

Preface

Anticipating that there will be an increase in violence as a response to global warming and environmental degradation has ethical implications that are addressed in this book. Using an anthropological approach, the limitations associated with reducing complex human behavior to this cause–effect model are illuminated. By reviewing a number of case studies and deconstructing the study of climate change and its relationship to conflict, the authors suggest that a much more complex and nuanced biocultural model must be used for understanding the consequence of major climate change events. The value of the biocultural model is that it accentuates the importance of considering multiple factors. This is important because a cross-cultural analysis of violent encounters reveals that migration plays a significant role in the presence or absence of violence and that it is often outsiders who are targeted during times of stress. There have been cases where shifts in climate could have caused increases in violence but alternatives were used instead. Thus, to understand what leads to violence, it is imperative to develop a more accurate database by examining how groups in the past adapted to long-term changes in the climate. These factors (ethnic identity and social fragmentation, inequality, environmental degradation, migration, and fear) interact with each other in complex ways depending on the culture, environment, and constitution of the population under study. Arguing for inevitability in how humans will react downplays the alternative choices they have as a species to deal with an unstable and changing climate.

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Ethical Considerations

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