Ata: Journal of Psychotherapy Aotearoa New Zealand

Volume 25, Number 1

"Te Ipu Taiao — The Climate Crucible", and other papers.

September 2021

Ata: Journal of Psychotherapy Aotearoa New Zealand

Ata

Ata is a small word with a magnitude of meaning that encompasses the spiritual and the relational, and reflects what we consider essential to a Māori indigenous therapy. Ata refers both to the actual as well as to the symbolic and thus allows us to explore meaning and possibility. Ata connects us to the natural world, entices us into relationship, caressing and encouraging human potentiality in the most subtle and gentle ways. Ata is used as a connector which invites a variety of meanings:

Ata — referring to early morning; ata pō, before dawn; ata tu, just after sunrise or dawn; as well as ata marama, moonlight.

Ata — referring to form, shape, semblance, shadow, reflection, and reflected image, as in whakaata, to look at one's reflected image; wai whakaata, a reflection to look into.

Ata — used to express accuracy, or to validate.

Āta — (noun) indicating care, thoughtfulness, as in ātawhai, showing kindness and concern; (verb) to consider; (adjective) purposeful, deliberate, transparent; (adverb) slowly, clearly.

Ata also appears as a component in other words such as ātāhua, beautiful, pleasant; and waiata.

We take inspiration from this word ata and embrace the way in which it supports us all to shape, inform and inspire the psychotherapy community in Aotearoa to reflect the essence of and challenges to our people and our landscape. Nga mihi nui ki a koutou katoa.

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Editorial: The climate crisis, clinical work and the work of mourning

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Korihi te manu	The bird sings
Tākiri mai i te ata	The morning has dawned
Ka ao, ka ao, ka awatea	The day has broken
Tihei Mauri Ora!	Behold, there is life!

E ngā mana, e ngā reo, e ngā manu tioriori, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa!

French analyst Jean Laplanche (1987) has suggested "All work is the work of mourning" (p. 298, cited in Davey, 2000, p. 59). Writers as varied in their understandings of therapy and psychoanalysis as Freud (1917/1950) and Jung (1961), Klein (1940) and Bion (1962), Winnicott (1974) and Edinger (1993), Kalsched (1996) and Steiner (1993), Benjamin (2004) and Stern (2009), all write of the centrality of the capacity for grief if inner transformation is to be a possibility. Whether their emphasis is on the intrapsychic, inter-psychic, interpersonal, transpersonal, or intersubjective, all these writers explore, from their very different perspectives, the importance of the "work of mourning". Indeed, if the traumatised psyches who inhabit our clinical rooms are to free their imprisoned souls, face the terror of their inner lives, and gradually transform their persecutory hatred into creative potency and protective aggression, their dissociated powerlessness into human vulnerability and need, then the capacity for mourning and grief is crucial. The adult must grieve the child's losses, the hurts, pains, and terrors of early life. And more than this they must grieve their loss of innocence, and the possibility that omnipotent control can keep pain at bay. In feeling the soft centre of our vulnerable humanity, facing the truth of the tender souls that we are, we have the possibility of living a life of creativity that can be born from the deep and profound acceptance of this humanity.

O'Connor, J., & Woodard, W. (2021). Editorial. *Ata: Journal of Psychotherapy Aotearoa New Zealand, 25*(1), 7–9. https://doi.org/10.9791/ajpanz.2021.01

We suggest this capacity for grief is not only central to the individual patient in our clinical rooms. Perhaps more urgently than ever, the centrality of this capacity challenges the whole of humanity, as the climate crisis and its life-threatening sequelae looms ever more frighteningly before us. Indeed, the current COVID-19 pandemic and its terrifying consequences invite us all to face the implications of an approach to life in which for so long we as human beings have assumed our superior dominion over the Earth and the more than human world. The temptations of consumerism, technology, individualism, and material wealth have seduced humanity to believe the fiction of our superiority. COVID-19 and its relationship to the climate crisis that we all face have, like Icarus, brought us shudderingly back to Papatūānuku, and with this crashing fall we face our tremendous collective fear and grief, as we face the loss of the fantasy of a planet under our control. We meet instead the truth of our humanity: that the Earth is not "our" planet, to be lived upon, dominated, and owned, but rather that we are in and of the Earth, that the human and the more than human world are interdependent and inseparable, and that our lives are changing and must change, if we are to live a life that respects this intertwined interdependence. To do so we must grieve our losses, and face the future together, connected to the tenderness of our humanity, and of the Earth's and our own vulnerability.

We suggest that the papers offered in this issue of Ata provide a potent and essential invitation to experience our grief, to stay close to the terror, to stay close to each other and our relationship with the world. Three of the papers in this issue arose directly out of the New Zealand Association of Psychotherapists' (NZAP) 2021 online conference, "Te Ipu Taiao — The Climate Crucible". These three papers directly explore the enormous challenges of the climate crisis, and their implications for psychotherapists and psychotherapeutic work.

Robert Romanyshyn poignantly invites us all to regather our capacity for collective mourning in relation to the pain that we and the Earth are currently experiencing. Jem Bendell potently challenges us to face the truth of the seriousness of the climate crisis before us. And Jasmine Kieft provides us with considerable evidence for the urgent necessity of such emotional honesty, with her review of literature exploring the value of speaking transparently about the crisis the Earth faces.

In addition, three further papers are included in this issue, which do not arise out of the above conference, but continue, from different perspectives, to consider the emotional challenges of being able to think and feel together within and outside of the clinical room, often under significant emotional pressure. Elizabeth Day and Kerry Thomas-Anttila write about their research exploring student psychotherapists' experience of needing to work clinically online as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the many challenges and opportunities such clinical work presents. Emma Green writes poetically about her personal journey in relation to indigenous matāuranga Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand, as a person, and as a psychotherapist. And Carol Worthington writes with grace and clarity about living and dying, as she encounters these profoundly human experiences in a recent visit to hospital.

Each paper, despite considerable differences in approach and topic, invites the reader to explore how emotional honesty, no matter how painful, might allow in each of us greater creativity, as we face the losses, terrors and potentials that lie ahead and before us, clinically, and in our lives. We hope the combination of articles in this issue proves enriching for

readers, particularly during these times of considerable disturbance and ongoing grief.

We thank Hineira Woodard for her generous and expert work providing te reo Māori interpretations of the abstracts; tēnā koe, Hineira. Our deep thanks to our creative, skilful, and eagle-eyed designer, Katy Yiakmis; tēnā koe, Katy. Thank you to Nikky Winchester for her dedicated and skilful work as assistant editor: tēnā koe Nikky. We thank Nigel Brown for the artwork which appears on the cover of this issue. Nigel's stunning work was originally designed as the logo for "Te Ipu Taiao — The Climate Crucible", the 2021 NZAP Conference. It evocatively captures the theme of the conference and much of the writing in this issue; tēnā koe, Nigel. We also thank Glenn Frei of Milford Galleries, Queenstown, for supplying the image of Nigel's artwork; tēnā koe Glenn. Finally, we thank you, the reader (NZAP member or subscriber), for your continuing support of the journal; we hope you will find this issue an evocative, provocative, enjoyable, and engaging read, and we look forward to editing the next issue.

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.

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Psychotherapy for end times

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France

Abstract
The broken connections between us and nature have left us feeling homeless in a world not only imperiled by multiple ecological crises and their political, economic, medical and social consequences, but also orphaned by the increasing turn to the allures of the digital world with its loss of place and embodied presence. In this context, this essay proposes that psychotherapy can be a place for homecoming in a fractured world. Exploring the key role of the grieving process in homecoming, I draw on my work in Jungian psychology, phenomenology, poetry and storytelling to show that our engaged, embodied presence with nature can re-mind us of the miracles in the mundane, the extraordinary in the ordinary, and can open our hearts to the wonder, mystery, beauty and sacred dimensions of human life.

Whakarāpopotonga
Kua waiho rongo kāinga-korehia mai tātau e ngā here motumotu i waenga i a tātau me tētahi ao kāre nei e whakaraeraehia e te tini taupuhi taiao mōrearea me ngā hua o ā rātau mahi tōrangapū, tikanga ōhanga, hauora, hāpori hoki, engari kua whakapanihia anō hoki e te rahi haeretanga o te mau ki ngā kukumetanga o te ao matihiko koia nei te ngarohanga o tōna wāhi tū me tōna ngarohanga aroaro-ā-tangata. I roto i tēnei horopaki, e kī ana tēnei tuhinga ko te whakaora hinengaro hei wāhi hoki kāinga mai i roto i tētahi ao whawhati. Tūhuruhia ana te kaupapa matua o te hātepe mōteatea rō hokinga kāinga, ka huri au ki āku mahi hinengaro Hungaiana,mātauranga pūtaio whakaharahara, toikupu, me te kōrero paki hei whakaatu ko ō tātau tūnga, aroaro-ā-tangata pānga taiao, mā ēnei tātau e whakamaumahara ake i ngā marutuna i rō mahinga ia rā, te marutuna o te waimemeha, ā, e whakatuwhera ō tātau ngākau ki ngā mea whakaharahara, pirikoko, ātaahua, me te tapu o te koiora tangata.

Key words: end times; grief; ecological crises; unconscious dynamics; homecoming; depth; surface; embodiment.

Introduction
We live today not only in the shadow of the bomb, but also in the deepening darkness of environmental collapse as the polar icecaps continue to melt, the western arm of the Gulf

Romanyshyn, R.D. (2021). Psychotherapy for end times. *Ata: Journal of Psychotherapy Aotearoa New Zealand, 25*(1), 11–17, https://doi.org/10.9791/ajpanz.2021.02

Stream in the North Atlantic Ocean is weakening, the seas and oceans become increasingly polluted, the buildup of carbon-based greenhouse gases reaches ever higher levels, and raging fires, floods and other weather catastrophes are increasingly destructive, while animal and human habitats are destroyed and the number of homeless refugees swells almost beyond belief. All the bodies of knowledge we create, like the bodies of those who create them, cast a shadow.

Death is now the invisible presence haunting our therapy room, re-minding us that the world as we have known it is ending and not knowing what kind of world might be beginning.

How do we do psychotherapy in such times when the impending sense of an ending darkens our every word, gesture and mood with fears, anxieties, strategies of denial and fantasies of sheltering in old, familiar patterns?

Surface and Depth

A psychotherapy for end times makes a place for the spirit of the depths that lingers and even haunts the spirit of the times. This distinction, which is basic to Jung's psychology, deepens our understanding of unconscious dynamics. It also recognizes that these dynamics are not only manifestations of psychopathology, but also revelations of the deeper wisdom of the psyche.

Four Levels of Unconscious Dynamics

Throughout the twentieth century Freud and Jung plumbed the various levels of unconscious dynamics. Beneath the level of personal and familial unconscious dynamics of Freudian psychology, phenomenology explored the cultural-historical levels where gender, race, cultural history and historical events play their part in shaping one's character and one's suffering. In the same period, Jung was uncovering the Collective Archetypal level, where mythic patterns and archetypal themes cradle the individual's life and suffering within the larger stories of humanity. In addition, Jung also described a Psychoid level of unconscious dynamics, where psyche and nature are one, pivoting round each other so that what is, from one angle, a psychological experience, is from another a material event. Jung's work with Wolfgang Pauli was the impetus for this insight, and synchronicity was for Jung a key signature of this kind of occurrence (Jung, 1946/1954).

Such moments do seem extraordinary, and von Franz (1980) has noted that in earlier times they would have been understood as miracles.

But are not such moments even today miracles, moments that do feel miraculous, and is it our incapacity to experience miracles today that marks the measure of our misery? Moreover, might the recognition of the psychoid level of unconscious dynamics be timely when collectively we are witnessing the destructive consequences and indeed even the insanity of continuing to uncouple human suffering from the suffering of nature and its creatures?

If one considers that depth psychology is not only a system of psychotherapy, but also, and perhaps more significantly, a new form of education that keeps soul in mind (Jung, 1946/1954), then each level of unconscious dynamics can be understood as a teaching, a

lesson about soul making, about living, loving and working with soul in mind. More specifically, this new form of education can be framed as learning how to love and bringing that lesson into one's life and work.

This education into soul making is the complement of a higher education, which my colleague Mary Smail has aptly called lower education. As such, it is not a step-by-step linear process toward progress. Rather, it is a spiraling process in which the image of steps gives way to the image of layers in which each layer contains or preserves what precedes it and transforms it. The process of soul making, therefore, is not about getting ahead. On the contrary, it is an alchemical process of continuous dissolution and coagulation, of letting go or sacrificing old ways of knowing and being and re-forming them as one slowly learns how to see in the light of soul, a darker light than that of the Solar, seemingly enlightened, mind.

If, for the sake of this presentation, we arrange these layers of unconscious dynamics more or less according to the times of their historical appearance, then each layer can be seen as both the many faces of love as they appear and are transformed.

At the personal layer the relationship between oneself and another is the alchemical vessel where all the complexities, power disguises and the inevitable sense of loss and grief that shadow love appear (Goodchild, 2001). Mary Shelley's story of Frankenstein can be read as a psychological primer on love and its shadows. In her story Victor Frankenstein is an emblem of the destructive consequences of love disguised as power while the Monster he creates is a seed of hope for the redemptive possibilities of love (Romanyshyn, 2019).

At the cultural-historical layer the personal layer of love's complexities and shadows is enfolded within the spirit of the times where gender, racial, economic and other roles can act as forces of oppression. But while these roles can serve as forces of oppression, they can also be occasions for the individuation process (Jung, 1934/1954). Dante's *Divine Comedy* can be read as a late medieval poetic description of individuation, and Mary Oliver's evocative poem, *The Journey* (1986), is a contemporary example.

At the Collective-Archetypal level the lesson of learning how to love rises from the spirit of the depths within which one's story is framed within the larger stories of humanity, where mythic patterns and archetypal themes of the ancestors cradle the individual's life and suffering, a moment which I have often noticed can have a salutary and even therapeutic effect. In these depths love is, as Rilke (1986) notes, the most difficult work of all apart from which everything else we do is but a preparation.

Beyond the human condition, learning how to love at the Psychoid level is learning how to be a good steward to all creation, an agent in service to its appeals.

Psychotherapy as Homecoming

As a lesson in learning how to love in the face of loss, a psychotherapy for end times becomes a homecoming, a re-turning to re-member the many ways the bonds between the sensual flesh of the embodied mind and the sensuous epiphanies of the natural world have been severed. This broken bond has been the central theme of my work over the years regarding the origins, development and crises of our scientific-technological world view (Romanyshyn, 1989). What I discovered in this work was an underlying mood of sorrow, a shared symptom of soul, a fever as it were of the *Anima Mundi*, awakening us to how learning how to love in

the face of loss is also learning how to grieve, a hard truth that undoes all the strategies of denial that would dismiss the necessity to mourn what has been lost, disregarded, forgotten or otherwise exiled to the margins of the disembodied ego mind. In the context of this broken bond, I began to witness in myself and my patients how psychotherapy as homecoming is a mourning process, which feels so necessary now when "Twentieth century Oedipal man has forgotten his mythical forebears and is haunted by what he has failed to mourn" (Mogenson, 2004, note 31).

Psychotherapy as homecoming uncovers the healing power of the grieving process. So crucial in our time of need when the climate of nature and that of soul are heralding end times.

Patterns of the Grieving Process

In *The Soul in Grief: Love, Death and Transformation* (1999) I described a personal account of the healing power of the grieving process. Mired in the depths of loss after the unexpected death of my first wife in 1992, something happened which, in recollection, felt like a miracle. Apart from any plan or even conscious intention I had had, it took place on a Sunday while I was sitting on a bench that looked out on a wide expanse of a green pasture. A late afternoon sun covered the field, which was about a hundred yards away and had a gentle downward slope. A soft breeze stirred the grass. As I sat there in the limbo space of reverie, neither awake nor asleep, suddenly I was wrenched back into the moment by the greenness of the grass rolling toward me, as if the green of the grass had been unloosed by that gentle breeze to become pure colour. Time seemed to fade away as the green colour unbound by form was gathering itself into a series of waves increasing in strength and power as they washed over me. When they began to subside, I heard a sound of winter ice cracking around my frozen heart.

While it would take a long time for the winter of grief to complete itself as the pattern of love, loss, descent and transformation continued, this singular moment was a beginning, a baptism as it were, a blessing. Later, as I explored the grieving process, I found that this pattern lives within the depths of the Collective and Psychoid layers of the conscious mind. Attending to the themes and images in the stories of Orpheus and Eurydice and Psyche and Eros among others, my grieving process was enfolded within those larger stories.

The grieving process not only changed me, it also deepened my practice of psychotherapy.

Every patient who crosses the threshold into the therapy room is a story that resonates at all four layers of the unconscious mind. Embodied and enacted in the daily round, a patient's tale is also embedded within cultural-historical and collective-archetypal images and stories that weave their story into the larger narratives of humanity. Moreover, and, I would emphasize of first importance, the story to be attended today is the one in which our sufferings are part of the sufferings of the natural world re-minding us that as part of nature and not apart from it, we are the agents, as it were, in service to its unfolding. Indeed, dare we say that we are the stuff on which nature's story is made on? Dare we not say that and continue to fall into the insanity of splitting ourselves off from creation?

The art of psychotherapy for end times is to discern at which layer of loss the other who comes to us for help, for comfort, for understanding, needs us to bear witness to their

suffering. That is a difficult art with its own ethical code of soul that applies to both patient and therapist. It would be unethical to ask of the other more than they could bear. It would also be unethical for a therapist to take a patient to layers that he or she has not experienced.

Departure and Return

In the last stanza of the eighth elegy of the *Duino Elegies*, Rilke (1939) presents the image of a man who turns and stops and lingers as he stands on a hill looking at the valley of his home. In this image there is a mood of lament that marks the tone of an elegy, and in this melancholic mood the poet wonders about who has turned us in this way so that, he adds, we live our lives as if we are always on the verge of departure.

Once, at some distant point in the past, we did take our leave from the natural world, a world, however, which even as we have left it has not left us, lingering and even haunting soul with images and myths of the garden, of paradise, of home and homecoming.

Technology has been the means of extending our departure from the world of nature to Earth itself, and yet it has been as well the opportunity to consider it as a homecoming. That possibility occurred on 24 December 1968 when the astronaut Bill Anders snapped a photograph of Earth rising above the moon's surface into the black night of space. For the first time in human history, we had an image of our myths of Eden as we looked at the lonely beauty of Earth as our home. Recalling Rilke's poetic image above, we could add to it these questions:

- Is Earth as seen from space an image of our farewell?
- Is Earth as seen from space an image of our homecoming?
- Or is it the painful realization homecoming requires departure?

Before I end my presentation on psychotherapy for end times with an example of each moment, I would add that those three questions mark the threshold of the therapy room where every new beginning is also an ending.

Taking leave

It was a dark winter day when I made a visit to the local zoo. On this occasion I was going to see the gorillas. Standing in front of the cage of a large, silver-back male, I keenly felt the presence of the bars between us. The gorilla was sitting in the front corner of his cage, and I could see him only in profile. On occasion, however (as gorillas will do with visitors), he would turn his head for a quick glance in my direction. His deeply set, dark, black eyes seemed like pools of time, and in those few brief moments of exchange I felt dizzy, as if I could swim through his eyes into another world. But the gorilla would just as quickly look away, and the spell would be broken.

The cage was so small, especially for so large an animal, and I wondered how he could bear it. His lethargy was inescapable and I thought of the many hours of boredom he must daily endure, wondering, too, if I was reading my own sense of melancholy through him. But I had also been with animals in the wild, and the difference in behaviour, in gesture, and in

that space between us was pronounced. Caught up in these reveries I had absentmindedly withdrawn an orange from my pocket and was tossing it in the air. The gorilla turned and began to watch me. Without thinking, I tossed the orange through the bars, momentarily oblivious to the prohibition against feeding the animals. The toss of the orange through the bars covered a distance of only a few feet in measured space and took perhaps only a second in clock time. But the gesture and what unexpectedly followed went beyond the normal boundaries of space and time. One would have expected the gorilla to take the orange and retreat to the far corner of the cage to eat it. But this gorilla did not do that. Instead, he tossed the orange through the bars back to me, I caught it, and in my astonishment, I tossed it to him again. We continued like this for perhaps three exchanges, until this ribbon between us, this gesture of play, was broken by the sound of a voice from the far end of the corridor. "Don't feed the animals!" When I turned toward the voice, the gorilla turned away. He retreated to the far end of the cage. He kept the orange.

I left the zoo and walked out into the city. The cold, dark, winter afternoon did little to cheer my sadness. Having left the gorilla *inside*, I realised the other meaning of my sorrow: I had left the gorilla inside me, inside the cage we have made to keep the wilds of nature apart from us. I was different, changed by that encounter, and even more lonely in the midst of the crowded city. The gorilla had suspended his appetite for a moment. For the sake of an encounter, he had with his gesture bridged an immense gap between our worlds. In that gesture of tossing the orange back to me, he had reached out his hand across an emptiness so vast as to be beyond measure. Together we had built a tremulous bridge of gestures. And, for a brief time, we stood on opposite sides of that bridge, connected in a way that seemed to acknowledge in each other some lost kinship.

On that cold winter day the loneliness of the caged gorilla mirrored my grief at being so far away from home.

Coming Home

In 2009 I made a short DVD film of a journey I took to the Antarctic, *Inner Journeys in the Outer World*. Amidst the splendid beauty of those crystal cathedrals of ice, in that place so far from home I felt as if I was on the way home. The DVD can be viewed on the home page of my website: Robert Romanyshyn.com.

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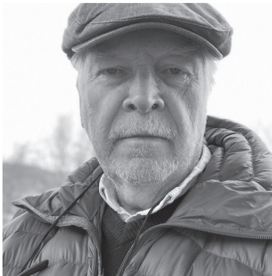

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On knowing who you are and who you are from: Some reflections on culture, biculturalism and identity

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Abstract

Engaging with poetic inquiry as a way of being and knowing, the author uses autoethnography and poetry to explore identity and to lay open the ideas of self in relation to culture and biculturalism. In this paper the author explores her immediate Western cultural contextual understandings in relation to the ancestral, historical context that has shaped her, and how these might be revealed in the bicultural context of Aotearoa-New Zealand. The invitation to deepen these understandings begins with her encounters with te Ao Māori. The paper and the poems unfold how mātauranga Māori might foster an expanded horizon such that the author can no longer consider her Pākehā (non-indigenous) 'self' an isolated 'I', but rather as deeply embedded in the world. The kōrero tracks her shift to consider herself in relationship to her ancestors (whakapapa) and her place(s) in the world (tūrangawaewae) where she is most connected to those ancestors and the earth. Supporting and woven throughout the text is the spine of a poem. Written over the course of a decade the poem, *Pepeha*, continues to grow and evolve as the writer's understandings change and develop.

Whakarāpopotonga

Ko te whakauru ki roto pakirehua toikupu hei ara mataora me te māhukihuki ka whakamahia e te kaituhi te rangahautanga kiritaumātauranga momo tangata me te toikupu hei tūhura tuakiri me te whakatuwhera i ngā whakaaro kiritau pā atu ki te ahurea me te kākano rua. I roto i tēnei pepa ka tūhurahia e te kaituhi ōna mātauranga horopaki ahurea Uru whakapapa atu ki ngā horopaki tīpuna, hītori tārai i a ia ā, me pēhea ēnei e kitea ai i roto i te horopaki kākano rua o Aotearoa-Niu Tīreni. Ko te tono whakahōhonu ake i ēnei whakamāramatanga, i tīmata i ōna tūtakitanga ki te Ao Māori. Ka whakaaturia e te tuhinga me ngā toikupu tērā pea mā te mātauranga Māori e whāngai he tirohanga whānui ake arā ia kua kore e taea e te kaituhi te whakaaro ake mō tōna taha Pākehātanga (tauiwi) 'kiritau' he mohoao 'au', engari kē e titi hōhonu ana ki roto i te ao. E whai ana te kōrero i tōna nekehanga ki te āta whakaaro

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i a ia me tōna whakapapa me t/ōna tūnga i roto i te ao i te wāhi e mau kaha ana te here ki aua tīpuna me te papa. E tautoko ana, e raranga haere ana i roto i te tuhinga te tuara o tētahi toikupu. Te toikupu, Pepeha, i tuhia nei i roto ngā tau tekau, e tipu haere tonu ana, e huria haere tonu inā neke haere, whanake haere ngā tirohanga ō te kaituhi.

Key words: poetic inquiry; autoethnography; biculturalism; whakapapa; tūrangawaewae; pepeha.

Author note

Occasionally reo Māori words, along with Scottish Gàidhlig words, populate the text. This is intended, not only as a gesture towards the decolonisation of the academe space, but also as the sowing of seeds that, like wildflowers, might go on to spring up in unexpected places. For the reader who appreciates an encounter with difference and would like to understand the non-English words there are links to two online dictionaries (one reo Māori; one Scottish Gàidhlig) at the conclusion of the text. For the reader who finds themselves irritated by the inclusion of non-English words (and the not-knowing/not-understanding that ensues), or indeed having to rely on an online dictionary, or finds such non-conventions disruptive or disturbing — there is an invitation to notice the feelings evoked when encountering a word that feels strange to the ear and in the mouth.

> Cuimhnich air na daoine às an tàinig u
> Remember the people from whom you came
> — Gàidhlig proverb

> Titiro whakamuri, kōkiri whakamua
> Look to the past to see the future
> — Māori whakataukī

Introduction

This paper has grown around the bones of a poem and some reflexive, autobiographical, writings, that the author began in 2012 in response to a noho marae. The poem(s) and writing as source of, and inspiration for, reflection have continued growing and developing over the ensuing years allowing for a deepening immersion in the subject matter. Poetic inquiry is an emergent, arts-based research methodology (Vincent, 2018) where the use of poetry is woven into the research process itself as well as forming part of the representation (of data) and method (Faulkner, 2019). Poetry and poetic inquiry provide a powerful way to present deep, nuanced understandings, allowing space for play and ambiguity, revealing fresh and surprising ways of thinking about phenomena. In their research poetry workshops Fitzpatrick and Fitzpatrick (2021) invite participants to "surrender to the sensuous, embodied provocation, and to generate words and phrases…the poetic research material" (p. 1). Prendergast (2015) describes the notion of surrender. This is a total involvement for the researcher, a consuming preoccupation, synonymous with the "experience of being" (p.

