



Undergraduate perceptions of the threat of climate change and its potential impact on sense of well-being: a qualitative study using focus groups.

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Abstract

This dissertation explores how university students perceive climate change and the impact these perceptions have on their well-being. Using 2 focus groups of 6 participants in total (3 in each) and thematic analysis, four key themes were identified: Lack of Control and Powerlessness, where students felt individual actions were insufficient compared to the overwhelming power of big business; Impending Doom and Climate Anxiety, highlighting emotional distress linked to climate change; Lack of Education and Awareness, reflecting gaps in knowledge and misunderstandings; and Coping Strategies and Resilience, showing how students manage climate-related anxiety through either disengagement or through community action. Social Representation Theory was used to interpret how shared ideas about climate change shape emotional responses. The findings suggest that while students often feel overwhelmed, they also express a desire for more support, education, and visible action. The study highlights the psychological impact of climate change on young people's sense of well-being and the need for universities and governments to respond.

Literature Review

Climate change is primarily regarded as one of the major threats facing the world in the 21st century. Rising temperatures because of global warming, extreme weather events and damage to the environment are all major elements in our world that have sparked divisive and intense discussions and debate across the planet. This has of course not only influenced us as a society on a political level but also, has had a major impact on us as individual people and our sense of well-being.

University students are one such demographic that has generated a lot of discussion surrounding the dangers of climate change and it's impacts. Students being usually a part of society that is primarily well-read and open minded are particularly impacted by climate change discussions and its effect on peoples sense of well-being as well as, their own perceptions on climate change and how that affects the wider socio-political climate. There has been extensive research surrounding the scientific aspect of climate change and political policy responses have been implemented there has been indeed less attention brought to university students and how climate change discussion and perceptions has impacted and shaped their mental and emotional sense of well-being.

Therefore, to better understand these impacts and affects climate change has on the well-being of university students this chapter will aim to provide an overview on already existing literature on climate change awareness, the psychological impacts of climate anxiety, and the role of higher education in raising awareness of climate change. It is also important to note that this chapter will discuss the current gap in

literature surrounding university students perceptions of climate change and how that affects their sense of well-being and it's understanding through the lens of social representation theory (Howarth, 2006).

Climate Change Awareness and Perceptions

General Awareness of climate change

Research has consistently shown that climate change is widespread throughout the globe though, the true understanding and depth of the information available to understand climate change very much varies throughout different demographics and socio-economic backgrounds. Public awareness of climate change can be primarily influenced by media exposure, education, governmental policies and the lived experiences of an individual. A study conducted to investigate the relationship between climate change awareness and climate crisis action in America and Europe (Jan Eichhorn, 2020) found that, although there is a high level of awareness in both countries surrounding climate change the perceptions of how urgent climate change is varies where, Europe primarily sees climate change as an imminent threat to the world America is much more polarised where political ideology and scepticism is much more present. This level of scepticism and lack of proper understanding of the severity of climate change seems to originate from misinformation spread across social media and the psychological distance between I.E. where issues of climate change are not clearly present individuals will tend to not take it as seriously. Therefore it is important to take note how the cultural, political and media influences

people's outlook on life something that the social representation theory will in particular be used to focus on. In contrast to this misinformation that was found to be spread by a lack of understanding or witnessing climate change issues directly the study by (Thi Lan Huong, Shun Bo, & Fahad, 2017) focused on how farmers based in North-West Vietnam perceived and were affected by climate change issues. These farmers stated that they found they were directly impacted by climate change issues such as, flooding, drought and rising temperatures and that they were keenly aware of how these issues are propagated by human activity such as deforestation and industrialization. This very much reinforces the use of social representation theory where in comparison to the previous study it shows how personal experiences with climate change issues can directly impact how they perceive climate change as a whole and whether or not, it is seen as an urgent threat to the world.

Factors Influencing Climate Change Perceptions

There are many different factors that influence people's perceptions of climate change where studies such as (Ehsan, Begum, Abdul Maulud, & Yaseen, 2022) who found that a key factor in influencing the perception of climate change in Malaysia is the educational level of people where higher education is more likely to correlate with a much greater understanding of climate change whereas, more rural and underdeveloped regions of the world are more likely to be less knowledgeable and aware of the dangers of climate change. Similarly to this (Ado, Leshan, Savadogo, Bo, & Shah, 2019) in their study on farmers in Niger also found that the economic and education level of the

people very much determined whether or not they saw climate change as a threat or if they just saw it as a natural cycle. This reinforces the idea that the perceptions of climate change can be based upon the direct experiences of people which highlights the importance in then understanding university students perceptions of climate change who may have not directly experienced the effects of climate change first hand. The media and political influences also play a factor into how climate change is perceived (Jamelske, Barrett, & Boulter, 2013) in their study comparing American students and Chinese students where they found that American students primarily get their perceptions of climate change from their political views and influences from scepticism whereas, Chinese students are more influenced by cultural elements in the importance of government environmental agencies and are more likely to trust the government. This cultural divide is of particular importance in understanding social representation theory and also can be of note in understanding how university students are influenced by global perspectives in particular surrounding the extent of which they suffer from “eco-anxiety” from world governmental influence.

Climate Change Perceptions vs Climate Action

Despite there being a high level of climate change awareness there also seems to be a gap between climate change action. There seems to be a key individuals differences that can influence people into either supporting climate change action or not based off of their own perceptions. This is highlighted by (Cipriani, Frumento, Grassini, Gemignani, & Menicucci, 2024) who found that these key psychological

differences shape an individual into being pro or anti climate change action. This is particularly crucial in understanding that climate change perceptions are not universal and are influenced by social and psychological factors. Furthermore it would be of note in understanding how university students are influenced by these perceptions as this group of people are hugely diverse and therefore, would be influenced by a range of factors. Further understanding into how the perceptions of climate change could influence action is that the political affect that it can have on people in the study by (Ricart, Olcina, & Rico, 2019) it highlights this political impact where people can be heavily influenced in their beliefs surrounding climate change by politicians. This is something that can be further developed in understanding university students perceptions of climate change and how that affects their sense of well-being as, this is something that is incredibly divisive and the political divide in reference to climate change would as this study states influence the mental well-being of people.

Psychological Impacts

Climate Change is not only something that impacts us on an environmental level it is also something that affects us psychologically. An increased awareness surrounding climate change and it's affects also comes with a heightened psychological impact especially amongst young people such as university students. Responses to these worries can result in eco-anxiety, trauma, stress and uncertainty surrounding the future. These will all negatively impact someone's sense of well-being and

therefore, it is vital to discuss it and look into the current literature that talks about it.

Eco Anxiety and Climate Distress

Eco-anxiety can be best described as a “chronic fear of environmental doom, affecting cognitive, emotional, and behavioural well-being” (Orrù, Orrù, Mannarini, & Mannarini, 2024) it is a form of anxiety that develops once a greater understanding of the dangers of climate change is discovered. This is something that is very much prevalent throughout the younger generations as seen in (Teo, et al., 2024) study on how climate anxiety affects Australian students when compared to the general population. This study found even though both elements of society were psychologically affected by climate change and suffered some level of eco-anxiety, it was found that the university students were much more likely to take an active stance against climate change and actively fight against it. This is important to understand as it shows how university students themselves differ from the rest of the general public as, they are more likely to take an active stance. Therefore it is important to further understand the reasoning and key psychological differences that university students have in not only understanding climate change but taking the extra step to fight against it.

Psychological Distance and Climate Change Perceptions

There is a belief that depending on how much you are directly impacted by something (the distance) then results in you developing certain psychological perceptions about something. In relation to climate change

it would mean that depending on how much it directly affects you would then depend how much it has a psychological impact on your perceptions of climate change. A key study which focuses on this is the study by (Teo, et al., 2024) who found that Australian students who suffered direct impacts from climate events e.g. Bush fires were much more likely to then report high levels of trauma and stress related symptoms than those who were not directly impacted. This can very easily promote mental disengagement or denial surrounding how serious the problem is. A further study to expand upon the impact psychological distance can have is (Rana, et al., 2023) who also similarly found that the perceived distance to the problem was vital in them being mentally affected by climate change issues. Also it was important to note that those who perceived climate change as a far off issue were then less likely to support anti-climate change measures it is therefore, important to understand people's reasoning behind not seeing climate change as an immediate threat a group such as university students would be very useful to study in this regard as they are such a large diverse group of people with differing views throughout.

Coping Strategies: How people manage Climate Anxiety

It is important to note that current literature explains various ways that people cope with their own climate anxiety. Climate change can lead to psychological distress particularly in the form of eco-anxiety being a major issue many groups of people tend to use a range of coping

strategies to manage these negative emotions. For the case of university students this is something that is very common as they are already undergoing a stressful time in their studies the necessity for coping strategies is very much apparent. Therefore understanding these coping strategies is not only important in seeing how students manage climate distress and anxiety but it is vital to see how different opportunities could be developed by institutions in order to offer better mental health support and overall improve student wellbeing. Coping with climate related distress involves many different emotional, behavioural and cognitive responses to the stress. (Crandon, Scott, Charlson, & Thomas, A theoretical model of climate anxiety and coping, 2024) presents a theoretical model of coping strategies wherein people categorize their problems into problem-focused, emotion-focused and meaning-focused coping methods. Each form of categorisation can lead to people then forming either constructive engagement in coping with climate anxiety or active avoidant behaviours depending on the context of their climate anxiety. Similarly to this (Gunasiri, et al., 2024) states that the cultural element is key to developing coping strategies where adaptive coping e.g. community led projects, sustainable behaviours are encouraged. More adaptive coping strategies were noticed in current literature (Daeninck, Kioupi, Kioupi, Vercammen, & Vercammen, 2023) found that students tended to provide proactive coping strategies focusing on future sustainability and goals related to improving their psychological development and understanding of climate change in order to actively make a difference. However it also noted that many people in current

literature develop maladaptive coping strategies in order to cope with eco-anxiety and stress. (Crandon, Scott, Charlson, & Thomas, A theoretical model of climate anxiety and coping, 2024) discusses how emotion focused coping strategies also include avoidance and denial behaviours showing that students do not only have positive coping strategies. Similarly (Ágoston, et al., 2022) identified climate related stress caused evidence of withdrawal, denial or emotional shutdown this shows us that, different emotions can cause different maladaptive coping mechanisms to be developed. (Crandon, Scott, Charlson, & Thomas, Coping with climate anxiety: impacts on functioning in Australian adolescents, 2024) stated that the impacts this had on students was extreme where high levels of climate anxiety led to increasing withdrawals from the school environment and social difficulty. This is important to see how climate anxiety and the coping strategies that are developed affect the social functioning of students. Therefore from current literature it shows us how two forms of coping strategies are mainly developed by students and people nationwide where some people focus on actively trying to make a positive difference to the climate other will instead choose to ignore the climate emergency or spiral into withdrawal and isolation.

Identified Gaps

Climate change awareness is something that is widely studied throughout the world especially in regards to youth and the general public with, a growing focus on climate anxiety and the emotional distress that comes with climate change. Coping strategies to deal with these problems are

also increasingly being explored by current literature to try and see how people are dealing with the stress. However current literature primarily fails to focus on a key element of society being university students. This group in society is mainly grouped together with “youth” which minimizes the importance that that sub-section of society has on the future of the world. University students specific perceptions of climate change are not consistently explored there seems to be a gap in understanding students mental health and well-being from how their perceptions of climate change impact their psychological well-being. There is very little focus on Social representation theory to understand how university students develop their shared perceptions of climate change; the main focus is on emotion regulation and the coping strategies that students develop.

Justification

Therefore following this the urgency of climate change cannot be understated it is a growing crisis which has untold psychological impacts on students nationwide it is then vital that university students in particular are focused on to understand the psychological and social impacts climate change perceptions has on the well-being of these students. University students being a politically and socially engaged group of people it is important to focus on this part of society to understand how this often underrepresented portion of society feels about climate change and it’s impact on them. The value of using social representation theory is that it provides a different outlook onto seeing the impact climate change perceptions affects well-being on a more

collective understanding rather than looking at it on a individualistic level. This focus on university students as whole will allow a greater understanding into how universities can benefit from increasing climate change information as well as how these institutions can improve mental health support on a much underrepresented impact that climate change has on student mental health.

Chapter 2- Method

Introduction

This chapter will focus on and outline the different methodological approaches that were adopted in this study to explore university students' perceptions of climate change and how that could potentially impact their sense of well-being. Given how the study is primarily focused on how students construct and understand their thoughts and feelings on climate change, a qualitative approach was adopted to achieve the best possible results using focus groups to allow for dynamic and descriptive discussion. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data guided by social representation theory (Howarth, 2006), which aims to examine how a shared understanding of climate change emerges in different social groups. This chapter will focus on and explain the research design, participant recruitment, data collection procedures, ethical considerations, and the analytical framework used to generate findings.

Participants

Participants for this study were six university students split up into two focus groups with three participants in each group. The participants were all recruited from the discipline of psychology and psychology and counselling. The recruitment process was based on the university's experimental management system (EMS) wherein the students were shown a brief description of the study and what it entails as no deception was necessary for this project. The participants during the focus group were each given a demographics form to fill out with their gender and

age being noted the age ranged from 19-28 and with there being 2 males and 4 females in total. In order to identify participants through their voice for transcription each participant was given a identifier name e.g. Participant 1,2,3 and following transcription the audio recording was deleted. The study received ethical approval following a submission of an ethics form to the ethics committee. The participants were all given an information sheet with key information about the study could be read and following this a consent form was given and required to sign in order to take part in the study. The two focus groups were both conducted within the university campus in a pre-determined room.

Data Collection and Analysis

This study utilised a qualitative approach using focus groups to collect data. Focus groups were chosen as they are designed to illicit deep and meaningful debate and discussion which vital to gain an understanding of university students perceptions of climate change and it's effect on well-being. The questions that were asked to all participants were designed to encourage discussion surrounding climate change using chosen news articles to help further discussion. Each focus group lasted around 45 minutes with the same researcher remaining for each focus group to maintain consistency. Key topics that were discussed by participants included emotional responses to climate change, impacts on personal well-being and the perceived coping strategies that people have to deal with climate change anxiety. The data was analysed using thematic analysis (Virginia Braun, 2008) where themes emerged organically from the data with some overlap from each focus group.

When conducting the analysis the researcher closely used (Howarth, 2006) social representation theory in order to make sense of complex perceptions and values that each participant had surrounding climate change.

The materials used in this study consisted of an informed consent form (See Appendices E) which provided details of what was expected of them throughout the focus group and then they were required to indicate if they consented to take part or not in the audio recording which were later transcribed (See Appendices A+B). The questions (See appendices G) consisted of 10 pre created questions to be asked towards the participants with follow up questions created on the spot but informed using the appropriate focus group training that the researcher undertook prior to commencing the focus groups. An information sheet (See Appendices C) was also provided to allow for further information of the study to be given to participants and finally a debrief sheet (See Appendices F) was given following the completion of the focus group where participants were given the ability to ask any potential questions.

Chapter 3- Results

In this chapter, I shall be focusing on the results that were taken from the two focus groups that were conducted with, a total of 6 participants. In order to properly conduct and analyse the research aim of understanding university students perceptions of climate change it is necessary to at first understand the different themes that these students within the focus group were discussing. Using (Howarth, 2006) creation of social representation theory as a lens to analyse the various themes it shall allow for the data to be properly and sufficiently analysed to allow for an accurate and conclusive discussion surrounding the beliefs and thought processes of the participants within the focus group. The first theme that can be taken from the qualitative data in the focus group is the theme of Lack of control and powerlessness, the second theme is Impending doom and climate anxiety, the third theme is lack of education and awareness and the final theme is coping strategies and Resilience.

THEME 1- Lack of Control and Powerlessness

The theme of lack of Control and Powerlessness emerged from the discussion of many of the participants talking about how we as individuals have very little control over climate change and what we as individuals can do in order to combat climate change I.E. Participant 3 in transcripts 2- focus group 2 (See appendices B) “especially like the everyday person. It feels very out of their control, so to have that fear put on you ... you'll spend the rest of your life worrying about it”. Further evidence to support the development of the theme of the lack of control

also comes from Participant 3 in transcript 2 where they state “financially, you have to go for the Cheaper option and it might not always be the most eco-friendly, but you know you often a choice you backed into a corner” this was said in relation to how different people especially university students are forced out of economic needs to go for purchases that are not as eco-friendly simply out of financial strain wherein they do not have the necessary control over their own finances in order for them to freely and willingly purchases the more expensive eco-friendly products. Further evidence to support the theme of powerlessness comes from the first Transcript (See appendices A) where participant 3 states “The idea of personal change to change global warming is an idea which was founded by big business to make us feel like we're the problem” a key element that was found throughout both the focus groups was that we as everyday individuals have little to no personal control over how climate change is countered globally and that all the power and ability to actually change current trends rests in the hands of these “big businesses”. Further agreement was made within the first transcript on how we as individuals have very little control over climate affairs and affects participant 1 stated that “there’s only so much that we can do ... it is the big countries that are drilling into the ground for oil doing all these things to make money whilst ruining the world and causing all these bad things to happen about the climate” both these quotes show direct agreement surrounding the theme that people do not have much control and the power is surrounding these big and powerful businesses not the average person. A quote taken from participant 3 in

the second transcript directly correlates with the previous quote wherein they state “I know they burn a lot of fossil fuels and I don't know if it's still this like slogan, but I know at one point Trump said very much dig, baby, drill, drill, baby, drill or whatever it is yeah and I also think that the wars and stuff going on like that, that must contribute to climate change, to like, physically bomb the earth”. This quote correlates to previous statements where the general theme is that people do not believe they themselves have power and that they lay the blame on the different governments and big business that are “drilling the earth”. A great quote taken from the second transcript by participant 3: “Basically got to the point where I was like, I physically have never going to change anything as one person and me take changing my toothbrush isn't going to change anything” this quote really enforces the idea that we as people truly feel we do not have control over climate change and as the participant said changing their “toothbrush” I.E. small changes won't really have the impact that changes from big companies would have on the world.

