

PSYCHOLOGY DAY at the UNITED NATIONS

PSYCHOLOGICAL
CONTRIBUTIONS TO
GLOBAL PEACE,
CONFLICT RESOLUTION
AND EQUITY

April 27, 2023

Co-chairs:

Ada Sinacore, PhD & Caroline Temcheff, PhD



Welcome to the Sixteenth Annual Psychology Day at the United Nations!

The Psychology Coalition at the UN (PCUN) is delighted to welcome you to the Sixteenth Annual Psychology Day. We hope this year's program will stimulate your interest in psychological contributions to global peace, conflict resolution and equity. To find out about ways to become more involved in this work and related issues, please visit our website: <http://www.unpsychologyday.com>.

This year's co-chairs are Dr. Ada Sinacore and Dr. Caroline Temcheff. Drs. Sinacore and Temcheff are very grateful for the support received for this year's conference. First, we would like to thank our Mission co-sponsors, the Permanent Missions of Mexico and Canada to the United Nations. We also thank the members and interns of the Psychology Coalition of NGOs having consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council for their dedication and efforts related to Psychology Day. We also thank the whole PCUN team for their assistance in making this year's Psychology Day possible. Finally, we are indebted to our panelists for their willingness to share their research and expertise during Psychology Day.

SIXTEENTH ANNUAL PSYCHOLOGY DAY
at the
UNITED NATIONS

**PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO GLOBAL PEACE, CONFLICT
RESOLUTION AND EQUITY**

There are numerous global challenges that have resulted in ongoing and developing conflicts within and between countries, resulting in the displacement of people, refugees, widespread trauma and loss of human life. Unresolved trauma (from living in high conflict or war areas) can also lead to or exacerbate conflict. Biased media and lack of access to information can contribute to hatred, discrimination and oppression of certain groups. Systemic inequities such as lack of access to education and fair employment lead to economic disparities and conflict. Gender-based violence is another global problem, which disproportionately affects women, girls, and refugees among others according to UNHCR (2022). This kind of violence can also result in serious trauma and other negative mental health outcomes.

Increasing violence on the global stage warrants paying attention to how psychology can inform and advocate for peace and de-escalation. Specifically, psychologists have the tools to offer insight into conflict resolution, reconciliation, and restorative justice. Psychological experts can develop specific recommendations on how to move towards peace and equity, while also addressing the human costs and trauma experienced from living in conflict areas.

The spread of misinformation and the advent of new communication tools such as social media, has increased divisiveness and led to conflict and the polarization of society. However, citizens need access to unbiased reporting to support government leaders and policy changes. It has become increasingly important to shed light on this phenomenon from a psychological perspective with research from Media psychology.

Psychology Day 2023 will bring together a panel of expert speakers from various regions of the world to discuss psychological research, best practices and evidence-based strategies to assist the UN in dealing with these challenging issues. Topics will include peace building and conflict resolution strategies, polarization through media, systems that increase the risk of violent conflicts, and gender-based violence. This conference will highlight perspectives from many areas of psychology including social, peace psychology, cognitive, media, counselling and community psychology.

Psychology Day at the UN is the ideal venue for informing the UN community about psychological expertise that can illuminate the path to peace, security and equity.

WELCOME

Caroline Temcheff, Ph.D.

Associate Professor, McGill University, Canada

OPENING REMARKS

David Livert, Ph.D.

President, Psychology Coalition of NGOs having consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council

Professor, Pennsylvania State University, USA

PANELISTS

Rezarta Bilali, Ph.D.

Associate Professor, New York University, USA

Title of Presentation: **Transforming conflict-supporting narratives to narratives of peace.**

A quarter of the world's population resides in areas impacted by violent conflict. In fact, the world is currently experiencing the largest number of violent conflicts since the Second World War, with over 50% of these conflicts being recurring. To break the cycles of violence, it is necessary to address the history of violence and the underlying structures that maintain it. The first step to addressing the past and overcoming legacies of violence is acknowledgement of the harm that was done. However, groups typically deny or justify the violence they have committed. In this presentation, I will explore the factors that contribute to denial, such as moral identity threats. I will examine the implications of denial narratives for the groups responsible for violence and those impacted by it. Lastly, I will delve into the barriers and challenges of transforming denial narratives, as well as some promising interventions for narrative transformation.

Laura Taylor, Ph.D.

Associate Professor, University College Dublin, Ireland

Title of Presentation: **Developmental Peacebuilding Model: Implications for Growing up in Divided Societies**

The persistence of intergroup conflict around the world creates an urgency for research on child development in such settings. Complementing the existing knowledge about internalizing and externalizing developmental outcomes, this talk shifts the focus to children's prosocial behaviors, and more specifically, introduces the Developmental Peacebuilding Model (DPM; Taylor, 2020). The DPM makes three main contributions. First, the DPM integrates a developmental intergroup framework and socio-ecological perspective, with a peacebuilding paradigm, to examine the target and type of children's prosocial behavior in settings of intergroup conflict. Second, DPM outlines how children's outgroup prosocial behaviors, which promote constructive change at different levels of the social ecology, can be understood as peacebuilding and fostering social cohesion. Third, the talk concludes with the DPM's implications for research and global policy, with a focus on existing UN policy infrastructures.