5). In this way the researcher caught up with poetic inquiry aims to give over fully, or as fully as possible, in order to “make sense of the material with *all* of [their] senses” (Fitzpatrick & Fitzpatrick, 2021, emphasis in original). Butler-Kisber (2021) suggested poetry “opens up our hearts and ears to different ways of seeing and knowing” (p. 21).

Poet Elizabeth Alexander suggests we need language to reach across the void in order to reach another human being and I am reminded of the last line of Ars Poetica #100: I Believe (Alexander, 2005), “Poetry (here I hear myself loudest)/is the human voice,/and are we not of interest to each other?” In this way the poetry and reflections offered here are something of my attempts to reach across the void, to visibilize or begin a bridge for that gap represented in the indigenous-settler or indigene-coloniser hyphen (Jones & Jenkins, (2008). The hyphen connects, becomes a symbolic bridge (Stewart, 2018) but it also interrupts, intrudes, and inserts itself. For Stewart (2016) this is the intercultural hyphen, Aotearoa-New Zealand; indigenous-settler; Māori-Pākehā. Here the hyphen brings our attention to something that connects two groups, two worldviews, and highlights the potential for engagement, or disengagement, across the bridge, from either side (Stewart, 2018).

Dove (1994) has described poetry as “the art of making the interior life of one individual available to others” (p. 25), which is where, for me, poetic inquiry might extend toward the autobiographical. Autoethnography is a form of qualitative research combining auto-biographical and ethnographic writing. In autoethnographic research the author uses self-reflexivity to examine and explore personal experience, with a view to understanding something of the culture (Ellis et al, 2010). Autoethnographic writing, like poetic inquiry, challenges conventional research methods such that research might become “a political, socially-just and socially-conscious act” (Ellis et al, 2010, n.p).

Mihi

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa

A familiar greeting to many who reside in Aotearoa-New Zealand in te reo Māori, the language of tangata whenua. The thrice uttered welcome greeting acknowledges those gathered, but also those who came before, and those yet to come into being. I spoke these words, in borrowed tongue, to a gathering of the International Symposium on Poetic Inquiry in Halifax, Nova Scotia at the end of 2019. I was there to speak about my reflections on biculturalism from my time living, working and being in Aotearoa-New Zealand.

I also spoke a greeting in Gàidhlig, the largely lost language of my ancestors.

Madainn mhath, ceud mile failte

I stood to give this talk upon the traditional, ancestral and unceded lands of the Mi’kmaq First Nations people. In acknowledgement of this I also offered the mi’kmawi’simk words;

Kwe’, wela’lioq

In the Canadian context land acknowledgements are part of the continuing work of re-conciliation by non-Indigenous Canadians (Mills, 2019). The reference to *traditional* recognises the traditional use and occupation of the land by First Nations. *Ancestral* acknowledges the handing down of land from generation to generation, whilst *unceded* recognises land not turned over to the Crown by treaty or settlement. Land acknowledgements serve to mark indigenous peoples' relationship to land. In their use they become a "stepping stone to honouring broken Treaty relationships" (Mills, 2019, n.p.). The acknowledging of land and people was familiar to me because of my time in Aotearoa-New Zealand, because of my contact with tangata whenua. I knew before I set foot in Nova Scotia that it was important to know whose land I was on, and to offer a greeting in their own language. Attending to a greeting that acknowledges the people(s) of the land disrupts the notion of *terra nullius*, and erasure of indigenous presence (Wiremu Woodard, personal communication, November 2020). In an academic setting, language other than English disrupts assumptions about understanding, and who *should* be able to, or indeed *can* understand, unsettling the dominant discourse.

An acknowledgement of the traditional, ancestral lands where I live and write from in Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland) for example, highlights the complexity of indigenous relationships to land. The area of land I currently live upon is tūrangawaewae for Ngāti Whātua o Ōrākei, Ngāti te Ata, Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki, Marutūāhu, Te Kawarau ā Maki, and Te Taoū (Wāitangi Tribunal, 2007). I acknowledge that there may be other claims to the land I live upon, obscured or suppressed over time.

Whenua and Wharenui

Where, and who, I 'come from', that is, where I was born, a small town in the Peak District in the north of England, and who my ancestors are, meant very little to me before I found myself at the other side of the world. I was not born here in Tāmaki Makaurau, Aotearoa, in Auckland, New Zealand, but I have made a home here for the last 20 years. Before I came to Aotearoa, I did not understand much at all about where I came from and the ways in which it related to my identity, the ways in which it had shaped me. I came to Aotearoa at the age of 24. If I was to go back in time and ask my 24-year-old self about where she 'came from' she would likely tell you simply that she was born in Cheshire (because that was the location of the closest hospital to her tiny town in Derbyshire), and that she had lived in various places in England. She might have been able to articulate a special fondness for Scotland, where her grandparents and great-grandparents were from, where her aunt, uncle and cousin's family still live, and where she had spent many significant summers in childhood. This is the peculiar thing about memory, it shifts and reshapes itself. Are those memories more important now that she understands and sees her past differently? Schutz (1972) has called this the reflective glance, by which we imbue meaning on that which has been experienced.

This 24-year-old me moved to Aotearoa in 2001. Newly married, we welcomed our first child in September of that first year in a new country. This place is my husband's land, his whenua, although neither of us, back then, understood that in any meaningful way other than his passport and the visa in mine. Together with my new daughter I visited a playgroup. The woman running the group told me the centre's philosophy was based on the principles of biculturalism. I didn't understand what she meant and said that surely we lived in a multi-

cultural society. She insisted on biculturalism. I insisted on multiculturalism. Because I did not understand, and she did not seem to be able to help me understand, we left it at that. I did not go back. I didn't understand what biculturalism, or a commitment to biculturalism, meant. I knew somehow her mention of it made me feel ignorant, and ashamed. There were things I did not understand about this new place. Perhaps I clung to my idea of multiculturalism as a way to navigate this discomfort. Making the playgroup woman wrong allowed me to manage these uncomfortable feelings. I could stay 'right' and not have to change. As Stewart (2018) suggests, biculturalism is unsettling and uncomfortable precisely because it challenges dominant understandings and ways of being.

Years later, as part of a work training, I attended a two-day workshop on the Treaty of Wāitangi. I cried in that workshop. I cried for all the people murdered in the name of progress and civilisation. I cried for all the native forests cleared for cattle, I cried for the wars fought, for the land stolen, for the dishonesty and manipulation used to take the land, and for the lies told and enshrined into laws that make it legal. For the promises made and broken. For a people dispossessed and disenfranchised and still feeling the aftereffects. For the scars of war and alienation, slow to heal. For the children punished at school for speaking te reo, for prayers that said our God, not yours. How could I have lived here for six years and not know? I will answer my own rhetorical question — because I had, and still have, the luxury, and privilege, of being white-skinned/not-knowing. I had, and still have, the option of being bicultural.

I want to acknowledge here the literature on white women's tears (see for example, Hamad, 2019; Liebow & Glazer, 2019; Phipps, 2021; and in the 'grey' literature see Eddo-Lodge, 2018; Hamad, 2018; Stewart Bouley, 2018). I do not offer an account of my tears as a weapon, to attempt to silence anyone through a display of my (white) fragility, nor to absolve myself of the work and commitment required to work at the hyphen (Jones & Jenkins, 2008). Reed (2016) invites Pākehā to "step up and shrug off the invisible cloak of whiteness" (p. 5), stating that any change to the status quo is going to require tauiwi (non-Māori) to undertake this work. I would argue that this work involves grieving, not as a way to avoid responsibility or deflect accountability, but simply as a place to begin the deep learning necessary for many Pākehā and tauiwi. This deep learning, for me, necessitated an encounter with parts inside that had long been buried.

In that workshop I connected with a new feeling inside of me, a hatred of the Crown, and a sense of shame about where, and whom, I was from. I left the workshop thinking what a lie the Treaty was. It promised so much, Participation, Partnership and Protection[2], and yet it seemed to me to have delivered so little for Māori. The Treaty seemed to be a lie founded on broken promises, and I could not understand why anyone would want to hold it up and celebrate it as a testament to fairness, justice or egalitarianism. I was so angry. And yet I did nothing. Very little in my outer life changed. Is this not the very definition of white privilege? (Flagg, 1993; Gray, 2012; McIntosh, 1989; Wildman, 2005). Flagg (2005) calls this the

1 More recent understandings attend to the differences between The Treaty of Wāitangi (the English version of the agreement between tangata whenua and the Crown), and Te Tiriti o Wāitangi (the version of that agreement written in te reo Māori). Under *Contra Proferentem* the interpretation of any ambiguity in a contractual document goes *against* the party who worded the contract. This means that the version in te reo Māori is the document that must be attended to and honoured by the Crown and its agents. The principles of Te Tiriti are Kawanatanga; Tino Rangatiratanga; Oritetanga; and Wairuatanga. (For a fuller discussion see, for example, Berghan et al, 2017; Came & Tudor, 2016.)

transparency phenomenon, in that whiteness does not have to see itself — to be white is not to think about race. Stewart (2018) writes that, unlike the dominant group who can ignore ethnicity, Māori have no choice but to be bicultural.

On Playgroup and a Treaty

they tell her, our philosophy is bicultural
she says, but we're multicultural
they insist, *bicultural* and
the word is funny in her mouth

she doesn't know that this land will open her up
she asks a friend who says, *read the treaty*
and she tries, but it's words … not people
she misplaces the playgroup
opportunity for understanding lost
workshop on the treaty
everyone there seems cross, or bored
we did this stuff at school, they say
but she didn't, because her school is 12,000 miles away
and her history was written and taught by white men
and that was another life
another land …

she learns how much land is taken
how many trees felled
for settler farms, for houses, for cattle
she meets the many thousands dead
by disease, by war
blood soaking into the same earth
that cradles the whenua of her babies
and she learns
how the word *bicultural* makes it better

she also learns 1) how to hate her own kind
2) how to be ashamed
3) angry tears don't stop nor do they make a difference
4) she is a coloniser
5) doing *bicultural* fixes nothing
6) a treaty doesn't put any of it right
7) she is Pākehā
8) she belongs nowhere because she can't go back now
even if she wanted to
9) that hate, disavowal and shame are not medicine

Home is here now
she's attached,
and she's living here on generosity,
and patience.
We wait,
for her to understand
how the blood of this land will open her up

Another six years pass, I am ashamed to say, because I have the luxury and the privilege of being white-skinned. In 2012 I began another training, my training to become a psychotherapist. In that first year our class had a noho marae at Te Puea, named for the wahine Māori leader, Te Puea Herangi. Te Puea was known for taking in orphans and the lost which will strike me, years later, as exactly what I was then, lost and in some ways orphaned. Despite my initial difficulties with notions I found antiquated and patriarchal, such as walking onto the marae behind the men, or being asked to wear a skirt, it felt so good to sleep under the protection of that wharenui, under Te Puea's watchful eye. When the kaumātua who led our group spoke to us about whenua, the land, he explained the word also meant placenta, that the wharenui is like the womb, that the men stand before the women to protect them because women carry the future generations. I fell in love with the metaphor of land and placenta, wharenui and womb, which is of course more than a metaphor at the same time. Whenua nourishes, it enriches and grows life, we need it for our survival, and without it we die. Without Papatūānuku (earth mother), without women, without whenua, life cannot go on. Tangata whenua is not instead, tangata o te whenua. People land, land people, the two are inextricably interwoven. Ko au te whenua, ko te whenua ko au. An understanding that my ancestors have forgotten.

On Finding One Does Not Belong

We broke into small groups that day on the marae and were given instructions as to how to write our own pepeha, a way of introducing ourselves that acknowledges our ancestors and where, and who, we come from.

Whakapapa, the kaumātua explained, means to place in layers, it is our foundation, our heritage, to know where and who we are from. Tūrangawaewae can be literally translated as tūranga, standing place, and waewae, feet. The word indicates a place to stand but more than this tūrangawaewae as a concept connects us to our whakapapa, our foundation or home, and it signifies a place where we feel empowered, connected to Papatūānuku. These two concepts, whakapapa and tūrangawaewae, are still working on and in me today. Almost a decade later I feel I can say I am beginning to understand their significance. However, the impact of these terms, and their ability to unsettle me and expose my lack of belonging, was instantaneous. On the paper before me that day I wrote down the following words;

Maunga, mountain,
Moana, sea or awa, river,
the Waka that brought you to this land,

Iwi, tribe
Hapū, family group
Marae — spiritual or communal meeting-place.

I struggled to identify myself in this new way, to think of my place in the world and where I had come from as intrinsic to my being. At that point I had lived in New Zealand for most of my adult life, yet I did not feel I could claim a mountain here, and yet, nor could I have told you the names of the places in England and Scotland that I was connected to. I felt ashamed again, at my ignorance, at how disconnected I was from 'my people', my history. Where was my land? Where was my tūrangawaewae? How could I understand and connect to my whakapapa? I did not even know the maiden name of one of my grandmothers.

When the time came to deliver our pepeha to the group I had cobbled together some semblance of myself. This is what I had written;

Ko Maungarei tōku maunga
ko Waitematā tōku moana
ko Stafford, ko Stopford tōku hapū
ko Te Puea tōku marae
ko Emma taku ingoa

Maungarei is the mountain I live near, walking there regularly. Waitematā is the body of water I recognized as being closest to me. The names Stafford and Stopford are the family names of my maternal and paternal grandfathers respectively. I had never had a marae before. As well as signifying a meeting place or place of spiritual meeting, marae as a verb means to be generous and hospitable. The tangata whenua of Te Puea marae had been generous and hospitable, opening up this precious place to us, offering us this wānanga. At the beginning of our time at Te Puea we participated in pōwhiri. We were told that this ceremony welcomed us to this particular land, this marae, an acknowledgment of transitioning to a different way of being in relationship with the people there and the place. This generosity, that I could be invited in so warmly, felt difficult to hold, especially contrasted with my awareness of my status as 'other', as perpetrator and coloniser. Could I then say that Te Puea was my marae? Probably not in the way that I understand now, but at the time I desperately wanted to claim Te Puea, a home for myself.

Simultaneously, I had never felt less like I belonged anywhere in my life. I had become aware of a gaping hole inside of me. I came up hard and close with my lack of self-knowledge and self-understanding and in doing so felt acutely alone, adrift, desolate and homeless. I believe this is something of the white self that is empty, unstable and insecure and at risk of wanting to take in the Other's culture, another colonisation (Tudor, Green & Brett, in press). Moreover, I had once again become painfully aware of the shadow of my heritage as 'British', my identity as colonial perpetrator. The feelings from the Treaty workshop surfaced, leaving me feeling ashamed, exposed and raw. How could I be scrabbling to find English roots even as I was filled with anger, shame and hatred towards these parts of myself?

At the end of our stay at Te Puea we gathered together before the kaumātua and they invited us to share kōrero. Some, a minority I considered bold, spoke. I remained silent,

emptied out of words, emptied out of self. Later I would keep turning this over and over, why not speak, in that space, where I had felt embraced and protected by the spirit of Te Puea, where I had been moved to tentatively call this place mine?

I wrote the poem below to make sense of some of these feelings, as a way to express some of the words I wish I might have been able to articulate on that day.

Pepeha (I)

Your pepeha divides us
keeps us pigeonholed
compartmentalised
separate,
(you will see I do not belong)

A record of heritage, lineage, blood
who did what to whom and when
You will know me by association
(you will see I do not belong)
a meeting defined by wounds, injustices
A testament to our difference,
our separateness

I have stood before you, unable to speak
we are not alike, although you offer to shelter me,
no river here is mine, no mountain can I claim
my landmarks are far, far away, even if I knew the names
and the legacy of my ancestors is arrogance and ignorance
and a heavy price.

I do not want to be defined by those who came before me
categorised, written off
I am afraid
Instead of connection, instead of a meeting
you will hear difference and you will be reminded
(as if you could forget)
of the deeds of my forefathers
Condemned for the accidental country of my birth
the landing of shapes, lines and numbers on the page

At the core of this struggle? I want to hide
my shame and guilt, so you will not see me
I am afraid
you will see,
you will see me

(you will see I do not belong)

I love this land I call home, and yet
what I know to be true today
what I understand is that
love is not enough.
If you see me, if you judge me,
if you find me wanting,
and wanting I am
(a home, a story, a self)
maybe I will be denied this land

You have made me see how small and lost I am,
(your land is all I have)
this thread hangs,
I am not sure I could bear to be turned away.

Pepeha, written in 2012, remains largely as it was. Back then I still didn't really understand the way in which the pepeha and whakawhānaungatanga processes had only highlighted something already, always inside me. As Stewart (2018) has written, "what we might learn in the bicultural space is not necessarily what we are prepared to know" (n.p). The process of whakawhānaungatanga had opened me to my own lack of cultural identity, to the profound disconnection from my ancestors and heritage and my sense of place in the world. I am referring here not to geographical place, but more a sense of belonging, a groundedness in the universe, a sense of interconnectedness. In simple terms, I didn't know who I was because I didn't know who I was from. I was culturally lost. This lack, so painfully exposed in these experiences, becomes foregrounded in relation to the 'Other' and the strong cultural identity of tangata whenua becomes something to be intimidated by, envied, craved, or perhaps spurned. These experiences would eventually spark a research project that would reveal links between whiteness and an empty, insecure, unstable cultural identity (Tudor, Green & Brett, in press).

Weaving Pepeha, Place and Belonging

In the same psychotherapy training we were tasked with creating a genogram, and so I found the names of my grandparents, and great-grandparents, and great-great-grandparents and so on. This project, begun nearly a decade ago, continues on today. My mother and aunt have become involved and together we have forged new connections and a new relatedness together as we search for ourselves in our shared past. The (re)search (Romanyshyn, 2007) has brought a closeness with my father as he reminisces about his own childhood, his parents and grandparents. I found a photograph of the children's home that his maternal grandfather had been sent to (he was profoundly deaf) and we suspect that this is where he and my father's maternal grandmother met each other. Together they would raise four girls with sign language, one of whom would be my father's mother. Over time, I put the pieces of

my life, and my story, together. I was able to put my *Self* together in a new way, no longer so isolated, now more in relation to my ancestors and those who came before. Gradually, I found a way to my own whakapapa, my own tūrangawaewae. I had had to travel thousands of kilometers to discover it was lost. To discover I had been lost, drifting and disconnected.

A Valley and a River of Tears

It is with great sadness that I have come to recognise that many stories that I might have had about my whānau are also lost. All I have are the fragments that remain in living memory. It is hard to weave with fragments. One of the pieces that has helped me understand myself is through my mother's line. My mother's grandmother, Margaret Mclennan-Mckenzie Glasgow, was born and raised in a small coastal village in Ross-shire in the Highlands of Scotland. Margaret left the Highlands, moving south, presumably for work or greater opportunity, to Dùn Èideann (Edinburgh), where she met and married my great-grandfather, Andrew Glasgow. I don't know why she moved or how many of her family were displaced, but it would have been at a time when the land and the people were in disarray. The Mclennans had been crofters, a hard way to eke out a living from unforgiving land, and had perhaps begun moving south towards the towns and cities for work opportunities, and no doubt because of the impact of the English way of life on the highlands in a shift from subsistence to capitalist ventures. Fuadaichean nan Gàidheal, a strategic and brutal clearing of the land of Gaels, was intended to provide landowners more space to raise sheep, but also to quell any further notions of independence and resistance to a union between Scotland and England. The clearings began around the mid-eighteenth century, continuing, on and off, well into the mid-nineteenth century. After the threat to the Crown of the Jacobite uprising of 1745 these 'clearances' were also a systematic way to devastate and demoralise an entire people into submission. Highland culture, including traditional dress and language, was made illegal. Granny Margaret, by the few accounts available to me, was a formidable woman. She kept the family names of her ancestors, Mclennan and Mckenzie, even as she married and became a Glasgow. Although she was punished at school for speaking Gàidhlig my mother and Aunt recall her singing Gàidhlig nursery rhymes to them as children. In tracing these links I find myself forging relationships with these ancestors, with Margaret particularly, drawing strength from the sense that she is with me, that her fierceness and determination is inside me and that I too might hold onto those names as a thread of connection to my ancestors.

One afternoon, driving with my mother-in-law from Whangārei to Dargaville, we passed through a valley I now know to be called Whekī Valley. I made her stop the car. It felt like home. This land, a green unfolding over dramatic grey limestone that occasionally breaks through, thousands of miles from where I had grown up in the Peak District in Derbyshire, reminded me of home. I felt the call of the land, a land I no longer thought of as home. This experience led me to booking a trip back to England and Scotland, to see family, but if I am honest, my primary intention was to be with the land. It was on this trip, at the end of 2017, that I realised, standing on a beach on the west coast of Scotland, one that I had played on throughout my childhood, that I felt a visceral connection to the land that is Scotland, the land of many of my ancestors. The Whekī Valley reminded me not just of the Peak District, but of Scotland.

This (re)search for my own history, my whakapapa and tūrangawaewae, through tracing the lives of my ancestors, allowed a different relationship to Aotearoa and to tangata whenua. My relationship to colonisation emerges as multilayered and complex. I felt I had fallen into a deep, wide, raging river of tears. I felt opened up to something in the collective, not just my tears, and not just tears of sadness, but hot, angry tears also. Margaret, and her parents and grandparents, connects me to the archetype of colonised, now able to be acknowledged as living inside me, opened up and raw, alongside the coloniser in me. I am both; I am coming to know both somehow.

In the precariousness of making a statement about knowing something about *colonised* it is vital to add that my intention is not to detract from the acknowledgement of the brutality, cruelty and devastating losses that tangata whenua have experienced as a result of colonisation, but rather to offer that in (re)searching and coming into relationship with my ancestors, and with my own cultural heritage, I come into a different relationship to Self, through my ancestors and through my connection to land, far away though it may be. This enhanced relationship is made possible through an engagement with matāuranga Māori whakapapa and tūrangawaewae. I find my empathy increased, I find also that my fears, of getting it wrong, of offending, are greatly reduced. Not because I won't get it wrong or offend anyone, but rather because there is a solidity in knowing myself and who I come from more intimately and this makes me a safer practitioner in terms of our bicultural context here in Aotearoa. I believe this learning and growth makes me a safer practitioner precisely because it affords me a stronger sense of self related to who I am from, in turn making it less likely that I will seek to idealise the other's cultural heritage but can instead begin to draw on my own as a foundation for openness and meeting. I carry these learnings with me into my teaching work and write about them here in the hopes that others too might engage in a biculturalism that is transformational, rather than transactional. *Pepeha (II)* was written in 2018 as I prepared to give a talk, on which this paper is based, in Nova Scotia.

Pepeha (II)

My bones too,
and my heart is broken open
(I see I belong)
Living in blood, not memory
born of fire,
born of rolling green,
silver stone, purple heather,
black of crowberry.
Standing there,
I shine

I want to put down this shame,
let it rest it beside my grief,
It has filled my ears and heart
for too long

Closing me to your blessings
such that I cannot hear your singing
I need to listen now

Your greeting is an invitation
I understand that now
You want to see me,
to know me,
And the difficulty of it makes me open
Breaks me open
Because when we see each other…
when I see myself,
and can be seen,
we can begin.

I finish with a beginning, with an introduction that has taken almost a decade to form inside me.

Pepeha (III)

E mihi ana ki ngā mana whenua
E mihi ana ki ngā tohu o nehe, o Tāmaki Makaurau e noho nei au
Nō Ingarangi rāua nō Scotland ōku tīpuna
Ko McKenzie, ko Mclennan, ko Stopford ratou ko Stafford ōku tīpuna
He uri ahau nō Ingarangi rāua nō Scotland
Nō Derbyshire ahau
I whānau mai au i te taha o te Peak District
I raro i te maru o te maunga o Shining Tor
Ko Lochcarron, ko An Cuan Sgitheanach ōku moana
Ko An Sgùrr, ko Suilven, ko Shining Tor ōku maunga te rū nei taku ngākau
Ko Ngāti Pākehā te iwi
He tangata Tiriti ahau
Kei te noho au kei Tāmaki Makaurau
Ko tenei taku mihi ki ngā tangata whenua o te rohe nei
Ko Emma Green ahau
Nō reira, tēnā tatou katoa

Resources

Māori Dictionary Online https://maoridictionary.co.nz/
Learn Gaelic Dictionary https://learngaelic.net/dictionary/index.jsp

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Psychological insights on discussing societal disruption and collapse[1]

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Abstract

As the impacts of climate change grow in number and severity, so climate distress is increasing around the world and becoming a major issue for psychologists, as both individuals and professionals. Increasing numbers of people assess that the damage that is forthcoming because of existing trajectories of atmospheric heating will lead to massive disruption and ultimate collapse of societies around the world. Some such people have been grouping together to share ideas on the implications for the rest of their lives. Many are using the concept and framework of "Deep Adaptation" to organise their sense making and actions. Their existence and ideas have led to strong criticisms from some commentators and scientists, who argue it is not correct or helpful to discuss collapse risk and readiness. This paper explores the reasons why publicly discussing anticipation of collapse has become helpful, and how criticisms of it are likely involving forms of 'experiential avoidance'. The problematic objectification of people for 'doomism' is explained, as well as the antecedents of authoritarianism that may be emerging in the criticisms of Deep Adaptation. Therefore, a case is made for how psychotherapists and psychologists can help people, including scholars, understand how their aversion to the topic of collapse — and the emotions associated with it — could be preventing dialogue and wise action at this crucial time for humanity.