Another quote taken from the first transcript by participant 1 where they state "The UK's version of trying to help is giving us paper straws from McDonald's... I don't know if that's going to make much change." This participant here is referring to the fact that we as individuals truly remain powerless and suffer from a great deal of frustration due to the perceived superficial solutions that big companies such as McDonalds are coming up e.g. banning plastic straws. However contradicting this was participant 2 of the same transcript who stated that in response to participant 1 who was explaining their dislike towards the banning of

plastic straws participant two stated that they “believe it does” have a major impact on the climate similarly to that agreement can also be found in the second transcript where participant 2 said “I get that there's micro plastics and then it goes into the water, the water, and then they eat it out and die.” This shows clear that participant 2 has a clear justification for the usage of paper straws in order to combat climate change and reduce the needless death of animals. Overall there very much seems to be a pattern present throughout both focus groups where the theme of lack of control and powerlessness seems to present itself whenever the discussion of big businesses or politicians arises wherein, university students describe themselves as well as other members of the general public as lacking the power and ability to truly cause environmental change on the earth as they seem to believe all the power rests within the powerful businesses and political elite not the everyday people.

Theme 2- Impending Doom and Climate Anxiety

This theme in particular was something that kept being prevalent throughout both focus groups and that it is something that the participants were saying a lot of people go through. Participant 2 in transcript 2 stated “If someone is anxious over it, then they're just going to feed into that” in relation to how someone would perceive information surrounding the climate. Similarly participant 3 in the same transcript stated “I think the impact it can have on their mental health and especially like the everyday person. It feels very out of their control, so to have that fear put on you from a child over the by the way, the world's

on fire but, you're going to, you're only six and you'll spend the rest of your life worrying about it.” This very much correlates that eco-anxiety in children and adults is very much a theme and topic of discussion throughout the focus group. Climate change is also something that for certain people it is not a constant factor plaguing their mind and worries as participant 2, states in transcript 1 “as soon as I leave and move onto something else it’s probably not going to be something I think about”. This shows that there is contradictory beliefs that climate change is not something that is a constant worry for some people and that climate anxiety is not as prevalent in some people as it is in others. Similarly to this participant 1 in transcript 1 also went on to state “I think climate change isn’t real for some people because it doesn’t affect them. It’s ‘not my problem’ until it is.” This reinforces that not everyone has climate anxiety if they are not as well read on climate related issues or if they are not directly impacted by these issues in examples of flooding, drought or rising sea levels. An interesting statement was said by participant 1 in transcript 2 where they discussed the article that they read and how it had a positive spin on climate change and the work that is being done by different organisations: “the title is the good news about climate change and I thought that was actually quite interesting because most of the stuff you see about climate change is always negative” he later goes on to discuss the importance of showing the positive side to the fight to climate change as well as the negative side of it: “And I think it's important that you highlight the good people are doing instead of just focusing on the bad”. This is different to a lot of the other opinions that

were shared by all participants in the two focus groups as, this participant shared beliefs from a more positive outlook on climate change highlighting the importance of having a positive stance over a negative one. There seems to be a shared pattern here where climate related anxiety was very much seen as a prevalent issue for some people however, it very much dictated itself on whether or not an individual was sufficiently exposed to climate related media or directly impacted by climate issues. These all then depend on the extent in which individuals such as university students and the general public are affected by climate anxiety and the impending doom that it presents.

Theme 3- Lack of Education and Awareness

The theme of lack of Education and Awareness was something that was especially prevalent throughout both focus groups this was a particular aspect that many participants felt that a majority of the worlds population fell short off. Many people are not aware of climate change issues especially on how it affects them and what they as individuals can do themselves to actively fight against the changing climate. In particular the participants in the second focus group explained that the ways in which we teach students about climate change is simply not effective or efficient in allowing them to fully understand and take in the dangers of climate change and therefore, reinforce how change can be done: participant 1 stated "If you want to fix an issue, you need to educate people. And by educate people, I don't mean put it in the curriculum and get kids to sit through classes." This shows the delivery of climate change information and dangers is not truly allowing students to grasp

the peril that it presents to the world and to them. Similarly participant 3 in the same focus group would go onto to agree with the previous statement themselves saying "Universities could help people understand the politics of climate change. It's overwhelming, but if universities could help funnel that information, students could find what they can actually do." This further shows how information around climate change is not having the impact it necessarily should have on the wider population of both students and non-students. The patterns that seemed to present itself for this theme were that overall most participants felt that more education was necessary in order to truly drive the importance of fighting climate change however, the ways in which current climate education was being delivered was found to be inefficient in getting the key arguments and points across. Many participants also presented the argument that social media plays a vital role in spreading misinformation surrounding climate change especially for university students where many people are susceptible to falling prey to incorrect climate related information.

Theme 4- Coping Strategies And Resilience

Another element that was present throughout the two focus groups was the discussion of how individuals who are experienced with climate change issues use coping strategies in order to combat climate change related issues as well as, how resilient these people are when facing the many challenges presented by climate change and its affects. Many participants discussed how people as individuals tend to take small personal changes in order to combat climate change over large

significant and life changing methods. This can be seen for example taken from focus group 2 where participant 1 stated "I try to focus on small things, like reducing waste, to feel like I'm doing something." This shows how to some people smaller personal change is preferred to more radical ones where they can feel like they are "doing something" in order to have a positive impact on the environment such as reducing waste.

Another element of the coping strategies that could be seen throughout both focus groups is how, when faced with the overwhelming fear or dread of climate change consequences a great many people including university students tend to disengage from the discussion surrounding the climate in order to avoid the potential stress that could come with that. For example in the first focus group participant 2 stated "Anger about climate change can be used to push change, but it can also make people feel hopeless." This infers that the way in which climate change information is delivered can very much have a negative outcome on whether or not, an individual is willing to listen or act upon climate related issues. The participants are stating that this counterproductive coping mechanism can have the opposite of the intended effect by individuals now preferring to not listen or think about the climate to avoid stress. Agreement for this can be seen in the second focus group where participant 2 states "I don't think about it too much because it makes me anxious." This reinforces the idea that a lot of people refuse to listen to climate change news or information to simply avoid the stress that that could bring. Further discussion from focus group 2 taken from participant 2 where they say "I avoid reading about climate change

because it stresses me out too much." This again shows how people turn away from the discussion of climate change in order to avoid the stress of talking about it. Another element of how participants discussed resilience can be built up and used to help facilitate climate change discussions and changes is, the use of community engagement and activism. An example of this comes from participant 3 in focus group 1 where they say "If people saw real changes in their own community—like their university doing sustainability projects—I think they'd feel more motivated." This shows us how if individuals saw more community projects especially in areas such as universities then this could allow for more climate change engagement and support. Local communities especially should be supported and "real change" shown to allow for individuals to then be able to be more motivated to act on climate change issues and matters. Participant 1 from focus group 2 directly agrees and correlates with this point of discussion: "I think if people saw change happening around them, like actual visible results, they'd be more likely to care and take action." This again shows that people could feel more willing to act on climate related issues if they witnessed change themselves. Further discussion from participant 3 in focus group 1 for how universities can influence change can be seen in: "If universities set up beach cleanups or local environmental projects, I think students would join in. It gives people a direct way to make a difference." This infers that the participants believed that programs such as beach cleanups can have more direct impacts on encouraging people such as university students to be more climate aware as well as engaging in helping their

local environment to flourish and remain clean. The patterns that were present in this theme were that climate activism does play a vital role in raising awareness of climate change many people tend to actively avoid it to prevent stress levels from rising. Many participants highlighted the importance of community led efforts to raise awareness of climate change and reduce its impacts on a local level which would go further than just reaching out to university students and the public through different news articles and journals.

Figure 1.1- Table of Themes

Theme	Subthemes	Description
1. Lack of Control and Powerlessness	– Corporate blame – Limited individual impact – Economic constraints	Students expressed feeling powerless when presented with big businesses being in power, highlighting the dominant role of corporations and governments, and the limits of individual action.
2. Impending Doom and Climate Anxiety	– Future uncertainty – Emotional Fatigue	Participants described experiencing negative emotions and anxiety about the future, often linked to media coverage and a lack of action by those in power.
3. Lack of Education and Awareness	– Inadequate school curriculum – Social media misinformation – Sense of disconnectedness	Students reported insufficient formal education on climate change, widespread misinformation online, and scepticism from older generations.
4. Coping Strategies and Resilience	– Disengagement and avoidance – Community involvement – Hope through collective action	Students discussed coping by disengaging or through local action. Some suggested university-led or group based initiatives as a source of motivation and hope.

Chapter 4- Discussion

Introduction

This chapter will primarily focus on interpreting and discussing the findings that were found throughout the results sections using, current literature and social representation theory (Howarth, 2006) to analyse the results. The four themes that were found and will be discussed are: Lack of control and powerlessness, Impending Doom and climate anxiety, lack of education and awareness, and coping strategies and resilience. Each offers insight into how university students understand climate change and how that then goes onto impact their own individual sense of well-being. SRT will then allow for a framework in which an understanding of the shared beliefs within the different social groups inside university can be developed especially through the process of anchoring and objectivation taken from SRT. These findings and analysis will then aim to demonstrate how students' perceptions of climate change are not just influenced by their factual knowledge but also by, their own emotional understanding and impacts that will affect how they think and feel.

Lack of Control and Powerlessness

One of the major themes to be taken and developed from the results section is the theme of lack of control and powerlessness when students are faced with the issues of climate change. The participants of both focus groups constantly discussed how they felt that they did not hold the power or the ability to make meaningful change towards climate change.

Many participants felt that these were in contrast to the overwhelming power and authority that big businesses had in their own capacity to make these changes. These perceptions very much line up with the concept of Anchoring in SRT (Moscovici, 1984) where quite advanced and complex geo-political global issues of climate change are “anchored” or made sense of by linking them to big business or politicians. To then look at this through the eyes of a student this lends itself to express a great amount of frustration that many students may be feeling and reflect the issues of climate change as one that is very much beyond the individuals ability to make any kind of impact in really reducing the negative effects of climate change. These issues focus on and bring attention to the deeply rooted feelings of disempowerment and show the psychological effects that creates barriers in allowing people; in particular students to take action against climate change. These issues of feeling powerlessness and having a lack of control are not only limited to those in the two focus groups current literature also, discusses this (Williams & Jaftha, 2020) they explain that these feelings of powerlessness are not only just routed in an emotional state it also has a behavioural impact on people as well wherein they say that people who feel powerless are less likely to engage in climate action. This is especially important as it helps explain the reasoning as to why students who feel powerless are now less likely to be inactive in the fight against climate change even when faced with all the impending information. In the first transcript participant 1 stated that “The UK’s version of trying to help is giving us paper straws from McDonald’s... I don’t know if that’s

going to make much change." This feeling of lack of control and impact over climate change issues that everyday people such as, students have over climate change can be echoed from (Winterich, Reczek, & Makov, 2024) who discuss how people don't truly understand what behaviours reduce emissions these feeling cause a great amount of frustration on perceived "superficial" impacts on climate change where they feel there effort is misguided leading to more feelings of powerlessness. This continued disillusionment is followed up by (Davidson, 2024) who states that cynicism is developed a coping mechanism when students are faced with issues relating to lack of power so that they instead blame governments and big businesses but, the emotional distress of this can then cause them to have a reduction in motivation in fighting against climate change. However, these feelings of high distress as a result of perceived powerlessness can also be challenged as (Vercammen, Oswald, & Lawrance, 2023) state that these social representations of powerlessness can be challenged by creating narratives of empowerment and visible community action this, would contrast with students who are feeling hopelessness if they were to see these active community led projects.

Impending Doom and Climate Anxiety

Another theme to emerge from the results section was the sense of impending doom and climate anxiety that many participants felt. Many students felt that being exposed to so many negative aspects of climate change combined with a sense of lack of progress contributed to the climate anxiety that they were feeling. This reflects current literature

such as (Clayton, 2020) and (Thompson, 2021) where climate anxiety is becoming a common response to environmental crisis across the world. Using SRT it very much supports the theory of objectification where, the threat of climate change is then transformed into a emotionally poignant imagery and thoughts throughout the minds of students seen in both transcripts when participants stated “the world is on fire” and “you’ll spend the rest of your life worrying about it”. These representations of the climate now reflect a new understanding of climate change amongst students where many of them now see climate change as a major issues and as a result suffer from climate anxiety. This is very much a global trend that can be seen as (Ogunbode, et al., 2022) found that climate anxiety world wide is linked to reduced well-being and a greater disengagement and burnout on climate related issues. (Pihkala, 2020) also correlates with this as climate anxiety related disengagement is a key element in many people’s coping strategies this, infers the significance of climate anxiety on students mental health and ability to function day by day. This climate anxiety can very much be linked to real world issues with well-being as discussed by (Mouguiama-Daouda, Blanchard, Coussement, & Heeren, 2022) who state that the climate anxiety faced by many people is measurable and very much linked to lowering well-being of people across the globe including students. In the two focus groups, participants inhibited different responses to climate change anxiety some saw it as an ever conscious issue in their mind whereas, others saw it as something that does not weigh on them this can be correlated by (Gregersen, Doran, Ogunbode, & Böhm, 2024) who

states that the public interprets climate anxiety in various differing ways some seeing it as more extreme than others. This supports the element that it is the social representation that is dependent on whether or not people such as students suffer from climate anxiety. However the climate anxiety that students face is not only influences them negatively it also allows for motivation for them to act against climate change as seen by (Thomson & Roach, 2023) who discussed that the anxiety levels of people can be used to fuel active change and energise them to fight against climate change. (Douglas A. Vakoch, 2023) similarly states how anxiety can act as a driving force for positive change and can transform climate anxiety into empowerment. It is then important to note that climate anxiety affects students in various different ways as it is dependent on the objectification of the information that is presented to the students I.E. some students are likely to spiral into anxiety and disengagement therefore, lowering their sense of well-being whereas, others use it as motivation to actively fight against climate change and it's related issues.

Lack of education and Awareness

Another theme that emerged from the results section was the perceived lack of education and awareness that was prevalent throughout university students in relation to climate change issues. Many students felt that climate change education was lacking in schools and education and that it is not properly imbedded into the current curriculum- "Universities could help people understand the politics of climate change ... It's overwhelming". This of course caused great frustration wherein the true

issues of the climate were not properly presented to students leading to them having inaccurate or even non-existent perceptions of climate change. The format in which climate education was handled in schools and universities was also criticised- “If you want to fix an issue, you need to educate people. And by educate people, I don’t mean put it in the curriculum and get kids to sit through classes.” The lack of proper and sufficient climate education can very much limit the social representations people have of climate change leading to them simply not caring or disengaging from climate related issues. It is important for education to make the proper impact on students about the seriousness of climate change as according to (Howarth, 2006) people rely on shared cultural narrative to understand complex and confusing issues such as climate change. Without a clear and concise explanation of climate change students may turn to less reliable sources of information which leads to the spreading of misinformation, (Jolley & Douglas, 2014) state that this can then lead to a sense of conspiracy an incorrect understanding of climate change and it’s related issues. This then of course would weaken the anchoring of climate change information where they base their opinions and values off of incorrect or misleading information and therefore their objectification or ideas will then also be incorrect. Current literature also supports the importance of climate awareness and education amongst students. (Verlie., 2022) argues that the emotional impact of climate change is not stressed enough in schools and universities and that, primarily relying on just the facts will not have the same impacts on students seeing first hand the affects climate change

has on the environment. Climate change being such a daunting and huge issue to tackle can leave many people feeling anxious and powerless therefore, (Pihkala, 2020) stresses the importance of ensuring everyone is climate aware and properly educated on what they as an individual can do to make a difference. This change in educating people and being open with communication can be vital in us a society fighting back against climate change (Clayton, 2020) further shows the importance of open communication highlighting that it can support psychological resilience in the face of impending doom. This would all support students to truly feel empowered and educated on the climate issues that are facing them allowing them, to work together to battle against climate change and work out new and innovative ways in which they can help heal the planet. As stated earlier misinformation is rampant in the online world which is where the majority of student get there information. The reliance that student can have on this source of information can cause fragmented representations of climate change leading students down the incorrect path. (Gregersen, Doran, Ogunbode, & Böhm, 2024) discusses how truly the public understanding of climate change can be shaped by media framing. Many of the students stressed how media control of information was something that was particularly frightening to them and that the extreme degree in which it has an impact on students. The exposure to these social media sites result in deep emotional responses as seen in the study conducted by (Ogunbode, et al., 2022) therefore, creating a harsh and divisive discussion online amongst groups such as university students. These negative and sometimes argumentative

discussions can result in deep divides amongst social groups and have a highly negative outcome in fighting against climate change due to the fracturing nature that these discussions can cause amongst people. Therefore it is important for universities to rethink the ways in which they deliver climate change information and the impact it is having on students nationwide. It is vital that education is not only purely information based and should reach students on an emotional level where it can cause them to develop more mental resilience and a stronger sense of well-being. This will then ideally create a more shared and supportive environment to fight against climate change.

