

## PSYCHD

### Engaging with the threat of the climate crisis

### The emotional journey and life stories of older adult climate activists.

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**Engaging with the threat of the climate crisis: The emotional journey and life stories of  
older adult climate activists.**

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*A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of  
Psychology in Counselling Psychology (PsychD)*

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## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that the work submitted in this dissertation is fully the result of my own investigation, except where otherwise stated.

Signed: 

Date: 11/06/2023

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## Abstract

**Background** The climate crisis poses an existential threat to all living beings; this knowledge can evoke painful emotions. It is thought that due to the pain of these emotions, many avoid thinking about this threat. However, some people, including climate activists, continue to expose themselves to it. There is currently very little research exploring the emotional experiences of climate activists and how engaging with the threat of the climate crisis impacts them; what is known explores the experiences of youth activists. There is even less known about is the experiences of older adult climate activists.

**Method** One-to-one, semi-structured qualitative interviews following the Biographical Narrative Interview Method (BNIM) were completed with eight climate activists aged 65 and over. Narrative analysis was then completed by taking an experience-centred approach. Individual stories were analysed before convergent themes were identified.

**Results** Six stories were identified in the data. The research found that the activist identity often had beginnings in social justice concerns and highlighted the ongoing pressure and responsibility that activists feel to enact change. This research demonstrated the importance of the activist community in providing support in the face of societal denial. It supported previous research demonstrating the anger evoked by political inaction and found that this contributed to feelings of hopelessness about the future. This research found that older climate activists experience anger, fear, powerlessness, and hopelessness through their awareness of and involvement in activism related to the climate crisis.

**Conclusions:** These findings support the growing research highlighting the climate crisis's negative impact on emotional wellbeing and present novel findings regarding the impact of age on these experiences.

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This thesis is dedicated to the future generations and the hope that we manage to change the course of this story's ending.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1 The Climate Crisis

Climate change is the term used to describe changes in the climate that can be identified and persist over time (IPCC, 2012). It is now well-recognised that current changes to the Earth's atmosphere have been primarily driven by human activity (Archer & Rahmstorf, 2012; IPCC, 2014). Recent reports by the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) have highlighted that it is no longer enough to stop the production of CO<sub>2</sub>; CO<sub>2</sub> needs to be removed from the atmosphere to prevent further warming due to feedback loops (IPCC, 2019). The IPCC has predicted that the climate crisis will lead to a multitude of globally impactful events, such as droughts, extreme weather, rising sea levels, species extinction and food scarcity (IPCC, 2014). These events will impact the health and well-being of the global population, disproportionately putting the most vulnerable at risk (IPCC, 2014). Due to the rapid heating of the planet, it is more suitable to use the term *climate crisis*, *climate emergency* (Carrington, 2019) or *climate trauma* (Woodbury, 2019) because of the existential threat it poses (United Nations, 2018). As such, the climate crisis is considered to be the greatest threat to public health in the 21st century (WHO, n.d). This research aims to explore the emotional impact of the existential threat of the climate crisis.

### 1.2 Emotional Responses to the Climate Crisis: Theory

As humans are fundamentally reliant on the Earth for survival, the climate crisis is the greatest existential threat facing our species (Griffin, 2018; Kassouf, 2017). Living with the knowledge of this threat is likely to impact our mental health, and as our awareness of this threat grows, it is likely that this impact will also grow (Fritze et al., 2008). One psychological response to the painful emotions triggered by the climate crisis is denial (Hoggett, 2019). Macy and Brown (2014) believe that when acknowledging the climate



crisis, the pain for the world is so great that many repress it due to fear of the emotions it evokes, such as powerlessness, guilt, and despair. This fear can be understood considering the predictions of a future of starvation, destruction, migration, disease, and war (Bendall, 2019). Thus, we need to acknowledge the loss of the world we once knew; without doing so, it cannot be grieved, and without emotions being experienced, we cannot move through denial into action (Randall, 2009; Macy & Brown, 2014). Weintrobe (2013) believes that climate crisis-related anxiety occurs for several reasons: we are witnessing the destruction of the planet we need to survive; we are facing the loss of a predictable future, and possibly any future; the inaction of world leaders leaves us feeling uncared for which is traumatic; our awareness of our destructiveness and as our current lifestyles will have to change. These emotional reactions, including eco-anxiety, are natural responses to the current time we find ourselves in, not a mental illness; instead, as Lawton (2019) proposes, we can think of it as an 'outbreak of sanity'.

### **1.3 The Emotional Impact of the Climate Crisis**

The 'direct impact' (Berry et al., 2009) of experiencing an extreme weather event is well-researched (Swim et al., 2009; Clayton et al., 2017; Clayton, 2021) and is linked to trauma, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), increases in suicidality, survivor guilt, addiction and depression (Clayton et al., 2017; Hayes et al., 2018; Hayes et al., 2019; Berry et al., 2009; Swim et al., 2009; Fernandez et al., 2015). The negative impact of chronic weather events such as drought is well documented and includes risks associated with climate migration (Clayton et al., 2021; Berry et al., 2009). Women, children, and older adults are particularly at risk from these events (Berry et al., 2009; Clayton et al., 2017).

Less known is the impact of the abstract knowledge of the climate crisis on emotional well-being, which has been noted in the literature as requiring further exploration (Hayes & Poland, 2018; Clayton et al., 2017). For many living in less climate-sensitive locations, like

the UK, this is presently the main climate 'hazard' they are experiencing (Hayes & Poland, 2018). Hayes and Poland's (2018) literature review of the mental health impacts of the climate crisis named climate activists and climate scientists as 'populations of concern' regarding the mental health impacts of the awareness of the threat of the climate crisis, proposing that investigating these two groups could give insight into impacts of this knowledge.

A meta-analysis by Boludo-Verdu et al. (2022) found that definitions of eco-anxiety varied in the context of different emotions in response to the climate crisis, such as: feeling anxious, worried, tense, helpless, powerless, sad, angry, depressed, grieved, guilty, afraid, and terrified. The findings showed that these emotional experiences impacted functioning for some and were associated with other mental health difficulties. Similarly, Du Bray et al.'s (2019) research explored the impact of gender on emotions related to climate threats on those from island countries; the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Cyprus and Fiji. Although both genders expressed hope for future generations, negative emotions were more commonly shared. Men in the study expressed emotions more often than women; women most expressed sadness, and men were more likely to express anger. Most frequently, emotions were related to concerns for future generations, for the way the climate crisis was affecting them, and the governmental failure to act. Those with a high connection to nature have also been found to experience depression, fear, hope, guilt, and frustration (Lehman, 2017). Importantly, Lehman's (2017) narrative analysis identified avoidance coping through social withdrawal and alcohol misuse, demonstrating possible risks associated with this way of coping. Feelings of apathy were most linked to fear and perceived lack of progress (Lehman, 2017). Similarly, to Du Bray et al. (2019), feelings of frustration and anger towards politicians' inaction were cited by participants.

The younger population are said to experience more significant climate anxiety than the older generation; this is thought to be due to older adults not seeing themselves as part of

the future impacted by the climate crisis (Clayton et al., 2021). When looking at the experiences of children and young people, in a recent study of 10,000 children and young people from 10 countries, 60% were found to feel 'very or extremely worried' (Hickman, 2021). More than 45% said their feelings about climate change negatively affected their daily lives, with those from poorer countries in the global south or climate-sensitive countries in the global north expressing more worry and impact on functioning. Feeling sad, afraid, anxious, angry, powerless, helpless, and guilty was reported by 50% of respondents; the least reported emotions were optimism and indifference. All reported experiencing feelings of betrayal; distress was found to be most significant in young people who thought their government was inadequate in their response (Hickman, 2021). Hickman et al. (2021) described how some research suggests individual action helps reduce anxiety and climate distress; however, they argue that the onus to change remains with the powerful as their research showed that the distress was associated with government inaction and feelings of betrayal.

### ***1.3.1 Older Adults and Climate Distress***

Little is known about the emotional experiences of older adults and the climate crisis. Intergenerational climate justice is defined as the duty that this generation has to the next generation concerning the climate crisis (Schuppert, 2012). In light of this, Chazan and Baldwin (2020) note how the youth are calling on older generations to change the foundations of the society they have built; within this, there runs a risk of a singular story of older adults being the 'individuals that caused the crisis' (Karpf, 2020). However, Griffin's (2018) PhD IPA research demonstrated an alternative story, and found that older adults experienced feelings of anger, disgust, fear and frustration but that they moved in and out of engaging with these emotions, often needing to engage in avoidance coping. Participants shared that their identity had been shaped by their experiences of historic large-scale threats

(Griffin, 2018), which raises questions about how the current climate crisis impacts older adults' identities. Griffin (2018) noted that further research was needed with those most actively engaged with the climate crisis and effective in active coping; older climate activists could answer this gap in the literature.

### **1.3 Theoretical Framework**

#### *1.4.1 Social Justice*

A commitment to social justice is central to the values and identity of Counselling Psychology (Kennedy & Arthur, 2014; Cooper, 2009; Winter & Hanley, 2015). Kasket (2016) emphasises that Counselling Psychology's social justice values only become meaningful when they are applied in our practice and in our research, therefore it is important to define social justice and how these values are in action within this research.

Definitions of social justice are wide-ranging and no one single definition is used in Counselling Psychology (Winter & Henley, 2015; Winter, 2019). Broadly, social justice can be defined as action towards equality, for individuals to achieve their potential without barriers, to live in peace and free from oppression (Cutts, 2013; Kennedy & Arthur, 2014). Social justice can additionally be thought to involve the fair distribution of finances, power, access to care and access to opportunities (Cutts, 2013). Within Counselling Psychology, we can enact change through increasing equality and being mindful of the balance of power both inside and outside the therapy room, recognising our own roles of power and privilege and challenging oppression and discrimination (Winter, 2019; Kennedy & Arthur, 2014; Orlans & van Scoyoc, 2008). Further, social justice as Counselling Psychologists includes empowering others and working to equip others with the tools for change (Goodman et al, 2004; Winter & Henley, 2015).

Kennedy and Arthur (2014) argue that social justice values are of increasing importance in Counselling Psychology as we become more aware of the impact of the

climate crisis on mental health and wellbeing. Moreover, the climate crisis cannot be separated from social justice due to the disproportionate impact of the climate crisis on the most vulnerable in our society (Hayes & Poland, 2018; Clayton et al. 2017). Individuals from low economic backgrounds and developing countries are more exposed to risk factors, have reduced agency in reducing risks and face greater barriers to repairing their lives post risk (Clayton et al., 2017; Hayes & Poland, 2018; Swim et al., 2009). When considering how social justice values relate more widely to this research, age is an area of 'difference' that can lead to power imbalance (Hay, 2016). Hay (2016) notes that young people and older adults can be considered minority groups, with working age adults holding the greatest power in society. Therefore, social justice values are reflected through the research topic and by the stance taken by the researcher, wherein a non-hierarchical relationship will be prioritised with participants and the researcher's own position and relationship with power will be reflected on (Kasket, 2016).

#### *1.4.2 Lifespan theory*

The examination of older adults' responses to the climate crisis requires consideration of the unique experiences that are specific to this stage of life. Developmental theory across the lifespan offers resources for this. Erik Erikson's theory of development remains significant when thinking about the experience and tasks of ageing.

Erikson looked at development across the lifespan and proposed that each stage offers a challenge and a crisis, a turning point from which we can either progress or stagnate (Werher et al., 2015; Erikson, 1997; Sokol, 2009). Erikson's 'eighth stage' is considered 'post retirement', roughly defined as age 65+ (Werher et al., 2015; Erikson, 1997); this stage centres on how a person views their life in the face of impending death (Werher et al., 2015). Whilst 65+ may not seem 'close to death' given current life expectancies, older adults will still face that they have lived more of their life than they have left to live (Erikson et al.,

1986). In keeping with this, Erikson defined the challenge of this stage to be one of integrity vs despair, with the virtue of this stage being wisdom. Integrity was defined as a sense of wholeness, where the individual is optimistic about their life achievements, they have an integrated life narrative and feel content reflecting on their life, in contrast to regrets and failures seen with despair (Werher et al., 2015; Erikson et al., 1986).

Erikson proposed that the highest achievement of wisdom is the ability to care for others (Hren Hoare, 2002); this focus on caring for others is related to Erikson's idea of the generative adult, the core task of his 'seventh stage' of development (Erikson, 1997).

Erikson's (1997) generative adult is thought to transcend personal interests to focus on the care, concern, and nurture of future generations. Grand generativity describes the continuation of generativity in later life and incorporates concern for present and future generations and the world's survival, which is thought to counter the despair associated with coming to the end of life (Erikson et al., 1986).

Notably, in his 1986 research Erikson et al. proposed that the older adult participants had greater optimism that nuclear war would not occur; Erikson et al. (1986) hypothesised that this optimism was as this protected them from the despair they would have felt if they believed that not only their life was ending but the end of the world as they knew it (Erikson et al., 1986). Building upon this, McAdams (1993) and Becker (1973) argue that humans are motivated by a fear of death and propose that reproductivity and heroism are two ways that we deny our mortality, producing or creating something that lasts after our body is gone (McAdams, 1993; Becker, 1973). McAdams (1993) notes that as we move through middle adulthood, we have a greater focus on the 'time we have left' (McAdams, 1993, p227) and, as such begin to focus upon our 'generativity script', which he defines as the plan for the 'heroic gift' that we will leave behind for the next generation.

## **1.5 Counselling Psychology and the Climate Crisis**

Given the evidence of the wide-reaching mental health and emotional well-being impacts of the climate crisis Counselling Psychologists as mental health practitioners and advocates for social justice would benefit from considering the impact of the climate crisis on their clients and society. However, this is often not the case; Bednerak (2018) notes that psychotherapy often reinforces our anthropocentric relationship and does not consider the living world in relation to well-being. This anthropocentric stance is seen in Counselling Psychology, where the relationship with the Earth is missing in our practice, training, and formulations (Higley & Milton, 2008; Milton, 2016). Through this anthropocentric stance, we miss seeing the bigger system that we are a part of (Milton, 2008) instead, perceiving nature as merely a background to our human existence (Higley & Milton, 2008). The field of ecopsychology would challenge this perspective, believing in the interdependent relationship between humans and the Earth (Roszak, 1995). Counselling Psychology prides itself on social justice, relationality and seeing clients as holistic, socially embedded beings (Cooper, 2009). Thus, the climate crisis and our relationship with nature can sit well in our philosophy. With the climate crisis worsening (IPCC, 2019), it would be beneficial for us to understand how this impacts individuals and be ready to support those who are being "forced awake" (Higley & Milton, 2008, p16).

## **1.6 Conclusion**

Despite the growing research in the field of climate psychology emotional impact of engaging with the abstract knowledge of the threat of the climate crisis is under-researched. Research into climate activists' experiences can offer insight into this. There is limited research into the emotional impact of the climate crisis on the older adult population, and it is anticipated that this will be echoed in limited research exploring the experiences of older-age climate activists. Gaining insight into the experience of older adults can support our

understanding of the intergenerational impacts of the climate crisis. Further, it may support the bringing together of generations in resolving the climate crisis and work towards challenging ageist narratives regarding older adults' concern for the climate crisis.

## **1.7 Reflexive Statement**

Reflexivity is a dynamic process of self-awareness of the relationship between the researcher and the researched (Finley & Gough, 2003). A reflexive statement aims to provide a window into the author's subjective experience and to explore how their values and self may impact their research process, protecting the integrity and ethics of the research, which are vital to the profession of Counselling Psychology (BPS, 2014). My story is relevant in understanding how I have come to and shaped this research. My story begins before I was born, with my grandfather, a Quaker and activist who spent his short life fighting social injustice. My mother was ten years old when he died; the memory of who he was and his values shaped my mother and, in turn, shaped me.

In my early life, nature was a constant source of joy, safety, and peace, particularly when these feelings were not present in other areas of my life. In my teenage years, when I struggled with my mental health, my dog and the fields in which I walked him became my therapy. It was the more-than-human world that I turned to for comfort; nature held me and healed me. During university, when these struggles arose again, I became interested in Eastern Philosophy and, through this, came to see myself as inter-connected with the Earth rather than an object on it (Watts, n.d.). As a result of this new outlook, I began to develop my understanding of the climate crisis. I recall watching an Extinction Rebellion video (Extinction Rebellion, 2018) and having to lie down in a dark room as despair washed over me. The fear and hopelessness triggered by reading the climate literature have led me to



engage in both avoidance and activism. I have been moved immensely, feeling both hope and loss at protests as we collectively acknowledge our destruction of the Earth.

It was due to my social justice values that I was drawn to Counselling Psychology, and when making my research proposal, it was my own experiences of the emotional impact of the climate crisis that drew me to research this topic. I am what Donati (2016) has termed the 'wounded researcher'; this project reflects my desire to contribute to the climate justice movement. This 'need' to help can offer passion and motivation in completing research. However, it can also hinder and impact the integrity of the research, leading to over-involvement (Etherington, 2004). Thus, it is through the process of reflexivity that I can aim to be aware of the impact of my subjectivity on the research process while recognising that my subjective processes are inherently present in this process (Donati, 2016). Further, this statement shares my position to the reader so they can also be aware of how I may have shaped the process. I should also state my relationship with the world; I am a white, middle-class, cisgender, heterosexual female. Thus, I am encountering the research from this socio-cultural lens, and this will be influencing how I both receive and interpret the research (Finley & Gough, 2003).

## **1.8 Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis has five chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the general background of the study, including the key terms and the role of this research in relation to counselling psychology. Chapter 2 gives an in-depth review of the current literature in this field. Chapter 3 explains the methodological approach used within this study to analyse the data and outlines my epistemological position. Chapter 4 outlines the findings from the data analysis. Chapter 5 reviews the findings of this research in line with the current literature in the field, reflecting on the contributions to the literature the present research has offered and the implications for Counselling Psychology.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Chapter Overview**

This literature review aims to synthesise and evaluate previous research completed exploring the emotional experiences of climate activists and research relevant to the experiences of older-age climate activists.

### **2.2 Method**

A narrative approach was taken to review the literature. A narrative literature review aims to identify and summarise relevant literature (Ferrari, 2015) and is beneficial when linking a broad range of research (Baumister & Leary, 1997). A systematic literature search of PsychInfo, Academic Search Primer, Sage Premier and Green FILE was conducted in 2020 and 2023. Search terms for the databases are listed in Appendix A. Initially, titles were reviewed to determine relevance to the research, after which abstracts were reviewed and finally, full articles were read.

As a lack of research exploring the emotional experiences of older climate activists was identified in the literature search, a further search was completed on Google Scholar, searching primarily for papers associated with 'elder' or 'older adult' or 'old age' climate activists; this only identified one further paper. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were relaxed on papers exploring the experiences of older adult climate activists; this was due to the limited number identified. Eligible articles were organised into themes in line with the narrative approach (Ferrari, 2015; Green et al., 2006); in line with the focus of this research project, the themes often surround the life stage of the participants in the research.

### **2.3 Climate Activists' emotional response to the Climate Crisis**

Many in society disavow their knowledge of the climate crisis, what is less explored is the emotional responses of those who do acknowledge it. Climate scientists and climate activists are two groups that have chosen to place it in the centre of their lives, Hoggett and Randall (2018) therefore, investigated the experiences of these two groups. A thematic analysis by Hoggett and Randall (2018) found that climate activists (N=10) experienced an emotional response earlier in their trajectory of engagement; this contrasted with the climate scientists (N=6), where scientific objectivity and rationality were perceived to support emotional distancing from the crisis (Hoggett & Randall, 2018). Whilst climate scientists were found to use defences to support the management of emotions, activists created supportive environments, engaged in self-care, and had a clear sense of their aims. Whilst the comparative nature of the research gives insight into the experiences of two different populations, the research findings were brief and limited in detail of the experience of these populations. The literature would benefit from an in-depth analysis of the emotional trajectory of climate activists and how they have made sense of this experience.

Building upon this, narrative research focusing on climate activists' emotional experiences found that all (N=41) experienced fear and that this fear was associated with the effects of the climate crisis and the lack of action to resolve it (Kleres & Wettergren, 2017). However, the authors suggest fear was not paralysing but, when mediated by hope, spurred activists to act; further, actions generated hope, which mitigated fear (Kleres & Wettergren, 2017). Anger was felt to be a sign of hope as it suggested activists were situating responsibility elsewhere (Kleres & Wettergren, 2017). The responses of participants located in the global south differed, with participants experiencing acute fear and feelings of anger at the global north; for these activist's hope was described as a painful struggle as they lived through the effects of the climate crisis (Kleres & Wettergren, 2017). These findings demonstrate the understandable difference in emotional experiences between the global north

and global south and the need for further research on the global south. Further, they show the complexity of emotional responses to the climate crisis that benefit from qualitative methods. These findings were supported by Marczak et al. (2023), who used qualitative methods to explore the emotional experiences of 'Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X and Baby Boomer' climate activists (N=33). Anger, fear, sadness, hopelessness, anxiety, grief, disappointment, despair, frustration, depression, regret, and unrest were all commonly reported by activists (Marczak et al., 2023). Participants described feeling these negative emotions on a regular basis and finding it harder to stay happy, describing feeling alienated from others who do not feel the same as them and finding themselves bringing everything back to the climate crisis. Positively, participants described action as empowering; however, the area that caused them the most distress was their feelings about bringing children into the world, either experiencing fear and anxiety about whether they would be able to or feelings of regret or sadness about having done so (Marczak et al., 2023).

Exploring the emotional experiences of climate activists whilst protesting, Martiskainen et al. (2020) interviewed N=64 climate strikers during actions in Brighton, London, New York, New Haven (USA), Montreal and Stavanger (Norway). They found that climate protesters' knowledge about the climate crisis varied, describing the most informed as the most concerned about the climate crisis (Martiskainen et al., 2020). Similarly, to much of the research, participants described experiencing emotions of fear, hope, disempowerment, anxiety, concern, anger, sadness, despair, loss of hope, and some described having no emotions. Engagement in action made them feel comforted in that they were 'doing something'; many were keen to make lifestyle changes but were frustrated with the unaffordability of doing so (Martiskainen et al., 2020). There were limitations to the research, interviews were brief and at a protest which may have impacted responses due to the public nature of interviews, and participants' demographics were also not reported. The authors

highlighted the value of future research exploring what is bringing retired grandparents to climate activism (Martiskainen et al., 2020).

Whilst Martiskainen et al. (2020) recruited participants from around the world, their research highlighted the similarities in the emotions experienced globally. In contrast, Ogunbode et al.'s (2022) large-scale (N= 12,246) cross-cultural quantitative research explored differences in emotional responses to the climate crisis over N=32 countries, predicting that increased climate anxiety would lead to increased activism. The results identified that 46.8% of participants were very or extremely worried about the climate crisis, with the highest proportion reported in Spain, 77.6% and the lowest in Russia, 9.6%. The degree of climate anxiety expressed was significantly associated with the extent to which they observed others around them expressing negative feelings about climate change (Ogunbode et al., 2022). Climate anxiety was also related to exposure to media information about the climate crisis (Ogunbode et al., 2022); these findings may explain the lower levels of anxiety in Russia where the media is largely state-owned. The researchers did not find a relationship between media presentations of solutions to the climate crisis and anxiety (Ogunbode et al., 2022); one interpretation of this could be that this speaks to the lack of trust in governments and those in power to implement or act on these solutions. Climate anxiety was found to have a positive relationship with pro-environmental behaviours; however, this was also mediated by the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country, with countries with higher GDP more likely to engage in pro-environmental behaviours (Ogunbode et al., 2022); echoing Martiskainen et al.'s (2020) reflection on the affordability of pro-environmental behaviour. Climate anxiety only had a positive relationship with activism in 12 countries, and China had the weakest association (Ogunbode et al., 2022); this perhaps can speak to the state's response to activism or dissent in China. Climate anxiety had an inverse relationship with mental well-being; however, this varied across countries. The findings from Martiskainen et al. (2020) and Ogunbode et al. (2022) demonstrate how cultural and

economic differences play a role in climate activism and would benefit from being considered in future research.

Taking action, finding community and practising spirituality were found to support climate activists (N=17) experiencing difficult emotions in the face of the climate crisis in Bell's (2021) research with individuals associated with an ecojustice centre in America. This research was faith focused and explored what ecofeminist spirituality lends to the emotional work needed to face the climate crisis through thematic analysis. Much like the other literature, the findings showed that participants experienced difficult feelings of anger, sadness, despair, and powerlessness; some participants described feeling overwhelmed at the enormity of the climate crisis, and those profiting from the environmental inaction were a source of anger.

## **2.4 Emotions as Motivation to Action**

What motivates individuals into action was also found to be a focus in the literature. Stanley et al.'s (2022) quantitative survey found 'distinct' emotional responses of eco-anxiety, eco-depression, and eco-anger; these emotions were linked to reduced well-being and increased pro-environmental behaviour. Further, eco-anger was associated with greater engagement in personal and collective actions and was adaptive in that it was found to be associated with lower levels of stress, anxiety, and depression (Stanley et al, 2022). However, whilst this research found a link between emotional experiences associated with the climate crisis and climate activism, the findings were not causal; thus, it may have instead found that those involved in pro-environmental behaviours were already experiencing increased emotional distress. These findings have been reported in other papers suggesting a causal relationship; this demonstrates the limitations of completing quantitative research in this field, as qualitative research may have been able to explore this relationship with greater clarity. Building upon this, more recent research by Lorenzi and Rosset (2023) focussed on

the role of anger and fear as motivators in their quantitative research of young people, adults and 'senior citizens' at climate protests. The researchers found that nearly half of all participants felt angry about climate change (N=40%), with older adults (N=45.2%) experiencing greater anger than young people (N=30.8%) (Lorenzi & Rosset, 2023). Young people were more likely to feel fearful (N=22.9%) than adults (N=15.5%) and older adults (N=12.7%); and were more likely to be driven by personal interests (N=40.6%) than adults (N=34.6%) and older adults (N=28.8%) (Lorenzi & Rosset, 2023). The research found that older people (N=77.5%) were more motivated by desires to pressure politicians than adults (N=74.1%) and young people (N=63.4%) (Lorenzi & Rosset, 2023). However, the data did not differ greatly between age categories, and no measures of statistical significance were completed. Lorenzi and Rosset's (2023) results suggest that youth activists are experiencing significantly less anxiety than the youth in Hickman's (2021) research. It may be that activism supports participants in managing their feelings of anxiety, as seen in Halstead et al. (2021) and Schwartz et al. (2022) research; however, it could also be due to the limitations in the method of data collection of a survey and methods of analysis.

Fear was a significant driver of climate activism in Ranken's (2022) PhD Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Activists (N=12) were often driven by the urgent threat of the climate crisis, both the magnitude and immediacy; their awareness of the threat was accompanied by emotional distress (Ranken, 2022). Supporting Bell et al.'s (2022) research, religious and spiritual factors motivated over half the participants; they expressed a need for action despite believing they would have limited impact (Ranken, 2022). Moral and ethical principles motivated individuals; however, they found that injustice did not motivate participants (Ranken, 2022). These findings contrast with Furlong and Vignales (2020), who found that experiences of anger, injustice and moral convictions could not be separated during their quantitative research of those involved with Extinction Rebellion and named this combination of emotions 'moral outrage'. Moral outrage and a belief that individual action

could make a difference were two pathways that predicted the likelihood of involvement in climate action found in Furlong and Vignale's (2020) quantitative research of N=203 climate activists.