Whakarāpopotonga

E rahi haere ake ana nei te tatau me te kino o te awe panoni taiao, e piki haere ana hoki te pakatokato āhuarangi huri noa i te ao, ā, me te aha e tau ana hai take matua mā ngā mātanga hinengaro i rō mahi, i waho mahi.E nui ake ana ngā tāngata e whakaaro ana ko te mutunga mai o te kino ka puta ake i nga tūmomo ara tuaora o te whakawera kōhauhau e hua ake te whakararu me te tanukunga o ngā hāpori huri noa i te ao. E whakarōpūtahi ana ētahi o ēnei tāngata ki te whakawhiti whakaaro mō ngā hua tau ki a rātau mō te toenga mai o ō rātau koiora. He maha kua huri ki te ariā me te poutarāwaho o te "Urutaunga Hōhonu" hai whakarite i ō rātau tairongo me ngā hohenga. Nā tō rātau tuaoranga, me ō rātau huatau i takia e ētahi

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kaikōrero wāwāhi tahā, ētahi kaimātai pūtaiao he huanga hahani e whakahau ana kāre e tika kāre rānei e whai hua te matapaki tūpono tanukunga. Ko tā tēnei pepa he tūhura i te take kua whaihua te matapakinga matawhānui whakaneinei tanukuhanga ā, te āhua nei ko te mutunga o taua matapakihanga he āhua 'karonga whakamātau'. Ka whakamāramahia ake te raru o te whakapakokonga tangata tautāwhi 'mutunga', me ngā kaiwhakamana o mua e puta haere ake ana i roto i ngā whakahahani mō te "Urutanga Hōhonu". Nō reira, kua whakaritea he āhuatanga e taea ai te āwhina tangata, e ngā mātanga hinengaro, huitahi ki ngā ākoranga, mōhio ai me pēhea tā rātau karo i te kaupapa o te tanuku — me nga kare-ā-roto pā atu — e pākati ana pea i te whakawhitinga kōrero, mahi rangatira i tēnei wā waiwai mō te ira tangata.

Key words: climate anxiety; eco-anxiety; eco-distress; societal collapse; deep adaptation; authoritarianism; activism; doomism.

Introduction

Your anxiety or emotional distress about the situation with the climate is normal, sane, healthy and even righteous. Those difficult emotions you have been feeling may also be a painful gateway to a different expression of who you are, depending on how we support each other in that process of change. I am addressing you directly as I begin this article, to avoid any suggestion that the topic of emotional distress (whether anxiety, grief, anger, shame or depression) can be analysed as a phenomenon outside of ourselves. Rather, these emotions are being experienced by you, me and our colleagues in this field of expertise. Our emotional reactions influence the way we engage in this topic. They may influence us even more if we pretend otherwise, as some scholars may be doing in this new era of societal disruption and confusion, since the onset of widespread environmental disturbances and the COVID-19 policy context.

People who do not experience any distress, despite being exposed to the information on the situation, might be experiencing something psychopathological. Their avoidance of normal yet difficult emotions might be an instance of something termed "experiential avoidance" in psychology and which is correlated with mental health problems, such as depression, panic attacks and aggression (Chawla and Ostafin, 2007). People living that way might tell us to be more positive or to stop upsetting other people. They might begin to see us as the problem, rather than our predicament as the problem. They might tell us that we are being manipulated by bad people, so that we could consider blaming such bad people for our difficult feelings and shift some of those feelings. Some people telling us such ideas might even claim psychological expertise. However, how should we respond to such arguments if we want to be fully present to reality, take responsibility for our emotions, and communicate without fear of judgement, with the aim of making better decisions for both ourselves and other people? My belief is the most appropriate response is to look much closer at what psychology and related fields can help us understand about this difficult topic of communicating insights on how bad the situation is and will become.

Because you care about people, do not want to hurt others and even want to help them, you have probably wondered how best to communicate both your analysis and your emotions about your analysis on the situation with the environment and society. If so, then

you are in the same situation as many thousands of scholars, educators and activists engaged in climate issues who have been wondering how best to look after our own emotional wellbeing while responsibly engaging other people on the evolving situation and our perceptions of that. In 2020, over 700 of us, from 30 different countries, signed a public Scholars Warning letter calling for more sober public engagement with the potential for societal disruption and collapse due to the direct and indirect impacts of climate and environmental change.[2] The letter notes that there are many perspectives on the concept and nature of societal collapses, past, present and future. In my work I have defined it as an uneven ending of normal life, meaning the normal modes of sustenance, shelter, security, pleasure, identity and meaning. The term collapse implies that there is an ending, and then something new, rather than a breakdown and possible repair back to normal (Bendell and Read, 2021).

In this article, I will explore the question of whether such scholars are being responsible in speaking out in this way, by drawing on some relevant theories in psychology. My aim is to provide you with a stimulus for your own reflection on whether and how to discuss more publicly your own perception of collapse risk and the need for society to have more public conversations on this matter ahead of potential new policy agendas.

I share these ideas in a journal of psychotherapy because I think it important for the psychotherapy — and related — professions to engage this topic more fully and publicly to help people avoid making the situation worse as our sense of distress and vulnerability increase in the coming months and years. I am not a psychotherapist and have prioritised learning about relevant insights on psychology since 2018 as I began to witness some academics and activists suppress difficult emotions and articulate explanations of our situation and the implications in ways that reduce the humanity of certain others. I guessed that defensive, authoritarian, and xenophobic patterns would emerge counter-productively within some people in response to societal disruption and the threat of collapse, and I wanted to learn more about what could be done about that. Therefore, in this article I will clarify some of the specific dangers from such responses and the role I see for psychotherapists to engage in public life to help both scholars and the general public explore more kind and wise responses to our increasingly stressful predicament.

Hypotheses on Why Discussing Collapse Risk in Public is Becoming Helpful

After discussions with many dozens of scholars around the world over the past three years, I hypothesise that the reasons why hundreds of us are calling for more attention to societal collapse include, but are not limited to, the following seven reasons.

First, honesty. Being true with each other is an important reason for people to discuss their anticipation of collapse. Related to that is enabling more honesty in society, through the expression of what people are privately believing or considering. Research shows that not only is climate anxiety widespread but also the anticipation of collapse in our lifetimes has increased rapidly in recent years (Cassely and Fourquet, 2020).

Second, mutual self-help, to help ourselves and each other cope better with this outlook,

2 www.scholarswarning.net

including our emotional wellbeing in the short and longer-term as we live into a destabilising future. Dialogue and community are an essential first step for that (Bendell and Carr, 2021).

Third, aggression reduction, to reduce the potential psychopathological behaviours arising from emotional suppression of this topic, which have been identified as delusion, depression and aggression by researchers of "experiential avoidance", as described earlier. These behaviours can arise from attachment to narratives of self and society, known as "worldview defence" in the "terror management" literature, due to a lack of other ways of being able to respond to feelings of confusion and vulnerability, which are associated with death aversion (Wolfe and Tubi, 2019).

People can also react to difficult emotions by reducing their appreciation of the dignity of others, thereby supporting authoritarian and violent approaches to enforce views and behaviours (which I return to below). However, the way people respond to increased awareness of their mortality is not set. For instance, there is evidence that reflection on death can lead to greater environmental commitment in the form of philanthropy (Fa and Kugihara, 2020). By discussing collapse, there can be an opportunity to transmute awareness of mortality and vulnerability into prosocial ways of thinking and acting. Deliberate processes for death reflection are well known in both spiritual traditions and philosophy, while also resulting in therapeutic benefits and pro-social implications in contemporary contexts (Arena, 2020). Inviting emotional expression and non-judgemental exploration of our situation is already proving helpful for reducing the likelihood of people responding in antisocial ways as they anticipate mortality (Bendell and Carr, 2021).

Fourth, self-transformation, for people who are ready for it, to support each other in processes of deep reflection, positive disintegration of old stories of self, and thus emergence of new ways of being (Laycraf, 2020).This can happen as we explore what really matters to us once our old stories of self, necessity and respectability are loosened by the realisation of the destructiveness and impermanence of mainstream societies. Some people are not ready for that, or they have already reached a place of self-construal where they do not prioritise this reflection anymore.

Fifth, cause identification. This reason builds upon all of the previous ones, as the work on those then allows a deeper exploration of why modern humans created this predicament. This includes looking at the ways that various forms of othering enable oppression and exploitation within and between countries (Bendell and Carr, 2021). That is more than an intellectual exercise, because it informs a sixth and seventh reason.

Sixth, path finding. This reason is to explore what to do next and why, at all scales from local to global, including how to not make matters worse, how to slow or soften societal disruptions and collapse, how to ensure that the most marginalised communities are not affected first and worst, as well as how to create more possibilities for the future (if that is what someone believes is possible). That then brings our attention to how some parts of society are already responding away from the limelight, such as the world's militaries, authoritarian elites and hedge funds, as they prepare for disruption and collapse in ways that civil society may rightly object to (Bendell, 2020).

Seventh, solidarity actions. Running in parallel to these reasons, a seventh reason to talk about collapse is to become better able to discuss effective responses to the societal disruptions and breakdowns that are occurring now, and to participate in significant

solidarity efforts. These include humanitarian action alongside work on social and trade justice, reparations and reconciliation.

Each of these hypotheses could be further explored and added to. Given the present nature of the predicament we face, action research that focuses on trying to make a positive difference through the research itself would be a valid approach. The nature of the hypotheses touch on many different intellectual disciplines, so interdisciplinary approaches will be key. The question of whether we should discuss collapse is far more than a pure question of psychology, but insights from psychology and psychotherapy could help us to learn how and when to discuss it and with whom.

Some of the 700+ signatories to the Scholars Warning are psychologists, but most like me, are not. To help us better understand how to engage on this matter in future, the Scholars Warning initiative commissioned a review of relevant psychological research, to support current and future signatory scientists and scholars (see Kieft, in this same issue). In that literature review, the psychological research that is relevant to some of the concerns raised about the psychological implications of anticipating collapse were summarised and discussed. Rather than review the sub-field of psychology and psychotherapy on climate change, or on environmental action, the review looked across all areas of psychology to find insights on the anticipation of disruption, decline, disaster and collapse. Therefore, I believe it points towards a step change, or focus-shift, for the way people can engage in climate psychology in future. It contributes to a psychological research dimension to the new fields of both "collapsology" (Servigne and Stephens, 2020) and "Deep Adaptation" (Bendell, 2018). The former is a field of scholarship about the likelihood, nature and implications of societal collapse. The latter is "an agenda and framework for responding to the potential, probable or inevitable collapse of industrial consumer societies, due to the direct and indirect impacts of human-caused climate change and environmental degradation" (Bendell and Carr, 2021).

How Anticipating and Experiencing Societal Disruption and Collapse is Affecting People

There has been much uninformed comment in the media — and even in academic texts — about the impacts of collapse anticipation on people's mental health and motivation. It is important that people considering whether and how to communicate on this topic become more aware of the range of possible sources of evidence and insight.

The centrality of behavioural psychology in previous work on climate psychology may have limited our understanding of our current predicament. The main focus has been on the individual as a consumer, and what makes them choose pro-environmental behaviours, rather than what radicalises them as citizens contributing to societal and political change, at whatever level (Adams, 2021). In the literature review by Kieft in this same issue, psychologist Jasmine Kieft discusses a few examples of where behavioural psychology has been publishing claims about negative implications of either anticipating or talking about disruption and collapse that are highly questionable, both theoretically and empirically. Such studies may suit the dominant narrative of optimism, reform and progress within its sister discipline of behavioural economics.

Ideological assumptions of some psychology and psychotherapy researchers may have led to biased and limiting interpretations of the role of narratives of hope and agency in supporting action and avoiding mental health difficulties. For instance, hope and agency are typically understood to mean stories of reform and betterment of current socio-economic systems, within a paradigm of material progress (as an example, see Marlon et al, 2019). That ideological limitation means that some psychologists and psychotherapists have not even considered how hope, whether a wish, expectation, intention, or deeper faith, could be expressed while also anticipating societal disruption and collapse within one's lifetime. To do that requires the courage to allow oneself to feel difficult emotions and the dissolution of some existing stories of self and society (Bendell, 2019a).

After I communicated my own anticipation of societal collapse in my "Deep Adaptation" paper (Bendell, 2018), and it was downloaded over a million times, I witnessed a wide range of responses to this topic. Sometimes scholars backtrack in public on things they have said in private. This may be for a mix of reasons, including the conservative culture of scientists, alongside not wanting to upset people or become the target of criticism (Hoggett and Randall, 2018). That is understandable, as many people experience difficult emotions when first hearing how bad our climate situation has become.

Some scientists have recently begun arguing that to suggest we will see massive disruption or even collapse in our lifetimes is demotivating and psychologically damaging (Mann, 2021). Some people who listen to such an argument might hear it as 'common sense'. However, on closer inspection, this view does not hold up so well. One study found that climate distress including "a proximal as well as a distal threat" where personal vulnerability is involved, "correlated positively with determinants of pro-environmental behaviour" (Verplanken et al, 2020). Another study in Australia found that people "feeling eco-depressed were more likely to report participating in collective climate action, while those feeling eco-anxious were less likely to join the cause" (Stanley et al, 2021). You might benefit from reading that sentence again and letting the implications settle. It suggests that being worried about climate change might not move people to activism, but feeling depressed about the situation is more likely to do so.

It is a matter of public record that the "Deep Adaptation" paper radicalised many people to then change their lives and join a new kind of climate activism, involving non-violent civil disobedience (Green, 2019; Humphrys, 2019). It is an open question whether such activism will have an effect on systems and, ultimately, either emissions cuts, drawdown or adaptation. However, it shows that the claim that apathy is the main response can be easily questioned. Further research will be necessary to determine the wider impact on apathy and agency. There is very little research on the wider forms of pro-social action that arise from people anticipating societal collapse. In one survey of members of the Deep Adaptation Forum, almost half of the respondents said they considered themselves to be taking leadership in new ways as a result of their new anticipation of collapse. Their range of actions included work on practical and emotional resilience within their communities and professions (Bendell and Cave, 2020).

One of the labels used to malign the scholars who speak out about the likelihood of societal collapse is that they are "doomers". The argument they make is that people labelled as "doomist" or "doomer" are concluding that there is no reason to explore and engage in

pro-social and pro-environmental action due to their anticipation of further disruption and ultimate collapse of the current way of life (Mann, 2021). The evidence for such a view is typically sparse to nonexistent, even in peer reviewed studies, as I will explore further below. If “doomism” is to believe in a negative view of the future, despite the evidence, then it is doomist to believe that people will only respond to a recognition of our climate calamity and forthcoming disruption with apathy, confusion, depression, selfishness, xenophobia or bigotry. Such a view not only ignores relevant studies (Stanley et al, 2021), but also evidence from the new kind of climate activism that has arisen since 2018, where the motivation includes doing what is right because people have a heightened sense of their own mortality and that of the people they love (Extinction Rebellion, 2019). It also ignores evidence of people engaged in the Deep Adaptation Forum (Bendell and Cave, 2020).

As this is a new situation, I believe it relevant to offer some insight from my own engagement with people since 2018. In that time, I have not met many people who accept information about the possible, likely, inevitable or unfolding collapse of society and then respond with pure apathy. Rather, the fatalistic people I meet tend to be people who do not actually feel the threat to their own wellbeing or that of the people they love. I look forward to seeing some more research on this topic. However, if researchers bring assumptions that people will only act when they think they will achieve solutions to environmental problems, and ask biased questions as a result, they will miss the more fundamental existential and spiritual motivations that may be key to contemporary environmentalism. That is demonstrated by a major study of Extinction Rebellion (XR) in 2020. The researchers explained they asked “XR protesters about who, or what, is best placed to solve our environmental problems” (Saunders et al, 2020). The researchers’ emphasis on “solving problems” arises from a modernist ideology, and embedding it into the survey questions meant that key aspects of the motivation and identity of Extinction Rebellion activists were excluded from the study. The framing to “solve” could be why the research found that “none of the options offered were strongly supported by XR respondents” despite the clear evidence of the high motivation of the activists. In the study there was no discussion of the power of despair or of mortality salience to the motivations of activists. Any participant observation or autoethnography, or even open-ended questions, would have helped researchers understand that the motivation of XR rebels is often quite different from past eco-activism. This reminds us that how research is as much a projection of the assumptions of the researchers as a response to what is happening in society.

It could be that negative views on how people react to anticipating collapse are based on assumptions about human nature being selfish or requiring promises of material or status gain to be motivated toward pro-social action. It is important to note that the view that human nature is basically selfish, which derives from the field of economics, has started to influence societal discussions of wellbeing. That approach also brings a utilitarian and modernist assumption of what constitutes the good society. Consequently, the field of wellbeing economics incorrectly assumes that the lesser a population experiences any negative emotions the better it is, rather than its capability for equanimity (for instance, see Piekałkiewicz, 2017). That means psychologists and psychotherapists could help by communicating alternative views more publicly more often.

Adaptation Delayism and Experiential Avoidance in Academia

Psychotherapists and psychologists have a useful role to play in helping scholars explore how their inner worlds are affecting their contributions to the fields of climate research and policy. It should be uncontroversial to state that emotions play a key role in the shaping of scientific study, from the development of questions, means of analysis, discovering insights, and deciding what to communicate and how (Thagard, 2002). However, the idea that researchers are like machines, or aspire to be, is still widely promoted. Such a claim to objectivity is problematic for many reasons, with one reason being that it means institutions of scholarship do not help their professionals develop greater self-awareness so that greater wisdom might emerge. Without attention to how our inner worlds shape our research, analysis, and communication choices, patterns of experiential avoidance in the emotionally distressing field of climate scholarship might be distorting the quality of academic activities. Rather than allow difficult emotions of fear, sadness, shame and anger, instead the suppression of them may mean that they unconsciously drive the academic process in some scholars. That could lead to them projecting their inner worlds onto others, as well as projecting blame onto them. The existence of people who are openly sharing their views on worst case scenarios and their painful emotions about that could be regarded, consciously or (most likely) not, by some observers as threatening their own coping mechanisms as persons either experientially avoidant or at risk of depression.

Most academic research papers on climate issues claim objectivity and suggest an absence of emotional drivers for their work. That is even the case for most papers in the social sciences. A close look at one paper will reveal how this approach could be enabling experientially avoidance amongst researchers, and unhelpful aggression towards people in society being described by such research. I choose the paper “Discourses of Climate Delay” (Lamb et al, 2020) as it was widely promoted amongst both scholars and commentators and is cited as a key text for claiming there is something called “doomism” which is described as bad. It reported that “we derive our initial list of discourses from an expert elicitation of the study co-authors”, which is a complicated way of saying the co-authors created their categories of discourse by conversations amongst themselves rather than analysing texts using any methods of discourse analysis. There is no evidence in this paper of any knowledge of discourse analysis methods, let alone critical discourse analysis, which would be appropriate for an attempt to explain influence of discourses on power i.e. policy agendas and decisions (Bendell et al, 2017; Gee and Handford, 2013). From a theoretical basis of using the term ‘discourse’ simply as a way of talking, rather than a huge field of sociological theory and research, and an empirical basis of discussing together what they want to criticise, this is what the authors wrote about what they describe as “doomism”:

> Doomism further argues that any actions we take are too little, too late. Catastrophic climate change is already locked-in: “The climate apocalypse is coming. To prepare for it, we need to admit that we can’t prevent it” (New Yorker opinion article). Such statements evoke fear and can result in a paralysing state of shock and resignation

> (Hulme, 2019). This discourse implies that mitigation is futile and suggests that the only possible response is adaptation — or in religious versions, by trusting our fate to "God's hands". As with many other discourses of delay, the surrender category does not favour the difficult work of building climate engagement and deliberating over effective solutions. (p.4–5)

The only data they use to highlight "doomism" is one article in the New Yorker. They only reference one academic study for the claim of a "paralysing" effect (Hulme, 2019), which was not from psychology or psychotherapy, thereby ignoring a whole discipline. That academic study revealed no references in it to any of the fields that guide the analysis of discourse e.g. cognitive linguistics, narratology, discourse analysis, or critical discourse analysis. The problem with this atheoretical approach to discourse on climate is that they might inadvertently block a deeper consideration of the topics addressed. A short analysis of their statements about "doomism" in the diagram that is contained in the paper reveals the ideological assumptions that produce their claims and limit imagination.

The paper states that "doomism" implies: "Any mitigation actions we take are too little, too late." (p.2) They offer no clarification on what it is too late for. Many climate activists today, such as those in XR and Deep Adaptation, claim that it is too late for industrial consumer society, too late for reformism, too late for incremental change, and too late for imagining that people will escape further and massive loss and damage in the near future. Some people are also arguing it is too late for the ideology that underpinned the destruction and has failed to inform significant change (Bendell and Carr, 2021). Just because it is too late for certain objectives does not mean it is too late for seeking to do anything. To not look closely at this issue might suggest an unwillingness to imagine anything beyond modernity and the progress of technological consumer society.

The paper next states that "doomism" implies: "Catastrophic climate change is already locked in." (p.2) That is a widespread view amongst many scientists and it is already happening for many people other than the authors of this paper. The paper then states that "doomism" implies: "We should adapt, or accept our fate in the hands of God or nature." (p.2) Here they imply that adaptation is inactive, and against seeking emissions reductions and drawdown, despite the evidence that people are working on this whole agenda. Accepting one's fate is assumed to be demotivating by these authors, despite there being a lot of research and current data to show the opposite — that a realisation of mortality and a relinquishment of certainty of impact or outcome can inspire courage and boldness.

By vilifying people who are seeking to integrate worst-case scenarios of climate change into their outlook and decisions, some scholars and commentators risk distracting society from a deeper focus on adaptation. That could constitute a form of 'Adaptation Delayism' that leaves the field of collapse risk, readiness and response to agencies and elites beyond the view, or potential influence, of an engaged civil society. To help address this problem, psychologists and psychotherapists could engage with scholars who are making such mistakes in their assumptions about human psychology, so that delays in engagement with adaptation are not further encouraged.

Experiential Avoidance and Authoritarianism

A concern often expressed amongst environmental activists is that an awareness of our ecological predicament, or the negative impacts on society, will lead to various forms of fascism. That concern is not a reason for avoiding talk of collapse risk and readiness, but conversely can be a reason for engaging in it actively to try to avoid that outcome. In 2021, human rights and freedoms are already being curtailed around the world, ostensibly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. If we care about personal dignity, liberty and accountable governance then we must address the potential for authoritarianism and associated aggressions. Psychotherapists and psychologists could play a particular role in bringing public attention to this matter, as well as exploring how to help their clients in relation to it, given that there is a low level of public awareness of how the antecedents of fascism exist in most of us and in everyday public discourse. With more awareness, people can choose to avoid contributing to the conditions for authoritarian aggression.

In this section I will summarise the psychological antecedents of fascism, before exploring the particular situation of academia, where 'experiential avoidance' could lead scholars to accidentally promoting authoritarianism.

One of the most important books on the rise of authoritarianism provides us with a salutary lesson on how society is always at risk of a descent into repressive fascism. Originally published in 1950, *The Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno et al, 2019) explained how authoritarianism (and repressive fascism) is not merely a political phenomenon, but the "manifestation of dispositions that lie at the very core of the modern psyche" (p12). One problem with the way "fascism" has become a label of alarm and dismissal, is that it suggests that what is being described is extreme, that there is universal agreement that it is bad, and that we are too modern and progressive for that today. Such an assumption denies how a worrying potential for supporting fascism lies in every one of us. As a new introduction to a 2019 republication of the book explained (Gordon, 2019):

> Fascism is something far deeper than a political form: it correlates with psychological patterns of domination and submission that take shape in earliest childhood and later harden into a syndrome of attitudes regarding hierarchy, power, sexuality and tradition. The psyche of a fascist is authoritarian in the sense that it attaches itself to figures and strength and disdains those it deems week. It tends toward conventionalism, rigidity, and stereotypical thinking; it insists of on a stark contrast between in group and out group and it jealously patrols the boundaries between them. (p 12)

Psychological research even as far back as the mid-1930s provided insight into how some people respond to feelings of confusion and vulnerability by submitting to a powerful authority, and how they feel emotionally threatened by anyone who does not also submit to that leader, therefore gaining some sadomasochistic relief from the domination or punishment of transgressors (Fromm, 1936). If people have been taught since childhood that any difficulty is best addressed through the function of a "strict father" then they are more likely to support authoritarian approaches (Lakoff, 2006).

A focus on fascism can also lead to an ignoring of the psychological and cultural

processes that led to authoritarian and aggressive regimes of colonisation. It is easier for many in the West to criticise 1930s Germany and Italy, than look at the attitudes and discourses that enabled Europe to maintain exploitative empires. The key psychosocial process involved in all forms of oppression is called "othering", where some people are implied to be less important than others (Bendell and Carr, 2021). That process typically involves the objectification of people. Martha Nussbaum (1995) identified seven ways in public narratives (or discourse) that people objectify others, describing them in ways that imply they have less dignity or self-worth. Such "objectification" can occur even if people think they are being concerned for the people being objectified. These methods include describing or treating someone as a tool, or lacking moral autonomy, or lacking agency, or being substitutable, or being violable, or capable of being owned, or not having a valid subjectivity. Wherever we witness people talking or writing about others in ways that objectify them in this way, then we know that oppressive power is being exerted and potential further forms of violence are being excused.

Psychotherapists and psychologists can help us to understand what is going on within us as we objectify people in such ways. For instance, it has been shown beyond doubt that the socially constructed idea of what behaviours people should be disgusted with, combined with the socially influenced habit of people not owning their emotional reactions, often leads to aggressive attitudes and behaviours against those being described as deviant (Ray and Parkhill, 2020). Research on the antecedents of fascism in the past point to the role of creating a myth of moral certainty, where values are narrowly applied and deviation is regarded as disgusting (Gregor, 2012). The psychology of disgust can combine with some people's aversion to their own difficult emotions, so that they express a "belief in silencing others" and thus authoritarianism (Tsfati, 2020, p. 488). One reason is that they feel uncomfortable about anyone whose views and life choices they regard as revealing their own submission to the narratives preferred by the current authorities in society (ibid).