Coping Strategies and Resilience

The final theme to emerge from the two focus groups in the results section was the development of coping strategies and resilience that students demonstrated in the face of eco-anxiety. Some participants described taking small but meaningful steps to act against climate change whereas others admitted to withdrawing from climate change issues and actively avoiding information about it. The students who decided to make changes in their lives tended to focus on initiatives such as reducing waste or joining local efforts to improve the climate. This very much reflect how some students desire to reframe climate change issues into something they can then manage themselves; it becomes something more beatable and then they themselves feel they can have more of an impact as individuals. This is supported by (Moellendorf, 2022) who states that hope and practical engagement is key to preventing paralysis. On the other hand, the negative anchoring of climate change issues

allowed for students to feel that the issues were simply too great leading to them to withdraw from climate change issues in order to protect their own sense of well-being as (Douglas A. Vakoch, 2023) describes stress leading to detachment.

Implications for practice

In order for climate related issues to be fully addressed and understood by university students the universities themselves should develop much more engaging, action orientated climate education to, create a much greater impact on the students learning about climate change and preventing the continued spread of climate misinformation. It is then vital that mental health support systems throughout university acknowledge and support students suffering from climate related mental health issues such as eco anxiety to ensure the continued improvement of student well-being. As eco-anxiety is going to be an ever present issue going forward especially as more eco-education initiatives are being developed in and around university. The institutions such as universities can help support the fight against climate change by sponsoring or supporting local developments and sustainability projects to allow, the involvement of students and therefore creating active visibility to local climate related issues.

Strengths and Limitations + Future Research

The use of focus groups were particularly beneficial in allowing the encouragement of deep and meaningful discussion surrounding climate change. Focus groups allowed for differing viewpoints to be discussed in

a safe and open environment where participants could discuss their own experiences and relate it back to climate change related issues. The use of SRT to support thematic analysis was also very helpful as it allowed the transcript to be fully analysed providing interesting theme to be developed discussing both mental wellbeing of students and the different perceptions that they and wider society had on climate change. A great limitation of the study would be the smaller sample size of six participants wherein, a greater sample size would have allowed for an increase in the variety of experiences to be brought in. However even with a smaller sample size deep debate was still present allowing for appropriate data to be collected. In future research going forward it would be beneficial if a greater cross-cultural representation of students could be sampled as the cultural element is something that has been shown to play a vital role in the development of climate change understanding. It would also be useful to see how different students from other courses interpret and deal with climate related issues and how that affects their own sense of well-being as they will of course psychologically have their own different mindsets.

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Appendix

Appendices A- Transcript Focus Group 1

Participant 1-Hello, I am participant one.

Participant 2-Participant two.

Participant 3-Participant three.

Researcher- Okay guys, I'm first going to start a question with what was your general opinion about these articles you read?

Participant 1- I think they're correct. I read that health climate change is making our health worse, and I think it's correct. Definitely. There's a lot more diseases than we think we know. I think, in my opinion, like back in the day, people say back in the day, I didn't have those things. They probably did, but they just wouldn't know about. Now they are. And I don't know, just an argument between them not knowing that these things existed, or just because climate change did genuinely make it worse.

Researcher- So you'd say people are more aware now?

Participant 2- I think so, yeah. About climate change, a lot of people don't really believe in climate change. They think it doesn't exist. They think it's not real, and that people just need to get a grip. But I don't think that's true. That it is a real problem. Do you know what I mean? It really is. You can tell. The weather is not stable. There's just a lot of things happening because of the weather. Yeah, that's one of my opinions.

Researcher- Would you guys say people would agree with that?

Participant 2- Sorry. No, I definitely agree that some people just simply don't believe it's real. I had a conversation with my mother recently where she was telling me that she didn't believe in climate change, which was aggravating. I feel like I don't feel like there's more diseases and stuff now. I feel like climate change probably isn't good for our health, whether it's that or anything else. I'm quickly scanning your article. Allergies, definitely. Food poisoning.

Participant 1- I'm allergic to wheat. Wheat allergy. I don't know if that's because... Back in the day, people used to say they didn't have these allergies, blah, blah, blah. I think maybe this thing's added to the wheat that I'm allergic to because I wasn't always allergic to wheat. My pregnancy triggered my allergy, so I was just out of nowhere. You know

what I mean? I don't necessarily know if something is added to the wheat in the things that I eat.

Participant 2- Is that climate change?

Participant 1- I don't know if it's climate change. At first, it was just a discussion I was brought in, about the allergy thing.

Participant 2- Firstly, I feel like climate change... I think it probably can have effects on our health, but I feel like that's not the main issue. I think it impacts things which then go on to impact our health, which I think is different. Like back in the 90s, I wasn't around for that, the whole acid rain thing, where people were like, oh, it's going to burn our skin, when in fact it was just damaging crops, damaging water sources. That indirectly harms us, but it wasn't like the direct, acid rain will hurt you, it will hurt the things that you need. So it's more of an indirect harm than directly, this is going to impact you. Does that make sense? Does that make sense?

Researcher- Yeah definitely so how did people perceive this? Was it like this craze of acid rain?

Participant 2- You know what I said before? I was talking to my mum. This is where I get this from, a very convenient conversation I had right before this. She was saying that back when it was a big thing, when she was younger, that apparently people were worried that the media was portraying it as acid falling from the sky, as opposed to high concentrations of acid in water, in a sort of safe way, but science concentrations, however that works, it's basically enough to damage crops, because those things are sensitive as hell. Yeah. You know what I mean? Yeah. I don't know if that makes any sense. Do you want to say anything?

Participant 3- To be honest, both of you have actually just said exactly what I think it was about.

Participant 2-I'm sorry.

Participant 3- No, no, it's fine. I mean, I would say that climate change does, that's about food, right?

Participant 1- This one, yeah, is about how it makes our health worse, and crops, and the potential to, you know, have a faster health, clean air, safe drinking water, nutritious food, safe shelter, things like that. It has the potential to undermine decades of progress in global health to do

with the fact that our air isn't clean anymore. There's a lot more carbon dioxide, or carbon monoxide? Carbon. One or the other. Because of the amount of cars that are around. Do you know what I mean? There wasn't that many cars back then, there was people cycling. So, yeah, it definitely has an effect. I'm sorry. When I was smoking cigarettes, I went to NHS Healthy Quit, and they helped me quit, and I did a carbon monoxide test thingy, and it was about 16, I don't know what it means, but when I quit smoking, I was down to two, and the reason she said it would never go down to zero is because of how much carbon monoxide is still in the air around us. It's never, our carbon monoxide level will never be at zero because of the effects of cars, and carbon dioxide in the air. Anyway, first off, so it definitely has an effect on us.

Participant 2- I was going to say, because we know air pollution is worse in especially big exporter countries, like China and India have some of the worst air pollution on earth, and they are two of the biggest exporters, and I feel like it's a mixture between factories, obviously factories, and just the lack of concern of how these operate, because at least some places try with production to make it more sustainable and, not sustainable, not impactful on warming, yeah, basically they try to go about it in a more eco-friendly way, that's what you're looking for. But countries like India and China are so focused on being the conglomerate exporter that they simply do not care and do not seem to be willing to change. Like, for me, being in Delhi for one day is the equivalent of smoking, like, 50 cigarettes. My partners get back from there. Sorry,

that's just how I know all my information. But yeah, no, same thing with China. I think they're a tiny bit better for it, like ever so slightly. So I think that's just more, like, they have better equipment and technology, but I think that's about the only difference, it's better. Sorry.

Participant 1- I mean, when you're a country sort of built upon big business, when that big business is sort of based around coal and fossil fuels, it's really hard to change that. Like, I think they also don't care, because it's cheap. But if they were forced to change, it wouldn't be instantaneous. No at all It would take at least a decade. And I'm saying at least with, like, leeway.

Participant 1-The damage would probably be already done by then. Do you know what I mean?

Participant 2-Oh, yeah. It's already done now.

Participant 1- Yeah, I don't think it's irreversible at all. Mother Nature created everything we needed to sustain life, and humans just made it worse.

Participant 3-It's going to live without humans, but humans can't live without her.

Participant 1-Yeah, exactly.

Participant 2-And politicians love oil. Oh, yeah, they do.

Participant 3- Oh, I have to go into Donald Trump. Yeah, no, I know what you're talking about. In his speech, when he first came into the presidency, he talked about drilling in Alaska, which is not good. Because Alaska is, I think it's one of the, like, it's a big oil reserve, but it needs to stay a big oil reserve, but not it be drained of everything, because it will kill. That will probably put, I'm pretty sure I read it somewhere. Please don't quote me on it though. But I think if they drill in Alaska, I think that's when it will be past the point of no return, I think. Everyone, while, during the presidential election run, they were worried if Donald Trump came into power, because I think scientists have sort of said that if he came to power, that would be irreversible after his presidency, all his views. But because of his views, it's not going to be. Yeah.

Participant 2- I feel like global warming is definitely, like, perpetuated by greed of people who won't be around long enough to see the

consequences of what they're doing. Like, you're all for fracking, like, cool, why don't you do that on your private golf course, if you love it that much?

Participant 1- I know. Why are you doing it in a whole world? It's odd. It's odd. Both worlds were started, you know world war one and two, both started by men who wanted something they couldn't have. Do you know what I mean?

Participant 3- Yep.

Participant 1- So it is literally that, yeah. It's just people get, wanting more and more and more, and just not caring about how it affects the world.

Participant 2- No, I think that is one of the biggest issues with global warming, is that people keep saying, I'm not going to live long enough to see the outcomes. But the outcomes are coming very quickly.

Participant 1- But it's still like, it just doesn't even matter if they're going to be here.

Participant 2- And the people who can make the difference are the ones who don't need to care. Like, the 70-year-old billionaires who already have more money than anyone else could ever possibly imagine aren't going to live to see the impact, so why not just have more fun while they're here?

Researcher- Would you say those types of people would see climate change as a threat?

Participant 2- I feel like world leaders wouldn't care about it.

Participant 1- Yeah, I don't think they do.

Participant 2-Unless...

Participant 1- I think if they did, they'd implement extreme measures to make sure that nothing bad happens to the planet. But they're not doing anything about it.

Participant 2- Some governments do.

Participant 1-Yeah, some.

Participant 2- Especially some places in Europe try really hard. But it's the places like China, India, and America that matter, and they don't seem to care.

Participant 1- The UK's version of trying to help is giving us paper straws from McDonald's. I don't know if that's going to make much change, but...

Participant 2-I believe it does.

Participant 3-The idea...

Participant 1- The idea of it, but it's...

Participant 3- The idea of changing...

Participant 1- And the electric car thing, but who's to say electric isn't damaging as well? So all of it's just so contradictory, isn't it?
Everything...

Participant 3- The idea of personal change to change global warming is an idea which was founded by big business to make us feel like we're the problem. So it's actually just big business. The amount of carbon we produce as a single person is not as much.

Participant 1-No.

Participant 3- It's basically nothing compared to what they do. However, politicians can't make big changes due to the fact that all governments are based upon big business as well. They won't be in power if they don't supplement what the big businesses want. It's late-stage capitalism, basically. There's no country which doesn't have late-stage capitalism in its core foundations. The only way to change it is radical change. But it's impossible to change anything quickly or radically where big businesses have the power to change what politicians say and do.

Participant 2- French Revolution again. Sorry.

Researcher- So how much control would the average person have over climate change?

Participant 3- Don't get me wrong. Everyone did everything. They did little bits, like making sure that you recycle a little bit more. That's fair, but... If all of our efforts go to absolutely nothing, which quite a lot of the time it does, so you need to recycle, but that recycling then doesn't get recycled, then that leads to absolutely nothing.

Participant 1- Yeah, that leads to another problem, about plastic in the air. Things like that, you know what I mean?

Participant 3- Microplastic.

Participant 1- Yeah, microplastic, everything. If it's an individual person, there's not so much... One person out of all the billion other people in the world, one person doing all that recycling and no-one else is, nothing's going to happen. I'm not saying that's what happens, but it's just an example of... We can all try to do our best, recycle, do all of that, but there's only so much that we can do. Do you know what I mean? It's not even us causing most of the problems. If we are recycling and we are doing everything right, it is big companies who are drilling into the ground for oil and trying to do all these things to make more money whilst ruining the world and causing bad things to happen to the climate. Do you know what I mean? There's only so much we as single people can do.

Researcher- So how would that... If someone, a regular person, was faced with big businesses impacting climate change and doing all the things that they're doing, how would that affect someone's well-being?

Participant 1- Do you mean if a person who enjoyed recycling and wanted to do that more was then working for a business that didn't do that?

Participant 2- I think it's just generally.

Researcher- The general population.

Participant 2-How do you think they're impacted by it? By climate change?

Researcher- Yeah, and by big businesses doing all these changes.

Participant 1- I don't know. I think our health, again, comes first, really, doesn't it? Your health. And the weather. The weather's just not... You can tell. Last year, we did not have a summer at all. In the UK, we do

have summers sometimes. It's always been iffy, but the weather has just been odd, hasn't it? I think so. Anyway, it's just been really iffy.

Participant 2- It's getting warmer. When's the last time you went to snow?

Participant 1- Yeah, exactly. There's no snow. No, I haven't seen snow since 2010, I think, or something like that. I see snow, but they're all in the mountains. We're all lower down, and we are by the sea as well. In Swansea, we are by the sea, so there's plenty of salt to get rid of all of that snow. Yeah, it does affect us. Wildlife as well, like all the birds. There's just loads of things I could think of. Everything gets ruined. Animals die because of littering. There's just loads of things.

Participant 2- I think one of the issues with well-being is... Firstly, it is completely person-by-person. That's obvious. People who don't believe in it or don't care about it, they're probably fine. If you don't believe in it, there's nothing to worry about. The thing about global warming that's really weird, despite the fact that having this conversation, we can acknowledge that it is detrimental. I'm not thrilled having this conversation. This isn't the most exciting thing to do. But as soon as I leave and move on to something else, it's probably not going to be something I think about. It doesn't actively weigh on me the way that other topics, like socio-political, whatever, it doesn't weigh on me the

way they do because it's simply just not shown. Back to what you mentioned with Donald Trump. I'm glad to see that's on all of our minds because that's what you're being shown every five minutes. Nobody talks about it, so nobody cares. When somebody does talk about it, they're a laughingstock. Greta Thunberg. Who took her seriously? I'm sure a lot of people did. If you saw any media outlets or anyone talking about her, it was all like, look at this little girl taking time out of school to shout at us all. Now, years later, am I seeing people actually talk about her respectfully and acknowledging what she did? I'm going to compare her slightly to animal rights activists. Obviously, people who eat meat. Kind of look at them as in, okay, have your own opinion. Why are you shouting at me, though? That's how people treated her, when this isn't a your opinion versus my opinion. I think that's really interesting that people just did not care or respect her when she was doing something which needs to be done because nobody talks about this. The most people ever talked about climate change is when she was doing her rallies. Now that she's stopped and nobody else is doing what she's doing, you don't hear about it.

Participant 3- She hasn't actually stopped doing her rallies.

Participant 2-No, people just stop caring.

Participant 3- No, social media doesn't post a little bit on the page because it's not part of the agenda anymore. Well, it is, but not her, specifically.

Participant 2- Point proven. Didn't know she was still doing it.

Participant 3- Yeah, no, I somehow found that she did a... I can't remember the word. It's when you go onto a factory site and shut it down by just being there.

Participant 2- Protesting.

Participant 3- Yeah, protesting. I can't remember where it was or what it was, but it was a factory doing something to do with climate change. Yeah, I mean, obviously. So she still does stuff. It's obviously not as big as going to these big meetings and shouting at world leaders, but she still does stuff. People just don't see it. Same with the moment with all the firing of people in the national parks in America, keeping it safe and keeping it all good. People don't see all of the protests about that. I'm not sure if you saw, but there were huge protests of a lot of people doing... Well, protesting, being fired from their jobs, and after looking after national... What are those places?

Participant 2- National parks?

Participant 3-Yeah.

Participant 2-Media control is terrifying.

Participant 3-Media control is terrifying.

Participant 2- And I think that really does, in terms of making this about climate change, I think it really does impact how people respond to things. Like, if, like you mentioned, big businesses, corporations, governments don't want you to care that much, they have the power to just not show it to you. Like, if it's not something which can either give them publicity or money, like Greta Thunberg did for that little while. Because even then, again, they kind of pushed a narrative to, you know, look at this kid being, you know, dramatic. And, like, now that they don't want her anymore, she's not doing anything for them, you don't see her anymore. It's really just what makes them money, gets them interest. They don't want to provoke you too much, to feel too much.

Participant 3- I mean, it's debatable to say that social media, especially around important topics, is to destroy people's ability to show empathy

and to be connected to social situations, really, especially around climate change. Because it's sort of, yeah, people, so empathy, I think, doesn't exist.

Researcher- What type of people do you think would be most likely to look at these?

Participant 1- People who care about climate change. That's a simple way, really. But I think people who are researching for information on climate change and how it affects their own body, those are the type of people who would not give a damn, of course.

Participant 2- I don't agree with that. No, sorry. I don't know if I'm just being negative, but a lot of these are very, like, I don't know if you've glossed over a couple of them, besides some that I've read. But most of these seem very, like, just scientifically large blocks of text. I hate to say that these are probably more like research and information papers. I don't think the normal person is going to be, like, reading these.

Participant 1- If they care about climate change, I think they would want to research.

Participant 2- I mean, yeah, maybe if you're doing, like... But even then, is that not a research preference? That's not average person reading.

Participant 1- No, not for average person, but not all people care about climate change. Some people who do want to know more about it would do research on it. I would think so. Like, I've done that, you know what I mean? But not on this, but on other things. You know, like, it's just... It's nice to know more about it, really, isn't it? Unless you don't already know, then... You know, like, when you have a question in your mind. I always have questions in my mind. I Google it, and I'm like, oh, I need to know what this means. And I look at loads of things, and in that way, some people probably do the same thing with this as well.