## **2.5 The Emotional Experiences of Youth Climate Activists**

The depth of youth climate activists (N=5) feelings about the future have been described as profound in discourse analysis completed by Nairn (2019). Feelings of despair mediated hope, leading to a more realistic response, with one respondent sharing that cynical peers had been less likely to experience burnout (Nairn, 2019). Future discourses were of despair, apocalyptic and 'end of life', which led some participants to decide not to have children (Nairn, 2019). As such, expanding our knowledge of how engagement with the climate crisis impacts activists' sense of the future would be beneficial. The profound nature of young people's emotional responses to the climate crisis was demonstrated in Halstead et al.'s (2021) case study of 11-year-old climate activist and one of the paper's authors, Lucie. Lucie's vision of the future included her family suffering and dying, and that she will not live beyond 50 (Halstead et al., 2021). Similarly to Naim (2019) and Kleres and Wettergren (2017), this case study demonstrates the complexity of the emotional experience of engaging with the climate crisis as her emotional journey was described as 'turbulent', moving between positive emotions of hope, self-belief, acceptance, empowerment, and confidence and negative of fear, frustration, exclusion, despair, and anxiety. Lucie's initial emotional response was sadness; however, her activism continued to be motivated by fear (Halstead et al., 2021). More positively, activism has given her a sense of belonging and cultural identity (Halstead et al., 2021). Lucie is hopeful that the future will be brighter than the predictions; she gains hope from activism, and activism acts as a barrier to eco-anxiety (Halstead et al., 2021). Schwartz et al.'s (2022) findings support the idea that activism acts as a barrier to eco-anxiety, as climate activism was found to moderate the association between Climate Change



Anxiety (CCA) and Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) in students (N= 284). Further, engagement in individual action was associated with lower Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) scores (Schwartz et al., 2022). However, overall mean levels of CCA were low compared to findings by Hickman et al. (2021). The findings were also not causal and thus could be reflective of other factors; for example, the people experiencing higher rates of MDD may not be active due to low mood, and individuals may be more active because they are less anxious. The research also collected qualitative data and found that those with the most distress described the climate crisis as a deadly threat due to its immediacy and irreversibility; their projections of the future were of chaos, and they described feelings of helplessness in the face of inaction and apathy in the face of powerlessness (Schwartz et al., 2022).

The importance of belonging cited by Halstead et al. (2021) was also reflected in Pickard's (2022) and Fisher's (2015) research. Pickard (2022) completed qualitative research with young people involved in the 'Fridays for Future' protests. Participants spoke of the importance of 'doing something'; this included doing something because of government inaction, doing something to get powerholders to act, and doing something to bring hope and belonging (Pickard, 2022). Participants described the importance of being with others and described not feeling alone as they are part of a community (Pickard, 2022). Participants expressed anger and frustration at politicians for their inaction and a lack of belief in the power of individual action to make changes, with the belief that collective action was required due to the scale of the crisis (Pickard, 2022). Young people (N=17) in Fisher's (2015) life trajectory research highlighted the importance and commitment to both the international youth movement and the climate crisis. Fisher's (2015) research was multicultural and highlighted how they could not separate their concerns for nature and for people, demonstrating an ecopsychology or inter-relatedness ontology that has not been

reflected in other research, all expressed concern for social justice and the environment. Many described a 'transformational experience' which had set off their involvement in climate activism, such as becoming depressed witnessing the impact of the climate crisis; others recalled incidents that evoked fear but did not describe this as transformative (Fisher, 2015).

Whilst most research found that youth activists fear the future, Spyrou et al. (2021) placed young activists' views of the future at the centre of their research. In a yearlong ethnographic study with Youth for Climate Cyprus, they explored how young people cope with climate anxiety and how they imagine their futures (Spyrou et al., 2021). Reflecting the findings of other research, participants described a fear of the future; this fear was compounded by the unpredictability of the climate crisis and a sense that Cyprus was a 'hot spot'; participants described an urgency to act but remained optimistic. Participants also described the future they desired, one of greater social justice and empathic and collaborative rather than selfish and individualistic (Spyrou et al., 2021). Feelings of desperation were cited due to feeling that the older generation is indifferent to a climate crisis they are responsible for; participants described feeling that they are victims of a crisis the older generation has caused (Spyrou et al., 2021). Participants spoke of creating hope, that this was cultivated and future-orientated.

## **2.6 The Emotional Experiences of Parent Climate Activists**

Taking a 'sociocultural perspective' of emotions, Howard (2022) focussed on the emotional experiences of activism, exploring the affective spaces of parenting and activism. Parents (N= 20) described fear and alarm as central to their mobilisation, with many sharing dystopian depictions of the future. Experiences of grief, terror and desperation were expressed as well as social outrage for those already impacted (Howard, 2022). All described being aware of the climate crisis but having a sudden movement of realisation, with most describing the 2018-2019 high-profile actions as catalysing. Interestingly the authors noted

how anger was rarely described, and when it was, it was reflected on and suppressed, as they described this being unhelpful for parenting, demonstrating how emotions related to activism present themselves in different populations and the need to explore the experiences of different groups. Activists gained energy through hope, solidarity, and empowerment; being active supported their anxiety and shifted the worry to empowerment. Interactions with other activists were a crucial source of support that helped counter feelings of fear and frustration (Howard, 2022). Participants described 'feeling alone' when others did not share their concerns for the future (Howard, 2022). Climate activism took up much of their spare time, and at times it was described as exhausting (Howard, 2022).

In contrast, Howard et al.'s (2021) paper focussed on the moralising nature of activism. Participants (N=20) often raised their decision to have children as a moral issue; some described feeling guilt, others described feeling as though children brought hope and spoke positively about how children neutralise protests, whereas others felt that the children should not have to deal with the climate crisis and that protests are not suitable places for children (Howard et al., 2021). Participants described a sense that they care more about the crisis because they are parents (Howard et al., 2021), speaking perhaps to Erikson's theory of middle-adult generativity (Erikson et al., 1986). Howard et al. (2021) noted the ageism present, as the participants 'excused' their parents, the elders, from the conversation, describing rarely discussing activism with the 'extended family' as they 'just don't get it' or felt that their parents had lived 'low carbon lives'. Whilst this challenges the other 'ageist' narrative of the older population being the cause of the crisis, the author notes that this response demonstrates an ageist belief that the older generation would not care, so do not invite them to be involved (Howard et al., 2021).

These two pieces of research demonstrate that parent activists were motivated into action following experiencing strong emotions. The findings demonstrate again our complex relationships with those at different life stages and the discrimination that can occur, either

positioning children as symbols of hope or as victims of the crisis; similarly portraying older adults as those who do not understand or need not understand.

## **2.7 The Emotional Experiences of Older Adult Climate Activists**

Only three research papers were found exploring the experiences of older-age climate activists. Interestingly in two of these papers, climate activism is associated with the area that the participants live in; Geary & Ravenscroft (2019) explore the experiences of those living close to the River Adur in Sussex and Larri (2022) explored the experiences of the 'knitting nannas' in Australia, whose activism group began following their local community was targeted for coal mining. Whilst these papers will be explored in greater depth below, it raises the question as to why the research thus far has focussed in this way or why research has yet to expand outside of this area. It may speak to the motivating force of these experiences, with Geary and Ravenscroft (2019) reflecting that their participants' experience of the river catalysed their involvement in activism.

No research was identified that focussed on the emotions of older adult climate activists; however, emotional responses were at times cited. For example, Geary and Ravenscroft (2019) explored how rural communities respond to changes in their local water environments, recruiting those living close to the River Adur in Sussex. They noted that environmental activism had supported participants moving from a high-status, high-paid job to a high-status role in the local community (Geary & Ravenscroft, 2019). Whilst emotions were not commented on a great deal; some described feeling alone and abandoned by the state following experiencing flooding. Whilst some elders expressed joy at following a lifelong interest in conservation and enjoying slowing down time, others felt their activism was necessary in the face of failing local authorities (Geary & Ravenscroft, 2019). Larri's (2022) 'knitting nannas' of Australia also described the positive impact of activism. Participants described bringing others hope and 'crafted' hope (Larri, 2022). Some described

how the group had turned their life around; they described the value of utilising their strengths from their professional careers, with many describing gaining confidence in themselves and their activist processes (Larri, 2022). One participant described experiencing increased cynicism about politicians (Larri, 2022); however, there was little reflection on the emotional responses this increase in cynicism had led to. Notably, the 'knitting nanna' activist group was created following experiences of ageism and sexism in their local climate activist group, whereby they were asked to 'make tea', bring biscuits or 'take minutes' (Larri, 2022).

These two studies explored the experiences of individuals who have come to activism later in life. In contrast, Dennis and Stock (2019) explored the life course of the 'second generation' of environmentalists who lived through the 'first generation' of the environmental movement. A thematic analysis was completed with N=20 participants aged 60-88 in faith-based environmental groups. Whilst their findings did not comment on the emotional experiences of activists, they demonstrated the role that time, and context played in developing the environmental activist identity. For example, participants had spent much time outside in their youth; they were impacted by the war and by the raising of consciousness that occurred in the 1960s and 1970s, describing the impact of the zeitgeist of political action, the civil rights movement, Earth Day and Back to the Land (Dennis & Stock, 2019). Participants described how gatherings with other activists was socially and emotionally beneficial, with one participant describing it as a support group (Dennis & Stock, 2019). They reflected on the challenges of intergenerational participation, with their groups mainly made up of older people, and interestingly they reflected that they struggle to connect with young people and get them involved, something that has often been cited as the other way around in research. The literature would benefit from further exploration of the emotional experiences of older-age activists that benefit from the 'support group' these participants described.

Notably, the limited papers exploring older age activists' experiences often refer to 'environmental volunteering' (Dennis & Stock, 2019; Diehl, 2022 & Pillemer et al., 2015). This language perhaps speaks to ageism, which is cited within the activist literature, both when exploring the older age population (Larri, 2022), the parent activist community (Howard et al., 2021) and youth activists (Spyrou et al., 2021). Older adults are often presented as less concerned by the climate crisis (Pillemer et al., 2022; Howard et al., 2021; Spyrou et al., 2021; Clayton et al., 2021) or as victims of the climate crisis due to the increased risks associated with older age (Pillemer et al., 2022). Diehl (2022) argues that increased interest in generativity motivates older adults to become involved in climate activism and that narratives around older adults should be changed to empower them to get involved in climate activism.

## **2.8 Gaps in the Literature and Implications**

Martiskainen et al. (2020) and Kleres & Wettergren (2017) note that climate activists' emotional responses to the climate crisis must be addressed in academic research and thus merit exploration in greater depth. Research into older-age climate activists' experiences can offer insight into this. Despite the growing research in this field, the emotional impact of engaging with the abstract knowledge of the threat of the climate crisis in older adults is under-researched. The above summary shows that much of the research literature explored the experiences of youth activists or working-age activists. Thus, little is known of the experiences of older adult activists, and whether the apocalyptic discourses in youth (Naim, 2019) are experienced by older adults.

Further, throughout the literature, ageist narratives were identified. The literature highlights the complexity of emotional experiences in response to the climate crisis (Halstead et al., 2021; Kleres & Wettergren, 2017; Niam, 2019), something which qualitative research can capture. Therefore, a qualitative study exploring the emotional experiences of older adult

climate activists would be beneficial to challenge these narratives of older adults and to develop an intergenerational understanding of the emotional impact of the climate crisis.

## **2.9 Research questions**

- What emotions have older climate activists experienced during their trajectory of engagement with the threat of the climate crisis?
- How has engaging in climate crisis activism impacted older activists' life stories?

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This research aims to explore older age climate activists' emotional experience of engaging with the climate crisis, including whether this engagement has impacted their life stories. This chapter will begin by discussing qualitative research; following this, discuss narrative methods and then the epistemological position of the research. The chapter then moves to a focus on the 'method', which includes information about the steps taken to complete the research, including the design, participant information, and the process of data analysis. I shall conclude the chapter by discussing the ethical considerations of the research project.

### **3.2 Qualitative Research**

The research question responds to the lack of research exploring older-age climate activists' emotions in response to engaging with the knowledge of the threat of the climate crisis. Qualitative methods are noted to be a beneficial approach to researching emotions due to the nature of emotions as ambiguous and subjective (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2010). At its most rudimentary level, qualitative research is the psychological analysis of non-numerical data (Coyle, 2015). Much like quantitative research and psychology research in general, qualitative research aims to improve our understanding of the human experience and differs from quantitative research by being largely concerned with meaning, how humans make sense of the world and experience events (Willig, 2021). With the focus of the current research on the exploration of emotional experience, qualitative research was deemed to be more suitable as a method of analysis.



### **3.3 Narrative Analysis**

#### ***3.3.1 Definitions***

For some, narrative and story are seen as distinct and separate entities, with narrative a specific pattern of progression, structure, and context; and story the idiosyncratic, focussed on content (Squire et al., 2014). However, it has been argued that story and narrative cannot be separated, as most stories have narrative built within them and vice versa (Squire et al., 2014). Therefore, for the purpose of this research, the terms narrative and stories will be used interchangeably.

#### ***3.3.2 Narrative Psychology and the Development of the Self***

McAdams (2018) notes that if we asked someone to create an image of their identity, it would look like a story; further, if we ask someone about their life, they will likely recount a story (Bruner, 2004). It is for this reason that Bruner (1991) stated that there was no separation between narrative and the self as the self is generated through narrative. In line with this, Ricoeur (in Simms, 2003) argued that we understand our own lives, ourselves and our place in the world by interpreting our life into a narrative, and that, in turn, by interpreting our lives into the narrative, we gain self-understanding (Simms, 2003). This can be thought of as a constructivist understanding of the self, in which the self and reality are constructed through narrative (Bruner, 2004). Further, it is not only ourselves we come to understand through narrative, but we also use narrative to understand the other; to comprehend someone's behaviour, we consider it in the context of our knowledge of their life (McAdams, 1993). This demonstrates the embedded nature of stories within our understanding of ourselves and the world.

The narrative self is described as having a level of coherence (McAdams, 1993; Bruner, 1997); Ricoeur described this as 'ipse', in which, despite the changes that we go through in life, there is some sense of sameness to our identity (Simms, 2003), there is a core

to our sense of self (Crossley, 2011). Ricoeur argued that to have narrative identity we must have another to share our story with; to have self-constancy, there must be someone we are remaining constant with (Simms, 2003); therefore, narrative identity is thought to be relational and comes into being through relationships. Cultural narratives shape individual narratives; as such, culture determines the "possible lives" we can live (Bruner, 1991, p. 694). However, Bruner (1991) argues that the lives we lead then add to culture, meaning that whilst we are shaped by narratives, we also shape them. Here we see how hermeneutics has influenced narrative psychology; we bring our understanding of the world into our narrative to understand the world; narrative imitates life and what we can learn about life (Simms, 2003). Narratives or stories are intrinsically linked to time; for a story to exist, there must be events that occur in sequence (Simms, 2003); as such, narrative is the best way to explore the lived experience of time (Bruner, 1991).

### ***3.3.3 Narrative research methods***

Narrative analysis is a qualitative research method in which researchers interpret the stories or narratives of their participants (Parcell & Baker, 2018). It is through telling stories that we create our identity, who we are and who we would like to be (Mishler, 1999; Atkinson, 2012), as such narrative analysis has a focus on self-exploration and identity construction across time (Crossley, 2011). The role of time, both in the timeline of events and the sequence in which the participant relays their story, is a defining feature of narrative analysis (Earthy and Cronin, 2008; Given, 2012). For this reason, narrative approaches have been used to explore experiences that impact an individual's sense of self, sense of time and relationships with their surroundings (Murray, 2000; Frost, 2009; Crossley, 2011). The interpretations we make about our experiences are thought to be grounded in larger cultural narratives that shape our experience of the world (Reissman, 1991). When we experience sickness, trauma, or a significant life event, it impacts our sense of self, sense of permanency

and the projections we have made of our future (Crossley, 2011; Reissman, 1991), impacting the narrative we might hold about our life. The climate crisis is traumatic; as it is an existential threat; through acknowledging and facing the reality of the threat of the climate crisis, we must face loss: loss of lives, biodiversity, livelihoods, loss of the life we have known, the life that we had planned and any certainty of the future (Weintrobe, 2013). By engaging with the knowledge of the threat of the climate crisis, climate activists may have had to re-organise their life story, their projections and find new meaning in their lives. Narrative analysis offers a method of exploring this and how activists have made sense of this knowledge.

There is no 'one' way to complete narrative analysis; in fact, there are multiple approaches and interpretations of said approaches (Reissman, 2005; Crossley, 2011; Coyle, 2016). The thematic approach can explore the substance of a narrative, including the content of the story, what story is being told and the genre of the story; it can also allow for an exploration of themes across narratives (Parcell & Baker, 2018; Given, 2012). This approach is commonly used in psychotherapy research (Reissman & Speed, 2006) and benefits the topic of exploration as it can give insight into the moments of personal experience that were meaningful and significant in the activists' process of engaging with the climate crisis. The experience-centred narrative analysis builds upon Reissman's (2008) 'thematic narrative analysis' by centralising a phenomenological stance, holding the phenomenological assumption that experience can be brought into consciousness through stories and takes a hermeneutic approach with a focus on understanding and meaning-making (Squire et al., 2013). Squire (2013) notes that experience-centred narrative analysis is a method taken by many established narrative researchers, such as Mishler, Reissman and Andrews, and that categorising their method as 'experience-centred' is highlighting the shared focus on experience and assumptions that narratives are: "Sequential and meaningful, definitely

human, 'Re-present' experience, reconstituting it, as well as expressing it, display transformation or change" (Squire, 2013, p2).

### ***3.3.4 Alternative methodologies***

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was considered as a methodology to explore the research questions. IPA draws on ideas from phenomenology and hermeneutic philosophy (Willig, 2008). As a method, IPA aims to give an in-depth analysis of how people make sense and meaning from their subjective experiences (Willig, 2008; Smith & Eatough, 2016). As such, IPA could answer the research questions and explore how activists had experienced engaging with the climate crisis and how they had made sense of their experiences. Discourse analysis (DA) was also considered; the focus of DA would be on how the experience of the climate crisis is constructed through the talk. As such, the words and language used to describe activists' experiences and what this discourse 'does' (Coyle, 2016) would hold the focus rather than the experience itself. DA would consider the activists' description of their experiences as an 'action' in their own right and takes some scepticism at taking these to be related to subjective experience (Crossley, 2011). As such, DA researchers view the interview as a place where social functions are performed, and so the focus is on the social functions achieved by a particular response, e.g., the presentation of a 'moral self' and focus less on whether this reflects reality (Smith, 1995). Whilst both these methods were considered, narrative analysis holds a unique position in both being able to explore phenomenological experience and discourse whilst also paying attention to the temporal movement of the stories, something IPA and DA do not.

### 3.4 Epistemology and Ontology

Epistemology is the philosophical study of knowledge, of what we can know (Coyle, 2016; Willig, 2018); this includes the understanding of the role the researcher plays in the production of knowledge (Ponterotto, 2005, p127). Ontology is concerned with what exists in the world, what there is to 'know' (Willig, 2018). The stance a researcher takes regarding this determines the researcher's understanding of whether the researcher is a neutral observer or whether shapes the research produced (Chamaz, 2014). Narrative analysis straddles both social constructionism and realism through its focus on narrative construction, discourse and its focus on phenomenology and subjective experience (Crossley, 2000). The research questions focus on activists' emotional experiences suggesting a focus on the subjective,

Social constructionists believe that reality is constructed through social interaction; therefore, language and discourse are central to social constructionist research (Berger & Luckman, 1966), as language is thought not to describe the world but to construct it (Burr, 2015; Willig, 2018). Therefore, the focus of research is often situated on the way in which the experience is constructed rather than the experience itself (Willig, 2018). Research produced through this lens would be seen to be a construction, as there are multiple possible truths or realities existing (Ponterotto, 2005). The research questions in this study ask about the *emotional experience* of activists; a social constructionist lens would consider the ways that emotions are spoken about by participants rather than the experience of the emotion itself (Coyle, 2015; Crossley, 2000). A social constructionist lens would lead to a focus on the way we *use* discourse to make sense of ourselves and others. For this reason, it is argued the 'self' can be lost through the focus on language (Crossley, 2000). Crossley (2011) argued that narrative analysis' understanding of the 'self' derives from phenomenology, as it takes focus on understanding the participant's subjective experience (Murray, 2000; Crossley, 2011). The focus of subjectivity inherent in narrative analysis would suggest that there is a self beyond

language and discourse that can be known and reflected upon (Bruner, 1997; Crossley, 2000). Steffen (2016) notes that a constructionist lens takes a suspicious stance of the data, whereas a phenomenological lens holds a more empathic position. An empathic focus on subjective experience aligns with the research questions, the values of Counselling Psychology and the researchers' values and for this reason a social constructionist epistemology did not align with this research.

Alternatively, a constructivist stance proposes that reality is constructed in the mind of the individual (Ponterotto, 2005; Harlow et al., 2006). Individuals are seen as active and agentic in meaning-making (Olssen, 1995), as knowledge is constructed by the individual as they interact with the environment (Kamii, 1978). As such, constructivism is focused on the subjective and can be considered relational, as knowledge is based on our engagement with the world, including our social world and community (Ultanir, 2012; Neimeyer, 1993). Therefore, constructivism allows for cultural differences in experience (Neimeyer, 1993), as culture will shape the meanings created from our experiences. Influenced by hermeneutics and phenomenology, constructivism maintains that meaning can be brought to the surface through deep reflection (Ponterotto, 2005; Neimeyer, 1993). Thus, research interviews are an opportunity for reflection and hermeneutic discovery, wherein the researcher and participant co-construct findings (Ponterotto, 2005). Consequently, similarly to a social constructionist approach, it would suggest there are multiple truths and interpretations of the data. Moreover, a constructivist stance acknowledges the role the researcher plays in shaping the research, thus, it is central that the researcher's position and reflections are shared as they will influence what is found (Chamaz, 2014). Neimeyer (1993) argues that humans self-organise through development to protect internal integrity and coherence; in Piaget's terms, when we cannot 'assimilate' new knowledge, we are thrown into 'disequilibrium', leading us to 'accommodate' this new knowledge by creating a new schema (Harlow et al., 2006; Ultanir, 2012). Ontologically, constructivism focuses on the individual's experience of reality, and as such, it

proposes that there are multiple realities, as reality cannot be separated from the individual (Ponterotto, 2005). This reality is experiential, as the world we construct is based on our experiences and the world we experience is constructed by us; hence constructivist research often focuses on the lived experiences of participants (Ponterotto, 2005). Thus, within research, there are as many readings of the data as there are readers (O’Leary & Wright, 2005). However, critically constructivists do not deny the presence of a reality separate from the knower but argue that this cannot be known in its true form (Hansen, 2004; Rosen, 1996; Olssen, 1995).

In the context of this project, I adopt a constructivist stance in prioritising the subjective lived experiences of participants, reflecting on the unique ways they have responded emotionally to the climate crisis due to the idiosyncratic interpretations that they will have made regarding their experience of activism. It will be assumed that the researcher and storyteller co-constructed the narratives and that the stories shared were shaped by both the context of the interview and the wider cultural context in which both are situated, such as those surrounding gender, age, activism, and the climate crisis. Moreover, when analysing the data, my own experience was used to make sense of the cultural and personal meanings of the participants' stories (Lyons, 2016). This research can broadly be thought to be epistemologically constructivist and ontologically realist. This position would support the exploration of activists' emotional experience as it assumes a chain of connection between what a person says and how they think and feel (Crossley, 2011).

### **3. 5 Method**

#### **3.5.1 Design**

The research aims to explore the emotional experiences of climate activists aged 65 and older engaging with the climate crisis. Further, it aims to explore whether their

knowledge of the climate crisis and their activism has impacted their life stories. This is a qualitative study using experiential narrative analysis, taking a constructivist epistemological stance.

### 3.5.2 Participants

For the purpose of this study, climate activism was defined as actions taken to mobilise behaviour change and efforts to make environmental change (Segan et al., 1998; Fisher & Nasrin, 2020). Activists within this research were required to be engaged in *collective activism* through participating in demonstrations and activities within an environmental group, such as communicating with the public (Pattie et al., 2003; Segan et al., 1998).

There is no recommended number of participants for narrative research, as such guidance was taken from other research methods and other PsychD narrative research projects. Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez (2011) recommend 8-10 participants for IPA research completed within a practitioner doctorate. Similarly, PsychD narrative research by Marshall (2013) and Rogers (2020) used 8 participants; as such, 8 research participants were recruited. The inclusion criteria for the research were:

- Climate activists aged 65 and older
- Involved in climate activism for two or more years
- Actively involved in climate activism (e.g. attending meetings, engaging with the community regarding the climate crisis, attending protests)
- English speaking
- Living in the UK

The initial inclusion criteria pertained that activists had been involved in activism for 5 or more years. However, it was identified that this would exclude activists that had become involved following 2019 or what is known as the 'Greta [Thunberg] effect' (Martiskainen et



al., 2020). Therefore, the inclusion criteria were amended to 2 years or more; another change came following interest from an individual outside of the UK; due to risk concerns, it was decided to recruit only from the UK (see Appendix Q & R). At the end of the interviews, participants were thanked with a symbolic gesture, with an offer to plant a tree 'for my research participant' with 'Tree of Life' or to donate £20 to an environmental organisation of their choice.

Purposive sampling and opportunity sampling was used to recruit participants by contacting climate activism organisations directly (e.g., Grandparents for a Safe Earth, Extinction Rebellion Grandparents, XR Elders, Extinction Rebellion, Friends of the Earth) through local and national (UK) group email addresses. Following initial emails receiving little response, I used social media using Twitter to 'tweet' about my research with my recruitment flyer and used both Twitter and Facebook's private messaging to contact activist groups, again both local and national groups. The recruitment flyer and email message had a link to an electronic form on the online research platform Qualtrics form which provided potential participants with some initial information about the research project and then completed basic screening; this process was also completed via email if participants were contacted through this medium.

**Table 1**

*Participant Demographics*

Participant	Gender
Mary	Female
Eleanor	Female
Matthew	Male
George	Male

Sally	Female
Jayne	Female
Ann	Female
Oscar	Male

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Note. The names listed are pseudonyms.

Whilst level of education, previous activism and religious beliefs were not included in the demographic data that was collected, through interviews, six out of the eight participants in my research disclosed that they had attended university, five of the eight participants had been involved in social justice activism prior to climate activism and two participants identified as Quakers, one as Buddhist and one as a Buddhist Christian. It is of note all participants' identified as white.

### **3.5.3 Procedure**

Following screening, participants were sent another Qualtrics link which contained the Research Information Form, Research Consent Form and Socio-Demographic Questionnaire (Appendix E). Following the participants' completion of this form, I contacted them, and we organised a time and date for an interview that was suitable for us both.

