

Cross-cultural approaches to understanding the emotional geographies of climate threats in four island nations

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Introduction

- The Global Ethnohydrology Study (GES) is a multi-year, transdisciplinary study examining local ecological knowledge of environmental issues related to water
- The 2014 GES used semi-structured interviews to understand respondents' emotional reactions to past, present, and future climate change issues

Why Emotion?

- Emotional geographers argue that emotion is key to understanding how people live in and experience the world around them
- Emotion has largely been relegated to the private realm, but is necessary to understand motivations and decision-making

Site Selection

- The IPCC argues that island nations are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change including:
 - sea level rise
 - coastal erosion
 - changing freshwater access
- A total of 272 respondents participated in four island nations:
 - Viti Levu, Fiji: 68
 - Nicosia, Cyprus: 40
 - Wellington, New Zealand: 86
 - London, England: 78

Methods

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

Research Questions

Are there consistent, observable gender differences in the degrees and forms of emotion expressed in relation to climate change threats?

Themes Identified from Interviews

| | Viti Levu, Fiji | | Nicosia, Cyprus | | Wellington, New Zealand | | London, United Kingdom | |
|--------------|--|--|---|--|--|--|---|---|
| | Women | Men | Women | Men | Women | Men | Women | Men |
| Sad | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For the younger generation Changes to local environment will affect younger generation Changes to local environment Loss of tradition; potential hardship at loss of plants and animals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For the younger generation Nostalgia; sadness at how younger generation won't have the same experiences Changes to local environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For the younger generation Nostalgia; sadness at how younger generation won't have the same experiences Changes to local environment Anticipated hardships | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes to local environment Changes to local environment will make it hard for anyone to make a living | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes to local environment Sad to see changes to local environment and home | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes to local environment Might cause hardship for people making a living off the land | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes to local environment Changing traditions in countryside For the younger generation Nostalgia; sadness at how younger generation won't have the same experiences or opportunities | |
| Angry | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For the younger generation Loss of a good future | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At inability to cause change For the future, for children | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At inability to cause change (for younger generation) Sense of anger at political structure's failings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At others Others are not taking responsibility for actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At others Other people do not care enough to ensure that they succeed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At others Others are not taking responsibility for actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At inability to cause change For family and younger generation |

Results

- Men were significantly more likely to say that they were angry:
 - "It makes me angry that people don't want me to succeed and be happy. I'm frustrated as well" (New Zealander respondent)
- Women were significantly more likely to say that they were sad:
 - "I [feel] sad. Life will be hard for people in the future. [The] soil and fruits could be different" (Fijian respondent)

Conclusions

- Women in more biophysically vulnerable communities were more likely to talk about their sadness in the context of changes to the local environment
- Women in less biophysically vulnerable communities were more likely to talk about their sadness in the context of the younger generation not having the opportunities they had
- Men in more biophysically vulnerable areas were angry about changes to the local ecology; only one Fijian respondent said he was angry
- Men in less biophysically vulnerable areas were angry about the way that climate change was affecting them and their outcomes personally
- Anger may be an important motivating factor for men
- Women may experience poor mental health outcomes as a result of their sadness