This body of work offers us an analysis of what might be occurring in 2021, where a combination of factors can provide a context for the expression of authoritarian personality types. These factors include a *deep incomprehension* due to a decline in knowledge that capitalism is a system of choice that generates difficulties; *intense confusion* arising from the divergent narratives about the nature of the COVID-19 pandemic; growing *feelings of vulnerability* from either the disease itself or the impacts of policies on livelihoods, wellbeing and mental health; and mass media *demonising people for opinions* on the nature of the threat or how to respond. Already, the impact of mainstream government narratives on the threat and appropriate responses to the COVID-19 virus has been found to increase prejudices towards non-traditional or non-conservative approaches in personal lives, without any medical rationale for such a view (Golec de Zavala et al, 2020). That provides evidence for how the increased anxiety in a population, and/or government and mainstream media narratives about appropriate responses, is increasing the support for authoritarianism.

The trend towards authoritarianism is directly relevant to societal collapse because it can be regarded as both a result and dimension of such a collapse. It is also relevant to our consideration of climate change agendas, as similar processes described above are beginning to manifest in discussions about appropriate responses. The criticism of so-called "doomism" that I described above involves the objectification of people. So-called "doomers" are

typically described as being a type of person who has been hoodwinked by bad actors, without meaningful agency or a valid subjectivity. Sometimes such criticism has even gone as far as negative comments on children activists who are described as being naïve or negative for taking more radical approaches than others (Villareal et al, 2020). In addition, in their paper criticising doomism (Lamb et al, 2020), the authors do not express how their own emotional distress might be affecting their work or that of others. They probably all have strong emotions about our environmental predicament. If some scholars are suppressing their emotional pain through believing ideas about solving a problem (climate change) then the existence of people who neither believe in that pain-alleviating idea nor in hiding their pain from public view could be upsetting to such scholars. While the scholars contributing to Lamb et al (2020) undoubtedly have emotions about the matter which influence their research, neither expressing them or exploring them reflects how experiential avoidance is regarded as an aspiration in academia rather than a pathology. Therefore, psychotherapists and psychologists could help more researchers move beyond that legacy from the natural sciences, and develop greater self-awareness.

Helping scholars to process emotions so they act less unconsciously from any repressed emotions is not only important for their self-care. It will be important to help such scholars as they engage more deeply in the question of how to respond to an anticipation of collapse. The research on the psychological antecedents of fascism shows that experiential avoidance can lead some people to express aggression in support of authoritarianism. Therefore, if experiential avoidance has influenced scholars to demonise people for their collapse-anticipation, then once they admit the inevitability of societal disruption, the same experiential avoidance might shape the future narratives and proposals from such scholars,.

With that potential shift towards authoritarian views on responding to the climate emergency in mind, the arguments of one scholar on societal collapse is of particular relevance. Philosopher John Foster (2021) critiques the Deep Adaptation agenda as a “utopian aspiration” that “need never really confront the utter futility of pursuing liberty and equality and justice and material welfare and compassion and all the rest of the Enlightenment list, into the turmoil of a breaking world.” (p.1) His argument is that to focus on how we wish to live as we anticipate collapse is to foreground the needs of privileged people to maintain their worldview and entitlements, rather than explore and do what is necessary for preserving societies of life on Earth.

I share Foster’s desire that people who anticipate collapse engage more courageously in public on this agenda, and that is why I have written this paper. However, I disagree with his suggestion that seeking to uphold key universal values as we try to respond usefully with our collapse anticipation is counterproductive. I know that the concepts of compassion, freedom and equality are not only modern but are found in ancient traditions. I know that arising from such values, methods of emotional processing, dialogue and decision making can lead to more wise and powerful action, rather than less. I know that nurturing such values is not a luxury, but an elementary need and dimension to human existence. Instead, there are middle class entitlements that are problematic for wise responses to the predicament. They typically include an assumption of entitlement to a better chance of life than others and a reaffirmed and superior identity and worldview to others (Bendell, 2021). If we are not aware of these entitlements in us, then we will more likely produce arguments that suggest we

protect "us" not "them" in ways that, replicated around the world by the middle classes in hundreds of countries, will increase the fracturing of international solidarity.

It is difficult not to see any proposition that people be realistic and ditch key values as actually a call for the powerful to decide what must be done and to whom. It is also difficult not to see such an argument as reflecting an assumption of the advocate that they exist within the in-group of the agentic power wielders. Therefore, such an proposition reflects the entitlements to superiority that are likely to encourage oppression and conflict. If scholars do not realise that we are inescapably engaged in a process involving self-composition and identity-defence as we write about these difficult topics, then that lack of self-awareness will hamper our attempts at wisdom on the matter.

Could more psychotherapists and psychologists act as an antidote to rising aggression and authoritarianism as eco-distress grows amongst scholars and the general public? There is a need for courage, not only in holding space for individuals but also in reaching beyond the therapy context to help educate people more widely, so people can help themselves to escape becoming accidental fascists. That will be important as more influential voices call for further restrictions on liberties as a means of applying policy approaches from the pandemic to the problems of the climate crisis (Latour, 2021). While that might sound appealing to some people who experience fear and frustration in the face of environmental disruption, it could easily distract attention from deeper causes, further empower elites, and alientate public support for social transformation. It will also undermine the potential for a radical environmentalism which centres the need for personal and collective freedom from ideologies and systems which are inducing us to further compete, destroy and consume (Bendell, 2021).

Ultimately the escape from aggression may need to be found in spirituality. Some of the difficulty people have with engaging in the possibility of societal disruption and collapse is because most cultures today are death avoidant, particularly Western Eurocentric ones (Solomon et al, 2017). By that, I mean that we ignore death, rather than recognising it as a constant ongoing complement to life, where one requires the other. Such death avoidance is heightened by anxieties about death, which in turn are heightened by an absence of either an understanding or experience of ourselves as being one with a greater life force (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1987). With that greater sense of separation as an individual mortal being, we can become more attached to our culture's stories of safety, worth and legacy. That means we can hold on to those stories more tightly when sensing greater vulnerability and become more critical about anyone challenging those stories (Solomon et al, 2017). Yet, if detached from either an understanding or experience of our oneness with all life, we are less connected to sources for vitality, creativity and courage, at a time when the turbulence invites us to be radically present to what is occurring (Abhayananda, 2002).

How Senior Leaders are Handicapped in Speaking About Collapse

There may be a particular problem with the climate anxiety of senior leaders and media commentators that scholars could help with. Research on leadership has found that typical psychological traits that lead people to seek positions of power or influence relate to insecure identity structures (Harms et al, 2011). That means they may be more likely to suppress

painful emotions associated with an awareness of vulnerability. The climate predicament presents both material risk and psychological risk, as the predicament undermines the legitimacy of societal structures that have provided the means of buttressing insecure identities. Therefore, senior leaders and media commentators may be more susceptible to experiential avoidance and the psychopathologies that result. That would be a problem at a time when we would benefit from more kind, wise and creative leadership. Therefore, there may be use in targeted engagements with senior leaders on their climate anxiety.

One challenge for senior leaders is that the discourse in our society tells us that to lead one needs to use stories of hope. Even in the psychotherapy and psychology literature, there is widespread confusion about what 'hope' means. It can mean a wish, expectation, intention or deeper faith (Bendell, 2019a). As mentioned earlier, some researchers assume hope on climate involves a belief in material progress and human control. Yet hope can be about people responding positively to difficulty, disruption and death. As experiential avoidance of emotional pain is found to be psychopathological, when hope is narrowly conceived, an emphasis on finding cause for hope could be an effort to swiftly exit difficult emotions, and thus prove to be unhelpful. Therefore, we need to be careful in our discussion and use of hope, and be alert to whether any experiential avoidance or 'worldview defence' in ourselves as researchers is influencing our analysis of this matter. One avenue for hope, which is not avoidant, could be the deeper faith that the goodness of humanity is planted deeper than any surface level conflicts, and will help us to express solidarity and reduce suffering, come what may.

Many of the typical refrains of management and leadership will not help senior leaders to respond well to the situation. Typically, they emphasise management control, and the importance of top management expressing confidence around a vision. In a situation where disruption and uncertainty become widespread, a different approach to management and leadership, which is more empathetic, dialogic, collaborative and humble, will be useful (Bendell, et al, 2017). Psychologists and others who support senior leaders, either as therapists or coaches, could help them to recognise the arbitrary nature of the standard refrains of leadership and how they could choose to move beyond them for a new era of adaptation leadership (Gosling, 2021).

With my practical and research experience as a Professor of Leadership, I am convinced that the dominant ideologies of leadership will not help people to engage well with matters of collapse risk and readiness. Therefore, leadership on adaptation to climate disruptions will need to come from all walks of life. There is a key role for people in the cultural sectors to voice what people are feeling but not speaking publicly. A good example is the US comedian Bo Burnham. His feature-length TV special "Inside" (Burnham, 2021) included a number of comedy songs which explored the theme of anticipating societal collapse or worse. Lyrics like "the quiet comprehending of the ending of it all" and "20,000 years of this, seven more to go" were powerful for reaching people who have a similar sense of foreboding to what he was singing about. His work is a digital demonstration of the creative power of the dark night of the soul and the power of retreating for contemplation. Viewing the dozens of reaction videos to "Inside" on Youtube, it is clear that such videos are a key means for people to receive ideas about society — and what to do about them. There is a need for more psychotherapists and psychologists to become active on Youtube, and react to current affairs and popular culture, to help people learn more about themselves and each other during the stressful times ahead.

Learning From Existing Practices and Research

There are many areas of inquiry that could inform a better understanding of responses to anticipating disruption and collapse. Areas which I have no expertise on, nor have time to learn. There are many people like me, who wish to learn from psychotherapy and psychology and hope to receive usable syntheses. For instance, I have wondered, might we learn from people with degenerative disease and those who love them? Or from studies on ageing, or on being childless as adults? Might we learn from studies of people who have been through traumatic situations due to famine, conflict or violence? There must be much to learn about emotional resilience and even emotional thriving in situations that are neither stable, safe, nor improving materially.

People like me would also benefit greatly from summaries and assessments of the range of potential ways we can help ourselves and each other with our climate anxiety, or to help us become radically present to the predicament as it unfolds both locally and globally. In my own life, I have benefited greatly from discovering a number of means of support for my emotional health. For instance, participating in a regular men's group, using processes from the Mankind Project, have been useful for my ability to process difficult emotions without blaming others. Mindfulness, and the particular approach of Vipassana, or insight meditation, has also been extremely powerful in helping me to disaggregate sensations, emotions, thoughts and actions, so that I can stay engaged with difficult topics and situations without agitation directing my thoughts and actions as much as it might otherwise. The practice of breathwork, which involves a slight hyperventilation, has helped me to calm and connect with a sense of universal love. Another key practice that has changed the way I related to uncertainty and experimentation is Improvisational Theatre. It helped me to understand the habits of control and planning that were connected to assumptions of unsafety and the potential for failure and shame. In addition, a couple of experiences with Psilocybin helped me to face emotions and ideas that I did not realise I had been suppressing. That helped me to see the extent of lying that maintains our culture in a state of denial and numbness over the destruction that is occurring (Bendell, 2019b).

In particular, the practice of open-hearted dialogue that called "Deep Relating" has been useful to me. It involves people interacting where our emotional curiosity, acceptance, honesty and expression is combined with 'owning' our emotions (avoiding blame when experiencing an emotional charge or trigger), so that there can be newfound connection and trust with another on difficult topics (Bendell and Carr, 2021). It is also helpful in becoming more aware of how our own insecurities and hurts lead to us projecting negative intentions onto others, so we might lessen our judgements. It also means we can lessen our negative reactions to people when they negatively project onto us. That has been invaluable to me when becoming the object of multiple projections as people process their own thoughts and emotions about the climate tragedy. A senior member of the Deep Adaptation Forum, Katie Carr, described to me some of their work in the following way:

> When people first begin to anticipate disruption and collapse they can feel overwhelming panic, powerlessness, fear, sometimes depression and anxiety. Having a sense of community, belonging, a space of unconditional positive regard in one's life, where it feels "safe enough" to share freely and openly about emotions that can

> feel unbearable when they're only existing inside us, is pretty much the most powerful source of healing that humans can provide for each other. It's our magic power. Being held and heard, non-judgmentally, is what can allow those overwhelming feelings to rise and fall, to be processed in the moment, and not stored in the body as future trauma.[3]

My intention in calling for more research is not to suggest that is where the ultimate truth on the human psyche is to be found, or that the best ideas on community engagement for enabling loving kindness will come from such research. There are limitations from the paradigm of mainstream psychological research for how we learn about our predicament. These limitations are due to the individualist and Western bias of much research in this discipline (Adams, 2021). That means the socially constructed notions of normality, safety, comfort, and choice, which rely on and maintain oppression of others, are not often questioned in the research. For instance, Kieft's literature review in this issue provides examples of where an uncritical questioning of societal norms has allowed theoretically and empirically weak arguments to be published and then influence subsequent condemnations of discussing collapse. Therefore, any psychotherapy and psychology research will be merely one contribution to a field of discussion and experimentation, which can also draw on and be informed by ancient spiritual traditions and other forms of knowing (Abhayananda, 2002).

I do not believe that research findings will be able to predict for certain how the general public will or will not, on average, react positively and compassionately to a growing sense of vulnerability. Rather, the extent to which more of us respond in curious, kind, and compassionate ways is up to each of us. So yes, it is time for more of us to discuss collapse, but when and how is something to keep learning about. I concur with Scholars Warning signatory Dr Susanne Moser (2020), who concludes that we must move beyond the not-too-late versus too-late dichotomy and now engage in "the political, policy, and practical work, as well as the deeper, underlying socio-cultural and psychological work, that the paradoxical tension between endings and possibilities demands".

The climate tragedy is the most difficult situation we have had to face, so we will need to keep experimenting, and forgiving each other for mistakes of understanding and communication. That is a challenge in itself, as a mixture of personal anxieties and political tactics will increasingly pollute our dialogue with invitations to moral outrage and condemnation, rather than maintaining a sober focus on what might build towards the peaceful revolutionary change that our situation now requires. We can all benefit from learning how to more quickly notice, catch and forgive ourselves and each other for when we slip into aggressive ways of relating. Continuing to return to love, courage and inquiry will be necessary whatever the topic we are working on and however bad situations may become.

3 Personal communication, May 1 2021. I recommend the Deep Adaptation Forum as a way of finding resources, people and a community to offer that kind of support. There is also a database of practitioners who offer support: http://guidance.deepadaptation.info

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The responsibility of communicating difficult truths about climate influenced societal disruption and collapse: An introduction to psychological research

A literature review[1]

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Abstract

This paper presents a review of psychology research that can help people begin to assess the different ways they can responsibly support each other to talk about their thoughts and feelings on their perceptions of societal disruption and collapse, at home and abroad, due to environmental and climate change. It includes a summary of a review of published studies in psychology on matters of anticipating difficult futures, including vulnerability, disruption, disaster, suffering and mortality. The claims by both specialists and non-specialists that collapse anticipation is necessarily harmful to mental health and social engagement is shown to be theoretically and empirically weak. Instead, the research suggests we engage each other on this upsetting topic to promote coping. It highlights the potential for that engagement to support people with processing difficult emotions and thus finding more pro-social and pro-environmental ways of responding to societal disturbances.

Whakarāpopotonga

E horaina ana e tēnei pepa he arotakahanga o te rangahau hinengaro taea te āwhina tangata ki te aromatwai i ngā tūmomo huarahi taea e rātau te āta tautoko tahi i a rātau anō ki te kōrero mō ō rātau whakaaro me ā rātau tirohanga ki ngāi mahi tutū, whakatanuku rō hāpori, i te kāinga me tāwāhi puta ake i ngā panonihanga o te taiao me te huarere. Huia mai hoki he

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whakarāpopotonga o ngā arotakenga rangahau hinengaro kua tāia e aro ana ki ngā take whakaneinei anamata uaua, tae atu ki te pānekeneketanga, te tutūnga, te aituā, te pākatokatonga me te mate. E kitea ana, ko te whakapae ā ngā mātanga me ngā mātanga-noa e pēhi whakaneinei ana, he mate kino ki te hauora hinengaro me ngā take hāpori e whākina ana he whakaarohanga he aromatawaihanga haumate. Mahue kē, te rangahau e tautoko ana me aro tātau ki a tātau anō i tēnei kaupapa mōrikarika hai whakatairanga oranga. Ka whakahiraina te torohūngā mō tērā aronga tautoko tangata ki te hātepe kare-ā-roto uaua ā, otīa kitea ai ētahi atu huarahi whakaratanga hāpori, whakataunga taiao whakautu i ngā whawhenga hāpori.

Key words: climate psychology; eco anxiety; emotion; post-traumatic growth; climate change; natural disaster; mental health; community care.

Acknowledgements

As I sit down to write these acknowledgements, a fire is raging through forests and bush on the outskirts of my city, only a short 30 minute drive from my home. The sky is an eerie orange colour as the sun shines through layers of smoke, and ash is raining in my garden. The streets are quiet, as our city is in the middle of another hard lock down due to a community case of a mutated strain of COVID-19. This summer has once again been hot and dry, and the windy weather means this fire is expected to burn for the next few days, despite the best efforts of brave firefighters and volunteers. As a mother, I worry about how this fire will affect my asthmatic children's breathing over the coming days and nights, and I check the Ventolin levels of their inhalers. As a friend, my mind is turned towards those I know who are on standby for potential evacuation, as well as those I know who have homes within the fire zone and I have yet to hear back from. Although over 70 homes have been destroyed so far, there have been no recorded deaths or civilian hospitalisations, and this brings a little comfort. As I sit with my anxiety and grief over the devastating effects of climate change, I am aware that I am but one person in this whole world of people who also have been, are, and will be navigating emotional experiences for similar reasons. These acknowledgements I extend to you.

Firstly, I am aware that we are not the first people to grieve the loss of land and ecosystems, the loss of a way of life, and the loss of how our culture functions. We are not the first people who fear the ravaging destruction of disease. We are not the first people to have our liberties and autonomy limited. We are not the first people to be separated from family and loved ones indefinitely. I extend my first acknowledgements to Traditional Land Owners, who are intimately acquainted with the grief and trauma of loss of country, culture, community, family, and identity. I write from Boorloo, the land of the Wadjuk people of the Noongar Nation.

Secondly, I want to acknowledge those who live in parts of the world where the effects of climate change are already being experienced. I acknowledge your grief as your way of life changes dramatically, and I want you to know that your pain is seen, and your cries are heard. Our efforts are for you.

Thirdly, I want to acknowledge those who work in their respective fields and spheres to bring about knowledge, awareness, support, advocacy, solutions, healing, and change in

respect to climate change. There are people who have dedicated their lives to work tirelessly in this area, and for you I am very grateful.

Finally, and definitely not least, I want to acknowledge the children of this earth. Yours is a difficult and uncertain future. I encourage you to continue to challenge us and hold us accountable for our decisions and efforts. I encourage you to remind us of your capacity for bravery, resilience, creativity, and innovation. I encourage you to speak out when you see injustice, and speak up when you imagine solutions. I encourage you to continuously cultivate empathy within yourselves, and seek to work together with compassion and solidarity.

Introduction

Over the past few decades, climate scientists have expressed increasing concern about the effects of climate change on our biosphere, and in turn, societal functioning (World Meteorological Organisation, 1986). The increasing awareness of our severe predicament throughout academic, activist, and mainstream contexts, activates emotional responses to this issue (Berry & Peel, 2015; Clayton & Karazsia, 2020; Comtesse et al, 2021; Consulo & Ellis, 2018). These responses are termed 'climate anxiety', 'solastalgia', 'eco grief', and 'eco anger'. Consensus is lacking as to how this information is received by the public, and what kinds of action it stimulates. Some believe that the overwhelming enormity of the climate emergency will lead to inaction, and therefore communication should be moderated to account for this (Strunz et al, 2018). Meanwhile, other voices provide evidence that people should embrace emotional responses, make meaning of these, and use them as the impetus for making the necessary shifts in society to navigate the uncertain future (Girons Lopez et al, 2017; Greer et al, 2018; Lindell et al, 2016; Rollason et al, 2018; Zhao et al, 2019). Climate anxiety is becoming a field of study in its own right, drawing from the diversity of knowledge within schools of psychology, neuroscience, anthropology, politics, sociology, philosophy, environmentalism, and economics. Given the variety of frameworks used to approach this area of research, there is the opportunity for a well-informed approach to communication on this topic collectively, and in solidarity. This review seeks to provide a systematic overview of the current research available on climate anxiety throughout the psychology literature.

In 1985, the United Nations released a statement entitled "Greenhouse Gases and Climate" (World Meteorological Organisation, 1986) which documented the increase of carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere and the associated effects, including changes in climate. In that report, it was stated that social and economic decisions at the time were being made on the assumption that the climate would remain stable for the foreseeable future. However, the panel of scientists concluded that such stability was no longer assumed and was therefore no longer a reliable guide to decision making. Based on the available information they declared it a matter of urgency to readjust social and economic directions. In the list of government and policy recommendations that followed, the second recommendation was the need for public communication regarding the extent of the climate emergency, including wide distribution of the report which documented inevitable and potentially irreversible climate change.

Since this time, public communication from scientists regarding climate change has

increased. However, the discussion of climate change has become politicalised with some confusion regarding what constitutes speaking from science versus speaking from political ideology (Chandler, 2006). Despite the scientific platform, there is still active resistance and suppression from those who struggle to acknowledge the severity of the climate emergency (Nuccitelli, 2014). Alongside this, due to current and expected ecological losses within the biosphere, strong emotions of distress have been activated globally (Consulo & Ellis, 2018). This rise in emotionality provokes concerns that it will lead to inaction, paralysis and reductions in pro-environmental behaviour (Wolfe & Tubi, 2019). Subsequently, there has been fear expressed regarding the impact on mental health from the public communication and discussion of climate change projections (Swim et al, 2011).

Given the highly charged nature of climate change information and the urgency with which it needs to be delivered it is vital that any generalisations drawn from research are factually based. Some of the articles on climate change related emotional responses suggest they lead to inaction. Such papers suggest considerations that climate change will lead to societal disruption or collapse are characterised by apathy. For example, Strunz et al (2018) argue that "collapse-warnings are psychologically ineffective because they might induce fear and guilt, which leads to apathy not action" (p. 1718), and that there is a risk that the "negative emotions triggered by collapse warnings even turn out to be counterproductive" (p. 1724). In supporting these claims Strunz et al cite experimental papers that investigate the impacts of risk related information being included in educational material (Chen, 2016; Keller, 1999); papers that mention the cohort of climate responders who doubt that humans will make enough change in time to avoid disruption or collapse (Ereaut & Segnit, 2006; Gifford, 2011); experimental papers investigating the response to risk salient environmental information (Buttlar et al, 2017); and experimental papers investigating the use of positive messaging on subsequent behaviour (Jacobson et al., 2018; Van de Velde et al., 2010). Despite the clarity of the authors' claims, the citations used to support those claims do not provide convincing evidence that this is the strongest conclusion.

Experimental studies cited by Strunz et al (2018) extrapolate from unrelated contexts, such as sorority member condom use following safe-sex information dissemination (Keller, 1999), and smaller scale fear appeal communication studies in which the authors themselves caution against being generalised (Chen, 2016). Studies used to support the suggestion that concern regarding societal disruption or collapse is inherently apathetic reference qualitative work describing the available narratives on climate change, rather than experimental studies exploring correlations between attitudes and behaviour (Ereaut & Segnit, 2006). Other studies, although climate change related, are cited as evidence of apathy despite not directly suggesting so. For example, rather than implying apathy, Gifford (2011) describes a type of climate responder who believes that *individual* responsibility and action is not enough to make enough of a difference to the emergency; Jacobson et al (2018) reports that positive rather than negative video messaging led to participants giving more to a conservation charity; and Van de Velde et al. (2010) recommends that messages regarding climate change provide guidance regarding pro-environmental responses in order to be effective. Although there are experimental studies that are directly related to the effects of environmental disaster messaging on behaviour, some, such as Buttlar et al (2017), do not sufficiently analyse their data and make claims that are not statistically evidenced.

Other papers report important distinctions between types of climate change doubt (not to be confused with climate change denial): constructive doubt includes those who do not believe that humanity will do enough to prevent the effects of climate change; fatalistic doubt includes those who believe that environmental impacts are in the hands of a greater force such as God or Mother Nature (Marlon et al, 2019). In this study, although fatalistic doubt was linked to inaction, constructive doubt was linked to increases in pro-environmental behaviour thereby contradicting the view that considering societal disruption or collapse leads to apathy. Other perspectives on the discussion of potential societal disruption or collapse suggest that it is reasonable to believe it is too late to prevent climate change induced human suffering and yet still work towards environmental and societal preservation (Moser, 2020). Furthermore, Moser (2020) suggests that climate change induced human suffering and societal disruption is already occurring in some areas of the globe, and thus to consider this perspective to be a worst-case scenario or 'doomsday response' is unreasonable.

Despite strong emotional reactions to climate change information being common, and expected, the field of research into this area is still in its infancy. Research regarding the impacts of climate change on humans focuses on physical health, with limited consideration of mental health impacts. As such, there is very little evidence documenting the epidemiological mental health outcomes of climate change (Berry & Bowen, 2010). The available research indicates that mental health can be affected directly or indirectly by climate change (Page & Howard, 2010). Direct effects include lived experience and exposure to natural disasters and extreme weather events such as fire, storms, and floods. Indirect and chronic impacts on mental health are due to secondary stressors of climate change such as loss of food supply, displacement, and loss of homes (Comtesse et al, 2021).