Interviews were conducted via the online videoconferencing platform Zoom. At the beginning of the interview, I discussed consent again and ensured that participants were happy to move forward with the interview. Due to concerns regarding the disclosure of illegal activity and the risk associated with confidentiality in relation to this, I outlined the limits of confidentiality with participants. I gained consent to record the interview and then began recording. Following the interview, I stopped recording, and we spent approximately 15 minutes debriefing.

### 3.5.4 Interviews

Discussing the climate crisis can evoke psychological defences in response to the complex emotions it can bring up; due to this, Lertzman (2018) recommends using interview methods that encourage unguarded responses. This approach was also recommended by Mishler (1991), who noted that we are most likely to find stories in relatively unstructured interviews, where individuals can speak their own voice and have greater control over the flow of the interview, giving ownership over their narrative. For these reasons, the Biographic Narrative Interview Method (BNIM) was chosen (Wengraf, 2001). The BNIM can be described as a 'lightly structured' interview method. As there was not sufficient time within this project to complete Wengraf's (2001) full BNIM, an adapted approach was taken, in which rather than two or three successive interviews, a single interview was split into two parts.

The first part of the interview lasted 25-minutes and consisted of a single question to elicit the participant's story; this was followed by a 10-minute break in which I developed questions based on the story the participant had told me. The questions developed were 'narrative evoking' questions, with a focus of expanding further on aspects of the story or questions formulated to answer the research question if they had not been captured in the first half of the interview. In the second half of the interview lasting 25-minutes, I asked these questions (Wengraf, 2001), this was followed by a 15-minute debrief. As this is a different type of research method which may be challenging for participants not accustomed to this approach, following the work of Lertzman (2018) and Wengraf (2001), I gave a 'preamble' to introduce participants to the process.

The preamble was:

"The interview today will be split into two halves; in the first half, I am going to ask you one single question. I might not say much after this; this is to allow you space to speak freely. There are no right or wrong answers to this question, but I am particularly interested in your emotional experience of the climate crisis. After about 25 minutes, we will have a 10-minute break; upon return, I will then ask you some questions about what you have shared with me."

After the preamble, I asked the Single Question Invoking Narrative (SQUIN):

"Please, can you tell me your story of your relationship with the climate crisis and climate activism? I am particularly interested in your emotional experiences across this story. Please share all events and experiences which were important for you, how your awareness and involvement developed and how you feel about the future. You could start around the time when the climate crisis became personally important to you. We have 25 minutes. Begin wherever you would like to begin. I'll listen; I won't interrupt. I will just take some notes after you've finished telling me about the experiences that have been important to you. I will tell you if we are running seriously out of time".

Once this question had been asked, I did not ask further questions but gave non-verbal encouragement such as nodding and 'hmm', tentative empathic responses. If participants asked where to begin, in line with Wengraf's (2001) recommendations, I responded, 'Wherever you would like, I want to know how it was for you'. Prompts such as: 'Does it make you think of anything else?', 'can you tell me more?' were offered if needed (Wengraf, 2001; Squire, 2013; Lertzman, 2018). If participants ran out of story, I asked narrative-pointed questions (Wengraf, 2001) such as: 'Do you remember/recall anything else?' and 'Is there any more story you would like to tell me?'.

### 3.5.6 Data Analysis

Narrative research offers no starting and finishing point and no clear framework as to how to complete analysis as there are with thematic analysis, IPA or other methodologies; it is well documented that analysis can be challenging (Andrews et al, 2013; Crossley, 2011). With that in mind, researchers often use one or more approaches to complete their data analysis. In this research, an 'experience-centred' (Squire, 2013) narrative approach was taken; this was supported by the work of Crossley (2000; 2011) and McAdams (1993).

I initially familiarised myself with the data, reading and re-reading transcripts and making initial notes of themes, reflections, imagery, and tone (Crossley, 2000); 2011). In line with experience-centred narrative analysis, I then described the interviews thematically, moving back and forth between the interviews and themes in a hermeneutic circle (Squire, 2013). To help guide the development of themes within the text, I followed Crossley's (2007) method of narrative analysis, which highlights the role of identifying narrative tone and imagery within the themes. Themes have been described as recurrent patterns of human intention, what motivated the individual and what is important to the individual (McAdams, 2005; Crossley, 2000); these questions were asked of the data. The work of McAdams (2005) and Crossley's (2000) interpretation of McAdams's work on narrative psychology supported me in identifying tone, imagery, and themes.

I initially analysed each participant's story and then took a comparative approach, highlighting the similarities and differences within their stories, much like in the work of various other narrative researchers (Mishler, 2004; Reissman, 1990; Reissman, 2000). Please see Table 2 for the analytic procedure. During my analysis, I reflected on my role in the production and interpretation of the data, as both my epistemological position and research method propose that narratives are jointly produced by speaker and listener (Squire, 2013; Mishler, 2004; Reissman, 2008)

**Table 2***Analytic Procedure*

Step	Procedure
1	Transcribing, reading, and familiarising myself with the data; during this process, I made notes of my reflections or recollections about the interview process.
2	Reviewing the reflective notes made post-interview.
3	Identifying narrative themes, imagery, and narrative tone in individual stories (Crossley, 2000; McAdams, 2005)
4	Individual story theme development: moving back and forth in a hermeneutic circle between the interview and theme, seeking out alternative explanations for interpretations made (Squire, 2013)
5	From the themes, develop a coherent story for each individual activist (Crossley, 2000)
6	Examine areas of convergence and divergence across each activist's themes and story, creating a coherent overarching thematic picture (Crossley, 2000)
7	Writing up

**3.5.7 Ethical considerations**

Ethical approval for this research was granted by the University of Roehampton's Ethics Committee (Appendix Q, R). Whilst the research does not work with a particularly vulnerable group or a highly sensitive topic, it is difficult to fully prepare someone for what might arise through the interview process, which raises questions of whether it is possible to gain truly informed consent (Esin et al., 2014; Squire et al., 2014). The interview technique encourages free association and active listening, as these are both therapeutic techniques; I was mindful that I tread the line between therapist and researcher carefully (Burck, 2005; Squire, 2013).

Esin, Farthi and Squire (2014) note how confidentiality may impact the research. Activists at times engage in actions that are illegal, and Extinction Rebellion has previously

been listed as an extremist ideology within counterterrorism guidance given to teachers for the government Prevent program (Dodd & Grierson, 2018). I made a direct statement regarding the limitations of confidentiality on the participant information form, consent form and at the beginning of the interview. My hope was that by offering clarity regarding confidentiality and its limitations, it would create a sense of safety through transparency and implementation of a clear boundary.

As narrative analysis takes a biographical approach, ethical considerations are particularly important as it is difficult to fully anonymise the data (Riessman, 2005; Atkinson, 2012). On the research information form (Appendix E), I encouraged participants to consider how they may feel about admissions or interpretations of their life narratives (Riessman, 2005; Steffen, 2016). However, this is again something that participants cannot be fully prepared for; this is of particular importance, as Squire et al. (2014) note how interpreting and editing what socially excluded people say about their lives can deepen the effects of social exclusion. Randall (2005) notes how societal anxiety around the climate crisis is often split off and projected into climate activists, where they are ridiculed to neutralise the anxiety. Therefore, it was important not to reinforce societal narratives or exclusion of activists. Due to the very personal nature of life story interviews, offering participants a choice as to how their data is used or whether their data is used in future research felt like an appropriate ethical step. As such, participants were offered two options during the consent process as to how their data could be used in further research: 1. Participants do not consent for their data being used in future research; 2. Participants consent to their data being used in future research. There is a discussion within narrative analysis regarding the number of meetings with participants, and whether analysis should be checked with participants prior to publication or completion of the research project. Whilst there are theoretical arguments both for and against sharing data with participants (Squire, 2013; Reissman, 2008; Mishler, 2004),

due to theoretical position regarding the co-construction of narrative and the time constraints of a PsychD project, it was deemed too challenging to meet participants for a second time.

### 3.5.8 Reflexivity

On reflection, I wonder where participants would have begun if I had not introduced the interview question with the suggestion "You *could* start..." almost all participants began where I had suggested. Mishler (2004), reflecting on his own interviews, notes that he was "looking for beginnings", making assumptions about the structure of stories which he later viewed as problematic. My preconceived ideas about the story I was looking for and how it would 'begin' played a role in the way I formulated my question and, in turn, influenced the answers shared. However, this may have reduced any anxiety evoked in participants by the open-ended nature of the question.

Throughout the research, I noted where my own story or my own experiences were shaping the interviews and the analysis; within this, I found myself drawn to asking questions surrounding spirituality to the participants who identified as Quakers. I also had to re-analyse data at times when my defences had taken over, and my desire to avoid the climate crisis came into my interpretations of participants' stories. Further, as someone who supports the work of climate activists, I found myself not wanting to make negative or critical interpretations; as a group who are already marginalised, I was aware of reinforcing this marginalisation or doing anything that could negatively affect their fight. I also wondered how my age influenced the research, with multiple participants commenting on my age during the interview, I wondered how this might have impacted the stories they shared. For example, when they described their fears for the future of their children and grandchildren, I was aware of my own age and that I am younger than many of their children, and this is a future that I shall be living through. I wondered how it felt to be projecting this vision of the future to someone who shall be living through it.



In hindsight, it would have been interesting to explore in the interviews what had led interviewees to participate in this research. Many participants reflected on their emotional reaction to the climate crisis and some commented on my focus on their age group. Thus, participants themselves appeared to be interested in this topic, interested in how it had impacted them emotionally and for some, how their age intersected with their emotional response. It felt as though participants wanted to offer something to understanding this further, and indeed they were offering their time and stories. Further, it felt as though at times participants would take a more educational or informative tone and shared information about the climate crisis. In these moments it felt as though their participation was perhaps an act of activism in itself; hoping to inform me or the imagined reader about the climate crisis. Some commented on the negative impact of covid on their activism; thus, I wonder if participating in this research was a covid safe form of activism. A final reflection is on the role of participation as contributing to the ongoing legacy that will be left behind after they are gone; their story and their activism will live on through their participation in this research. Whilst these are just hypotheses, one reflection can be that participants were very generous with their time and of sharing their experiences with me. I believe this reflects something of their desire to contribute to the ongoing discussions and growing awareness of the climate crisis and can reflect a continuation of their on-going grand generativity (Erikson, 1997).

## Chapter 4: Findings

Through analysing all of the interviews, six stories were identified: 'journeys into climate activism: early beginnings', the 'good activist', 'relationships: connection and disconnection', 'anger at inaction: social justice and systems of power', 'the future: hopelessness, fear and concern for future generations' and 'activism and ageing: reflections on life stories'. The analysis revealed many similarities across participants' stories; therefore, this chapter aims to bring together areas of convergence thematically. To capture the unique stories of participants, areas of divergence were also reflected on. This chapter aims to weave together a coherent story of the themes in participants experiences; and in Western storytelling form, attempts to tell the story chronologically were made, journeying from the beginning of participants climate activism to their projections of the future. Not all participants told their story in a chronological order, thus this ordering could be described as artificial; however, stories were restructured to support the identification of areas of convergence and divergence. The quotes presented below have been cleaned up, hesitations, pauses and repetitions were removed to support clarity and ease of reading. The quotes are reported in italics to ensure distinction.

### 4.1 Journeys into Climate Activism: Early Beginnings

One story that participants shared was their journey into climate activism; often participants reflected on their early life and experiences that led to the development of strong moral values. For many, these experiences and values held the roots of their activist identity, in particular, participants often shared an enduring concern for social justice. These values were reflected in social justice activism during early adulthood, something that, for some, continued throughout their life prior to climate activism. A few of the activists reflected on

the time they were born into and lived through before becoming climate activists and gave insight into the societal factors that may have influenced their developing sense of self. Most participants reflected on this being a gradual awareness of the climate crisis, often 'knowing' in some way about the climate crisis but taking time to move into climate activism. Often coming into activism was facilitated by relationships in their life, with some describing an initial hesitation at joining the climate activist movement. Overall, this story was a developmental tale and gives an insight into the construction of an activist identity.

Just over half the participants described how their early life impacted their coming to activism; for some, this was related to the role they played in their family others described the impact of early life experiences such as migration or loss that shaped them. For example:

*'I think it's something, probably, but I don't want to get bogged down with this, to do with my relationship with my mother. Who was very often ill, so if she'd been ill, then somebody had to be with her, oh that's alright Ann can take a day off school. So it was my role, is to, to make everything better. So, I think that's sadly still my life view.'* (Ann, L: 57).

Here Ann makes sense of her desire to make the '*world a better place*' (L:55) through her role within her family in childhood. These reflections on early life experiences shaping their activism were reflected in others' stories, such as the impact of a religious upbringing which half the participants described. It appears experiences in family and religious systems supported the construction of personal roles and moral values. Mary similarly described how her religious upbringing taught her we are all '*God's children*' (L:132); this in part seemed to set the scene for her involvement in activism and developing a sense of the importance of equality.

*'Everyone no matter what colour, what culture, what language, what religious belief, we are all one family, so I think that's been really, and still is a really deep part of my*

*engagement because part of my engagement with [activist group] is looking at the social justice aspect of it' (Mary, L:132).*

Participants often described how the time that they were born into shaped their values, for example Mary described how during her teenage years the civil rights movement was happening and reflected that this was her '*first introduction to injustice*'; Ann described the first televised recording of Earth from space and others reflected on being born shortly after the war, setting the contextual scene of their early life. This was reflected in descriptions of involvement in social justice activism prior to climate activism. Participants described involvement in civil rights, anti-apartheid, nuclear disarmament, closure of mines, and environmental or animal rights movements, reflective of the concerns of the 1960s and 1970s. It was evident that justice had been at the forefront of many of the activists' minds throughout their lives. These social justice concerns, and the anger they evoked, appeared to be a significant motivating factor in climate activism for many participants:

*'...in the same way as my activism has risen has been before, which is basically, a political response. I mean, I was just really angry. Like, I am angry about social injustice. Like I have been campaigning a lot of my life or active a lot of my life on sort of social justice issues' (Eleanor, L:63).*

Just over half of the participants described a 'gradual awareness' of the climate crisis, often being alerted to it years prior to them becoming involved in climate activism. For example, Mary described studying Ecology at university which had '*alerted*' her to the '*fact that there was a greenhouse effect, that co2 emissions had been going up steadily through the industrial revolution and that the planet was warming*' (Mary, L:84). She reflected that it did not seem like a '*huge deal*' back then but that they '*didn't know*' it would '*ramp up*' to the level it is now (L:86), reflecting something of a sense of knowing but not knowing or perhaps

denial that occurred in activists' stories. This was reflected in Jayne's story when she described both gradual awareness and experiencing 'wake-up' moments when she went through menopause and turned 60 years old:

*'Oh my fuck, you know, I am sixty years old, I've really got to get my finger out...feel this overwhelming knowledge, I've only got twenty years or so left, given a fair wind and looking after myself.'* (Jayne, L:172)

Some participants described how their growing awareness led to an increasing internal pressure to act, which George described as *'feeling I was not fulfilling my ideals'* (L:95). For many, however, the shift to becoming involved in climate activism often involved their relationships with others. Many participants cited conversations with trusted, respected others as pivotal and supportive in their coming into the climate activism movement; this appeared to be due to some hesitation or anxiety in joining climate activist groups.

There were areas of divergence in activists' stories; Ann and Matthew had not been involved in activism prior to their climate activism. Matthew came to activism later in life following recovery from a period of poor mental health, Matthew reflected he came to climate activism *'innocent'* (L:41) and had initially thought the climate movement was a *'hopeful cause'* (L:226). Sally and Ann both described a more transformative interaction when they became aware of the climate crisis; for Sally, this was in her early twenties, whereas for Ann this was more recently. However, both expressed disbelief: *'it's like why is nobody doing anything about this?'* (Ann, L: 76), that motivated them to act.

In summary, for many participants, their story of activism began long before their involvement in the climate activism they are involved in now. We can understand that this story demonstrated the narrative construction of the climate activist identity, it is a developmental story a reflection of how the context of their early life in their family and societal systems shaped the development of their values and sense of self which is linked to

their activism. Half the participants' description of a 'gradual awareness' can reflect the way denial presents in society. The main emotion associated with these values and moving into action appeared to be anger or outrage; however, for some, the emotional response came later in their activism.

#### 4.2 The 'Good Activist'

At the beginning of each interview, I shared the limits of confidentiality for this research, including a reference to arrestable actions which had not been previously investigated. I found that this often led to comments from participants regarding their 'arrest statuses for example, Jayne said she *'can't unfortunately be part of the arrestable actions for [activist group], although I would love to be...'* (L: 5). There was a sense through some of the interviews that arrestable climate activism was valued more than other forms of activism, Oscar commented he didn't agree that activists *'win your awards through getting arrested'* (L: 81) and described a sense that traditional activism was not valued in the same way. These early reflections were the beginning of a narrative that appeared to emerge surrounding what it means to be a 'good activist'. In part, this narrative appeared to be related to a sense of responsibility activists felt related to their moral values. However, this also appeared to be a pressure that came externally, through public responses and within the activist movement. Some participants described experiencing or feeling close to burning out; the regenerative culture of their activist group was mentioned by many as vitally important to their activism and to reduce burnout.

Half the participants described what appeared to be a pressure to be 'active'. For some, this pressure was accompanied by an internal conflict between what they believed was the 'right' way to act and the way they acted or at times wanted to act. Jayne described experiencing *'schizophrenia'*: the conflictual pull between the urgency she feels to act and her desire to do things she enjoys (L:382). Oscar similarly described that his *'behaviour*

*necessarily isn't consistent with [his] beliefs'* and shared that this *'does cause [him] some distress'* (L: 57). Oscar reflected that his behaviour is questioned by the public who can be *'combative'* and ask, *'well did you drive here?'* (L: 65). Participants described attempts to find peace with their inner conflict, for example, Oscar reflected that Quakers believe that *'humans are limited in our ability to lead a good life'* (L: 72).

Half the participants also described experiencing pressure from others; whilst for some this came from the confrontations by the public regarding their behaviour, this external pressure seemed to come from both inside and outside the activist movement:

*'Actually, a really good friend of mine, a black activist woman, and I was saying I can't way to go away to [country] I'm so fed up with it all and just want to get out, recharge' and she said, 'I wish I could have a holiday from racism' and I thought yeah that's really true but actually you can't'* (Jayne, L:600)

The last line here perhaps demonstrates a sense of pressure described by activists to always be 'active' and a sense of shame that can be evoked if they are not. Some activists described experiencing burnout or being close to burnout, often due to the intense level of activism they are engaged in or due to added challenge of their internal conflict. In part, it seemed that a sense of urgency regarding their mortality and time left to act was contributing to this experience:

*'I am aware that you know, during that ten-minute break I went out into the garden and took a look around. Without feeling morbid about it, I was thinking, I don't know how many more springs I have got left, that, I'm in good health, I'm not as, I'm not as fit or as able as I used to be, my memory isn't as good as it was, but I am very fortunate health wise. But I'm aware that time is running out and that anything I need to do in life, it's a luxury to put it off. Things are urgent, the climates urgent but if I am going to do anything that's got to be urgent as well but of course that also*

*clashes with wanting to enjoy life outside this hallowed world of climate activism.'*

*(Oscar, L:470)*

Sometimes, this sense of needing to be a 'good activist' came through the interviews in the story the participants told rather than their descriptions of this pressure. For example:

*'it hardens my resolve to be as you know, to have my carbon footprint as low as possible, so I've got through this winter with absolutely no heating in my house because I do have a car, I have an electric car, I switched to electric but I'm aware that even that carries an ecological burden, you know it's practically child labour and slave labour that gets the, the minerals that are needed for the electric batteries for cars. So, it's not ideal, so I use it as little as possible.'* (Mary, L:527)

Whilst one way of interpreting Mary's quote is to consider the sacrifices Mary is making to live in line with her values, another is to consider the sense of individual responsibility and perhaps a sense of needing to be 'ideal'. This came through in other ways in Mary's narrative in which it felt at times that she positioned herself as the 'good activist'; describing herself as feeling at times as though she is an '*eco-fascist*' reflecting on the '*entitlement*' of others, here runs the risk of polarisation from within the activist community where activists are 'good' and others are 'bad'.

Many described the value of regenerative practice that is central in their activist group, countering what I have identified as a pressure that activists were experiencing. For instance, Sally described:

*The regenerative bit, I just I've never come across that before. Because as I said, to think previously, there's an awful lot of a culture. If you're not doing it 24-7, seven days a week, you're not a good activist. And that's very soul destroying and incredibly upsetting because I've always thought that was wrong. So, it was like, oh wow,*



*someone recognises people recognise that humans have needs and we have needs to rest and recuperate and regenerate ourselves (Sally, L:580)*

In summary, activists told a story about what it means to be a 'good activist'; this is perhaps the product of in-group and out-group pressures wherein participants are critiqued by the public for acting outside societal denial and narrative of 'business as usual'. Whilst the drive to be good in many ways is admirable and motivates the activists into action, there runs risks of burnout through continually pushing themselves and carrying the individual responsibility of changing the climate crisis because of the internal conflict they experience when they are not 'good'. The regenerative practice encouraged by certain activist movements offers a counter-narrative to this internal pressure, which would benefit from being further developed to support activist wellbeing.

#### **4.3 Relationships: Stories of Connection and Disconnection**

The story of the role of relationships for activists seemed to represent both the most joyful and the most challenging aspects of their climate activism; the challenges of engaging with individuals with opposing world views was offset by a sense of community and nurturing relationships from activism and their religious community. Challenges were often described in relation to family members, however, for one activist the central narrative of their story was of the abuse experienced by society. In contrast, many activists described the 'joy' of being part of a social circle that they would not normally have access to, whether this be because of age differences, cultural difference or due to their own challenges in developing larger friendship groups. The importance of these connections in their capacity to continue as activists was noted and this sense of the importance of community was echoed as a way that participants felt that society needed to move to overcome the climate crisis.

Half of the participants described struggles in their relationships with family members, for some this was as their family members were climate deniers, for others, it was that they felt disappointed by their family members lack of interest in something that was vitally important to them, and many described the difficulty they experienced in speaking to those closest to them. For example, Ann shared how climate change denial is a ‘*really emotional one*’ for her because her siblings are climate change deniers:

*‘I find it really hard that [they] make, such a point of bringing up something we, so fundamentally disagree about, so fundamentally, and [they’re] always criticising protesters, they should be locked up and keys thrown away, [they’re] really horrible, and I say I’ve been on demonstrations, I nearly got arrested in 2019 you know’ (Ann, L:117)*

Often, these challenges within their family relationships were understandably an emotive topic for participants, where the climate crisis became an area of disconnection or distance in the relationship. Eleanor described not being able to communicate with her family: ‘*Frustrating, isolating, I feel quite lonely*’ (L: 158). Whilst participants generally described finding speaking to the public easier than talking to those, they are close too, a few described challenges with the public, press and politicians. For example, more than one participant recalled the experience of being called ‘*uncooperative crusties*’ by Boris Johnson, the then Prime Minister. Sally spoke to the abuse she has experienced across her life as an activist, describing the experience of being misquoted by a national newspaper:

*‘I had the most horrendous trolling. It was like hundreds of messages pouring into me every day about what an arsehole I am, and all of the problems in the world are all because of people like me and, if I was nearby, I’d come and kill you, I mean, really horrendous stuff. This is the norm.’ (Sally, L:513)*

Sally's quote demonstrates the level of abuse that climate activists can experience, describing how ridicule leaves her feeling like an '*alien*' (L: 623); whilst other participants did not report this, Oscar reflected on experiences where people can try to '*humiliate*' him (L: 458), and participants described a sense of disconnection from others who do not see the world in the same way as them. In contrast to these challenges of disconnection and alienation, nearly all the activists described the happiness they gained through the relationships they had made in activism. Supportive relationships were described as central in continuing their activism, preventing burnout, and inspiring them to push themselves further. George described the importance of being paired with a '*supportive*' person during his first climate activist meeting '*finding somebody [he] could identify with and could discuss things quite personally with*' (L: 121). Supportive relationships were also described as pivotal in their ability to remain activists, for instance, Mary shared:

*'I just feel so inspired by some of the people whose understanding and dedication and you know the whole lot is just so profound that I think it's so important to hang out who are really inspiring and for me that's a real regenerative thing for me. It keeps me having the courage to be engaged and go beyond my own comfort zone.'* (Mary, L:555)

Whilst all but one participant described the importance of the support found in their activist community, participants made sense of the '*joy*' (Oscar, L:271) found in these connections in different ways. For some the group relationships gained through activism were in direct contrast to experiences of isolation, as George reflected: '*[activist group] and climate activism has given me entry into a friendship circle of amazing people*' (L: 665). Others described how much value they have taken from meeting people that are different from themselves, such as from different cultural backgrounds or different age groups. For example, Oscar shared how nice it is to be '*involved with young people*' reflecting that in his

other social circles he is largely with people his own age and that he would ‘*miss it*’ if the ‘*whole world changed*’ describing the activist community as ‘*nurturing*’ (L: 255)

For over half the participants, their religious or faith groups were significant sources of connection and support; participants identified as Buddhist, Christian and Quaker. It was notable that regardless of religious background, participants described the importance of the silence that came with their faith practice; Eleanor reflected that she ‘*find[s] that the greatest resistance for me is, the silence is the quietest route to bringing down and the connection with others*’ (L:105).

Half the participants described that community is not only needed for their activism but is the route for our way out of the climate crisis, describing a need to come together to overcome the climate crisis, with participants describing a need for a different way of relating with each other and the global community, this way of relating was one of interconnection and interdependence with both the global community and the natural world. For example:

*‘We are all deeply, deeply connected and we have to act as community if we ever [going to] pull through the whole world’ (Mary, L: 691)*

In summary, relationships with others who see the world in the same way as themselves provide a space of safety, support and containment which meant that activists were able to continue in the face of experiences of disconnection and alienation. Climate activists challenge the narrative of ‘business as usual’ leaving them to feel that they live in a different reality to the rest of society, the movie the Matrix was leaned on as an alternative narrative to make sense of their experiences. Connection was not only identified as an antidote to the feelings of isolation and alienation but as an answer to the climate crisis. Activists described the shift in mindset that is needed, offering a counter-narrative to the individualistic Western societal values. It appears that for these activists, early experiences,

relationships, and influences perhaps created a value system that prioritised values of justice and community and this is reflected in these stories.

#### **4.4. Anger at Inaction: Social Injustice and Systems of Power**

This story follows the challenges found in participants' relationships; this is a story about participants' relationships with those who are inactive, this centred around the characters of the powerful and the powerless. All but one of the activists described anger at those in power due to the lack of action they were taking in response to the climate crisis. Many activists expressed disbelief in the inaction of those in power and it seemed as though attempts would be made within the interview to make sense of something they found incomprehensible. As most participants had described an early motivation into climate activism through their social justice values, social justice concerns often sparked anger for participants, which were compounded by their feelings of concern for their children and grandchildren.