Jay van Bavel, Ph.D.

Professor, New York University, USA

Title of Presentation: **The Power of Us: How to build shared identity in the face of division**

We live in a world where architects of division leverage propaganda, misinformation, and hostility to foster conflict and polarization. In this talk, I will explain how the tools of the modern media—including social media platforms—are used to sow conflict around the world. I will then explain how citizens, leaders, and institutions can leverage the same elements of human psychology to fight misinformation, create a shared sense of reality, and inspire cooperation.

Daniel Bar-Tal, Ph.D.

Professor Emeritus, Tel Aviv University, Israel

Title of Presentation: **Why is it so difficult to solve intractable conflicts?**

In social-psychological terminology, some of the violent and protracted disputes are called “intractable conflicts” and they have a number of fundamental characteristics. They are fought over goals viewed as existential, are violent, perceived as being of zero sum nature and unsolvable, preoccupy a central position in the lives of the involved societies, require immense investments of material and psychological resources and last for at least 25 years. These conflicts are termed intractable as members of the involved societies feel that they have no control over their peaceful resolution, and they see no prospect of peace. The basic premise regarding these conflicts maintains that, although they have been created as a result of actual events that every member of the group has experienced, in reality, they have continued—and they are still continuing—also on the basis of ideas that have been formulated in people’s minds. This repertoire is composed of beliefs, attitudes, and feelings, and is organized into narratives that describe, interpret, and explain the conflict. In a long process, this repertoire and its narratives turn into pillars of conflict culture that become hegemonic in many societies.

The construction of such narratives is necessary, as human beings tend to consider their own behavior as rational and appropriate to the circumstances. Therefore, these narratives express a sincere attempt by the members of society to organize their experiences and the information flowing to them into a knowledge system. In the nature of the process, in time, these narratives become a prism through which society members also interpret the reality of the conflict in all of its complexity. Knowledge that does not fit the narratives is discarded. Alternative knowledge that might dispute the narratives is discredited and even blocked. And because new decisions and choices are made in light of partial and biased information, they reinforce the conflict realities to an even greater extent in a kind of circular feedback.

INTEGRATIVE REMARKS

Ada Sinacore, PhD

Associate Professor, McGill University, Canada

Q&A and DISCUSSION

Moderated by **Ada Sinacore, PhD**

Associate Professor, McGill University, Canada

ANNOUNCEMENTS

David Livert, Ph.D.

President, Psychology Coalition of NGOs having consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council

Professor, Pennsylvania State University, USA

CLOSING REMARKS

Caroline Temcheff, PhD

Associate Professor, McGill University, Canada

BIOGRAPHIES OF PANELISTS

(Listed in order of presentation)



Rezarta Bilali, PhD

Rezarta Bilali is an Associate Professor of Psychology and Social Intervention at New York University. She previously worked as Assistant Professor of Conflict Resolution at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. Bilali holds a PhD in Social Psychology with a concentration in peace and violence from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and a Master's degree in Conflict Analysis and Resolution from Sabanci University in Istanbul. Dr. Bilali's research focuses on the social psychological factors underlying conflict and violence, as well as the development and evaluation of interventions to address violent conflicts. She employs various methodologies such as experiments, surveys, interviews, and content analysis of written materials. She has conducted research in different parts of the world including Albania, Burundi, Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Turkey, the United States, etc. Dr. Bilali has over 15 years of experience collaborating with non-governmental organizations to develop and evaluate violence prevention and reconciliation media programs, and other peace interventions. She has published 45 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters, as well as written a dozen technical reports for various collaborating organizations.



Laura Taylor, PhD

Laura K. Taylor is an Associate Professor in the School of Psychology at University College Dublin. She integrates developmental and social psychology with peace studies to examine positive development and social inclusion among children and youth in conflict-affected settings, such as Colombia, Croatia, Kosovo, Israel, Republic of North Macedonia, and Northern Ireland. She uses the Developmental Peacebuilding Model (Taylor, 2020) to study how multiple factors (e.g., family, school, nation) influence child development. Dr. Taylor also focuses on children's and youth's agency, more specifically, how outgroup prosociality toward conflict rivals may be contribute to peacebuilding.

Prior to academia, Dr. Taylor worked as a peacebuilding and human rights practitioner in Guatemala and Nepal. Laura's current research is funded by the European Union, Irish Research Council, Enterprise Ireland, John F. Templeton Foundation. She has over 80 peer-reviewed articles, almost half of which have student co-authors. Laura is a Consulting Editor for Child Development and the Journal of Research on Adolescence, and the Editor of the APA journal Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology.



Jay van Bavel, PhD

Jay Van Bavel is a Professor of Psychology and Neural Science at New York University, an affiliate at the Stern School of Business in Management and Organizations, Director of the Social Identity & Morality Lab, and co-author of the award-winning book "The Power of Us: Harnessing Our Shared Identities to Improve Performance, Increase Cooperation, and Promote Social Harmony". Dr van Bavel completed his BA at the University of Alberta, PhD at the University of Toronto and a Postdoctoral Fellowship at The Ohio State University.

