

Children, Youth and Environments: A Call for Research, Practice, Action and Policy

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Join a local environmental society, but see to it that it does not waste time on superficial purposes... Don't think it is enough to attend meetings and sit there like a lump.... It is better to address envelopes than to attend foolish meetings. It is better to study than act too quickly; but it is best to be ready to act intelligently when the appropriate opportunity arises... Speak up. Learn to talk clearly and forcefully in public. Speak simply and not too long at a time, without over-emotion, always from sound preparation and knowledge. Be a nuisance where it counts, but don't be a bore at any time... Do your part to inform and stimulate the public to join your action.... Be depressed, discouraged and disappointed at failure and the disheartening effects of ignorance, greed, corruption and bad politics—but never give up (Douglas, 1980, as cited in Breton, 1998, p. 244).

On February 14, 2018 at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, 34 students and staff were wounded in a mass shooting—17 died. This passage, written in 1980 by journalist and activist Marjory Stoneman Douglas, is quoted on a banner displayed near the high school in Parkland, Florida that bears her name (opened in 1990—the year of her 100th birthday), in articles by contemporary journalists, and on social media by school leaders and students calling for action to increase school safety and prevent school shootings. Like many of the authors and readers of CYE, Mrs. Douglas believed in the importance of environments and activism. When presenting her with the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1993 on the same day she witnessed the signing of the Brady Bill establishing a federal background check for purchasing firearms, former President Clinton noted,

Beyond Florida, Marjory Stoneman Douglas is a mentor for all who desire to preserve what we southerners affectionately call 'a sense of place.' And Mrs. Douglas, the next time I hear someone mention the timeless wonders and powers of Mother Nature, I'll be thinking about you (Clinton, 1993).

She passed away in 1998 at the age of 108, yet Mrs. Douglas' words and actions have inspired yet another generation. Survivors of the deadliest high school shooting in American history have organized a movement called **Never Again MSD** that uses social media (#NeverAgain) and rallies to instigate change through legislative action. On March 9, 2018, Florida's Governor, Rick Scott, signed the **Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act**, which includes some regulations for purchasing firearms, and provides programming for arming school staff and the policing of school grounds. Governor Scott commented, "To the students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, you made your voices heard. You didn't let up and you fought until there was change" (Sanchez & Yan, 2018). On March 14, 2018, a **National School Walkout** occurred at 10:00 a.m. in every time zone. Teachers, students, administrators, parents, and allies at approximately 3,000 schools across the U.S. walked out of school for 17 minutes of silence to honor each person killed at MSD. The walkout was organized by a Connecticut student who lives near Sandy Hook Elementary School, where 26 students and staff were killed on December 14, 2012. On March 24, 2018, **March for Our Lives** became one of the largest protests in American history. On April 20, 2018, the 19th anniversary of the 1999 Columbine High School massacre, another National School Walkout was held to remember the 13 victims killed in Littleton, Colorado. Youth are using their voices to communicate their rights, needs, and ideas.

Figure 1. Protester participating in the 2018 March for Our Lives in Washington, D.C.



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Yet, on May 18, 2018, as we were writing this editorial, 10 were killed and 13 others were wounded in another school shooting at Santa Fe High School in Texas. That day, CNN published an article estimating that, on average, there has been one school shooting *every week* in 2018 (Ahmed & Walker, 2018). In addition to Parkland and Santa Fe, there were shootings on school grounds in the following places across America: Italy, Texas; Benton, Kentucky; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Los Angeles, California; Oxon Hill, Maryland; Nashville, Tennessee; Birmingham, Alabama; Lexington Park, Maryland; Gloversville, New York; Raytown, Missouri; Ocala, Florida; and Palmdale, California.

What Can We Do?

In response to the school shooting at MSD High School, we published the following statement on CYE's website:

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) stated that life in a society where "every man is enemy to every man" and where individuals "live without other security than what their own strength and their own invention shall furnish them" limits their well-being consequentially with "no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time, no arts, no letters, no society, and, which is worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death, and the life of man solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." The horrific loss of 17 people at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, **another** U.S. school shooting in which youths' lives were cut short by a semi-automatic rifle, has spurred youths' grief into activism. The editors at *Children, Youth and Environments* commend these youth as they call out politicians using their own moral authority based on emotions and losses intimate to the gun laws debate and other safety reforms. As these youths appear on television programs, demonstrate at the capitol, and ask poignant, but too often unanswered questions to politicians, we applaud their voices as they advocate for safe environments and the societal norms they want, a society in which they are not living in continual fear of a violent death. It is their future and the future of subsequent generations that they are advocating for... Historians will document whether or not these youths' activism will make a difference. Current events, however, suggest that it is time to listen to the voices of the next generation (<http://cyenetwork.org>).