Researcher- So how easy would it be then for someone to not look at these, to then reduce the negative impacts and the feelings of climate change?

Participant 2- I was going to say, can you please repeat that?

Researcher- Someone who didn't want to be exposed to climate change. How easy would that then be for them to... Avoid it.

Participant 1- Pretty easy, I think. I think it would be pretty easy to avoid. I mean, it's not really out there a lot, as much as it should be. So I think it would be pretty easy to avoid that. Yeah, definitely.

Participant 3- Especially with social media.

Participant 1- Oh, 100%, yeah. And you have all your pages all of your algorithm.

Participant 3- You could also reset your algorithm.

Participant 1- Oh, right. I might do that.

Participant 3- Yeah, multiple times. Reset my Instagram one. Reset my Twitter one. Yeah. Just to get, like...

Participant 2- I mean, it's owned by Elon Musk. It's only going to get worse. I feel like it's visibly gotten worse.

Participant 3- I'm thinking about deleting it, because 90% of the time it's just. I follow a handful of people. Yeah, on my 4U page, it's all right-wing stuff. I'm not a right-winger.

Participant 2- I... Is Twitter, like, designed to give you the worst possible things? I will not respect it. I will not call it that.

Participant 1- That's not X. Sorry. I would love to.

Researcher- So you said about Twitter, people are, like, exposed to the most extreme elements related to climate change.

Participant 3- I would say it pushes almost the complete opposite agenda. It pushes false narratives of... Yeah, false narratives of right-wing politics.

Participant 2- Which they don't seem to like climate change or any other real issues.

Participant 3-It's owned by someone who profits off...

Participant 1-That goes back to the conversation about the big world leaders as well. Not caring. Because they literally don't believe in it. They just don't want to spend their money on things that could make things better.

Researcher-How would people be impacted by these false narratives, as you said, through climate change?

Participant 1- Easily manipulated, I think.

Participant 3-I think it can be seen with the rise of more right-wing agendas in the country. It can be more easily manipulated. It's also due to lack of proper education on topics as such as climate change as well as the seemingly right-wing agenda is the ability to push blame onto minorities rather than themselves. Which in turn doesn't help anyone get to the root of the problem, which is ridiculous.

Participant 2- And it feels like a competition now as it seems to indoctrinate children the quickest into believing what you believe. And the fact that kids now have the internet, it's even easier to just push whatever you want them to believe onto them, because they fall down one little rabbit hole and now they're just right pipeline believing whatever convinces them, which obviously the case of this study is

probably pushing them away from massive global issues and more into what benefits me, what benefits us.

Researcher- So you'd say people have become more individualistic in that sense?

Participant 1- Hopefully they've become more individualistic. I suppose I was thinking in a good way.

Participant 3- Given a false idea that their views are their own, whereas they're actually very general of the big business. I'd say that.

Participant 1- Hopefully they're more mentally strong to believe what's true.

Participant 2- That's not what we're saying.

Participant 1- No, that's not what we're saying.

Participant 3- I'm trying to completely disagree do you hear that? I just want to know.

Participant 2-I think we're not here to agree.

Researcher- How do you think people in general, if they're presented by false narratives and then if they how likely would they be to accept that?

Participant 1- Accept that it's true?

Researcher-Accept that it's true, yeah.

Participant 1- That really depends on their mental state if I'm being honest. If we're doing psychology we try to be as strong as you mentally can with your own beliefs. Do you know what I mean? Everyone has their own belief system. If you're easily swayed that way, I don't mean to be mean about it but it's like your mental health clearly isn't the best if you are okay with believing that black people are a problem, things like that. Do you know what I'm saying?

Participant 2- Completely caught off guard. Yeah, yeah.

Participant 1- Racist people, their belief system is that black people are this, and the fact that they believe are like that is obviously

generationally taught but unless you are your own person and you have your own beliefs. Do you know what I mean?

Researcher- Do you think people are less critical if their mental health is not normal?

Participant 1- I do think so, yeah. I think if their mental health is okay then there more critical.

Researcher- So what do you say in relation to these articles? How would someone like that be influenced by them?

Participant 1- If someone's mental health is bad, I would say it may be easily swayed. I don't know. I'm not judging people for bad mental health. I have my own problems. Do you know what I mean? I have BPD or whatever. So I'm not judging that. It's just the fact that even though I've been through these things, I know what I believe and if you're easily manipulated and believe in something that isn't true, it doesn't really make any sense. Do you know what I mean?

Researcher- How would you say the age of someone would impact their thoughts on climate change?

Participant 1-Oh, 100% I would also say it doesn't also 100% rely on age.

Participant 3- It also relies on emotional intelligence, being able to understand when someone is trying to emotionally manipulate you into believing something because you can have a bad mental health, but if you have emotional intelligence to understand your own feelings and to potentially get help for those feelings or understand how it impacts you on your day-to-day and impacts how you perceive things, then you're less likely to be indoctrinated.

Participant 1- You said it so well. I was trying my best to say it that way, but it did not come out like that. It did not come out normally.

Participant 2- No. I kind of want to disagree. I do agree with you here in terms of emotional maturity and things like that, but I feel like people... Can I really quickly ask you to repeat the question? Just to make sure I'm not going too far.

Researcher- So how would someone's age then impact...

Participant 2-Previous question as well.

Researcher- How would someone who has bad mental health how would that impact someone's opinion on these articles, and then how would someone's age then impact climate change discussion?

Participant 2- I feel like with mental health specifically I feel like that would lead more down to the nihilistic catastrophizing Looking at this as in we ruined everything. The planet's going to die with me. More of the misery of the situation than the alt-right kind of views. If you know what I mean. I feel like I may have gotten lost somewhere in the discussion. I don't know. Because I feel like that's what you were saying, I think. I'm scared I've gotten lost.

Participant 3- You're saying that if someone has a bad mental health or has low age maturity they're more likely to catastrophize. Which I think you're trying to say that someone is more likely to then follow the views of someone who gives them hope. So like, at the moment they're sort of going follow me and all will be good. You stick with these people and it won't be. If someone could catastrophize they're more likely to do that.

Participant 1- That ties back to you again saying emotional intelligence. Do you know what I mean? So you can have mental health problems but also be emotionally intelligent. I think I'm completely aware of my symptoms. I know how I act and why I act the way I act. And I try my best to change that. Do you know what I mean? There's only so much you can do. I do think it really does depend on the person and their mental frame of mind.

Participant 2- With the age as well I feel like the people who don't believe in climate change or don't treat it seriously on the two complete different ends of the spectrum it's either young people who've just gotten into again like we've been talking about being swayed into oh it's fine, it's not that big a deal just don't worry about it. Everything else in your life is good. Just don't think about that. Or it's old people who just it wasn't a problem back in my day so it's not a problem now. It's mostly older people.

Participant 1- I feel like older people have more of an issue. Definitely. I think they just don't think it's real. And allergy things like my grandma for example when she was young she didn't believe everything she was told. She didn't believe that these things happened. When she got diagnosed she was like oh my god. Do you know what I mean? And then ADHD, she didn't believe that was real. She didn't believe mental health. She didn't believe none of that. And then she gets diagnosed with

it and now she believes it. Do you know what I mean? She was sort of set in her ways stuck in her way of thinking that there was no way out of that until she got real proof in front of her that it was real.

Participant 2-I think that does kind of line up with this in the way of it's not real until it affects me. I feel like that's a really good way to look at the whole situation. I feel like climate change isn't real because it doesn't affect me. Why should I care about something that has no bearing on my life? Yet?

Participant 3- That's because social media has destroyed people's ability to connect with certain things because they're not there but being affected by it doesn't matter. It sort of relates to the very work of that person's being that person's doing something about climate change but obviously I have no impact on it at this moment so it must not.

Participant 2-Going back to social media and people not caring about issues something I've seen recently which has really gotten to me is the phrase sin of empathy. Have you seen that?

Participant 3-No.

Participant 2- I've seen it so much. People referring to the sin of empathy and that makes me so angry.

Participant 3-I feel like that's another word people are trying to use for wokeness.

Participant 2- Obviously it feels like that.

Participant 3- I mean people throw around the word wokeness when people are trying to talk about issues about social political issues. It is a word used again by the majority of business as well as people who believe they're in power to shut down conversations because if someone says your being woke you basically shut down.

Participant 2- In fact it wasn't an insult when the word was created.

Participant 3-No, the word Woke describes someone who has loads of empathy and awareness to social economic hardships. I think it's progress.

Participant 2- Originally it was very spiritual when the word was created because the whole world was like I'm awake to the world is what it was supposed to be.

Participant 3- Some words which were created to be a positive thing ended up turning into negative.

Participant 2- Because it's not positive if they don't like it. So they can warp any positive word into a negative if it's a negative in their eyes. Take the most offensive insults.

Researcher- So would you say the discussion on climate change comes from this?

Participant 2- Oh absolutely.

Participant 3- Someone got shut down in a conversation say like Greta Thunberg again, she got shut down for being too woke and people didn't like what she was saying. I don't know about this. I should ask her that.

Researcher- So would you say university students tend to be more well read about climate change issues?

Participant 2-I'd certainly hope so.

Participant 1- Me too.

Participant 3- I would also hope so.

Participant 3- Especially in this course you expect people to have higher levels of emotional maturity and intelligence understanding that their own personal views of emotion should not impact how they talk about pieces of research that they've done, especially around things like climate change.

Participant 2-That's another huge issue that people blend emotion and fact together. I think in some cases I think that is alright actually. I think emotion and fact can go together in certain places. I'm going to circumvent myself in personal experience and say things like feminism. I think emotion and fact go well with feminism because I think the impact of emotion in the topic can kind of bring more to it. But emotion with climate change usually becomes more of a negative. Because if you've got a strong emotion about climate change that isn't obviously, you know, like this is awful, it's going to be an emotion like, you know, what are you doing? This is so stupid. This isn't real. This doesn't impact anyone. It's always going to be the more negative emotion takes over,

and in this case well actually negative emotion, which will overtake all others and the normal person who believes that climate change is real and a problem won't have anger because this is a much more melancholic situation, which again, linking back to Greta Thunberg, I feel like I'm making a whole conspiracy right now. She was angry. She was very angry and I think that again, that's just another thing of anger will overtake all other emotions in this case. And I think people didn't take her seriously for it.

Participant 3-It's because it was weaponised to make her look dumb or young. Not young, because she was young. Yes. Very much so.

Participant 2- Young, angry woman. I don't know what people could hate more.

Participant 3- Yeah, no, that's true. Yeah, no, actually the anger behind people, no, the anger which people expressed around climate change, especially Greta Thunberg, was weaponised to make her look unintelligent and emotionally driven, which is not true. I think it's true to a certain extent, obviously.

Participant 2- Everyone is emotionally driven.

Participant 3- But if you don't care about it, it's not necessarily a good thing. You should care about these things. But yeah, it was weaponised to make her look unintelligent, emotionally driven, and someone who you should not listen to.

Participant 2- And I think the fact that she was a young girl really made it worse, because I think, yeah, people will look at a young girl, especially one who is angry and be like, oh, you're just a hormonal, emotional child. But then take an adult man who's sitting in court being serious and shouting. You're going to look at him and be like, oh, he's got something to say. He's important. He's got, like, he's got emotion. He cares. But you see this girl and it's like, you know, is that the thing with mothers? Sorry.

Participant 3- If Kamala Harris said the exact same thing Trump would have said, she would have still lost.

Researcher- So you don't think that anger would resonate in someone's views of climate change? Could that have a positive or negative effect?

Participant 2- No, anger is a 50-50 in this case, depending on which side you lean on.

Participant 3- I think anger is a good thing, because it shows passion, but it is weaponised to show intelligence.

Participant 2- But then if you're on the side of not believing, people like that, again, going, loving the word right-wing today, they love anger for themselves. Like, they love being angry amongst themselves in the way that they have such hatred for things, in the way they have hatred for people and things that happen, and in this case, again, climate change and the people who believe in it. Hatred and anger is good for them. And, you know, I guess in our case, anger is good for us. Because it shows that we care, we have these feelings. And basically, we'll just continuously see each other as stupid. Because as long as you disagree, the other person always looks wrong.

Participant 3- It's rage bate to make someone act out or get overly passionate about something. Yeah, it's rage bating. So anger itself is a good thing, but to a certain level, it also depends on how it's used. It can be very much weaponised to actually have a negative impact, especially around climate change. Yeah, that's it. Yeah.

Participant 2- I apologise for bringing in feminists so much. It's my favourite thing to do.

Researcher- So you said about the anger. How would that impact someone on a day-to-day basis about climate change? If they were faced with positive or negative.

Participant 3- Well, I mean, take the uni, for example. Someone being passionate slash angry at climate change could actually support the change within the organisation positively. So I think that could impact day-to-day positively and that people wouldn't take it. Other things get involved, like social media or business. Well, not necessarily. I mean, because change in politics is no way to split it. Yeah, I'd say it's a good thing. Yeah. Sorry.

Participant 1- Could you repeat the question sorry?

Researcher- How would someone who's faced with anger from climate change, positive or negative, how would that impact their day-to-day lives?

Participant 1-That depends on who's here.

Participant 2- Yeah. I think, like, I agree with you on the fact that change can be done. I think emotion definitely does lead to change. But... God, I

hate to think back to feminism again. Something, you know, like a socio-political cause that impacts me and definitely makes me angry, I think it takes a huge toll on your mental health if it is something that weighs on you like that. Because anger can be one of the most, like... I think it's the most destructive emotion that you can have, self or externally. And I think that if you conceive on it, it can end up either hurting you, someone else, something else. And, you know, obviously most people aren't going to be sitting at home punching a wall over climate change.

Participant 3- Anger can be used to build stuff up that can cause change.

Participant 2- Like... I agree with you that it can cause change, but I think it can also be devastating personally. Like, if it's something that has that much of an impact on you, I can admit that, yeah, you will just be basically left seething over something. You cannot change a lot. And I think that's what makes it a problem, is that this is really an issue that we just have to look at. Because as an individual, there is little you can do. And, you know, again, looking as an individual, you can do things, but most people just kind of can't. As one person, a problem this big cannot be solved with one person.

Participant 3- I mean, we've got quite an odd example so, in the movie A Bug's Life...

Participant 2- I already know where your going with this.

Participant 3- It's coming to light because it's also true, because it's talking about individuals and then a group, and it's talking also about anger. I think, yeah, quite a bit. It's also about how the crickets have created this narrative that the ants, even together, are much stronger than them, even though they outnumber them 10 to 1. Yeah, actually maybe 100. Whereas, and then at the end of the movie they sort of go, well, actually, no, we can. We can do all of this ourselves. And I think that's what society has been led to believe, that one person can't actually do anything by themselves. It's 1,000 in a country of 90 million, but if thousands and thousands of people get together, they can make change.

Participant 2- I agree. I like that example. I've been seeing that a lot, actually.

Participant 3- Yeah, I've been thinking about that for the last 20 minutes.

Researcher- So I think we're coming to the end now. I'm going to end the focus group here. Thank you all for coming and I'll now hand out the debrief sheet.

Appendices B- Transcript 2

Participant 1- Hi, this is participant 1

Participant 2- Hi this is participant 2

Participant 3- Hi, this is participant 3

Researcher- So my first question to ask you guys is what is it was your overall general opinion about these articles In relation to climate change?

Participant 1-I picked up one here, but the tile is the good news about climate change and I thought that was actually quite interesting because most of the stuff you see about climate change is always negative and if you don't really hear much positivity around, obviously it's a big issue, but there are a lot of companies and businesses doing a lot to try and counteract the issue and that's not really given a lot of limelight in the media. I think it was quite nice to read about a positive change rather than the other two are quite negative and highlighting the issue.

Researcher- So how would someone react to read an article like that, do you think?

Participant 1- I think this if you pick if when I picked that up, I was happy to read about the WWS work and what they're doing to combat the issue rather than, these ones where you just see the negative connotations are being piled on. A lot of people know it's an issue if you

read up, you can say that's an issue and that being reinforced over and over again in the media isn't necessarily going to do anything. And I think it's important that you highlight the good people are doing instead of just focusing on the bad.

Researcher- Would you guys agree or disagree with that?

Participant 2- This one is about how children are worrying about climate change and It's suggested a way to be truthful, but not so damning so that the children know what's going on but it's not such an impact-negative impact.

Researcher- How much would the truth affect someone? Do you think in relation to climate change?

Participant 2- A lot I think depends depending on the individual in their outlook but If someone is anxious over it, then they're just going to feed into that. The articles are going to feed into that.

Researcher- Could you elaborate a bit more

Participant 2-what I mean with this one with the children?

There are obviously seeing the articles posts online and as it says, they're going to grow up during the climate crisis, so they do need to know the truth about it, but educating them in a certain way would build resilience and knowledge and hopefully bypass the extreme anxiety.

Researcher- Do you guys agree with that or?

Participant 3-Yeah, I agree with that. I think it's good to be aware of it. But for adults, but but definitely for children, the I think the impact it can have on their mental health and especially like the everyday person. It feels very out of their control, so to have that fear put on you from a child over the by the way, the world's on fire. And but you're going to, you're only six and you'll spend the rest of your life worrying about it. And there's small things. I think it's good. Like, oh, yeah, this is more eco friendly. So we should do this. This is kind of the plan. But yeah, telling children that the earth is getting hotter and there's nothing they can do about it, I think, yeah, that's the impact that can have on children's mental health. Yes, it's not good.

