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MASTER'S PROJECT: COPING WITH CLIMATE CHANGE: EXAMINING
EMOTIONAL EFFECTS AND SEARCHING FOR SOLUTIONS

A Capstone Project Presented

by

Caylin McCamp

to

The Faculty of the Graduate College

of

The University of Vermont

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Science
Specializing in Leadership for Sustainability

October, 2020

ABSTRACT

Inspired by experiences with college students and my own reckoning of the climate crisis, I sought to understand the indirect psychological impacts of climate change on UVM students and what might be done in response. I conducted a literature review, online survey, interviews and focus group style stakeholder conversations. The results showed negative impacts on overall wellbeing and acute mental health impacts, which stakeholders agreed should be addressed and offered ideas for doing so. This research was also a practice of embodying leadership. In interpreting and sharing these results my understanding of the issue itself and my own reaction to it evolved. I learned to see climate change as a symptom of systems of domination and oppression. I also attended to my own emotional response and became more comfortable addressing the psychological impact of the climate crisis in professional and personal settings.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It's been suggested that only people who expect to be mentioned within this section read it. So if you're here, you likely did contribute to my journey. Thank you! I'd like to especially acknowledge those who really made this capstone possible. My coach, Rebecca, who I looked forward to checking in with each month because I always felt better at the end of our call. The groups and departments who served as stakeholders, welcomed me into their spaces and engaged genuinely in dialogue. All of the MLS leadership, teachers and affiliates who were not necessarily knowingly active parts of my second year in the program but who planted so many seeds that have blossomed during this time. My professors and professional acquaintances whose words of encouragement along the way carried more weight than they knew. My therapist, Claire, who helped me with my own climate anxiety and grief throughout this project. My cohort, who I leaned on for consolation, commiseration, celebration and everything in between for the last two years. My colleague, David and the students in his fall 2019 CDAE 250 Research Methods class, whose partnership and participation set much of this in motion. My boss, Gioia, who encouraged me to find the places where my work and capstone converged and always supported the integration of my learning into our office. My partner, Scott, who was the rudder helping keep me accountable to my own intentions. My friends, who lovingly accepted "homework" as my reason for declining an invitation more often than I wish in the last two years. And the birds, especially the hawks, who always seemed to appear when I was working, bringing me a smile and a wonder-filled respite that reminded me of what really matters.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	2
INTRODUCTION	4
METHODS	6
Data Collection	6
Stakeholder Discussions	6
RESULTS	8
Survey	8
Stakeholders	9
Leadership	9
EVALUATION & ASSESSMENT	12
RECOMMENDATIONS, NEXT STEPS & KEY LEARNINGS	14
REFERENCES	16
APPENDICES	18
A. Survey	18
B. Observation Worksheet	23
C. Interview Guide	25
D. Survey Sampling Methodology & Response Rate	26
E. Annotated Bibliography	29
Original Influences	29
Experiential Influences	32
Ongoing Influences	36
F. Stakeholder Presentations	39
Completed Presentations	39
Postponed Presentations	41
G. Stakeholder Discussion Questions	42
H. Students Studying Sustainability	43
I. Findings & Suggestions Summary	44
J. Capstone Adjacent Activities	46

INTRODUCTION

I work in the Office of Sustainability at the University of Vermont (UVM) and am surrounded by students from the “climate generation” as well as faculty and staff who help facilitate their intellectual, identity, and career development. My capstone project sought to understand the mental health and wellbeing impacts of climate change awareness on UVM students and explore possible responses with campus stakeholders. This inquiry was inspired by my experiences with students and my own reckoning of the climate crisis. As my assessment of our collective future has become more grim, I often wonder how to hold that truth and live fully and thrive in a way that honors the reality of a climate changed future. In that sense I’m also searching for my purpose as I try to understand where and how I can best show up in the face of this existential threat, both for myself and for others.

Concern for mental health and wellbeing is shared across campus and some see a connection to climate change. The Student Government Association has attempted to create space and community to support students who are experiencing climate related burnout. Staff in the Environmental Program are grappling with how to advise students who present existential concerns. The Division of Student Affairs (DOSA) is working to foster and measure student resilience. The campus’ public health entity is considering how to create programming and support for students with concerns about a climate-changed future. The Center for Teaching and Learning is helping instructors recognize and take responsibility for the emotional impacts of teaching about sustainability.

In 2011, Doherty and Clayton established three levels of psychological impacts and outlined the differences between them:

direct (e.g., acute or traumatic effects of extreme weather events and a changed environment); indirect (e.g., threats to emotional well-being based on observation of impacts and concern or uncertainty about future risks); and psychosocial (e.g., chronic social and community effects of heat, drought, migrations, and climate-related conflicts, and postdisaster adjustment). (p. 265)

I focused on indirect impacts, which they say can include anxiety, worry, depression, despair, grief, mourning, unconscious defensiveness, numbness, apathy, and vicarious trauma. Umbrella terms referring to these states usually include prefixes of climate, eco or ecological, and suffixes of anxiety or grief - the most common being eco-anxiety.

Youth are one demographic at greater risk, simply because they have more years ahead of them and will be living with the consequences of our actions today. Awareness and study of this issue within and specific to higher education is new but growing. Humboldt University professor, Sarah Jaquette Ray, (2018) researches what she calls, “coming to age at the end of the world,” and draws from affect theory to help students process the emotions associated with the material in her Environmental Studies classes. An assessment of concern about climate change at University of Hawaii found a high level of dissonance within their student body, which their Sustainability Director suggested could have implications on the University’s ability to attract students (Lynch, 2019). The University of Washington offers a class called Eco-Grief and Climate Anxiety that regularly has a waiting list (Long, 2018).

METHODS

I chose methods that I could weave into my existing job responsibilities with hopes of continuing this work beyond the capstone. I conducted a literature review, online survey, interviews, and focus group style stakeholder conversations.

Data Collection

In reciprocal relationship with a service-learning class, students were taught research methods using my “real world” research question (how is climate change affecting students?) while I gained their insights and the support of their professor. The primary research tool was an online survey (Appendix A) developed in an iterative process informed by students’ literature reviews, observation exercises (Appendix B), and interviews (Appendix C). The 90 interviews were also reviewed for concurrence with the survey results and I used quotes from them to help tell the story behind the data.

The survey was emailed to a representative sample of students and employees (Appendix D). I coded and analysed the responses using SPSS. Frequencies and means were calculated for all questions. Cross-tabulation analysis by demographics were used to identify areas with differences and chi-squared tests were used to determine which were significant. I also compared results with similar national and statewide studies to contextualize the numbers. My interpretation of the data drew from sources identified in my annotated bibliography (Appendix E) within the disciplines of ecopsychology, psychology, and behavioral science. I focused on the student survey responses.

Stakeholder Discussions

I shared the results with relevant stakeholders on campus to start a dialogue about

how to respond as a campus. I was nervous about this phase because I worried that if stakeholders didn't see this as an issue that I'd feel both academically and personally invalidated. I started with a short list of relevant groups with whom I was familiar. I tested my presentation on these groups who helped me clarify messaging and identify my audience: staff who support students or help shape the student experience. Many of the relevant departments fell within DOSA. Having worked there, my understanding of DOSA's role, work, and influence on campus helped me to see them as a leverage point that I was uniquely suited to engage.

I identified about a dozen stakeholder groups that I planned to present to or engage representatives of. In the wake of COVID-19 and the public outcry after the murder of George Floyd, half of my planned conversations were postponed and the others moved online. I straddled an interesting line in my presentations where I was coming as an expert on my own research but also as a learner, needing to hear from them. I began each presentation stating that I saw personal growth in getting more comfortable positioning myself as a learner without feeling insecure. My presentation consisted of introductions, a brief literature review, and an overview of the survey results. Some recordings are available in Appendix F. Afterwards I used semi-standardized questions to facilitate a dialogue (Appendix G).

RESULTS

Survey

The survey showed that almost all (96%) of students believe in climate change. Most (86%) expect to be personally harmed a great deal or moderate amount by climate change. Worry was the most common emotional reaction to climate change, selected by 84% of respondents. These responses were at least 24 percentage points higher than Americans on average (Leiserowitz et al., 2019). Only 18% strongly agreed that they understand the main solutions to climate change. I think this reads like an equation: *high belief in issue + high expectation to be affected - low understanding of solutions = high concern*. I wanted to understand how this heightened awareness and concern affected students. They said it has manifested often or occasionally in the following ways: 72% feeling uncertain about their future, 71% affecting their outlook on life, 39% experiencing mental health affects, and 19% impacting ability to succeed in school.

