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To cite this version:

Claudia Teran-Escobar. The essential role of Health Psychologists in tackling climate change: Insights from the presentation by Esther K. Papies during the European Health Psychology Society Conference 2022. 2022. hal-03856061

HAL Id: hal-03856061

https://hal.science/hal-03856061v1

Preprint submitted on 16 Nov 2022

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The essential role of Health Psychologists in tackling climate change: Insights from the presentation by Esther K. Papies during the European Health Psychology Society Conference 2022

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"*Nothing else matters if we don't tackle climate change*" (Dr Esther K. Papies). As inspiring and frightening as this phrase can be, it highlights how essential the work of health psychologists can be in tackling climate change. We can help by focusing our present and future research on targeting and promoting behaviours that might allow humanity to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

In August 2022, I had the pleasure to assist (online) at the 36th Annual Conference of the European Health Psychology Society (EHPS 2022). Among the list of oral and poster presentations, one presentation immediately caught my attention: *The state of art about health psychology and climate change: Time to address humanity's most existential crisis*. This short review summarises my reflections on this presentation (by Dr Papies) within the session 'Climate Change and Sustainable Diet' that impacted me the most during the EHPS 2022 but also during all the congresses I have attended for a while.

Let's start with the first question that I asked myself before assisting and attending: **how is health psychology associated with climate change?** The first part of the presentation by Dr Papies focused on a summary of the consequences of global temperature destabilisation and biodiversity loss that are already visible today: droughts, floods, climate refugees. With the recent floods in Bangladesh, it was not too hard to imagine that the effects of climate change can be devastating. Then, another fact: our current lifestyles (what we eat, how we heat and how we travel) are a very important contribution to greenhouse gas emissions and can be an important source of climate change mitigation (Wynes & Nicholas, 2017).

For several decades, as health psychologists, we have been focused on improving health and quality of life. But during recent years I have been asking myself (and now I am sure that this urge is shared by many colleagues): **what can we do as health psychologists to face climate change?** The presentation answered my question by pointing out our skills and what we should do better in the future. As health psychologists we have the methods and skills to promote the adoption of new behaviours, especially useful if these behaviours can lead to health benefits (for humans and the planet) like reducing air pollution or increasing physical activity (for more examples, see Bernard et al., 2021; Chevance et al., 2022). Moreover, the choice of the behaviours that we want to promote should be better informed, as in the future all our efforts should be focused on changing "high impact" behaviours such as living car free, avoiding transatlantic flights, buying green equipment or adopting plant-based diets (Wynes & Nicholas, 2017). The same goes for the excessive focus on the role of individuals as consumers only and forgetting the other roles they may have as investors, role models, participants in organisations and institutions, and citizens who have a voice and political power (Nielsen, Clayton, et al., 2021). Not to mention that climate change is also an issue of inequality: the wealthiest have a very large carbon footprint and influence on greenhouse gas emissions in various ways (Nielsen, Nicholas, et al., 2021). Finally, this challenge will have to

be faced from several disciplines and institutions: interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary efforts will be essential to tackle climate change.

In conclusion, the presentation by Esther K. Papies at EHPS 2022 was a source of inspiration and a kick-start to guide research in health psychology to tackle the most important challenge facing humanity: climate change. Understanding the role that we can and need to have (as consumers but also as citizens and role models), the potential of our knowledge and skills at health psychologists (e.g., individual behaviour change), and the need for interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary collaboration are essential to provoking the societal transformation that is needed.

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