Participants described their anger, 'outrage' and fury at the inaction of others, this anger was mainly directed towards the inaction of politicians. Most participants perceived the government and corporation inaction to desire to maintain a status quo, related to ensuring that those with money maintain their wealth. For example:

*'The anger that because a small group of people have a lot of wealth and therefore a lot of power because wealth is particularly in Britain is so linked to access to politicians and they are destroying the future for future generations because they want more money when most of them have got more money than they can spend anyway and that does make me really angry.'* (Ann, L:732)

While most participants linked government inaction to vested financial interests, George was the only one to directly link this with capitalism, describing capitalism as the root of the climate crisis due to its model of '*continuing growth on a finite planet*' (L: 398). It seemed at times that activists would try to make sense of the incomprehensible inaction of politicians describing it as '*madness*' (Sally, L:397) or politicians as '*psychopaths*' (Jayne, L: 309); one way of understanding Jayne's use of the term psychopath is a sense of a lack of empathy or care by those in power. Nearly all participants described their sense of profits being placed over the good of the planet and humanity; they communicated something of a loss of trust in those in power to be acting in the best interests of the people they serve. Matthew brought the lack of trust into the fore as he described what can be interpreted as a desire to trust politicians. Matthew shared that he had initially believed that governments and co-operations would '*do the right thing*' and over time realising that this was not the case. Matthew shared:

*I was moved by Ashok Sharma's tearful address at the end of the COP26, I mean, that says a lot you know, that was, well, it was disappointing, saddening, but I was glad that he was crying. And I suppose that's another thing, if leaders showed vulnerability and emotion in the moment and we trust them and we trust their emotions. Then that's another kind of gathering or collecting together of energy, a different kind of energy. (Matthew, L:314)*

Matthew went on to describe this energy as '*trust developed through authenticity*' (L: 324), what comes through in this is Matthew's desire to be able to trust those in power to do the right thing. Matthew went on to describe the different '*energy*' that women bring to activism, an '*expertise*' in '*connection*' (L: 366) and I wonder if there is something here about masculinity and power; being vulnerable, showing emotion and care are perhaps traits that are considered in Western society '*feminine*' and it is traditionally masculine traits of

power and domination that are a part of challenges that activists are describing. There was a feeling throughout the narratives of a lack of care by those in power, this lack of care was at times linked to social justice and at other times linked to a lack of care for the younger generation, for instance Ann shared:

*'You want to go and say to them, this is my grandchildren, my children that you are hurting, its everybody's children and grandchildren that they are hurting because of this ridiculous thing called wealth and that does make me very angry' (Ann, L:737)*

Some participants conceptualised their relationships with governments and systems of power using the language of abuse and abusive relationships. Jayne (L: 278) described politicians *'fucking gaslighting'* individuals and Mary conceptualised the inaction of world leaders as *'rape'*:

*'The profit for, 1% of the world's population, the profit is going into their pockets, and they are raping the people and the land and the animals and the habitats and everything.'* (Mary, L:146)

Mary shared *'you would not stand by or walk on past somebody who was actually physically being raped in the street, you would in some way try and intervene and say this is wrong, stop.'* (L: 458), this is a very powerful way of communicating something of how Mary experiences inaction, in which those who do not act are bystanders to a violent assault on the Earth. Outside of their fury with inaction, participants described how exhausting it was to fight against systems and structures of power to try to enact change. Within this there was a sense of their own powerlessness as they described their desire to create impact:

*'It's just bloody frustrating and confounding really. (R: mmm) that everything has to be a battle, to fight for the environmental factors, improvements and that is making me quite emotional now actually. Yeah, that does that battle because I can't, I can't*

*influence that. Not really. I'm not talking to top-down people. I wish I was, you know, and as I say, maybe I can step up once or twice... ' (Matthew, L:614)*

In this story participants positioned themselves as both powerful and powerless, on the one hand they position themselves as the powerful in contrast to the more vulnerable they are fighting for, the children, the global south, the planet. Participants demonstrated their power through their agency in being active; but equally they describe feeling powerless against the systems of power they are fighting against. We see participants constructing narratives about government inaction, trying to make sense of something that appears incomprehensible. The primary emotions in this story are that of anger, rage and powerlessness; powerlessness can be thought of as an offshoot of despair, and sadness. In this story participants again counter the narrative of the success or benefits of capitalism that Western society promotes and instead share a sense of longing for qualities of trust and care in power.

#### **4.5 The Future: Hopelessness, Fear and Concern for Future Generations**

All participants spoke of the anticipated future, a future that as most commented, they will not be here for. The lack of action and their perceived helplessness to create action or change led to a feeling of futility and a fear of the future. This is a story filled with imagery of death, the tone was largely pessimistic. Most participants described a sense that the climate crisis could not be stopped and that their actions were futile; however, that action helped them manage the difficult emotions that arose out of the climate crisis and despite their feelings of futility they were motivated to act by their concerns for their children and grandchildren. Two participants became tearful when sharing this part of their story, the feelings of sadness, grief and despair at times was palpable during interviews.



All participants described no longer feeling hopeful about the future, and having feelings of futility, hopelessness, or grief. Ann described how *'as far as the futures concerned [she's] not altogether hopeful'* (L:276) and is *'further down the road to despair'* (L: 493). Echoing this Eleanor reflected that *'increasingly'* she feels they are *'hospice workers'* and she *'might be witnessing the inevitable, final chapters, not just of homo sapiens but of so much life on this planet'* (L: 272).

Participants often moved from thinking about their feelings of hopelessness about the future to their concerns for future generations and their grandchildren. This often led to reflection on their motivation for activism, every participant described their actions being driven by their love and concerns for future generations. For example, Mary shared:

*'What I've started doing, is when I'm out in the streets I'm looking at small children in buggies and toddlers and school aged kids and just saying, under my breath, I'm doing this for you kids. Because the importance, and that does make me feel emotional actually, I can feel my emotion rising as I say that because we are creating a unliveable future for these kids that are already born.'* (L: 161)

Participants described a sense of *'futility'* regarding their activism, describing a sense that their actions would have a limited impact on the outcome of the future. These themes of futility about the future were reflected in George's sense that the crisis could not be overcome *'without a catastrophic change which is going to lead to suffering and death of a large portion of humanity.'* (L: 512) demonstrating a sense that the way out of the climate crisis was also full of suffering. Many described feeling as though they *needed* to act, despite feeling that their actions would not change the course of the climate crisis. Activism was identified as one way that activists managed the challenging emotions the climate crisis evoked, it seemed that for some it increased feelings of power in the face on ongoing

powerlessness and for others it created hope or created 'the right' to hope that things could be different:

*Taking action, meaningful action helps to overcome feelings of inadequacy and impotence. Even though we have no idea whether our actions are going to have real impact, we still have to do them and because we're doing what we know we have to do, it's not like it makes us smug, it just kind of takes the sting out of, if I wasn't doing something, how would I be feeling and so it mitigates the helplessness of the feeling by actually taking action (Mary, L:621 )*

Matthew described how *'in the face of loss of hope [he'd] gathered determination'*, he described how activists need to also gather their *'determination'* and recognise that *'we've got like a really small window to get, though, to get these changes made before its lost'* (L:240). Matthew's reflections on the need for determination felt like a call to action; he has managed to find hope in maintaining his focus on the opportunity for change but notably was the only participant to have a hopeful tone when considering the future.

Just under half of the participants shared that it had taken them time to emotionally connect with their feelings about the climate crisis, often already involved in climate activism before doing so. It seemed as though it was through their activism, through the climate education that occurred or discussions within their groups they were no longer able to *'deny'* the projections for the future, this was the beginning of their feelings of fear or for some *'depression'* (Mary, L: 706), for example Jayne shared:

*'I am very scared, yeah, I am very scared, wasn't able to feel scared or angry personally, for a very long time and I used to watch all the [activist group] people like running around saying I am terrified and lying down in the street and I used to think mmm yeah so am I, and then I realised that I wasn't being honest, I was intellectually worried and scared but it never really hit home but it sort of has now. I have an adopted grandson as*

*well and I also since joining grandparents and elders, that's actually been a bit of a turning point for me' (Jayne, L: 298)*

It appeared this was perhaps an ongoing experience for Oscar, whose struggle with understanding his lack of emotional response to the climate crisis was the central focus of his story. It felt as though he was attempting to make sense of this through the interview. For Oscar, this lack of emotional response seemed to challenge his sense of self as he described himself as an '*emotional person*' but feels there is a '*disconnect*' as he doesn't have '*any feelings of panic, feelings of despair or depression*' (L: 136). Oscar reflected that one emotional moment was when his activist group invited a scientist to come to talk and he didn't want this, as he '*didn't really want to face the fact that the game was lost*' (L:176). One explanation of Oscar's lack of emotion is the powerful psychological defences that can be evoked by the climate crisis, protecting him from truly allowing himself to connect with what he knows intellectually.

In summary, these responses demonstrated the complexity of activist's emotions when coming to the climate crisis. Participants' constructions of the future were of suffering, death and contained a lack of hope. Overall, the tone of this story was pessimistic, futile and despairing, participants described a *need to* act in the face of a future that for many felt unbearable. The findings demonstrate that even for activists the emotional reality of the climate crisis can be unbearable and evoke psychological defences of denial. Their concerns regarding their grandchildren and the next generation evoked the strongest emotions in activists and motivated their activism in the face of futility. Activism further helped participants manage the difficult emotions, empowering them and giving them reasons to feel hopeful in the face of a loss of hope.

#### 4.6 Activism and Ageing: Reflections on Life Stories

Through thinking about the way their activism had shaped their life stories, many participants described a sense of continuity that had occurred through the construction of a progressive self, one in which their sense of self had remained in part constant over time. Yet, they also shared a self that was constantly growing, growing in confidence and one in which change, and transformation was still occurring in later life.

Participants described a sense that rather than climate activism changing their life story, it was a part of who they had always been. For example, Ann reflected:

*‘it’s a coming together of all the strands of my life, you know the catholic education, the need to make the world a better place, I suppose who I am maybe that was an inevitable road to be involved in climate action’* (Ann, L:662)

Whilst Ann reflected on this more directly, there was a sense through activists’ reflections of their past and path into climate activism that this aligned with their sense of who they were. Sally reflected that activism is *‘it’s a big part of my identity and my sense of self’* (L:689), rather than identities shifting and changing over time, their journey into climate activism appeared to be a culmination of who they are and perhaps for some activism maintains a sense of identity as they move into older age. Coming into activism post-retirement was mentioned by half the activists, with some participants wondering in the interview what else they would be doing with their time; for example, Ann shared:

*‘So it’s certainly does give me something and I suppose you know when you retire you probably do need a sense of purpose so but I think if my only sense of purpose is to stop climate breakdown I’m not doing very well really. But yeah certainly I do think sometimes, what would I do with my time’* (Ann, L: 703)

This sense of finding purpose in activism post retirement was reflected on directly and indirectly, participants often discussed their careers within the interviews and valued their ability to use the skills developed from their previous job in their activism. At times something a sense of loss would come through, Oscar reflected that grandparents *'don't seem to have the same status in peoples minds'* as they previously had, reflecting on how the *'BBC would speak to us, local papers would'* whilst Oscar reflected that this was as older age activism had become mainstream and this was *'good'*, there was a sense of the difficulty of the loss of status (L: 158).

Some participants described pushing themselves out of their comfort zone and challenging themselves through their activism, taking on new roles and responsibilities, it seemed that activism for some had supported a development of confidence in later life. This was seen the most in Matthew's story:

*'Being in the local scene with my sleeves rolled up and whatever is going to is going to keep me healthy, and sane, grounded, I suppose. Being concerned for the environment it's the ultimate grounding experience in a way, you know, that is the ground is our ground. So on reflection its impact on my life story has been very positive'* (Matthew, L: 494)

We can understand that for Matthew and for others, activism has offered them the opportunity to continue growing and developing; challenging narratives of old age which may suggest a *'slowing down'*. A few participants reflected on their feelings about their coming to climate activism later in life. Mary reflected that she was *'startled'* (L:838) that she had not been involved in activism sooner.

For some challenges with the younger generation arose at times, Sally described that she feels *'patronised'* at times by youth activists and Oscar reflected some frustration and anger with the younger generation:

*'Yeah, so sometimes I feel a bit outraged, sometimes I get a bit pissed off with young people when they say well 'so what have you done for us' and I'll say, sit down and I'll tell you. But they're right as well so again it's a double thing.'* (Oscar, L:545)

Whilst these comments were rare, what both capture are experiences of discrimination due to their age. George and Eleanor reflected on their age meaning that perhaps they were able to face the emotions of the climate crisis in a different way than perhaps they or others would be at another time in their life, whilst they conceptualised it in different ways there was a sense of the emotional openness that occurs towards the end of life.

*'Your focus is on old people, and I have reflected on that myself, and to what extent me being at this time of life. Has made me more emotionally vulnerable. I haven't got the I mean, I remember my dad towards the end of his life, used to listen to opera and just cry a lot. I'm entering that, that. I don't know. I don't know whether it would be different, if I was 40, would I be glued to the top of that? I don't know.'* (Eleanor, L: 409)

Whilst participants did not often speak about their own death, this was an underlying narrative present throughout the interviews as they spoke of how they do not need to be worried about the climate crisis for themselves. When participants reflected on their motivation of activism some reflected on their thinking about the legacy they will leave behind, the story that will go on without them; Sally shared:

*'When you get into your later life stage rather than a later stage, you do reflect back and, yeah, very much, I've made an impact. I've done lots of things which I know have made a very, very positive impact.'* (Sally, L: 713)

In summary, an ongoing drive to live by their values, appeared to be present for many activists. As they have come to later stages of life, where their identity may have been impacted by the loss of other roles such as that of their professional self, activists continue to forge and develop their sense of self, for many of the activists their post-retirement life was filled with purpose, confidence, and agency that for some was a transformational experience. Whilst not all activists had retired, many had, and activism provided a way of a continuation of the skills they had developed over their working careers. As they entered the later stages of their life, for some climate activism was part of the legacy of the mark they had left on the world, that they had made a positive difference in the world.

#### 4.7 **Summary of the findings**

Narrative analysis of six participants accounts was conducted to answer two research questions:

- What emotions have older climate activists experienced during their trajectory of engagement with the threat of the climate crisis?
- How has engaging in climate crisis activism impacted older activists' life stories?

An experience-centred narrative analysis was completed, stories were analysed individually, following which cross-story themes were identified. Six main areas of convergence were found, these six stories and their core narrative are presented in table 3, the unique areas of divergence in these themes are reflected on in the stories presented above.

**Table 3***Summary of Findings*

Story	Core Narrative	Tense
Journeys into Climate Activism: Early Beginnings	<i>I have been campaigning a lot of my life or active a lot of my life on sort of social justice issues'</i>	Past
The 'Good Activist'	<i>"If you're not doing it 24, seven, seven days a week, you're not a good activist."</i>	Present
Relationships: Stories of Connection and Disconnection	<i>climate activism has given me entry into a friendship circle of amazing people'</i>	Present
Anger at Inaction: Social injustice and Systems of Power	<i>They are destroying the future for future generations because they want more money</i>	Present - Future
The Future: Hopelessness, Fear and Concern for Future Generations	<i>as far as the futures concerned [she's] not altogether hopeful'</i>	Present - Future
Activism and Ageing: Reflections on Life Stories	<i>I've made an impact. I've done lots of things which I know have made a very, very positive impact.</i>	Past, Present, Future



## Chapter 5: Discussion

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter will continue to explore the findings of the previous chapter and will relate the current findings to the pre-existing literature, exploring what the findings mean in context. This chapter will go on to explore the limitations of the current study, the implications for Counselling Psychology, indications for future research and will end with a brief conclusion.

### 5.2 *Journey into climate activism*

The findings showed that participants' stories about their journey into activism often began in childhood when they developed values regarding equality, justice, and their role in society. These findings support the work of Dennis and Stock (2019), who similarly found that early life experiences and the context of the political zeitgeist of the 1960s and 1970s had influenced the development of older adults' climate activist identity. These findings can be understood by considering McAdams's (1993) and Erikson et al.'s (1986) theories regarding identity development occurring in adolescence. McAdams notes that we all hold an ideological setting which will set the foundation of our life story; he proposes that identity is built upon ideology. McAdams (1993) suggests that there are two key themes in ideological settings, communion and agency; those who value communion value society and interpersonal relationships over the individual (McAdams, 1993). He proposes that our ideological setting is based on the world we are born into (McAdams, 1993); all participants in this study, by the nature of the age group interviewed, are children who were born either during the Second World War or during the twelve years which followed, they lived through the creation of the welfare state, the NHS, the civil rights movement, the beginning of the environmental movement. We can propose that the early experiences in activists' lives created an 'ideological setting' of community, setting the background for the story of their

lives. For many of the participants, it was these social justice and moral values that precipitated their involvement in activism. Thus, we can propose that the knowledge of the climate crisis was assimilated into their pre-existing understanding of social injustice.

The findings demonstrated that rather than a 'transformational moment' (Fisher, 2015), participants often came to activism with intellectual knowledge rather than an emotional reaction. When emotions were described, they were of outrage or anger, situated in their sense of social injustice. For participants in this study, their relationship with climate activism was often a reflection of previous activism and drive to fight for equality and justice. Further, unlike other research by Griffin (2018) and Lehman (2017), the findings did not suggest that a significant connection with nature was a contributor to their involvement in climate activism; it seemed that what was a greater factor for all participants was social justice. This can be understood to be reflective of a shift in the environmental movement in recent years wherein environmental and climate activists speak of 'climate justice' rather than concerns for the environment alone. These findings support the work of Furlong and Vignales (2020), who identified 'moral outrage' as the combination of anger, injustice and moral convictions that motivated climate activists in Extinction Rebellion. Further, whilst it was not an aim of the research to explore social identity models of collective action, the findings from this study support the 'Encapsulated Model of Social Identity in Collective Action' (Thomas et al., 2012) in finding that perceived injustice was often the initial motivator in engaging in collective action rather than group identity; these findings make sense in the global north where activists themselves are unlikely to be experiencing significant direct impacts of the climate crisis at this current time; as such motivation was often on behalf of others such as the global south or participants grandchildren and as such evoked feelings of injustice. These findings are in direct contrast to Ranken (2022), who found that injustice played no role in the motivation of activists in her PhD study.

Rather than a transformational experience (Fisher, 2015; Hoggett & Randall, 2018) in coming to be concerned about the climate crisis, participants often described a more gradual journey into activism, often participants had been told about the climate crisis or had been introduced to the idea to it long before their involvement in activism. The steps between knowing and action were influenced by their relationships with those involved in climate activism and by being influenced by the rise in action seen globally in 2019. These findings can perhaps speak to Norgaard's (2011) ethnographic research in Norway, which found that despite being knowledgeable about the climate crisis, this knowledge was not integrated into the daily life of the Norwegians she met with. Norgaard (2011) concluded that that denial occurs within society through unspoken social norms to repress or ignore the knowledge of the climate crisis. We can understand that the rising level of climate activism in 2019 and conversations with those who are breaking the 'social norms' of denial and repression supported the integration of this knowledge into daily life. We can reflect on the important role that activists play in supporting challenging societal denial and challenging the social norms of 'business as usual'. It is important to note that the ability to have a gradual awareness is a privileged experience, with those in the global south unable to stay in denial, which may explain the differences with Fisher's (2015) findings, as those in England are perhaps less likely to have a 'transformational experience' as at present are less likely to be directly impacted by the climate crisis. Following on from this, the findings in this study demonstrate the importance of smaller conversations that activists have with others, despite their challenges in communicating with those closest to them.

Participants also often described coming to activism at a time where they had greater space, whether this be post-retirement, post-children leaving home, and this was reflected in their discussions regarding who was in their activism groups. The findings appear to reflect something of the space and time needed to be able to engage in activism and perhaps raise the

question of what activist groups can do to reduce the load for those who may want to be active but that do not have the space at present.

### ***5.3 The 'good activist'***

It seemed as though the narrative regarding what makes a good activist, or the construction of a good activist, was created both within the climate activist movement and by society. Psychoanalytic theory can be supportive in helping make sense of this narrative. Randall (2005) has shared that the strong emotions associated with the climate crisis are thought to provoke unconscious psychological defences, including splitting and polarisation. With regards to climate activism, Randall (2005) has proposed that the collective guilt and anxiety of society are split off and projected onto activists where it can be neutralised by ridicule. We can formulate that this creates enormous unconscious pressure on activists and that this is what is in motion in the construction of the 'good activist', wherein anything less than ideal is critiqued both by the public and activist community. It seems that the despair evoked due to the inaction of others leads to increased internalised pressure to act themselves; as such, we can propose that activists take on the split-off responsibility and anxiety from society and act as if it is their own (Randall, 2005). Reflecting on Randall's (2005) work, Nairn (2019) wondered whether activists carried the burden of despair due to society's inaction. The findings in this study perhaps show the impact of activists carrying the burden of action and urgency for those unable to acknowledge it. The findings within this narrative demonstrate the dangers of denial and polarisation and the impact of these on climate activists. One other way of interpreting the sense of urgency and pressure to act could be related to the sense of personal responsibility that participants felt to create change. The sense of urgency and pressure participants felt to always act in line with their climate knowledge was also found in Maczek et al. (2023), who found that participants strived to act in line with moral values, which, on the one hand, bought them pride but on another created

stress when they did not act as intended. Maczek et al.'s (2023) study is the only paper that identified describing this internal conflict that activists can experience. This speaks to the strong moral values that participants in this study were found to hold and the sense of individual responsibility they feel to act.

Other previous research exploring youth activists also found that participants experienced feelings of urgency (Pickard, 2022); however, in youth activists, the urgency is related to the threat of the climate crisis, whereas, for older adult climate activists, it seems as though the urgency is related to the threat of the climate crisis compounded by their mortality. The findings in this study regarding the urgency participants felt related to their mortality is a novel finding and can give us insight into the unique way that older climate activists are impacted emotionally as they strive to live up to their values and make a difference with the time they have left. This raises questions as to the role of COVID-19 played in this sense of urgency, as it confronted us with our own mortality (Bednarek, 2021).

The findings of activism leading to burnout have been reflected in other research with youth activists (Nairn, 2019); this study is the first, to the author's knowledge, to have found this in the older adult climate activist population. Much like Hoggett and Randall (2018), participants' descriptions of burnout led to a reflection on the things that have supported them, including regenerative practice. Regenerative practice is the practice of self-care in activism and was repeatedly cited as supportive in reducing burnout and supporting people to continue as activists and take some of this pressure off themselves. However, whilst participants described the benefit of the regenerative practice, it seemed as though in practice, activists at times still found it difficult to prioritise self-care, with participants describing the importance of 'regen' in the context of sharing how they were continuing to push themselves. A continued emphasis on regenerative practice would be beneficial for activist groups, with a focus on self-compassion in climate activism. A compassion focussed approach could support challenging the narratives surrounding what it is to be a 'good activist', recognising

activists' humanity and, through this, hopefully reducing the impact of the negative projections from society.

#### ***5.4 Relationships: Connection and Disconnection***

The findings from this research demonstrated the key role of supportive relationships in response to the climate crisis. These findings continue to demonstrate the importance of connection and community in activism, supporting much of the previous literature that found a positive sense of belonging that came with climate activism (Halstead, 2021; Pickard, 2022; Fisher, 2015). This research offered the novel findings regarding how age intersects with the value of relationships in activism. For instance, with findings of the joy that came from being part of a community with individuals from different cultural or age groups to themselves, activism opened opportunities for relationships that participants may not have found elsewhere in their community. In contrast to Dennis and Stock (2019), whose participants reported struggling to connect with young people and having activist groups of mainly the older population, in this study, participants described activist movements made up of mainly older retired activists and youth activists and shared how much they valued this intergenerational space. The faith community was also found to be a significant source of support for activists; much like Bell et al.'s (2021) study, participants in this research described the value gained from their religious community. Interestingly, participants described the silence found in the Buddhist and Quaker faith as particularly nourishing; Macy and Brown (2018) reflect on how for Quakers, silence helps us connect to our inner knowing, and this is something that is also central to the Buddhist tradition. Another interpretation could be related to the growing evidence base of the positive impact of mindfulness on well-being, including reducing stress and anxiety by brining awareness to the present moment

(Davis & Hayes, 2011); this is of particular relevance when considering the emotions associated with thinking about the future and the climate crisis.

This study also found that relationships could also be incredibly distressing for participants, their relationships with others and society strained by the disconnect in their view of the world or being directly confronted with denial in close family members. The findings of alienation reported in these findings were also reflected in Marzcek et al. (2023), in which participants described feelings of alienation, powerlessness, and isolation from society as they perceived others to not be concerned about the climate crisis. The findings in this study supported Marzcek et al.'s (2023) reflections on the role politicians play in constructing this alienation, as participants reflected on being called 'crusties' by the Prime Minister. Outside of the abuse, participants described feeling as though they lived in a different reality, reinforcing the feelings of alienation and demonstrating the negative impact of the denial in society. One way of understanding this is that the knowledge of the climate crisis provided an ontological shock to many participants; they now live in a different world to those around them. Whilst it seems as though they were able to assimilate the knowledge of the climate crisis into their schema regarding politics, it seems as though the greater the knowledge became, a new schema or view of the world needed to be constructed (Olssen, 1995; Ultanir, 2012). Participants live in a post-knowing reality; their narratives of the future now look very different to perhaps the ones that would have been told before; in the face of the loss, participants seek community to rebuild their world and a new narrative.

### ***5.5 Anger at Inaction: Social Injustice and Systems of Power***

Participants often described a loss of trust in government and a lack of care by those in power. Considering the findings of loss of trust in the present research and in wider contemporary discussions, this research found that the loss of trust in politicians and

corporations, which initially evoked anger and rage, led to feelings of hopelessness due to a lack of belief in change. These findings are consistent with other research, which has repeatedly found anger at the inaction of global leaders both within (Kleres & Wettergren, 2017; Marczak et al., 2023; Martikainen et al., 2020) and outside of the climate activist movement (DuBray et al., 2019; Lehman, 2017; Griffin, 2018). However, whilst some research suggested that anger was a hopeful emotion (Kleres & Wettergren, 2017) or was associated with lower levels of stress, anxiety, and depression (Stanley et al., 2022), the findings in this research did not suggest such an impact of anger. While in support of Kleres & Wettergren (2017), the anger can be interpreted as responsibility being placed elsewhere, in this study it did not seem that anger increased hope or reduced the responsibility activists placed on themselves. In fact, stories of anger often progressively led in the narrative to feelings of hopelessness due to the sense of powerlessness and lack of change that they were seeing. The feelings of powerlessness found in this study support findings in previous literature (Lehman, 2017; Hickman, 2021; Schwartz et al., 2022; Bell et al., 2021). Although there was a sense of powerlessness in activists' narratives, in contrast to previous literature, this did not deter activism (Griffin, 2018; Schwartz et al., 2022).

The findings demonstrated a significant lack of trust in politicians and world leaders to act. When considering the findings of Ogunbode et al. (2022), which stated that there was no relationship between media presentations of climate solutions and anxiety, we can propose that for there to be a reaction of anxiety in the face of climate solutions, there has to be a belief that global leaders will put these solutions in place, this requires a level of trust in leaders, which this research and others demonstrate is lacking. The findings of this study regarding the loss of trust in those in power also challenge Lorenzi and Rosset (2023), who hypothesised that the older generation would 'trust' politicians more. The findings of this study demonstrate the danger of homogenising findings about an age group; the participants in this study, as in Dennis and Stocks's (2019) study, had often been involved in activism



across their life course, beginning in the rise of activism in the 1960s and 1970s. Thus, these activists could possibly have higher levels of distrust in politicians as they have witnessed and fought against political decision-making that has gone against their values across their life span.