Only two demographics showed significant differences in these responses, females and students studying sustainability (Appendix H). They both were significantly more likely to experience mental health effects more often than their peers, two and three times more, respectively. My sample (Appendix D) was likely too small and/or white for the data to show any significant differences by race. However, it is well documented elsewhere that people of color are more likely to be concerned about and affected by climate change (Ballew et al., 2020; Burton, 2020).

Stakeholders

In doing this analysis I was struck by how much leeway and power a researcher has in interpreting data. There were ways to determine statistical significance but it was up to me how I told the story. I tried to stay self-aware of my own biases and account for them in my presentation of these results. For example: what level of frequency and severity is enough to constitute a problem that should be addressed? Instead of trying to answer that myself, I brought the question to the stakeholder groups.

All six groups said the results made sense, even if they were surprised or upset by the severity or prevalence of students' concern and struggle. They also all thought this issue warranted addressing and had ideas for how their staff and others might be able to do so. A summary of each meeting is in Appendix F and a handout of key findings and stakeholders suggestions is in Appendix I. A few stakeholders have already volunteered to join an ongoing working group to implement these ideas. This work has become part of my job expectations for the coming year, meaning I can continue meeting with groups who weren't available this spring, making it possible for more ideas to be added to this list.

Leadership

I recorded my stakeholder presentations and got to rewatch myself. Seeing my leadership in practice more objectively, I learned that I often relayed information and handled questions better than I remembered. This gave me confidence and helped me get more courageous in sharing what brought me to this project. Speaking my truth and letting myself be seen was both challenging and refreshing. It also brought forward more

genuine responses from stakeholders.

My presentation and understanding of my work and this topic has evolved significantly. For example, I used “mental health” in my survey, but now know that term risks pathologizing a very rational response to the state of our world. I now use “mental and emotional wellbeing.” Most powerfully, I started out seeing this topic as an isolated issue. Learning to see climate change (and therefore all of its impacts) as a *symptom* of systems of oppression and domination instead of it’s own issue was a paradigm shift for me in this program that really took hold in my capstone process. When I learned about these systems and began to think more critically about their influence, I started to see that anthropocentrism, colonization, racism, white supremacy, capitalism, and patriarchy could be considered root causes or key enablers of climate change. I’ve started beginning my stakeholder presentations with this framing and am carrying this understanding into other aspects of my work and leadership, like defining sustainability issues with this framework for my student employees.

In the spring I tuned in more than ever before to racism and witnessed it at a whole new scale, along with much of the country. I began experiencing emotional reactions of the same scale that I do with climate change and seeing parallels between the existential threats of climate change and racism. I realized that the framing I’d been using to understand the psychological impacts of climate change (indirect vs psychosocial vs direct) could likely be applied to any of the oppressive/dominating systems named above. Intersectionality theory would suggest that the burden of these systems accumulates as race, class, gender, and other disparities are layered on top of each other. This further

reinforced my understanding of my highly privileged positionality as a white, cis-gendered, heterosexual, married, upper class, able-bodied, American woman of western European decent and Catholic upbringing researching exclusively indirect psychological impacts of climate change.

EVALUATION & ASSESSMENT

Feedback from stakeholders, my coach, and professors all helped me assess the quality of my work. My coach gave me feedback on the visual presentation of my results and helped me articulate the story behind the data. She also encouraged me to consider the diversity of the stakeholder groups I was sharing with and how that could affect their responses. One professor suggested I develop a few hypotheses and check them. Another helped me understand that my survey questions could be considered validated based on how they were developed. While this was reassuring, it was the responses stakeholders had to my presentation that really helped me see my work as valid and meaningful. Many stakeholders said the results resonated with their personal experience or experiences of their students. All stakeholder groups were interested in using the information to inform their work. While the timeframe of my capstone project doesn't allow me to include the results of this integration, I will be following up and can at least be confident that those who I've shared with have an increased awareness of this issue. Interest from others researching this topic nationally also greatly affirmed the value and quality of my work.

My results exceeded my expectations, especially in the ways this project seeped into my job and life. My student employees decided to make an entire campaign about coping with climate change (Appendix J). Doing this work together fostered a strong team bond even though we'd just gone remote due to COVID-19. I'm also providing my data to two undergraduate students doing their theses on climate anxiety so they can build on the work. I shared my work with my town's sustainability group, which led to us doing a book club on the topic and was the first time in my four years with this

community that we ever openly discussed our emotional response to the problems that we try to solve together. I didn't anticipate being able to work on this issue at work beyond the scope of my capstone; however, continuing is now one of my supervisor-assigned goals for next year. I'll be offering a professional development session on the topic for UVM employees this fall and folding the content into the student program I run. I connected with others nationally who are doing this work and will be presenting and offering a networking session together at our field's largest conference this year. Perhaps most importantly, I've been able to better articulate my own emotions and mental health struggles related to climate change and see these as valid responses worth addressing both professionally and personally with the people around me.

RECOMMENDATIONS, NEXT STEPS & KEY LEARNINGS

Because this process isn't ending with my capstone or graduation I continue to learn more and adapt how I explain and present this information. In one of our very first modules I wrote that I worried I wasn't learning enough or fast enough. Matt responded that one qualitative measure of rigor is tracking how your questions become more sophisticated or nuanced over time. In Appendix E I narrate much of the evolution of my orientation to this issue as a whole by showing the original influences of my work, detailing my engagement in various webinars, workshops, and presentations that influenced my thinking, and outlining what additional resources continue to influence me as this project comes to an end and I move towards integrating this effort and learning into my work at UVM.

The immediate next steps are to continue sharing this information on campus, and pursue the forthcoming and existing stakeholder ideas (listed in the sidebar of Appendix I and Completed Presentations section of Appendix F). I will share this work publicly at the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) annual conference and hope to publish the survey results in a journal so that others may replicate this methodology and any best practices that emerge. Lastly, I focused on the student data. However, employees were also surveyed and more work needs to be done to communicate and address that side of this issue. An emerging question, offered at the capstone summit, is: how can employees support students in this struggle while managing their own emotional response?

The key finding of the research is that much of the UVM community is experiencing mental health effects but that this ubiquity is often unknown, and that the few early efforts to address it are small and classroom-focused. This started as a question from the heart and a search for my purpose, so many of my key learnings have been personal. I've come to understand that my pain for the world is the flip side of my love for the world, that I couldn't feel the anxiety and grief that I do if I didn't have a deep love for the people and all other life on Earth. Seeing my feelings in that way has helped me reframe and harness them a little bit better. I absolutely still struggle to comprehend and deal with the atrocities currently experienced on our planet and the knowledge of what is to come. I've learned that acknowledging the pain of that truth is the first step, and staying tuned into my own emotional response, instead of burying it, helps me from letting it take over. Another important practice for me is having community in this shared struggle. I've learned that there are so many more people feeling this way than talking about it and we need to be supporting each other. I am grateful to be connected to others who are not only experiencing this but also researching it.

Finally, I've taken the intersectionality of this issue to heart. I used to think that social justice could wait, that climate had to come first because if we didn't solve the climate crisis nothing else would matter. I didn't see how injustice fueled climate change. It's not that I've developed a blind faith that we'll be able to ramp down carbon emissions in time, I just now see how working for all beings on this planet to have dignified lives now by dismantling systems of oppression inherently contributes to a more secure future for us all. That understanding now guides my search for purpose.

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APPENDICES

A. Survey

Note: No questions were required, all were able to be skipped. Demographic data was collected via UVM netID when respondents logged in to take the survey instead of being asked as questions. The survey was launched on 10/17/2019 and four reminder emails were sent (on 10/24, 10/31, 11/4 and 11/5) until it was closed on 11/6/2019. Not all questions were used for my project.

LEVEL OF CONCERN

Please rate whether or not you agree with the following statements:

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I know what the major CONTRIBUTORS to climate change are	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know what the main SOLUTIONS to climate change are	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My understanding of climate change has grown as a result of working/studying at UVM	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Climate change is happening	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Climate change is human caused	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Climate change: a shift in global and/or regional climate patterns over the last ~150 years due to an increase in global temperature.