The emotional responses due to the direct and indirect effects of climate change have been termed eco grief, climate anxiety, solastalgia, and eco anger. Although there is overlap in their development, they are considered to be distinct phenomenological experiences (Comtesse et al, 2021). Eco grief refers to the sense of sadness due to losses within the biosphere. This can be experienced due to past and present losses of species, ecosystems, and landscapes; loss of environmental knowledge, connection with land, and related cultures and identities; as well as anticipated environmental and lifestyle losses (Berry & Peel, 2015; Clayton & Karazsia, 2020; Comtesse et al, 2021). Grief is a natural response to loss and although there is much understanding of the emotional and physiological components of grief, this is yet to include the grief of losses within the environmental world (Consulo & Ellis, 2018). This type of grief is not well understood or tolerated within secular contexts. Solastalgia, similar to eco grief, refers to a sense of sadness that is specific to an individual's sense of home, familiarity, and belongingness to place (Comtesse et al, 2021). Solastalgia arises from the awareness that the places forming part of one's identity will no longer exist in their current state. It has been described as a sense of homesickness whilst being at home. Climate anxiety is future oriented and refers to the anticipation of the hardships that come with climate change (Comtesse et al, 2021). This can be due to lived experience of natural disaster, relating to post traumatic stress, or pre-empting the trauma to come due to knowing the impacts of climate change on the environment. Recently, 'eco anger' is being researched. It is defined as anger related to the human induced impacts on the environment and a sense

of wanting to protect and preserve it (Stanley et al, 2021). The initial research suggests that 'eco anger' propels individuals to act in a protective manner towards the environment. The way anger is related to other emotions, whether subsequent to love and fear, and how it leads to other emotions over time (Greenberg, 2008), depending on expression and feedback, is yet to be further investigated in this context.

This systematic descriptive review of the psychology literature finds little evidence to support the concerns that increasing emotional responses to climate change will reduce pro-environmental behaviour or that it is necessary to moderate climate communication. Evidence for inaction comes from research into social, political and economic attitudes to climate change, as well as uncertainty or mistrust regarding the evidence supporting climate change (Berry & Peel, 2015). However more research suggests that climate anxiety and eco grief are inherently 'adaptive' emotional experiences and increase the likelihood of pro-environmental behaviour (Comtesse et al, 2021). The word 'adaptive' in this context means psychologically positive. As climate anxiety is future oriented, it can provide impetus for adaptive and pre-emptive preparations or precautions (Clayton & Karazsia, 2020).

A scale to assess the strength of individuals' identification with environmental issues found that higher levels of environmental identification was linked to higher risk of climate anxiety as well as greater pro-environmental behaviour (Clayton & Karazsia, 2020). Furthermore, the creation and validation of a climate anxiety measure found that negative emotions identified (sad, scared, angry, etc.) were distinguishable from clinical levels of anxiety; in other words, they are not psychopathological. Additionally, these negative emotional responses to climate change were indicative of higher levels of pro-environmental behaviour. This study also found that clinical anxiety was not correlated with environmental behaviour. It is important to note that if anxiety was associated with apathy or paralysis, a negative correlation with behaviour would have been present (Clayton & Karazsia, 2020).

These findings indicate that climate anxiety and discussion about climate change and adaptation should not be assumed to be synonymous with paralysis and overwhelm (Berry & Peel, 2015). Moreover, currently there is no research to suggest any causal link between climate anxiety and clinical pathology (Berry & Peel, 2015). As such, the mental health impacts of climate change need to be approached with an awareness that over-pathologising of their reactions misses opportunities to harness their adaptive potential (Berry & Bowen, 2010). In the mental health promotion field, good mental health has been described as the ability to engage with and live with our own emotional experiences and those of others (Herman, 2001). Since climate related emotional experiences are not inherently pathological and may increase pro-environmental behaviour, this definition suggests that climate related emotions could in fact be indicative of good mental health. Rather than avoiding or aiming to suppress such emotions, supporting people's ability to process their feelings may help to enhance their adaptive effect on pro-environmental behaviour.

Throughout the eco grief and climate anxiety literature, authors encourage further research into this phenomenon to both increase understanding of these emotions, and to support those experiencing them (Berry & Bowen, 2010; Berry & Peel, 2015; Clayton & Karazsia, 2020; Comtesse et al, 2021). Literature addressing how to support people who have these experiences highlights the growing evidence that eco grief may have a large impact on children (Clayton et al, 2017). Surveys suggest that a sizable proportion of children and

adolescents are concerned about climate change and its impacts. As such, policy and intervention should consider implementing early intervention services to enable this demographic to be well supported in their resilience, which is enhanced by the capacity for emotional processing and reflective functioning (Clayton et al, 2017). As this area of research is emerging, there is currently no integrative framework for understanding and responding to mental health concerns due to climate change (Berry & Bowen, 2010). The available research encourages communication regarding climate change to attend to the framing of public messages by taking into account the context of the audience, and insight into cognition and emotion.

Another recommendation is the need for provision of services to support those with underlying psychiatric conditions in order to manage any distress due to potential comorbidity with eco-grief and climate anxiety (Berry & Peel, 2015). Furthermore, recommendations encourage the building of healthy community relationships and collective emotional resilience, both of which are protective factors in mental health (Berry & Peel, 2015). Eco grief and climate anxiety are not yet well understood despite becoming more prevalent within communities as climate change impacts increase. More research is needed to identify ways to support and process this grief as environmental and societal losses increase (Consulo & Ellis, 2018).

In a response to the need for more public discussion regarding climate change, this systematic descriptive review seeks to investigate and describe the research available within and beyond the specific field of eco grief and climate anxiety. Through six separate topics, this review seeks to explore communication of climate emergency to a public audience, as well as the potential public responses to this information. The six topics were generated by discussions between members of the Deep Adaptation Forum and psychologists, as they sought to clarify the understandings from which they were working. Climate change and its impact on humanity is a multifaceted and systemic issue, and as such, synthesising the diversity of knowledge from various fields in addressing this issue is necessary. This review seeks to explore perspectives within psychology and neuroscience in providing insight into these questions. This review is exploratory in nature and seeks to describe the various perspectives that can inform the formulation of this communication. The aim of this paper is not to provide an exhaustive review of the literature for each question. This paper is an attempt to deliver a 'snapshot' of the salient research available for each question with the intention of providing evidence that there is potential for a cohesive, systemic, and synthesised approach in understanding these.

Method

Materials

The range of databases used pertained to social sciences, humanities, and environment. These included: Annual Reviews, Australia and New Zealand Database, BioMed Central, Cochrane Library, Directory of Open Access Journals, Gale Academic OneFile, Informit Families and Society Collection, Informit Health Collection, JSTOR Arts and Sciences I–IV Collections, MA Healthcare, Oxford Journals, Oxford Medical Online, ProQuest Central,

SAGE Journals, Science Direct, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis Journals, Walter de Gruyter eJournals, and WorldCat.org.

Procedure

Key words for each topic of enquiry were chosen and then entered in a step-wise sequence in order to refine the number of results produced. In order to cover the most relevant research the target quantity for search output was set at less than 100 articles per topic, with approximately five articles to be included in the final selection for each search. The scope of each search was limited to only include peer-reviewed, full-text, journal articles from the last ten years. Larger result quantities were further restricted to the last five years. The results were then screened by title to assess for those that were related to the topic being researched. These articles were then further screened by abstract to only include those that were related to the research question. The remaining articles were read in their entirety, and those that were relevant to providing depth and insight into the research question were included in this document.

Results

Topic 1:

The psychological impact of hearing grim predictions, from apathy to motivation, depends on how we help each other to process the implications of that foresight, including attention to the intellectual, emotional and physiological aspects of ourselves. There is a skill to be learned about how to break bad news and help each other integrate that bad news.
Key words: Disaster, emotion, social support, community.
Timeframe: Articles published within the last five years.
Initial journal output: 361 articles were generated.
Screening scope: Inclusion criteria encompassed articles that investigated 'bad news' in a variety of contexts and the impact this has on the receiver. Articles investigating this retrospectively to make recommendations were included. Articles that investigated different types of human experiences in the midst of crises were included.
Articles included in the review: Garcia & Rime, 2019; Geiger et al, 2017; Gianisa & Le De, 2018; Gillilan et al, 2017; Johal & Mounsey, 2016; Lin et al, 2020.

Topic 2:

It is not predetermined how people respond to their perception of the increased vulnerability of them and their loved ones. It can lead to a range of different emotional (and neurobiological) and intellectual responses (in the immediate moment and over the longer term i.e. things change as people process emotions and discuss). Different pathways of response to increased vulnerability are influenced by context. In other words, although increasing fear often leads to support for simplistic, authoritarian and xenophobic ideas, it can lead to other responses, and depends on how we help each other process the emotions of vulnerability.
Key words: Crisis, fear, political support, society, emotional processing.
Timeframe: Articles published within the last five years.

Initial journal output: 48 articles were generated.
Screening scope: Inclusion criteria encompassed articles that investigated the way individuals and societies respond during crises. Intercultural interactions during crises were included. Communication regarding crises and the impact on public and individual perceptions and behaviours were included.
Articles included in the review: Courtney et al, 2020; Jost, 2017; Lamprianou & Ellinas, 2019; Mukhtar, 2020; Pyszczynski et al, 2020; Rothmund et al, 2017; Wolfe & Tubi, 2019; Yang et al, 2018.

Topic 3:

It is not proven that to foresee a calamity as probable or certain undermines action, with much evidence to the contrary.
Key words: Risk perception, behavioural response, natural disaster.
Timeframe: Articles published within the last five years.
Initial journal output: 157 articles were generated.
Screening scope: Inclusion criteria encompassed papers that investigated crises and how they are communicated to the public as well as social responses to these emotionally and behaviourally.
Articles included in the review: Girons Lopez et al, 2017; Greer et al, 2018; Lindell et al, 2016; Rollason et al, 2018; Zhao et al, 2019.

Topic 4:

Mental health can be supported through more honesty about our thoughts and emotions (including vulnerability about those) and more connection and dialogue with others. Conversely the avoidance of issues and the suppression of emotions about those issues is unhelpful for mental health and wellbeing.
Key words: Emotional processing, change mechanism, adaptive, affect avoidant.
Timeframe: Articles published within the last ten years.
Initial journal output: 563 articles were generated.
Screening scope: Exclusion criteria included articles addressing therapy style efficacy as this was not useful to question. Inclusion criteria attended to articles that investigate process of change within experimental conditions and attention was paid to whether the sample population was clinical or non-clinical for extrapolation purposes.
Articles included in the review: Messina et al, 2016; Pascual-Leone, 2018; Riedel et al, 2018; Rohde et al, 2015; Scherer et al, 2017; van der Linden, 2014.

Topic 5:

Transference of responsibilities, or deference, to perceived authorities on matters of mental health and wellbeing are unhelpful for positive mental health outcomes. Instead, commitment to collective co-responsibility is helpful for mental health and wellbeing.
Key words: Community care, mental health, peer provider, co-design, minority, meta analysis.
Timeframe: Articles published within the last five years.
Initial journal output: 127 articles were generated.

Screening scope: Inclusion criteria encompassed articles pertaining to the provision of mental health intervention as well as articles pertaining to the development and governance of these interventions. Screening also extended to included findings pertaining to how demographics access mental health programs or awareness of demographic mental health disparities.
Articles included in the review: Ayano, 2018; Mantovani et al, 2017; Marshall et al, 2020; Ridley et al, 2018; Sweeney et al, 2019; Zapolski et al, 2017.

Topic 6:

Those people who can allow foresight of calamity into their current experience might be able to help other people later on, if they have time to process the implications for themselves now.
Key words: Post traumatic growth, compassion, empathy.
Timeframe: Due to limited results when screened by timeframe, this topic did not include a timeframe scope.
Initial journal output: 65 articles were generated.
Screening scope: Inclusion criteria encompassed articles that investigated how people grow from trauma and what leads them to help others.
Articles included in the review: Armstrong et al, 2014; Hallam & Morris, 2013; Kashdan & Kane, 2011; Pollard & Kennedy, 2007; Scrignaro et al, 2018; Sifaki-Pistolla et al, 2017; Slavin-Spenny et al, 2010; Staub & Vollhardt, 2008.

Discussion

Topic 1:

The psychological impact of hearing grim predictions, from apathy to motivation, depends on how we help each other to process the implications of that foresight, including attention to the intellectual, emotional and physiological aspects of ourselves. There is a skill to be learned about how to break bad news and help each other integrate that bad news.

The research generated for this topic was not specific to hearing predictions; however, it does document how people respond within crises in various ways. The various contexts included in this topic cover initial responses to disasters in a collective manner, as well as receiving diagnosis and prognosis news of loved ones. In addition, the neural processes underlying observation of the harm being done to others are included. The lack of research regarding pre-emptive responses to receiving alarming news highlights a need for more research to be done in this area.

Johal & Mounsey (2016) investigated the needs of communities who had been impacted by natural disaster in order to understand how to prepare communities to respond well to these. They found that communities affected by floods will best be served by responding organisations that are cognisant of the potential psychosocial and mental health impacts. This indicates that although physical safety and shelter are the initial priorities when providing aid to devastated communities, the psychosocial determinants of health should not be underestimated. For communities to be well supported post-disaster, response

agencies should support emotional well-being, recognise and respond to community distress, and take action to prevent onset of additional mental health problems. These responses need to be flexible to individual needs and take into account people's existing psychosocial factors such as socioeconomic circumstances.

The most frequently reported coping strategies following natural disaster are rational, detached and avoidant, with the least frequent being emotional coping. This indicates that although physical needs may be taken care of, the survivors' emotional and social needs will suffer, both short term and long term. In order to process this experience and support others in this process, emotional and social engagement is needed. Greater amounts of time spent volunteering in flood efforts were associated with increased feelings of belongingness and decreased feelings of burdensomeness. Both of these indicate that these volunteers are engaging emotionally and socially. In addition, these are both protective factors against suicide. Research suggests that higher 'stoicism', in which an individual employs distraction or emotional avoidance as coping strategies, is associated with higher post-disaster depression and poorer self-reported mental health. Similarly, the use of maladaptive coping, such as venting and distraction, were also associated with greater deterioration in mental health after floods. This indicates that coping strategies that avoid or suppress emotional engagement have negative long-term effects. Conversely, emotion-focused coping such as acceptance, positive reframing, and humour, were protective against such deterioration.

Research into the biopsychosocial determinants of health often exclude spirituality from its investigation. Gianisa & Le De (2018) considered the impact that spirituality and religious engagement has on post-disaster recovery. There were initial concerns that portraying disasters as divine retribution might create a fatalistic attitude. This could leave the community more vulnerable and hinder efforts to tackle the root causes of disaster. In contrast, findings suggest that the religious beliefs of the community created positive re-evaluations of the event and strengthened the social links within and between local communities. Religious beliefs and practices, as part of the culture, appeared to be one of the key resources participants mobilised to overcome the disaster. These beliefs gave the Confucian and Muslim participants a way to cope with the 2009 earthquake by providing them with, what the researchers define as, answers and hope. The researchers found that praying positively improved their ability to cope by reaffirming their view that every event is caused by God. This belief, which relates to the concept in many religions including Islam of surrendering-to-what-occurs, then provided them with the strength to face the event. This is in line with different studies showing that religious beliefs provide people with a sense of power, intrinsic self-worth, optimism, a low level of depression and a feeling of control and safety. Although these beliefs may not be scientifically evidenced, in these communities they were protective by providing hope and connection within the community. This does not provide information on the effect that this has on motivation to overcome climate change; however, it does indicate that spirituality is an important factor in post-disaster recovery. Similarly, when faced with existential grief in palliative care, there is a need for an individual to be assessed as a whole, which is inclusive of their spirituality (Gillilan et al, 2017).

Lin et al (2020) investigated the experience of parents being told by medical practitioners that their child was very sick, vulnerable, and potentially dying. They reviewed over 100 articles to identify themes within this body of literature. Theme one revealed that parents

and children experienced feeling invisible and powerless in this process. There was a sense of feeling displaced when told the news and the following events often led to a sense of being undermined by authorities. Through this process patients and parents sometimes felt betrayed by staff and became distrustful. Within this theme was a strong experience of feeling helpless and intimidated. This process was also disempowering when there was a lack of information provided. This theme indicates that in breaking bad news, there is a need for more awareness of the powerlessness and vulnerability of the audience. When these people have information withheld from them or their needs being undermined by authorities, this is a disempowering process and can lead to feeling betrayed and distrustful.

The second theme was of fear and worry for the future. When individuals were given this bad news, their initial response was often paralysis. This would then be followed by uncertainty and dread as they were unable to foresee how this would develop over time and how they could process this with their loved ones. This anticipation often led to a need to discuss intimate and private topics. This indicates the delicacy of delivering this news, and to be cognisant of the multifaceted impact it has on individuals. Although delivering the news may be within the scope of intervention for the clinician, this news permeates the most intimate aspects of the client's lives.

The third theme was burdened with responsibility. With this news came a sense of pressure and the children diagnosed felt a need to balance the external expectations of others whilst also navigating an internal sense of being unprepared and wishing to preserve their parents' hope that they would survive, in order to reduce their parents' pain. These associated tasks that come with this news also have a high pressure on parents. As such, deliverers of news should be aware of these pressures and provide support for these other aspects that then may enable patients to process this news.

The fourth theme was the sense of emotional support and encouragement. There were experiences in which parents felt supported emotionally and encouraged by those around them through this process. This theme came with a sense of being validated in their 'personhood' as all aspects of themselves were encouraged and supported. Within this theme was a sense of companionship. This theme highlights the importance of understanding the person as a whole in the delivery of 'bad news'. The presence of connection and validation are important aspects when processing news that may change the paradigm of someone's life.

The fifth theme revealed in this process was of safety and trust. When individuals felt that their clinicians were being truthful and transparent, they trusted them. When they felt aware of the intricacies of the situation and were able to understand them, they felt prepared for the future. When experts were able to connect with the emotion of fear in clients, this was a reassuring process. And when the adults were experiencing a sense of trust and agency within this uncertain situation, the children felt as though they could depend on the adults for protection and direction. This theme was permeated by a sense of security in expressing opinions and needs, and the ability of clinicians to receive these and process these with their clients. This theme speaks of the need for benevolent leadership within the impartation of bad news, as well as the openness to receive the fears and curiosities of those receiving the news.

The last theme was empowerment and assertive agency. In this theme, individuals expressed their rights for individual knowledge and choice, they asserted control over their lives, they engaged in a healthy partnership and mutual respect throughout the process, and

this gave them the enhanced capacity for self-management. This last theme indicates that this process, when navigated well, can be an empowering one that leads to agency and assertiveness. This agency occurs within the context of mutual respect and openness.

Literature investigating the collective trauma of survivors and communities after incidents of domestic terrorism looked for ways that communities find resilience in the aftermath of attack (Garcia & Rimé, 2019). Emotional engagement was an important factor within this and with long-term expressions of solidarity being related to the previous participation in collective emotions. This indicates that those who are familiar with emotionally engaging with their own concerns, as well as alongside others, find this process post-disaster to be more intuitive. This then leads to a sense of solidarity, connection, and support within communities. These collective emotions are foundational to further psychological phenomena, such as group-based emotions and collective action. When a society experiences trauma on a widespread scale, the emotional response is not simply a collection of simultaneous negative emotional responses from many individuals. It is in fact a collective emotional experience, felt as a whole, that can lead to long-term solidarity, the activation of social processes, the use of language related to prosocial behaviour, and the expression of positive affect. These findings suggest that it is not despite the distress of the community that they are more united after a terrorist attack, but it is precisely because of their shared distress that their emotional bonds become stronger. This collective processing of grief and assertiveness provides societies with the strength and resilience to adapt to face the new threats.

Geiger et al (2017) investigated the neural processes that are engaged when viewing information about environmental destruction and animal cruelty. These findings illustrate the phenomenon of mirror neurons when watching another in pain. It is known that when observing another human, these neuronal networks become activated leaving the observer 'feeling' what the other is feeling. This process is the foundation of empathy and activates an observer to help when the other is in pain. Geiger et al (2017) looks at these neural pathways and the link to empathy when observing destruction of the environment. There are neural overlaps between observing suffering in animals and observing suffering in humans. As such, when receiving messages involving environmental destruction and its impact on animals, individuals are likely to have empathic responses and feel compelled to help. This is acknowledged as an impetus for engaging with animal activism.

This knowledge can be used to understand why people then become engaged with protecting the environment. When observing environmental destruction, there are overlaps between the neural pathways that lead to empathic concern for humans and animals; however, these neural responses are somewhat muted compared to those elicited by human and animal subjects. This is important as it demonstrates that humans are neurologically predisposed to be drawn to act upon visually noticing distress in others, when the individual identifies with that distress; the greater the individual identifies with the distress, the greater their urge to act.

The literature generated in this search highlights that when taking into account recovery post-disaster, it is important to consider all aspects of a person. Whilst physical needs are focused on by aid volunteers, often the psychosocial aspects are overlooked. Research shows that when these aspects are overlooked, many individuals do not have the skills to navigate

their emotional experiences within this trauma and therefore employ avoidant or suppressive coping mechanisms, which leads to post disaster depression. When social and emotional engagement is enabled, risk of long-term depression including suicide is lowered.

The process of delivering bad news and how this can impact the receiver has been explored in this systematic review. Openness, honesty, respect, and rapport building from the person delivering the news provided trust, safety, agency and assertiveness in the receiver. On a societal level, when a community is faced with a collective trauma, their ability to express their emotions collectively and support each other determines how resilient they can become to face further threats. Consequently, there is research to support Topic 1.

Topic 2:

It is not predetermined how people respond to their perception of the increased vulnerability of them and their loved ones. It can lead to a range of different emotional (and neurobiological) and intellectual responses (in the immediate moment and over the longer term i.e., things change as people process emotions and discuss). Different pathways of response to increased vulnerability are influenced by context. In other words, although increasing fear often leads to support for simplistic, authoritarian and xenophobic ideas, it can lead to other responses, and depends on how we help each other process the emotions of vulnerability.

During times of crisis, there are often multifaceted aspects to how this is navigated that can impact the mental health of society. Many of the risk factors that are present during these times are precipitated by a sense of fear, which leads to perceptions and behaviour as a response to that fear. The results generated in exploring this topic discuss the emergence of conspiracy theories, misinformation, and disinformation, which can lead to racism and discrimination. There are also political implications of circumstances that incite anxiety. Political ideologies have tendencies towards either rigidity or flexibility, and the ability to tolerate ambiguity, collaborate with outgroups, and apply reflective cognitive functioning in order to adapt to circumstances are all vital to resilience and resourcefulness during crisis. The research regarding this topic has been more focused on risk averse and trauma informed approaches to navigating emotional responses and does not clearly document the adaptive and positive communal responses that have emerged during these events.

Several studies have included insights from Terror Management Theory (TMT) into their conceptualisation of the response to climate change and its associated effects. Wolfe & Tubi (2018) argue that climate change communication can include material that increases mortality salience, which is an individual's awareness of their death, a key component in TMT. For some people, such information can trigger a deep existential terror which can be overwhelming for an individual to experience. Due to this, defence mechanisms and cognitive biases are employed in order for the individual to maintain cognitive and emotional equilibrium. Wolfe & Tubi (2018) reviews a body of literature in which mortality salience triggered by discussion of climate related disasters leads to non pro-environmental behaviours. This research reveals that under these circumstances, there is an increase in exploitation of natural resources and material consumption, and a decrease in perceived connection to, and desire to protect, nonhuman species. However, the authors found that when mortality salience was presented within the context of pro-environmental behaviour becoming a social norm, as well as the mortality salience becoming highly personal for receivers of the climate

communication, then this information leads to pro-environmental behaviour.

Pyszczynski et al (2020) and Courtney et al (2020) consider the role of mortality salience (the underpinnings of TMT) within responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. Their research indicates that the constant reminder of death through pandemic news has led to divergent, or avoidant, behaviours seen in an increase in food consumption, television viewing, alcohol consumption, and engaging in conversation aiming at a trivialisation of the situation. Adaptive responses to the mortality salience since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic have been to engage in social distancing, obey health directives, follow WHO advice on pro-social hygienic behaviour as well as engaging in social justice causes, such as Black Lives Matter protests.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a large impact on collective mental health (Mukhtar, 2020). Throughout this context, there have been patterns of behaviour and beliefs that have emerged out of fear. The restrictions in response to COVID-19, in conjunction with the global impact of the disease, has led to intense psychosocial issues and compromised mental health. Mukhtar (2020) has identified an array of risk factors that have impacted mental health during this time. Lifestyle factors have been indicated as a result of globally implemented preventive and restrictive measures. These new measures have limited the usual coping and resilience factors, such as social support, which have made supporting mental health a challenge. Many beliefs emerging from fear have been circulating inclusive of conspiracy theories, misinformation, and disinformation. These have in turn increased fear levels and removed focus from collective mental health to protection of the immediate self or suspicion of the status quo. In addition, there has been a global socioeconomic crisis as many individuals have lost their livelihoods and loved ones, and have been limited in their access to travel, entertainment, and social or religious gatherings. These all impact the ability for recreational activity, connection with loved ones and expression of identity. Other panic-related behaviour includes panic buying and hoarding, and xenophobia and discrimination. These indicate the inherent role that fear plays in the shrinking of in-group inclusion criteria as a way to protect the individual from perceived harm. On a macro scale there has been the psychological pressure of productivity, overwhelm of medical centres and health organisations, and general impact on education, politics, socioeconomic, culture, environment and climate. Although this research does not provide solutions to these risk factors, the identification of such is important for being aware of the multifaceted nature of the risk factors to mental health and the responses, in order to be prepared for future similar effects.