But then these articles that I would say that prove that there is clearly an issue that things are changing, something needs to be done about it. But I don't know. I don't think that I think everyday people can do little things, but I think mainly it has to come from big oil and gas companies.

Participant 2-They just. We've had a lot of blame on just the average person. You know, you, there's the emphasis on, you have to recycle, you have to do this. And then there's the eco friendly products over not so friendly, but then things.

That are produced in factories or. I think places like Amazon. The amount of things that go to landfill just because nobody's bought them or they've been sent back or something like that everybody has a role to play in it, but I think that the big companies need to take a bigger responsibility.

Participant 3-I I agree with that and I read the article on the Paris Agreement.

And I'm a way I don't know the in's and outs too much about politics because it's riles me, but I know that America have just said that they're going to pull out of that.

And I think they may be the biggest culprit. I know they burn a lot of fossil fuels.

And I don't know if it's still this like slogan, but I know at one point Trump has very much dig, baby, drill, drill, baby, drill or whatever it is. Yeah. And I also think that the wars and stuff going on like that, that must contribute to climate change, to like, physically bomb the earth. So I'm having a massive impact that as recycling our home recycling isn't really going to. Yeah, that's not really going to equal that out at all. And then I don't know like this is a fact, but I'm I'm not sure if I read somewhere that like the recycling, all like some of it ends up in landfill anyway, like a massive majority ends up in landfill. But yeah, I think it's more big also come from the leaders of countries and governments and big companies to make those big changes, because I think every day like everyday products like you said that people use with the cost of living prices.

Is it our Eco friendly? Can be more expensive?

But if you're up against it financially, you have to go further. Cheaper option and it might not always be the most eco friendly, but you know you often a choice you backed into a corner. And also I don't think that that's going to make as much of an impact as BP and Shell could be

making.

Participant 2- I remember when I was in college we were encouraged not to use Polly pockets to keep our work in and it's like, imagine how many offices there are in the world in these massive companies and the Polly pockets that they're going through. And it's like using a few my school work. But it's crazy and they're targeting.

Weird things like glitter. I remember there was like a boycott glitter and straws. Yeah, just. How? How is that going to make a difference?

Researcher- Do you think people are aware of the impact as individuals they have on climate.

Participant 1-I wanted to bring up in if I've just finished high school now. So she went back three or four years when I was finishing my GCSE. I think you could ask.

60% of the people in our school is about 1300 of us. I think 60% of them couldn't tell you more than a definition of what climate change is. And if you want to fix an issue, you need to educate people and by educate people, I don't mean put it in the curriculum and get kids to sit through classes because that's not what people want to do. Think of how many classes you sat through as a kid in school and you just weren't. Listening you need to there needs to be an active way of educating people about what the consequences are going to be and what we can do to counteract that, but then also have to find the balance If you can't just frighten people with statistics and go, Oh yeah, in 20 years, the world's not going to exist if you don't throw away your plastic bottle. So there's a balance, but there needs to be some form of education and it needs to be

implemented properly for it to for it to have a real effect, I think.

Participant 2-I think, I know a lot of people make jokes about things like straws, for example, and they're like, well, I've never seen a fish sucking up water through a straw. So how is that going to, you know, impact them? I get that there's micro plastics and then it goes into the water, the water, and then they eat it out and and die. But I don't know what the steps before that is. It's just like for me, all I know is don't use straws or plastics, because somehow that ends up in the sea and inside the turtle and It's not good obviously, but I think people need to know Why we're using paper straws. I hate them.

Participant 3- I know that Trump again recently.

Was like filmed and stuff when it in the office that I'm going to bring plastic straws back and I feel like that itself makes him a hate climate change. Because I'm able to see, most people know that changing straws isn't going to save the Planet, but it can have an impact. But yeah, I feel like it. It's almost laugh in the faces of those who were trying to make active change, but I think you're right in the sense of I think people need to see change like everyday people need to see change in their communities, maybe of how they, I don't know, eco friendly things that impact their community that they can see And I don't know I could be wrong, but I think that would help people understand. And there's a direct impact to them. I don't really. I don't know. Rather than just

thinking about turtles in here, which is obviously bad, and I don't think it's a good thing. But you know, because we don't have turtles over here, it's hard for people to imagine, like, well, I've never seen you're not. You're not going to see that impact. It's going to be in other countries that make they might see the impact of that. I think bringing it back to communities doing and then I think.

On a smaller scale, that and it will impact children. They'll learn about things and I don't know, for example, like litter bins and recycling bins everywhere. And it was funny, you say, about school cause, I don't know. I left school in 2012 and I remember them. It was a thing that they brought in recycling bins and I guess wild to think I was not I'm only 29 but like it was when I was in school that it was almost like, oh, we're actually going to talk about this. I felt like that was the first time I'd ever heard. But I remember we had these green paper recycling bins, and we only had paper for the time. Remember, they were like, everywhere. And they were like, yeah, we're going to be eco friendly. I think we've gone a long way since then, but again I think it's going to come from bigger companies.

Researcher-Do you think the control people have everyday people have is limited?

Participant 2- Yeah, definitely I think whereas we go in a little bit back to nature in in showing children where their food comes from and getting them involved in planting food and digging it up and things Incorporate

something. Where they are getting involved in anything to do with climate change and litter and bit more hands on rather than just like you say, sat in a classroom.

How aware do you think university students are surrounding climate change?

Participant 1-Some a lot more than others yeah, I'm. I'm not particularly educated on I should be. Obviously everyone's aware of the issue turn the news on and you're gonna hear something. But I do, I do my bit. I do what I can, but I don't litter or anything. But there's probably more I could be doing and I'm not necessarily educated on what the right practises are and what what I could be doing to help.

Participant 3- More, more people are more aware than ever. I think. Then it sort of, I don't know. A few years ago I was, you know, very much advocating that we need to be doing something about climate change and not that I don't Now. I just don't. It bogs me down. Basically got to the point where I was like, I physically have never going to change anything as one person and me take changing my toothbrush isn't going to change anything. That I think I don't know that people are going to the point where they're like, I'm aware this is happening, but I'm not aware there's nothing. Not that there's nothing they can do about it, but. When you've got big companies and countries still continue doing whatever they're doing it, I think people are more aware that It's not actually worth ruining your life over worrying about.

Because it's probably not going to change on until big companies change.

Researcher- Do you think that could affect some and sense of well-being?

Participant 3- Yeah, absolutely. I think I think climate anxiety is like a real thing, and especially like the article you read with the younger children, I feel like it's going to be more ingrained, younger. I think the impact long term could be Not not good for that But then on flip side, maybe they might be more conscious throughout. It was like I was Put into conversation in that comprehensive there was maybe being educated a bit younger will help, but I think also you will get more children fearful for these things, which then inevitably impacts on mental health services which are already. There in the Campbell at both ends.

Participant 2- I think ultimately children are the ones that's going to eventually save the world. So, so to speak. So I think they should be taught a lot more. But obviously carefully, in a way to build up their resilience and knowledge and. Hopefully they can save us.

Researcher- So how would how would children go about doing that to not repeat the mistakes of the past, do you think?

Participant3- I would say I don't know about that because I feel like as a

world as a whole, we are not very good at not repeating mistakes that have happened in the past. I think as a world and not necessarily everyday people and those who make the big differences will actively ignore what's happened in the past and just continue whatever I think a lot of it has to do with money, yeah and I think that's a that's a massive issue. I think there's greed involved.

Participant 2- Look at the billionaires in the country, I think the in the world, three of them, I think Jeff Bezos, Elon Musk and I don't know who the other one is, but.

They're not doing anything really they could Implement so many things with the amount of money they've got. I know that it's not down to you can't expect one person to pay out a lot of money, but they could at least help I mean, all he's doing is that Elon Musk is making those terrible, terrible cars And Yeah, I don't see much else.

Participant 3- And obviously he's very much siding with Trump at the moment that I can't imagine he's going to be reminding him, oh, by the way, climate change, don't forget about climate change.

Participant 2- He's a horrible, horrible person when these little children got stuck in a cave in Thailand one of their groups, from Swansea Valley, actually went over with their because they're quite they're experts in caving and what not, they went over.

To help dig them out and Elon Musk was like targeted by people saying, why can't you help? You've got all this money and he was just Tweeting things like, well, those men, those cavers, they're only going there because they like children so.

Participant 3- A lot of people look up to Elon Musk as well, which I might not necessarily agree with, but I think some people do, and I think his influence as well, I don't know. I just think that surely if you had money that you could never spend in a lifetime, you might put it into something positive or they choose not to.

Researcher- Would you say these wealthy people influence people like university students in like climate change or issues related to that?

Participant 2- Celebrities do but I think they are also quite a large problem, like things like the prime drinks, as Logan Paul, the amount of plastic that was being sold just for his name when he could have, I don't know, used recyclable products and made you know a big thing of the fact that these are ecofriendly and not just.

Participant 3- Yeah, because isn't it like 10 can be recycled forever? I don't know if they're energy drinks. I don't really know much about it, but yeah, I think you're right. Like if that showed the level of influence that people with money have on others and I never thought of it like that.

But yeah, if they had said or, you know, they didn't have to really say it's eco-friendly, he could just have on the can that this is made of whatever, because it's kind of for the planet. And I think that would send especially to the younger generation, those who did see it would maybe understand it more. This is something they're interested in. I think it's like a tiny way of like planting the seed of, you know, this kind of material is better than buying a bottle of water or whatever.

Researcher- So you're going to see like small steps, yeah, towards reducing climate change.

Participant 1-Yeah. Yeah. I think the more, the more steps any business makes is likely to call the domino effect. If one company does something. And it seems beneficial to everyone companies are likely to follow suit, and then you get to start to see real change. Obviously you're not if you don't UWTSD does something I'm not expecting Amazon to follow suit but if Tesco does something and then Asda does something, then it keeps going like that and goes on and on. It builds up and the momentum gathers and then you can start to see real change then.

Participant 3- I do think I could be wrong, but do you think that they could be if possible? A market for a green university if someone advertised themselves as a green university. That a lot of young people would choose would make their decisions around that. Obviously there's

going to be other factors like.

You know whether you you would have to move to go there or whatever. But I think if it was a reasonable option for people and they were already interested in climate change, if you'd like, that would steer. I know I certainly would like if I thought that this was a green university and I, I don't know, I was looking where I was going to go. I think it as long as it was like the right kind of course as well that that might that would probably put me over the threshold of actually I'll I'll go there because I know that this good for the environment. I don't know. Obviously there's a lot of activism as well that I think it shows that young people do care, and they do want to make a difference. I think something like a green University would be And I think like you said that and that other universities, I think that would feel more encouraged. They'd probably see it positive. Obviously you get people that won't agree with it and say it's a rubbish, but Those that really care and really look into it and are interested. I think they would make the effort.

Partcioant 2- Yeah. And we could start that off in schools like from nurseries, they could have eco friendly products and be taught about the products. You know from very young, so that choosing eco friendly products It is kind of ingrained in them and as they get older, then maybe show them the difference of using these products can make and yeah, just green products in school. I mean the amount of plastic we go through-Bottles every day vending machines and things like that, so maybe they could have just eco friendly drinks in their vending machines

or on their cafeterias.

Researcher- So what specific aspects of climate change do you think university students are influenced by or affected by, if any?

Participant 3- I think it affects everybody really that the the impact that will have on that future In general, you know.

Participant 2-It always feels like it's way off in the future. Like I don't know how many years that this climate crisis is going to kick in. I don't even know what else that's going to look like. What's going to happen? I know there's an impending doom, but I don't know how we get there or how we can tell it's here already?

Researcher-Would you say that's a Western perspective?

Participant 2- Yeah, probably. Yeah, I would say so.

Researcher How affected do you think Western countries, that is the UK are by climate change?

Participant 3- In a way. Yeah. I think if anything we I would say we've benefited from it because we've had hotter summers and people love a

hotter summer and.

Considering we hardly to get one, it's nice that when we do get it, but then I know like that America of more fires, but they also have hurricanes and tornadoes and difference, but all that too when kind of deal with.

And other countries of tsunamis and what I think we're quite lucky in the sense of we don't have earthquakes, tornadoes, we don't tend to have wildfires because it doesn't get hot enough over here. So I think our extreme temperatures may be aren't as noticed as much as others. We just see it as well. We've had a lovely summer and which I don't like. I do like it when we have a lovely day, but.

I am up in the back of my mind. I'm like, well, is climate change, this is climate change. But yeah, we've had flooding that obviously, I don't know if that's flooded in Swansea, but I think flooding is a big issue. Not saying I don't know if it's something that's all we have that we've always had. But and I don't know if it is getting worse, but I would feel like I've heard more about flooding in the news over the past couple of years than I have in a long time. But and as extreme that it is as that is and obviously devastating for the people going through it.

I think it's very much if it's not happening in your back door, it's it's easier to kind of. So I think I'm powerless. It's not really much I can do. But I don't think I think it in like the sense of climate change is probably extreme, but here but not as extreme is it that you would have it in other countries? I think I don't know. California on here is already known for being more so. If that's going even hotter than you might, I don't know.

But in places like Australia, where it's already hot, it was so hot you stay indoors, whereas we have never really got to those temperatures. I don't think it's very much like obviously find. It's just a nice day. Just a very nice summer's day In that respect, we do benefit off it a little bit.

Researcher- So how could that to disconnect between Extreme temperatures and events happening elsewhere compared with what's happening here could that affect someone's well-being sense?

Participant 2-I think a lot of the Third world population countries they are suffering a lot of rubbish ends up in their in tips and slums I've been watching them this programme recently Go back to where you come from was called and it's easier. It's about basically racist that go to Syria or Somalia and they've got to try and make their way back to Britain and you see the the children going out in, like, barefoot.

digging through garbage just to try and like take a few tins to sell them for recycling or things that they can use full of rubbish from the West Western world and is going over to these hotter countries or these poorer countries and just being dumped, I mean, I think there should be harsher consequences on the companies that do that.

Fines, for example, it's all about money rr than wanting the biggest profits.

They should be made to clean up the mess that they make. I mean, think about like McDonald's. When I was going out clubbing, long time ago

walk down wind street or or Kingsway. And there is just rubbish everywhere. McDonald's wrappers.

So, you know all of that sort of thing. I mean their brand is, is posted on all of them and it's still there the next day. If something as simple as making them accountable for going out and picking up all of that rubbish.

Or fining them. You know, it's a tiny step, but it it is a way forward to making these companies accountable for the damage that they are present.

Participant 3- I think the biggest I don't. The biggest I wouldn't know, but I think money is a massive issue and I think you're right. I think as soon as you start fining companies, that's the only as long as long as they're losing money. That's the only time they're going to acknowledge the impact that they have on the planet. And suddenly I feel really strongly about which I know could be a bit controversial. But I do a lot of research on it. So I really believe in, and I know that the country in the Middle East that's currently occupied by another country Illegally.

Actually, no one's ever told that there's oil there, and that's why America they're in on it. We're in on it. There's oil in the countries that's never been hidden, but it isn't advertised on the news. So while we're all trying to battle climate change, actually this massive thing where they're trying to dig for more oil and take over a different country and dig for more oil Is still happening. Anyway, no one's going to. Actually, we need to start making oil a thing of the past like this isn't good for the planet. How are

we going to change things?

They still have to be seeking it out because it's about money. There's profits there.

So I think the only way that companies will ever be held accountable is through fining

Participant 2-Which is the only language they know is, yeah, I think do something wrong, lose money, less profit, because that's that's the language that they talk.

Participant 3-I do think a university well and schools generals, but universities especially I think, could help people or students anyway to politically, understand what's happening and what they can do regarding politics to help said whatever. I don't know if people in America knew that Trump was going to pull out of the Paris Agreement Would maybe change? Literally probably would not, but.

I don't know if an opposition was going to in our country was going to pull out of everything to do with climate change. I think a lot of people, I think it would mean a lot to a lot of people. I think people need to be informed and I think more information from the university because I think to look at manifestos. So overwhelming for people. I do think. I don't know. I just think more education around the politics of things of like, actually, if you vote this way or if you look at your local, whoever and what they are doing about climate change, I think that's where you can start to feel more in control of like actually, I can have a direct

impact. I can vote somebody in that stands for what I stand for. Rather than being told yeah to stop using plastic straws, stop doing that. Stop doing that and you'll see a change. I think people need to be shown maybe a more direct route of like this is what your local.

Member of Parliament can do for your community regarding climate change and I think as soon as people start seeing seeing that, then maybe that will be how I know. It would be helpful for me. It's something I would definitely look into like if there was, I don't know, more information around like climate change and the politics around it. I know that's something I would personally be interested in and I would probably go out of my way like join a club or whatever.

To find out more and be more informed. And I think that's the. Issue. Sometimes people just feel lost in all the information. Yeah, but it is overwhelming. But if the universities could help, maybe funnel that information a bit so people can find what they can, but what they can do and how they can see change and maybe what needs prioritising and whatever that that that could benefit students especially.

Participant 2- I think community is quite key actually.

There isn't really that sense of community these days as there used to be. Don't I mean, I talk to my neighbour on Facebook Messenger rather than just like popping around, knock on a door. And the only time we did read, but I didn't do the clapping thing, but during COVID, you could step down your door. You might have a conversation and online. There's a lot of really good information, but there's also a lot of conspiracy

theorists. There's a lot of Infowars going on within the deliberately creating false information about things and you it is easy to get sucked in.

Because they do make gets sound logical like they've got explanations for this that I mean, there's people that believe that Finland doesn't exist this crazy. Do you mean digital countries? And because they can just use you know, to the narrative to their advantage, people are believing it and with there being such an online presence now, people who don't even know each other from different countries. Hey, I'd like some of the the forums like Reddit can be quite cult like in in following And they'll blindly follow Trump, for example but I think If community initiative was implemented. Don't know how but maybe people could talk to each other about the impact in their neighbourhood and they're their relatives and maybe exchange tips on how to get things more eco friendly.