How much do you think climate change will harm...

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	Not at all	Only a little	A moderate amount	A great deal	Don't know
Plants and animal species	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People in future generations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People in your generation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People in developing countries	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

People in the United States	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People in lower-income communities in the U.S.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People in coastal areas of U.S.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People you know	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People in Vermont	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
You personally	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Does the issue of climate change make you feel any of the following ways?

Please choose **all** that apply:

- Angry
- Uninterested
- Afraid
- Optimistic
- Helpless
- Motivated
- Guilty
- Worried
- Other: _____

How often does concern about climate change...

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	I am not concerned about climate change	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often
Affect your ability to succeed at school/work?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Affect your mental health?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Make you feel uncertain about your future?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Affect your outlook on life?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

ENGAGEMENT & RESPONSIBILITY

Please rate whether or not you agree with the following statements:

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I try to reduce my contribution to climate change	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Climate change is such a big problem that there is very little I can do personally to reduce its effects	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reducing the negative effects of climate change will require sacrifice from ordinary Americans	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having more resources means a greater responsibility to respond to climate change	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Resources could include money, time, education, influence or natural resources like forests, water and land.

How often do you hear about climate change from a **UVM** source?

*Please choose **only one** of the following:*

- At least once a day
- At least once a week
- At least once a month
- Several times a year
- Once a year or less often
- Never

UVM sources are things UVM entities create, publish or host like campus newspapers, classes, departmental newsletters, UVM events, webpages and campus initiatives. A classmate or coworker at UVM would not be a "UVM source".

What specific UVM sources do you hear about climate change from?

Please write your answer here: _____

*Please include the **specific name** of sources (ex: "CDAE250 Research Methods" vs "class")*

How often do you discuss climate change with...

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often
Friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Classmates (only asked of students)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Coworkers(only asked of employees)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

UVM SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITY & ACTION

Please rate whether or not you agree with the following statements:

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
UVM has a responsibility to respond to the issue of climate change	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'm aware of the existing campus efforts to reduce carbon emissions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
UVM should do more to respond to the issue of climate change	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A UVM education adequately prepares students for an uncertain climate future	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please rate whether or not you agree with the following statements:

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
UVM's sustainability reputation influenced my decision to come here	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
UVM does enough to justify its sustainability reputation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sustainability is one of UVM's values	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There is a culture of sustainability within the campus community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Sustainability means meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future

generations to meet their own needs.

Which climate initiatives (if any) do you most support UVM focusing on over the next five years? (Select up to three)

- TRANSPORTATION: Reducing emissions by greening the campus fleet, and introducing more incentives and infrastructure for low/no emission commuting
- BUILDINGS: Using space efficiently to minimize the need for new construction and designing ecologically sound, efficient and accessible new buildings
- FOOD: Serving mostly local, organic, fair trade, or humanely raised food
- ENERGY: Becoming carbon neutral by reducing energy use, switching to renewable energy, and offsetting remaining emissions
- WASTE: Reducing net material waste, through source reduction, reuse, composting and recycling, so that nothing is sent to landfills
- INVESTMENTS: Divesting financial interests from fossil fuels and investing in a socially responsible manner
- WATER & GROUNDS: Having functional landscaping that captures campus stormwater runoff to protect Lake Champlain
- ACADEMICS: Requiring students to demonstrate climate-literacy and take courses that integrate issues of climate change as a graduation requirement
- RESEARCH: Supporting research on local climate solutions, adaptation and resilience
- PLANNING: Adopting comprehensive short and long term sustainability plans that include adaptation, resilience and climate action goals
- Other: _____

Climate literacy - an understanding of your influence on the climate and climate's influence on you and society

Carbon neutrality - making no net release of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere

Resilience - strengthening the ability of human and non-human systems to withstand and respond to changes in the earth's climate

Adaptation - a society adjusting to the changing conditions (like weather extremes) in their region

OPEN ENDED

Do you have any comments, suggestions or questions about the topics covered in this survey?

Please write your answer here: _____

B. Observation Worksheet

Directions: Go to the UVM or Burlington Climate Strike Action on September 20, 2019. There will be no class that day. The UVM event is 11am on Andrew Harris Commons. The Burlington event is noon at City Hall Park. Spend long enough to observe people participating (at least 15 minutes).

Location : _____ Beginning time: _____ Ending time: _____

Expectations:

Before attending the event, write down what you expect it to be like. You can use some of the questions below for guidance.

Observations:

- Describe the event. What was the purpose? How was the message communicated? What was the tone?
- Approximately how many people were in attendance at the event? (Estimates are fine: dozens, hundreds, etc.)
- General descriptions of people (ages, races, style of dress/appearance, other):
- Who *isn't* at the event?
- Did people seem to come and go, or did they stay once they arrived?
- Describe participants' behaviors. What is the range of participation (from standing around, to marching, chanting, passing out information)
- Describe the participants' demeanors in general. Were they alone or with people? How would you describe their body language/actions? Did they seem hurried, distracted, happy, angry, other?
- Were there counter-protests? If so, how many, what were they doing?
- What else was near the observation area? What else did you notice about the surroundings?

Senses:

- What did you hear? What kinds of sounds?
- What did you smell?
- What else caught your eye?
- What did you feel? Temperature, humidity, anything else?
- How would else you describe the atmosphere around the observation area? What level of comfort or safety did you feel and why do you think that was?

Other:

- Anything else important not covered above? Sometimes the assumptions and things we take for granted actually hold some of the most interesting and helpful information. Can you notice anything that you wrote off as an unimportant observation?

Reflection Questions:

- What did you learn from this exercise? What knowledge did you gain?
- Revisit your prior expectations and knowledge of the UVM/Burlington

community's perceptions of climate change. What was confirmed? What was surprising? What did you learn?

- Based on your answers, what are the opportunities and barriers for more effective engagement of UVM on climate change actions?
- What research questions on our class topic have emerged from the literature review and observation? What are some questions on interviews and surveys we should ask?

C. Interview Guide

Notes to interviewer in italics

1. What do you see as the most pressing problems our world currently faces? Why do you say this?
2. Tell me about your perception/understanding of climate change; what does it mean to you?
3. Where do you get information about climate change? How do you feel/react when you hear/see/learn something about climate change? How would you characterize your level of concern about climate change? How does that impact you, if at all? *Could be in day-to-day life ex: stress, or in long term ex: unsure about career.*
4. Who do you think is most affected by climate change? Why? Have you been affected by climate change? If so, how? Do you expect to be impacted in the future? Have you heard of climate justice? If so, what does it mean to you?
5. Whose responsibility is it to respond to climate change? *Can be multiple.*
 - a. Has climate change influenced your behaviors or choices in any ways, big or small? If yes, explain what specifically motivated you.
 - b. Did you participate in the Global Climate Strike on 9/20? Why/why not? Have you ever participated in anything similar? If yes, what?
 - c. Do you think UVM has a responsibility to respond to climate change? If so, do you think UVM is fulfilling this responsibility? Why or why not? Would you like to see any specific response from UVM?
6. Compare your understanding of climate change from before you came to UVM to today. What was it like before? How has it changed? If there has been a change, what would you say caused that change? *If classes are mentioned, ask and list which ones.*
7. How does your perception of and attitude about climate change align with the people in your social group? How do you think the people around you have influenced your beliefs and vice versa?
8. Year, major, gender identity

D. Survey Sampling Methodology & Response Rate

The survey population includes undergraduate & graduate level students who were enrolled at UVM in the fall 2019 term. The population also includes UVM employees who were in the PeopleSoft system as of the October 2019 census data pull.

The student population was limited to those students over age 18 as of the September 2019 add-drop date (date that the enrollment data was pulled).

The employee population has the following criteria/caveats, per the type of data that is in our regular PeopleSoft census pulls:

- We include regular employees only (not temporary) with an active HR status, who are neither terminated nor on an unpaid leave of absence. We exclude grad advisors, visiting grad students, post/pre doc fellows, and visiting scholars.
- In addition to the regular census criteria, the employee population is also limited to exclude graduate student employees, because grad students are already part of the student population and had an equal chance of being sampled in that group.

The student sample pulled 800 students, stratified by class year and college so that it was representative of those groups in the overall population. The employee sample pulled 800 employees, stratified by employee type so that it was representative of faculty/staff numbers in the overall population.