Opposing responses to vulnerable out-groups from in-groups in society during the Euro-crisis were observed (Rothmund et al, 2017). During the Euro-crisis there were polarised opinions regarding for and against ‘bailing out’ other countries within the European Union. The difference between these two groups was investigated to discover any underlying group characteristics. Observer-sensitive individuals were those who responded to the vulnerable with empathic concern and anger on their behalf. The empathic concern also extended to the intergroup level and was directly related to policy attitudes in this context. These individuals also showed reduced anger regarding the behaviour of disadvantaged out-groups and this partially accounts for why observer-sensitive individuals are able to support intergroup solidarity. This indicates that during crises, some individuals will respond to this crisis with empathy towards those outside the in-group and be tolerant

of the behaviours that result from fear and discrimination. During these times, these people will remain supportive of intergroup dynamics and respond towards others with a sense of solidarity. In contrast, people high on victim-sensitivity are those who see the vulnerable population and are sensitive to feeling suspicious and rejecting of these people. This group is less likely to favour the idea of solidarity compared to people low on victim-sensitivity. The impact of victim-sensitivity was fully mediated by higher angry resentment, lower empathic concerns and higher nationalistic concerns. This indicates that victim-sensitive individuals are more inclined to be mistrustful of others' intentions and concerned about the risk of exploitation. Furthermore, victim sensitivity is linked to anger and fear of being exploited in intergroup relations, especially with regard to disadvantaged outgroups.

Jost (2017) argues that individuals are attracted to certain political ideologies in order to meet three psychological needs: epistemic, existential, and relational needs (or motives). Behaviour that stems from these needs aims to provide a sense of safety, security, and reassurance; and a sense of identity, belongingness, and shared reality. These needs and subsequent behaviours are seen to manifest differently. Jost (2017) conducted a meta-analysis of the political nuances found in political philosophies to produce insight into the different ideologies held. The findings supported a stronger need to maintain the status quo and perceptual and cognitive rigidity in some ideologies, leading to a higher need for predictability and closure. When ideologies showed the ability to tolerate ambiguity, uncertainty, and lack of cognitive closure there was also a higher need for deliberation and consideration of their perspectives, as well as a willingness to employ cognitive resources to do so. When these results are considered in the context of crises, those who have more flexible and inclusive psychological processes are better equipped to withstand the uncertainty within crises as well as support those around them during this.

Crises such as epidemics can impact psychosocial aspects of mental health. Although crises induced by infectious disease may continue for weeks, months, or years, there is clear evidence that events at the later end of the crises are shaped by predisposing factors present in earlier stages of the crises (Yang et al, 2018). Emotional processing, both collectively and individually, impact the capacity to endure crises. On the premise that prevention is easier than repair, the author highlights the importance for research to investigate the mechanisms of the social and emotional processes that are present at early stages of crises. This knowledge is key to developing methods for emotion management through individual support and collective approaches at later stages of crises. Consequently, there is research to support Topic 2.

Topic 3:

It is not proven that to foresee a calamity as probable or certain undermines action, with much evidence to the contrary.

As climate related disasters become more common, patterns of behavioural responses to these disasters are able to be documented. The research explored within this topic demonstrates the types of behavioural responses to natural disaster. Furthermore, nuances in sequences of behavioural responses have been investigated, and regression analysis has shown a predictability to these. Research has also shown the importance of the type of communication provided at different stages of disaster, and the impact of this on behaviour and after-effects.

Zhao et al (2019) investigated how individuals respond to environmental risk and how these behaviours and perceptions differ between different stages of disaster. They found that as the weather conditions deteriorated, affect, risk perception, and behavioural intent all increased. This indicates that as disaster progresses, individuals become more emotionally engaged with the problem, are more cognitively active during the problem, and from a combination of these, they respond behaviourally. In addition, it was possible to predict behaviour at certain stages of storm progression based on the behaviour exhibited by individuals at prior stages of the storm's progression. This indicates that there is a predictable pattern of behaviour that is seen during disaster. This pattern appears to be inherently sequential with emotional, cognitive, and behavioural responses emerging in a particular order. Furthermore, these responses follow a trajectory as level of responses at one stage of a storm can indicate the level of responses at more acute stages of the storm. Furthermore, it was possible to link negative affect with risk perception, as those with greater activation were more aware of the risks present within the storm. When looking at the impact that media communication had on the individuals affected, it was found that risk perception and behavioural intention were heightened after media exposure. Media coverage of a disaster was able to impact the response to the disaster. As disasters progress, the likelihood that communication technology will fail increases. For this reason, communication by the authorities as well as between community members becomes essential for preparedness. This indicates the need to communicate the risks and evacuation plans early in the progression of a natural disaster in order to ensure this information has been received during times when technology is no longer operating.

Girons Lopez et al (2017) investigated the usefulness of preparing communities for disaster when threat of such is not imminent. In these cases, the community becomes prepared for the potential of a natural disaster and aware of how they will support each other and evacuate during this event. In the context of flooding, the findings highlight the importance of social preparedness for flood loss mitigation. It was found that efforts to promote and preserve social preparedness before the threat of disaster helped to reduce disaster-induced losses by almost one half. When faced with a threat, the typical responses fall into either a fight, flight, or freeze category. Fight and flight lead a person to either confront and address the threat or escape the threat. Freeze occurs when the person is overwhelmed and unable to respond instantly. Freeze is a frequent response during traumatic events, and prior communicated plans and social supports protect the community from the freeze response.

Whilst investigating the impact that different aspects of disaster communication have on the communities involved, Rollason et al (2018) found that threat appraisal was vital in order for residents to respond appropriately. Communication of disaster often provides information about the threat in order to make residents aware of the current and future risks to them. When this is done without providing "threat appraisal information", which assists in making meaning of the threat, residents were less likely to adopt protective behaviours. In these cases, residents employed wishful thinking, over-reliance on management organisations, denial, and learned helplessness. When threat information is provided, appraisal information should be included so that residents are informed how to respond emotionally and behaviourally. This includes providing specific risks to residents

based on their areas, projected impact of the disaster, specific plans on how to mitigate risks, and when to respond using these plans. In order to navigate their emotional responses to disaster, residents desire a greater range of information about the disaster, including locally specific information on the dynamics, which would allow them to understand their personal risk situation and how the disaster will affect them as individuals. Delivering the entire range of information available is vital to enable those at risk to judge what protective actions they can take, and when they should take action. Without these forecasts of how the disaster will progress, residents are unable to judge the potential severity of future disaster. In addition, this study found that the residents impacted by disaster desired the array of information to be provided to them. Without being informed, individuals become uncomfortable and reluctant to act blindly.

When investigating the mechanisms of change within individuals who drastically increase their risk perception and respective protective behaviours, personal impact was one of the key factors (Greer et al, 2018). When individuals do not feel as though they are personally affected by disaster, they show lower risk perception and commitment to protective behaviours. Even when risk perceptions are higher, this still did not reach the threshold for engaging in protective behaviours. Longevity of living in an area decreases the likelihood to show risk perception or desire for action in response to disaster. This is reflective of the innate bias towards maintaining the status quo, and denial of evidence that threatens it. However, when exposed to an acute natural disaster personally affecting them, residents' risk perception and protective behaviours rise significantly. In addition, longevity of living in the area then becomes positively correlated with desire for action. This highlights the importance of communicating the personal impact that disaster will have on the individual, and that their emotional response to this information is the impetus for protective behaviours.

The research generated within the review for Topic 3 gives insight into how communities respond to trauma in the immediate and long term. It has been found that when the urgency of the message to respond to expected disaster increases, and when environmental conditions pertinent to the disaster increase, risk perception of community members also increase. As risk perception increases, subsequent protective behaviours also escalate. In more acute natural disasters, such as unexpected large earthquakes, the instant response of the population is to freeze. This is an instinctive response that occurs before action. In these instances, the clear and well-established plans for evacuation, which had been communicated consistently over time prior to the disaster, were able to overcome this instinct. When individuals froze, there was less need for them to plan an appropriate response as instructions had already been scaffolded and communicated to them. In addition, it was found that without the salience of the imminent threat of the disaster, individuals were less likely to adopt protective behaviours. When individuals perceive themselves to be in danger, they then respond to this threat. Threat appraisal was required to be communicated in conjunction with clear evacuation plans in order to increase attention and a sense of urgency and decrease a sense of overwhelm or chaos. When evacuation plans are delivered, the threat appraisal becomes the impetus for the plans to be followed.

Topic 4:

Mental health can be supported through more honesty about our thoughts and emotions (including vulnerability about those) and more connection and dialogue with others. Conversely the avoidance of issues and the suppression of emotions about those issues is unhelpful for mental health and wellbeing.

The ever-increasing awareness of the climate crisis our globe is currently facing is coupled with collective emotional responses which are likely to increase in proportion with exposure to climate change effects. In order to respond appropriately to the mental health needs that are embedded within this issue, it is important to have knowledge of the most beneficial way of navigating emotions. This search looked for literature that could provide insight into how people process their emotions and cognitions, and how this could be done in such a way as to foster growth and agency.

Pascual-Leone (2018) investigated emotional expression leading to transformation and developed a model that indicates that emotions are accessed sequentially. Using this model, he suggests that it is possible to facilitate growth in an individual so that they shift towards transformative expression of emotion. This facilitation occurs by first engaging with expressions of global distress, fear or shame to make meaning of these. This research supports the suggestion that the capacity to be honest with ourselves and others regarding the nature of our emotional experiences is important for growth. When a distressing emotion is experienced or expressed in a difficult manner, the response to this should not be of alarm or an attempt to reduce this experience, but to 'lean in' and 'make space' for this experience. Doing so provides the opportunity to transform responses to a more adaptive expression such as acceptance and agency. Due to the sequence of emotions proposed by this model, the implications of discouraging expression of distress, shame or fear are that this could prevent the opportunity to process and make meaning from these. In this case, alarm about people experiencing distressing emotions could prevent transformative growth.

In addition to highlighting the importance of engaging with emotional experiences to making meaning of these, literature suggests that for this to provide a growth opportunity, it should be done in the context of intentional meaning making. This indicates that emotional expression alone is not enough for growth. Meaning making is a cognitive process and is an integral aspect of growth. Rohde et al (2015) investigated the use of emotional engagement with and without meaning making. They found that although both conditions reported a sense of relief following emotional expression, only those in the meaning making condition were found to have increased levels of resolution of their grievances, and mastery over this type of grievance. This indicates that whilst emotional engagement is vital to therapeutic outcomes, coupling this with intentional meaning making is required. The usefulness of both the cognitive and emotional aspects of exploring distress in tandem was the focus of van der Linden's (2014) research, in the context of personal responses to climate change. They found that incorporating both aspects of cognitively and emotionally exploring the eco grief in a way that was personal to the individual was also necessary. Being present with one's own emotion whilst making sense of the larger issues propelled individuals to employ information seeking behaviour.

Engaging with both emotion and cognition within a therapy context was found to be a strong predictor of therapeutic outcomes (Scherer et al., 2017). This research found that

therapeutic outcomes were positively related to cognitive reappraisal, and negatively related to reducing emotional engagement. This indicates that when individuals were facilitated to actively form reappraisals, they were more likely to have good therapeutic outcomes. However, when individuals were discouraged from engaging with their emotional experiences, they were more likely to have poor therapeutic outcomes. Although the relationships were both significant in both instances, reducing emotional engagement leading to poorer therapeutic outcomes had the larger effect size. This research shows the importance of engaging with emotional experiences during meaning making and supports the prior suggestions that cognitive and emotional processes are both important in facilitating growth. As such, when individuals are not intentionally encouraged to emotionally engage with the experiences they are reappraising, this is counterproductive to their growth and reduction of psychopathology symptomology.

The importance of engaging with emotion during cognitive reappraisal has been indicated within several neuroscientific studies. Messina et al (2016) found that reducing emotional reactivity as a catalyst for reappraisal led to a rebound effect, and further entrenched maladaptive emotional responses. This indicates that employing emotional avoidance techniques appears to be useful in the short term as an individual is visibly less distressed. However, long term avoidance has poor implications for an individual's ability to move forward; growth occurs in the engagement with emotions. This was supported by Reidel et al. (2018) research which concluded that emotional engagement was necessary for growth and understanding, as meaning making in the context of emotional arousal leads to reappraisal and reduces emotional reactivity. These studies highlight the importance of engaging with emotion whilst employing cognitive techniques to reappraise, and that exploring emotional experiences should be supported.

The research generated in this search provided strong evidence supporting the process of engaging with emotional experiences to make meaning of them as a way to support good psychological health. The research identified the importance of utilising both cognitive and emotional experiences when trying to process a distressing situation. Furthermore, it is important that both of these aspects of an experience are engaged with during this process in order to support the meaning making that is required for growth. Conversely, no research was found that supported the use of avoidance techniques or suppression of emotion. Research indicated that these responses were counterproductive to growth and meaning making, with some studies suggesting that these techniques provided a rebound effect, eventually leading to further distress.

Topic 5:

Transference of responsibilities, or deference, to perceived authorities on matters of mental health and wellbeing are unhelpful for positive mental health outcomes. Instead, commitment to collective co-responsibility is helpful for mental health and wellbeing.

In order to best support mental health and well-being, it is important to understand the complexities of how this issue is both perpetuated and protected by our societies. This area of enquiry aimed to investigate the most functional approaches to supporting mental health, taking into account the systemic nature of psychological well-being.

When investigating the experiences of accessing and initially engaging with mental

health services, Sweeney et al (2019) found that from as early as the assessment phase, the approach taken by the clinician can have a strong impact on the individual. There is an inherent power dynamic between clinicians and clients, with the clients being the vulnerable party in these interactions. When this is not managed by the clinician in a way that provides a sense of safety or autonomy in the client, this can incite distress, powerlessness, and hopelessness. This study found that when the clinician focused on establishing a good rapport with the client, and engaged in a collaborative manner, these outcomes could be avoided. It is clear that the responsibility for establishing trust, engagement, and collaboration within this power dynamic should be placed on the position of power and authority. When this is not taken into account, or managed well by the authority, this can have damaging effects on the individual, leading to disengagement.

Zapolski et al (2017) provided insight into the strengths that different cultural demographics may bring to emotional resilience. It was found that identifying with certain minority cultures had protective effects against drug use, whilst identifying with a white Western culture had the opposite effect. This research is nuanced in its approach and should be interpreted within the scope of literature of its kind; it is possible to draw further hypotheses from these results. Some minority groups have strong family and community ties. Identification with this strong collective approach may provide a sense of belonging and identity, as well as a sense of safety and protection from within the group. These aspects may protect individuals against feelings of isolation, overwhelm, and vulnerability. Although this research leads to more questions than answers in the context of the original topic, it does indicate the potential that when collective responsibility for others forms part of an individual's identity, there is less need for unhealthy coping mechanisms as support is accessible within the group. This may explain why identifying with a white Western culture did not have protective benefits, as this culture tends to focus on the importance of individuality over the collective identity. When an individual struggles in these circumstances, there is less readily available social support, more stigma regarding asking for help from others, and a greater sense of isolation. The antidote to these struggles would be shifting a cultural perspective towards mental health being a collective responsibility. In this case, those who were struggling would not have to then overcome societal expectations and stigma themselves, but the gap would be bridged by other society members who are able to provide support.

Incorporating the local community into navigating the impact of mental health has been strongly supported by research (Marshall et al, 2020; Ridley et al, 2018). The outcomes of these studies indicate the importance of supporting the psychosocial determinants of health on a community level. One approach to this is collectively designing mental health services in collaboration with the community they intend to serve. This leads to more accessible and relevant services which is paramount in supporting mental health. In the context of preventing homelessness, facilitating a multifaceted community network that provides opportunity to access social supports and social integration should be provided in addition to mental health services. This systemic approach is integral to supporting the mental health of those within the community. This suggestion recognises the impact and responsibility that social, youth, religious, aged, and disability workers have on mental health as well as the importance of individual, community, and population interventions to promote this. Although sharing the

responsibility amongst the various industries in order to support those within the community in a holistic way has shown to be beneficial, this has yet to be effectively promoted. There is a need to actively encourage and facilitate more collective responsibility for mental health within the community. Mental health services have begun including this perspective within their design, by facilitating community members and those with lived experiences in collaborating with a skilled cohort in designing services. In these cases, although the individual interventions continue to be delivered by mental health professionals, the way in which a person accesses and operates within this service is designed collaboratively with the community and reviewed for its impact on the individual and community level. This type of service design has found to be effective in engaging marginalised communities, as well as overcoming the inherent racism and classism that is often found within these systems. The importance of collective responsibility by utilising the strengths of those invited into collaborate (e.g., profession, cultural understanding, lived experience) enables hard-to-reach communities to be engaged and well supported.

Both bottom-up and top-down approaches have been considered in how to support good mental health in the community. Mantovani et al (2017) conducted a pilot study to investigate what could be done within marginalised communities in addition to the services provided. They trained laypeople from marginalised demographics as mental health advocates who provided support within their homes and communities. This study found that this was effective in approaching stigma regarding mental health in these communities; however, the advocates found that their training was not sufficient to provide the complexity of mental health support required. The conclusion was that a balance between in-community support and mental health service provision was important for good mental health outcomes. This indicates that even with community support and involvement there is the need for mental health professionals in supporting the complexity of mental health. As stigma is still an obstacle to accessing services, this can be effectively addressed through training community members to be aware of signs of distress, as well as normalising help seeking behaviour. As this research is in its infancy, this is not evidence to dismiss the notion that more responsibility for mental health can take place within the community, as better training and more research may address these questions.

Conversely, Ayano (2018) investigated the impact that decisions made at a policy level have on community mental health. They considered the global burden of disease, taking into account the weighting of impact different countries have on this burden. Gaps between countries were noticed, with some countries having higher global burdens of mental health than others. When considering the differences between these countries it was noticed that there was a link between burden of disease and provision of legislation to govern how this was managed within communities. Countries without mental health legislation had higher levels of homelessness and institutionalised care that enabled violations of human rights. This indicates that although community mental health needs to be collaboratively managed between mental health professionals and community engagement, without the policy and legislation to protect and govern this process, this area of well-being cannot be sufficiently addressed. In these instances, the systems provided to support mental health can become responsible for perpetuating these concerns.

The research generated in exploring this topic has highlighted the complexity and

multifaceted nature of mental health and well-being. There is a need for co-responsibility of mental health and this needs to be covered by a micro and macro approach. In-home trained community advocates as well as community involvement in designing services are both important in reducing stigma and increasing accessibility. Within services, taking active responsibility to account for the inherent power dynamic between the client and clinician is important in increasing engagement through collaboration. Furthermore, appropriate legislation and policy to govern how these initiatives are developed and managed is imperative in supporting the human rights on an individual scale, as well as reducing the global burden of disease on a macro scale.

Topic 6:

Those people who can allow foresight of calamity into their current experience might be able to help other people later on, if they have time to process the implications for themselves now.

The research generated for this question shows the capacity for post-traumatic growth following a crisis and the potential for this growth to be used to help others in similar circumstances. Adaptive aspects of navigating experiences that foster post-traumatic growth are explored and the research highlights the importance of being able to process emotional experiences, particularly within an interpersonal context. The research does not cover this process prior to a calamity, and as such, further investigation into the nuances and potential extrapolations between post-traumatic growth and pre-traumatic growth are necessary.

When facing personal trauma, there are several approaches to navigating the intense emotional experiences that emerge (Staub & Vollhardt, 2008). These can be categorised into two groups; expressors and repressors. 'Expressors' actively engage with their experiences in order to make meaning of them. This leads them to understand themselves and others better as an outcome of this process. 'Repressors' actively avoid exploring their pain which can leave them easily overwhelmed or emotionally reactive in emotionally strained situations. In order to be able to grow and move past these experiences, being able to explore these emotions is vital. This process of exploring emotional experiences leads to growth as well as the capacity to meet one's own basic psychological needs. One of the outcomes of this growth is the recognition of a personal need for support from others, as well as the will and ability to seek this support.

Another indicator of post-traumatic growth is the ability to tolerate one's own negative emotions and a sense of comfort with expressing these as part of a personal need to explore one's own existence (Scrignaro et al, 2018). In light of this research, if there is evidence for a disaster, those who are able to engage with their emotional experiences such as fear and anger, and make meaning of these, will be well placed to support others through this experience. Furthermore, without the opportunity to be able to process the emotions that are part of realising disaster is imminent, these people will not be equipped to support others through this process. Similarly, for those who are 'repressors', this experience is likely to be overwhelming and intolerable, especially when it becomes impossible to utilise coping mechanisms such as emotional avoidance.

The process of exploring emotional experiences has been found to be most beneficial when undertaken in a 'spoken disclosure' format (Slavin-Spenny et al, 2010). This research

investigated different methods of facilitating post-traumatic growth within participants who disclosed a traumatic event that remained emotionally unresolved. They found that various methods of spoken disclosure were linked to significant post-traumatic growth, whilst written disclosure was not. In addition, it was found that one 30 minute session of verbal disclosure led to significant post-traumatic growth. The indications from this research highlights the importance of engaging with emotional experiences post-trauma, and emphasises the need for this to be done through conversation with supportive others. It also indicates that without this opportunity for engaging with emotional experiences by speaking to others, an individual's opportunity for growth is limited.

One of the largest predictors of developing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms post-trauma is a perceived lack of social support, and conversely the strongest protective factor against PTSD symptoms is a sense of belongingness and social support (Sifaki-Pistolla et al, 2017). Research investigating the impact that belongingness or social support had on PTSD symptoms found that it was the coping strategies which an individual employed that mediated any social effects found (Armstrong et al, 2014). Belongingness refers to the sense of identification and acceptance within a specific social context, while social support reflects the emotional and relational elements that are provided within this 'belongingness'. Although these aspects are known to be preventative against suicide, these findings indicate that the way a person relies on these supports is the important factor in how helpful these can be. Coping strategies such as emotional expression and cognitive reappraisal are both indicated as important aspects for post-traumatic growth, and it is through the use of these within a social context that belongingness and social support become useful. Coping strategies that are most adaptive involve acceptance and exploration of the experiences, whilst maladaptive coping styles included denial and avoidance (Pollard & Kennedy, 2007). As such, when an individual seeks out the social support of the people available to them in order to explore their own experiences and develop acceptance of them, this leads to growth, and they are well placed to also provide similar support to those within their community.

Although post-traumatic growth is predicted by frequency of trauma, belongingness, and coping strategies, neither the predictors of frequency nor belongingness remained significant when coping strategies were statistically controlled for. This indicates that, whilst frequency and belongingness are both opportunities to maximise post-traumatic growth, it is the coping strategies employed during this process that are the mechanism for change. Similarly, the coping strategy of intentional rumination was strongly predictive of post-traumatic growth. Intentional rumination refers to the cognitive focusing and exploring of ideas and experiences with the intention of making meaning of these. In addition, this is done in an accepting manner with no pressure on thinking 'positively'. This coping style differs from intrusive rumination, whereby an individual has unwelcome thought patterns that occur alongside the desire to avoid or suppress these. Intrusive rumination is considered to be maladaptive. When intentional rumination was accounted for in social support seeking, it was found to mediate the relationship between social support and post traumatic growth (Hallam & Morris, 2013). Similarly, further research has found that when high post-traumatic distress is coupled with low emotional avoidance, high levels of post-traumatic growth and meaning in life occurs. This indicates that high post-traumatic distress provides

opportunity for large amount of growth; however, this needs to occur within a context of emotional exploration instead of avoidance. Conversely, high distress and high avoidance leads to minimal growth and meaning making (Kashdan & Kane, 2011). These findings suggest that that growth and meaning making can take place in the context of high distress, however exploring distressing thoughts and feelings must happen in order for this to occur.

The research reviewed in addressing this topic highlights that employing coping strategies of exploring and engaging with experiences over suppressing and avoiding experiences is imperative to post traumatic growth. In the context of processing collective grief, these findings indicate that social systems are catalysts for growth, and that individuals should be encouraged to utilise these supports to discuss their concerns. Given that exploring emotions and reappraising cognitions within social contexts is the mechanism for change within belongingness and social support, it is important to maximise the number of individuals within these social systems that have the capacity to hold and facilitate this process for others. This would lead to social systems becoming more effective in transforming these individual emotions and fostering post traumatic growth on a larger scale.

Summary of Main Findings

This paper responds to the need for more public discussion on current and future societal disruptions from climate change by investigating a series of topics. The topics covered the nature of the communication of difficult truths, as well as the ways that people may respond to these truths. Although these topics were multifaceted and diverse, the research generated during this review revealed three main themes that emerged consistently throughout each topic. These themes are; the important role of emotion; the important role of a collective response; and the need for communication to be intentionally shaped by insight into how people respond to news. Each of these themes will be discussed further below.

The important role of emotion

Throughout each question, the role that emotion has to play continued to remain salient. It was clear that emotion, rather than being deemed either positive or negative, could be inherently adaptive when given opportunity to process this in a meaningful way (Pascual-Leone, 2018). In order to process emotional experiences, any maladaptive expressions needed to be engaged with in order to move towards more adaptive expressions. Given the hierarchal nature of emotional expression, avoidance had the potential to prevent this growth. Natural disaster research revealed that those who were emotionally engaged during a disaster were more likely to respond in protective ways (Zhao et al, 2019). Furthermore, negative affect was linked to more risk averse and adaptive responses. Following disaster, those who were more likely to engage with their emotions showed greater post-traumatic growth, and this growth increased proportionally with their distress levels (Kashdan & Kane, 2011). In this instance, high emotional distress was adaptive when emotional engagement occurred. This research is consistent with the climate change literature that indicates the adaptiveness of emotional responses to climate change.