Participants' disbelief at the lack of care of politicians can somewhat reflect what Weintrobe (2021) has called the 'culture of care, reflecting that all of us hold 'caring' and 'uncaring' parts, but the rise of neoliberalism and consumerism have fed these uncaring aspects of the self which is particularly seen in politicians and those in power. Whilst only one participant directly named capitalism, participants described what can be understood as the impact of capitalism and expressed disdain at the way power and profit were placed over the good of people and the world. There is a sense within this research, and in others (Spyrou et al., 2021; Nairn, 2019), that activists hope for a future which is less individualistic, instead, prioritises community over profit, perhaps creating a narrative of a world that could be possible outside of capitalism. These descriptions perhaps again speak to the proposed ideological setting of communion (McAdams, 2005) that shapes how the participants in this study construct their narrative and, as such, make sense of the world. Therefore, climate activists in this study and in others (Spyrou et al., 2021; Nairn, 2019) construct a narrative of an alternative reality, a story of how things need to be, and this reflects something of the 'culture of care' that Weintrobe (2021) has written of.

It appeared that activists had constructed narratives regarding the inaction of leaders; these were often ones of psychopathology or abusive relationships; one understanding of this is whether terms of psychopathology were used to make sense of behaviour that was incomprehensible, Weintrobe (2021) reflects that this is a way of saying that they are out of touch with reality. The role of the researcher as a Counselling Psychologist can be reflected in whether participants attempted to use a shared language as we co-constructed their experience. In contrast to DuBray's (2019) research, there were no clear gender distinctions

between the emotional experiences of the male participants and female participants; however, there was a notable difference in how participants spoke about their experiences. It was interesting that it was only women who used the language of abuse and mental illness to make sense of the inaction of politicians. The similarities between the domination and control of the natural world and the domination and control of women in a patriarchal society have been discussed at length in ecopsychology and ecofeminist texts (Milton, 2016; Rozak, 1995). Participants' descriptions of climate inaction in terms of abusive relationships may speak to the way that gender impacts the construction of the narratives and ways that women contextualise and make sense of behaviours indicative of abuse of power.

### ***5.6 The Future: Hopelessness, Fear, and Concern for future generations***

The findings in this study demonstrated a great level of fear, terror, grief, hopelessness, and despair when thinking about the future. Much like previous literature (Nairn, 2019; Halstead et al., 2021; Howard, 2022), the narratives of the future contained imagery of death, were despairing and at times, apocalyptic. Activism was described as a way of empowering or managing difficult emotions. However, it did not create hope for most participants. In Klere and Wettergren's (2017) research, they identified anger as a sign of hope; this did not appear to be the case in this research; in fact, in contrast to this, anger appeared to be part of the process of hopelessness as participants moved through anger toward futility. The findings of this study were more in line with the experiences of the global south in Klere's and Wettergren's (2017) research, wherein hope was described as a 'painful struggle'. Further, the findings of the pervasive hopelessness countered much of the current literature on activism and relationships cultivating hope (Bell et al., 2021; Halstead et al., 2021; Spyrou et al., 2021; Howard, 2022) or activism bringing hope to others (Larri, 2022). In contrast, the narrative from most participants in this study was one of hopelessness and futility. One way of interpreting this is the impact of participants' age; participants reflected

on the role their age has played in coming to face the climate crisis or the emotions associated, for instance, George's reflections on whether the reality of the climate crisis can only be faced when you know you would not live through it. An alternative explanation could be that participants' own relationship with their mortality is intertwined with the hopelessness they feel about the future, Erikson et al. (1986) note that existential dread can come with older age and that this despair can arise in the face of not only believing that your life is coming to an end but that the world as you know it is, thus removing opportunities for immortality through threatening the future of their children and grandchildren. Though it would be denial to suggest that this is the only reason that activists are feeling despair, age may compound the grief of the climate crisis and may explain the reduction in hope seen in the older generation compared to the younger.

The findings in this study demonstrated that activism supported activists with the challenging emotions that arose in response to the climate crisis; these findings have been repeatedly found in the literature where activism has been found to empower and reduce anxiety (Marczak et al., 2023; Martiskainen et al., 2020; Bell et al., 2021; Halstead et al., 2021; Pickard, 2022). However, whilst activism does support the valuable role that activism can play for those struggling with negative emotions in response to the climate crisis, in line with Hickman et al. (2021), these findings do not mean that the onus on action sits within the individual. Whilst this might be one way of supporting their own well-being and engaging in 'problem-focused coping'; the onus of responsibility to act remains with those in power. In this research, the inaction of those in power was often associated or narratively linked with their fear of the future, hopelessness, and despair. Therefore, if those with the power to effect change acted, it is likely that this would have the greatest impact on supporting or reducing the negative emotions related to the climate crisis. By recognising the benefits of activism in managing climate distress and in creating change *and* recognising that this is not the solution

to climate distress, this helps to continue challenging the narrative of individual responsibility created by corporations in the 1970s (Mann, 2021; Henritze et al., 2023).

Further, these findings of participants' hopelessness are not necessarily negative. Nairn's (2019) participants described that their more cynical peers had been less likely to burn out. Further, it has been argued that hope is a denial of the reality of the situation, and loss of hope reflects a loss of denial (Bendall, 2014). It can perhaps be thought of in relation to the work of Macy and Brown (2014) that once the reality has been faced, then we can work to grieve and work through the loss into action, something that was seen in Mary's story of moving through depression to action. Bendall (2020) argues that hopelessness is not something to be feared or negative, but like those coming to terms with a terminal diagnosis, it can offer us a different way to live. What appeared to motivate participants into action, despite this hopelessness, was often described as a need, as the only option, in the face of the future that they saw for their grandchildren or the children of the future. The participants in this study can be seen as 'wise' adults (Erikson, 1986; Hren Hoare, 2005); their stories are tales of generativity. However, they experienced despair in the face of the existential threat of the climate crisis. The findings of concern for future generations support previous research in both the climate activist (Howard et al., 2021) and non-climate activist populations (DuBray et al., 2019). Whilst this was a small sample and so findings cannot be generalised, in this study, an individual without children expressed similar levels of distress and fear for future generations as those with grandchildren, thus challenging suggestions that generativity is only found in those with children and grandchildren (Erikson et al., 1986; Howard et al., 2021).

The challenges in coming to terms with the climate crisis were a novel and unexpected finding, as climate activists reflected on coming to experience the emotional impact of the climate crisis after they had already joined climate activist movements. These findings were perhaps less expected in the face of much of the research that has shown that

people are motivated into action by emotions (Stanley et al., 2021; Rankin, 2022; Lorenzi & Rosset, 2023; Stollberg & Jonas, 2021). It can be argued that these findings demonstrate the challenge of coming to terms with the climate crisis and the powerful feelings that this knowledge evokes. Whilst the findings did demonstrate some support for Macy and Brown's (2014) theory that we need to move through powerful emotions into action, the findings also demonstrate that individuals can come to climate activism without having fully connected with the difficult emotions that arise with the climate crisis. It seems that as long as denial was not present, activism supported participants in coming to terms with and facing the facts of the climate crisis, perhaps offering the experience of containment needed to face this knowledge.

### ***5.7 Ageing and Activism: Reflections on the life story***

The findings in this study showed that for some, their climate activism in later life was an ongoing product of a sense of identity; this can be understood as what Ricoeur described as 'ipse', the sense of an ongoing sense of self despite the changes that we experience through life (Simms, 2003). The findings showed that for many participants, the early values of their family, religion, and community had perpetuated through their life and shaped the activists they are today. This supports McAdams et al. (2001) research which found that generative adults generally are the protagonist in a 'commitment story', in which, sensitised to others suffering in early life, they go on to be guided by a clear personal ideology that remains stable over time. In this study, we can see how personal ideologies surrounding communion and equality have pervaded across most participants' lives. Those who did not follow this 'commitment story', like Matthew, expressed the most significant impact that activism had on life.

The findings of this research challenge narratives of ageing, Diehl (2022) notes that there remain misconceptions about ageing which include that ageing consists of loss and

decline, that older adults are 'the same' and are a burden to society. This research challenges these misconceptions about ageing and post-retirement. These participants have shown that instead of life slowing and declining, life can become more active, challenging, and exciting; new friendships can be formed, and it can be a time of growth rather than loss. The findings of this research challenge the narrative that older people are only 'vulnerable' to climate change and demonstrate the value that the older generation can bring to activism with the knowledge and skills from across their life. The findings showed that activism could bring purpose and meaning in post-retirement; the findings from this study support previous findings (Dennis & Stock, Larri, 2019; Geary & Ravenscroft, 2019) that older adults value their skills from their professional life being put into use in activism.

Overall, the findings demonstrate the deep care that participants feel with regard to the climate crisis, evoking powerful emotions such as anger, rage, powerlessness, hopelessness, terror and fear. These findings offer a counter-narrative to the discriminatory views held by young people in Spyrou et al.'s (2021) research that older adults are indifferent to the climate crisis and Howard et al.'s (2021) findings that participants felt that older adults 'didn't get it'. Further, the present study demonstrated the anger that these discriminatory views can provoke in the older-adult population. The findings in this study directly challenge ageist narratives about the older generation; not only did the participants care deeply about the climate crisis, but they were often pushing themselves to the edge of burnout to make an impact in the time that they had left.

Participants' reflections on their life spoke to an ongoing thread throughout the interviews and stories, which was one regarding their being in their 'later life stage', in Eriksonian terms, having lived more of their lives than they had left to live (Erikson et al., 1986). Some participants reflected on the legacy that they would be leaving behind; McAdams (1993) reflected that as we come to the later stages of our life, we think about a 'generativity script', what we will be leaving behind for the next generation. Becker (1973)

has described heroism as the ultimate fight for immortality; through their ‘heroism’ they are working on a legacy and on the mark they will have made in the world. Through this, we find immortality, a way of living on when we are no longer here (McAdams, 1993; Becker, 1973). We can wonder whether, in part, climate activists are working on this script through their climate activism and perhaps also through participating in this research; through the present research participants have found another way to live on, to share the story of how they tried to make a difference.

## **5.8 Social Justice and Climate Activism**

The definition of climate activism used in this study would have restricted the involvement of many who are concerned about the climate crisis but may not be able to attend climate protests. There are many reasons why an individual may not be able to engage in collective action and these can relate to social justice and inequality, such as systemic racism within policing, not having the financial freedom to have a time off work to protest, or the way society disables those with impairments (Scope, 2014).

Perhaps because of the issues noted above, the climate activist population is less diverse than the general population; Saunders’ et al. (2020) report on the demographics of extinction rebellion found that two thirds of participants identified as middle class, and 85.8% were reported to have a degree or equivalent, twice the national average. Both Ogunbode et al. (2022) and Martiskainen et al. (2020) demonstrated the unaffordability for many of pro-environmental behaviours, due to the costs associated with buying more environmentally friendly products. The sense of urgency participants felt due to their age and mortality identified in this research can perhaps explain Saunders’ et al. (2020) findings that those over the age of 65 were greater represented in arrests and in the courts despite this being the smallest demographic present at protests. An alternative interpretation of these statistics may be that many over the age of 65 are retired and so are likely to be less concerned about the

impact of arrest on their career. Considering this, those still in work may not be able to attend protests and may not feel able to engage in arrestable actions, continuing to demonstrate the impact of class in climate action.

It could therefore be argued that the focus on collective climate activism limits the diversity of the voices heard in this research. However, this research aimed to explore the emotional impact of the climate crisis through understanding the current experiences of those who are most concerned about it. Hoggett and Randall (2018) noted that climate activists are individuals who have placed the climate crisis at the centre of their lives. Further, research suggests that those who attend protests are the most knowledgeable and most concerned about the climate crisis (Martiskainen et al. 2020; Noth & Tonzer, 2022). As the climate crisis worsens, it is likely it will become a central focus of our lives, thus by understanding the experiences of climate activists we can gain insight into the emotional impact of this experience. Thus, we can argue that exploring the experiences of climate activists limits that range of voices heard in the study and yet can still offer a valuable contribution to our understanding of the emotional impact of the climate crisis.

As such, by recognising both the barriers to climate activism and recognising that this research is still meaningful, we can take a both/and position, moving away from polarisation. This position is reflective of the constructivist epistemological stance of this research. Constructivism's recognition of the complexity of truth, is particularly relevant when considering the pull to polarise in climate activism identified in the current research and Randall's (2009) work. Constructivism states that there are as many realities as there are individuals, as our reality is shaped by our subjective experience (Ponterotto, 2005). Thus, it can be said that the findings in this research are just one of the many truths or realities of activists' experiences (Ponterotto, 2005; O'Leary & Wright, 2005).

Moreover, the narrative analysis used here, as with qualitative research more broadly, focuses on experience and meaning making (Willig, 2021). The use of experiential narrative



analysis in this research focused on the way individuals make sense of their experiences through narrative and acknowledged that our interpretations of events will be shaped by our experiences (McAdams, 1993). Thus, the findings of this research will not represent the experiences of all those that are climate concerned and moreover, it was not intended too. As such, the narrative approach in this research encouraged us to reflect on the ways that class, age, and gender may have impacted participants stories; rather than seeking to irradiate difference, we can instead reflect on these areas of difference. This research identified the unique ways participants' made sense of their experiences and explored their narrative journey to becoming activists, it was idiographic and emic (Ponterotto, 2005), and as such represents one narrative of climate activists whilst recognising that there may be many other narratives.

## **5.9 Implications for Counselling Psychology**

The findings of this study have several implications for Counselling Psychology. Firstly, they demonstrate the vital role of supportive relationships and community play in being able to face the reality of the climate crisis, and the emotions that occur in response to the climate crisis. The findings of this study demonstrate the importance of understanding the individual meaning that individuals have of their experience of the climate crisis; for example, women in this study experienced the inaction of those in power as abusive. As Milton (2016) has previously noted, how Counselling Psychology is known for its challenging stance, and educating practitioners can support challenging societal denial and polarisation in society. As therapists standing for equality and justice, we can use our role to challenge the status quo and systems of power. Practitioners' own understanding of the impact of the climate crisis on emotional well-being increases the likelihood of offering a containing environment wherein the individual can express their climate concerns and distress. The findings demonstrate the importance of offering a safe space to clients in which

their feelings around the climate crisis can be heard, validating their emotional experiences and, as such, countering alienation they may be experiencing in the community. Whilst as reflective and ethical practitioners, we should always consider the biases we may hold, this research encourages us to consider any ageist perspectives that practitioners may hold about older generations' concerns about the climate crisis, so we do not miss distress.

Further, this research aims to bring the climate crisis into the collective consciousness of the Counselling Psychology, psychology, and psychotherapy professions. As noted in the introduction, Milton (2016) has reflected that the climate crisis and our relationship with the natural world is largely missing from practitioner training programmes. With growing research, including the findings of this study, demonstrating the negative impact of the climate crisis on mental health and wellbeing, it can be argued that the climate crisis would benefit from being part of the training in our field. With this in mind, it is hoped that this research can contribute to raising practitioners' awareness of the importance of the climate crisis both in clinical work, research, community psychology and training programmes. It is imperative that the climate crisis continues to grow as a presence in professional discussions, formulations, and psychological thinking to ensure that we can recognise the impact of the climate crisis on individuals and are prepared to support those with climate related distress. To have this impact on practice and conversation, this research will be disseminated through its publication in academic journals and through presentation at professional and academic conferences.

### **5.10 Critical Appraisal of the Study**

Like much of the research regarding climate activism, the participants in this study were all white, described as having accessed further education and presented as middle-class. Whilst generalisability is not an aim of qualitative research, it is an aim for research to be diverse and inclusive; it would have been of benefit if we had a more diverse population to

capture an intersectional understanding of the impact of the climate crisis. Further, although there were many overlapping similarities in participants' stories, there were also areas of divergence and uniqueness; whilst these have been attempted to be captured as well as possible, there are stories that could not be told and may have benefitted from a more in-depth exploration. Whilst within this study, every attempt was made to capture the unique experiences of activists, this was limited by the scope of this project.

These interviews took place shortly following the end of the COVID-19 pandemic and at the beginning of the war in Ukraine; most participants noted the negative impact that this had had on them. Bednarek (2022) notes that the pandemic brought our mortality to our awareness. We can wonder how the pandemic and war impacted the stories told by participants' relationships about an existential threat considering the recent existential threat experienced globally. Thus, this may impact the validity of the findings of this study.

### **5.11 Future research**

Further research could explore the emotional experiences of older activists in the global south or in climate-sensitive locations; this could develop insight into the way direct experiences of the climate crisis have impacted individuals emotionally across their life story; this could support our understanding of the impact of intersectionality within the climate justice movement. There were differences at times in the way participants of different genders constructed their understanding of aspects of the climate crisis; further research could explore this by taking an ecofeminist stance. This research has qualitatively analysed the emotional experiences of older age climate activists; further research could expand on this and take a quantitative approach, which would allow a larger sample size to develop a greater insight into the wider experiences of the older climate activist population.

## **5.12 Conclusion**

This thesis aimed to explore the emotional experiences of older age climate activists engaging with the climate crisis; it also aimed to explore whether this had impacted their life stories. To the best of my knowledge, this was the first piece of research specifically exploring the emotional experiences of older-age activists. A narrative analysis demonstrated that older age climate activists experience a wide range of emotions during the trajectory of their involvement, including anger, fear, hopelessness, joy and futility. The present research identified novel findings on the way that age and the emotional response to the climate crisis intersect. The findings also challenge ageist narratives that exist that the elderly population are not concerned about the climate crisis by demonstrating the immense concern of the participants in this study. This research adds to the growing research and literature demonstrating the negative emotional impact of the climate crisis; in response to this, it highlights the value of the community and connection in activism that can support those struggling whilst also highlighting the responsibility of politicians in effecting change. These findings can support psychologists in their practice with a growing understanding of the impact of the climate crisis on psychological well-being.

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26(2), 231–236. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797614561266>**Appendices**

## **Appendices**

## **Appendix A – Search Terms for Systematic Review**

“Climate change” OR “climate crisis” OR “climate emergency” OR “global warming” OR “environmental degradation”

AND

“Climate\* activist” OR “environmental activist” OR “Climate change activist” OR “Eco\* activist” OR “climate emergency activist” OR “global warming activist” OR “climate crisis activist” OR “environmentalist” OR “protesters” OR “activism” OR “eco-activist” OR “environmental activist” OR “pro-environmental protestor” OR “eco-protestors” OR “Eco-warrior” OR “Eco\*-activism” OR “pro-environmental activism” OR “Climate strike”

AND

“emotions” OR “emotional” OR “wellbeing” OR “mental health” OR “ mental wellbeing” OR “feelings” OR “psychological” OR “psych\*” OR “anxiety” OR “eco-anxiety” OR "grief" OR “eco anxiety”

### **Results:**

#### **PsychInfo:**

- Initial results = 106
- Left after screening =5

#### **Academic Search Premier**

Initial results =110

Following screening: 12

#### **GreenFILE**

Initial search: 23

Following screening= 4

#### **Sage**

Initial search = 24

Following screening = 3

Following full review = 2

Once duplicates removed = 23

## **Appendix B – Recruitment Letter to Organisations**

Dear [activist organisation],

I am a trainee Counselling Psychologist at the University of Roehampton, and as part of my doctorate I am undertaking research into the emotional experience of climate activists' engaging with the threat of the climate crisis.

There is currently limited research exploring the emotional experiences of climate activists, and that which has been done has largely explored the experiences of youth activists. Very little is known about the experiences of climate activists aged 65 and older. I am hoping that this project can provide further insight into the psychological impacts of the climate crisis.

As part of the research project, I am hoping to interview 8 climate activists aged between 65 and 80. I wonder if it would be possible for you to share the attached flyer within your activist community.

Participation would involve one interview that would last up to 1.5 hours. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the interview will take place on Zoom. The interview will be confidential within the confines of the research project and every effort will be made to ensure participants remain anonymous in the write-up of this research and any subsequent publications. This project has been approved under the procedures of the University of Roehampton's Ethics Committee.

Please find attached a flyer containing more information about the project and my contact details so that those that are interested can get in touch. I would be very grateful if you could share this within your community.

If you would like to talk with me further before sharing this or if you have any questions about anything included in this email or the flyer, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Warm wishes,  
Sammy Hart

[email signature]

Appendix C – Recruitment Flyer (with QR code)



## RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

for research exploring the emotional impact of the climate crisis

Are you a climate activist aged between 65 and 80?

Have you been involved in climate activism for two years or more?



I want to hear from you.

Calling all climate activists aged 65 to 80 who would like to take part in research exploring the emotional experience of engaging with the climate crisis.

If you would be interested in supporting this research please scan the QR code or contact me on the email listed below.



Sammy Hart (She/Her), Lead Researcher  
Email: [harts2@roehampton.ac.uk](mailto:harts2@roehampton.ac.uk)

School of Psychology  
University of Roehampton

## **Appendix D – Screening Questionnaire Qualtrics**

**[Form 1 Screening Form (to be administered by Qualtrics) PSYC 21/ 408]**

### **Engaging with the threat of the climate crisis. The emotional journey and life stories of climate activists.**

Thank you for your interest in my research project. The next few pages will provide you with some information about the research and will then go on to ask a few questions to see if you are eligible to participate. You have a week to complete the survey once you have begun and it should take no longer than 10 minutes to go through.

You have the right to withdraw from the survey without giving a reason. You can withdraw at any time by closing your web-browser.

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#### **Brief description of research project:**

This study aims to explore climate activists' emotional experience of engaging with the threat of the climate crisis. There has been little research exploring the emotional experiences of climate activists, and what has been done has focussed on the experiences of youth activists. I, the researcher, aim to speak with 8 climate activists aged 65 to 80.

#### **What participation involves:**

Participating in this project would involve completing one further brief questionnaire and meeting with me for an interview where you will be asked to tell me your story of your involvement with the climate crisis with a focus of your emotional experience.

#### **Where it will take place and how long it will take:**

The interviews will take place on a one-to-one basis using the online platform 'Zoom'. The interview will last no longer than one and a half hours. Together we can decide on a date and time that can suit us both for the interview. It will be important that you have a space that is confidential, safe and that you feel you can share your story. I will also be in a confidential space.

#### **Who can take part in this study?**

- Climate activists aged 65 to 80
- Involved in climate activism over 2 years
- Are actively involved in climate activism (e.g., attending meetings, engaging with the community regarding the climate crisis, attending protests)
- English speaking
- Living in the United Kingdom
- Have a safe and confidential space to complete the interviews

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### **What happens to my personal data?**

In line with UK Data Protection Act (2018) and the University of Roehampton's Record Retention Schedule, if you were to take part in this research project the data collected across the life of the project will be pseudonymised as far as possible and destroyed 10 years after it's completion. If you are not eligible to take part in the study, or if you do not proceed to interview then identifiable data such as your name and contact information will be destroyed at the point of data analysis.

The pseudonymisation of data means that all identifiable information is removed and cannot be linked to you without additional information. Within this study this means that the data collected in this questionnaire holding your name will be stored separately from the rest of your data. The transcript of our interview will have all identifiable data removed from it but will be linked to your consent form and recording by a unique ID number. One reason that we do this is that if you decide to no longer participate in the research, we can identify your data and remove it from the study.

### *Confidentiality*

I am bound by the British Psychological Society (BPS) professional code of ethics and conduct which includes the responsibility to ensure privacy and confidentiality of all information shared by the participant through the research process. All personal information will be held securely and any identifying characteristics (e.g., your name, where you live) will be pseudonymised.

----- PAGE BREAK -----

To see if you are eligible to participate in this research project, I need to ask you some questions about yourself and your involvement in climate activism. As so I can contact you if you are eligible to participate, I will be asking you for your name and email address. As this is personal information, I need to ask your consent to collect this data. The way your data will be stored and managed is included in the previous pages, if you wish to review this information please press 'back' on the survey now.

In the following consent statement 'I' will refer to you, the participant and 'the researcher' to Sammy Hart, principle researcher.

### **Consent statement:**

**I agree to take this survey and am aware that I am free to withdraw at any point without giving a reason by exiting this internet browser window or by contacting the researcher. I understand that if I do withdraw, my data will be erased at the point of analysis and will not be used in the research.**

**The information you provide will be treated in confidence by the researcher and your identity will be protected in the publication of any findings.**

### **Age confirmation**

I confirm I am 18 years old or over.



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**Next Steps**

If you continue to the next part of this survey, I will ask some questions to see if you are eligible to take part in the interview. This survey will take a maximum of 5 minutes.

You have the right to withdraw from the questionnaire without giving a reason. You can withdraw by exiting this questionnaire by closing your web-browser.

Please note that completing this survey does not enrol you to take part in this research. Following your submission of your answers the researcher will aim to contact you within 48 hours to discuss the next steps with you.

**Investigators contact details:**

Sammy Hart (She/Her)  
School of Psychology  
Whitelands Campus,  
University of Roehampton  
Parkstead House  
Holybourne Avenue,  
SW15 4JD

[Harts2@roehampton.ac.uk](mailto:Harts2@roehampton.ac.uk)

**Please note:**

If you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries, please raise this with the investigator or the Director of Studies. However, if you would like to contact an independent party, please contact the Dean of School.

**Director of Studies contact details:**

Dr John Rae  
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**Dean of School contact details:**

Dr Yannis Fronimos  
School of Psychology  
Whitelands Campus  
University of Roehampton  
Holybourne Avenue  
Roehampton  
SW15 4JD  
0208 392 3626  
[Yannis.fronimos@roehampton.ac.uk](mailto:Yannis.fronimos@roehampton.ac.uk)

Should the Dean of School change over the lifecycle of the research project the new Dean of School will become the independent contact. Contact details for the new Dean of School can be obtained from the investigator.

-----PAGE BREAK -----

Page 1

Please provide your full name:

Please provide your email address:

Page 2

**Are you 65-80 years of age?**

Yes/No

**Do you identify as a climate activist?**

Yes/No

**How long have you been involved in activism?**

Less than 5 years	
5-10 years	
11-20 years	
21+	

**Do you live in the United Kingdom?**

Y/N

---- FINAL PAGE ----

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey. I aim to be in touch within 48 hours regarding whether you are eligible for participation in the research study. If you have any questions that have been raised by completing this or if you would like to withdraw from the research, please contact me on my details below.

**Investigators contact details:**

Sammy Hart (She/Her)  
School of Psychology  
Whitelands Campus,  
University of Roehampton  
Parkstead House  
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## **Appendix E – Research Information Form, Consent Form and Sociodemographic Questionnaire: Qualtrics**

### **[Background Information (to be administered by Qualtrics) PSYC 21/ 408]**

#### **Engaging with the threat of the climate crisis. The emotional journey and life stories of climate activists.**

Thank you for your interest in my research project.

This questionnaire will take you up to 20 minutes to complete. The first part will give you some more information about the research project and what participation entails. The second part will ask for your consent to take part in the research. The third and final part will ask you some questions about your identity, for example your age and gender.

You have the right to withdraw from the questionnaire without giving a reason. You can withdraw at any time by closing your web-browser.