STUDENT SAMPLE	Population		Sample		Responses	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Response Rate	23.63%					
First Year	2749	23%	181	23%	41	22%
Sophomore	2554	21%	170	21%	41	22%
Junior	2553	21%	169	21%	39	20%
Senior	2684	22%	176	22%	36	20%
Graduate	1594	13%	104	13%	32	17%
CALS	1385	11%	91	11%	21	10%
CAS	4402	36%	288	36%	63	33%
GSB	872	7%	58	7%	10	7%
CESS	691	6%	47	6%	9	7%
CEMS	1442	12%	95	12%	27	14%
RSENR	764	6%	52	7%	13	7%
CNHS	984	8%	65	8%	14	7%

Grad	1594	13%	104	13%	32	17%
Grand Total	12134	100%	800	100%	189	100%
In-State	2893	21%			52	28%
Out-State	10655	79%			137	72%
American Indian/Alaska Native	17	0%			0	0%
Asian	413	3%			4	2%
Black or African	206	2%			3	2%
Hispanic	587	4%			8	4%
International	654	5%			5	3%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	3	0%			0	0%
Two or More	430	3%			3	2%
White	10859	80%			164	87%
Unknown	379	3%			2	1%
Male	5431	40%			51	27%
Female	8117	60%			138	73%
Grand Total	13548	100%	800	100%	189	100%

EMPLOYEE SAMPLE	Population		Sample		Responses	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Response Rate	40.63%					
Faculty	1768	42%	336	42%	104	32%
Staff	2448	58%	464	58%	221	68%
Management	116	3%	22	3%	11	3%
Non-Management	4117	97%	778	97%	314	97%
Grand Total	4216	100%	800	43%	325	39%
Non-Academic	1519	36%			130	40%
RSENR	99	2%			5	2%
Library	80	2%			0	0%
LCOM	1350	32%			102	31%
Honors	7	0%			0	0%
GSB	61	1%			5	2%
GRAD	11	0%			0	0%

Extension	112	3%			0	0%
CESS	183	4%			14	4%
CEMS	147	3%			13	4%
CDE	45	1%			0	0%
CAS	449	11%			32	10%
CALS	170	4%			12	4%
American Indian/Alaska Native	12	0%			0	0%
Asian	232	5%			8	2%
Black or African	107	3%			6	2%
Hispanic	143	3%			8	2%
International	72	2%			2	1%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	2	0%			0	0%
Two or More	60	1%			6	2%
White	3484	82%			286	88%
Unknown	121	3%			9	3%
Male	1863	44%			130	40%
Female	2370	56%			195	60%
Grand Total	4233	100%			325	100%

E. Annotated Bibliography

Original Influences

This bibliography was completed in October 2019 and serves as a great time capsule of my inspirations for this project. When I look back at this list the resources reflect the strong need I felt at the time to validate the study of this topic, survey results and my own emotional response to climate change. I can see how I favored clinicians and drew from some of the most dramatic of climate collapse narratives (Uninhabitable Earth and Positive Deep Adaptation) to assure myself and my audience of the severity of this issue. My orientation was that our negative/undesirable psychological responses to the climate crisis was a problem to fix and that it was fairly separate from other issues. I now see how integrated it is with other large social issues and understand our reactions as a rational response that has the potential to be very helpful if we attune to, accept, and grow from them.

Clayton, S., Manning, C., College, M., Krygsman, K., Speiser, M., Cunsolo, A., ...

Tabola, J. (2017). *Mental Health and Our Changing Climate: Impacts, Implications and Guidance* (p. 70). Retrieved from <https://ecoamerica.org/research/#PsychImpacts>

This report details the connections between climate change and mental health by reviewing, consolidating and summarizing existing research on the topic. The focus is on negative mental health impacts of people who have or are experiencing a climate change related natural disaster or other climate change exacerbated event. There is a small section on mental health implications of anticipating climate change effects. This is the area I am most interested in. There seems to be little research in this area so I plan to follow the threads of the cited research.

Conner, D., Falkner, A., Lantieri, N., McGavisk, B., McShea, B. "Stakeholder Perceptions of Campus Sustainability Efforts: Lessons from Vermont." *Sustainability* 10, no. 11 (November 2018): 3849.

<https://doi.org/10.3390/su10113849>.

In fall 2017 served as the community partner for the service learning class that conducted the survey that this article is about. The December 2018 Sustainability Cultural Assessment (that is also in this bibliography) is a follow up to the survey in this article. The majority of authors were UVM students at the time it was published so this piece serves as a useful snapshot of student-interpreted student-attitudes. This is the same class I am the service learning partner for in fall 2019 that is helping to develop survey and interview questions that will be used for my capstone. I am interested in publishing my findings and expect to use a similar framework as this.

Coyle, K., Van Susteren, L. (2012). *The Psychological Effects of Global Warming on the United States: And Why the U.S. Mental Health Care System Is Not Adequately*

Prepared (p. 60). Retrieved from https://nwf.org/~media/PDFs/Global-Warming/Reports/Psych_effects_Climate_Change_Ex_Sum_3_23.ashx

This report discusses negative mental health effects like anticipatory anxiety, depression related to loss of places and species, and the overwhelming emotional toll on professionals in climate change fields. A comparison is also made to the common belief of children during the Cold War that nuclear war would affect them and that the world would end soon, resulting in “despair and lack of motivation.” This reminds me of what I hypothesize some of the climate-informed youth may believe and be experiencing, all while trying to navigate college and being asked to plan for their futures. I’m interested in digging deeper into the areas touched on here and finding more recent research.

Fritze, J. G., Blashki, G. A., Burke, S., & Wiseman, J. (2008). Hope, despair and transformation: Climate change and the promotion of mental health and wellbeing. *International Journal of Mental Health Systems*, 2(1), 13. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1752-4458-2-13>

This article aims to provide an introduction to emerging evidence and debate about the relationship between climate change and mental health. It dedicates a substantial section to awareness (versus lived experience) can create emotional distress and anxiety. There is also a discussion of the uniquely challenging situation children are in when they hear multiple explanations of climate change and have to determine what is true and how worried to be. This is the most thorough research I’ve found on this topic but it is old so I can use it to find more current aligned research.

Lynch, M. (May 2, 2019). Higher Education Must Teach to the Issues of Our Times to Remain Relevant. Retrieved from <https://medium.com/@mklynch/higher-education-must-teach-to-the-issues-of-our-times-to-remain-relevant-90ee63133ac0>.

This is a transcript from Matthew Lynch, director of the Office of Sustainability, presenting to the University of Hawaii’s Board of Regents about their office’s recent 2018 Earth Day Survey and associated interviews. Their goal was to “hear about what our students know, think, do and FEEL about climate change, sustainability and resilience issues.” The statement made to the Board was heartfelt, clear and convincing. It peaked my interest in doing something similar at UVM. The rich information they received from their 200 interviews encouraged me to revise my IRB approval to include audio recordings of the interviews students in the service learning class were already assigned to conduct. Their findings also influenced my interview questions.

Positive Deep Adaptation [Facebook Group]. (n.d.). Retrieved October 7, 2019 from <https://www.facebook.com/groups/deepadaptation/>.

This group was formed by Jem Bendell, author of [Deep Adaptation: A Map for Navigating Climate Tragedy](#), a wave-making paper that was self-published in July

2018 by the professor of Sustainability Leadership at the University of Cumbria. The intention of the group is for members to provide positive practical and emotional support to others who have come to accept that the collapse of the societies we know today is an inevitable reality of the climate trajectory we are on. The posts are raw, eye-opening looks into how individuals around the world are understanding their future and coping. This resource is helping me understand the breadth of orientations and responses within a small, niche group that is theoretically aligned. There are other Deep Adaptation or affiliated resources that I expect to explore and find useful. This is very accessible, so it is where I have spent the most time so far.

Steers, N., McCamp, C. (December, 2018). Sustainability Cultural Assessment. Retrieved from

https://www.uvm.edu/sustain/sites/default/files/uploads/Documents%20Archive/For_Website/Documents_for_Website/Publication%20and%20Resources/2018_sustainability_cultural_assessment_report.pdf

This is a presentation and intern and I put together of the results from the most recent survey Office of Sustainability conducted. It has not been formally presented at a conference. The purpose was to understand the sustainability-related values/beliefs, sustainability-related behaviors and level of awareness of campus sustainability initiatives of UVM students and employees. Conducted in spring 2018, not enough time has passed to create meaningful longitudinal comparisons. Some questions may be used again in my survey where “sustainability” could be swapped out for “climate change” in order to measure the difference in opinion between the two aligned issues. Lessons learned from this work have also influenced my survey design.