Participant 3- But I think that's why you do it in the community. Like when you think that like I'm not from Swansea. My brother lives here now when he went to uni here, like the beach and things. There's lots of things you could get community involved through the university. They've got the university doing this. We're going to have students there, we're going to do a beach clean up. I'll be honest, I don't think I've ever seen much litter on in on the beach in Swansea but in the summer I know things will factor in when it's busier and whatever but just little things that people can.

I don't. I don't mind it a bit of litter picking. I think sometimes it can. It's

a way for people to meet each other as well. So many lonely people as well. That it's a way of making friends. I think people would people would join here and it's direct impact. Then we open up the area. Yeah. But they can see. And I think that makes a difference. If you can see the change people are more likely to to take it in.

Researcher- So I think I'll wrap it down now. Thank you again, guys again for coming I'll end the recording now and I'll pass you the debrief sheet.

Appendices C- Information Sheet



Centre for Psychology and
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SA1 Campus

Study Information Sheet

This document provides key information regarding the study and provides details about what will be expected of you as a participant. Therefore, please read this information carefully before providing consent to take part.

The purpose of this study is to explore students' perceptions of climate change and how people might respond to information about climate change. A specific aim is to consider how climate change is portrayed in news media in different ways, and how this might influence beliefs about the effects of climate change on the environment and on people.

During this study you will be required to do the following:

- Fill out a demographic questionnaire asking you for basic demographic information.
- Read and look at different climate change related news articles.
- Engage in discussions about climate change in response to the researchers questions.

At the end of the study you will be provided with the study debrief.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact the researcher Zach Evans (2205439@student.uwtsd.ac.uk) or the dissertation supervisor Dr Judith Marshall (Judith.marshall@uwtsd.ac.uk)

If you feel you want to leave the study, you can do so at any time by notifying the researcher. Once the study has ended if your discussion is on the audio recorder it cannot be withdrawn. However your discussion will be anonymised. All participants will be required to

announce themselves as participant 1,2,3 etc for ease of transcription at the beginning of the focus group and start of recording.

If you do not understand anything that has been asked of you please now ask the researcher or dissertation supervisor.

Appendices D- Demographics Form



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SA1 Campus

Demographics Form

Please indicate what age category you are:

18-25 ☐

26-33 ☐

34-41 ☐

41-48 ☐

49-55 ☐

56-63 ☐

64-71 ☐

Please state your gender:

Male ☐

Female ☐

Other ☐

Prefer not to say ☐

Appendices E- Consent Form



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

Centre for Psychology and
Counselling

Study Consent Form

I understand that this research study is being carried out by a level 6 psychology student for the purpose of a completion of a dissertation, and that taking part in this study will involve engaging in a focus group and where discussion shall be surrounding the climate emergency and how that can potentially affect someone's sense of well-being.

I understand that this study will take approximately 45 minutes to complete.

I understand that participation in this study is completely voluntary. Data will not be withdrawn following completion of the focus group, as all participants' contributions will constitute part of the discussion, thus all data is required.

I understand that following transcription the recording shall be deleted from the voice recorder.

I understand that in order for data taken from the focus group to be analyzed my voice will need to be recorded on a recording device. However following the write up of the transcript the recording shall be deleted from the voice recorder to ensure anonymity.

I understand that once I complete the study my data will remain anonymous and will not be traced back to me as a code will be assigned in place of my name and unique EMS identification number. The recording will be stored securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act until completion of the semester.

I am aware that if I have concerns about the study, I can contact the researcher at any time during or after the study on Zach Evans (2205439@student.uwtsd.ac.uk) or the dissertation supervisor Dr Judith Marshall (Judith.marshall@uwtsd.ac.uk), should I have any concerns.

I also understand that at the end of the study I will be provided with a debrief form.

Please tick the boxes below to confirm:

- ☐ I am aged 18 years of age or over
- ☐ I understand I can withdraw at any time without penalty
- ☐ I understand my data will be held confidentially with a code assigned in place of my name
- ☐ I understand all the above information on this consent form
- ☐ I consent to taking part in this study

Signature _____

Date _____

Appendices F- Debrief Sheet



Prifysgol Cymru
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University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

Centre for Psychology and
Counselling

SA1 Campus

Swansea

Study Debrief Sheet

Undergraduate perceptions of the threat of climate change and it's potential impact on sense of well-being: a qualitative study using focus groups.

Thank you for taking part in this study.

The aim of this study was to explore undergraduates perceptions of climate change and how that then impacts their sense of well-being. I specifically wanted to explore to what extent university students perceive the climate emergency is viewed as a threat by the general public. This includes how their interpretation of various news articles influences their discussion on climate change and how this potentially could affect people's sense of well-being.

If you have any questions, you are welcome to ask these before leaving the focus group setting.

If taking part in this study has raised any questions, please speak to the researcher Zach Evans (2205439@student.uwtsd.ac.uk) or contact the dissertation supervisor Dr Judith Marshall: (Judith.marshall@uwtsd.ac.uk)

Thank you once again for taking time to participate in this study.

BSc Psychology and Counselling

University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Swansea

Appendices G- Question list and prompts

Focus Group Questions and Prompts if needed

1. How does the group think climate change is understood by the general public?

Prompt if needed: Where do you think the people get most of their information about climate change?

2. Are there specific aspects of climate change that are particularly concerning?

3. What do you think about the type of information people are exposed to in these articles? (present a range of articles from the dramatic/emotive to the informative (science))

4. How do you think people would be likely to react to these articles?

5. How persuaded do you think the people are that climate change is a threat?

6. Who do you think should be in control of climate decisions?

Prompt if needed: Do you think in today's modern globalised world climate change is taken seriously by different governments?

7. How much control do people generally have regarding responding to climate change?
(locus of control links to wellbeing)

Prompt if needed: How effective might people's own activities or practises be regarding helping to reduce climate change?

8. In what ways might issues of climate change effect people's sense of wellbeing?

Prompt if needed: How might the articles and images here effect people's sense of wellbeing?

9. How easy is it to reduce negative feelings related to climate change?

10. How might portrayals of climate change in the media influence peoples' perceptions of the future?

Further prompts that could be used:

Could you elaborate on that?

How would someone be impacted by that?

That's very interesting what you are saying does anyone else have any views on that?

Appendices H- News Articles Screenshots

Climate change has made the grasses and shrubs that are fuelling the Los Angeles fires more vulnerable to burning, scientists say.

Rapid swings between dry and wet conditions in the region in recent years have created a massive amount of tinder-dry vegetation that is ready to ignite.

Decades of drought in California were followed by extremely heavy rainfall for two years in 2022 and 2023, but that then flipped again to very dry conditions in the autumn and winter of 2024.

Scientists say in a **new study** that climate change has boosted what they call these "whiplash" conditions globally by 31-66% since the middle of the 20th Century.

The wildfires have spread across parts of the Los Angeles area, leading to at least five deaths, burning down hundreds of buildings, and prompting evacuation orders for more than 179,000 people.

"This whiplash sequence in California has increased fire risk twofold," said lead author Daniel Swain from UCLA.

"First, by greatly increasing the growth of flammable grass and brush in the months leading up to fire season, and then by drying it out to exceptionally high levels with the extreme dryness and warmth that followed."

The researchers say that with every degree of warming the atmosphere is able to evaporate, absorb and release 7% more water.

This "expanding atmospheric sponge" as the scientists term it, not only leads to flooding when things are wetter, but it pulls extra moisture out of the plants and soils when the drier conditions set in.

The new study adds to the growing body of evidence that a warmer climate has altered the background conditions to the raging wildfires currently burning around Los Angeles.

Much of the Western US including California experienced a decades-long drought that ended just two years ago.

The resulting wet conditions since then have seen the rapid growth of shrubs, grasses and trees, the perfect fuel for fires.

However, last summer was very hot and was followed by dry autumn and winter season with almost no rain - downtown Los Angeles has only received 0.16 inches of rain since October, more than four inches below average.

Researchers believe that a warming world is increasing the conditions that are conducive to wildland fire, including low relative humidity.

These "fire weather" days are increasing in many parts of the world, with climate change making these conditions more severe and the fire season lasting longer in many parts of the world, scientists have shown.

In California, the situation has been made worse by the topography with fires burning more intensely and moving more rapidly in steep terrain.

This area of California is also dominated by naturally very fire-prone shrub vegetation.

"While fires are common and natural in this region, California has seen some of the most significant increases in the length and extremity of the fire weather season globally in recent decades, driven largely climate change," said Professor Stefan Doerr, Director of the Centre for Wildfire Research, at Swansea University.

"That said, it is too early to say to what degree climate change has made these specific fires more extreme. This will need to be evaluated in a more detailed attribution analysis."

The good news about climate change



With more frequent and extreme weather events, melting glaciers, and rising sea levels, there is no question that the climate crisis is here now and the impacts are felt by humans and nature alike. But there is good news: every day we see more individuals, organizations, businesses, and governments responding to the crisis. People are coming together to take concrete steps to mitigate the worst impacts of climate change.

By working together, we can change course. We can pave a path forward to a future in which businesses rely on renewable energy, cities rethink waste disposal and transportation, and work with communities and individuals to avoid the worst impacts of climate change.

We're learning to adapt to changes that have already happened.

There is no denying that our climate is changing and that it impacts the most vulnerable people and species first. We also know that solutions to the climate crisis are most effective when they're led by people from those communities most deeply affected. WWF works with local communities, governments, and research institutions around the world to help people and species prepare for—and adapt to—the impacts of climate change. Also, working with global experts in climate and ecological modeling, we identify actions that help communities and nature continue to thrive in a warming world.

In the same way climate change hits the most vulnerable people first, it increases the stresses on endangered and vulnerable species. WWF's Wildlife Adaptation Innovation Fund addresses this climate vulnerability by supporting pilot projects that find innovative ways of helping species adapt to these changes in climate. For example, through installation of artificial nests it has helped recovery of the vulnerable shy albatross among others.

The solutions we need for a carbon-zero future already exist.

Low cost solar, wind, and battery technologies are on profitable, exponential trajectories that if sustained, will be enough to halve emissions from electricity generation by 2030. Wind and solar energy now regularly out-compete fossil fuels in most regions of the world. Electric vehicle growth has the potential to reach a 90% market share by 2030 if sustained, but only if strong policies support this direction.

Developed responsibly, we can harness these technologies and potentially scale further unproven ones to reduce about nearly two thirds of potential emissions in 2030. However, we need governments to drive this progress and take us the rest of the way.

In 2015, world leaders from 196 countries came together in Paris to sign the first truly global deal to fight the climate crisis. An initial signatory, the United States later announced its intent to withdraw from the agreement in 2017. However, a growing coalition of more than 3,600 leaders from cities, states, tribes, businesses, college, and university came together to ensure America's continuing commitment to the Paris Agreement as part of the *We Are Still In* movement. This coalition spans all 50 states, represents 155 million people, over 9.46 trillion in GDP, and is growing every day.

This type of coalition across sectors, partisan lines, and even faiths was once unprecedented, but they now drive nations toward more ambitious climate action around the world. The *Alliances for Climate Action* is a global network of coalitions now spanning five continents. They are the new faces of climate leadership around the world and are speeding up the planning and implementation of critical action on climate.

On Sept. 22, 2019, an estimated 6 million people around the world joined the global climate strike making it likely the largest climate rally ever. While the protests were led by younger people, the event brought together individuals of every age, every walk of life, across cultures, and even party lines.

Higher temperatures and more extreme weather

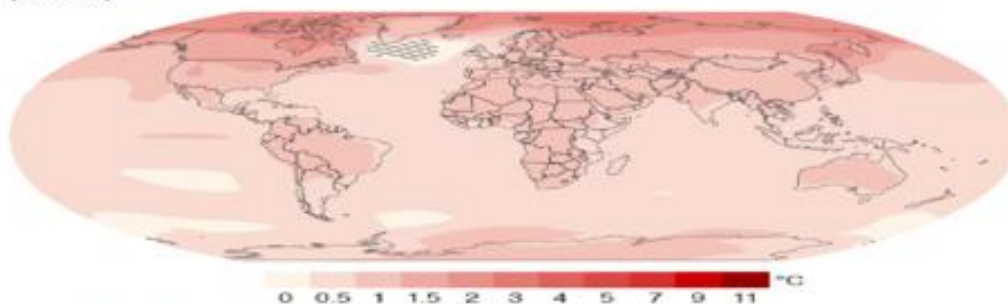
The scale of potential impacts is uncertain.

The changes could drive shortages in freshwater, bring about major changes in food production conditions and cause a rise in the number of casualties from floods, storms, heat waves and droughts.

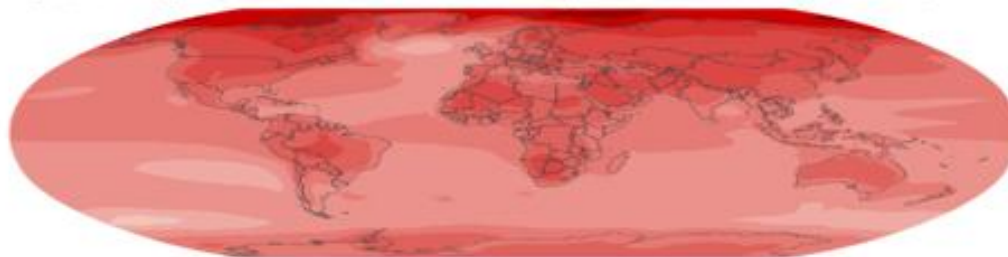
This is because climate change is expected to increase the frequency of extreme weather events - however linking any single event to global warming is complicated.

Projected temperature change (1986–2005 to 2081–2100)

If greenhouse gas emissions peak between 2010–2020 and then decline substantially (RCP2.6)



If greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise throughout the 21st century (RCP8.5)



Source: International Panel on Climate Change - Fifth Assessment Report (AR5)

Arctic sea ice melt

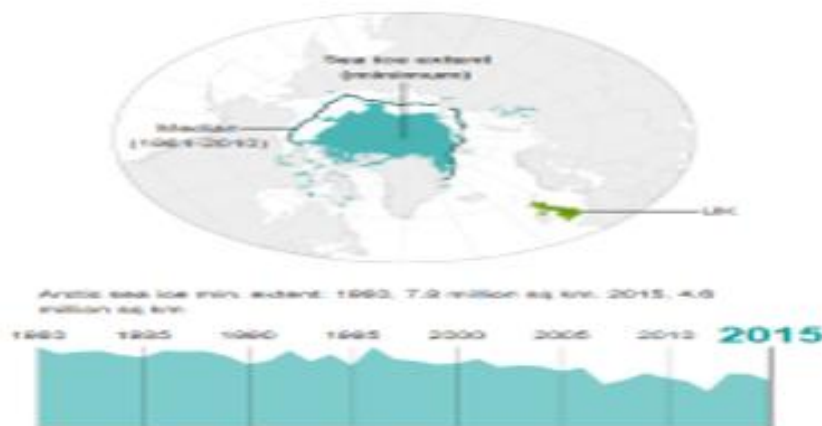
Higher temperatures, extreme weather events and higher sea levels are all linked to a warming climate and could have a drastic effect on the world's regions.

Since 1900, sea levels have risen by on average about 18cm globally. The rate of sea-level rise has accelerated in recent decades, placing a number of islands and low-lying countries at risk.

The retreat of polar ice sheets is an important contributor to this rise.

Arctic sea ice is also shrinking because of higher temperatures, though it makes little contribution to raised sea levels.

An area of sea ice roughly 13 times the size of the UK has been lost when the current day is compared with average levels from the early 1980s.



Source: National Snow and Ice Data Center


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Is there any hope for Paris Agreement targets after 2024 record temperatures?

Story by Stuti Mishra • 6d •  3 min read

The [Earth](#) may have already entered an era of intensified global heating that the [Paris Agreement](#) was aimed to avert, two new studies examining the record breaking temperatures of 2024 have found.

The research, published in [Nature Climate Change](#), suggests the [unprecedented heat last year](#) could mark the beginning of a multi-decade period where the average global temperature consistently exceeds 1.5C above pre-industrial levels.

In 2024, temperatures rose above 1.5C for 12 consecutive months.

This matters because 1.5C is the key target set by the [2015 Paris Agreement](#), the level countries were trying to avoid exceeding to limit catastrophic [climate](#) impacts.

The first study, from [Germany](#), suggests Earth has likely entered a 20-year period where global temperatures will consistently average above 1.5C.

"Multiple datasets and approaches from different organisations converged on a 2024 average increase of 1.55C above the pre-industrial baseline," the study says.

The second study, led by researchers from Canada, says June 2024 marked the 12th consecutive month with global mean surface temperatures at least 1.5C above pre-industrial levels.

The study shows that having 12 consecutive months above 1.5C means there's a 76 per cent chance that we've already hit that long-term warming threshold under current climate policies.

If this trend continues for 18 consecutive months, the research says, the breach of the Paris Agreement threshold will be virtually certain. [January 2025 was the 19th month to cross](#) that mark.

Dr Andrew King, senior lecturer in [climate science](#) at the [University of Melbourne](#), who was not part of either study, says the research highlights how "single months and years over the 1.5C mark are likely to be features of a longer period the world has entered in which the climate averages more than 1.5C of global warming".

Without rapid [decarbonisation](#), he warns, it will be difficult to prevent the climate from remaining above this threshold.