### **Block 2 - Participant Information Form**

#### **Engaging with the threat of the climate crisis. The emotional journey and life stories of climate activists.**

#### **Participant Information Form**

The next few pages aim to explain why this research is being completed and to set out what will be involved for those who choose to take part. If any questions arise from reading this, or if there is anything you feel is not covered, please do get in touch with me. My contact details are at the bottom of this form. Thank you for taking the time to read this information form.

#### **About the study**

Whilst many find the climate crisis too difficult to think about, climate activists choose to place this as a central focus in their lives, engaging with the knowledge of this existential threat. I hope that by interviewing climate activists aged 65 to 80, we may better understand the emotional experience of engaging with the climate crisis. It is hoped that the research will add to our understanding of the impacts of the climate crisis and how we may be able to support others in engaging with the climate crisis.

#### **Why are we researching this?**

There is currently very little research exploring the emotional experiences of climate activists and how engaging with the threat of the climate crisis impacts them. The research that has currently been completed has largely looked at the experiences of youth activists, I hope for this research to broaden our understanding of experiences across the lifespan.

#### **Who can get involved?**

I am looking to interview 8 individuals aged 65 to 80 who have been engaged in climate activism for 5 or more years.

**What can you expect?**

If you are eligible, I would invite you to a one-to-one interview on the online platform Zoom. The interview will last up to 1.5 hours in which I will ask you to share with me your story of your engagement with the climate crisis. The interview will be confidential, and your identity will be protected, more information regarding this will be shared if you wish to participate.

**What is informed consent and why is it important?**

Informed consent means that you are given as much information as possible about the study so that you feel that you know what to expect from participation, what will happen to your data and who to turn to if something happens you feel uncomfortable with. Due to the unfolding nature of interviews, it is difficult to comment on all that may arise, but this is to give you a 'good enough' idea of what participation involves.

**Who is organising this research?**

The research is being organised by myself (Sammy Hart, the principal researcher) and two research supervisors in the School of Psychology at the University of Roehampton. I am completing this research as part of my doctorate in Counselling Psychology. This research has been approved by the University of Roehampton's Ethics Committee.

**Who can take part in this study?**

- Climate activists aged 65 to 80.
- Involved in climate activism >2 years.
- Are actively involved in climate activism (e.g., attending meetings, engaging with the community regarding the climate crisis, attending protests)
- English speaking
- Have a safe and confidential space to complete the interviews.

**Do I have to take part?**

No. Taking part in this research is completely voluntary. If you agree to take part now, you can change your mind later (see below).

**If I do take part, what would be asked of me?**

You will be invited to meet me via Zoom for the interview. I will ask for your consent to record our conversation and will record via Zoom. The interview will last up to 1.5 hours. I will ask you to share your story of your engagement with the climate crisis. I may not ask a lot of questions, but I may prompt you at times to 'tell me more'.

After the interview we will spend some time 'debriefing', this is a space dedicated to thinking about your experience of the interview. We will also use this space to think about whether you have any feedback for the interview. This will not be audio-recorded.

**Where and when do the interviews take place?**

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, interviews will take place on Zoom at a time that is convenient for us both. We will both need to be in a safe and confidential space, so that you feel comfortable and able to speak freely. I will provide you with a copy of Zoom's privacy policy.

**Are there any disadvantages/risks to taking part?**

This study has been designed so there are as few risks to taking part as possible. There may be areas of your life that are difficult to think or talk about and may cause you distress. If you do not feel comfortable talking about your experiences or become upset at any point, you can choose not to talk about certain things, we can take a break or we can stop the interview altogether. If this happens, it would be good if we could talk about how, you found the experience and whether you would like any extra support.

You will be asked to dedicate a maximum of 2 hours to this study. Risk to self through screen time is a possibility, I will encourage you to ensure you are comfortable and have adequate screen breaks.

### **Are there any benefits to taking part?**

Some people find it helpful to reflect on their experiences; however, this cannot be guaranteed. It is hoped that this research can go on to help generate knowledge of how climate activists aged 65-80 respond to the emotional threat of the climate crisis and how they stay engaged with this knowledge.

### **Will what I say be confidential?**

What you discuss in the interview is confidential; however, there are limits to this, these include if I feel that you are at risk of harm to yourself or someone else or if you disclose engagement in criminal activity that has not been investigated. Wherever possible I would discuss this with you first.

When I write up the findings of the study, I will ensure that any details that could directly identify you will be removed. For example, I will remove your name, any names of others you mention, the names of cities or any dates.

### **Will my data be kept safe?**

For the purpose of this research, **data can be defined** as any information you provide, for example your consent form, the recordings from the interviews and the transcripts of the interviews. All data collected in this research will be stored on a password protected and encrypted device.

Your consent forms holding your name and socio-demographic data will be stored separately from the rest of your data. Whilst your transcript will have all identifiable data removed from it, it will be linked to your consent form and recording by a code. This means that the data is pseudonymised. Having a code linking your data to your consent form means that if you were to ask to withdraw participation from the study, I will be able to identify which data is yours. This is discussed further below. Please note that it is not possible to edit audio recordings, therefore identifiable information on the audio recording will not be able to be removed. I will be the only person who will see your identifiable information, your pseudonymised data will be seen by my research supervisors and examiners.

The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) (2018) and the Data Protection Act (2018) ensure that your data is managed and processed in the safest way. In line with UK Data Protection Act (2018) and the University of Roehampton's Record Retention Schedule, data collected over the course of this research will be pseudonymised and will be kept for 10 years from the completion of the project before being archived/destroyed. When I have completed my studies, the data will be transferred from one secure encrypted server to another (for example from the University OneDrive to the researcher's personal OneDrive).

This will all be done under following the University of Roehampton's Data Protection Guidance (2020) and the regulations of UK Data Protection Act (2018).

There is a possibility that your data will be used again in future research. You have the option to decline consent to your data being used again.

**What is Zoom's policy for data sharing?**

Zoom cannot hear or access what is discussed when using their system; therefore, the interviews will remain private and confidential. Zoom have their own privacy policy for how they handle data, which is provided on a separate document. It is recommended that we both delete our cookies after our Zoom calls to increase confidentiality, instructions on how to do so will be provided.

**What will happen to the research once it is complete?**

The research will be written up as a doctoral thesis and published through the University of Roehampton online portal. It is hoped that this research will go on to be published in academic journals and may be presented at seminars and conferences.

Whilst all identifiable information will be removed from the research, due to the nature of life story research, you may still be identifiable, I encourage you to consider how you might feel about your story being analysed and shared. Sometimes, participants wish for identifiable information to be shared. Due to the long-term impacts this may have, this is not possible within this research.

**What happens if I change my mind?**

You can change your mind at any time about participating in this research. Whilst completing the following questionnaire you can exit the browser. If it is prior to the interview, you can cancel the interview by contacting me as soon as possible. If you change your mind during the interview, then we can conclude the interview straight away. If you change your mind after the interview, you will need to contact me and provide your unique ID number (which will be at the end of this questionnaire and on your debrief form) so we can locate your data and remove it prior to analysis. Once I have begun analysis, I may not be able to withdraw your data however it will be used as part of an anonymised aggregated dataset. The University's [Data Privacy Notice for Research Participants](#) accompanies this form.

**What if I have concerns about the study?**

If you have any concerns about the study, please talk to me about this as soon as possible by using the contact details at the end of this questionnaire. If you would prefer not to speak with me about your concerns, you can contact my Director of Studies, Dr John Rae. If you feel you would like to talk to someone independent from the research, you can contact Dr Yannis Fronimos, Dean of School of Psychology.

## **Engaging with the threat of the climate crisis. The emotional journey and life stories of climate activists.**

### **Participant Consent Form**

Thank you for reading through the Participant Information Form, I hope this has given you a clear idea of why this research is being completed and what participation entails. This next section follows on from the Information Form and asks for your consent to participate in this research project. Participating in this project would involve meeting me on Zoom for an interview for up to an hour and a half. During your interview I will ask you to share with me your emotional experience of engaging with the climate crisis. Our interview will be audio-recorded.

Further information regarding what participation involves, where it will take place, how long it will take, how long any personal data will be kept for, how the research will be disseminated (seminars, conferences, journals etc) is included on the Participant Information Form. Please press 'back' on the questionnaire if you would like to review the Participant Information Form again.

If you have any further questions that you would like to ask before completing this consent form, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me via the email address listed below.

#### **Investigator contact details:**

Sammy Hart (She/Her)  
School of Psychology  
Whitelands Campus,  
University of Roehampton  
Parkstead House  
Holybourne Avenue,  
SW15 4JD

Harts2@roehampton.ac.uk

In the following consent statement 'I' will refer to you, the participant and 'the researcher' to Sammy Hart, principle researcher.

#### **Consent Statement:**

**I agree to take part in this research and am aware that I am free to withdraw at any point without giving a reason by contacting Sammy Hart. I understand that if I do withdraw, my data may not be erased but will only be used in an anonymised form as part of an aggregated dataset. I understand that the personal data collected from me during the course of the project will be used for the purposes outlined above in the public interest.**

**By signing this form you are confirming that you have been informed about and understand the University's Data Privacy Notice for Research Participants.**



**The information you have provided will be treated in confidence by the researcher and your identity will be protected in the publication of any findings. The purpose of the research may change over time, and your data may be re-used for research projects by the University in the future. If this is the case, you will normally be provided with additional information about the new project.**

Name .....

Signature .....

Date .....

Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries, please raise this with the investigator or the Director of Studies. However, if you would like to contact an independent party, please contact the Dean of School.

**Director of Studies contact details:**

Dr John Rae  
School of Psychology  
Whitelands Campus,  
University of Roehampton,  
Holybourne Avenue,  
Roehampton,  
SW15 4JD  
j.rae@roehampton.ac.uk

**Dean of School contact details:**

Dr Yannis Fronimos  
School of Psychology  
Whitelands Campus,  
University of Roehampton,  
Holybourne Avenue,  
Roehampton,  
SW15 4JD  
0208 392 3626  
Yannis.fronimos@roehampton.ac.uk

Should the Dean of School change over the lifecycle of the research project the new Dean of School will become the independent contact. Contact details for the new Dean of School can be obtained from the investigator.

**Please place a tick in the box next to your preferred option regarding the use of your data in future research:**

I wish for my data to only be used in this piece of research. Please do not share my data for further research purposes.	
I am happy for my data to be shared and used in future research.	

### Block 4 - Socio-demographic Questionnaire

These questions aim to collect some background information about who you are and how you describe yourself. All data gathered during this study will be held securely. It will only be used in accordance with the permissions that you gave in the consent form.

**What is your age?**

**How do you identify yourself with respect to your gender?**

Female Including transgender women	
Male Including transgender men	
Non-binary	
In some other way:	
Prefer not to say	

**Please choose one selection from A-F and tick the appropriate box to show your ethnic group.**

<b>A. White</b>	
British, English, Northern Irish, Scottish or Welsh	
Irish	
Gypsy or Irish Traveller	
Any other white background, please specify	
<b>B. Mixed or multiple ethnic groups</b>	
White and Black Caribbean	
White and Black Asian	
White and Asian	
Any other mixed or multiple ethnic background, please specify:	

<b>C. Asian or Asian British</b>	
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
Any other Asian background, please specify:	
<b>D. Black, African, Caribbean or Black British</b>	
Caribbean	
African	
Any other Black British, African or Caribbean background, please specify:	
<b>E. Other ethnic group</b>	
Arab	
Any other ethnic group, please specify:	
<b>F. Prefer not to say</b>	

### Block 5 – Thank you and Unique ID

*(on Qualtrics a unique participant ID will be given at this point)*

Please take note of this unique participant ID, this will link the information on this form to your interview data. This means if you decide to withdraw from the research we will be able to identify your interview data to remove. I will also give you this number at the end of the interview.

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. I aim to be in touch within 48 hours to discuss organising an interview. If you have any questions that have been raised by completing this or if you would like to withdraw from the research please contact me on my details below.

**Investigator contact details:**

Sammy Hart (She/Her)  
School of Psychology  
Whitelands Campus,  
University of Roehampton  
Parkstead House  
Holybourne Avenue,  
SW15 4JD

Harts2@roehampton.ac.uk

## Appendix F – Zoom Instructions

### How To Use Zoom

You can create a Zoom account and download the application for free from: <https://zoom.us>.

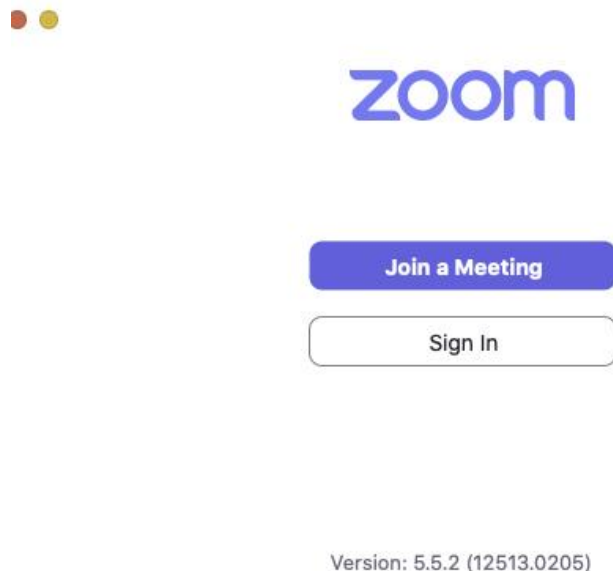
You are able to join a Zoom meeting either through the online web browser or through the application on your device.

Prior to our meeting you can go on the website to familiarise yourself with what it looks like.

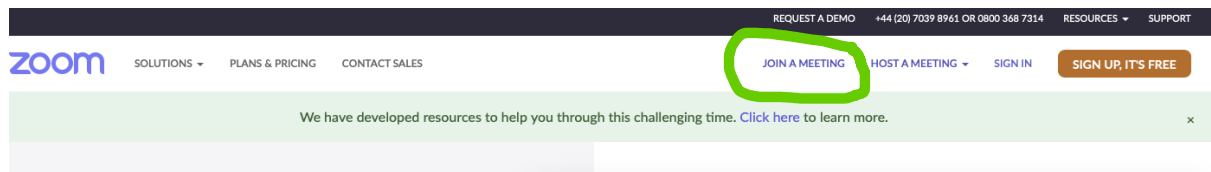
I will send you an invitation for our meeting/s via email. This invitation will contain the meeting ID, password and link.

You can access the meeting in two ways. First, you can click on the link in the invitation, which will take you to another page for the meeting. Or you can enter the meeting ID and password manually either on the application through 'join a meeting' or at the top of the webpage where it will also say 'join a meeting'

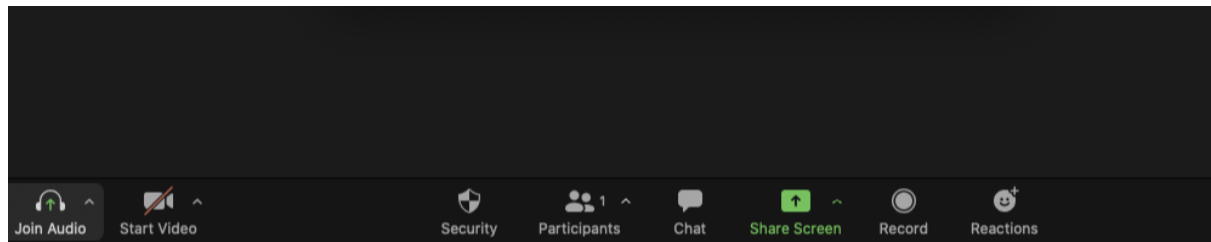
### Application



### Web browser



You will then be able to join our meeting. You may need to adjust audio and video settings, which are in the lower left corner of the screen.



There is also a helpful video on YouTube which explains how to set up and use Zoom further: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QOUwumKCW7M>.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

**Investigator contact details:**

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Whitelands Campus,  
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Holybourne Avenue,  
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## **Appendix F – Data Privacy Notice for Research Participants**

### **DATA PRIVACY NOTICE FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

#### **Research Participants - How the University of Roehampton uses your personal data**

##### **Why have I been directed here or been given this form?**

This statement explains how the University of Roehampton handles and uses personal data collected from research participants. This includes data collected directly from research participants or where the data has been received from a third party.

##### **Who will process my personal data?**

This statement applies to all research conducted by the University of Roehampton and its members.

##### **What is the purpose of the personal data processing?**

You will have been informed about the specific types of personal data that will be used in connection with the research project you are participating in, and the nature and purpose of the research project. You will have been informed of any data sharing with participating research institutions, transfers outside of the European Union, and any automated decision making that affects you.

In some cases, your data may have been shared with the University by another organisation for the purposes of conducting research. The University may also re-use personal data it already holds for the purposes of conducting new research. The University will only use personal data in this way where it is legally entitled to do so. In all cases, the University will normally contact you to give you details of the research unless this would be impossible or involve disproportionate effort, or would significantly undermine the research objectives.

The University may in exceptional circumstances release personal data to appropriate authorities without seeking the permission of or notifying the data subject, but will only do so in compliance with its legal obligations.

##### **What is the legal basis of the processing?**

In the majority of cases, your personal data (including, where appropriate, sensitive personal data) is used to carry out research, including scientific, historical and statistical research, in the public interest. Where the research is commercial in nature or funded by a private company, the legal basis for processing is likely to be legitimate interests. If the personal data being used for research purposes falls into one of the special categories of personal data, including criminal convictions data, the lawful basis will usually be that the processing is necessary for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific or historical research purposes.

##### **What are my rights as a data subject?**

The General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018 provide exemptions for personal data processing in relation to research activities.

You have the right to opt-out of any further processing. If you do opt-out, your personal data may not be erased but will only be used in an anonymised form as part of the dataset. (Please note that this is separate to withdrawing your participation from the research project itself).

In accordance with accepted ethical standards, you will not be named in any published materials unless you have given your explicit permission for this to happen.

The University considers that other statutory rights held by personal data subjects do not apply where the personal data is being processed for the purposes of research. If you would like to request a copy of the personal data then you can contact the lead researcher. Where practicable, they will provide you with a copy of this data. However, they are under no obligation to do so.

### **How long is my information kept for?**

Your data will be kept in accordance with the University of Roehampton's Record Retention Schedule. Research data may be retained indefinitely in an anonymised form by researchers. The University may also reuse your personal data for a different research project. If it does, the University will make reasonable attempts to inform you about this reuse and its impact on your rights as a data subject.

Occasionally a researcher will leave the University and begin working for another organisation. In this case, your personal data may be transferred to the new organisation so that the research project can continue. If this happens, you should be provided with updated privacy information by the new organisation.

The University is committed to protecting all personal data for which it acts as a controller. Your information will be safely held on a secure system.

### **Who can I contact?**

The University has a Data Protection Policy which sets out how personal data will be used across the whole University. Further information about data protection can also be found on the University's website. <https://www.roehampton.ac.uk/corporate-information/policies/>. If you would like to receive hard copies of any policies relating to Data Protection please contact the University Data Protection Officer.

If you would like to make a general query about how your data is being used as part of a research project, you should contact the researcher whose details you will already have been provided with.

If you would like to make any further enquiries or raise any concerns with respect to your personal data, or your rights as a data subject, you can contact the University's Data Protection Officer, Alison Bainbridge, at [a.bainbridge@roehampton.ac.uk](mailto:a.bainbridge@roehampton.ac.uk).

### **How do I complain?**



If you have any concerns about the University's handling of your personal data, you have the right to make a complaint about to the Information Commissioner's Office and can do so at <http://ico.org.uk/concerns/>.

## **Appendix H – How to delete cookies instructions**

### **Clear Cache and Cookies**

Begin by clearing your browser's cache and cookies. Follow the steps below depending on which browser and operating system you use.

#### **Chrome**

##### **PC:**

In the Chrome browser toolbar, click the **Menu** icon.

Click the **More Tools** link.

Click the **Clear browsing data** link.

Use the drop-down menu to select the time range from which you want to clear browsing data.

Select the **Cookies and other site data** and **Cached images and files** checkboxes.

Click the **Clear Browsing Data** button.

##### **Mac:**

In the browser toolbar, click the **Menu** icon.

Click the **More Tools** link.

Click the **Clear browsing data** link.

In the data drop-down menu, select the time range where you want to clear browsing data.

Select the **Cookies and other site and plug-in data** and **Cached images and files** checkboxes.

Click the **Clear Browsing Data** button.

#### **Edge**

In the Edge menu bar, click the **Hub** icon.

To view your browsing history, click the **History** icon.

Click the **Clear all history** link.

Choose the types of data or files you want to remove. Select the **Cookies and saved website data** and **Cached data and files** checkboxes.

Click the **Clear** button.

#### **Firefox**

##### **PC:**

In the Firefox menu bar, click the **Firefox** option.

Select the **Preferences** link.

Click the **Privacy** tab.

Under the History heading, click the **clear your recent history** link.

Select the **Cache** checkbox.

Click the **Clear Now** button.

##### **Mac:**

In the Firefox menu bar, click the **Firefox** option.

Select the **Preferences** link.

Click the **Privacy** tab.

Under the History heading, click the **clear your recent history** link.

Select the **Cache** checkbox.

Click the **Clear Now** button.

To learn more about clearing your cache in Firefox, visit [Firefox Support](#).

### **Safari**

In the Safari menu bar, click the **Safari** option.

Click the **Clear History** link.

In the Clear History drop-down menu, select the time range where you want to clear browsing data.

Click the **Clear History** button.

## Appendix I – Information about OneDrive data storage

### How OneDrive safeguards your data in the cloud

*OneDrive (home or personal) OneDrive for Mac OneDrive for Windows*

You control your data. When you put your data in OneDrive cloud storage, you remain the owner of the data. For more info about the ownership of your data, see Office 365 Privacy by Design.

### How OneDrive protects your data

Microsoft engineers administer OneDrive using a Windows PowerShell console that requires two-factor authentication. We perform day-to-day tasks by running workflows so we can rapidly respond to new situations. No engineer has standing access to the service. When engineers need access, they must request it. Eligibility is checked, and if engineer access is approved, it's only for a limited time.

Additionally, OneDrive and Office 365, strongly invests in systems, processes, and personnel to reduce the likelihood of personal data breach and to quickly detect and mitigate consequence of breach if it does occur. Some of our investments in this space include:

**Access control systems:** OneDrive and Office 365 maintain a “zero-standing access” policy, which means that engineers do not have access to the service unless it is explicitly granted in response to a specific incident that requires elevation of access. Whenever access is granted it is done under the principle of least privilege: permission granted for a specific request only allows for a minimal set of actions required to service that request. To do this, OneDrive and Office 365 maintain strict separation between “elevation roles,” with each role only allowing certain pre-defined actions to be taken. The “Access to Customer Data” role is distinct from other roles that are more commonly used to administer the service and is scrutinized most heavily before approval. Taken together, these investments in access control greatly reduce the likelihood that an engineer in OneDrive or Office 365 inappropriately accesses customer data.

**Security monitoring systems and automation:** OneDrive and Office 365 maintain robust, real-time security monitoring systems. Among other issues, these systems raise alerts for attempts to illicitly access customer data, or for attempts to illicitly transfer data out of our service. Related to the points about access control mentioned above, our security monitoring systems maintain detailed records of elevation requests that are made, and the actions taken for a given elevation request. OneDrive and Office 365 also maintain automatic resolution investments that automatically act to mitigate threats in response to issues we detect, and dedicated teams for responding to alerts that cannot be resolved automatically. To validate our security monitoring systems, OneDrive and Office 365 regularly conduct red-team exercises in which an internal penetration testing team simulates attacker behavior against the live environment. These exercises lead to regular improvements to our security monitoring and response capabilities.

**Personnel and processes:** In addition to the automation described above, OneDrive and Office 365 maintain processes and teams responsible for both educating the broader organization about privacy and incident management processes, and for executing those processes during a breach. For example, a detailed privacy breach Standard Operating

Procedure (SOP) is maintained and shared with teams throughout the organization. This SOP describes in detail the roles and responsibilities both of individual teams within OneDrive and Office 365 and centralized security incident response teams. These span both what teams need to do to improve their own security posture (conduct security reviews, integrate with central security monitoring systems, and other best practices), and what teams would need to do in the event of an actual breach (rapid escalation to incident response, maintain and provide specific data sources that will be used to expedite the response process). Teams are also regularly trained on data classification, and correct handling and storage procedures for personal data.

The major takeaway is that OneDrive and Office 365, for both consumer and business plans, strongly invest in reducing the likelihood and consequences of personal data breach impacting our customers. If a personal data breach does occur, we are committed to rapidly notifying our customers once that breach is confirmed.

Protected in transit and at rest

Protected in transit

When data transits into the service from clients, and between datacenters, it's protected using transport layer security (TLS) encryption. We only permit secure access. We won't allow authenticated connections over HTTP, but instead redirect to HTTPS.

Protected at rest

**Physical protection:** Only a limited number of essential personnel can gain access to datacenters. Their identities are verified with multiple factors of authentication including smart cards and biometrics. There are on-premises security officers, motion sensors, and video surveillance. Intrusion detection alerts monitor anomalous activity.

**Network protection:** The networks and identities are isolated from the Microsoft corporate network. Firewalls limit traffic into the environment from unauthorized locations.

**Application security:** Engineers who build features follow the security development lifecycle. Automated and manual analyses help identify possible vulnerabilities. The Microsoft Security Response Center helps triage incoming vulnerability reports and evaluate mitigations. Through the Microsoft Cloud Bug Bounty Terms, people across the world can earn money by reporting vulnerabilities.

**Content protection:** Each file is encrypted at rest with a unique AES256 key. These unique keys are encrypted with a set of master keys that are stored in Azure Key Vault.

Highly available, always recoverable

Our datacenters are geo-distributed within the region and fault tolerant. Data is mirrored into at least two different Azure regions, which are at least several hundred miles away from each other, allowing us to mitigate the impact of a natural disaster or loss within a region.

Continuously validated

We constantly monitor our datacenters to keep them healthy and secure. This starts with inventory. An inventory agent performs a state capture of each machine.

After we have an inventory, we can monitor and remediate the health of machines.

Continuous deployment ensures that each machine receives patches, updated anti-virus signatures, and a known good configuration saved. Deployment logic ensures we only patch or rotate out a certain percentage of machines at a time.

The Microsoft 365 "Red Team" within Microsoft is made up of intrusion specialists. They look for any opportunity to gain unauthorized access. The "Blue Team" is made up of defense engineers who focus on prevention, detection, and recovery. They build intrusion detection

and response technologies. To keep up with the learnings of the security teams at Microsoft, see [Security Office 365 \(blog\)](#).

