LET'S TALK ABOUT FEELINGS
Multimodal Strategies to Mitigate Eco-Anxiety and Empower the Next Generation

BACKGROUND

- **Eco-anxiety** is used as an umbrella term for emotions related to environmental uncertainty or worry that inhibits personal action (Pihkala 2020)

- Youth are more at risk for eco-anxiety and other related mental health consequences

- Narratives in MEDIA and EDUCATION are too detached and fear based, fueling climate doomism (overwhelming apathy due to perceived futility of action)

- Communicators must learn to navigate multimodal platforms like Instagram and TikTok to better connect with youth audiences

OBJECTIVE

Assess communication and marketing strategies that nurture youth optimism, agency, and engagement

METHODOLOGY

**Internship**

- **Sustainability Ambassadors**: a local non-profit whose mission is to Rapidly Advance A Sustainable Future through student, teacher, and community programs (See Figure 1)

- **Impact Storytelling**: I designed diverse content for grant-funded Water Systems campaigns (static posts, creative videos, poetry, and playlists) (See Figure 2)

- **Goal**: Develop a marketing strategy to bolster SA’s online engagement

RESULTS

**Opportunities**

- **Conscious Marketing**: (see Figure 3) Avoids fear-based tactics and takes a value-centered approach

- **Authentic Attraction**: Audiences are more attracted to non-profits that have distinct values similar to their own

- **Lead with Laughter**: Humor can combat climate doomism by motivating youth to imagine better futures

- **Multimodal Magic**: Videos that offer an immersive escape or quick laugh are most attractive to younger audiences

- Using relevant hashtags, on-screen text, trending sounds, and music can improve engagement

SIGNIFICANCE

Harness the dialectic opportunity of eco-anxiety (see Figure 4):

- **Online**: Nonprofits can create an engaging space to interact with the “wins” of environmentalism

- **Education**: Offer curriculum that empowers youth to explore these complex issues in a collaborative environment

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Eco-Anxiety is a complex and dynamic experience that involves cycles of both positive and negative emotions. Adapted from Pihkala (2020).

METHODOLOGY BACKGROUND

**Practical** Shows a concern and desire to make a change

**Paralyzing** Makes us feel helpless, overwhelmed, and burned out

**Significance**

**Objectives**

- Anecdotal Observations
- Interviews
- Literature Review

**Implications**

- Optimism
- Agency
- Collective Action

**Eco-Anxiety**

- Positive Emotions: Excitement, Enthusiasm, Anticipation, Ambition
- Negative Emotions: Grief, Guilt, Shock, Worry

**RESEARCH QUESTION**

What are the opportunities and obstacles of using multimodal communication to foster optimism and combat eco-anxiety in the next generation?