Whilst emotional experiences themselves can be considered to be inherently adaptive,

emotional avoidance continues to be a common coping mechanism (Pollard & Kennedy, 2007). In the context of trauma, exploring emotional experiences has been found to be an adaptive response, with denial and avoidance being maladaptive. When investigating the use of emotional activation within a therapy context, it was found that those who did not emotionally engage during the therapy process had poorer outcomes (Scherer et al., 2017). This indicates that lack of intentional emotional engagement is counterproductive to growth. These claims were corroborated through the neuroscientific literature on emotional suppression (Messina et al 2016; Reidel et al., 2018). Similarly, post-disaster literature stipulates that mental health is often neglected in first responder intervention (Johal & Mounsey, 2016). In these circumstances, emotional coping is the least frequent method of processing experiences, and yet this is a coping mechanism that has been linked to good outcomes. Suppression and avoidance during disasters are linked with greater post-disaster depression. More recently, research into coping mechanisms during the COVID-19 pandemic has found that lack of capacity to engage with emotional experiences has led to maladaptive coping behaviour, in the form of emotional avoidance such as overeating and television binging (Courtney et al, 2020; Pyszczynski et al, 2020).

Engagement with emotional experiences is fundamental to processing and making meaning of them. It has been found that in order to grow and achieve catharsis, reappraisal must occur (Garcia & Rime, 2019; Rohde et al, 2015). Furthermore, in order to be able to support others through emotional experiences, an individual must have first engaged in this process themselves. When faced with uncertain and fear-inducing news about the prognosis of their own health conditions, Lin et al (2020) found that some children hide their emotional experiences from their parents. This was done in order to protect their parents who were struggling with their own emotional experiences. This indicates that the capacity to tolerate one's own emotional experiences and be supportive of others is not limited by age. Research into post-traumatic growth reveals that those who are 'expressors' of their emotional experiences are better able to understand others as well as themselves and were equipped to meet their own psychological needs whilst supporting others (Hallam & Morris, 2013; Scrigarno et al., 2018; Staub & Vollhardt, 2008). Conversely, those who were 'repressors' became easily emotionally overwhelmed and reactive. Acceptance and processing of emotional experiences is a key component of post-traumatic growth.

The importance of co-responsibility for mental health

The various topics of this literature review revealed the importance of engaging with a collective response in regard to climate change, as well as co-responsibility for the mental health of communities. As individuals make meaning of their responses to climate change, incorporating global grief into this was important as it led to individual responses to a global issue (van der Linden et al, 2014). Furthermore, this process of meaning making is most productive when done in spoken form, emphasizing the important and healing nature of being with another person (Slavin-Spenny et al, 2010). This process of collective emotional meaning making is mutually beneficial, as those who embrace this process have increased levels of reflective functioning and understanding of others, leading to being more open to intergroup support (Jost, 2017; Rothmund et al, 2017). Psychological flexibility and increased

reflective functioning in a social context facilitates tolerance of emotional experiences and ambiguity, both of which are important to navigating the climate emergency.

The benefit of co-responsibility extends beyond individuals to communities and the supportive services within these. Much emerging research documents the importance of incorporating communities in designing services, and notes that this systemic approach is protective for mental health (Mantovani et al, 2017; Marshall et al, 2020; Ridley et al, 2018). On a global scale, provision of policy and legislation is required to support mental health providers and services. Without these, countries are likely to have larger footprints of the global burden of disease due to mental health, as well as increased likelihood of human rights violations, institutionalisation, and homelessness (Ayano, 2018).

Throughout the disaster and trauma literature, the need for community engagement and social support was clear. Mid-disaster communication between community members within a crisis was found to be protective of mental health, and helped with logistical preparedness (Zhao et al, 2019). These strong community ties and communication became vital during times in the disaster when technology was no longer available. Furthermore, this social preparedness and working together during crisis was found to reduce disaster related losses by a half (Girons Lopez et al, 2017). When first responders to disaster victims accommodated for mental health needs as well as physical health needs, individuals' capacity to engage with the community post-disaster increased. Furthermore, volunteering within the community during these times led to greater feelings of belongingness, which is protective against suicide and despair (Johal & Mounsey, 2016; Mukhtar 2020). When communities had strong religious ties during disaster, this was found to be protective as it increased social support and facilitated community mobilisation following the disaster (Gianisa & Le De, 2018). Similarly, research into communities who have experienced collective trauma found that communal emotional responses lead to greater solidarity within the community (Garcia & Rime, 2019). During these events, perceived belongingness is protective against the development of PTSD and was the largest predictor of good mental health (Sifaki-Pistolla et al, 2017).

Constructing public messages about climate change

The final theme that was apparent throughout this review was the breadth of literature available which provides the capacity to communicate climate change messages appropriately and effectively. Although there is contention regarding how much risk should be communicated with these messages, it has been found that communicating disaster requires threat appraisal to be present in order for individuals to respond adaptively and protectively (Rollason et al, 2018). The Chen (2016) article that Strunz et al (2018) cite to argue that higher fear provokes apathy actually found that people exposed to a high-fear message who also believed in collective efficacy then increased their pro-environmental actions. From that insight, the matter is not the fearfulness of the message that is key alone, but how people are supported in their sense of efficacy as they process the information. The question then becomes what assumptions people and researchers may have, from society, that limit our understandings of what efficacy means and how it can be achieved. When a threat is being communicated, the message can benefit from providing some scaffolding as

to how to understand and respond to the threat, or how to begin to understand how one can respond. Without this scaffolding, the behaviour may not be protective. However, this does not need to be prescriptive, especially if any prescriptions are influenced by Experiential Avoidance or other cultural assumptions about efficacy within the people who are constructing and delivering the message. (Elsewhere in this issue, Professor Bendell points to the framework of Deep Adaptation, which offers a four-part inquiry into how one might respond positively to an anticipation of societal disruption and collapse.)

Further to 'what' should be communicated, research also informs the 'how' and 'when' information should be communicated. In disaster response, the media has played an important role, as greater media exposure has been linked with greater behavioural responses (Zhao et al, 2019). Furthermore, communicating response plans and risks well before the escalation of disaster was vital for adaptive and protective behavioural responses during the disaster (Girons Lopez et al, 2017).

Limitations and Recommendations

Given the breadth of topics to cover within one systematic review, it was not practical to explore each topic in depth. As such, a limitation of this review is that whilst it provides a good overview of some of the research available for the topics, more detailed analysis of the nuances of these topics has yet to be completed. Further systematic reviews and experimental research is needed to develop a deeper understanding of these important aspects of the psychosocial impacts of climate change.

The literature produced within this review was predominantly from a Western context. It is vital that information on this topic is representative of the wide varieties of demographics available. The form of eco grief for the loss of environmental knowledge and cultural identification with land is an important aspect of climate-related emotional responses and yet it has less weight within the literature available. As such, responses that are shaped by literature have the potential to further marginalise communities that have been less present in the scope of research. Future research to replicate findings presented in this review in other countries, cultures, religions, and contexts is necessary in order for policy and communication to be equitable and effective.

This systematic review focuses on the quantitative nature of the topics explored. Although this is an important aspect of forming perspectives that are empirically sound, it does not attend to the qualitative nature of what it means to be a human in a time when the world is changing dramatically. There are important schools of research and thought that attend to the more qualitative aspects of living and being, which are important for knowledge to be drawn from. In order for this human experience to be attended to in a holistic way, holistic lines of enquiry are required. Future qualitative research is needed within these fields, such as politics, sociology, anthropology, and economics, in order to provide these important perspectives. Furthermore, more attention to the wider range of literature available regarding the human experiences is needed including support of research in these areas.

Aspects of this review revealed the relevance of climate-related emotional experiences to child and adolescent demographics (Clayton et al, 2017). Given the insight that children

are able to acknowledge their own emotional experiences and navigate these in order to protect their parents' reactions (Lin et al, 2020), as well as the importance of a communal approach to processing and supporting these experiences, more research is required into this area of attachment. Furthermore, in order for emotional experiences regarding climate change to be explored and supported systemically rather than in isolation, early intervention programs to increase the capacity for emotional processing and reflective functioning of both parents and children are needed.

Conclusions

This review indicates the usefulness and importance of drawing knowledge from a variety of schools pertaining to human thought, emotion, and behaviour, and how this collaborative approach can inform communication to a public audience regarding climate change. Research investigating climate change specific emotional responses has found that these differ to pathological experiences, are inherently adaptive, and can indicate pro-environmental behaviour. The importance of encouraging emotional engagement and exploration as a means to process and make meaning of experiences has been found as a main theme of this review. This was present throughout the literature and within all topics. Furthermore, the importance of the collective capacity of humans in making meaning of their experiences, supporting each other through trauma, and overcoming natural disasters has been evidenced. It is clear that as part of navigating the climate emergency, space for collective processing of emotions, and public discussion regarding these is important, and adaptive.

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In person online: What trainee psychotherapists discovered about online clinical work[1]

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Abstract

During the 2020 lockdown in response to COVID-19, students in the Master of Psychotherapy at the Auckland University of Technology (AUT) were required to rapidly move their clinical work online. We surveyed these students about their experience of working clinically online. We used a mixed-methods approach and analysed qualitative data using grounded theory methods. Students found the move online difficult, with technological challenges, the loss of a professional clinical space, and having to establish and maintain the therapeutic alliance in the unfamiliar online setting. They showed a strong preference for in-person clinical work, along with scepticism about the efficacy of online therapy, though some acknowledged its convenience and others its currency and relevance. Most expressed a need for more specific training in online therapy. Students rated their technological skill level higher than their levels of interest in online communication. This suggests that preferences, rather than technical skill, influenced their hesitancy for working clinically online. While online therapy can impose increased strain on clinicians and directly impact their capacity to manage online clinical work, the literature finds strong and consistent evidence that online therapy has equivalent outcomes to in-person therapy. There is significant emphasis in the literature on the disjunct between the outcomes evidence and therapist expectations. This is modified somewhat by training and experience in online therapy. We recommend that research-active psychotherapists engage actively and collaboratively with the profession, through professional bodies, to encourage research-informed professional development and practice for clinicians; and that further research is conducted into effective strategies for training in online clinical delivery.

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Whakarāpopotonga

Ko te urupare i a Kōwheori -19 te wā o te mohoao 2020 i whakahauhia kia tere te neke a ngā ākonga o te Tohu Tuarua Hinengaro o te Te Wānanga Aronui o Tāmaki Makau Rau i ā rātau mahi haumanu ki runga tuihono. I rangahauhia e mātau ō rātau wheako mahi tuihono. I whakamahia he tātai tikanga-kōrori ka huri ki te ara kari ariā hai aromatawai i te rarau kounga. He tino uaua te neke ki te mahi tuihono ki nga ākonga; huitahi atu ki ngā wero hangarau, te kore ātea haumanu mahi, me te hanga te tiaki i te mahitahinga haumanu i roto i te wāhi tuihono tauhou. Ko tā rātau whiringa matua kia mahi kanoho ki te kanohi, me te kore e whakapono i te pai o te haumanu tuiono; engari i whakaae ētahi i tōna pai me ētahi i tōna uara me tōna hiranga. Ko te nuinga i whakaputa i ō rātau hiahia mō tētahi whakangungu arotika pā ki te haumanu tuihono. I tohua nuihia ake e ngā ākonga ō rātau pūkenga kōeke hangarau i ō rātau kōeke aronga whakawhitiwhiti kōrero tuihono. E mea ana tēnei ehara nā ō rātau pukenga hangarau engari nā ngā whiringa kē i awe ai ō rātau hokirua ki te mahi haumanu tuihono. Ahakoa utaina te rahi haere ake o te uaua mahi haumanu tuihono ki ngā kaihaumanu ka whakaaweawe tōtikahia ō rātau kaha ki te whakahaere mahi haumanu tuihono, e kitea ana e ngā tuhinga te kaha me te pūmau o te taunaki he rite tonu ngā huanga o te haumanu tuihono ki te haumanu ā- kanohi. He tūtohu hira kai roto i ngā tuhinga mō te wehewehe i waenga i ngā hua taunaki me ngā wawata o ngā kaihaumanu. Mā te whakangungu me te wheako ki ngā haumanu tuihono tēnei e āhua urutau. E whakatau ana mātau me tū ngangahau, mahi tahi i te taha o ngā mātanga me ngā rōpū mātanga te ngangahau-rangahau, hei whakakipakipa mātauranga-rangahau whanake mātanga me te whakawai mā ngā kaihaumanu; me te whanohanga rangahau atu anō hei rautaki pono hei whakangunguhanga haringa haumanu tuihono.

Key words: clinical; in-person; online therapy; trainee psychotherapist; student; COVID-19; pandemic.

Introduction

In Aotearoa New Zealand in 2021, management of COVID-19 is stable relative to most other countries, thanks to effective strategic political decisions. Last year, though, with the event of our first national lockdown, we were having to acclimatise to the risks and constraints brought about by this novel coronavirus, to learn new health protocols and a whole new language around this defensive way of living. Terms such as social distancing, contact tracing, viral shedding, long COVID, Delta variant, and superspreaders are part of our everyday lexicon, for now.

Along with such shared experiences, each of us will have had unique experiences of the impacts of this virus on our lives. In the profession of psychotherapy (and in other allied health professions) we have had to make adaptations to our practices to accommodate a change in the number of clients, and our mode of working with them. For student psychotherapists in the Master of Psychotherapy programme at AUT, the timing of lockdown required an abrupt move from seeing their clients in person to seeing them online. For staff in the department, the urgent work was to support that move as best we could, in the context of working from our own homes and with an increased workload.

Online psychotherapy is by no means a recent phenomenon. At the time of the first lockdown, however, our students generally had not been familiar with online therapy, nor had they been trained to work online. By contrast, we had previously had our own experiences of being in therapy online, and we both consider it equally as effective as in-person therapy. In addition, we both have private practices that include online clients and during lockdown we each moved our practices entirely online. The usual relational components of psychotherapy can, with skill and experience, all remain operational: the working alliance, transference and countertransference, unconscious processes, embodied awareness, and working at depth. This experience has support from the research literature, as we describe below. This is the background and perspective we brought to the task of preparing our students for online work.

On 27 March last year, two days after the first Level 4 lockdown started, we developed guidelines for our clinical students, together with links to resources and workshops. The guidelines included how to prepare for online sessions, information about relevant technology (especially platforms on which to work) and issues relating to the therapeutic frame. We acknowledged the challenges of this time and left it to students to decide when to begin seeing their clients online. This allowed time to familiarise themselves with the guidelines and other related resources about online work, to set up a suitable space in which to work, and to attend to pressing family matters. We advised that they did not need to take on new clients at that time and that they could suspend therapy with existing clients, while keeping in mind their clients' needs. In the transition to working online, students also had the support of their clinical supervisors and the clinical educators in the AUT Psychotherapy Clinic, based at AUT Integrated Health (AIH). At the end of the semester, we tailored the usual round of feedback processes to ask students about their experience of working clinically online.

This article reviews current research on working psychotherapeutically online and describes how our students experienced this move. We take this into a wider exploration of the concerns, complexities, and opportunities for beginning psychotherapists working online.

Given the lack of consistency regarding the terminology to describe internet-delivered interventions (Smoktunowicz et al., 2020), we predominantly use the term "online therapy" because it fits with the context within which our students work with their clients in the online space. The current and common uptake of this term has been influenced by Colón (1996), a leader in the field of therapy online (Stasiak et al., 2018). By online therapy, we mean therapy delivered in real time via video conferencing, using platforms such as Zoom, where therapist and client can see each other. In some cases, a decision may be made to turn the cameras off, in order to remove the distraction of the image on the screen and thus to enhance the focus on internal processes; we include this also under the term "online therapy". For the purposes of this article and, again, in the context in which our students work with their clients, this does not encompass other media platforms, such as apps or chat programs.

Online Therapy: The Literature

Earlier research into online therapies (including asynchronous services) has found benefits from this mode of delivery of therapy. These include accessibility, convenience, reduction in stigma and inhibition around the uptake of clinical services, increased client control of the

process, and the potential for keeping a recording of the process (Wright, 2007). There has been a rapid development in the literature on online therapy since the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in support of its equivalence with in-person therapy, in relation to effectiveness and outcomes. Poletti et al. (2020) reviewed 18 studies, published between 2015 and 2020, and found that, despite some scepticism, telepsychotherapy is a "trustworthy alternative" (p. 1), ensures continuity of therapy, provides often much-needed psychological support in an uncertain and traumatic time and, importantly, is effective in treating common mental health disorders.

Specific research on the therapeutic alliance and client outcomes in psychotherapy overwhelmingly confirms that these are similar, regardless of whether the therapy is in person or online. Simpson and Reid (2014) conducted a review of research studies over the preceding 23 years, measuring the therapeutic alliance. They found that clients rated bond and presence in online therapy "at least equally as strongly" (p. 280) as in-person therapy. Berger (2017) reviewed studies assessing the therapeutic alliance online and found that clients' alliance scores were "roughly equivalent" (p. 511) to alliance ratings for in-person therapy. In a systematic review of 15 studies exploring the differences between the use of telephone and in-person therapy, Irvine et al. (2020) found little difference in terms of therapeutic alliance, disclosure, empathy, attentiveness, and participation. Fisher et al. (2020) cited randomised controlled trials that show online therapy as being equally effective as in-person therapy in the areas of patient satisfaction, therapeutic alliance, treatment outcome, and symptom improvement.

Békés et al. (2020) reported on survey responses from 190 analytic therapists as they transitioned to online therapy at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. They found that therapists believed they were able to maintain as strong, authentic, and emotionally connected a presence online as in person. This led to the therapists viewing online therapy in a more positive way than they had earlier, although a majority of therapists still believed that online therapy is less effective than being in the room with the client. This is a commonly held view, and there are likely to be several reasons for it. Békés and Aafjes–van Doorn (2020) noted that most therapists pre-COVID had little or no experience or training in working online and that many held the unsubstantiated view that online therapy is less effective than in-person therapy. There may be prejudices about, or difficulties pertaining to, being in the online space, which then impact therapist perceptions. A striking illustration of bias emanating from negative expectations of technology is provided by Berger (2017). In a laboratory experiment, two separate participant groups of clinical psychologists were shown an identical therapy session; however, it was shown as though it were an in-person session to one group, and to the other as though it had taken place online. The participants who believed the session was held in person gave much higher ratings for the quality of the therapeutic alliance than those who believed it had been held online.

The extent to which therapists' negative perceptions of online therapy have been influenced by the additional demands of providing therapy during a pandemic is unclear. Scharff et al. (2020) found that trainees consistently needed to manage their emotional distress to be able to empathise with their clients; they noted the increased likelihood that therapists working during a pandemic would struggle more to separate their clients' issues from their own. Aafjes-van Doorn et al. (2020) surveyed the experience of 141 therapists who

transitioned to working online during the pandemic. They noted that therapists with more online experience had lower levels of anxiety and self-doubt about providing online therapy and felt more positively about it, including thinking that their clients viewed it positively. Their recommendation was to provide more training in online therapy, to ensure a better experience and more effective use of the medium.

In addition to training needs, there are particular challenges associated with a move to working online, and particularly during a pandemic. Therapists report feeling more tired than usual, and may be coping to varying degrees with their feelings of loss and anxiety relating to the pandemic (Geller, 2020). The home environment can be distracting, and clients may be in the same environment with the people they are having issues with (Geller, 2020). In a mixed-methods survey investigating the experiences and challenges of 335 psychotherapists working online during the pandemic, McBeath et al. (2020) found that, despite most therapists considering online therapy to be effective, and intending to persist with it, they often struggled with feelings of isolation and fatigue, professional self-doubt, and loss of confidence. There were also concerns relating to technical issues. This was echoed by Aafjes-van Doorn et al. (2020), who found that therapists were concerned about the impact of technical issues that inevitably arise. Beyond the technical, concern extended to how to maintain confidentiality, and fears that the therapeutic alliance might suffer. These concerns are not supported in the literature. While the therapeutic alliance is not rated highly in the online setting by therapists (Simpson & Reid, 2014), clients of online therapy rate the quality of the therapeutic alliance highly (Berger, 2017; Norwood et al., 2018; Simpson & Reid, 2014). Moreover, Simpson and Reid (2014) found that clients do not generally have a preference between being online or in person. This evident disjunct between client and therapist perceptions of the effectiveness of online therapy, alongside our experience of supporting our students to move their clinical work online, prompted us to consider what they might tell us about their experience online as trainee psychotherapists.

Method

We conducted the current research using a mixed-methods approach in order to get data on students' experiences of the move to online clinical work. Alongside qualitative questions directed towards understanding their experience, we wanted quantitative data that may elucidate the factors contributing to that experience, such as their prior skill level in online communication in everyday life.

We developed an online survey of 10 questions:

1. How would you rate your interest in online communication in your everyday life?
2. How would you rate your skill level in online communication in your everyday life?
3. How would you rate your experience of seeing new clients online?
4. Where applicable, how would you rate the experience of moving online with existing in-person clients?
5. What challenges, if any, did you experience working clinically online?
6. How adequate was guidance from staff, clinical educators, and clinical supervisors for working clinically in the online space?

7. What extra training, if any, would have been helpful?
8. This question is about the level of intimacy you find possible between you and your clients in the online space, compared with in person. On the scale of 0–100, is online intimacy lower (0–39), similar (40–60), or higher (61–100) than with in-person clients? If you have not worked in both ways, please skip this question.
9. How would you rate the strength of the therapeutic alliance online, compared with in-person?
10. Overall, do you prefer online or in-person clinical work, or are they more or less the same to you? Please write your preference, and brief reason, in 50 words or less.

Seven questions required responses on a 100-point Likert scale, and three required open-ended responses of 50 words or less.

Participants

We used a convenience sampling of students who were already assigned clients in the psychotherapy clinic at AIH. These students were in the first and second year of the Master of Psychotherapy programme and were seeing clients in the clinic as part of their course-work requirement. We contacted students through the university's Learning Management System, inviting them to complete an anonymous online survey about their experience of the move online. We set a three-week turnaround timeframe without either enticement or requirement to participate. Students were reminded of the survey in class, and many expressed an interest in having their say about their experiences of online clinical work. Out of the 36 invited students, 26 (72%) responded.

Quantitative Findings

Quantitative data were gathered in seven research questions (RQ) from the survey (RQs 1–4, 6, 8, and 9). In the 100-point Likert scale used for each question, 0 represented the lowest and 100 the highest rating. For question 8 (see above), we described the range more specifically.

From the quantitative data, students' levels of interest in online communication in everyday life averaged 65%, though their self-assessed skill level averaged 73%, showing a rating based slightly more on preference rather than skill level for working clinically online. They rated the satisfaction with their experience of seeing new clients online at 42% and a higher rate (53%) for their experience of moving online with existing in-person clients.

Perceptions of the levels of intimacy possible between student therapists and their clients in online clinical work rated significantly lower (38%) than the intimacy possible between students and their clients in in-person therapy. However, the strength of the therapeutic alliance was rated at an average of 42% online, compared with in-person.

Qualitative Findings

Qualitative data were gathered in three research questions from the survey (RQs 5, 7, and 10). These were analysed through a process of open, axial, and selective coding. We drew on a

grounded theory process (Charmaz, 2014, 2017) to analyse our data because it best matched our intent to make sense of the responses from our students to inform policy and curriculum development within the Master of Psychotherapy programme. Rather than seeking to co-construct a theory from the data, we sought to find one narrative (among possible others) for the phenomenon under investigation—trainee psychotherapists' experiences of working clinically online for the first time. We did this by exploring relationships between the properties and codes from the data (Carmichael & Cunningham, 2017).

During the initial coding process, both authors separately coded different research questions. We identified properties in the data and used an interpretive axial process to code them according to their relationships to each other and to the question overall. Then we coded the properties by using gerunds to generate nouns from key verbs in the data. For Charmaz (2014, 2017) the use of gerunds for coding is preferable as its focus on actions rather than concrete statements can help prevent conceptual leaps before thorough analysis is completed, and it supports the social action orientation of grounded theory approaches to research.

After initial coding of separate research questions, we checked each other's coding against the data. Throughout this analysis phase we met to discuss co-emergent meanings, to enquire into what might be being described in the data and what we might be missing. Constant comparison was used to establish the relationships between data, properties, and codes, resulting in a synthesis of the co-constructed meanings in the data. This synthesis is represented in the axial codes, which articulate relationships between open codes, and the selective code, which captures the core of the enquiry.

Research Question (RQ) 5: What challenges, if any, did you experience working clinically online?

Twenty-five of the 26 survey respondents answered RQ5. The responses to this question generated six open codes and one axial code relating to challenges of working clinically online. In ascending order of influence, the challenges were found to be spatial, technical, and relational.

Spatial challenges were identified by just under half (11/25) of the respondents. These challenges included lack of privacy for client and/or student clinician ("Not having my own separate professional working space at home"). Both were at risk of being overheard or disrupted, and the student clinician was at risk of feeling intruded upon by having their personal space visually accessible to clients. Respondents also had concerns around the lack of a safe space for clients in their home ("Clients leaving as don't have safe space at home"), as well as a sense that the therapeutic frame was weakened, and therapeutic effect limited, by the lack of a separate and neutral professional space dedicated to clinical work ("The therapeutic aspect of providing a space to be in was removed"). Overall, respondents expressed a sense of wanting the boundaries provided by a professional working space.

Technical challenges were discussed by around half (12/25) of the respondents. These challenges included user skills and bandwidth limitations, or at least a weak and disrupted internet connection ("Problems with either the clients or my internet cutting out disturbed sessions, sometimes significantly"). This resulted in "loss of connection in our *kōrero*". Online therapy was found to be more demanding energetically than in-person therapy, with

some feeling "Zoomed out", and identifying a need for more breaks. Technological skills and resources were understood as necessary support for the therapeutic process ("Learning new technology like Zoom").