What's next? We believe it's important to bridge research, practice, action and policy related to children's safety on school grounds. In the past, CYE has published special issues, research articles, field reports, and book and media reviews on these topics. Although not an exhaustive list, here are a few references in chronological order:

Baker, R. L., & Mednick, B. R. (1990). Protecting the high school environment as an island of safety: Correlates of student fear of in-school victimization. *Children's Environments Quarterly*, 7(3), 37-49.

Special Issue (1993). School design: A continuous process. *Children's Environments*, 10(2), including:

- Moore, G. T., & Lackney, J. A. (1993). School design: Crisis, educational performance and design applications, *Children's Environments*, 10(2), 99-112.
- Sanoff, H. (1993). Designing a responsive school environment. *Children's Environments*, 10(2), 140-153.
- Galvin, M. (1993). The Columbine School: A principal reflects on the influence of school design. *Children's Environments*, 10(2), 154-158.

Checkoway, B., & Richards-Schuster, K. (2004). Youth participation in evaluation and research as a way of lifting new voices. *Children, Youth and Environments*, 14(2), 84-98.

Nairn, K., Sligo, J., & Freeman, C. (2006). Polarizing participation in local government: Which young people are included and excluded? *Children, Youth and Environments*, 16(2), 248-271.

Special Issue (2007). Pushing the boundaries: Critical international perspectives on child and youth participation - Focus on the United States and Canada, and Latin America. *Children, Youth and Environments*, 17(2), including:

- Stoudt, B. G. (2007). The co-construction of knowledge in 'safe spaces': Reflecting on politics and power in participatory action research. *Children, Youth and Environments* 17(2), 280-297.
- Suess, G. E. L., & Lewis, K. S. (2007). The time is now: Youth organize to transform Philadelphia high schools. *Children, Youth and Environments*, 17(2), 364-379.
- London, J. K. (2007). Power and pitfalls of youth participation in community-based action research. *Children, Youth and Environments*, 17(2), 406-432.
- Kara, N. (2007). Beyond tokenism: Participatory evaluation processes and meaningful youth involvement in decision-making. *Children, Youth and Environments*, 17(2), 563-580.

Owens, P. E., La Rochelle, M., Nelson, A. A., & Montgomery-Block, K. F. (2011). Youth voices influencing local and regional change. *Children, Youth and Environments*, 21(1), 253-274.

Special Issue (2012). Reconceptualizing school design: Learning environments for children and youth. *Children, Youth and Environments*, 22(1), including:

- Malinin, L. H. & Parnell, R. (2012). Reconceptualizing school design: Learning environments for children and youth. *Children, Youth and Environments*, 22(1), 11-22.
- Ghaziani, R. (2012). An emerging framework for school design based on children's voices. *Children, Youth and Environments*, 22(1), 125-144.
- Fram, S. M., & Dickmann, E. M. (2012). How the school built environment exacerbates bullying and peer harassment. *Children, Youth and Environments* 22(1), 227-249.

Special Issue (2013). Children, violence, community and the physical environment. *Children, Youth and Environments*, 23(1), including:

- Lalor, K. (2013). Children, violence, community and the physical environment: Foreword to the special issue. *Children, Youth and Environments* 23(1), i-vii.
- Blanchet-Cohen, N., & Nelems, R. (2013). A child-centered evaluation of a psychosocial program: Promoting children's healing, safety and well-being in post-disaster contexts. *Children, Youth and Environments*, 23(1), 23-42
- Zuch, M., Mathews, C., De Koker, P., Mtshizana, Y., & Mason-Jones, A. (2013). Evaluation of a photovoice pilot project for school safety in South Africa. *Children, Youth and Environments* 23(1), 180- 197.

McKoy, D., Stewart, J., & Buss, S. (2015). Engaging students in transforming their built environment via Y-PLAN: Lessons from Richmond, California. *Children, Youth and Environments*, 25(2), 229-244.

As Marjory Stoneman Douglas recommended, we should continue to *study* the "prevailing influence of design on school climate and function" (Galvin, 1993, p. 154) and youth participation in transforming their schools and shaping school-related policies. We call on researchers and practitioners to expand the knowledge base on these topics by submitting proposals for special issues of the journal, research papers, field reports, and position papers that examine how environments, design, and projects and programs positively and negatively influence school climate, violence, safety, and well-being for children and youth, as well as their efforts to organize and advocate for safe and enriching environments.