The Washington Post. (2019). *Washington Post-Kaiser Family Foundation Climate Change Survey, July 9-Aug. 5, 2019* [Survey results]. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/context/washington-post-kaiser-family-foundation-climate-change-survey-july-9-aug-5-2019/601ed8ff-a7c6-4839-b57e-3f5eaa8ed09f/>

This poll focuses on opinions about climate change and how they differ between adults and teenagers. It was conducted July 9-Aug. 5, 2019 among a random national sample of 2,293 adults age 18 and over as well as 629 teenagers ages 13-17. The timing of the poll is significant. It occurs the summer after Fridays for Future school strikes, started in Sweden by teenager Greta Thunberg, spread all over the world, concentrated in K-12 schools. It occurs before the Sep 20-27, 2019 Global Climate Strike week. Both the sample age demographics and question topics line up well with my survey. I will be choosing some questions to duplicate exactly in order to make comparisons between my results (local, UVM specific) and these results (national).

Wallace-Wells, D. (2019). *Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming*. Tim Duggan Books.

This book provides a general overview of current climate science aimed at an educated lay audience. It focused on the effects of climate change on humans and what life might be like under future climate scenarios, painting a vivid picture by using familiar events like Hurricane Katrina and the Syrian refugee crisis for reference. Some critics call the author an alarmist saying he chose the most aggressive projections to focus on. The book was a wake up call for me and heightened my sense of urgency. I began to think more critically about my field broadly and role specifically, asking questions like, who are we working for/accountable to? The book helped me construct an idea of what my future might be like if climate change goes unchecked, which caused anxiety and even moments of despair. This made me wonder about how others are processing this reality, especially college-aged youth.

Yale Program on Climate Change Communication, George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication. (2019). [Interactive maps by state, congressional district, metro area, and county levels October 9, 2019]. Climate Change in the American Mind project. Retrieved from <https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/visualizations-data/ycom-us/> These are visualizations of American's beliefs, attitudes, and policy preferences about climate change. The data underlying the maps includes over 24,000 survey responses collected from 2008 to 2019 as part of the Climate Change in the American Mind project. The maps combine these responses with "demographic data from the U.S. Census to estimate opinions for different groups of people based on information such as their gender, race and ethnicity, and educational attainment." This will be helpful for comparison because it is longitudinal and geographically specific. I will be choosing some questions to duplicate exactly in order to make comparisons between my results.

Experiential Influences

This is a listing and explanation of the presentations, webinars and workshops I attended related to my capstone. After doing my original literature review (above) I did not actively pursue and engage with lots more material on my capstone topic. Despite my intentions to, I've still yet to open most of the dozen books I checked out in the fall. This meant that neither my interpretation of the topic as a whole nor my presentation of my findings were evolving much. It wasn't until my stakeholder presentations slowed down that I actually started to re-engage with material on the topic. It seemed like virtual offerings on the intersection of climate change and mental health were suddenly everywhere and I signed up for everything I found. I now see this as a sort of discourse analysis because I was able to hear current thoughts on this topic from leaders in the field within our present-day context of COVID-19 and a national reckoning of racism.

The sources I'd engaged for my literature review (see Original Influences section above) all discussed how climate change will impact (in every way - physically, mentally, economically, etc.) the most vulnerable of our society hardest and fastest.

However, they did not talk about the reverse relationship, as many of these webinars have, especially ones after George Floyd's murder on May 25th. These discussions have grown my understanding of how racism also fuels climate change and that they each share some of the same root causes, like colonization and enablers like capitalism.

These were immensely helpful and influential for both my work and me personally. I was exposed to many more people who are doing this work, including more diverse races, ages, and professions. I got to see how they speak about their work and ideas live (versus in polished writing) and carry themselves as professionals, all things I could draw from for my stakeholder presentations. So many of them used MLS-aligned language, which was affirming. Many sessions were workshop style and used exercises that were beneficial for me to experience as a participant. In one exercise I volunteered for I cried as I expressed my concerns about the future. It was therapeutic to do so and informative - I had just cried on a national webinar in front of a bunch of unknown peers and it was okay. In fact, I was supported and appreciated for being vulnerable. Actually running through these exercises also helped me start to think about translating them into my work with students.

Blank, M., & Scannell, J., (Feb 18, 2020). *Collectively Processing the Climate Emergency: Engaging Despair and Empowerment* [Workshop]. Facing the Climate Crisis series held at the Kellogg-Hubbard Library, Montpelier, VT. This was my first experience participating in an event that used Joanna Macy's frameworks from her books *Active Hope* and *The Work that Reconnects*. As a participant I was asked to respond to prompts about my climate despair with a partner. It was a powerful experience to voice my existential concerns, usually reserved for conversations with my therapist or husband, to a complete stranger. This inspired the original plan for the Eco-Reps Coping with Climate campaign, where students were going to host similar dialogues in their residence halls. Of course this all changed drastically because of COVID-19.

Hiser, K., (2020, April 9). *Virtual Symposium on Climate Anxiety, Environmental Grief, and Pretraumatic Stress* [Workshop Series]. Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education.

<https://www.aashe.org/calendar/coping-climate-anxiety/>

This started as a one time workshop to address climate anxiety, pretraumatic stress and ecological grief in the classroom. It evolved into a series of sessions (see next three citations) about helping each other to prepare for addressing the trauma of COVID-19 and racism (in addition to climate change) in our work, knowing that classrooms contain a latent environment of fear, anger, sadness and shame. The series asked how we can build self-efficacy, resilience and active hope. The practitioners emphasized that expressing and addressing these emotions for ourselves is a first step to being able to create and hold space for others, especially our students. This first workshop used exercises from Joanna Macy's *Work That Reconnects*, focused on how the exercises could be used in a classroom setting, adapted for an online format. It was personally helpful to interact with 70 strangers in my field who are feeling similarly to me. I was also able to chat with

Hiser afterwards and she shared some really valuable resources, including her forthcoming paper on assessing concern about climate at University of Hawaii.

Hiser, K., (2020, June 11). *Coping with Climate Anxiety in the Classroom and for Yourself: a Workshop for College & University Faculty*. [Workshop Series].

Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education.

<https://www.aashe.org/calendar/coping-climate-anxiety-june-2020/>

This workshop was a follow up on the one from April. There was a focus on the inseparable need for pursuit of racial justice within the environmental/climate movements in response to the recent murder of George Floyd. We were asked to name our sadness, fear, anger and shame about the state of the world. Then we reworked our statements looking at love as the root of those other feelings and talked about how to apply active hope to our visions for the world. For me this was about getting practice and building comfort with the vulnerable questions and sharing required to do this work.

Hiser, K., & Lynch, M., (2020, July 23). *Coping with Climate Anxiety in the Classroom and for Yourself: a Workshop for College & University Faculty*. [Workshop Series].

Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education.

<https://www.aashe.org/calendar/coping-climate-anxiety-july-2020/>

This session included Matt Lynch, Director of Sustainability Initiatives at the University of Hawaii System. His speech to their Board of Regents about their Worry & Hope study was a catalyst for my capstone. They co-facilitated the Great Transitions Climate Futures activity, which focused on facing our own and others mortality and some unpleasant possible stages of society and environment over the next eleven decades. While most other sessions focused on classroom and faculty, it was helpful to hear his articulation of these issues (because our roles are so similar) and think about how I might draw from his example to do similar things at UVM.

Hiser, K., (2020, August 6). *Coping with Climate Anxiety in the Classroom and for Yourself: a Workshop for College & University Faculty*. [Workshop Series].

Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education.

<https://www.aashe.org/calendar/coping-climate-anxiety-august-2020/>

This session included a guest speaker from Swarthmore College explaining how they use framework from Clark University to hold a series in the “way of council” focused on the uncertain human future. They asked similar questions of students as my survey did and responded with this series. The series resulted in a greater participant agency and sense of community within the campus. This was done by the Office of Sustainability and shared with the College president who reacted very positively despite not being a “touchy feely” guy. I’m following up with Swarthmore and Clark to learn more. This session further solidified my interest in expanding this conversation at UVM.

