

# Psychology, environment and climate change: foregrounding justice (part two)

The world is experiencing unprecedented heating, extreme weather patterns, natural disasters, pollution, biodiversity loss, and environmental destruction with disproportionate impacts on marginalised peoples' physical and mental health. Environmental and climate justice is increasingly used to frame research, practice and praxis. For example, activists on the margins are increasingly demanding that their voices are heard despite extreme levels of physical and epistemic violence. Countries in the global South are demanding reparations for the disproportionate harm caused by industrialised nations. For the first time, the latest IPCC report acknowledged the impacts of colonisation on climate change. However, much work needs to be done. With planetary health at a tipping point, it is crucial for all sectors and disciplines to urgently mobilise to acknowledge disproportionate impacts and reverse environmental degradation and climate change.

This special issue focuses on how psychologists foreground justice in their work on climate change and environmental destruction. Changing individual cognitions, emotions, perceptions, opinions, and behaviours (where many psychologists feel comfortable) is one crucial piece of the climate action puzzle. However, we know too that we have to turn our attention upstream to the causes of the degradation, work with marginalised groups at the interface of environmental and climate action, mobilise and strengthen our theories and methodologies in the hope of a more politicised and impactful disciplinary response. How do we do this?

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Part two of the special issue commences with an insightful paper by Anna Berti Suman called *The 'caring community' Recognising and shielding civic environmental monitoring*. The paper discusses the role of civic environmental monitoring using case studies from Ecuador and the United States of America (USA). Civic environmental monitoring is an important yet under-acknowledged aspect of collective environmental governance. However, in some contexts, civic monitoring is not recognised and is even criminalised. The paper introduces and compares two cases of civic monitoring – one where it is criminalised (USA) and one where it is recognised (Ecuador) – showing how community civic monitoring, particularly by informal collectives, should be recognised with legitimate and legal status. This is a helpful approach to governance with legal benefits too. Thus, the paper usefully combines principles of participation, collective decision making, and governance with a legal perspective.

Next, Trevor Scott Lies, Glenn Adams, and Byron Santangelo's paper called *Decolonial Considerations of Environmentalism: Observations from a (US) State Park* focuses on perceptions of anthropogenic climate change and extreme weather events. The authors interviewed 41 visitors to a state park in an area that had experienced extreme weather events. The authors explored visitors' perceptions of anthropogenic climate change (ACC) and extreme weather events. They found that the denial of ACC was greater among white participants than among participants of colour. The findings also showed a tendency to focus on individual action and natural conservation priorities that authors refer to as "the cult of the wilderness." The authors reflect on white ignorance and individualism, the disconnect between ACC and extreme weather events, and discuss a decolonial perspective as an alternative to colonial forms of environmental engagement.

Stephanie Klarmann and Brendon Barnes present a paper called *'Towards a just conservation psychology'*. Historical race-based land dispossession in the name of conservation is an essential topic for scholars interested in how colonial environmental management policies manifest in contemporary societal issues. Conservation psychology has been touted as an important disciplinary development to protect biodiversity. The paper critiques the individualist and apolitical assumptions of the growing field of conservation psychology. It also critiques psychologists' uncritical silencing of land and resource dispossession. Informed by critical place theory, environmental justice, and critical psychology, the authors put forward just conservation psychology principles. It applies these principles to a case study of impoverished youth living alongside the Kruger National Park in South Africa, discussing how a just conservation psychology may offer an alternative lens to work on conservation, psychology and justice in unequal contexts.

Christine Bauriedl-Schmidt, Monika Krimmer, Markus Fellner and Paul Cash present an insightful theoretical paper titled *Understanding climate injustice as social pathology through the lens of psychoanalysis, recognition theory and critical psychology*. The paper focuses on climate injustice as social pathology. It does so through psychoanalytic theory and critical psychology. The paper provides valuable theoretical insights into climate change and nicely locates the current issue with established theory, reminding us of existing ways of thinking about the ‘social’ and pathology.

Andrea Marais-Potgieter and Andrew Thatcher present a paper called *The relationship between the COVID-19 pandemic and environmental attitudes and what this means for environmental justice*. The paper focuses on the relationship between the COVID-19 pandemic and environmental attitudes. Studies conducted elsewhere have shown shifts in environmental attitudes over the pandemic. The study compares two social and environmental attitudes surveys, one in 2016 (n=721) and one in 2020 (n=665). Given the possible zoonotic origins of COVID-19, the paper investigates whether environmental rankings may have shifted before and during the pandemic relative to other economic and social concerns. The study found no changes in relative rankings of environmental rankings. Social and economic considerations such as safety, economic, and social issues remained higher than traditional environmental ones. The authors suggest that, when framed by intersectional justice (rather than focusing on ‘green’ issues), it may be possible to focus on the links between economic, social and environmental issues, thereby leveraging interlinking concerns to promote environmental and climate justice.

The final contribution is a book review by Thato Mdladlamba, a postgraduate student with a keen interest in activism and social change. The author reviews the *Extinction Rebellion and Climate Change Activism – Breaking the law to change the world* written by Daniel Schmidt and Oscar Berglund. The author critically evaluates the book highlighting the potential strengths (for example, the potential for disruptive politics and the authors’ scholarly critique of the link between extinction rebellion and anarchism) and weaknesses (for instance, that the authors are too quick to dismiss certain aspects of the XR approach). For the author, “The book contributes a new way to analyse and critique climate change activism and think about our society.”

We set out to map how justice was written into the environment and climate psychology research and practice. Papers focused on different topics and approaches (for example, the military, speculative fiction, allyship, transspecies accompaniment and conservation) emanating from different parts of the world. However, common themes included a strong focus on intersectional justice, an emphasis on politicised action and praxis, and using critical methods. Importantly, several papers focused on strengthening theory, including critical psychology, psychoanalysis, power threat meaning framework

and conservation. We also see contributions from several fields of psychology, including political, social, environmental, and community psychology and contributions from several sectors, including legal scholars, activists, writers, and postgraduate students.

There were, however, gaps in the contributions. Authors from the global South and marginalised groups more generally were underrepresented in the special issue. While we received excellent contributions, few of them came from the global South (outside of South Africa). We need to be mindful that scholars from the global South are underrepresented in climate change scholarship, and we need a concerted effort to be inclusive in our efforts. We must ensure that the scholarship on psychology and environmental and climate justice does not mirror global trends that ignore marginalised scholars. We also did not receive contributions focusing on feminism and gender, disability, pedagogy, sexuality, public mental health and critical arts. We need to make a concerted effort to develop these areas in the future. We are honoured to have put together this special issue, and we hope that we have inspired more work on psychology, environment and climate justice.