: and our conscious thoughts and intentions follow.
- **Values**: societies that thrive, rather than collapse, in the face of environmental challenge have 2 important features: willingness to reconsider core values; long term planning towards a shared vision
- **Identity**: our sense of “who we are” seems the most powerful determinant of our values and actions. It often seems that we would rather die than give up our sense of me-ness. Can we expand the sense of who is “us”?
- **Power**: the more access we have to socially valued resources, the healthier we are, both physically and mentally, and the more resources we can draw on to make changes in our lives.
Personal actions for environmental protection

• have the conversations
• act as role models, BUT
• don’t succumb to shaming and accusations of hypocrisy
• generate stories of realistic hope
• behave as if good will prevail
• retain a sense of agency: small drops lead to waves of change
• don’t give up! Despite the forecasts — we are working together like never before
• Stop. Breathe. Think. Connect. Act
  (Caroline Hickman, psychotherapist)
• vote according to climate policies .....
Political actions for climate change

• Put climate on the ballot paper
• End fossil fuel subsidies
• Put a price on carbon: taxes with redistribution
• Scale back demand for fossil fuels
• Stop flaring
• Roll out large scale carbon capture and storage
• Halt investment in fossil fuels
• Establish market metrics on climate change

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez: “This will be the defining decade not only of our lives, but of life itself for human beings on this planet. I have no doubt that we can and will get it right, because human beings have this stubborn desire to survive.”

https://youtu.be/Whrwt5m9jHw
Raising children (and adults!) to thrive in a climate changed world

Australian Psychological Association

- Help self-regulation
- Teach justice and equity
- Encourage flexibility and adaptability
- Model co-operation
- Be a giver
- Use negotiation & conflict resolution skills
- Build awareness of “bigger than self” issues
- Talk about how climate change is going to be worse for people developing countries (where 85% of children live), and how unfair this is (since they didn’t cause climate change)
- Discuss ways they can help
What can we do as consumers (as well as citizens?)

• New, compelling narratives will be needed to inspire and mobilise mainstream participation in solutions, adoption of technologies and change in behaviours.

• Government must create a wider context which nurtures public engagement with action on climate change and ...enable consumers to take specific concrete actions that deliver large emissions reductions.

• These changes need not be expensive and can deliver large co-benefits, to health and beyond...

  • active transport and reduced flying;
  • de-carbonised domestic heating and increased insulation;
  • sustainable (more plant-based) diet and reduced food waste
Trans-theoretical model of individual change
(Prochaska, Diclemente, Norcross, 1970s)

- Consciousness-Raising
- Dramatic Relief
- Identity Re-evaluation
- Environmental Re-evaluation
- Social Liberation
- Identity-Liberation
- Helping Relationships
- Counter-Conditioning and new habit building
- Reinforcement Management
- Stimulus Control

TABLE 1. Motivational Interviewing Principles

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
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<td>Express empathy</td>
<td>Show an active interest in the individual’s perception of his or her challenges.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop discrepancy</td>
<td>Evoke the individual’s positive and negative aspects for or against change.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roll with resistance</td>
<td>Listen to the individual’s ambivalence without pushing him or her to discuss a behavior change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support self-efficacy</td>
<td>Build an individual’s confidence that he or she is capable of changing.</td>
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We need a new, human rights based, economic model - Doughnut economics: Kate Raworth

• The biggest sources of planetary boundary stress today are the excessive consumption levels of the world's wealthiest people, and the production patterns of the companies producing the goods and services they buy. Just 11% of the global population generate approximately 50% of global carbon emissions, and the richest 10% of people in the world hold 57% of global income.

• It's wealth, not poverty, that's putting this planet under pressure.
And a political psychology: Creating Capabilities
Martha Nussbaum (2011)

• “a significant challenge for the future is to work out a political psychology. It is obvious that people will not create a programme as demanding as this one, requiring a lot of sacrifice of personal self-interest, without emotions of compassion and solidarity... this task cannot be completed without an inquiry into the emotional dimensions of the political sphere”.
Towards a new model of social collective change

- **Connect**: expand our sense of identity (who is “us”), including the natural world

- **Prepare**: re-appraise our (western) societal core values, and imagine, through creative engagement, what a new order involves; get ready for change.