Malgeri, M., & Vatovec, C., (2020, February, 11). *Climate Change: A 21st Century*

Public Health Crisis [Presentation]. University of Vermont Larner College of Medicine Community Medical School.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ex82KXvRRBo>

I was happy that the presenters discussed mental health (beginning at 50:55 in) as a component of the health effects of climate change. I appreciated the very Vermont-specific case examples that the practicing primary healthcare provider gave. This included a woman who stopped recreating outdoors for fear of ticks and getting Lyme disease, a growing issue in Vermont. Plus a focus on youth. There was also research shared showing that 97% of Hurricane Irene victims interviewed in Waterbury, VT were worried about mental health impacts. CA wildfire and Hurricane Katrina survivors were found to feel similarly.

Ray, S. J. (2020, May 18). *What the Climate Crisis has Taught Me About Teaching During a Global Pandemic* [Webinar]. University of Vermont Center for Teaching and Learning Pivotal Pedagogy Series.

This got me thinking about trauma informed teaching and how that applies to my work with Eco-Reps and how prevalent trauma seems to be now that there is more understanding of it, or maybe I'm just more aware of it. But it seems to be everywhere. This presentation essentially argued that all students will be returning traumatized in the fall from COVID if they weren't already traumatized in another way. It asked professors to really examine what assignments were necessary and tied to learning outcomes versus busy work. Or in the case of classes that cover climate or other distressing topics, what assignments might be traumatic? How can professors be transparent about the affective components of assignments and areas of study? Those same questions apply to Eco-Reps and made me appreciate how solutions focused our program is, spending only 1/7th of our meeting time on the problem and the rest on addressing it.

(2020, April 21). *Climate of Emotions: Supporting Youth Wellbeing* [Webinar]. Six Seconds. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FpkEW1CE7nl>

This four hour long webinar brought together so many of the leading researchers and practitioners I'd been reviewing the work of all in one space together and introduced me to incredible youth activists. Jamie Margolin was one of those youth organizers. She explained climate change as a symptom of other oppressive systems (colonization, white supremacy, patriarchy, racism) so clearly that it really clicked for me and I was able to integrate that into my presentations and make a connection between climate change and the social justice work/mission that many of the offices I was presenting to have. I explained that they are already working on climate change in a way by addressing social issues and it helped what I was presenting seem more aligned with their work and less overwhelming because it wasn't framed as a new initiative. I was also inspired by youth activist, Clover Hogan, who works to help youth overcome feelings of helplessness and engage them in the climate movement.

(2020, July 16). *Climate, Race, Mental Health* [Webinar]. Healer Collective.

This panel was mostly made up of Black, Indigenous Women of Color who shared the connections they saw between climate, race and mental health. Notably, they all spoke of direct climate impacts they and their communities have experienced, not indirect. Almost all of the other webinars I've attended have been white dominated and focused on indirect impacts, which is what white people are more likely to be experiencing right now. This itself was illustrative of climate change affecting more vulnerable populations first. There was also a significant focus on self care and joy as necessary for that capacity building, and as an act of resisting the systems of extraction that push us to do more and as a way to stop passing on unhealed trauma to the next generation. There was so much wisdom packed into this, reminding me I've merely quantified an issue but I am just barely starting to understand the root causes and root solutions.

(2020, May 27). *Sarah Ray & A Field Guide to Climate Anxiety* [Webinar]. Litquake.

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2719530044986921>

This webinar was two leaders (and main inspirations for me) in this work, Sarah Jaquette Ray and Renee Lertzman having a conversation about Sarah's new book. This dialogue was packed full of the foundational theories influencing each of their work and thinking. I have a long list of resources to follow up with as a result.

Ongoing Influences

While these resources are not directly cited in my work they continue to influence my thinking on this topic, remind me how much more there is to unpack and inspire me to keep going despite the difficulty of this topic. As I look at this list I see a much more theoretical and systems oriented approach to the topic than my original influences. These resources focus on understanding rather than quantifying and qualifying. They are created for more general audiences, not bureaucrats, politicians and policy makers. Yet, they are still mostly white people. All are drawing on Black, Indigenous and/or Bhuddist wisdom. I am so grateful for how these resources have elevated and reoriented my thinking. Yet, I feel tension in seeing this repackaging by white people because I know it largely continues to benefit white people (the authors and the audience) and because it is a pattern of mine to trust white voices speaking other's wisdom over the original authors. A goal of mine is to dig into the source material these scholars build off of and bring that work forward when I address this topic further in my job.

Atkinson, J. (Host). (2020). [Audio podcast]. *Facing It*. Intrasonus UK.

<https://www.drjenniferatkinson.com/facing-it>

Jennifer is the professor at University of Washington who teaches a class called Eco-Grief and Climate Anxiety. In episode three she talks about how she didn't really know what she was doing when she started teaching it but that the crisis we are in demands that we all try our best to help address the problems we see in front of us with the skillsets we have. This is encouraging and motivates me in the times when I feel woefully unqualified to be in this space. In episode four she talks about how much student's perspectives on their futures have changed in the

last ten years of her teaching career and this is aligned with what I've seen in my 2019 snapshot.

Hiser, K., & Lynch, M., (2020). *Worry & Hope: What College Students Know, Think, Feel, and Do about Climate Change*.

This paper is the only other measurement of level of concern and types of emotional responses students have to climate change on college campuses that I know of. It is pending publication in the Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship. Reading this affirmed the legitimacy and value of my work. Having it published will allow others to continue to contribute to this study. I'm thankful to Krista and Matt for putting this out into the world!

Hopkins, H. (2020, June 8) *Racism is Killing the Planet*. Sierra Magazine. Retrieved from: <https://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/racism-killing-planet>

There has been an outpouring of new material drawing the connections between racism and climate change. This is the best explainer I've seen on why racism and white supremacy are directly in conflict with climate and environmental goals. The logic is laid out clearly with this quote: "You can't have climate change without sacrifice zones, and you can't have sacrifice zones without disposable people, and you can't have disposable people without racism." I've been thinking about how I can make this connection more clear in my outreach work.

Johnstone, C., & Macy, J., (2012). *Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We're In Without Going Crazy*. New World Library.

I started this book alone but it is really meant to be read and processed in community so I was very happy to begin reading it as a book club with my local community group and sustainability staff at University of Washington. It was an odd combination that felt entirely suited to me and my needs. We met four times from March to June for an hour and a half each. I listened to and read the book so I could highlight passages and dogear activities to try with my students. Many of these were used in Krista Hiser's workshops and it was very beneficial to experience them in that way before I attempt to myself. Some were also used in this book club but mostly we discussed our own reactions and experiences.

Kimmerer, R. W., (2013). *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*. Milkweed Editions.

I started listening to this in mid March, right as COVID-19 was becoming serious in the United States. I read it at the same time as *Active Hope*. Both authors mention each other and they were great companion books, each building on and reinforcing the other. It was also springtime and I had a new daily routine of walking 1.5 miles in my neighborhood each morning. The perspective and level of appreciation I gained was simultaneously grounding and eye opening. I felt the first inklings of a nature connection forming and it helped me think more broadly about the context of my work, humanity, and the natural world.

Lewis-Reau, A. & Schmidt, L. (Hosts). (2020). [Audio Podcast] *WHY?!? A Good Grief Network Podcast*. Good Grief Network.

<https://www.goodgriefnetwork.org/podcast-2/>

This podcast interviews some of the big thinkers in the field of climate anxiety and grief. Their second season started in April 2020. They address COVID-19 and racial injustice and the interplay of these issues with climate change. I'm especially a fan of the first episode of season one where they interview Sarah Jaquette Ray about her new book and how she applies its wisdom in the classroom and in her own life. Sarah is honest about how difficult it is to enact the principles she lays out even though she understands that they will help her and the people around her. This resonated with me because I struggle with the same issue. Through my capstone I've learned about lots of effective tools, but I haven't gotten skilled with using them yet.