"Global [greenhouse gas emissions](#) remain at or near record levels, and global warming has even accelerated in recent years.

"A major shift is needed to decarbonise our society and economy; otherwise, we will keep warming the planet and causing more and more damage."

These studies are a timely reminder of how far we really are from tackling climate change properly.

Dr Andrew King, senior lecturer in climate science at the University of Melbourne

But Dr Tom Mortlock, head of climate analytics Asia-Pacific at Aon and Adjunct Fellow at the Climate Change Research Centre at UNSW, adds: "2024 was the warmest year on record globally, with average temperatures exceeding 1.5C. While often used interchangeably, this is not the same thing as breaching the Paris Agreement threshold of 1.5C."

yahoo/news

How climate change is making our health worse

Climate change could wreak havoc on Britain in coming decades, with rising food poisoning, allergies and the arrival of diseases such as Zika and dengue fever.



Rob Waugh · Contributor

Updated 16 January 2025 · 4-min read



Climate change could wreak havoc on the [health](#) of British people in coming decades, with experts warning of rising food poisoning, allergies and the arrival of diseases such as Zika and dengue fever.

The World Health Organization (WHO) issued a warning over the effects of [climate change](#) saying, "It threatens the essential ingredients of good health – clean air, safe drinking water, nutritious food supply and safe shelter – and has the potential to undermine decades of progress in global health."

Yahoo News spoke to Marisa Miraldo, professor in health economics at Imperial College Business School, who said that climate change increases the risk of disease, as well as worsening existing health issues.

Reports by the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) have suggested that climate change could lead to up to 10,000 more deaths per year by 2050 due to effects on everything from food poisoning to allergies.

As the UK warms, mosquito-borne viruses such as chikungunya virus, dengue fever and Zika could become transmissible in London and other areas, the UKHSA has warned.

Many diseases that affect people are highly climate sensitive, and a relatively small change in temperature can mean new illnesses could spread in Britain. The UKHSA said: "Many infectious diseases are highly climate sensitive, and with warmer temperatures we can expect an increased risk of new and emerging infectious diseases in the UK, including those transmitted through mosquito and tick bites.

This risks widening health inequality, with poorer people likely to be more affected, the agency added.

Prof Miraldo said: "Even high-income countries face rising healthcare costs and system strain, affecting particularly underserved and minority communities, as they respond to heat-related illnesses, mental health crises, and the emergence of vector-borne diseases."

Food poisoning bugs thrive in warmer weather, and cases of food poisoning linked to warm weather are already rising, according to a Department of Health report.

Climate change | Press Release

Majority of under-12s worried about climate change, survey shows



Stefano Gelmini
February 3, 2025

Nearly four in five primary-aged children (78%) say they are worried about climate change while teachers say they face challenges in tackling eco-anxiety at school, a set of newly released surveys shows.

While climate anxiety is already well documented among older children, very little research has been done on younger age groups. Now a YouGov survey of over 600 children commissioned by Greenpeace UK shows worries about climate change are widespread among primary school children, with 78% saying they're worried about it and over a quarter (27%) very worried.

A separate YouGov poll, also commissioned by Greenpeace UK, suggests that many teachers are finding it hard to deal with the emotional impact of this topic on children. 70% of primary teachers interviewed say they don't have enough time in the school day to help students with concerns about climate change, and 82% say they would find lesson plans and resources to support students with these concerns useful.

To coincide with the findings and the start of Children's Mental Health Week, Greenpeace UK has published new guides to help teachers and parents discuss the climate crisis with their pupils and children. Written by Caroline Hickman, a psychotherapist and leading researcher on eco-anxiety, the booklets provide simple advice on how to approach the subject in a way that's both truthful and positive.

Commenting on the guides, **Caroline Hickman** said:

"Homes torched by wildfires, flooded villages, people fleeing hurricanes – pictures of climate impacts are coming in thick and fast and our kids are watching. Parents want their children to have a worry-free childhood – it's a natural instinct to shelter them from scary truths. But this is neither feasible nor helpful. When it comes to climate change, ignoring the problem would only put them at a disadvantage. Our children will come of age during a climate crisis so building their emotional resilience is one way to prepare them. But we know this can be a challenge for parents and especially teachers, who already have a lot on their plate. This is where these guides come in. They give some simple tips on how to start the conversation and make sure that it strikes the right balance between problems and solutions."

Greenpeace UK's co-executive director **Areeba Hamid** said:

"Children hear frightening information about our changing climate from many different sources. Helping them to make sense of it all, and emotionally preparing them for the big role climate change will play in their lives, can be a challenge for parents. They're often torn between being honest about the scale of the threat we face and avoiding giving their kids another thing to worry about. But the reality is that the climate crisis will be one of the major forces shaping the world they'll grow up in, and it's good to give them the tools they need to make sense of it. This is the aim of this guide – to help parents meet the responsibility of being truthful to their children in a positive and supportive way."

Boomers not concerned about environmental impact of travel, says new research

Story by Joanna Whitehead - 5d - [Open read](#)



Only a quarter of travellers aged 70 and older were concerned about the impact of travel on the environment, says survey

Less than a third of older Britons are worried about the impact of their travel on the environment and local communities compared with almost half of Gen Zers, a new study from YouGov has revealed.

Only 31 per cent of baby boomers – those aged between 60 and 77 – said they were concerned about the adverse effects of their travel, a figure that falls to just 26 per cent among those aged 78 and older.

Younger generations are increasingly likely to experience “eco-anxiety” when it comes to travel, with 47 per cent of adult Gen Zers – those aged 18-27 – and 42 per cent of millennials – those aged 28-41 – admitting the environmental impact of their travel worries them.

The survey, commissioned by hybrid hospitality operator The Social Hub, also found that younger travellers were more inclined to opt for accommodation with positive social and environmental credentials, such as B Corp certification.

Read more: [Extreme weather is already forcing almost a third of travellers to change holiday plans](#)

Almost half (48 per cent) of Gen Z travellers said such accreditation was important, compared with less than a third (32 per cent) of Gen X and baby boomer travellers.

Connecting with local communities was also a priority for younger travellers, with 58 per cent saying they would opt for a hotel that offered volunteering opportunities or supported local businesses.

Appendices I- Approved Ethics Form

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

RESEARCH STUDENTS

This form is to be completed by the student within **SIX** months for full-time students and **TWELVE** months for part time students, after the commencement of the research degree or following progression to Part Two of your course.

Once complete, submit this form via the ***MyTSD Doctoral College Portal*** at (<https://mytsd.uwtsd.ac.uk>).

This document is also available in Welsh.

RESEARCH STAFF ONLY

All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk , with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name.

STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.

In order for research to result in benefit and minimise risk of harm, it must be conducted ethically. A researcher may not be covered by the University's insurance if ethical approval has not been obtained prior to commencement.

The University follows the OECD Frascati manual definition of **research activity**: "creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications". As such this covers activities undertaken by members of staff, postgraduate research students, and both taught postgraduate and undergraduate students working on dissertations/projects.

The individual undertaking the research activity is known as the "principal researcher".

Ethical approval is not required for routine audits, performance reviews, quality assurance studies, testing within normal educational requirements, and literary or artistic criticism.

Please read the notes for guidance before completing ALL sections of the form.

This form must be completed and approved prior to undertaking any research activity. Please see Checklist for details of process for different categories of application.

1	Full Name:	Zach Mark Evans			
2	Tick all boxes that apply:	Member of staff:	☐	Honorary research fellow:	☐
	Undergraduate Student	☒	Taught Postgraduate Student	☐	Postgraduate Research Student

SECTION A: About You (Principal Researcher)

SECTION B: Approval for Research Activity

3	Institute/Academic Discipline/Centre:	University Of Wales Trinity Saint Davids			
4	Campus:	Swansea Campus IQ			
5	E-mail address:	2205439@student.uwtsd.ac.uk			
6	Contact Telephone Number:	07704336250			
For students:					
7	Student Number:	2205439			
8	Programme of Study:	Psychology and Counselling			
9	Director of Studies/Supervisor:	Dr Judith Marshall			
1	Has the research activity received approval in principle? (please check the Guidance Notes as to the appropriate approval process for different levels of research by different categories of individual)	YES	☒	NO	☒
					Date
2	If Yes, please indicate source of approval (and date where known): Approval in principle must be obtained from the relevant source prior to seeking ethical approval	Research Degrees Committee	☐		
		Institute Research Committee	☐		
		Other (write in)	☐		

SECTION C: Internal and External Ethical Guidance Materials

	Please list the core ethical guidance documents that have been referred to during the completion of this form (including any discipline-specific codes of research ethics, location-specific codes of research ethics, and also any specific ethical guidance relating to the proposed methodology). Please tick to confirm that your research proposal adheres to these codes and guidelines. You may add rows to this table if needed.	
1	UWTSD Research Ethics & Integrity Code of Practice	☒
2	UWTSD Research Data Management Policy	☒
3	BPS Code Of Ethics And Conduct	☒
4	BPS Code of Human Research Ethics	

SECTION D: External Collaborative Research Activity

If there are external collaborators then you should gain consent from the contact persons to share their personal data with the university. If there are no external collaborators then leave this section blank and continue to section E.

1	Institution					
2	Contact person name					
3	Contact person e-mail address					
4	Is your research externally funded?	YES	☐	NO	☐	
5	Are you in receipt of a KESS scholarship?	YES	☐	NO	☐	
6	Are you specifically employed to undertake this research in either a paid or voluntary capacity?	Voluntary	YES	☐	NO	☐
7		Employed	YES	☐	NO	☐
8	Is the research being undertaken within an existing UWTSD Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership (APLP)?	If YES then the permission question below does not need to be answered.	YES	☐	NO	☐
9	Has permission to undertake the research has been provided by the partner organisation?	(If YES attach copy) If NO the application cannot continue	YES	☐	NO	☐

Where research activity is carried out in collaboration with an external organisation

10	Does this organisation have its own ethics approval system?	YES	☐	NO	☐
	If Yes, please attach a copy of any final approval (or interim approval) from the organisation (this may be a copy of an email if appropriate).				

SECTION E: Details of Research Activity

1	Indicative title:	Undergraduate perceptions of the threat of climate change and it's potential impact on sense of well-being: a qualitative study using focus groups.		
2	Proposed start date:	30/09/24	Proposed end date:	25/03/25
	Introduction to the Research (maximum 300 words per section) Ensure that you write for a <u>Non-Specialist Audience</u> when outlining your response to the points below: <i>Purpose of Research Activity</i> <i>Proposed Research Question</i> <i>Aims of Research Activity</i> <i>Objectives of Research Activity</i> Demonstrate, briefly, how <u>Existing Research</u> has informed the proposed activity and explain <i>What the research activity will add to the body of knowledge</i> Existing research primarily infers that there is a great divide within the world's population with many people holding varying degrees of opinions related to climate. Existing research shows that those who believe climate change to be a dominant threat to the planet are those directly affected by climate change through drought, flooding etc. Many people primarily in western societies those that are heavily influenced by social media and those around them have a great mix of opinions towards the climate emergency. <i>How it addresses an area of importance.</i> It is important to fully understand and discuss the importance to how everyday individuals discuss and feel about climate change and how that then affects their mental health and well-being. It will allow an understanding into how much people truly take the climate emergency seriously or whether they see it as something unimportant to the global consciousness.			
3	Purpose of Research Activity The purpose of this research activity is to gain an understanding of how climate change is understood by people and to what extent and in what ways they then interpret the proposed climate emergency as a threat. The purpose of this research is to gain an understanding of how people view climate change and how their interpretations of various news articles and imagery influences their discussion about issues relating to climate change and how these could affect people's sense of well-being. Already existing research such as Sloggy et al (2021) found that those who are personally exposed to major climate events e.g. hurricanes primarily see the climate emergency as a threat to the world. However, scientists have argued that slowing the effect of climate change will necessitate behavioural change across the world. Therefore, it is important that this research is used to analyse those who are not exposed to regular climate related threats (hurricanes, tsunamis, flooding and drought). As it could be argued that young people would have the most to lose in the future of climate change. This study will then focus on students in the United Kingdom who come from a very moderate climate. However contrary evidence can also be found that climate extremes are not the dominant thought processes for why most people see climate change as a threat as Marquart-Pyatt et al (2014) found that individuals political beliefs are what primarily influence their views on climate change			

	not extreme weather events. This study will use information from news sources to focus discussions on perceptions of personal levels of control regarding behaviour change and sustainable behaviours, which links with the literature on climate change, eco-anxiety, eco-depression, eco-anger and general wellbeing e.g. Stanley et al (2021) who found those who experience eco-anger “predicated better mental health outcomes, as well as greater engagement in pro-climate activism and personal behaviours” (2021) (this box should expand as you type)
4	Research Question Undergraduate perceptions of the threat of environmental change and their sense of wellbeing: a qualitative study using focus groups. (this box should expand as you type)
5	Aims of Research Activity The aims of the research activity are to fully investigate how undergraduate students within university perceive the threat of climate change for the world and whether or not they see it as a threat. A further aim is to explore the impact of these perceptions of climate change has on the students own sense of well-being in relation to the climate emergency. The final aim is to then fully understand the relationship between these environmental climate concerns and how that psychologically affects their mental health and sense of well-being. (this box should expand as you type)
6	Objectives of Research Activity The objectives of the research activity in order to fully achieve the aims necessary to complete the research project are to properly organise and conduct a focus group which will discuss and explore undergraduate students perceptions of climate change. For this to be done the facilitation of in depth discussions would be necessary amongst participants for detailed qualitative answers to be collected. The differing themes and patterns that emerge following the focus group would then need to be analysed regarding climate change perceptions and their sense of well-being. To then fully understand the relationship between these climate concerns and their sense of well-being existing literature would then be compared to the qualitative findings so that a comprehensive understanding of the research activity can be reached. (this box should expand as you type)

	Proposed methods (maximum 600 words) Provide a brief summary of all the methods that may be used in the research activity, making it clear what specific techniques may be used. If methods other than those listed in this section are deemed appropriate later, additional ethical approval for those methods will be needed. You do not need to justify the methods here, but should instead describe how you intend to collect the data necessary for you to complete your project.
7	Method Participants The research activity shall all take place in the form of a focus group where 12 participants from two groups shall be, shown a series of journal articles and thought provoking imagery all related to climate change with the intention, to spark debate and discussion around climate change and what it means to them. All participants from levels 4 and 5 will be able to sign up to the study through the universities experimental management system (EMS) where a brief description of the study such as the length and topic will be provided. Design Various prompts shall be given by the researcher to participants with the intention to allow for discussion around certain topics e.g. how would these articles make someone feel about climate change. However, free open discussion shall be allowed provided that it remains on topic. All participants shall be audio recorded which will later be transcribed by the researcher allowing for the qualitative data to be properly analysed. All audio recordings shall be securely locked away within the university following the completion of the focus group with the only individuals having access being the researcher and the project supervisor to ensure participant confidentiality is kept. All data shall also be analysed using thematic analysis (Howarth, 2006) which will allow for a full comprehensive analysis into the different themes and patterns that have emerged following the focus group. This method will allow appropriate understanding into the reasoning behind different participants answers and beliefs which will further allow us to comprehend the reasoning to where students are able to anchor the information that is presented to them about the climate emergency and to how they can then objectify that and reach their own conclusions. If available the supervisor will also be present within the room the focus group is taking place to allow for any queries to be solved if they arise during the focus group. News articles shall be presented by the researcher to participants with the intention to allow for discussion around certain topics e.g. how would these articles make someone feel about climate change. However, free open discussion shall be allowed provided that it remains on topic. All participants shall be audio recorded which will later be transcribed by the researcher allowing for the qualitative data to be properly analysed.