Most respondents (16/25) identified relational challenges in online clinical work. They expressed a need to see and feel the presence of the whole person of their client in therapy, and felt "something missing" in the online space ("The communication is not as rich," "Not being able to read their body language," "Unable to read as many nonverbal cues"). Specific challenges included having only partial views of each other, and a reduction in sensory information, nonverbal cues, eye-to-eye contact, and somatic sense between the client and therapist, which are needed to support attunement and countertransference ("My felt sense of the client, and of myself, was impeded"). Client preferences needed to be considered and some were distracted online ("Client less committed to the session, tempted to do other things while in session"). Others were reportedly unwilling to attend online therapy, preferring to wait until in-person therapy became an option ("One client was very averse to online sessions and did not want to meet unless in person. They were happy to wait"; "Only three out of 10 clients found online sessions convenient"). Respondents understood these challenges as hampering relational connection ("Could be harder to connect on an emotional level at times, felt more distant with some clients"), and at times reducing the depth of the work ("Consideration of how deep/challenging material explored," "Harder to hold clients in distress or when in touch [with] painful affect online"). In summary, respondents' experiences of relational challenges online led to a preference to see and feel the presence of the whole person. In addition, these challenges required that respondents consider client preferences, and develop more capacity for online presence.

RQ7: What extra training, if any, would have been helpful?

The responses to RQ7 by three quarters of respondents (19/26) generated four open codes and one axial code relating to training needs.

Respondents expressed a need to be, and to feel, resourced to provide effective relational clinical work in the online space ("Training around empathy, embodied awareness, countertransference, creating alliance, while online"), and to be able to use online technology effectively and ethically ("Having a class or several class sessions to explore the benefits, pitfalls, ethics, and how to work online would be great"). Respondents here indicated a need for training in being present in the online space ("Techniques for staying grounded and present in sessions"), holding the therapeutic frame, establishing and maintaining the therapeutic alliance, understanding therapeutic risks and benefits of the online space, and clarity around the distinct ethical consideration for the online space ("It comes with its own ethics and rework of therapeutic practices in the new field and space"). Respondents represented a general need for a facility with the practical aspects of using technology for effective therapy ("A 'class' on the practical aspects of going online, setting up space, etc."; "Boundaries are very different too and the frame evolves depending on quality of technology, internet connection, lighting"). Respondents' requests here were expressly around how to manage payment, boundaries, physical space, safety, and privacy for clients.

Respondents varied on the degree to which training was needed. Several respondents assessed that they were adequately prepared from previous experience or guidance offered

by our program ("Guidance was not really that needed since I had been working online already"; "I paid for an online training that [staff] emailed a link to which was helpful"; "In the circumstances it was adequate, there were helpful hints provided"). Four respondents were either satisfied with or not sure of what they needed ("There were a lot of resources made available to us… I can't think of what else I would have needed").

Others, however, expressed a clear preference for learning experientially and for mentoring from experienced practitioners. There were requests for practice opportunities to embed the learnings ("Role plays!"), as well as for guidance from online experienced supervisors ("Supervisors who were more empathic to the differences and adjusted their supervision style to online therapy") and from online experienced clinicians ("Insight from clinicians familiar working in this medium would have been welcome, with deeper exploration of therapeutic implications, risks and benefits"). Overall, respondents expressed a need for comprehensive, guided experiential training and practice for skilful online presence.

RQ10: Overall, do you prefer online or in-person clinical work, or are they more or less the same to you?

The responses to RQ10 by all of the respondents (26/26) generated two open codes relating to preferences for online or in-person clinical work.

For this question, we asked respondents if they preferred online or in-person clinical work, or if these were "more or less the same" to them. Almost all respondents preferred in-person clinical work (24/26). The reason they gave was that it is easier to have a felt sense of being with the client when they are there in person. This included being more easily able to monitor nonverbal communication, to attune to the client, and to establish and maintain a strong therapeutic alliance. Some respondents said that because they are a beginning therapist, they believe that being physically in the room is crucial for learning at this stage, particularly learning to attune to the other. Respondents also highlighted differences between new clients and existing clients. Their experience was that it was easier to be online with clients they had seen for some time, rather than beginning online with a new client ("My client of two years fared much better than my client of four weeks"). The difficulties that respondents experienced online included problematic external distractions (that can occur when therapist and client are online) and concerns about safety and privacy. Overall, the responses indicated that the students found being physically present with their client easier and more clinically effective.

Some respondents saw working online as simply a necessity when it is not possible to be physically in the room, with one student viewing it as "the last resort," another declaring it "better than nothing," and yet another stating they would "be happy to never do another online therapy session". However, there was also a general acknowledgment of the advantages and value of working online and a recognition of the need to develop online skills in an environment where it is becoming increasingly expected that therapists will be able to work effectively in this way. This includes continuity in therapy when the unexpected happens, such as, for example, a pandemic outbreak. Respondents' comments relating to the benefits and advantages of online therapy included: seeing the value for younger clients who are more familiar with being online; online being more accessible for some clients (e.g., it cuts

down on travel time); and logistical ease and convenience for both therapist and client (e.g., faster to set up and finish sessions). As a counterpoint to comments that it is easier to work online, respondents also mentioned the increased difficulty of this way of working ("Requires more ability from both the therapist and the client"). Despite a clear preference from the respondents for being physically in the room with their clients, there was an acknowledgment of the flexibility, accessibility, convenience, and contemporary relevance of online therapy.

Following the coding of the three RQs, we generated axial codes and the overarching selective code. Through this we found that respondents experienced technological, spatial and relational challenges in transferring their clinical work to the online space during lockdown due to the pandemic. Although they prefer in-person clinical work, they are mostly willing to engage in the online space; and to do this well they expressed a need for comprehensive, guided experiential training and practice to develop skilful online therapeutic presence.

Discussion

At the beginning of the lockdown, our students were unfamiliar with working online with their clients. They had been seeing clients in person in the psychotherapy clinic at AIH and also in their community placements. Added to the stress of beginning to find out how to live in a pandemic, they were faced with suddenly needing to transition to providing therapy online. It is hardly surprising under these circumstances that many challenges were encountered. These challenges were perhaps exacerbated by negative perceptions of working online. Some students believed that therapy online was "not as good" or "not as effective" as therapy in person. We heard examples of students offering a fee reduction, giving as a reason that the online therapy would be inferior to in-person. Given that the assumption that online therapy is not as effective as in-person therapy is not evidenced by research, this may have arisen from fear of the new, from concrete thinking about what constitutes relationship, and from beliefs about definitions and boundaries of self.

We wondered how lecturers and supervisors might support students to move online and how to model changing practice. There were wider questions about how the profession of psychotherapy supports ongoing development. The psychotherapy profession has been at times a late adopter of change, and has a conservative cast around some key issues relating to educational developments. For example, entrenched views on the "therapeutic frame" have in some cases been slow to evolve under these changing and novel circumstances. Useful and well-informed guidelines that have developed from clinical practice over the decades can easily translate to becoming inflexible rules. Meister Eckhart's (as cited in Symington, 2012, p. 395) words resonate here: "To regard as primary what is secondary is the root of all fallacy." We consider, along with the common factors research findings (e.g., Duncan et al., 2010; Wampold, 2010), that what is primary in psychotherapy is the therapeutic relationship and how therapist and client work together within an ethical relationship in the interests of the client's growth and wellbeing. In this regard, Scharff (2019) has noted that physical presence is less important than affect and imagination, and that closeness in the therapeutic alliance is engendered more by integrity and commitment than by literal physical proximity.

Although the therapeutic alliance is not compromised in the online space, there are clear challenges to negotiate in this medium. Technological difficulties, including glitches with internet connections and inexperience with technology, can result in a momentary or cumulative lack of connection between therapist and client. The effectiveness of therapy can suffer where there are technical difficulties or unfamiliarity with web-based communication (Poletti et al., 2020; Simpson & Reid, 2014). Beginning practitioners, such as our students, face particular challenges in providing therapy online. Aafjes-van Doorn et al. (2020) and Békés et al. (2020) found that less-experienced therapists suffer increased levels of self-doubt and anxiety when they work online, particularly those working at home with young children or other family responsibilities. It can be difficult for students to find a suitable space in their home in which to work and this becomes even more complex where they are balancing childcare and wider family responsibilities. These can impact on their capacity to be present and empathise with clients.

Being online for long periods, particularly with the stress load of a pandemic, leads to increased tiredness and fatigue, or, in the words of one respondent, being "Zoomed out". Zerbe (2020) describes as "pandemic fatigue" (p. 476) the phenomenon brought about by the experience of living through a crisis that shakes one's sense of safety, and produces feelings of insecurity, loss, disorientation, irritability, exhaustion, and feeling "unmoored" (p. 476). There are also the physical and psychological impacts of spending an increased amount of time in the online world. If sufficient non-screen activities are not included in the therapist's day, then they are likely to suffer from disconnection and exhaustion. More time between and after sessions needs to be scheduled (Geller, 2020). Simpson and Reid (2014) note that therapists likely need to work harder online, for example, to compensate for sound problems or to actively convey empathy; and it takes time to learn the skills necessary for working online. In advice to psychotherapists, Essig et al. (2020) also emphasised the tiredness resulting from online therapy and noted that therapists have to work harder to capture and reflect nonverbal aspects of the therapy. Given this extra load of working online, an increased focus on self-care supports therapists to remain well and work effectively (Geller, 2020; Scharff, 2019).

While technical and spatial difficulties of being online were mentioned, the majority of responses spoke to the relational challenges of working online. Research shows that the essentials of the therapy process, including the therapeutic alliance, are maintained in online therapy (Fisher et al., 2020; Merchant, 2016). However, the findings of Scharff et al. (2020) that trainees rely more than experienced clinicians on nonverbal clues were borne out by our respondents. They mentioned that being physically in the room meant that it was easier to see the whole person and thus their body language and nonverbal communication. Mention was made of a stronger therapeutic alliance being possible in the room — including connection and intimacy — and that something is "lost" in not being in the physical presence of the other. Differences between new clients and existing clients were highlighted by a number of students, who pointed to better outcomes in online therapy with clients who they had previously been seeing in person. This raises an important issue in relation to the developing therapist and was echoed by other respondents, who referenced their current status as beginning learners. For example, one said that working in person is "crucial for my learning". The reason given was that students are still learning how to feel and to attune in

the space together and that, according to them, this cannot be done online ("Sitting with a client and learning to feel and attune in the space together is my focus, which I can't do online"). One respondent commented that the learning feels diminished by being online, while another acknowledged that with the right training they believed they would become effective in online treatment.

Our students had not previously delivered therapy online, nor had training for online therapy. Due to the short notice of our university closure during the lockdown, preparing students to deliver therapy online was carried out with urgency. In response to this, students have expressed a desire for comprehensive and guided experiential training and practice for online therapy. This includes specific guidance on online holding, how to stay grounded and present, advice on the spatial aspects of online therapy (setting up space, lighting, technology), how to ensure safety and privacy for clients, and exploring benefits, pitfalls, ethics, and boundaries in the online space. Mentoring from online-experienced practitioners is important to them, along with supervisors being more accommodating of online therapy and adjusting their supervision style accordingly. These expectations are borne out in the literature.

Merchant (2016) stresses the importance of professional development for practitioners delivering online therapy. With the right training, therapists without much experience can make the adaptations needed in communication and learn to work with the technology (Simpson & Reid, 2014). Important skills development includes developing an online presence (Geller, 2020) and epistemic trust (Fisher et al., 2020). Geller (2020) argues for the cultivation of therapeutic presence for the establishment and maintenance of effective therapeutic relationships, and for clinical training to support this cultivation of presence for online therapy. Guidelines recommended in the literature for transitioning therapists online include "ethical considerations and concrete issues related to the treatment settings and boundaries, for both traditional dynamic psychotherapy (Scharff, 2018), and protocol-based interventions" (Fisher et al., 2020, p. 4). McBeath et al. (2020) found that many therapists expected online therapy to become part of their core service to clients and that therapy training should include online working skills as a core subject. It has been found that therapists' attitudes towards online therapy, and confidence in practising it, are increased by training and experience (Aafjes-van Doorn et al., 2020).

Limitations and Recommendations

Our survey did not differentiate between student year levels (ie., Master's year one and Master's year two). In retrospect, making this differentiation may have given a more granular picture of the specific stressors for each level of training. Nor did we elicit specific data on cultural and gender identifications, which may have brought useful dimensions to the meanings we have co-created from this research. A more specific demographic component to research in this area may yield useful insights for planning and policy. In particular a kaupapa Māori research methodology may have yielded more nuanced findings about the experience for Māori and Pasifika students. As it stands, there is a significant gap in the literature about the cultural implications of online therapy for tangata whenua and Pasifika populations (Classen et al., 2021).

However, within the horizon of uncertainty about the extent of the pandemic and the lockdowns ahead, we aimed to hear from our students as a single cohort, in order to support a quick response for the purposes of planning training for the next semester. This justified for us the reduced scope of the research in this instance.

While there is strong and consistent evidence that online therapy has equivalent outcomes to in-person therapy, the challenge is to translate this evidence into a change in the assumptions of service providers and consumers. Such a change requires us to understand and address the "factors of ambivalence… which pose a barrier to wider implementation" (Irvine et al., 2020, p. 120). To this end, we recommend that research-active and academic psychotherapists engage actively and collaboratively with the profession, through peak bodies, to encourage research-informed professional development and practice for clinicians. In addition, as our findings may be transferable to other tertiary institutions, we recommend further research into effective strategies for training psychotherapy and allied health students in online clinical delivery.

Conclusion

In the rush online during lockdown, our students had to rapidly come to grips with online therapy. Although they reported levels of interest in online communication at only about 65%, they rated their skill level higher. This rating suggested that students' preferences, rather than their technical skill level, influenced their hesitance for working clinically online. Their perceptions of the levels of intimacy possible in online therapy were significantly lower than for in-person therapy. They found technological, spatial, and relational challenges in online therapy and expressed a need for comprehensive, guided experiential training and practice to develop online therapeutic presence. This finding is generally borne out by the literature. Although preferring in-person clinical work, the students are willing to engage in the online space and understand the push factors for the need to do this.

There is a significant emphasis in the literature on the disjunct between the outcomes evidence and therapist expectations. This is seen to be modified somewhat by training and experience in the practice of online therapy. Our psychotherapy curriculum had not previously incorporated training for online therapy, but we are integrating the suggestions from our students to provide relevant and comprehensive content for this mode of therapy. The need for this is evident in an environment of persisting and heightened uncertainty. Moreover, there is increasing recognition by both students and staff that online therapy is a critical growth area that provides increased flexibility, accessibility, convenience and contemporary relevance, and that therapists need to be skilled and competent to work in this way, beyond lockdowns.

During their transition to the online space — and as a result of their experiences and their engagement with research — students have generally reported an increased openness to working online. There are signs that initial antipathies are yielding to a willingness to enquire into the base of their own assumptions about differences between in-person and online therapy. Together we may be discovering how it is possible to be in person online.

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In Melbourne Elizabeth was Academic Head of a Psychotherapy and Counselling Department for a national college. She transferred to online teaching and research supervision through the re-settlement to Aotearoa New Zealand. After establishing the studio at Kihikihi, she joined the Department of Psychotherapy and Counselling at AUT, where she is a senior lecturer and current Head of the Department. She teaches postgraduate courses, conducts research, and provides research supervision for Masters and Doctoral students.

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An 89 year old goes to hospital (with thanks to John Bowlby, 1969)

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Abstract

In this reflection on living, dying and ageing, the author explores her encounter with different aspects of herself and others, evoked by a recent visit to hospital.

Whakarāpopotonga

I tēnei whakaarohanga whakapā atu ki ēnei mea te koiora, te whakamatemate me te kaumātuahanga, ka tūhurahia e te kaituhi tōna tūtakitanga ki ōna me ō ētahi atu tūmomo āhua rerekē i puea ake i muri mai i tētahi haerenga ki te hōhipera.

Key words: hospital; dying; euthanasia; life.

I continue to have doubts about submitting such a personal story, also wondering if it's too trivial to appeal, but then on reflection think that maybe it's a story needing to be told: how one's unconscious mind can carry one through a healing process in a way the conscious mind can not. The story is also age-related, which was one of the themes in the NZAP 2020 Conference, as in Susan Lugton's (unpublished) paper and Roy Bowden's Zoom meeting.

16 November 2020: "No, *no*, *NO*" I said, firmly and loudly, as I looked at my left leg, doubled up under me with toes beneath thigh, right leg in the shower where it had slipped on a tiny patch of the new shower cleaner I'd bought.

However, while denial is one of my family's favourite defences — enabling my father to sit under a sign reading "Cancer Ward" for a year while not "realising" his radiotherapy was for cancer — it obviously wasn't going to get me off the floor and round to my phone in the bedroom. Reality kicked in and I instinctively straightened the left leg and dragged myself to said phone. I rang for an ambulance, rang Jane of Casa de Wootton Cattery to look after Simba (my Burmese), and rang neighbours who needed to know, as I live in a semi-detached townhouse in a block of four. That was enough reality to deal with.

The ambulance arrived, and then for the first time pain kicked in. X-rays showed a series of horrendous cracks and breaks, with the kneecap also shattered. The next day I met the

Worthington, C. (2021). An 89 year old goes to hospital (with thanks to John Bowlby, 1969). *Ata: Journal of Psychotherapy Aotearoa New Zealand*, 25(1), 107–111. https://doi.org/10.9791/ajpanz.2021.08

surgeon and his anaesthetist. In my fantasy I would be brave and have the leg set under a local anaesthetic or epidural, but again reality intervened; the surgeon thought it would be the most difficult break he'd ever had to fix, so a general anaesthetic would be needed. As I did not expect to survive that, given my age, frailty and lung problems, I signed a form requesting no resuscitation if anything went wrong. I have always considered lethal injection the best way to die, if one *must* die, so I surrendered gracefully to the prick in the arm. I awakened to find a frame weighing over two kilos attached to my left leg, pinning the knee in an unmovable position and meaning I'd have to spend the next five or more weeks on my back when in bed.

As a firm advocate of euthanasia I had accepted that the fall and break had decided my fate, and that there was no point in enduring nausea caused by opiate-based painkillers, or the unpleasantness of physiotherapists exhorting one to painfully walk on frames, so I declared to the staff that I wished to be left alone and that when my son arrived from Australia he would be taking me home to die. "Would you like to see 'someone'?" was the anxious reply. "Damn it, I *am* 'someone'," I retorted, but finally gave in to their wish that I see the resident psychiatrist. I met this lovely lady from Brazil and tried to explain the difference between suicidal sadness and euthanasia. I think we agreed to disagree.

"I" with my euthanasia was ready to accept the inevitable, but the other "I" that speaks from the unconscious had made a different decision, one that I became aware of only much later. This is the "I" that Margot Solomon has so elegantly described as "thinking in the marrowbone" (Solomon, 2014). My "marrowbone" had opted for life and for a way to get me rested and looked after while a healing process could take place.

I don't recall much of the days after surgery which I spent in the Orthopaedic ward. After eight days I was transferred to Rehab — a misnomer if ever there was one. Rehab is situated as far away as is possible from the rest of the hospital, and when one finally reaches it, it's renamed the "Older Persons" ward. We are put where we'll be least trouble, can die gracefully, or just fade away. I regarded my poor twisted leg regretfully but remembered an amusing tale when I'd been in the OP ward in 2008, after a stroke. An elderly woman had been admitted to my cubicle who was very angry. I had asked what her problem was, to which she had replied, "I'm furious; I've been told I've got a broken leg. I don't know who broke it but it certainly wasn't *me*!" She was deadly serious.

It was only after some three weeks in hospital that I realised something strange had been happening to me. Evidently, my psyche had registered the whole experience as so traumatic (probably due to my age, and to the very real threat to my life) that I had entered a deep regression and *did not know it*! I needed to be nursed through it, I now realise. In this phase I gorged on potato crisps brought by my good friends and Helpers Extraordinaire, Ann Nation and Sandy Tustin, assisted by Sue Young and Sophia Jensen (members of our monthly Reading Group), and Elisabeth Stubbs.

I had with me a black and white striped blanket the cat sometimes slept on, and in this regressed phase it became a transitional object. Winnicott (1971) describes the transitional object as something between the sucked thumb and the teddy bear — the first possession — which the child uses to ward off anxiety, especially when trying to sleep. It can be a piece of wool, a blanket, really any object, but it must never be washed or changed. My blanket and a blue jersey I "had" to wear at night became such objects. I gave my blanket a name,

Stripey, talked to it, snuggled it round my neck and generally soothed myself with it before going to sleep. My jersey and my Stripey, they comforted me.

To make the most embarrassing confession of all, while regressed I poo-ed in my bed! Admittedly the nurses dished out laxatives like there was no tomorrow, so eventually the dam broke, but I recall enjoying the soothing sensation of warm unmentionables accumulating round my body. I did this — only once! — without any sense of shame, until the nurses discovered it and were shocked and dismayed. I certainly felt shame then. I must admit though, I'm horrified in retrospect that a well-analysed psychotherapist could ever have entered such a regressed state. What would the Reading Group have made of that if they'd known! I do know that during this phase I had visitors and presumably I talked to them normally, and they did not notice anything wrong? I was aware that I found it hard to "make" conversation, and was glad when people departed.

The first inkling that I'd been in such a state occurred suddenly: a wave washed up on the shore of my psyche carrying an idea with it — I had a hand and maybe that hand could rearrange the pillows behind my head, I didn't have to ask the nurses to do it for me! This truly radical idea led me to cautiously put my hand on the pillows and yes, I could move them. With some effort I could also reach the water jug on my trolley and pour a drink! Another wave rolled ashore — there was a heater, heaters have controls, and maybe my hand could reach those controls and switch the heater on! And I could! Let there be warmth! For goodness knows how many days I had felt terribly cold, and had the paranoid fantasy that "they" wanted to freeze us to death. Now I had found some limited control over my surroundings. It felt as if there was a whole new world to be discovered, and I wonder now if this is how a baby feels when it starts to become aware of its surroundings.

A third wave ushered in the awareness of a wonderful book, brought by cat-lady Jane, called *Enigma* (Harris, 1995), a novel based on the group at Bletchley Park in UK, where they broke the Enigma code used by the Germans in World War Two. Like a child who wants the same story read over and over, I read and re-read *Enigma*. To be fair, to a non-mathematician it's a difficult novel, but I don't think that was my only reason for reading it at least five times. I devoured the book as I had devoured the potato crisps, refusing to read anything else. This clinging to a familiar object that must not change is also an aspect of the transitional object described by Winnicott, the book being like the blue jersey and the blanket. It all also reminded me again of the stroke in 2008, when I'd spent the first two terrifying days and nights compulsively spelling "supercalifragilisticexpialidocious" in an effort to hold my psyche together and reassure myself there was some brain function. Holding the self together is one function of the transitional object.

I was very glad to emerge from this regressed state and to become more aware of what was going on around me. The OP/Rehab ward is not a very pleasant place to be in, surrounded as one is by people in various stages of dementia and senility. We had a convict with early stage dementia (and his two security guards, of whom I was more afraid than of him), and a woman who just wanted to walk round the TV lounge kissing everyone — some twenty times per day. Another woman told me her life story over and over, flatly refusing to consider she'd been hospitalised for memory loss. The convict and the kissing lady spent much of their day closely examining objects they might once have used, such as door knobs and small objects, desperately trying to recall some vestige of a familiarity they had once known. It was frightening and sad to watch. My packet of potato crisps was one such object, much to my

dismay. This terrible loss of familiarity is a path some of us will tread, as the well-known gradually becomes unrecognisable and meaningless.

Most nurses seemed to cope by acting as if nothing much was wrong. However, one tiny Chinese nurse wore a face that was like a stone wall, betraying no emotions. Her lips were tightly drawn and she looked as though she hated everyone. Worried about her, one night I asked, as she was putting me to bed, what part of China she came from, as I had been in China myself in 1989, the year of Tiananmen Square. She looked startled but not exactly unfriendly as she said she came from way down south. I said that was exactly where I'd been, south in Xiaoquin! I remembered my husband and I being surrounded by peasants at a night market all begging us to help them develop their English, and laughing uproariously when I made a ridiculously low bid for an expensive object I didn't want. "Lovely people, awful government," I said as I told her this story. To my surprise her face burst into a lovely smile and then into tears, and she threw her arms round me as we both wept. "China broken," was all she said, and I dared not ask about terrible losses she had obviously endured. It was a moment I shall never forget, never to be repeated, though she did offer a faint smile if our paths crossed again. Parenthetically, we might reflect on this other side of China, in view of the anti-China sentiments bandied about by politicians today.

My son in Australia had been ringing me every day from Perth, where he lives and works, and as Christmas approached and his exit from quarantine neared, my thoughts about "going home to die" gradually changed into a very tentative possibility of "going home to recover." Comin' for to carry me home! While awaiting Tim's arrival on Christmas Day I listened to the physiotherapists, tried desperately with varying degrees of success to walk on their various frames, and generally prepared to depart after Christmas. The hospital wanted me to stay another two weeks but Tim and I had agreed that the depressing impingements of the OP ward were becoming too much for me. I discharged myself on 5 January, the day before my ninetieth birthday, and enjoyed celebrating 6 January with my son and my non-senile friends.

The cat and I are now alone at home, facing an uncertain future. His future depends on my existence and I will not leave him behind. How lucky he is not to know of my ruminations about our future. My leg remains weak and twisted and I am dependent on a walking frame. As the weeks pass I shall have much time to decide whether this will slowly become a life that can be lived, or whether it is simply a time-passing existence, way beyond its use-by date. One defence has never left me; the feeling that all this is not actually real, it's happening to "the woman". But as my analyst once said, we all need our defences.

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Carol Worthington has been a practising psychoanalytic psychotherapist for some 40 years; she holds a Ph.D. from Massey University (1977) and was a registered psychologist and member of the NZ Psychologists Association and of NZAP. She retired at Christmas 2019. Carol lives alone with a somewhat radical cat, the only surviving one of three. Before a fall in 2016, followed by pneumonia, she had been a keen gardener and an avid overseas traveller. She still writes letters to the Editor of the *Dominion Post* on political subjects, and has also published articles in the *Ata Journal* (when it was named *Forum*), in 1999 and 2010. Carol was asked by the Wellington Branch of NZAP to present the story of how she became a psychotherapist, and this later appeared in the *NZAP Newsletter* (2018).

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