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ENVIRONMENTAL ANXIETY AND HEALTH CRISIS: A GEOPOLITICAL STUDY

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Abstract

The convergence of biopolitical encroachment and climatic challenges within cultural contexts influence women's health outcomes, conception, fertility and the quality of future generation, leading to divergent health impacts across different cultural groups. The impact of bio-invasion leads to increase in exposure to heat, poor air/water quality, extreme weather conditions and poor food security, which affects men and women differently due to cultural, biological or socio-economic factors. The hypothesis focuses on the cultural factors which play a crucial role shaping a gender specific society, especially women who are affected by the combined influences of biopolitical invasion and climate crisis on their health, with multiple variations in coping mechanisms and resilience levels among different cultural groups.

Keywords: Environmental Anxiety, Imperial Environmentalism

The physical state of the earth's surface has been drastically altered by human activity. Wide swaths of marshy land have been transformed into lush pastures or fertile fields, and vast uplands are covered with majestic trees. Many regions, all over the globe, that were once lush and fertile are now barren and arid wastelands. These changes are the result of human activity, and the best ways to deal with the evils that may result from these vast clearances is among the most pressing questions that physical geographers ponder. Behind Victorian arrogance, and the belief that science and technology could bring ever-greater material progress and aid in the conquest of ever-greater parts of the earth, lie complex and sometimes conflicting environmental anxieties.

The convergence of biopolitical intrusion and climatic challenges within cultural contexts has a profound impact on women's health outcomes, conception, fertility, and the well-being of future generations, resulting in varying health effects across different cultural groups. The ramifications of bio-invasion include heightened exposure to heat, deteriorating air and water quality, extreme weather conditions, and compromised food security, affecting men and women disparately due to cultural, biological, or socio-economic factors. The hypothesis underscores the pivotal role of cultural factors in shaping gender-specific societies, particularly highlighting the vulnerability of women to the combined influences of biopolitical intrusion and climate crises on their health. It acknowledges the diverse coping mechanisms and levels of

resilience among different cultural groups. Addressing climate and biopolitical risks necessitates targeting specific segments of society, preferably women, as agents of social change to reform policy frameworks for a more equitable and sustainable world.

Through their experience of industrialization, Europeans introduced concerns about the pace and direction of urban, social, and environmental change to their colonies. The rapid transformation of unfamiliar environments across Australasia and South Asia also gave rise to new anxieties, leading to unintended problems that posed threats to agricultural improvement and human health. These challenges necessitated novel solutions or adaptations of existing scientific and bureaucratic models and policies to fit local colonial circumstances. The shared experiences of rapid environmental change facilitated exchanges of anxiety between regions such as Australasia and India, as well as between Europe and North America, forming the focus of this study.

Encounters with unhealthy climates or infertile land sparked anxieties that drove efforts to implement remedial measures aimed at preserving resources, preventing waste, and ensuring that environments did not adversely affect European health or aesthetic sensibilities. Various responses emerged, including environmental modifications, the development of bureaucratic and legislative solutions to specific health and environmental issues, geographical relocations, and the creation of artwork. By examining a range of anxieties, this study seeks to capture the complexity of contemporary understandings of environment, health, and aesthetics.

One prominent theme in imperial environmental history is the expansion of the colonial state and its increasing dominance over nature, often resulting in environmental degradation. While this portrayal holds merit, it represents a particularly strong narrative prevalent in imperial environmental history. Environmental historians have typically depicted religion in overly simplistic terms, either as an environmentally destructive ideology or by disregarding its influence

entirely. As Richard Drayton contends, Christian beliefs about humanity's place in nature played a central role in shaping Imperial Britain well into the nineteenth century. Agriculture, framed as a means of utilizing nature in accordance with the religious and economic assumptions of the West, proved crucial to British expansionist endeavors.

Health anxiety in the nineteenth century stemmed from the prevailing belief in the environmental origins of diseases and the potentially lethal consequences of exposure to new environments, particularly tropical climates, on European health. Settlers harbored apprehensions regarding both the unknown and untested nature of these environments, as well as the adverse effects of human-induced alterations, such as water and air pollution, and unsanitary and overcrowded urban living conditions. Some colonists argued that settlements necessitated the establishment of parks and urban greenery to counteract the unintended environmental and health consequences of development and to ameliorate perceived unhealthy areas like swamps and poorly drained land.

For me, food sovereignty is sovereignty over your life, livelihood and health. We are interconnected; therefore food sovereignty is an ecological process of co-creation with other lifeforms. It begins with seed sovereignty: saving and using living seeds. It involves care for the land and soil. We cannot have food sovereignty if we do not feed the soil organisms. Food sovereignty is based on organic farming and avoiding chemicals and poisons. Food sovereignty includes knowledge sovereignty, economic sovereignty and political sovereignty. (Vandana Shiva)

The late-eighteenth-century agricultural improvements and imperial expansions significantly transformed Britain's fortunes. Agricultural advancements led to the displacement of many impoverished individuals from rural areas, compelling them to migrate to cities or seek opportunities elsewhere. By the nineteenth century, the British Empire provided a lucrative market for the nation's manufactured goods and afforded

access to India's abundant resources and inexpensive labor force.