	Materials Prior to the start of the study and to ensure the correct following of the BPS protocols and guidelines participants will be presented with an information sheet and consent form which will briefly outline the procedure that they will follow throughout the focus group where, if they are happy to proceed they are then free to sign the consent form and take part in the focus group. Also a demographics form shall be required to be filled out by participants where, they shall be asked their age and gender. Following the study then they will all be given a debrief form which will allow the participants the ability to ask any necessary questions and gain support from either the researcher or the supervisor which due to the potential sensitive nature of the topic and a focus group may be necessary. Procedure All participants shall sign up through the university experimental management system where it shall have a brief description of the study. Participants shall take part in a focus group where they shall be shown various different news articles related to climate change, and they shall be asked a series of pre-determined open questions to facilitate discussion surrounding climate change and the impact it has on people. All participants shall be given an information sheet, consent form and a demographics form which they will be required to fill in stating their age and gender. Following the focus group once all discussion has ended they shall be given a debrief form and the opportunity to ask any questions they may have. (this box should expand as you type)
	Location of research activity Identify all locations where research activity will take place.
8	Research activity shall all take place within the university on the IQ campus within an identified pre-booked room in the IQ building that participants will be told about once they have signed up for EMS. (this box should expand as you type)
	Research activity outside of the UK If research activity will take place overseas, you are responsible for ensuring that local ethical considerations are complied with and that the relevant permissions are sought. Specify any local guidelines (e.g. from local professional associations/learned societies/universities) that exist and whether these involve any ethical stipulations beyond those usual in the UK (provide details of any licenses or permissions

	required). Also specify whether there are any specific ethical issues raised by the local context in which the research activity is taking place, for example, particular cultural and/or legal sensitivities or vulnerabilities of participants. If you live in the country where you will do the research then please state this.
9	All research shall be conducted within the UK therefore, no necessary cultural precautions shall be needed as no culturally insensitive information or imagery shall be shown to participants preventing any ethical issues to arise throughout the study in relation to cultural insensitivity. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>

10	Use of documentation not in the public domain: Are any documents NOT publicly available?	NO	☒
		YES	☐
11	If Yes, please provide details here of how you will gain access to specific documentation that is not in the public domain and that this is in accordance with the current data protection law of the country in question and that of England and Wales. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

	Does your research relate to one or more of the seven aims of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015?	YES	NO
12	A prosperous Wales	☐	☒
13	A resilient Wales	☐	☒
14	A healthier Wales	☐	☒
15	A more equal Wales	☐	☒
16	A Wales of cohesive communities	☐	☒
17	A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language	☐	☒
18	A globally responsible Wales	☒	☐
19	If YES to any of the above, please give details:		
	The research primarily will heavily relate to a more globally responsible Wales through the direct discussion of climate change and it's discussion on impacts on local and international environments. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

SECTION F: Scope of Research Activity

	Will the research activity include:	YES	NO
1	Use of a questionnaire or similar research instrument?	☐	☒
2	Use of interviews?	☐	☒
3	Use of focus groups?	☒	☐
4	Use of participant diaries?	☐	☒
5	Use of video or audio recording?	☒	☐
6	Use of computer-generated log files?	☐	☒
7	Participant observation with their knowledge?	☒	☐
8	Participant observation without their knowledge?	☒	☐
9	Access to personal or confidential information without the participants' specific consent?	☐	☒
10	Administration of any questions, test stimuli, presentation that may be experienced as physically, mentally or emotionally harmful / offensive?	☐	☒
11	Performance of any acts which may cause embarrassment or affect self-esteem?	☐	☒
12	Investigation of participants involved in illegal activities?	☐	☒
13	Use of procedures that involve deception?	☐	☒
14	Administration of any substance, agent or placebo?	☐	☒
15	Working with live vertebrate animals?	☐	☒
16	Procedures that may have a negative impact on the environment?	☐	☒
17	Other primary data collection methods. Please indicate the type of data collection method(s) below.	☐	☒
	Details of any other primary data collection method: (this box should expand as you type)		

If NO to every question, then the research activity is (ethically) low risk and **may** be exempt from **some** of the following sections (please refer to Guidance Notes).

If YES to any question, then no research activity should be undertaken until full ethical approval has been obtained.

SECTION G: Intended Participants

If there are no participants then do not complete this section, but go directly to section H.

	Who are the intended participants:	YES	NO
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1	Students or staff at the University?	☒	☐
2	Adults (over the age of 18 and competent to give consent)?	☒	☐
3	Vulnerable adults?	☐	☒
4	Children and Young People under the age of 18? (Consent from Parent, Carer or Guardian will be required)	☐	☒
5	Prisoners?	☐	☒
6	Young offenders?	☐	☒
7	Those who could be considered to have a particularly dependent relationship with the investigator or a gatekeeper?	☐	☒
8	People engaged in illegal activities?	☐	☒
9	Others. Please indicate the participants below, and specifically any group who may be unable to give consent.	☐	☒
	Details of any other participant groups: (this box should expand as you type)		

	Participant numbers and source Provide an estimate of the expected number of participants. How will you identify participants and how will they be recruited?	
10	How many participants are expected?	The expected number of participants are 12 within two focus groups. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
11	Who will the participants be?	The participants will all be students within the Discipline of Psychology and Counselling, UWTSD from levels 4 and 5. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
12	How will you identify the participants?	Participants will be identified using the University Experimental Management System (EMS) where the students will sign up and agree to the study. Participants will be identified through EMS number only. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>

	Information for participants:	YES	NO	N/A
13	Will you describe the main research procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	☒	☐	☐
14	Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	☒	☐	☐
15	Will you obtain written consent for participation?	☒	☐	☐

16	Will you explain to participants that refusal to participate in the research will not affect their treatment or education (if relevant)?	☒	☐	☐
17	If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed?	☒	☐	☒
18	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	☒	☐	☐
19	With questionnaires, will you give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer?	☐	☐	☒
20	Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?	☒	☐	☐
21	Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation, in a way appropriate to the type of research undertaken?	☒	☐	☐
22	If NO to any of above questions, please give an explanation			
	Students will not be informed they do not have to answer. However, they might choose not to speak at times. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>			

	Information for participants:	YES	NO	N/A
24	Will participants be paid?	☐	☒	☐
25	Is specialist electrical or other equipment to be used with participants?	☐	☒	☐
26	Are there any financial or other interests to the investigator or University arising from this study?	☐	☒	☐
27	Will the research activity involve deliberately misleading participants in any way, or the partial or full concealment of the specific study aims?	☐	☒	☐
28	If YES to any question, please provide full details			
	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>			

SECTION H: Anticipated Risks

	Outline any anticipated risks that may adversely affect any of the participants, the researchers and/or the University, and the steps that will be taken to address them. If you have completed a full risk assessment (for example as required by a laboratory, or external research collaborator) you may append that to this form.		
1	Full risk assessment completed and appended?	Yes ☐	No ☒
2	Risks to participants For example: sector-specific health & safety, emotional distress, financial disclosure, physical harm, transfer of personal data, sensitive organisational information		
	Risk to participants: Emotional distress from the sensitive topic area, confidentiality breaches, researcher bias when listening to participants answers.	<i>How you will mitigate the risk to participants:</i> To prevent the emotional distress of participants a full debrief process should be followed. If any potential distress was to take place within the focus group was to happen the focus group will be paused, the participant will be taken outside, given time to relax and offered to return to the focus group without any penalty to the participant. The appropriate ethics guidelines will be followed: UWTSD Research Ethics & Integrity Code of Practise; BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct; BPS Code of Research Ethics. If a participants becomes distressed, the focus group will be paused while the researcher and the participant leave the room. The participant will be offered opportunities to either return to the focus group or withdraw from the study with no penalty. The participant will be directed to Student Services if they feel that will help. Researcher: To prevent any anonymity breaches participants names and identities will be hidden using a coding system e.g. participant 1, participant 2, participant 3).	

	Anonymity and confidentiality- Due to the nature of the focus group with others being present the ability for participants to be Anonymous is limited as there will be other participants present during data collection. Risk of Physical Harm Potential physical harm to participants or the researcher could take place if something was said which may cause offense or upset. Data Leakage	Participants: A consent form shall be given to participants where they will have to sign it in order to take part in the study with the consent that their anonymity will be kept To prevent researcher bias a series of prompts will be created and discussed with my supervisor to prevent any researcher bias from affecting participants answers. To uphold anonymity and confidentiality of participants they shall be informed verbally and through the debrief sheet the importance of not sharing any information outside of the room the focus group takes place in following the completion of focus group. Risk of Physical Harm: The correct de-escalation techniques must be used such as offering the focus group to be paused and the offended participant to temporarily leave the room to calm down. If the participant does not then calm themselves the offer to end the focus group will be available with supervisor support. It is intended that the study supervisor will be in the room during data collection. Data Leakage: To prevent data leakage all recordings shall be securely stored within the university campus on an encrypted password protected computer. All participant information written down shall be securely locked away within a draw in the researchers home. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
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	Potential Data leakage if the storage devices (audio recording, information sheet) were to be lost or seen by someone other than the researcher and the supervisor. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	
3	If research activity may include sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use) or issues likely to disclose information requiring further action (e.g. criminal activity), give details of the procedures to deal with these issues, including any support/advice (e.g. helpline numbers) to be offered to participants. Note that where applicable, consent procedures should make it clear that if something potentially or actually illegal is discovered in the course of a project, it may need to be disclosed to the proper authorities	
	N/A <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	
4	Risks to the investigator For example: personal health & safety, physical harm, emotional distress, risk of accusation of harm/impropriety, conflict of interest	
	Risk to the investigator: Risk of being accused of improper conduct during the study. Physical Harm: Risk of being physically harmed during the study.	<i>How you will mitigate the risk to the investigator:</i> The appropriate guidelines will be adhered to e.g. BPS Code of Human Research Ethics, BPS Code of Ethics And Conduct and UWTSD Research Ethics & Integrity Code of Practice. The focus group will be recorded so, while this can't guarantee ethical behaviour, it can provide evidence of this also, the supervisor might be in attendance. Risk of Physical Harm: The correct de-escalation techniques must be used such as offering the focus group to be paused and the offended participant to temporarily leave the room to calm down. If the participant does not then calm themselves the offer to end the focus group will be available with supervisor support. It is intended that the study supervisor will be in the room during data collection.

	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
5	University/institutional risks For example: adverse publicity, financial loss, data protection	
	Risk to the University: Loss of reputation for the university due to accusation of improper researcher conduct or data leakage. Risk of being accused of improper conduct during the study. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to the University: Appropriate data storage and security procedures will be followed (see data storage and security section) The appropriate guidelines will be adhered to e.g. BPS Code of Human Research Ethics, BPS Code of Ethics And Conduct and UWTSD Research Ethics & Integrity Code of Practice . The focus group will be recorded so, while this can't guarantee ethical behaviour, it can provide evidence of this Also, the supervisor might be in attendance. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
6	Environmental risks For example: accidental spillage of pollutants, damage to local ecosystems	
	Risk to the environment: Improper disposal of paper stimuli. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to environment: Ensure all paper stimuli are properly disposed of in the recycling bin and none are left on the floor/table. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>

	Disclosure and Barring Service			
	If the research activity involves children or vulnerable adults, a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate must be obtained before any contact with such participants.	YES	NO	N/A

7	Does your research require you to hold a current DBS Certificate?	☐	☒	☐
8	If YES, please give the certificate number. If the certificate number is not available please write "Pending"; in this case any ethical approval will be subject to providing the appropriate certificate number.			

SECTION I: Feedback, Consent and Confidentiality

1	Feedback What de-briefing and feedback will be provided to participants, how will this be done and when?
	Once the study is completed a full debrief form shall be given to the participants and the researcher will talk them through this. Within this form appropriate information will be provided allowing for participants to discuss any questions or concerns they might have had. A reminder regarding maintaining anonymity and confidentiality will be included, along with their right to withdraw at this point. The focus group discussions will be transcribed after each session has ended, so withdrawal must be requested before the participants leave the session. Further information shall also be disclosed fully explaining the general reasoning explanation for the study. They shall also be reminded that they can contact the study supervisor if they feel the need to do this. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
2	Informed consent Describe the arrangements to inform potential participants, before providing consent, of what is involved in participating. Describe the arrangements for participants to provide full consent before data collection begins. If gaining consent in this way is inappropriate, explain how consent will be obtained and recorded in accordance with prevailing data protection legislation.
	Consent shall be gained using a consent form that all participants are required to fill in prior to the start of the focus group. Within the consent form it shall have all the necessary information regarding what each participant is expected to do during the data collection session, allowing for their full understanding and consent to be given before the focus group begins as no deception techniques are needed throughout the study. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
3	Confidentiality / Anonymity Set out how anonymity of participants and confidentiality will be ensured in any outputs. If anonymity is not being offered, explain why this is the case.
	All participants will be required to present themselves as number e.g. participant 1 before speaking so that any participant names will not be disclosed during the study preventing any breaches of confidentiality. However, the focus group will be audio recorded therefore, participants will be told

	through the consent form that prior to the study if they wish to not take part in the study then they are free to do so. Participants will also be told following the start of the study and their voices being recorded they cannot then be removed on the recording after the study is completed but their answers and discussion will not be analysed or discussed. The audio recording shall be securely stored and locked away within the university with only the researcher and supervisor allowed access to prevent the loss of confidentiality. Therefore, true anonymity cannot be guaranteed during a focus group. However, the focus group will be audio recorded therefore, participants will be told through the consent form that prior to the study if they wish to not take part in the study then they are free to do so. Participants will also be told following the start of the study and their voices being recorded they cannot then be removed on the recording after the study is completed but their answers and discussion will not be analysed or discussed. The audio recording shall be securely stored and locked away within the university with only the researcher and supervisor allowed access to prevent the loss of confidentiality. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
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SECTION J: Data Protection and Storage

	Does the research activity involve personal data (as defined by the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 “GDPR” and the Data Protection Act 2018 “DPA”)?	YES	NO
1	“Personal data” means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person (‘data subject’). An identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person. Any video or audio recordings of participants is considered to be personal data.	✓	☐
	If YES, provide a description of the data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
2	An audio recording of the focus group and then transcript is necessary in order to properly allow for the analysis of the qualitative data present. All participants shall not be identified with their real name and instead shall be identified with a number e.g. participant 1. Once the audio recording has been uploaded to the secure OneDrive, the audio recording on the voice recorder shall be deleted preventing any confidentiality breaches. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
	Does it involve special category data (as defined by the GDPR)?	YES	NO
3	“Special category data” means sensitive personal data consisting of information as to the data subjects’ –	✓	☐

	(a) racial or ethnic origin, (b) political opinions, (c) religious beliefs or other beliefs of a similar nature, (d) membership of a trade union (within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992), (e) physical or mental health or condition, (f) sexual life, (g) genetics, (h) biometric data (as used for ID purposes),		
	If YES, provide a description of the special category data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
4	Due to the sensitive nature of the topic of the climate emergency the discussions that may arise could potentially relate to participants political beliefs however no intentional push towards these opinions and beliefs shall be made by the researcher through prompts. Participants will be asked what people within the general public might think about climate issues – what opinions might be circulating. (this box should expand as you type)		

	Will data from the research activity (collected data, drafts of the thesis, or materials for publication) be stored in any of the following ways?	YES	NO
5	Manual files (i.e. in paper form)?	☒	☐
6	University computers?	☐	☒
7	Private company computers?	☐	☒
8	Home or other personal computers?	☒	☒
9	Laptop computers/ CDs/ Portable disk-drives/ memory sticks?	☒	☐
10	“Cloud” storage or websites?	☐	☐
11	Other – specify:	☐	☒
12	For all stored data, explain the measures in place to ensure the security of the data collected, data confidentiality, including details of backup procedures, password protection, encryption, anonymisation and pseudonymisation: All physical copies of paper e.g. consent form, demographic form and audio recording shall be safely stored within a locked area of the researchers home and shall not be removed off the premises to prevent any breaches of confidentiality. The only time where any physical copies may be removed are if the examining board seeks further evidence in order to assess the dissertation. All electronic data shall be securely stored within a password protected university one drive account. Following the completion of the dissertation and the finalisation of the results all data electronic and paper shall be destroyed after the thesis grade has been confirmed by the examination board. (this box should expand as you type)		

	Data Protection
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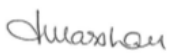
	Will the research activity involve any of the following activities:	YES	NO
13	Electronic transfer of data in any form?	☒	☒
14	Sharing of data with others at the University outside of the immediate research team?	☒	☒
15	Sharing of data with other organisations?	☐	☒
16	Export of data outside the UK or importing of data from outside the UK?	☐	☒
17	Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, emails or telephone numbers?	☐	☒
18	Publication of data that might allow identification of individuals?	☐	☒
19	Use of data management system?	☐	☒
20	Data archiving?	☐	☒
21	If YES to any question, please provide full details, explaining how this will be conducted in accordance with the GDPR and Data Protection Act (2018) (and any international equivalents, where appropriate):		
	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
22	List all who will have access to the data generated by the research activity:		
	The only individuals that shall have access to the data generated by the research activity shall be the researcher (Zach Evans).		
	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
23	List who will have control of, and act as custodian(s) for, data generated by the research activity:		
	The project supervisor (Dr Judith Marshall) shall be the custodian of any data generated by the research activity ensuring it's safety.		
	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
24	Give details of data storage arrangements, including security measures in place to protect the data, where data will be stored, how long for, and in what form. Will data be archived – if so how and if not why not.		
	Paper copies of participant information shall be securely locked away within a draw in the researchers home with access only allowed for the researcher. All electronic data shall be locked on a password protected one drive account. All data shall be destroyed once the thesis grade has been confirmed by the examination board.		
	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
25	Please indicate if your data will be stored in the UWTSD Research Data Repository (see https://researchdata.uwtsd.ac.uk/). If so please explain. <i>(Most relevant to academic staff)</i>		
	No.		
	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
26	Confirm that you have read the UWTSD guidance on data management (see https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/library/research-data-management/)	YES	☒

27	Confirm that you are aware that you need to keep all data until after your research has completed or the end of your funding	YES	☒
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SECTION K: Declaration

	The information which I have provided is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I have attempted to identify any risks and issues related to the research activity and acknowledge my obligations and the rights of the participants. In submitting this application I hereby confirm that I undertake to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice which is published on the website: https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/research/research-ethics/		
1	Signature of applicant:	Z.Evans	Date: 03/10/24

For STUDENT Submissions:

2	Director of Studies/Supervisor:		Date: 02.12.2024
3	Signature:		

For STAFF Submissions:

4	Academic Director/ Assistant Dean:		Date:
5	Signature:		

Checklist: Please complete the checklist below to ensure that you have completed the form according to the guidelines and attached any required documentation:

☒	I have read the guidance notes supplied before completing the form.
☒	I have completed ALL RELEVANT sections of the form in full.
☒	I confirm that the research activity has received approval in principle
☒	I have attached a copy of final/interim approval from external organisation (where appropriate)
☐	I have attached a full risk assessment (where appropriate) ONLY TICK IF YOU HAVE ATTACHED A FULL RISK ASSESSMENT

☒	I understand that it is my responsibility to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice.
☒	I understand that before commencing data collection all documents aimed at respondents (including information sheets, consent forms, questionnaires, interview schedules etc.) must be confirmed by the DoS/Supervisor, module tutor or Academic Director.

RESEARCH STUDENTS ONLY

Once complete, submit this form via the **MyTSD Doctoral College Portal** at (<https://mytsd.uwtsd.ac.uk>).

RESEARCH STAFF ONLY

All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk , with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name.

STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.