Additional OneDrive security features

As a cloud storage service, OneDrive has many other security features. Those include:

- **Virus scanning on download for known threats** - The Windows Defender anti-malware engine scans documents at download time for content matching an AV signature (updated hourly).
- **Suspicious activity monitoring** - To prevent unauthorized access to your account, OneDrive monitors for and blocks suspicious sign-in attempts. Additionally, we'll send you an email notification if we detect unusual activity, such as an attempt to sign in from a new device or location.
- **Ransomware detection and recovery** - As an Microsoft 365 subscriber, you will get alerted if OneDrive detects a ransomware or malicious attack. You'll be able to easily recover your files to a point in time before they were affected, up to 30 days after the attack. You can also restore your entire OneDrive up to 30 days after a malicious attack or other types of data loss, such as file corruption, or accidental deletes and edits.
- **Version history for all file types** - In the case of unwanted edits or accidental deletes, you can restore deleted files from the OneDrive recycle bin or restore a previous version of a file in OneDrive.
- **Password protected & expiring sharing links** - As an Microsoft 365 subscriber, you can keep your shared files more secure by requiring a password to access them or setting an expiration date on the sharing link.
- **Mass file deletion notification and recovery** - If you accidentally or intentionally delete a large number of files in your OneDrive cloud backup, we will alert you and provide you with steps to recover those files.

## Personal Vault

OneDrive Personal Vault is a protected area in OneDrive that you can only access with a strong authentication method or a second step of identity verification, such as your fingerprint, face, PIN, or a code sent to you via email or SMS.<sup>1</sup> Your locked files in Personal Vault have an extra layer of security, keeping them more secured in case someone gains access to your account or your device. Personal Vault is available on your PC, on OneDrive.com, and on the OneDrive mobile app, and it also includes the following features:

- **Scan directly into Personal Vault** - You can use the OneDrive mobile app to take pictures or shoot video directly into your Personal Vault, keeping them off less secure areas of your device—such as your camera roll.<sup>2</sup> You can also scan important travel, identification, vehicle, home, and insurance documents directly into your Personal Vault. And you'll have access to these photos and documents wherever you go, across your devices.
- **BitLocker-encryption** - On Windows 10 PCs, OneDrive syncs your Personal Vault files to a BitLocker-encrypted area of your local hard drive.
- **Automatic locking** - Personal Vault automatically relocks on your PC, device, or online after a short period of inactivity. Once locked, any files you were using will also lock and require re-authentication to access.<sup>3</sup>

Together, these measures help keep your locked Personal Vault files protected even if your Windows 10 PC or mobile device is lost, stolen, or someone gains access to it.

<sup>1</sup> *Face and fingerprint verification requires specialized hardware including a Windows Hello capable device, fingerprint reader, illuminated IR sensor, or other biometric sensors and*

*capable devices.*

<sup>2</sup> *The OneDrive app on Android and iOS requires either Android 6.0 or above or iOS 12.0 and above.*

<sup>3</sup> *Automatic locking interval varies by device and can be set by the user.*

Taken from: <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/how-onedrive-safeguards-your-data-in-the-cloud-23c6ea94-3608-48d7-8bf0-80e142edd1e1>

More information can be found at: <https://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/trust-center/privacy>

## **Appendix J –Link to Zoom Privacy Statement**

Zoom Privacy Statement

[https://zoom.us/privacy#\\_Toc44414842](https://zoom.us/privacy#_Toc44414842)

Last updated: August 2020

## **Appendix K – Sample Interview Question**

### **Sample interview question**

Sample preamble to question:

"I am going to ask you a question; I might not say much after this; this is to allow you space to speak freely. After about 45 minutes, I will ask you some questions about what you have shared with me. There are no right or wrong answers to this question, but I am particularly interested in your emotional experience of the climate crisis. We will have up to 75 minutes to explore this. You can start wherever you like."

The single interview question:

"Please can you tell me your story of your relationship with the climate crisis and climate activism, all the moments and experiences that have been important to you. Please try to reflect on how you have felt emotionally across your story. You can begin wherever you would like to begin, I won't interrupt, I'll just take some notes for afterwards"

Once this question has been asked, I will not ask further questions but will give non-verbal encouragement such as nodding and 'hmm', tentative empathic responses. Prompts such as: "does it make you think of anything else?", "can you tell me more" will be offered if needed. In the second half of the interview, I will continue to expand upon topics raised by the participant in the first half of the interview (Wengraf, 2002); I may also ask some questions that are related to my research interests.

At the end of the interview, I will ask participants if there is anything they feel they would like to say but they had not had a chance to?

## **References**

Wengraf, T. (2004). *The Biographic-Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM)*.



## Appendix L – Debrief Form



### **Engaging with the threat of the climate crisis. The emotional journey and life stories of climate activist**

**Thank you** for giving up your time and sharing your story with me as a participant in this research project. I hope you found this to be a valuable experience.

#### **Purpose of Research**

My aim in talking to you today was to find out more about your experience of engaging with the climate crisis, in particular the emotions this engagement has evoked. This research also aims to explore how your engagement with the climate crisis and activism have shaped your sense of self and your life story.

The reason for doing this research is to improve our understanding of the emotions experienced by engaging with the threat or the reality of the climate crisis. As the climate crisis worsens, more individuals will likely have to come to face this knowledge, and understanding the experiences of those that already do can help us further our understanding of how best to support those who are coming to this awareness later.

Further, the climate crisis may shape how we think about the life we have led and the futures of ourselves and of the planet. Thus, by hearing your life stories we hope to gain some insight into how engaging with this knowledge has shaped your life story.

This will support the developing research into the psychological impact of the climate crisis.

#### **Debrief**

Sometimes during an interview, people get thoughts, feelings, concerns or questions that they want to talk about. We shall now take some time to talk about anything that arose for you. It is important that you have a chance to reflect on the interview, and to take a moment to consider if there is anything you would like to talk about. The following questions may help in doing this:

- How are you left feeling after this interview?
- What was your experience of being interviewed?
- Do you have any questions or concerns about the interview process or what happens next?
- Do you have any thoughts on how this experience could be improved?

#### **Further Support**

I understand that difficult thoughts and feelings may have arisen through this experience. Talking about your life story and your relationship with the climate crisis may have brought up distressing memories or difficult emotions related to the climate crisis.

Below are some details of services that can offer both climate distress related support and more general emotional support.

**Climate Café's** provide a safe space to meet with others and talk about how the climate crisis makes you feel.

<https://climatecafes.org/map-locations/>

Whilst climate distress can be a helpful sign that something is wrong, at times this can become overwhelming and begin to impact our functioning day to day. In this case, it may be helpful to speak to someone that is trained in supporting those in distress.

**Counselling** can provide a safe space to explore your feelings around the climate crisis.

Whilst all therapists are likely to have the skills to work with climate distress, The Climate Psychology Alliance provide details of therapists around the UK who specialise in this area:

<https://www.climatepsychologyalliance.org/support/indsupport>

**The Samaritans** offer free confidential non-judgmental emotional support, 24 hours a day, for people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those which could lead to suicide.

Telephone: 116 123

Chris,  
Freepost RSRB-KKBY-CYJK,  
PO Box 9090,  
STIRLING,  
FK8 2SA

Email: [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

Write a letter:

If you think of any questions you would like to ask once I have gone, or if you need further support, then you can contact me on the details included below.

### **What if I change my mind?**

If you change your mind about being involved in this study and would like to withdraw your data, please contact me as soon as possible and provide your unique ID number that is listed at the bottom of this sheet. This is so we can identify your data and remove it from the analysis. When analysis begins it will become difficult to withdraw your data from the study and it may still be used in anonymised form as part of an aggregated data set.

### **Thank you**

To thank you for your time and sharing your story with me, as a symbol of gratitude for your time I would like to make a donation of a value of £20 to the environmental organisation of your choice or purchase a tree in the Scottish Rewilding Project 'Tree of Life'. The tree will be named 'for my research participant' and can be found by visiting:

<https://treesforlife.org.uk/>

If you have any questions or comments regarding your experience, your data or the research project, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me:

**Investigators contact details:**

**Sammy Hart (She/Her)**  
School of Psychology  
Whitelands Campus,  
University of Roehampton  
Parkstead House  
Holybourne Avenue,  
SW15 4JD

[Harts2@roehampton.ac.uk](mailto:Harts2@roehampton.ac.uk)

**Please note:** if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries please raise this with the investigator or the Director of Studies. However, if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the Dean of School.

**Director of Studies contact details:**

John Rae  
School of Psychology  
Whitlands Campus,  
University of Roehampton,  
Holybourne Avenue,  
Roehampton,  
SW15 4JD  
[j.rae@roehampton.ac.uk](mailto:j.rae@roehampton.ac.uk)

**Dean of School contact details:**

Yannis Fronimos  
School of Psychology  
Whitelands Campus,  
University of Roehampton,  
Holybourne Avenue,  
Roehampton,  
SW15 4JD  
0208 392 3626  
[yannis.fronimos@roehampton.ac.uk](mailto:yannis.fronimos@roehampton.ac.uk)

Should the Dean of School change over the lifecycle of the research project the new Dean of School will become the independent contact. Contact details for the new Dean of School can be obtained from the investigator.

Unique ID:

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## Appendix M – Example initial read through

101 umm at the terrible way that profit was put over ummm the good of the  
 102 environment. Was-was the guiding factor and so I would, you know I was I was one  
 103 of the primary educators in the movement umm which you know is still a reasonably  
 104 healthy and robust organisation going on locally and im still pretty involved in it and I  
 105 teach organic gardening once a month on zoom. I used to teach it in person, I went  
 106 out and gave, so I suppose it was my first activism in a way, I would go out and give  
 107 talks to local horticultural societies for instance and-and college students and so on. I  
 108 probably did a lot at my peak I was probably doing 2 or 3 a year about how important  
 109 it is to create safe havens where we can in our gardens, allotments, school gardens  
 110 and so on, for creatures. Not use any poisons so we are building habitat locally  
 111 because the rural habitat has become so dangerous and I have been very shocked  
 112 by the terrible cataclysmic drop in numbers of insects, 75% in, in 70 years we've lost  
 113 and and the birds you know, we have lost 50% of farm birds and the habitat loss you  
 114 know 90% 95% was lost. So this really engaged my outrage I suppose. Umm and  
 115 my motivation for encouraging people to not only grow organically but buy  
 116 organically as well, because there is so much more wildlife on organic farms. So that  
 117 was, that was what I was doing for that 20 years, I've got an organic allotment, I'm a  
 118 bit too old and infirm now to do it too much but I have two wonderful allotment co-  
 119 workers who actually joined [redacted] a couple of weeks ago so I'm really  
 120 chuffed about that. So that was from my ecological perspective. Umm I had done a  
 121 bit of justice activism, I used to go on demonstrations, I was at university in [redacted]  
 122 [redacted] and I used to go on demonstrations for the civil rights campaign there umm  
 123 because I was horrified by the injustice to Catholics of something called  
 124 gerrymandering where they would draw the election boundaries so Catholics would  
 125 have no chance of having a voice in power. So I guess that was one of my first  
 126 introductions to injustice, oh no, no no, one of my first introductions to injustice was  
 127 Martin Luther King of course because the civil rights demonstrations in the states  
 128 were going on while I was in my teens. Umm and I remember being very engaged by  
 129 that. I was brought up in a very religious background, ummm my dad was a Parson,  
 130 a minister, and so we were taught from a very early age, that-that the entire human  
 131 population is family, we are all god's children. And that everyone no matter what  
 132 colour, what culture, what language, what religious belief we are all one family so I  
 133 think that's been really, and still is a really deep part of my engagement because part  
 134 of my engagement with umm [redacted] is looking at the social justice  
 135 aspect of it, where umm. Ok so the most particular things, there's two, the most  
 136 particular things are that the people who have done the least to cause the  
 137 environment and climate problem are the umm the ones that are suffering the most  
 138 because they're more equatorial and more marginalised societies but even in  
 139 developed countries the people who suffer most are those who are poor and those  
 140 who are of colour umm women and children umm because they live in, they have to  
 141 live in cheap housing so that's much more likely to be polluted and subject to  
 142 flooding and air pollution and pollution from industry. All of those things, so that's a  
 143 really big part of my engagement. And the other bit with the social justice thing is just  
 144 seeing how the new fossil fuel developments are impacting, particularly on people in  
 145 Africa and indigenous communities in both north and south America. Umm it's just  
 146 awful, it feels like rape to me. It feels like, the patriarchal colonial mindset, which is  
 147 into profit and power is just going in and has done for you know, probably forever,  
 148 but particularly over the last 500 years. Has gone in and committed genocide and  
 149 taking slaves and taking land from people without so much of as [inaudible]. Telling  
 150 people, telling the indigenous people that this is going to be good for you in the long

*creating agency / vs damage*

*motivated by outrage & frustration*

*waves have reigned*

*shock at loss*

*outrage at loss motivated organic action*

*interconnect & faith*

*social & climate justice*

*profit & Power - profit / power & social enquire.*

*using my life to work against this*



## Appendix N – Example initial analysis



Original Transcript	Tone	What <u>are</u> imagery? What language is used to describe & characterise life events? Self-defining memories and emotionally salient experiences? What connections are made? Is there a pattern of what motivated them or what is important? How does the story progress?	Themes	For whom is this story constructed? Audience? How is the participant positioning himself/herself? How did I contribute?
<p><b>**Mary spoke of outrage and fear – I wondered about sadness, loss, grief and I wondered if the outrage <u>protects</u> ? or perhaps it is simply she is more angry right now – stages of grief</b></p> <p><b>Participant:</b> Okay so, umm, I think it's important to state that its <u>its both the climate and the ecological emergency that I feel engaged in, I don't want to leave the ecological side out of it because that was probably more, ummm, more of a motivating thing <u>initially</u></u></p> <p><b>Researcher:</b> Mmm.</p> <p><b>Participant:</b> So, went to university in 1968, and I studied human ecology umm which looked at the impact of humans on the environment and how humans were affected by the environment. <u>So</u> it was kind of a, no one had heard of ecology in those days [laughter] so this was gosh, 54 years ago that I went. <u>Ummm</u> and obviously that alerted me to the fact that there was a greenhouse effect, that co2 emissions had been going up steadily through the industrial revolution and that the planet was warming. It didn't seem, at the time, a particularly <u>huge deal</u> umm but of course back then we didn't know that it was really going to ramp up to the level that is has now. So I think for me, it was more umm looking at the, looking at poisons used in the environment, looking at toxic chemicals where some <u>some</u> islands had been so polluted with, I think it was lindane umm was an outer Hebridean island I think that was so polluted it wasn't fit for habitation at all and likewise with DDT the way it was kind of, retained in umm in animals bodies and even penguins in the artic had it where it had never been used. And I, I would imagine that I did read Rachel Carson's umm Silent Spring at that stage, I can't remember for sure, I've certainly read it <u>since</u> and I read it before I became involved in climate activism. <u>Ummm</u> in fact I did quite a study on her, an art group I was in, where we chose, a woman, it's a</p>	<p>Informative?</p> <p>Reflective</p> <p>Optimistic ? Creating change?</p> <p>Optimistic – motivation</p>	<p>Beginning of first story – first story is of her coming into climate activism but to share this story she frames what the climate crisis means to her so her earlier activism fits the frame? Theme of coming into the climate and ecological activism</p> <p>Alternatively – does this comment on how the ecological is left out of the conversation, she is bringing in the wider connections</p> <p>First introduction to ecological and climate crisis was over 50 years ago, when she studied human ecology- I wonder what motivated her to study this?</p> <p>From an early age Mary has had a sense/interest in the self and other relationship of the human relationship with the non-human world. This at the time was fairly unheard of. At the beginning there is a bi-directional relationship which continues as a theme throughout – “impact of humans on the environment and how humans were affected by the environment”</p> <p>These studies ‘alerted’ her to ‘greenhouse effect’ ‘co2 emissions going up steadily’ and ‘planet was warming’</p> <p>Mary notes how this hadn't seemed like a ‘<u>huge deal</u>’ – they ‘<u>didn't know</u>’ it was going to <u>ramp up</u> to the level it is now. – we move on very quickly to what she did know and what had caught her attention– which was around pollution. Interesting that we don't stay with what it is like now to reflect on that she had studied this such a long time ago- how does it make her feel now to realise this?</p>	<p>Ecological and climate crisis</p> <p>Bidirectional relationship – humans on planet, planet on humans</p> <p>‘we didn't know’</p>	<p>Feels often throughout the story, Mary's preferred self is present, that of spiritual activist – the two selves are not in fact separate but one, intertwined. The selves that are missing are that of her self outside of this, I do not get a sense of her self which has perhaps</p> <p>Mary highlighted that it is a ‘climate and ecological emergency’. When Mary said this, I felt a bit embarrassed that I had not named that it was an ecological crisis, as it most certainly is. I also wondered whether highlighting this helps support Mary in feeling validated in her earlier activism, that she has been ‘active’ for longer than perhaps the ‘climate activism’ would suggest as at the end of the interview Mary notes that she feels ‘startled’ that she has not been more involved earlier. Although it could also express frustration that the ecological aspect of the climate crisis is forgotten??</p> <p>“no one had heard of ecology in those days [laughter] so this was gosh, 54 years ago..”- is she a</p>

## Appendix O – Individual narrative analysis

### Only part of the analysis is shown below:

Mary was raised in a very religious household, she shared that this environment taught her that we are all ‘God’s children’ and this in part seemed to set the scene for her involvement in activism and developing a sense of the importance of equality. During Mary’s teenage years the civil rights movement was occurring and Mary reflected that this was her first introduction to injustice, this grew when she went to university during which time she became involved with activism against Gerrymandering Mary reflected that she was ‘horrificed’ by the ‘injustice’ and the fact that people did not have a ‘voice in power’. Mary has shared that this early introduction to the importance of equality and social injustice has driven her activism, and that this is motivates her as a ‘deep part’ of her engagement due to the inequal impact of the climate crisis. When reflecting on the role of social injustice in motivating her activism Mary reflected that she feels that it ‘it feels like rape to me’, the word rape conjures thoughts of violent assault, destruction, the taking without consent, without regard for another – for the objectification of another where it is possible to take without considering the impact on them/the earth – the entitlement to do so, the power one has over another, one is the aggressor the other the victim/survivor (in this case the earth will recover and survive, the aggressor/human will not). This also highlights the difference between Mary’s way of relating and her perception of the wider human way of relating with the Earth. She is relating to the earth and humanity as an interconnected whole, whereas her description of others is more of a transactional objectified relationship. Mary studied human ecology and the human relationship with the natural world, reflecting that her main interest at the time was regarding the impact of poisons and toxic chemicals on the earth. We can understand that for Mary outrage became a motivating factor for her, she reflected that *‘my frustration, my outrage, my frustration umm at the terrible way that, profit, was put over ummm the good of the environment. Was-was the guiding factor’*. Mary shared that it is the social injustice and the fact that *‘1% of the world’s population, the profit is going into their pockets and they are raping the people and the land and the animals and the habitats and everything’*. Throughout Mary’s story she has reflected on this being a driving factor in her activism, *you would not stand by or walk on past somebody who was actually physically being raped in the street, you would in some way try and intervene and say this is wrong, stop.* Mary shared some sense of needing to act, despite a feeling that it might not make a difference stating that ‘we are called to act not called to be successful’ speaking to her feeling that she must do something despite a sense that it may not have an impact.

Mary shared some hesitancy about joining the activist group and it seemed as though motivating factors had been her relationships with others who she respected and thought highly of who were involved in part led her to join activism. Upon attending a protest this is where Mary described a feeling of ‘coming home’ that it was ‘bliss’ she had ‘found [her] tribe’. Mary described feeling inspired by other activists and spoke of feeling that they were doing the work of God and shared that ‘community’ is a motivator for her and that these relationships also ‘regenerate her’. This sense of connection and interdependence was in contrast with how she viewed the ‘individualism’ that she felt was a driving factor in climate inaction and cultural difficulties that perpetuated the climate crisis. Moreover as we came towards the end of the interview, Mary got in touch with more difficult feelings about her difficulty in being part of something that is viewed as ‘difficult’.

Mary reflected that when studying human ecology she had learnt about the ‘greenhouse effect’ at this time but that it hadn’t seemed like a ‘particularly big deal’ and that back then they ‘didn’t know that it was really going to ramp up to the level that it has now’. This relates to a later aspect of her story when she shared the depression she fell into following ‘facing the facts’ and studying the ‘tipping points’ and realising that she ‘couldn’t deny all this stuff’ she became ‘quite depressed for around 6 months’. Mary reflected that it was going on retreat that had helped her emerge from this depression and this retreat had taught her that you have to learn ‘to hold the suffering and the joy at the same time’, Mary described how following this retreat

she felt reinvigorated in her activism and did her first ‘arrestable action’ where she wore a board around her neck saying that she ‘feels terrified for the future of our children’. Mary spoke of her fear for the future of children around the world, she spoke of an ‘unliveable future’ in an ‘unliveable world’ and an ‘unliveable climate’ she described her lack of understanding or comprehension of the inaction of those in power however, this led her to reflect on how the *‘difficulty of the future is too enormous for anybody to comprehend so people push it away and I push it away’*. Mary reflects on the importance of action, that *‘even if we have no idea whether our actions are going to have to have real impact, we still have to do them’* and that these actions *‘mitigate the helplessness’*.

Mary ended her story sharing the more challenging aspects of activism, this came in at the very end of our interview and I wonder if this symbolises something of how difficult it for Mary to connect with this aspect of her experience. Mary shared that she finds it ‘quite hard’ to talk to people she knows about her activism, and described how difficult it was to be part of something that was seen as ‘difficult’; Mary seemed to try and place blame for the difficulty within offshoots of the activist organisation she is part of which felt like she was trying to distance herself from the ‘badness’. When reflecting on her discussions with her sibling she reflected that ‘[activist organisation] isn’t for everybody’ but then said ‘it could be’ perhaps reflecting a longing for her family

### **Reflection on ideology**

*Mary’s spirituality is weaved throughout her story and we have a clear sense of a strong ideology that is based in Christianity and Buddhism; the way Mary has interpreted these scriptures leads them to have a strong teaching about equality which is a strong motivator for Mary. Mary also describes what could be understood as an ideology of communion over agency – she describes a sense of an interconnected world, it is interesting because it is Christian teachings that are thought to have impacted our relationship with the natural world, placing man above nature, however, this is not the case for Mary*

## **Narratives**

### **Narrative: Journey into climate activism: social justice & ecology**

#### **Past - Present**

Mary was raised in a very religious household, she shared that this environment taught her that we are all ‘God’s children’ and this in part seemed to set the scene for her involvement in activism and developing a sense of the importance of equality. During Mary’s teenage years the civil rights movement was occurring and Mary reflected that this was her first introduction to injustice, this grew when she went to university during which time she became involved with activism against Gerrymandering Mary reflected that she was ‘horried’ by the ‘injustice’ and the fact that people did not have a ‘voice in power’. Mary has shared that this early introduction to the importance of equality and social injustice has driven her activism, and that this is motivates her as a ‘deep part’ of her engagement due to the inequal impact of the climate crisis.

Mary studied human ecology and the human relationship with the natural world, reflecting that her main interest at the time was regarding the impact of poisons and toxic chemicals on the earth. We can understand that for Mary outrage became a motivating factor for her setting up an organic gardening group, she reflected that *‘my frustration, my outrage, my frustration umm at the terrible way that, profit, was put over ummm the good of the environment. Was-was the guiding factor’*.

Mary shared some hesitancy about joining the activist group and it seemed as though motivating factors had been her relationships with others who she respected and thought highly of who were involved in part led her to join activism.

Mary shared that many years ago she went and heard Desmond Tutu speak, it appears that through this she developed a sense of the power of individual action, she reflected that his teachings expressed that those in Robbin Island

### Exemplars:

**Line 80:** I studied human ecology umm which looked at the impact of humans on the environment and how humans were affected by the environment. So it was kind of a, no one had heard of ecology in those days [laughter] so this was gosh, 54 years ago that I went. Ummm and obviously that alerted me to the fact that there was a greenhouse effect, that co2 emissions had been going up steadily through the industrial revolution and that the planet was warming. It didn't seem, at the time, a particularly huge deal umm but of course back then we didn't know that it was really going to ramp up to the level that is has now.

Line 97: So about, twenty, yeah just over twenty, twenty-two years ago I began to-to be one of the primary founders of our local organic gardening group because clearly, ummm being organic was a really important thing in the face of the amount of damage that industrial farming was doing. So I guess my frustration my outrage my frustration umm at the terrible way that, profit, was put over ummm the good of the environment. Was-was the guiding factor

Line 112: I have been very shocked by the terrible cataclysmic drop in numbers of insects, 75% in, in 70 years we've lost and and the birds you know, we have lost 50% of farm birds and the habitat loss you know 90%, 95% was lost. So this really engaged my outrage I suppose. Umm and my motivation for encouraging people to not only grow organically but buy organically as well, because there is so much more wildlife on organic farms

Line 121: I had done a bit of justice activism, I used to go on demonstrations, I was at university in [area in Great Britain] I used to go on demonstrations for the civil rights campaign there umm because I was horrified by the injustice to Catholics of something called gerrymandering where they would draw the election boundaries so Catholics would have no chance of having a voice in power. So I guess that was one of my first introductions to injustice, oh no, no no, one of my first introductions to injustice was Martin Luther King of course because the civil rights demonstrations in the states were going on while I was in my teens. Umm and I remember being very engaged by that. I was brought up in a very religious background, ummm my dad was a Parson, a minister, and so we were taught from a very early age, that-that the entire human population is family, we are all god's children. And that everyone no matter what colour, what culture, what language, what religious belief we are all one family so I think that's been really, and still is a really deep part of my engagement because part of my engagement with umm [activist group] is looking at the social justice aspect of it

Line 176: I went on civil rights demonstrations, I also went on a few of the demonstrations, very few and far and far between and antiapartheid demonstration

**Line 180:** I had the bliss of being in a congregation, a small congregation, addressed by Desmond Tutu about 30 years ago. And he said, and this is really pivotal, he said, really clearly, don't ever feel that as an individual you don't have the capacity to make a difference. The people that were incarceration in Robbin island, knew that individuals in the wider world were, caring about them, caring about their cause, wanting apartheid to fall and without that knowledge of all of those people who are individuals coming together to umm to express and to impose sanctions and things like that, so I'll never buy anything from South Africa



**Line :** a friend, a-a fairly close friend who I feel very fond of umm just mentioned to me three years ago have you heard about [activist group] and no I don't think I had at that point. Ummm and then I heard a couple of other people mentioning it and and discovered that a – married couple that I had quite a lot of respect for were very very involved and then I saw the principles and values of [activist group] stencilled on the wall. Umm and so this was over a period of about 4 or 5 months umm and I thought, those are all things that I can very happily agree with and then in [city] there was a, well there still is an [activist group] meditators group and they were putting on a meditation and a friend told me about it and three of us from our Buddhist group went along to it and I thought, this is great, this is coming and sitting and meditating as a protest, is actually really potent and feels very right I could completely resonate with doing that. Not, not, civil disruption but umm but just making a really strong statement, holding silent space, which I think is a very powerful thing.