Marya, R. (2018, Nov 29) *Health and Justice: The Path of Liberation through Medicine*. [Presentation] National Bioneers Conference. Retrieved from:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GyymzSE0VE8>

In this keynote speech Rupa Marya explains how she sees colonization led to many other forms of supremacy-based oppression to feed capitalism and that all of that oppression creates societal and individual trauma, which leads to inflammation. Inflammation is a significant contributor or root cause of many of the Western world's health issues. Human supremacy is listed as causing ecocide and exploitation of "resources" which lead to trauma, inflammation and support capitalism. This helped me form my own explanation of the root causes of climate change that I've shared in a few presentations but am still evolving.

Ray, S. J. (2020). *A Field Guide to Climate Anxiety*. University of California Press.

This book came just at the right time for me. I actually hugged it after reading the first chapter if that is any illustration. There is so much wisdom, resonance and encouragement in this book that can be returned to over and over again. It is written for Zoomers and young Millennials and really speaks well to that audience with current references and relatable experiences. It is broadly applicable to all types of topics that can trigger the same feelings as climate change. I am thinking about how I can bring it into my work with students.

F. Stakeholder Presentations

Completed Presentations

This is a list describing each time I presented this data including the date, number of people, format of presentation, and any key takeaways. Some of these were formal stakeholder presentations with dedicated time for discussion and others were more brief opportunities to share just a taste of my work. I have also included the list of groups I still hope to present to or have a conversation with in the fall. Links to presentations which are publicly listed have been included.

Environmental Studies Class | February 12, 2020

I shared some of my initial findings with this mostly sophomore class of about 35 Environmental Studies majors as part of a one hour in person guest presentation about sustainability at UVM. It was great to get student reactions to the material but we did not have time for robust discussion. The main sentiments expressed were validation of their own feelings and surprise that these feelings were widespread throughout all majors.

Sustainability Staff Brown Bag | March 5, 2020

This was an in person presentation to a group of five UVM staff who have sustainability as part of their job role. They are close colleagues and were the first to see the full presentation. They gave helpful feedback on visual choices and places I could be more clear. I got to test my discussion questions to learn how long they really took and how well they flowed together. The main sentiments expressed by this group were dismay and discouragement about how students are feeling. This led me to reordering some slides so that I ended on the work being done on campus to address this.

Eco-Reps | March 16, 2020 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fa_ogu87TVM&t)

This was intended to be an in person presentation to my Eco-Reps staff of 20 at our regular weekly meeting but the University closed down so I recorded it and asked them to watch it on their own time. Because of this we didn't get to have a discussion about this material specifically. However, we spent the rest of the semester working on a campaign about coping with climate change and other crises (like COVID-19). So this was referenced and talked about throughout the semester, just not in a formal discussion. The main sentiment was similar to the Environmental Studies class. I think having this information helped our staff open up to each other about their personal feelings.

Staff Council | April 7, 2020 (<https://youtu.be/IqUwfBgdoaM?t=2613>)

This was a virtual presentation about sustainability at UVM to the general body Staff Council of about 40 members. I included some of my findings but it was a small part of the 25-min presentation and there was no discussion. My presentation begins 43 minutes into the video.

LivingWell | April 30, 2020

This virtual presentation was my first dedicated stakeholder presentation where I followed my intended format and had a full hour for sharing and discussion. LivingWell is the public health entity arm of UVM's Center for Health and

Wellbeing. I presented during a standing staff meeting and the full staff of ten was present. This topic is very aligned with their programming and outreach. Two people were interested in being part of an ongoing working group to address this issue on campus. There were four additional concrete ideas for action from the meeting:

- ❑ Add a climate change theme to Counseling and Psychiatry Service's existing group counseling program.
- ❑ Offer non-clinical spaces for expressing and making meaning of these feelings in community with others feeling similarly.
- ❑ Add a statement about climate change as a public health issue to the LivingWell website and incorporate climate change into existing wellness services the way they already do with race, gender identity, etc.
- ❑ Including climate change in substance abuse conversations and prescription takeback day events.

Sustainability Ambassadors | May 5, 2020

This is a group of staff who do not have sustainability as part of their job role but are passionate about it and have signed up to be part of a community I run where they advocate for and educate about sustainability in their workplaces. Seven joined for this virtual standing monthly meeting. We covered other business as well and my presentation did not follow the formal format. I presented employees data alongside student data, which was my most robust presentation of the employees data. The exercise of putting this together helped me learn that there are actually very little differences between the two. The experience of presenting this data taught me that employees are much less comfortable talking about their own feelings on this topic than they are talking about how to help students with the same issues. Learning this reinforced my intention to focus on the student data to start with and let the employee side develop out of it as was modeled with studying and addressing food insecurity on campus. There were no action ideas.

Career Center | May 14, 2020

This virtual presentation was made optional for Career Center staff and nine people attended. It followed the formal format. There was good engagement from this group and I think one or two people might be interested in an ongoing working group. Though they did not have direct experience with students expressing these concerns they realised they should consider who might not be coming to the Career Center because they feel like they don't have a future to plan for. Here are some of their action ideas:

- ❑ Help students understand that concern about climate can translate into a career.
- ❑ Bring awareness about the mental health impacts into design of "green" career fairs and counseling conversations.
- ❑ Incorporate emotional intelligence related to climate into existing Sustainability or other General Education requirement.

Various Representatives | May 21, 2020

I invited the full membership of the Sustainability Faculty Fellows Coordinating Committee, Sustainability Curriculum Review Committee and the General

Education Sustainability Assessment Committee to a joint presentation. Six people joined the virtual presentation, which followed the formal format. There were great questions about the use of mental health terminology versus grief or another term that suggests these emotions being a normal response to the crisis we face. All of these people are already involved in committee work so understanding how to best engage people from these groups in a new working group could be a challenge. Some ideas for action included:

- ❑ Share information broadly to reduce stigma and inform social norms. Possibly through the Student Government Association as a whole, not just the Committee on Student Action & Well-Being.
- ❑ Seek cocurricular collaborations, building on knowledge of faculty and skills of student affairs staff.
- ❑ Train TAs of sustainability classes on this topic and how to handle it in practice.

Women and Gender Equity Center | August 6, 2020

The full staff of four was present. I emphasised females being one of the few groups that stood out in the data. The staff didn't focus on that data point in the discussion. One staffer is Indigenous and emphasised how important it is to include Indigenous voices in any work in this realm on campus. She also emphasised that this doesn't necessarily have to be a huge programming lift. Students can be empowered to self-treat and programming can catalyze that.

- ❑ Look for the overlap with WAGE Center mission, hold programming at this intersection. Ecofeminism? Use of WAGE Center's backyard.
- ❑ Collect non-binary information in future data, not just male/female
- ❑ CAPS staff are embedded in identity centers. Should CAPS staff be embedded in RSENR or ENVIS also?
- ❑ Including this topic in WAGE's existing First Year programming or Writing & Healing workshops.
- ❑ Prioritize inclusion of Indigenous people. Get in touch with the student who is beginning a native student club/org.

Postponed Presentations

Conversations with these groups were put on hold. I have sent each my Findings & Suggestions Summary (Appendix I) in anticipation of scheduling a conversation in fall 2020.

- Counseling and Psychiatry Services - goal is to pursue the idea of group counseling, understand how this data aligns with practitioner experience and source more ideas for addressing this issue as a campus.
- Division of Student Affairs (DOSA) - goal is to inform DOSA leadership about this issue, understand how it fits into other DOSA concerns and goals, discuss possibilities for communicating this information back to the student body and source more ideas for addressing this issue as a campus.
- Student Services Collaborative - goal is to inform staff who advise students about

this issue, understand how it is showing up in their work and source more ideas for addressing this issue as a campus.

- Student Leadership Development Consortium and/or Student Life - goal is to inform supervisors who work with lots of the student staff and leaders on campus about this issue and source more ideas for addressing this as a campus.
- Student Government Association's Committee on Student Action & Well-Being - goal is to understand how this might fit into the committee or general body's agenda for the academic year.

G. Stakeholder Discussion Questions

These are all of the discussion questions I had prepared for each conversation. I did not use them all with each stakeholder group. I let the group's initial responses, reactions and tone guide me to my next question. For example, many responses to question 2 would answer question 4 so I would move to 4a or 4b instead.

Primary

1. Do you have any questions for me before we get into discussion?
2. How does this information land with you? What stands out to you?
3. Does this information align with your experience of our student body?
4. Does it seem like a problem? Should it be addressed? If so, a) How might UVM respond to this information to better serve or support students? b) What role might you/your department play? How does this issue compare to or fit in with other systemic issues your work addresses? (Topic-wise, scope-wise.)