From neurons to social networks, Dr. van Bavel's research examines how collective concerns—group identities, moral values, and political beliefs—shape the mind, brain, and behavior. His work addresses issues of group identity, misinformation, cooperation, intergroup bias, moral judgment, decision-making, and social media. He studies these issues using a combination of neuroimaging, lesion patients, social cognition, behavioral economics, global surveys, and computational social science.

Dr. van Bavel has published over 100 academic publications and co-authors a mentoring column, called Letters to Young Scientists, for Science Magazine. He has written about his research for The New York Times, BBC, The Atlantic, Scientific American, The Wall Street Journal, Guardian, LA Times, and The Washington Post and his work has appeared in academic papers as well as in the US Supreme Court and Senate. His research was also featured in TEDx and TED-Ed videos and he has consulted with the White House, United Nations, European Union, and World Health Organization on issues related to his research.



Daniel Bar-Tal, PhD

Daniel Bar-Tal is Professor Emeritus at the School of Education, Tel Aviv University. His research interest is in political and social psychology, studying socio-psychological foundations of intractable conflicts and peace making. Specifically, he has studied the evolution of the socio-psychological infrastructure in times of intractable conflict that consists of shared societal beliefs of ethos of conflict, of collective memory, and emotional collective orientations. He has examined their contents, acquisition, functions, societal mechanisms of their maintenance and institutionalization, as well as their contribution to the formation of social identity and development of culture of conflict during the conflict. In this framework, he has also examined the changes required in this socio-psychological repertoire for conflict resolution and reconciliation. In particular, he has proposed a conceptual framework for the evolution of reconciliation, for the development of peace education and eventually of peace culture, as well as development of political understanding among children, and peace education. Recently he has extended his scope of research to the study of the deterioration of democracy and the rise of authoritarianism.

He has published over twenty-five books and over 250 articles and chapters in major social and political psychological journals, books and encyclopedias. He has served as President of the International Society of Political Psychology and has received various awards for his work, including the Lasswell Award and the Nevitt Sanford Award of the International Society of Political Psychology and the Morton Deutsch Conflict Resolution Award of the Society for the Study of Peace, Conflict, and Violence (Div. 48 of APA).

PRESIDENT OF PSYCHOLOGY COALITION AT THE UNITED NATIONS

David Livert, PhD



Dr. David Livert is a social psychologist with a focus on program evaluation and the engagement of psychology at the United Nations. He earned a Ph.D. in Social/Personality Psychology from City University of New York (CUNY) Graduate Center and is currently a Professor of Psychology at Pennsylvania State University, Lehigh Valley. He has served in the PI and External Evaluator roles for education and professional development interventions including GK-12 Science Now (NSF); Demonstration District Project (Gates), Differentiated Evaluation Process Project (Gates), Evaluation of the New York State Race to the Top Program (NYSED) and the Eureka! Fellowship (California State Librarian). He has received numerous fellowships, awards, and grants, including the 1995 Lawrence Kogan Fellowship in Quantitative Methodology at CUNY Graduate Center. Since 2017, Livert has served as SPSSI's Main Representative to the United Nations, leading a team of representatives and interns in New York who advocate, author statements, and conduct events at the United Nations pertaining to the application of psychological research to national policy and social issues. He is current president of PCUN.

PSYCHOLOGY DAY AT THE UNITED NATIONS CHAIRS

(Listed in order of appearance)



Caroline Temcheff, PhD

Caroline Temcheff is an Associate Professor and Quebec Health Sciences Research Scholar in the Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology at McGill University and the director of the Healthy Development Laboratory. Dr. Temcheff's research centers around longitudinal trajectories of mental health problems and service use among boys/men and girls/women with and without aggressive problems in childhood. Dr. Temcheff co-leads two longitudinal projects and her research has been financed by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Social Sciences and Humanities Council of Canada, and the *Fonds de recherche du Québec*. Dr. Temcheff published over 70 academic articles and book chapters, and has made over 100 presentations in scientific conferences.

Dr. Temcheff is also a practicing clinical psychologist registered with the *Ordre des psychologues du Québec* and a member of the Canadian Psychological Association.



Ada Sinacore, PhD

Ada L. Sinacore, Ph.D. is an associate professor in the Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology at McGill University, an associate member of the Institute for Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies, and the Director of the Social Justice and Diversity Research Lab. Professor Sinacore is the current past-president of the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA). They sit on the board of the International Council of Psychologists, and are a member of the advisory council of the Global Network of Psychologists for Human Rights. Professor Sinacore has over 25 years of experience working in the U.S., Canada, and abroad, and is internationally recognized for their expertise, scholarship, and activism addressing social justice and human rights concerns at the individual, institutional, societal, governmental, and policy levels. For this work, Professor Sinacore has received numerous honors and awards. Internationally, Professor Sinacore has been a Distinguished Visiting Scholar in a number of university around the world. Since 2019, Dr. Sinacore has collaborated with the Canadian Embassy and the University of Chile to address gender based and sexual violence in various institutions.

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