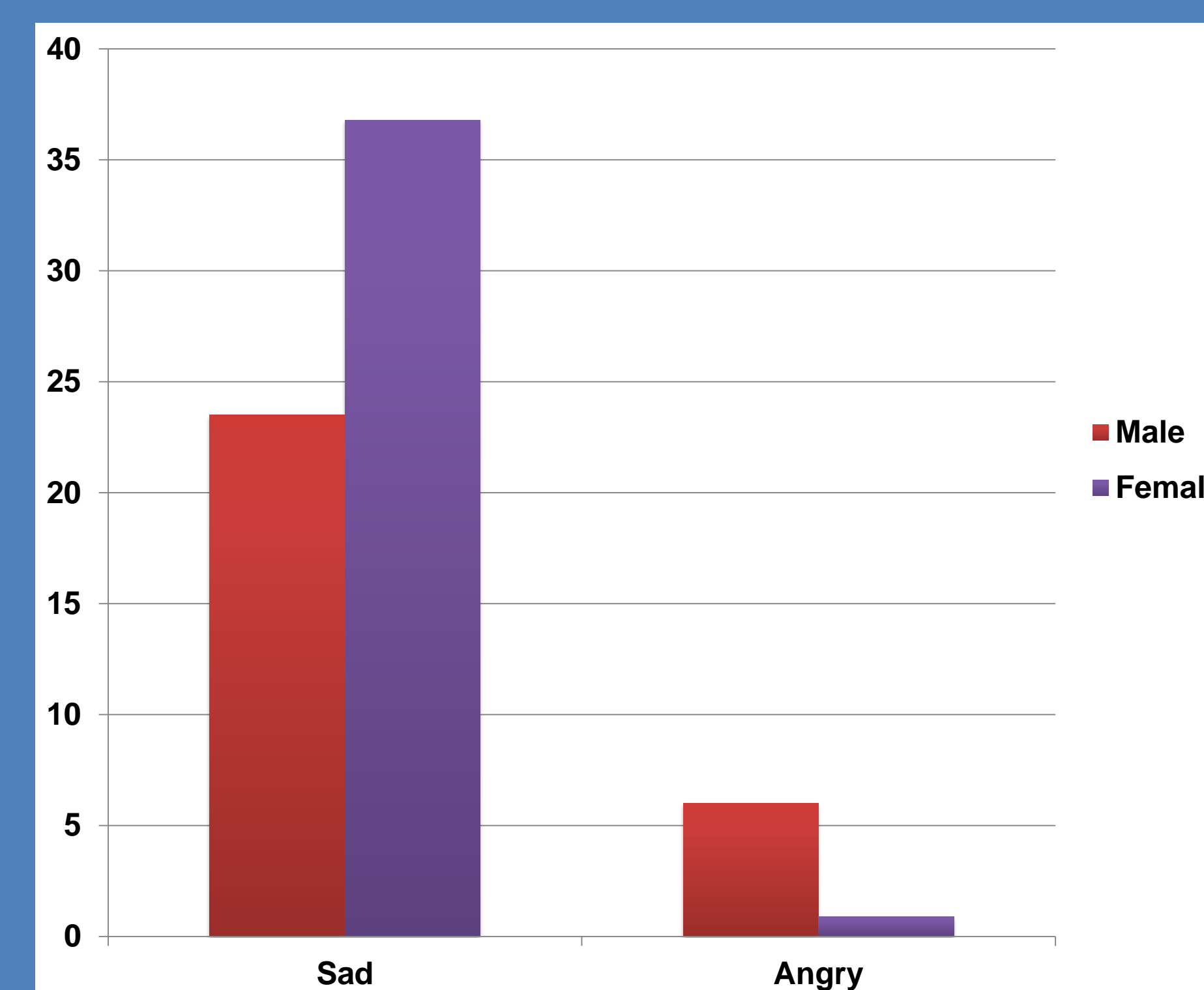


Figure 1. Showing the number of times "sad" and "angry" were used between men and women.

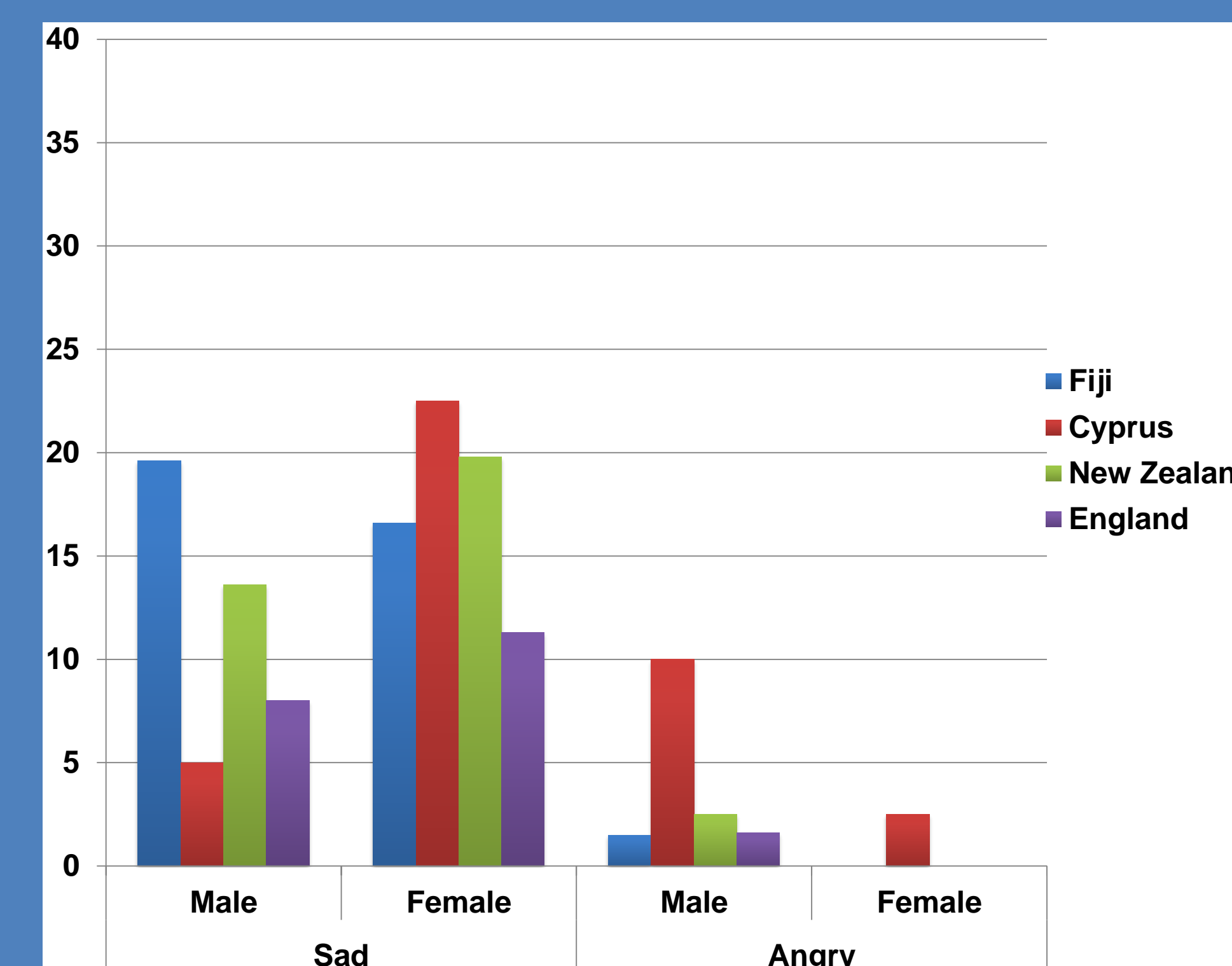


Figure 2. Showing the number of times "sad" and "angry" were used by gender and site.