

Corresponding Author:

Jacob Hovde
Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg Germany
jacob.hovde@gmail.com

Author(s):

Charlotte Sander¹ and Wolfgang Hochbruck²

¹Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg, Charlotte.Sander@Online.De, DEU

²Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg, Wolfgang.Hochbruck@Anglistik.Uni-Freiburg.De, DEU

This paper unveils how cultural disaster memory can affect preparedness and resilience in regard to a pandemic, in this case COVID-19. Since its initial spread and subsequent declaration as a global public health emergency by the WHO, the COVID-19 pandemic has made apparent the need for an adequate understanding of socioanthropological factors such as cultural risk perception in order to improve risk communication during the unfolding of such hazardous events. However, the impact of (popular) culture on the reception of COVID-19 has so far been overlooked, which is why this paper makes a case for the integration of a cultural studies viewpoint into COVID-19 risk research. Our hypothesis was that cultural images deriving from previous disaster experience, as well as from disaster coverage consumed through fictional accounts, have an impact on the response to any future pandemic, and that the impact of these images has been underestimated.

Fictions from Edgar Allan Poe's "The Masque of the Red Death" on have set standards for pandemics as disastrous events on a scale that the real diseases fail to meet. As a result, news reporting is often not taken overly seriously, because the exaggerated expectations are not met.

A survey was distributed among members of the English department of the University of Freiburg (N=103), looking for possible relations between previous disaster experience (fictional, real, historical) and the response to COVID-19. Their experience with previous disastrous events, and media images, in relation to resilience and preparedness concerning the COVID-19 pandemic was evaluated using the PAS (positive appraisal style) score method by Kampa et al.. The results indicate that exposure to various types, and varying degrees of, disaster experience, can influence resilience, and consequently preparedness, in facing challenges like COVID-19.

Kampa, Miriam et al. *A Combined Behavioral and Neuroimaging Battery to Test Positive Appraisal Style Theory of Resilience in Longitudinal Studies*. Neuroscience, 2018. DOI: 10.1101/470435.

Deep cultures of disaster: The significance of the anthropological perspective for understanding the interstices of hazards and disaster