Line 216: So that was my first step into an [activist group] action, and I said I was happy to be involved with the [activist group] meditators group and umm so we had some meetings and there was going to be a big [action] in [city] and I wasn't going to go ... there was a Buddhist umm retreat held in [city] just a two day one, and umm kind of for people who were thinking of going to the rebellion and I decided ok, I will go for one day

### **Narrative: Interdependence and Connection Present**

Upon attending a protest this is where Mary described a feeling of 'coming home' that it was 'bliss' she had 'found [her] tribe'. Mary described feeling inspired by other activists and spoke of feeling that they were doing the work of God and shared that 'community' is a motivator for her and that these relationships also 'regenerate her'. This sense of connection and interdependence was in contrast with how she viewed the 'individualism' that she felt was a driving factor in climate inaction and cultural difficulties that perpetuated the climate crisis. Mary ended her story sharing the more challenging aspects of activism, this came in at the very end of our interview and I wonder if this symbolises something of how difficult it for Mary to connect with this aspect of her experience. Mary shared that she finds it 'quite hard' to talk to people she knows about her activism, and described how difficult it was to be part of something that was seen as 'difficult'; Mary seemed to try and place blame for the difficulty within offshoots of the activist organisation she is part of which felt like she was trying to distance herself from the 'badness'. When reflecting on her discussions with her sibling she reflected that '[activist organisation] isn't for everybody' but then said 'it could be' perhaps reflecting a longing for her family to be involved .

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1	Activist	The past: early life experience, social justice background Line 80: I studied human ecology which looked at the impact of humans on the environment and how humans were affected by the environment. So it was kind of a, no one had heard of ecology in those days [laughter] so this was gosh, 54 years ago that I went and obviously that alerted me to the fact that there was a greenhouse effect, that CO <sub>2</sub> emissions had been going up steadily through the industrial revolution and that the planet was warming. It didn't seem, at the time, a particularly huge deal but of course back then we didn't know that it was really going to ramp up to the level that it has now.  Line 101: So I guess my frustration my outrage my frustration at the terrible way that profit, was put over the good of the environment. Was the guiding factor and so would, you know I was I was one of the primary educators in the movement which you know is still a reasonably healthy and robust organisation going on locally and im still pretty involved in it and I teach organic I make them involve in public protests, so demos I suppose, demonstrations. During the 1960's at university I was involved in protesting against UDI which gave you some ha, you'd probably be too young to know, but unilateral declaration of independence, Rhodesia broke away from the United Kingdom; So it was a white regime really. I went on to demonstrate also whilst I was in [University] against the Spring Box a rugby team, the white rugby team from South Africa that came to London. Probably a number of then- having children and I suppose settling down if you like, in-to-in a career was less [protesting] then. Then went on to [pause] I recall a demonstration called coal not dole, when we protested in favour of coal mines, or seems very historical now, Line 55: K, so, the story of my relationship with the climate crisis. I suppose it probably starts long before I was even aware of the climate crisis and it's probably something about feeling I ought to be making the world a better place. And I think that probably why I decided to train as a social worker, cos it's all about, and I think it's it's something probably but I don't want to get bogged down with this, to do with my relationship with my mother. Who was very often ill and you know somebody, so if she'd been ill then somebody had to be with her, oh that's alright [Name] can take a day off school. So it was, you know, my role, is to, to make everything better. So so I think, you know, that's kinda my, sadly still is er my life view, then there was the moment I think when we first saw, the pictures of the Earth from space and that kind of, the beauty of it and the fragility of it, the kind of mind	Gradual coming into climate activism Line 196: I bumped into a close friend and colleague there who is very, of a similar mindset to me and she also has joined [activist group], I mean I think she joined two or three years ago as well. So that's that's kind of background of my activism prior to joining [activist group]. Soo my [activist group] journey, a friend, a fairly close friend who I feel very fond of just mentioned to me three years ago have you heard about [activist group] and no I don't think I had at that point and then I heard a couple of other people mentioning it and discovered that a married couple that I had quite a lot of respect for were very very involved and then I saw the principles and values of [activist group] stencilled on the wall, and so this was over a period of about 4 or 5 months and I thought, those are all things that I can very happily agree with and then in [city] there was a, well there still is an [activist group] meditators group and they were putting on a meditation and a friend told me about it and three of us from our Buddhist group went along to it and I thought, this is great, this is coming and sitting and meditating as a protest, one of our group who has been actually quoted in the news really through climate activism in London and has been arrested numerous times; was, started taking to us about climate change probably about 10-15 years ago and his concern about it and u having been involved in protests for other matters over quite a number of years. I saw this as being one other social issue that needed to be addressed "going back to how I came into climate activism, I came, came to it I suppose through my wife and that was a, quite a profound conversation she had with one of the members of my men's group. and she felt at the end of the that conversation, which actually took place at someone's 60th birthday party, so er, they were sat in the corner having this conversation but it was, er very much about how, how I suppose it was a conversation we had in one car with, with a friend who I have got a lot of respect for, he is now about 85 I think, and because I ask that sort of question I said to him I think [husband] was driving and [friend] was in the back. You know so what are the important things we should be aware of in the world at the moment, or something like that, and he said, well it's the climate you know and the climate is really serious and I think from there I kind of I think I took it on board first and then [husband] followed very quickly afterwards and it's like why is nobody doing anything about this, why, how can we keep overlooking this really important issue. And of course becoming a grandmother as well and that you know, we-we've got three fabulous grandsons and that kind of. You know, what is the world going to be like for them and if we think we've got problems now by the time they're our age, it's going to be so much worse	Urgency, pressure to be good & burnout  Line 295: So I did that [arrestable action] and I really felt like I had cut my teeth there on on really being activist and then we did we did another action in London in the s er the St Pauls cathedral one where lots of people did get arrested but I was in the outside team so we weren't in danger of arrest, it felt great to be involved in that. Line 377: I don't think my behaviour necessarily is consistent with my beliefs and that's always been a challenge and that's relevant to the climate crisis is that I may hold fairly strong beliefs about; take the climate crisis now, my way of life, my lifestyle isn't entirely in keeping with that, and that does cause me some distresses. And certainly when meeting with members of the public as I do quite regularly in the streets around issues to, do with the climate crisis, em climate change, people come up to me and say well did you drive here or do you, what do you do about plastics or things like that. It can be quite combative, I've had to learn to,	Powerful and Powerless: Social Justice and Anger at Inaction Line 146: It feels like rape to me. It feels like, the patriarchal colonial mindset, which is into profit and power is just going in and has done for you know, probably forever, but particularly over the last 500 years. Has gone in and committed genocide and taking slaves and taking land from people without so much of as [inaudible]. Telling people, telling the indigenous people that this is going to be good for you in the long run and its bloody not and that is still happening now. We haven't learnt from history and the you know, the profit for, 1% of the world's population, the profit is going into their pockets and they are raping the people and the land and the animals and the habitats and everything.  Line 458: so for me going back to the theme of rape. You would not stand by or walk on past somebody who was actually physically being raped in the street, you would in some way try and intervene and say this is wrong, stop. So in a similar way, when I see the rape of the world that's being carried out for the greed of a few people, I have to stand up and say this is wrong  Line 158: , I guess in a way, that almost emotionally engages me more [pause] than the abstract thing you that you know in by the turn of the century we are heading for 2.7 degrees, I think it is now, of global warming, because I know I'm not going to be around.  Line 168: that's largely because the rich and greedy developed, so called, world is using up such a huge proportion of the worlds resources both in	Relationships: Alienation, disconnection & connection Line 274: Which is and me going to morning prayers is pigs flying to be perfectly honest, I'm ever such a reluctant Christian to just do bible study and stuff is kind of what am I doing this is pigs flying. But it's just such a great bunch of people I feel inspired and privileged to be that part of the crew  Line 299: So part of what engages me is the feeling of community, both within Christian climate action and within [activist group] broadly and particularly in my local group. So I've actually stepped up to a specific role in our local group recently, which is kind of a bit outside of my comfort zone which is the official welcome for people who are joining and I actually gave a talk through a microphone in public a couple of weeks ago.  Line 533: I think on a daily basis I'm with like-minded people and I think that is one of the things that really nourishes me and is really regenerative for me because one of the cultures within [activist group] is regenerative culture, that we develop resilience and ways of Line 228: Ahm I have just said that my 228: three children respect what [wife] and I are doing u but on the whole their 230. Lifestyle hasn't really taken this on board. I- and I feel a bit sad actually that, 231. they, don't seem to want to join in any in any our kind of activism daughter who is very much involved with everything involved with feminism to 233. do with gender equality and-very politically minded then. Doesn't seem to 234. extend to climate change issues that much and I'm just very glad that I 235. have a wife who also has the same concerns as myself because I don't think my 236. children really share it in their hearts.  Line 270: I should say, 271. another emotion of course is joy and em I do enjoy being with this lot and it's, 272. It's really nice Line 92: on the whole people are very nice, and you know and you get the deniers and you get the, you know the people who say 'well I'm 80 it's not going to affect me, go away sort of thing' and that always makes me sad because I think yeah but there are future generations  Line 97: two of my [siblings] are quite active climate deniers and you know one's a retired [profession], one, and so that's the eldest, and then the next one down from me u is a scientist or [their] degree is in science, they're both very bright people u and yet and yet [siblings] has persuaded [their] granddaughter that climate change you know is really not a problem and nobody needs to do anything about it and that changes in the Earth's temperature are absolutely normal and it's all ok and that's distressing because I kinda think, that's going to impact on her grades, you know, if she is answering the question in an exam	Hopelessness, fear of the future and activism as an antidote Line 161: What I've started doing, is when I'm out in the streets I'm looking at small children in buggies and toddlers and school aged kids and just saying, under my breath, I'm doing this for you kids. Because the importance, and that does make me feel emotional actually, I can feel my emotion rising as I say that because we are creating a unliveable future for these kids that are already born. And [pause] and I actually think that one reason that I decided to stay childless was because I could see that the world population was expanding at such a rate that we were going to run out of resources, which we already have  Line 293: I think I joined a focus group in CCA where we were, we came together to really look at the facts in the face about what was going on. So I learnt about the tipping points, I really educated myself and became quite depressed, yes, I became quite I have to be honest, it's true, there we are dealing with something that could wipe out our grandchildren, we have 3 grandchildren of whom I am very fond but somehow I wonder, although I can be quite an emotional person about many things, when I see people suffer some- it's a bit difficult to believe with my whole heart, with my whole being that this is happening. But I act as if, ha, I act as if I do and if I was asked do I truthfully believe that civilisation on earth is doomed, I would say [it] probably is yeah, but there may be things we can do to mitigate it, there may be things we can do to delay it, to delay the disappearance of human life on earth but the chances are probably more than 50% that humanity won't survive but I Line 276: but as far as the future concerned. [pause] I'm not altogether hopeful, I know Greta Thunberg says there's hope in action but [movement] I don't know what I - I think unless some change in world view or or or even just governments taking real notice of the IPCC reports and taking that on board, but it's like you know, yeah of course they've got lots of other things to think, they've had Brexit, they had covid, we've got the war in Ukraine, there is always a reason to postpone taking drastic action. So I'm not very optimistic about the future really  Line 289: But I mean, you know, you kno, islands are already being submerged underwater and people are suffering from drought and fires and floods but because on the whole it's not, it doesn't impact very much on people in the west I	AGING, LIFE STORY REFLECTIONS  Line 838: I'm just a bit startled that I wasn't more ummm engaged with the whole thing for, umm, for those years between I mean I was a bit through the organic gardening group but between the age of [pause] what 22 until I was 69 I didn't, is that right, 69? Yes I was 69 when I got into XR, just turned 69. I'm quite started that I wasn't more profoundly engaged with the whole thing during that time. Yeah Line 333: 333. Ummm yes I don't know what our people are supposed to do but the stereotype is 334. sit back take things easy, umm go on cruises, read lots of books and so on. I 335.. would feel very uncomfortable with that umm so I, I feel that its, quite important 336. to be, to be active er which may mean activism but may mean other ways of 337. being active like going for walks for instance, I enjoy that umm. But I think if I 338. wasn't involved in trying to right things, even, again this is a bit inconsistent, if 339. you think well life on Earth, human life on Earth is possibly doomed, then why do 340. anything. But I do feel action is important and it makes me feel I am doing 341. something valid in being active. At the same time as really on earth but the chances are probably more than 50% that humanity won't survive but I feeding it's, a bit of 342. futility, so mixing those, I don't, they aren't the motions as such,  Line 662: , I think it is more that it, that it's a coming together of all the strands of my life, you know the catholic education, the need to make the world a better place, the umm. I suppose who I am maybe that was an inevitable road to be involved in climate action. But there so many other things that need action as well you know, the housing situation in Britain is another one of my pet things that I tend to rant about as well as climate. I do have little rants from time to time umm but this idea that you that you, that you that, you leave the place, the world a slightly better place when you die than it was before you came into it I think perhaps has always been there, you know, she did not harm, she maybe did a little bit of good. So yeah I think, yeah I think it's more about who I am rather than what it's made me become, does that make sense
2	Mary							
3	Oscar							

**Appendix Q – Ethics Approval**

**From:** Ethics <Ethics@roehampton.ac.uk>

**Date:** Monday, 13 December 2021 at 10:32

**To:** Samantha Hart (Research Student) <harts2@roehampton.ac.uk>

**Cc:** Amanda Holmes <A.Holmes@roehampton.ac.uk>, Yannis Fronimos <Yannis.Fronimos@roehampton.ac.uk>, John Rae <j.rae@roehampton.ac.uk>

**Subject:** Ethics Application Ref: PSYC 21/ 408 - Final Approval

Dear Samantha,

**Ethics Application**

**Applicant: Samantha Hart**

**Title: Engaging with the threat of the climate crisis. The emotional journey and life stories of climate activists.**

**Reference: PSYC 21/ 408**

**School: Psychology**

Under the procedures agreed by the University Research Integrity and Ethics Committee I am pleased to advise you that your School has confirmed their approval of your application and that any conditions for approval of this project have now been met, and that the risk assessment for your project has been reviewed and approved by the Health & Safety Office. We do not require anything further in relation to the approval of this application (but please see the minor conditions/ comments below: although your application is approved, the minor conditions should be addressed).

Please note that approval is subject to adherence with any University guidance relating to COVID-19 (including general social distancing measures).

**Minor Conditions:**

- 1) Please add the section from our consent form template in the Consent Statement on page 2 (we have amended this as it's online):  
By agreeing to complete this survey you are confirming that you have been informed about and understand the University's Data Privacy Notice for Research Participants
- 2) In the information sheet on page 4 under What if I have any concerns please change Fronomis to Fronimos

**As these are only minor conditions it is assumed that you will adhere to these conditions for approval and therefore we do not require a response.**

Please note that on a standalone page or appendix the following phrase should be included in your thesis:

The research for this project was submitted for ethics consideration under the reference PSYC 21/ 408 in the School of Psychology and was approved under the procedures of the University of Roehampton's Research Integrity and Ethics Committee on 13.12.21.

**Please Note:**

- **This email confirms that all conditions have been met and thus confirms final ethics approval (it is assumed that you will adhere to any minor conditions still outstanding).**
- **University of Roehampton ethics approval will always be subject to compliance with the University policies and procedures applying at the time when the work takes place. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are familiar and compliant with all such policies and procedures when undertaking your research.**
- **Please advise us if there are any changes to the research during the life of the project. Minor changes can be advised using the Minor Amendments Form on the Ethics Website, but substantial changes may require a new application to be submitted.**
- **If this project involves clinical procedures or administering substances it is a condition of Ethics approval that all relevant SOPs published on the School communities pages are fully complied with.**

Many thanks,

Jan

**Jan Harrison**

Ethics Officer

Research Office

University of Roehampton | London | SW15 5PJ

[ethics@roehampton.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@roehampton.ac.uk)

[jan.harrison@roehampton.ac.uk](mailto:jan.harrison@roehampton.ac.uk) | [www.roehampton.ac.uk](http://www.roehampton.ac.uk)

Tel: +44 (0) 20 8392 5785

**Office Hours: Monday 9.00 - 3.00; Tuesday to Friday 9.00 - 2.30**

**Appendix R – Ethics Amendment's Approval**

**From:** Ethics <Ethics@roehampton.ac.uk>

**Date:** Tuesday, 11 January 2022 at 12:16

**To:** Samantha Hart (Research Student) <harts2@roehampton.ac.uk>

**Cc:** Amanda Holmes <A.Holmes@roehampton.ac.uk>, John Rae <j.rae@roehampton.ac.uk>

**Subject:** Ethics Application Ref: PSYC 21/ 408 - Amendment 12.21

Dear Samantha,

**Ethics Application (Amendment 12.21)**

**Applicant:** Samantha Hart

**Title:** Engaging with the threat of the climate crisis. The emotional journey and life stories of climate activists.

**Reference:** PSYC 21/ 408

**School:** Psychology

**Original Approval Date:**

Under the procedures agreed by the University Research Integrity and Ethics Committee I am pleased to advise you that your School has approved the amendment to your above application dated 26.11.21. We do not require anything further in relation to the approval of this amendment.

**Please Note:**

- This email confirms that any conditions have been met and thus confirms final ethics approval for this amendment (it is assumed that you will adhere to any minor conditions still outstanding).
- University of Roehampton ethics approval will always be subject to compliance with the University policies and procedures applying at the time when the work takes place. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are familiar and compliant with all such policies and procedures when undertaking your research.
- If this project involves clinical procedures or administering substances it is a condition of Ethics approval that all relevant SOPs published on the School communities pages are fully complied with.
- Please advise us if there are any changes to the research during the life of the project. Minor changes can be advised using the Minor Amendments Form on the Ethics Website, but substantial changes may require a new application to be submitted.

Many thanks,

Jan

**Jan Harrison**

Ethics Officer

Research Office

University of Roehampton | London | SW15 5PJ

[ethics@roehampton.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@roehampton.ac.uk)[jan.harrison@roehampton.ac.uk](mailto:jan.harrison@roehampton.ac.uk) | [www.roehampton.ac.uk](http://www.roehampton.ac.uk)

Tel: +44 (0) 20 8392 5785

**Office Hours: Monday 9.00 - 3.00; Tuesday to Friday 9.00 - 2.30****From:** Ethics <Ethics@roehampton.ac.uk>**Date:** Friday, 25 February 2022 at 10:44**To:** Samantha Hart (Research Student) <harts2@roehampton.ac.uk>**Cc:** Amanda Holmes <A.Holmes@roehampton.ac.uk>, John Rae <J.Rae@roehampton.ac.uk>**Subject:** Ethics Application Ref: PSYC 21/ 408 - Amendment 02.22

Dear Samantha,

**Ethics Application (Amendment 02.22)****Applicant: Samantha Hart****Title: Engaging with the threat of the climate crisis. The emotional journey and life stories of climate activists.****Reference: PSYC 21/ 408****School: Psychology****Original Approval Date: 13.12.21**

Under the procedures agreed by the University Research Integrity and Ethics Committee I am pleased to advise you that your School has approved the amendment to your above application dated 23.02.22. We do not require anything further in relation to the approval of this amendment (but please see the minor conditions below: although the amendment to your application is approved, the minor conditions should be addressed).).

**Minor Conditions:**

- i. Please change the wording on the Participant Information Form and the Recruitment Flyer (both give the inclusion criteria as being engaged in climate activism for 5 or more years) and check any other participant documents for this.
- ii. On the amendment form please add None in the section Data Protection Implications of Amendment

As these are only minor conditions it is assumed that you will adhere to these conditions for approval and therefore we do not require a response.

**Please Note:**

- **This email confirms that any conditions have been met and thus confirms final ethics approval for this amendment (it is assumed that you will adhere to any minor conditions still outstanding).**
- **University of Roehampton ethics approval will always be subject to compliance with the University policies and procedures applying at the time when the work takes place. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are familiar and compliant with all such policies and procedures when undertaking your research.**
- **If this project involves clinical procedures or administering substances it is a condition of Ethics approval that all relevant SOPs published on the School communities pages are fully complied with.**
- **Please advise us if there are any changes to the research during the life of the project. Minor changes can be advised using the Minor Amendments Form on the Ethics Website, but substantial changes may require a new application to be submitted.**

Many thanks,

Jan

**Jan Harrison**

Ethics Officer

Research Office

University of Roehampton | London | SW15 5PJ

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Tel: +44 (0) 20 8392 5785

**Office Hours: Monday 9.00 - 3.00; Tuesday to Friday 9.00 - 2.30**

**From:** Ethics <Ethics@roehampton.ac.uk>

**Date:** Monday, 8 August 2022 at 09:50

**To:** Samantha Hart (Research Student) <harts2@roehampton.ac.uk>

**Cc:** Amanda Holmes <A.Holmes@roehampton.ac.uk>, John Rae <J.Rae@roehampton.ac.uk>

**Subject:** Ethics Application Ref: PSYC 21/ 408 - Amendments A and B 07.22

Dear Samantha,

**Ethics Application (Amendments A and B 07.22)**

**Applicant:** Samantha Hart

**Title:** Engaging with the threat of the climate crisis. The emotional journey and life stories of climate activists.

**Reference: PSYC 21/ 408**

**School: Psychology**

**Original Approval Date: 13.12.21**

Under the procedures agreed by the University Research Integrity and Ethics Committee I am pleased to advise you that your School has approved the amendments A and B to your above application dated 21.07.22. The amended risk assessment has been approved by our Health and Safety Office. We do not require anything further in relation to the approval of these amendments (but please see the comment below).

**Comment – Amendment A:**

We like the suggestion of providing the transcript of participant responses only. Given that there is a slight risk of the participant becoming unsettled on reading their previous responses, we would recommend re-sending a copy of the debriefing form together with the transcript.

**Please Note:**

- **This email confirms that any conditions have been met and thus confirms final ethics approval for this amendment (it is assumed that you will adhere to any minor conditions still outstanding).**
- **University of Roehampton ethics approval will always be subject to compliance with the University policies and procedures applying at the time when the work takes place. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are familiar and compliant with all such policies and procedures when undertaking your research.**
- **If this project involves clinical procedures or administering substances it is a condition of Ethics approval that all relevant SOPs published on the School communities pages are fully complied with.**
- **Please advise us if there are any changes to the research during the life of the project. Minor changes can be advised using the Minor Amendments Form on the Ethics Website, but substantial changes may require a new application to be submitted.**

Many thanks,

Jan

**Jan Harrison**

Research Ethics and Governance Officer

Research Office

University of Roehampton | London | SW15 5PJ

[ethics@roehampton.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@roehampton.ac.uk)

[jan.harrison@roehampton.ac.uk](mailto:jan.harrison@roehampton.ac.uk) | [www.roehampton.ac.uk](http://www.roehampton.ac.uk)

Tel: +44 (0) 20 8392 5785



**Office Hours: Monday 9.00 - 3.00; Tuesday to Friday 9.00 - 2.30**

**From:** Ethics <Ethics@roehampton.ac.uk>  
**Date:** Monday, 21 February 2022 at 09:55  
**To:** Samantha Hart (Research Student) <harts2@roehampton.ac.uk>  
**Cc:** Amanda Holmes <A.Holmes@roehampton.ac.uk>, John Rae <J.Rae@roehampton.ac.uk>  
**Subject:** Ethics Application Ref: PSYC 21/ 408 - Amendment 12.21

Dear Samantha,

**Ethics Application (Amendment 12.21)**

**Applicant: Samantha Hart**

**Title: Engaging with the threat of the climate crisis. The emotional journey and life stories of climate activists.**

**Reference: PSYC 21/ 408**

**School: Psychology**

**Original Approval Date: 13.12.21**

Under the procedures agreed by the University Research Integrity and Ethics Committee I am pleased to advise you that your School has approved the amendment to your above application dated 16.12.21. We do not require anything further in relation to the approval of this amendment (but please see the minor conditions below: although the amendment to your application is approved, the minor conditions should be addressed).).

**Minor Conditions:**

- i. Where you make reference to the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) (2018) please could you change to the UK Data Protection Act (2018).
- ii. Please proof read Forms 1 and 2.
- iii. Please note the typo on page 6 of form 2 - Whitlands Campus,

As these are only minor conditions it is assumed that you will adhere to these conditions for approval and therefore we do not require a response.

**Please Note:**

- **This email confirms that any conditions have been met and thus confirms final ethics approval for this amendment (it is assumed that you will adhere to any minor conditions still outstanding).**
- **University of Roehampton ethics approval will always be subject to compliance with the University policies and procedures applying at the time when the work takes place. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are familiar and**

**compliant with all such policies and procedures when undertaking your research.**

- **If this project involves clinical procedures or administering substances it is a condition of Ethics approval that all relevant SOPs published on the School communities pages are fully complied with.**
- **Please advise us if there are any changes to the research during the life of the project. Minor changes can be advised using the Minor Amendments Form on the Ethics Website, but substantial changes may require a new application to be submitted.**

Many thanks,

Jan

**Jan Harrison**

Ethics Officer

Research Office

University of Roehampton | London | SW15 5PJ

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Tel: +44 (0) 20 8392 5785

**Office Hours: Monday 9.00 - 3.00; Tuesday to Friday 9.00 - 2.30**

**From:** Ethics <Ethics@roehampton.ac.uk>

**Date:** Monday, 13 December 2021 at 10:32

**To:** Samantha Hart (Research Student) <harts2@roehampton.ac.uk>

**Cc:** Amanda Holmes <A.Holmes@roehampton.ac.uk>, Yannis Fronimos <Yannis.Fronimos@roehampton.ac.uk>, John Rae <j.rae@roehampton.ac.uk>

**Subject:** Ethics Application Ref: PSYC 21/ 408 - Final Approval

Dear Samantha,

**Ethics Application**

**Applicant: Samantha Hart**

**Title: Engaging with the threat of the climate crisis. The emotional journey and life stories of climate activists.**

**Reference: PSYC 21/ 408**

**School: Psychology**

Under the procedures agreed by the University Research Integrity and Ethics Committee I am pleased to advise you that your School has confirmed their approval of your application and

that any conditions for approval of this project have now been met, and that the risk assessment for your project has been reviewed and approved by the Health & Safety Office. We do not require anything further in relation to the approval of this application (but please see the minor conditions/ comments below: although your application is approved, the minor conditions should be addressed).

Please note that approval is subject to adherence with any University guidance relating to COVID-19 (including general social distancing measures).

**Minor Conditions:**

- 3) Please add the section from our consent form template in the Consent Statement on page 2 (we have amended this as it's online):

By agreeing to complete this survey you are confirming that you have been informed about and understand the University's Data Privacy Notice for Research Participants

- 4) In the information sheet on page 4 under What if I have any concerns please change Fronomis to Fronimos

**As these are only minor conditions it is assumed that you will adhere to these conditions for approval and therefore we do not require a response.**

Please note that on a standalone page or appendix the following phrase should be included in your thesis:

The research for this project was submitted for ethics consideration under the reference PSYC 21/ 408 in the School of Psychology and was approved under the procedures of the University of Roehampton's Research Integrity and Ethics Committee on 13.12.21.

**Please Note:**

- **This email confirms that all conditions have been met and thus confirms final ethics approval (it is assumed that you will adhere to any minor conditions still outstanding).**
- **University of Roehampton ethics approval will always be subject to compliance with the University policies and procedures applying at the time when the work takes place. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are familiar and compliant with all such policies and procedures when undertaking your research.**
- **Please advise us if there are any changes to the research during the life of the project. Minor changes can be advised using the Minor Amendments Form on the Ethics Website, but substantial changes may require a new application to be submitted.**
- **If this project involves clinical procedures or administering substances it is a condition of Ethics approval that all relevant SOPs published on the School communities pages are fully complied with.**

Many thanks,

Jan

**Jan Harrison**

Ethics Officer

Research Office

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