

## **Children, Citizenship and Environment: #SchoolStrike Edition**

Bronwyn Hayward (2020)

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Our planet is now in a new age, the Anthropocene epoch. This threshold has become emblematic for citizens, academics, and politicians to focus not only upon our existing ecological reality but our social realities as well. Our collective next steps to deal with this reality have at times forgotten the voices of children and youth. Not any longer, as argued in Bronwyn Hayward's book *Children, Citizenship and Environment: #SchoolStrike Edition*.

Children and youth activism for the environment has been reignited by the global School Strike for Climate (SS4C) initiative, asking schools to participate in demonstrations to demand action from political leaders to mitigate climate change and decarbonize our energy industry. This was championed by Swedish youth climate activist Greta Thunberg, who staged a solo protest in August 2018 outside the Swedish parliament, holding a sign that read "*Skolstrejk för klimatet*" (School strike for climate; Hahn, 2021). While the current #SchoolStrike movement continues to be impactful, the work of children's environmental activism has been the focus of Bronwyn Hayward's scholarship well before Greta arrived on the scene. Her research focuses upon the intersection of sustainable development, youth, climate change and citizenship, as demonstrated by her contributions to the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and leadership with a global initiative that spans seven cities worldwide titled, Children and Youth in Cities Lifestyle Evaluation Study (CYCLES).

In this revised edition of Hayward's ground-breaking book, *Children, Citizenship and Environment*, she re-examines how students, teachers, parents, and other activists learn to take effective action to confront the complex realities of climate change and other environmental challenges globally in light of the new #SchoolStrike movement. This edition draws on interviews conducted as part of the CYCLES initiative with young people in New Zealand, and includes new contributions by youth, indigenous peoples, social inclusion activists, researchers and educators, so as to provide a contemporary perspective that reminds us of the importance of youth activism and its social nexus in communities.

The book is divided into eight chapters, each providing a comprehensive and succinct overview of important premises for the scholarship, along with updated commentaries gleaned from youth and other concerned citizens, professionals, and activists. Chapter 1 provides the *raison d'être* for the updated book as predicated on the #SchoolStrike movement. Chapter 2 builds upon the 2012 edition by having a wider discussion of the prospects of children who live in New Zealand, who are now older (ages 12-18) than the previous edition's participants, and by listening carefully to adolescent discussions about well-being and the decarbonization of

cities. Importantly, this chapter frames her research findings in the context of Anglo-American neoliberal democracies, and how youth agency has manifested itself in the New Zealand context.

One of Hayward's key research questions is to understand how children and youth can learn new forms of citizenship now to better equip themselves to thrive in the Anthropocene epoch. Chapter 3 begins to address this question by introducing three-part typologies (i.e., *FEARS*, *SMARTS*, *SEEDS*) or models to analyze and interpret the important discussions and interviews conducted. Chapter 4 builds upon the individual agentic model of youth activism, as demonstrated by Greta Thunberg, and highlights the power of and necessity for social and political youth agency, which can transcend an individual narrative. Chapters 5 and 6 turn to the role of formal and informal education in creating outcomes that are not only focused on environmental knowledge and dispositions, but also address action-oriented competencies relevant to local communities with the goal of better addressing the complex socio-ecological intertwining of environmental issues such as climate change. Chapter 7 reflects upon how climate change activism has reignited the discussion regarding "deliberative democracy" and how this can be used to rethink and enact practices involving youth and place, as described by the youth-led Council of the Pacific. Finally, Chapter 8 provides a hopeful yet critical message for the need of children and youth to work together with adults to support strong ecological citizenship and advance democratic ideals that we all should cherish to build a sustainable future.

While the book is appropriately grounded in socio-political frameworks as it relates to youth citizenship and activism, there are opportunities for further connecting to other relevant theoretical frameworks, particularly as they relate to socio-psychological and educational factors impacting youth as they think and act in relation to environmental issues like climate change. Research has identified the importance of nature and parental eco-friendly behavior as predictive of youth environmental engagement later in life (Weyler, 2019). Further, there are other surprising developmental findings, for instance that adolescents may become less concerned about the environment as they get older. The transition of children's pro-environmental attitudes to youth environmental citizenship behaviors during their adolescent years should be best described as "in flux." Nevertheless, this developmental stage can be influenced with due considerations to cultural and educational contexts. In general, this speaks to the complex realities of children and youth in local communities, and a reminder about the transdisciplinary nature of the #SchoolStrike movement and ecological citizenship.

Bronwyn Hayward has provided a necessary and timely addition to the environmental literature by successfully arguing and illustrating how children, youth and adults in local communities collectively enact ecological citizenship. Her book supports ideas of youth activism moving away from both "thin environmentalism" and authoritative relationships that often frustrate youth. To support this shift, Hayward puts forward a "strong ecological citizenship" typology in her book: **S**ocial agency, **E**nvironmental education, **E**mbodied justice, **D**ecentered deliberation, **S**elf-transcendence (*SEEDS*) for ecological citizenship that can effectively support youth

and the environment. This stimulating typology is a viable model for researchers and educators alike to explore and validate in diverse contexts around the globe.

In summary, this insightful book prompts a re-thinking by researchers, educators, environmental and community advocates that wish to support young citizens and activists as they confront the task of re-creating a better world. This necessary shift in our adult thinking is illustrated below by a youth's declaration while listening to another youth speak.

*We will be a pain in the ass, we will keep on striking until they do something (Greta Thunberg).*

*I cannot sit there and watch her [Greta] do all this for the environment, and do nothing (young person in crowd listening; Hulu, 2020).*

Review by Xavier Fazio

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