

The Emotional Geographies of Climate Change in Three U.S. Contexts

Rhian Stotts, Margaret du Bray, Amber Wutich, Alexandra Brewis
School of Human Evolution and Social Change

Introduction

- The Global Ethnohydrology Study (GES) is a transdisciplinary, multi-year, multi-site research project, designed to survey cross-cultural water knowledge and norms.
- GES 2014 focused on individuals' emotional responses to climate change in biophysically vulnerable communities, i.e. communities that are highly susceptible to the effects of climate change.

What are emotional geographies?

- An emotional geographies approach focuses on how the world is experienced and constructed through emotions. While emotions have often been seen as part of the private domain, emotional geographies examines the role that emotions (and their environmental context) play in the public/policy sphere.

Data Collection

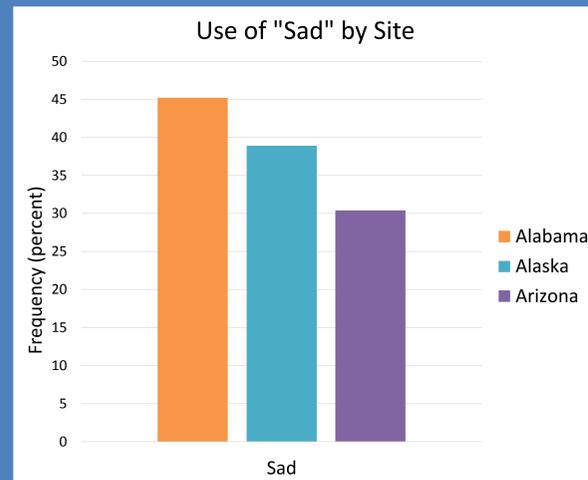
- A purposive sampling strategy was used to capture local residents' emotional reactions to past, present and future climate scenarios as well as respondent demographics.
- A total of 136 respondents participated across three communities:
 - Mobile, Alabama: 31
 - Kodiak, Alaska: 36
 - Phoenix, Arizona: 69

Methods

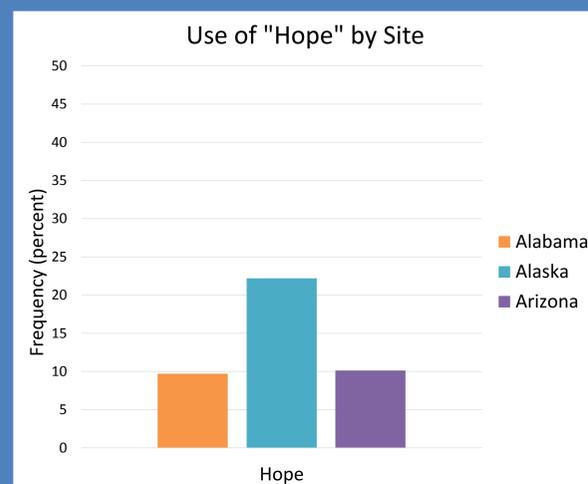
- Used MAXQDA to autocode interviews for emotion terms
- Conducted keywords-in-context analysis to understand how people used emotion words

Research Question

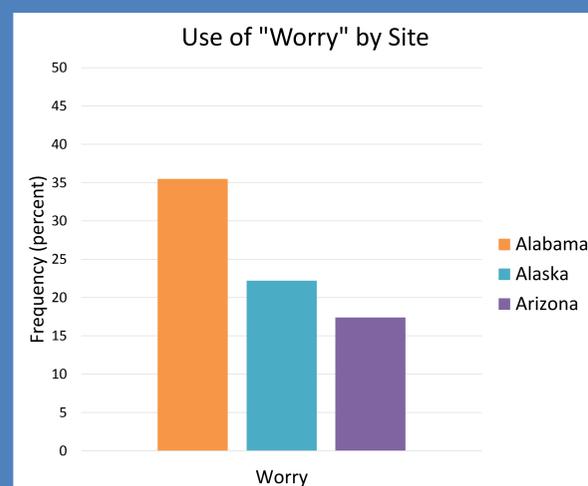
How do people express the emotional effects of climate change uncertainty?



"Sad that they have to deal with that [climate change] rather than working on medical research. I hate that we're going to have to spend a lot of money as a country or as a government when it's so needed elsewhere."
– Alabama resident



"I hope I can keep my business alive for another 5 years. Then I will be 60 years old and have to go get a job so I can live out my life. I have no job retirement. I have lived off the land for too many years."
– Alaska resident



"I feel worried because security (like food and basic resources) is not certain in the future."
– Arizona resident

Themes Derived from Interviews

	Alabama	Alaska	Arizona
Sad	About future prospects for respondents' children and the younger generation		
Hope	For the future generation	For survival, both in general and financially	That climate doesn't change too much
Worry	None (not worried)	About changing future livelihoods	About the future

Results

- Results indicate that emotional words are used more frequently in Alaska and Alabama.
- While Alaskan residents in general use more emotion words, they also use positive emotion words (e.g., hope) most frequently.
- Understanding emotional responses to climate change may help policy makers make governance decisions that resonate with constituents.

Future Research

- Ongoing keywords-in-context analysis to explore variation in word usage between sites
- Quantitative analysis that compares qualitative data with demographic data
- Classical content analysis using themes pulled from this dataset, as well as pulling from existing emotional geographies literature

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