Introducing Position Papers

Heeding Marjorie Stoneman Douglas' advice, the next step is to "Do your part to inform and stimulate the public to join your action..." In this issue, we debut a new section for CYE: Position Papers and Commentaries. We envision Position Papers as essays that (1) communicate a stance, beliefs, and arguments on significant and often controversial issues; (2) provide evidence to support opinions and recommended courses of action; and (3) stimulate research, practice, action and

policy on the topic. To provide guidance to authors, we established the following guidelines for preparing position papers:

- The paper should be no more than 4,000 words, excluding abstract and references.
- The paper should be written so that it is accessible to a general, international audience (e.g., researchers, students, policy makers, media) who may or may not agree with the position. Authors should write for readers who may be unfamiliar with the author's country or field. Jargon should be avoided or explained.
- The paper should include:
 - a general statement of the position;
 - evidence to support the position, including theory and research (e.g., statistics, findings from studies);
 - a review of other positions and explanations for why those were not taken; and
 - a conclusion that summarizes the position and how it is supported.
- The paper should not include method and results sections.
- The editors may invite commentaries to position papers.

The current issue includes two position papers and a commentary on children's leadership and rights related to climate change. We hope you enjoy reading this new section and we encourage readers to prepare and submit Position Papers related to the topics discussed in this editorial.

Currently, politicians are discussing a variety of design-related solutions to the school shooting epidemic in the U.S., including "hardening schools," arming teachers, hiring more school-based police officers, increasing metal detectors, and changing entrances. Our nation is giving some thought to questions that many of us grapple with on a daily basis: How do children's environments affect their learning? How can we make schools safer places for children to play and learn without turning them into prisons? How can we involve children and youth in decision-making? As experts, we can answer some of these questions and interject complexity and nuance into the conversation using our accumulated wisdom. We have formed opinions that are based on evidence, data from a variety of research methodologies to address these questions, and some stellar examples of practice. For example, the new Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut demonstrates biophilic design that encourages learning, affirms life, and cultivates character, yet also has improved safety features that don't take center stage (Kellert, 2015). We hope that this new forum encourages our readers to share their opinions, knowledge, research, and practice in a way that can influence action and policy.

Editorial Transitions

Professional and family transitions have prompted editorial transitions for the journal. We would like to express our appreciation to outgoing Field Report Editors Briony Towers, Amy Wagenfeld, and Mayeda Rashid who skillfully engaged in detailed editorial processes that led to the publication of high quality, accessible reports of international practices consistent with the mission of CYE. We would also like to express our gratitude to outgoing Book Review Editor Angela Kreutz. We thank you for sharing your vision and providing guidance to the incoming editors to ensure a smooth transition.

We are pleased to welcome Daniela DiGiacomo and Sue Elliott as Field Report Editors. Dr. DiGiacomo is currently a community- and design-based postdoctoral researcher at the University of California, Riverside in the Graduate School of Education and Civic Engagement Research Group. She holds a B.A. in Latin American studies from UC Berkeley, a master's degree in development studies from Cambridge University, and a Ph.D. in learning sciences and human development from the University of Colorado, Boulder. Her experience includes secondary teaching, school administration, political asylum advocacy, and social work and her current research focuses on design for more equitable teaching and learning relationships between adults and young people across various lines of difference.

Sue Elliott is a senior lecturer in Early Childhood Education at the University of New England, Armidale, New South Wales, Australia. Dr. Elliott is an experienced practitioner, consultant, and researcher in early childhood education with a focus on education for sustainability; design, play, and pedagogy in outdoor learning environments; and practitioner action research methodologies to facilitate change. Among other books, she's the author of *Sustainability and the Early Years Learning Framework* (2014), *Outdoor Learning Environments: Spaces for Exploration, Discovery, and Risk-Taking* (2017), and co-editor of *Research in Early Childhood Education for Sustainability: International Perspectives and Provocations* (2014) with Julie Davis.

We also welcome Ina Gankam Tambo as Book and Media Review Editor. Dr. Tambo is an experienced editor of books, monographs, and other works and author of book reviews. She currently serves as Chair of History of Childhood, Education and Youth at Ruhr University, Bochum, Germany. Her work in the field of comparative educational science focuses on children's rights, international migration and education, and globalization.

We believe these new editors have much to offer the CYE community!

Forthcoming Issue

The next release in this volume is a Special Issue featuring work presented at the International Play Association World Conference held in Calgary, Alberta, Canada in 2017. Dr. Janet Loebach, an environmental design researcher and consultant, Theresa Casey of Theresa Casey Consultancy, and Dr. John McKendrick, professor at Glasgow Caledonian University serve as co-editors for the Special Issue. Together they bring expertise in participatory action research design, the design,

build, and evaluation of natural playgrounds, inclusive play environments, adventure play, playwork, children in poverty, and children's play in areas of crisis. The Special Issue features research papers, field reports, and book and toolkit reviews related to children's play in environments across the world.

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