

EDITORIAL

Climate Change, Resilience, and Trauma: Course of Action Through
Research, Policy, and Practice

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The negative effects of climate change on human health and the environment are extensive and predicted to increase according to several governmental and nongovernmental reports and studies (Hayes, Blashki, Wiseman, Burke, & Reifels, 2018). In 2018, 10,733 lives were lost, and 61.7 million people were affected by climate induced disaster events (Center for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters [CREDE], 2019). Climate shifts and intensified disasters have the potential to impact food security, water sources, increase diseases, and increase temperature-extreme related morbidity and mortality. The World Health Organization predicts an increase of 250,000 excess deaths per year between 2030 and 2050 due to the impacts of climate change (WHO, 2018).

Although climate change's negative impact on physical health is evident, the impact of climate change specifically on mental health and well-being has not been extensively captured. Because climate change can be described as a slow onset process that impacts humans and their ecosystems in a myriad of ways, the psychosocial impacts might not be detected or diagnosed immediately. Impacts can instead appear as secondary or tertiary consequences that includes but not limited to fear, loss, displacement, injury, or food and health insecurity.


The extent of climate change distress is often closely related to how connected an individual is to their environment and the threat to the environment (Ingle & Mikulewicz, 2020). Sadness and loss associated with witnessing and experiencing the gradual transformation of one's environment is recognized as "*solastalgia*" (Albrecht et al., 2007). The concept of *Solastalgia* can be explained as the pain caused by loss and isolation connected to the present state of one's home (Albrecht, 2005). Climate change can alter our natural landscapes considerably. Intensified hydrological hazards such as hurricanes, tornadoes, droughts, fires, and floods can trigger *solastalgia* by changing the aesthetics of landscapes, use of land, and forcing temporary or permanent migration (Albrecht, 2005). Experiencing *solastalgia* can lead to negative health effects from visceral pain to mental anguish, which can escalate into more serious mental health problems (Albrecht, 2005). Eco-anxiety is another important concept closely related to our mental health

within the context of climate change. The concept of eco-anxiety can be described as the severe and overwhelming worry about climate and environmental risks and can result in dramatic reactions, that includes loss of appetite, sleeplessness, and other psychosocial impacts (Ingle & Mikulewicz, 2020; Rabinowitz & Poljak, 2003; Verplanken & Roy, 2013).

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Given the rapid increase in climate induced disasters and the associated impacts on mental health as a result of experiencing eco-anxiety and/or *solastalgia*, it is evident that more empirical research and interventions are needed in this domain. This special issue on *Climate Change, Resilience and Trauma* addresses the need for more empirical evidence in the domain of climate change and mental health.

The special issue includes a range of empirical and theoretical approaches to gain a better understanding on how climate change impacts our overall well-being. The first article by Matthews focuses on the importance of resilience in the context of climate change. The second article by Ntontis and colleagues proposes a new conceptualization of aspects of community resilience based on the social identity approach in social psychology and grounded upon the principles of collective psychosocial resilience—the way that shared identification allows groups to emerge, coordinate, express solidarity, and provide social support. In the third article, Weber et al. developed a cohesive model of positive factors in the context of tornadoes. The fourth article by Hansel et al. explored environmental quality of life as a mediator among disaster exposure, mental health, and resilience. Everett and colleagues focused on ways to address trauma and improve community resilience in response to disaster and climate change-related events in South Louisiana in the fifth article. In the special issue by Powell et al., the sixth article examined mental health distress, work-related stress, and protective factors in Texas and Puerto Rico impacted by hurricanes in 2017. Zeligman et al., explored whether trauma symptoms, social support, and religious coping served as predictors of PTG among drought-stricken Botswana residents, and whether social support and religious coping moderated the relationship between trauma symptoms and PTG. Shigemoto, examined reciprocal effects of posttraumatic stress symptoms (PTSS) and posttraumatic growth (PTG) at 16, 17, and 19 months after Hurricane Harvey. The final article of the special issue is by Moyo,

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who explored the resilience of rural Batswana and how these factors could be further enhanced to withstand the impact of climatological hazards.

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At the time of writing (August, 2020), we are dealing with the unprecedented impact and the myriad of deeply worrying effects of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Given the impact of COVID-19, it is hoped that the dialogue about climate change and mental health is continued within the context of COVID-19. It is important to note that there are certain categories of people whose mental health will be disproportionately affected by climate change. Those include children, women, seniors, people of the global majority (PGM), immigrants, people with disabilities, and people living in poverty, to name a few. Given that developed nations are mainly responsible for climate change and often face the least amount of effects, there should be extra resources allocated to developing nations and indigenous populations that are the least responsible and have the highest threat to their livelihoods and mental health (Barrett, 2013; Ingle & Mikulewicz, 2020).

Through international and national policies and frameworks, governments can be on the forefront of addressing climate change. With the implementation of mitigation measures, the impact of climate change in communities can limit the traumatic impact and create more resilient communities across the globe. The research, policy, and practice community should now more than ever collaborate and be proactive with their agendas and plan to generate impactful research that will guide policymakers to provide essential mental health services to climate change exposed and impacted populations.

Finally, we all have the responsibility to educate those around us on the impacts of climate change on our mental health and, where possible, reach out to those who may be impacted by disaster, climate change, and COVID-19 to provide support to one another,

whether in a personal or professional capacity (Zwanziger et al., 2017).

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