Stakeholder Specific

5. DOSA groups: Do you see anything transferrable from DOSA's work with DEI that could be applied to getting everyone on the same page with the climate crisis?
6. LivingWell: More acknowledgement of mental health during coronavirus than ever. Are you seeing any opportunities to build off that "all hands on deck" mode when things return back to "normal"? Gauge interest in Active Hope style workshops.
7. Faculty: I know some of you are already thinking about how this could be addressed in your roles. What ideas do you have for going beyond the classroom and curriculum into the other parts of the university experience?

Extra

8. Joanna Macy is someone who's work I've turned to and she talks about our general "pain for the world," which includes lots of things other than climate change. COVID19 is obviously one of the pains on the front of a lot of people's minds. Do you see any overlap in responding to student distress about climate change and COVID?
9. What do you think about the employee's struggles with this? (Note: presentation included a slide sharing that employee responses were very aligned with student responses)

Closing

10. Is there any other information that could be helpful?
11. Is there any other group you think should hear or might be interested in this work?

H. Students Studying Sustainability

I expected there might be some significant differences in responses based on what college/school students were in, especially because there is a dedicated school of environment and natural resources. When there weren't any differences I decided to look at sustainability majors specifically. UVM already publicly reports what degree programs require an understanding of the concept of sustainability as a program-level learning outcome (differentiating from the University-wide sustainability general education requirement). I used this list to isolate the "students studying sustainability" demographic. The degree programs included are:

- Community Development & Applied Economics (CDAE)
- Environmental Science (ENSC)
- Environmental Studies (ENVS)
- Food Systems (FS)
- Forestry (FOR)
- Geology (GEOL)
- Natural Resources (NR)
- Plant & Soil Science (PSS)
- Plant Biology (PBIO)
- Sustainable Landscape Horticulture (SLH)
- Wildlife & Fisheries Biology (WFB)
- Master of Business Administration (MBA)
- Master of Public Administration (MPA)
- Business Administration (BSAD)

Out of the 189 student survey responses, 41 were in these degree programs. This group feels more optimism and motivation than peers but are 2.5 times more likely than their peers to report "often" experiencing mental health effects.

I. Findings & Suggestions Summary

CLIMATE CHANGE AFFECTS MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

People do not have to experience an extreme weather event (ex: hurricane) or persistent climate threat (ex: drought) to be affected by the state of our planet. Just observing the current crises or understanding the future risks is enough to impact mental health and wellbeing.

AMONG UVM STUDENTS

In fall 2019, 90 students were interviewed about their feelings on climate change. Their responses informed a survey on the same topic. It used a representative sample of 800 students and had a 24% response rate. The following survey results align with interview responses.

PERCENT WHO FEEL WORRIED ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE:

84% UVM students | **78%** Vermonters | **60%** Americans

Helplessness (56%), anger (64%) and fear (64%) were the next most common feelings for students.

PERCENT OF UVM STUDENTS WHOSE MENTAL HEALTH IS AFFECTED:

11% often | **28%** occasionally

Females and students studying sustainability report more frequent mental health effects.

20% OF UVM STUDENTS SAY THEIR ABILITY TO SUCCEED IS OFTEN OR OCCASIONALLY AFFECTED

**employees were also surveyed but results are not shown here and stakeholder conversations focused on students.*



Find more information at www.uvm.edu/sustainabilityoffice

WHAT HELPS

acknowledge emotional impact | accept as a reasonable response to crisis | share feelings in supportive community | build emotional resilience | act for resonance

STAKEHOLDER IDEAS

Add a climate change theme to Counseling and Psychiatry Service's existing group counseling program.

Offer non-clinical spaces for expressing and making meaning of these feelings in community with others feeling similarly.

Add statement about climate change as a public health issue to the LivingWell website and incorporate climate change into existing wellness services.

Including climate change in substance abuse conversations and prescription takeback day events.

Help students understand that concern about climate can translate into a career. Bring awareness about the mental health impacts into design of "green" career fairs and counseling conversations. Consider who isn't coming to Career Center because they feel hopeless about their future.

Share information broadly to reduce stigma and inform social norms. Possibly through Student Government Association.

Incorporate emotional intelligence related to climate into existing Sustainability or other General Education requirement.

Seek cocurricular collaborations, building on knowledge of faculty and skills of student affairs staff.

Train TAs of sustainability classes on this topic and how to handle it in practice.

Form working group to implement ideas and address employee* data. Conduct follow up research after changes are made.

CLIMATE CHANGE AFFECTS MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

People do not have to experience an extreme weather event (ex: hurricane) or persistent climate threat (ex: drought) to be affected by the state of our planet. Just observing the current crises or understanding the future risks is enough to impact mental health and wellbeing.

ON OUR CAMPUS

In fall 2019 a representative sample of 1,600 UVM students and employees were surveyed with a 32% response rate.

PERCENT WHO FEEL WORRIED ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

84% students | **78%** employees

In comparison, the national rate in 2019 was 60% and in Vermont it was 78%.

PERCENT WHOSE MENTAL HEALTH IS OFTEN/OCCASIONALLY AFFECTED

38% students | **30%** employees

Females and students studying sustainability report more frequent mental health effects.

PERCENT WHOSE ABILITY TO SUCCEED AT SCHOOL OR WORK IS OFTEN/OCCASIONALLY AFFECTED

20% students | **14%** employees

**these conversations focused on the student data, which is reflected in the ideas generated.*



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Seek cocurricular collaborations, building on knowledge of faculty and skills of student affairs staff.

Train TAs of sustainability classes on this topic and how to handle it in practice.

Form working group to implement ideas and address employee data. Conduct follow up research after changes are made.

J. Capstone Adjacent Activities

I coordinate a program called Eco-Reps that employs 20 undergraduate students to do peer-to-peer education and outreach around sustainable practices and lifestyles. We focus on four topics and dedicate a quarter of the school year to each. The second half of spring 2020 was climate change themed. In December 2019 I met with the student co-leads to talk about what they'd like to focus on. They wanted to avoid "doom and gloom" feeling that most people already knew what they could do to address climate change in their lives but were just overwhelmed by the issue and the relative insignificance of their actions. I shared my capstone work and they liked the idea of talking to students about how to deal with the reality of climate change as a theme instead of talking about climate change itself.

We named the campaign "Coping with Climate." The co-leads developed workshop ideas for small residence hall based events where students could share their emotional responses to climate change and Eco-Reps would either explain or run through some coping strategies. There would be a low pressure activity (like a craft) or traditional draw (like free food) to get people in the door.

UVM went remote the day this campaign was supposed to begin. We renamed the campaign to "Coping with Crises" in order to include the crisis on the front of most people's minds, COVID-19. I worked with the co-leads to transition the guest speakers we had lined up about mindfulness practices, the importance and art of dialogue, meaning making and creative expression as an outlet to join us over Zoom. They focused more on how the Eco-Reps could use these skills themselves rather than how they might impart them. These were really intimate and vulnerable spaces where deep sharing occurred. Noticing students around me struggle was part of my motivation for this project. I did this research hoping to find solutions for both of us. This campaign actually implemented some of the best practices for addressing climate distress at a time of great collective distress. It was also very well received by the Eco-Reps themselves and laid a framework for continuing this level of relationship within the program.

Instead of having in person events, each team created social media posts about coping with crises and each also held a five-part film showing and facilitated discussion called the Climate Film and Conversation Series. The campus-wide element of the campaign was a video interviewing the Eco-Reps and other UVMers on their feelings about climate change and COVID-19. Below are some artifacts from the campaign:

- The video was shared during the final film series night. It is available here: <https://youtu.be/IPPDJg02zDE>.
- Highlights of the campaign are in our annual report: https://issuu.com/uvm.sustainability/docs/eco-reps_annual_report_fy20/9
- A full review of the campaign is available as a case study on the AASHE Hub: <https://hub.aashe.org/browse/casestudy/23196/University-of-Vermont-Eco-Reps-Coping-with-Crises-Case-Study-2019-2020>
- One of the campaign co-leads, Maya Bostwick, is also an editor for a student-run environmental magazine at UVM and interviewed me for an article she wrote in it: https://issuu.com/uvmheadwaters/docs/headwaters_s20_online/30.