Safeguarding the Earth and preserving indigenous cultures has become increasingly imperative in contemporary times due to the cumulative impacts of five centuries of colonialism and three centuries of fossil fuel-based industrialization, which have brought us to the brink of collapse. Indigenous peoples have long thrived in harmony with nature, demonstrating respect for the Earth and its inherent limits. They serve as invaluable guides for navigating through this period of ecological crisis and species extinction.

Indigenous cultures universally adopt an organic-food ethos, embodying a profound stewardship of the land. For instance, Australian Aborigines have cultivated the land for an impressive 60,000 years, while small-scale farmers in China and India have sustained agricultural practices for over 4,000 years. Sir Albert Howard, dispatched to India in 1905 by the British Empire with the aim of enhancing Indian agriculture, found himself profoundly influenced by the organic farming techniques employed by Indian peasants. In his seminal work, "An Agricultural Testament," Howard acknowledges the superiority of indigenous practices in India and humbly embraces Indian peasants as his mentors.

The detrimental impact of colonialism and industrialism on the Earth and indigenous cultures can be attributed to four erroneous assumptions. Firstly, the fallacy that humans exist apart from nature rather than as an integral part of it. Secondly, the misconception that nature is inert matter, merely ripe for exploitation by industrial processes. Thirdly, the misguided notion that indigenous cultures are primitive and inferior, necessitating their "civilization" through enduring colonization efforts. Lastly, the erroneous belief that nature and cultures require improvement through external manipulation and interventions, a premise that underpins initiatives such as the Green Revolution, GMOs, and gene editing.

Globalization has fuelled unregulated commerce and rampant greed, leading to economies driven by ecocide and genocide.

Electoral democracy, increasingly influenced by wealthy elites and corporations, has deviated from its original principles of being "of the people, by the people, for the people" to a system dominated by corporate interests. This has exacerbated scarcity and competition, fueling culture wars and exacerbating social divides.

Anthropocentrism, the belief that humans are the central or most significant beings in the universe, is a fundamentally flawed and violent construct. It asserts human superiority over other forms of life, perpetuating a harmful hierarchy that disregards the interconnectedness of all living beings. In reality, humans are inter-beings, intricately linked with the Earth and its ecosystems. Earth Democracy offers a transformative vision, shifting away from destructive economies and lifeless democracies towards living systems that respect the Earth's abundance and limits. Despite divisions imposed by colonialism, gender, race, religion, and class, humans are integral parts of the Earth, with food serving as the currency of life. Any food system that wages war against the Earth ultimately harms our own bodies.

The global consciousness is awakening to the detrimental effects of an unjust and unsustainable industrialized food system, particularly in the midst of the ongoing pandemic. Solutions to these crises lie in transitioning towards local, biodiverse, poison-free, and chemical-free food systems that nourish all beings while minimizing our ecological footprint. Conscious eating plays a crucial role in addressing these issues, emphasizing the avoidance of processed foods and prioritization of fresh, wholesome options. Recognizing that all beings are sentient and interconnected, eating consciously fosters a respectful dialogue with other living beings and promotes both human and environmental health.

Our dietary choices significantly impact our hormonal balance, with certain foods contributing to hormonal imbalances while others support equilibrium. Factors such as stress, exposure to toxic chemicals, disrupted sleep patterns, light exposure, extreme temperatures, and pollution can all disrupt hormonal levels, leading to a range of health issues

including thyroid dysfunction, menstrual irregularities, fertility problems, and even certain types of cancer. Common sources of endocrine disruptors include pesticides, plastics, and chemicals found in personal care products. Disruptions to the sleep-wake cycle, exposure to light, and extreme temperatures can also impact hormone production and regulation. Pollution in the air and water further exacerbates these concerns, exposing us to harmful substances that interfere with the endocrine system.

Climate change and biopolitics pose additional threats, exacerbating existing gender-based health disparities, particularly in developing countries. Women's health is disproportionately affected by these changing and challenging times, necessitating targeted policy interventions to mitigate negative health outcomes. Socioeconomic, cultural, and physiological factors all play a role in determining health impacts within society. By centering women in these contexts, it becomes possible to develop a risk-reduction policy framework that enhances the quality of life for many women. However, navigating the intersection of politics and policy-making in a time-bound society is complex. To address these challenges effectively, it is crucial to identify a set of legal, social, and lifestyle indicators that can inform policy decisions, potentially utilizing online monitoring tools for analysis and evaluation.

Works Cited

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