- **Reflect**: acknowledge and address emotions (anger, fear, love) and link these to the bigger picture, using reason in support of emotions (critical thinking)

- **Share**: participatory decision making; reduce power inequalities and promote social justice – promote policy structures that support equal distribution of resources, power and knowledge
Background

• Schwartz Center Rounds: a practical tool for health & care providers to improve the culture of their organisation and support staff.

• Schwartz Center for Compassionate Healthcare, Boston USA

• Provided by Point of Care Foundation in UK – over 100 agencies [http://www.pointofcarefoundation.org.uk/Schwartz-Rounds/](http://www.pointofcarefoundation.org.uk/Schwartz-Rounds/)

• Founded by Kenneth Schwartz’ family to strengthen the relationship between caregivers and patients.

• High levels of (dis)stress among NHS staff. Stress can lead to burnout & get in the way of compassion and empathy (Goodrich 2012)

• There is an important relationship between well-being of staff and well-being of patients (and financial performance too!) (Boorman 2009; West & Dawson 2012; Dixon-Woods et al 2014)

• Rigorous research demonstrates how Rounds provide a counter-cultural space:
  • Healthcare staff who regularly attend Schwartz Rounds to share the emotional, social, or ethical challenges they face in the workplace, experience less psychological distress, report improved teamwork and increased empathy and compassion for patients and colleagues” (Maben, 2018)

The smallest acts of kindness make the unbearable, bearable.

Kenneth Schwartz 1954-1995
The Round

• Free lunch (or coffee/tea): first come first served

• Start (and end) on time: one hour

• Introduction by facilitator and clinical lead

• Panel speak in turn for about 5 mins each

• Invite and encourage audience responses; comment on themes

• Panel members have last word

• Feedback sheets; give notice of next date and theme

• Steering group debrief
Here were videos of trainees stories of their experience of climate change and the environmental emergency at the Schwartz-like Round
Nick Sarra
“The earth is suffering from disseminated primatemaia - a plague of people,”

John Gray
Barca Nostra 18th April 2015
1100 deaths
Bringing into View.
Observations on Select Committees.
Engaging with difference and spearing the fish. The construction of the relational.

Night Fishing in Antibes, Picasso 1939.
The construction of identity in a quasi legalistic framework

William Yeames 1895
Power dynamics and the construction of consensus. Conflict management.

When did you last see your Father? Yeames 1878
Bodily communication and the ‘theatre’ of the committee

Gestapo informer recognized by a woman she had denounced, Transit Camp, Dessau, Germany
Cartier Bresson 1945
Taking the lid off.
Heath Robinson.
Planting your Queen’s Commonwealth Canopy trees

• Now that your saplings have arrived don’t let their roots dry out. Take them out of the packaging and pop them in a bucket with a little bit of water.

• Choose a location where your trees will have plenty of room to grow, so not too close to a house or building and at least two metres apart from each other. The soil should be free-draining and in at least partial sunshine. If you don’t have enough space for five trees share them with your friends and neighbours.

• Dig a hole slightly wider and deeper than the roots of your tree. Loosen the soil around the edges.

• Put your tree upright in the hole and check the depth. Look for the ‘collar’ – the mark on the tree from where it originally started to grow above the soil. This should be level with the top of the soil.

• Hold your tree upright and gently push back the soil to fill the space around the roots, carefully pressing it down around them to secure the tree in the ground.
All GTiCP programmes should address this issue ...why?

1. It’s the defining psycho- socio- political issue of our time.
2. The climate and environmental crisis is a health and mental health crisis.
3. We have an ethical responsibility to engage, contribute and educate the next generations to do more.
4. We have particular skills, knowledge and research capabilities to contribute, regarding processes of individual and social change.

....among many others...